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Tinubu discusses AI advancement in Nigeria with Google in France

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Bola Tinubu has had discussions with Sundar Pichai, who is the chief executive officer (CEO) of Alphabet Inc. and its subsidiary, Google in Paris, the French capital city, in images posted by the presidency.

The President is currently on a private visit ahead of his trip to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for the upcoming African Union (AU) Summit.

The president wrote on his official X.com handle: “I enjoyed engaging in crucial discussions about advancing Nigeria’s role in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital innovation with you in Paris, Sundar @sundarpichai.

“We are also exploring partnership opportunities with Google, which will focus on five key areas: enhancing scalable cloud infrastructure, equipping our workforce with essential skills for the future, promoting AI innovation and research, driving cloud adoption, and elevating Nigeria’s standing in the global tech landscape as a hub for



innovation and AI transition.”

“It is worth noting that Nigeria already has some bright prospects in the AI space, including the likes of Awarri Technologies @awarritech, with whom the Federal Government is currently collaborating to build critical AI software infrastructure to meet the needs of the local market unique to our arts and culture, languages, and society, amongst others, which have mostly been put on the backburner by current existing models.

”This includes data capture platforms and an LLM for Nigerian languages in partnership with our National Centre for AI and Robotics @NCAIRNigeria.

“This partnership conversation with Google aligns seamlessly with our Renewed Hope Agenda, which emphasises economic diversification through industrialisation, digitisation, and innovation. This will empower businesses, create new opportunities, and establish Nigeria as a significant player in the global digital economy.” “The Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy @FMCIDENigeria will provide strategic oversight, while NITDA @NITDANigeria will spearhead the implementation.

“Nigeria is poised to take the lead in AI and technology—this is merely the start of an exciting journey!”

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9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
5X2	42,916.50
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3X3	28,000.00
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PRESS RELEASE (4X4)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
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Tax reform bills clear second reading despite opposition

By Friday Omosola

On Wednesday, the House of Representatives advanced four tax reform bills submitted by President Bola Tinubu in 2024, approving them for the next legislative stage after scaling second reading.

The bills Nigeria Tax Bill 2024, Tax Administration Bill, Nigeria Revenue Service Establishment Bill, and Joint Revenue Board Establishment Bill—were drafted following recommendations from the Taiwo Oyedele-led Committee on Fiscal Policy and Tax Reforms.

With their second reading completed, the bills will now proceed to a public hearing for further scrutiny.

Despite making progress in the House, the bills have faced significant opposition from various quarters, including northern governors and opposition politicians, who have called for their withdrawal, citing concerns over their potential impact.

During plenary, several lawmakers backed the bills, emphasising the need for tax system modernization.

However, Rep. Sada Soli raised concerns that certain provisions



might conflict with the 1999 Constitution, particularly regarding derivation principles, which he argued must be explicitly defined to prevent ambiguity.

He expressed confidence that the House Committee reviewing the bills would resolve any inconsistencies before their final passage.

Other legislators also flagged key areas of concern, including the 40 different laws the bills seek to amend.

They particularly highlighted issues of multiple taxation, pointing out that the current provisions require both buyers and sellers of properties to pay tax, a policy that could burden individuals and businesses.

READ ALSO: Tax Reforms: Tinubu calling for anarchy – Gov Mohammed

With the bills now moving to the public hearing stage, lawmakers are expected to engage stakeholders in further consultations before making final amendments.

The outcome of these deliberations will determine whether the proposed tax reforms align with the nation's economic objectives and constitutional provisions.

Another blackout looms as national grid collapses again

By Dave Oludare Oso

Another bout of blackout and loss of income occasioned by businesses shutdown is imminent as Nigerians were thrown into yet another round of power chaos with the nation's electricity grid suffering a "grid disturbance" just before noon today, causing widespread outages across several parts of the country.

The Nigeria National Grid, in a brief statement on X (formerly Twitter), confirmed the collapse but provided little detail on the extent of the disruption.

The agency posted, "There was a 'GRID DISTURBANCE' before noon today. Parts of the country experienced an outage. Further information shortly,"

This latest power failure has sparked outrage among citizens and businesses, who are grappling with the recurring nightmare of grid collapses.

Many took to social media to express frustration over the unreliable power supply, with some questioning when Nigeria will finally achieve a stable electricity system.



A collapse too many

This troubling development of Nigeria's electricity grid collapse, has become too much and too frequent, throwing Nigerians and businesses into turmoil. In recent years, the country has witnessed repeated blackouts due to systemic failures.

In 2024 alone, the national grid collapsed over 12 times, throwing millions into darkness and disrupting economic activities.

One of the worst incidents occurred in September 2023, when the grid suffered a total collapse, leaving over 90% of the country without power.

The frequent collapses have been attributed to poor infrastructure, gas supply shortages, transmission failures, and inadequate system upgrades.

Despite repeated government assurances and billions of naira spent on power sector reforms, the situation remains dire.

With industries, hospitals, and households forced to rely on costly generators, the power crisis continues to deepen.

Calls for urgent power sector reforms are growing louder, but whether the government can finally end this cycle of blackouts remains to be seen.

Ganduje backs Tinubu's reelection, says North will wait till 2031

By Friday Omosola

The National Chairman of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) Chairman, Abdullahi Ganduje, has reaffirmed that power will remain in the South until 2031 before shifting back to the North.

He said this as speculation grows about opposition from certain northern political factions against President Bola Tinubu's anticipated bid for a second term.

Ganduje, a former governor of Kano State, made this statement in Abuja on Tuesday while addressing a delegation from the Tinubu Northern Youth Forum.

He commended the group for its organizational efforts and its role in gathering electoral data, assuring them of the APC's full support.

"You are already assisting the government in educating the public on key policies like the tax reform agenda, which was initially misunderstood.

"However, through sustained engagement, people now grasp its objectives. Support groups like yours play a crucial role in ensuring public enlightenment and inclusivity in governance," Ganduje stated.

Addressing the 2027 election, he



praised the forum's voter mobilization efforts and emphasized President Tinubu's commitment to national unity.

"Our president belongs to both the North and the South; he represents all six geopolitical zones. That is why we, as a party, uphold the principle of power rotation.

"After a northern leader served for eight years, we insisted that the presidency should move to the South. With collective effort, we succeeded in making that happen.

"Now, President Tinubu is leading and, by God's grace, will secure a second term in 2027. After his tenure, power will return to the North.

"Your initiative aligns with this vision, and we encourage you to continue your work. We will review

your proposals and identify areas where we can collaborate," he added.

Ganduje also met with the Tinubu Young Generation Forum, an organization actively promoting the administration's Renewed Hope Agenda.

He acknowledged the challenges Tinubu inherited upon taking office but expressed confidence that ongoing reforms were beginning to yield positive results.

"For years, many things went wrong, and addressing them requires deep structural changes. However, we are beginning to witness economic improvements, and we believe these reforms will continue to deliver progress. Ultimately, this will cement the legacy of the Renewed Hope Agenda," Ganduje stated.

Senate grills IGP over missing 3,907 guns from police armoury

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Senate on Tuesday vigorously grilled the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Kayode Egbetokun regarding 3,907 assault rifles and pistols allegedly missing from the Nigeria Police Force armoury as of January 2020.

Egbetokun, who was represented by the Assistant Inspector General of Police (Budget), Abdul Suleiman, appeared before the Senate Public Accounts Committee (SPAC) on Tuesday to address an audit query issued by the Auditor-General for the Federation (AuGF), failed to provide satisfactory answers about the missing weapons.

The representative of the Auditor-General, Olu Samuel Godwin, cited findings from the 2019 audit report, revealing that a total of 178,459 firearms were unaccounted for as of December 2018. This figure included 88,078 AK-47 rifles.

The report highlighted that discrepancies were noted in records from the Force Armament at Police Headquarters, Abuja, where the Police Mobile Force Squadron failed to report any missing firearms, despite records showing 46 missing weapons between 2000 and 2019.

In response, police representatives could only account for 15 of the 3,907



missing rifles flagged in the audit report. They requested a closed-door session to discuss the matter, but the Senate Committee rejected the plea.

Senator Victor Umeh criticised the police for failing to recover the missing weapons in the face of rising insecurity across the country.

He argued that “Thousands of AK-47s are missing at a time when insecurity is at its peak. The police should have been able to trace these arms. If over 3,900 rifles are unaccounted for, it means our security is compromised. Claiming it’s a ‘security issue’ without providing answers only raises more concerns.”

After a voice vote which went in favour of the majority, the session continued overtly.

The police explained that some of the weapons were derived from officers killed while their weapons were carted away. He says no arms were unaccounted for.

The Committee on Public Accounts declared dissatisfaction with the explanations, again summoning the IGP to again before the committee on Monday.

The Senate reiterated the need for the Nigeria Police Force to account for all missing weapons, emphasizing the critical importance of proper firearm management for national security.

The committee vowed to continue its investigation until satisfactory answers are provided, underscoring the gravity of the issue and its implications for public safety.

Reps moves to halt telecom tariff hike amid public outcry

By Friday Omosola

The House of Representatives has called for the immediate suspension of the recently implemented 50% increase in telecom tariffs, citing the financial strain on Nigerians.

The resolution followed a motion of urgent national importance raised by lawmaker Oboku Oforji during Tuesday's plenary.

Lawmakers also condemned the deteriorating service quality provided by telecom operators, insisting that any tariff adjustment should be contingent on significant improvements in service delivery.

As part of its directive, the House instructed the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) and the Minister of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy, Bosun Tijani, to halt the tariff hike in light of prevailing economic challenges.

This development comes as telecom operators commenced the rollout of the new pricing regime earlier approved by the NCC.

Many subscribers took to social media to express frustration over a sharp rise—up to 50%—in call, data, and text messaging costs.

According to official NCC data, Nigeria had over 224 million telecom subscribers as of December 2023.

MTN leads the market with 87 million users, accounting for 38.79% of the total share, followed by Globacom and Airtel with 61 million subscribers each, while 9mobile serves 13.9 million customers.



The NCC announced in January that telecom users would experience higher costs for data and airtime, approving a 50% tariff hike.

While some network operators had pushed for an increase exceeding 100%, the regulator said the approved adjustment was a compromise, considering ongoing industry reforms aimed at ensuring long-term sustainability.

The tariff hike was implemented under Section 108 of the Nigerian Communications Act, 2003, which empowers the NCC to regulate pricing within the industry.

The move has sparked opposition from organized labour.

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) initially threatened industrial action, demanding a reversal of the hike.

However, they suspended planned protests after last-minute negotiations

with government representatives.

The tariff increase adds to the financial burden on Nigerians, who are grappling with one of the worst economic crises in decades.

The removal of fuel subsidies and the floating of the naira has triggered a steep rise in inflation, worsening the cost-of-living crisis.

Since President Bola Tinubu took office in May 2023, petrol prices have surged from under N200 per litre to over N1,100 in some regions, while the naira has plummeted from approximately N700/\$ to N1,600.

Food prices and essential goods have also skyrocketed, further straining households across the country.

NLC rejects 50% telecom tariff hike, threatens nationwide shutdown

By Friday Omosola

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has rejected the recent 50% increase in telecom tariffs, calling for an immediate rollback to the previous rates.

The union has threatened to shut down the operations of telecom providers if the hike is not reversed by March 1, 2025.

The NLC and the Federal Government previously formed a 10-member committee to review the tariff adjustment and provide recommendations before any implementation.

However, despite this agreement, telecom companies went ahead with the price increase, prompting the NLC's strong response.

In a communique signed by President Joe Ajaero and General Secretary Emma Ugboaja after a Central Working Committee meeting in Lokoja, the union accused telecom operators of acting in bad faith by implementing the increase before the review process was completed.

The NLC also criticized the government for failing to protect Nigerians from corporate exploitation.



As part of its protest strategy, the union has directed Nigerian workers and the public to boycott MTN, Airtel, and Glo services daily from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM, starting February 13 until the end of February 2025.

“All workers and citizens are urged to stop purchasing data from these companies, as data pricing has become one of their primary tools for exploiting Nigerians,” the statement read.

The NLC further demanded that telecom firms return funds allegedly siphoned out of the country and warned that if the old tariff is not restored by the end of February, a nationwide shutdown of telecom operations would commence.

The NLC instructed its State

Councils to begin immediate mobilization, sensitizing workers and the general public about the planned actions.

It also urged Affiliate Unions to ensure compliance with the electronic silence protest during the designated boycott hours.

Additionally, the Congress reviewed the government's ongoing tax reform discussions, emphasising that while fiscal policies are necessary, they must not worsen the economic burden on Nigerian workers.

With tensions rising over the tariff hike, all eyes are now on telecom operators and the government to see whether the looming shutdown can be averted.

Nwoko Chairs Senate Ad-Hoc Panel on Oil Theft, vows to curb crime

By Friday Omosola

Ned Nwoko, representing Delta North Senatorial District, has pledged to reinforce legal and institutional measures to combat oil theft and ensure perpetrators face justice.

He made this commitment on Wednesday in a statement on his X page, following his appointment as Chairman of the Senate Ad-Hoc Committee on Crude Oil Theft.

Nwoko, who recently defected to the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), described the appointment as a crucial national duty aligned with President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda.

He emphasised that crude oil theft has long posed a serious threat to Nigeria's economy, draining government revenue, discouraging investment, and jeopardizing national security.

"Nigeria, as Africa's largest oil producer, loses billions of dollars annually to oil theft, illegal bunkering, and pipeline vandalism. These activities not only weaken our economy but also disrupt our energy sector and limit the country's ability to fund critical infrastructure, social



services, and development programs.

"This committee is tasked with: Investigating the root causes of crude oil theft and illegal bunkering. Identifying the key actors and networks facilitating these illegal activities.

"Reviewing existing security measures and recommending stronger enforcement strategies. Engaging stakeholders—including security agencies, oil companies, host communities, and government agencies—to develop sustainable solutions", Nwoko added.

The senator emphasised that crude oil remains Nigeria's most valuable natural resource, making its protection crucial for economic

stability, national security, and the well-being of all Nigerians.

He stated that the committee's primary objective was to eliminate sabotage, restore investor confidence, and ensure Nigeria maximally benefits from its natural wealth.

According to him, President Tinubu's administration prioritises transparency, accountability, and sustainable economic growth.

"I look forward to working with my distinguished colleagues, security agencies, and industry stakeholders to address this challenge decisively. Together, we will secure Nigeria's oil resources and build a more prosperous future for all."

Mutfwang partners with UNDP to empower youths

By Friday Omosola

Governor Caleb Mutfwang's commitment to fostering strategic global partnerships has taken a significant step forward with the launch of the 'Plateau Agro-Innovation Makerspace', an initiative aimed at equipping young people with modern agricultural and technological skills.

Established through a collaboration between the 'United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)' and the state government, the high-tech facility is designed to drive youth empowerment, economic transformation, and sustainable development across the state.

Located at Plateau State Polytechnic, Barkin-Ladi, the Makerspace will serve as a hub for advanced learning in agricultural innovation, technology-driven education, and renewable energy solutions, particularly solar power systems.

Speaking at the launch, Governor Mutfwang emphasised the importance of the initiative in harnessing the potential of Plateau's youths, empowering them with the skills to create sustainable livelihoods.

"We are deeply grateful to UNDP, led by Resident Representative Elsie Attafua, for piloting the Integrated Development Approach here in Plateau State.

"This initiative will uplift our youths and connect them to global opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship."

Reaffirming his administration's dedication to positioning Plateau as a hub for science, technology, and innovation, the governor urged young people to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the



Makerspace.

"This is your opportunity. This is your moment. This is your time! I sincerely appreciate UNDP for this invaluable partnership, and I look forward to building a future where our young innovators thrive."

In her remarks, UNDP Resident Representative in Nigeria, Ms. Elsie Attafua, commended Governor Mutfwang's leadership in creating a peaceful and conducive environment for innovation and economic transformation.

"We celebrate the 1.8 million talented, ambitious, and productive young people of Plateau. You are the architects of Plateau's transformation, and you must take this responsibility seriously. The Governor has declared that the time is now for Plateau to shine, and that light will come from its young people."

Ms Attafua described the Makerspace as more than just a structure, calling it a "powerhouse of ideas" that will

incubate businesses and revolutionize agriculture.

"This is not just a building. It is a hub packed with ideas—ideas that will evolve into businesses. It is a place that will equip entrepreneurs with the tools to build enterprises and redefine agriculture on the Plateau, shifting from subsistence farming to an agribusiness model with a strong value chain."

As part of efforts to enhance UNDP's operations in the region, Governor Mutfwang also handed over Guest House Number 1 to the UNDP for use as its North Central office, ensuring the smooth implementation of development programmes in the region.

With this milestone, Plateau State is setting a precedent in youth empowerment, innovation, and economic transformation, marking the beginning of a future driven by technology, sustainability, and strategic global partnerships.

Man kills wife with hammer over video calls with other men

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A Nigerian man has allegedly killed his wife by striking her on the head with a hammer, after accusing her of making video calls with other men in Abeokuta, the Ogun State capital.

The shocking incident came to light through a viral TikTok post on Wednesday, where the suspect, who has already been arrested, narrated his side of the story.

According to him, he had repeatedly warned his wife to stop communicating with other men but claimed she refused to listen.

He even reported the issue to her mother, but the situation persisted. The man also alleged that while he was hospitalized, he was informed that his wife often spent the night elsewhere, only returning home the next day.

The tragic event occurred just days after his release from the hospital. A heated argument erupted between the couple over her frequent video calls with other men, which led to the suspect attacking her with a hammer.

As the post circulated online, concerned individuals flooded the



comment section to express their thoughts on the matter.

See some reactions below:

seyi336: "Why now every bad things is always from Abeokuta."

Morenikeji: "why is it dat every bad things always happen from Abeokuta."

TOLUWALASE: "Make God help man cos if u stay inside with relationships that is where u can know where the frustration is coming from."

jiboku oluwapelumi: "Why are you all shouting Abeokuta, instead of praying make we never witness any evil in our marriage, and then no be only Abeokuta bad thing dey

happen. Ibi oni sele si emi ati idile mi o, ati gbogbo wa."

Ade gold: "Dis Abeokuta no be place pple suppose dey, marry walla too much everytime, kilode."

abidemioyesanya: "I can never allow even my enemy to marry Abeokuta, bad things dey always happen at Abeokuta."

temilizzy8: "Olorun ma gbami lowo eyin oloriburuku omo ale ti e fe so Abeokuta lenu fun mi."

ORENTEWEARS: "I know him at FMC self, his bed dey beside my brother at hospital, Oga ooooo, he kill his wife few days he was discharged from hospital chai."

Gospel music ministers like prostitutes, not different from Davido, others – Abel Damina

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Popular preacher, Pastor Abel Damina of the Abel Damina Ministries has stirred controversy by stating that those who call themselves gospel music ministers are no different from mainstream artists like Davido, Tiwa Savage, and Burna Boy.

According to Damina, there is no biblical basis for the term “gospel music minister,” adding that there is nothing gospel about their lyrics.

The clergyman made the remarks while addressing his congregation, referencing a viral video where Pastor Chris Oyakhilome of Christ Embassy lamented that he had to let go of some gospel music ministers because they were only in it for the money.

“The worst of them are the ones they call music ministers; I didn’t see that in the Bible. There is no difference between them and Davido, Tiwa Savage and Burna Boy. Their modus operandi is the same. They have agents, agencies, and managers. They have a list of things you must do. You pay, you sort things out before they come. They are the same thing.”

Damina argued that their lyrics do not reflect the gospel, emphasizing that true gospel music must contain the core message of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection.

“The only difference is that their lyrics are motivational, ‘Everything na double double o’. It’s not the gospel. The gospel must have the facts in it. Any song that doesn’t have those facts is not the gospel, it’s motivation. The gospel is how Christ died for our sins according to the scripture, that he was buried and that he rose again on the third day. If those lines are not in a



song, it is motivation.”

The clergyman further expressed frustration that gospel artists were only interested in hyping and motivating the congregation rather than ministering the gospel.

“Yet they charge \$50,000 for one night. Those of them they call A-List gospel ministers. They charge that kind of amount. N10 million for one night. These are businessmen using the Bible as a meal ticket. They don’t stay in teaching services and they don’t have pastors. They don’t sit down to be taught. They are just like prostitutes. When they come and sing, immediately they finish singing, they are gone. Because as far as they are concerned, they are the bosses. The rest of you, plus your preachers are apprentices. They are superstars. I don’t blame them. It is the churches that patronise them that are giving them that relevance.”

Damina also accused some ministries of being responsible for nurturing and creating what he described as

“monsters” in the gospel music industry.

“There’s a ministry in this country that was responsible for fertilizing, nurturing and creating that monster. Now that ministry is regretting and looking for how to fight it but the monster has matured. They don’t know how to destroy it. They have tried to destroy it but some of them have left those churches because they have already established their businesses.”

He explained that the reason gospel music ministers eventually left the churches that groomed them was because they had grown too big for them.

Damina also faulted pastors who proclaimed gospel artists as anointed and ordained men of God, saying they are now struggling to control the situation.

“They are now trying to fight it but it is not working. You created the elephant, deal with it.”

Customs halts 4% FOB levy

By Friday Omosola

In response to mounting pressure from industry stakeholders, the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has suspended the implementation of a 4 per cent Free-on-Board (FOB) levy on imports.

NCS spokesperson Abdullahi Maiwada announced the decision in a statement yesterday.

He cited the need for further consultations between the Minister of Finance, Olawale Edun, and key stakeholders.

The proposed 4 per cent FOB levy was intended to replace a previous system where firms like Webb Fontaine conducted import inspections for a 1 per cent fee.

However, its introduction sparked concerns among importers and industry players.

“This suspension coincides with the



termination of the contract agreement with service providers, including Webb Fontaine, which were previously funded through the 1% Comprehensive Import Supervision Scheme (CISS).

“This provides an opportunity to reassess our revenue framework holistically,” Maiwada explained.

Under the repealed funding arrangement, the 1 per cent CISS and the 7 per cent cost of collection were managed separately, leading to operational inefficiencies and financial gaps in customs modernization efforts.

The Nigeria Customs Service Act (NCSA) 2023 seeks to address these challenges by consolidating funding through a levy of “not less than 4 per cent of the Free-on-Board value of imports,” ensuring sustainable financing for critical customs operations and modernization initiatives.

During the suspension period, the NCS will engage stakeholders to refine the framework and align its implementation with the provisions of the new Act.

“We will announce a revised implementation timeline once consultations are concluded,” Maiwada stated.

Mobile police officer commits suicide in Niger

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Ogun State Police Command has confirmed the discovery of the lifeless body of Sikiru Olatunji, a 76-year-old man who was declared missing on February 8, 2025.

According to police reports, his corpse was found about one and a half kilometres from Wasinmi Abule Maria via Balogun Village in Yewa North Local Government Area of Ogun State.

The reports noted that the deceased was found lying face-up with his cutlass by his side. No visible signs of violence were observed on his body,



leaving the cause of his death unclear.

The discovery was made known following an extensive bush-clearing

operation and a coordinated search effort by police officers from Imasayi Division, assisted by Amotekun operatives, the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN), the Baale, and local hunters.

Following the recovery, the deceased’s family requested and was granted custody of the corpse for burial.

However, the police are still investigating the circumstances surrounding his death and are soliciting useful information from the public to aid their inquiry.

Five Katsina bandit leaders surrender to troops, release hostages

By Dave Oludare Oso

Five most wanted bandit leaders, who have long terrorised Batsari, Safana, and Jibia local government areas of Katsina State, have laid down their arms following intense military operations.

The bandits handed over weapons to the military and released several hostages kidnapped during their reign of terror.

They also vowed to embrace peace and end their involvement in criminal activities.

The repentant scoundrels are named as; Abu Radda, Umar Black, Abdullahi Lankai, Jijige, and Dabar Musa Dan Gandu, all operating from the Jibia axis.

A counter-insurgency publication focused on the Lake Chad region, Zagazola Makama, said the armed groups voluntarily disarmed.

During their surrender, they appealed to the government for alternative means of livelihood, requesting the construction of markets, hospitals, and access to clean water to aid their reintegration.

Their surrender was facilitated by the National Community for Security and Societal Advancement in Katsina State (NCSOSACK), led by Comrade Hamisa S. Batsari, representing



affected communities in security dialogues.

Top military sources welcomed the surrender but insisted that the operations against unrepentant bandits would continue until total peace was restored in Katsina, Zamfara, Sokoto, and the entire North West.

On Monday, the defence headquarters (DHQ) said 800 former Boko Haram fighters who surrendered to the military are currently undergoing deradicalisation for onward reintegration into society.

The Chief of Defence Training and Operations, Emeka Onumajuru who disclosed this stated that while 129,000 Boko Haram fighters and their families had so far surrendered, only a select group had been chosen

for rehabilitation.

“To get the numbers right, right now, (we have) about 129,000 surrendered Boko Haram members and their families,” Onumajuru said.

He explained that all surrendered individuals are subjected to legal scrutiny, with those found guilty facing prosecution, while others deemed fit for rehabilitation are placed in the deradicalisation programme.

He added, “Some of them are in detention facilities, some of them are in Kainji, and there is a special court that goes through all of them. Those that were found culpable face the books, and those that are going to be deradicalised go through the process, which takes about a year.”

PDP crisis: NWC voids Wabara's suspension

By Dave Oludare Oso

The internal crisis within the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) took a new turn yesterday as the Abia State chapter of the party announced the suspension of Senator Adolphus Wabara, the chairman of the Board of Trustees (BoT), over alleged anti-party activities.

The Abia PDP accused Wabara of making comments that suggested Governor Alex Otti of the Labour Party (LP) had already secured a second term, despite being just five months into his first tenure.

Citing provisions from the party's constitution—Articles 57(1),(2),(3), 58(1)(b) & (f), and 59(1) (e) & (f)—the state chapter declared that Wabara was “debarred” from holding any party office, effectively removing him as the BoT chairman.

However, the PDP's National Working Committee (NWC) swiftly intervened, nullifying the suspension.

In a statement, the party's National Publicity Secretary, Debo Ologunagba, dismissed the Abia State PDP's action as “null, void, and of no effect whatsoever.”

Also reacting, former PDP Deputy National Chairman, Chief Bode George, condemned Wabara's suspension, calling it an “insult and an affront that should not stand.”

“The NWC categorically dismisses the purported suspension as null and void and of no effect whatsoever, not being consistent with the provisions of the constitution of the PDP (as amended in 2017) and laid-down rules of our great party.

“For emphasis, no state working committee has the power to suspend or



take any disciplinary action against a member of the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the party without due recourse to the NWC as clearly provided under Section 57 (7) of the Constitution of the PDP (as amended in 2017).

“Section 57 (7) is unambiguous in providing that; ‘Notwithstanding any other provision relating to discipline, no Executive Committee at any level, except the National Executive Committee, shall entertain any question of discipline as may relate or concern a member of the National Executive Committee, Deputy Governors or members of the National Assembly...’

“The explicit import of Section 57 (7) is that Abia State chapter has no powers whatsoever to take any disciplinary action against the chairman of the Board of Trustees, Senator Adolphus Wabara, being a member of the National Executive Committee of the party.

“The PDP, therefore, condemns the purported suspension of Senator Wabara as reckless, unconstitutional and cautions those behind this act, in defiance of the PDP constitution, to retrace their steps as

the NWC will not hesitate to take appropriate disciplinary actions to preserve the stability of our party and the sanctity of its constitution.

“The NWC calls on all leaders, critical stakeholders, members and supporters of our party in Abia State, the South-East zone and, indeed, across the country to disregard the purported suspension.”

This comes as Chief Bode George, when reacting to Wabara's suspension, in a chat with newsmen said, “To me, that is an affront; it is an insult. Those who did that must have been sent by someone. It is like some people coming together to suspend the chairman of UAC.

“Wabara is the chief custodian of the party. Who are the characters who carried out such an act? We will defend this party and we will stand by it. This is unheard of. I don't know who is playing that silly game but they must be careful. We, the elders of the party, will not allow such to stand because it is an insult.”

2027: Step aside for others, Okonkwo tells Tinubu, Obi, Atiku

By Dave Oludare Oso

Former spokesman of the Labour Party (LP) presidential campaign team in the 2023 general election, Kenneth Okonkwo has urged President Bola Tinubu, and the presidential candidates of LP and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Peter Obi, and Atiku Abubakar to step aside from contesting for the presidential seat in the 2027 election.

The Nollywood actor-turned-politician stated this on Politics Today, a programme on Channels Television.

Okonkwo, who was an active member of the LP, in the lead-up to the 2023 general election, has, however, backtracked from his support for Obi, asking the LP chieftain, Atiku and Tinubu to step aside for other candidates in Nigeria's next round of elections.

When asked whether he still wants the trio to give way for other candidates in the next general election, he said, "I said it and I maintain it because in Nigeria, people will not give you their mandate and you treat it with levity.

"You must do everything



decisively to secure it. Unfortunately, nature has bestowed on us the duty that in Nigeria, you will not only win an election, but you have to fight for your mandate."

He further stated that though he worked with Obi in the 2023 election, that is now in the past.

He said whatever happened in 2023 should stay in 2023, ruling out backing the former Anambra State governor in the next round of general polls in Nigeria.

Okonkwo officially resigned from the party on Tuesday, saying it will take effect from February 25, 2025.

Citing the many internal rambles in

the Labour Party as the reason he dumped the party, Okonkwo, a former member of the All Progressives Congress (APC), ruled out returning to the ruling party.

He added that he resigned from APC on principle, and accused the ruling party of failing to address the country's challenges.

"I resigned from APC on principle," Okonkwo said, but gave only one condition to return to the party.

"Let me tell you, I will be the first person to admit it if the APC changes today and is doing well for Nigeria," he said.

10 habits to keep your brain young

By Boudicca Fox-Leonard

Don't let age hold you back: it's never too late to build a more resilient brain and body

We used to think that the only thing that could happen when you get older is that things go downhill. Thankfully we've moved past that phase. We now recognise for example that dementia is an abnormal trajectory of ageing.

While some change in our cognition is expected, it does not need to interfere with our daily lives.

In 2008 Prof Emily Rogalski at Northwestern University in Illinois, USA, coined the term SuperAger, defining them as someone over the age of 80 that has memory performance at least as good as people in their 50s and 60s.

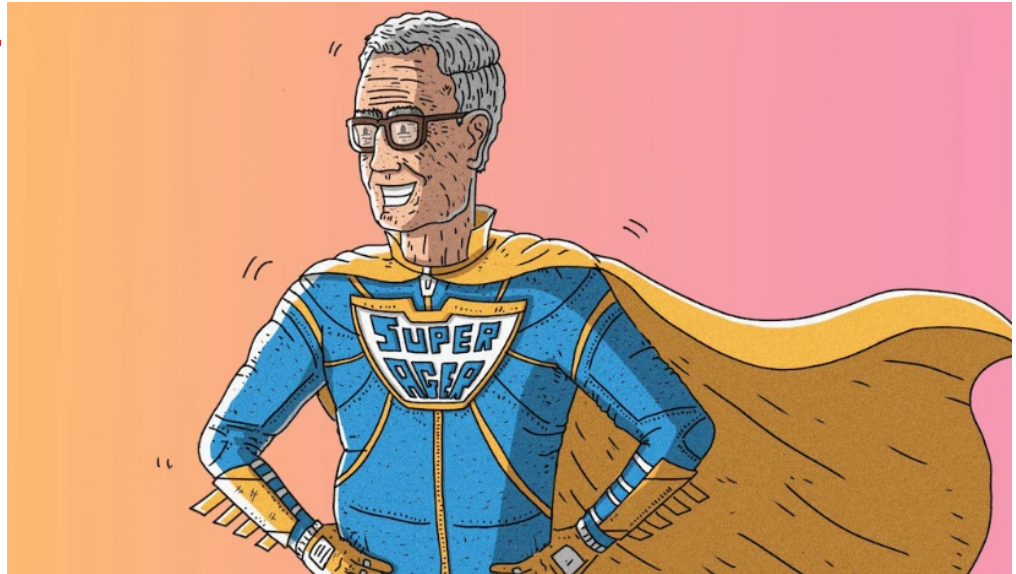
At the time she hadn't found any SuperAgers. "We knew we were setting the bar really high," says Rogalski, now professor of neurology at the University of Chicago. One thing her team realised early on is that the outer cortex of a SuperAger's brain looks more like that of a 50- or 60-year-old.

"What usually happens with ageing is that the outer layer shrinks a bit. And that's associated with changes in our memory and thinking abilities. In SuperAgers we don't see that biological thinning," explains Rogalski.

Scientists haven't yet unlocked the secret recipe for keeping your brain young, but they have identified ways in which SuperAgers differ from the rest of the ageing population. And lifestyle is key.

In recent years the term has become a little bit muddier. In common parlance it has been applied to those with physical health that is well preserved as their cognition.

Prof Jugdeep Dhesi, a consultant geriatrician and president of the British



Geriatrics Society, says: "It's very difficult to disentangle cognition and physical health. There's an overlap between them."

In the UK one in five of the population is aged over 65. Three million are aged over 80, and 1.5 million are over 85.

"That is something to be pretty proud of," says Dhesi. "The thing I'm concerned about is that it's also about living well. Not just longer."

We know that genetics are responsible for about 20 per cent of how we age. The rest is down to us.

"We can make positive changes at any time," says Dhesi.

So what habits do experts on ageing think we should learn from SuperAgers?

1. SuperAgers weather the bad times

Rogalski considers herself to have the best job in the world: "I have the opportunity to meet and learn from these inspiring individuals. They teach me about adaptability."

The SuperAgers she meets haven't always had the easiest of lives, but they've been able to let things go and persevere through challenges.

"We've had holocaust survivors, individuals who've lost their entire families and they were the only ones to survive, people who've lost kids at a young age or been in poverty; really terrible life experiences where it would have been easy to say 'Man, this is too much', but they chose a different path."

She has learnt a lot from their inspiring stories about how to live her own life: "We do have some control over recognising when we have mentions and learning to reframe there can be looking for the good. That might not be easy, but I think there are those opportunities."

Attitude towards adversity is something that Dr Dawn Harper, GP and health and wellbeing ambassador at retirement villages operator Rangeford Villages, kept encountering when she wrote her book *Live Well* to 101.

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“I have met many people who have held onto anger, which I believe has contributed to both mental and physical ill health,” she says.

Letting go can be a real challenge for some. Her advice is to buy a notebook and write down something that made you smile today. “It could be something as simple as the first snowdrop coming to life. It will help you see life through a positive lens.”

2. SuperAgers don't let ageism hold them back

Images of frail, older people sitting in wheelchairs looking sad does us all a disservice. That's a scientific fact.

Prof Becca Levy, of Yale School of Public Health in the US, has spent her academic career researching the impact of negative and positive beliefs about age.

She has found that individuals who have a positive attitude to ageing tend to have better physical, cognitive and mental health.

One study showed that among those who have an injury in later life, if they have positive age beliefs they will recover much faster.

In another study of the population of the town of Oxford, Ohio, everybody was asked about their age beliefs. Levy matched those findings to longevity information and found those individuals who had more positive age beliefs had on average a 7.5-year survival advantage over those who had adopted a more negative view of ageing.

“We know what children as young as age three have taken in the age beliefs of their culture,” says Levy.

However it's never too late to start

thinking differently about ageing.

In her book *Breaking the Age Code*, Prof Levy came up with a method for combating negative perceptions of ageing called the ABC Method.

“A” stands for awareness. “Be more perceptive in noticing the ways you're being given messages about ageing. Both negative and positive,” Levy says.

“B” stands for “Blame ageism, not ageing”. When something goes wrong, Levy says we should not immediately blame ageing itself. “Is there something else contributing to it going wrong? Could it be ageism contributing to a health problem?”

“C” is for challenge. Find ways to challenge negative age beliefs that one encounters. “This can happen on an individual level and also by creating a social movement towards age positivity.”

A source of inspiration to Levy has been Japan, where she spent time earlier in her career.

“At the time they had the longest life span in the world – it's still one of the longest – and I was interested in what the culture contributed to that longer life span. One of the things I noticed was how positively the older members of the culture were treated. They were celebrated and featured in pop culture in a way that showed admiration. Comic books had older characters with rich social lives.”

3. SuperAgers converse

The SuperAgers that Rogalski researches all report higher levels of social connection than their peers.

While we know that loneliness is a killer (social isolation puts people at a 50 per

cent increased risk of developing dementia) there is more to spending time with others than it making us feel good.

Talking is good for our brain.

“It's hard to have a conversation,” says Rogalski. “It's good for your brain to have to think how to respond to a question.”

So it's not just the community, social and emotional side of socialising that benefits us: “It's also keeping your brain thinking about whatever your topics are.”

4. SuperAgers volunteer

Strongly linked to this idea of socialising is the evidence that many SuperAgers have a strong sense of service.

“Many of them volunteer, and find ways for intergenerational connection,” says Rogalski.

As well as helping them to be adaptable cognitively, there are the social benefits associated with spending time with others.

Dhesi agrees: “In the community where I live, there are lots of older people who volunteer. And we know that volunteering brings loads of mental health and social benefits.”

She adds: “We often think communities don't exist any more. But people do want to belong in communities and they are looking out for opportunities to do that. Often there's a lot more going on locally than you would think.”

5. SuperAgers DO get ill

The word Super might make you think that you have to be invincible to qualify as a SuperAger. Not true.

Gov Oyebanji reaffirms commitment to quality healthcare

By Helen Okechukwu

As part of ongoing reforms in the health sector, Governor Biodun Oyebanji has reiterated his administration's dedication to providing accessible and affordable healthcare for all residents of Ekiti State.

The governor made this commitment during an inspection of Ijan General Hospital, where he assessed the ongoing renovation and upgrades of healthcare facilities.

Also, Governor Oyebanji disclosed that his government has initiated the renovation of at least one primary health center in each of the state's 177 wards.

This visit follows his earlier inspection of Itapa-Ilupeju and Iye-Ifaki General Hospitals, highlighting his proactive approach to improving medical services across the state.

Governor Oyebanji emphasised that his government is prioritizing the revitalization of healthcare infrastructure, ensuring that



facilities meet the needs of citizens, particularly those at the grassroots level.

In addition to infrastructure improvements, the governor acknowledged the shortage of medical personnel in government hospitals and pledged to address the issue.

He announced plans to recruit more doctors and health workers across all general hospitals and primary healthcare centers.

To attract and retain skilled

professionals, he also revealed that his administration would introduce an improved welfare package for medical personnel.

This effort is aimed at enhancing healthcare delivery and ensuring that residents, especially those in rural areas, have better access to essential medical services.

With these initiatives, the Ekiti State government reaffirms its commitment to strengthening the healthcare system, providing quality services, and improving the well-being of its citizens.

Valentine's Day: NACA urges Nigerians to remain sexually cautious

By Helen Okechukwu



Ahead of the auspicious day set for the celebration of love among couples, the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) urges Nigerians to maintain healthy sexual practices to prevent the spread of infections.

Under the theme “Love Wisely, Spread Love, Not HIV,” NACA advises citizens to prioritise safety, emphasising that protection is essential in matters of love.

The agency highlighted key health measures as HIV remains a public health concern while acknowledging that it is

preventable.

The Head of Public Relations and Protocol, NACA, Toyin Aderibigbe, in a signed document on Tuesday, underscored the importance of knowing one’s HIV status through regular testing, which must be part of a routine healthcare practice.

NACA encourages everyone to visit any government-owned hospital to get a free HIV test, as it is a priority.

Dr. Temitope Ilori, Director General of NACA, said, “Testing helps individuals make informed

decisions to protect themselves and their partners. We want everyone to enjoy Valentine’s Day while making choices that safeguard their health. HIV is preventable, and we have the tools to stop its spread.”

NACA listed unprotected sex, having multiple partners, and substance abuse as factors that can increase the chances of HIV transmission.

For further information on HIV prevention, testing, and treatment, citizens are encouraged to visit www.naca.gov.ng or call the toll-free line 6222.

I love Natasha, want to marry her – Tuface

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Man in the eye of the storm, Innocent Idibia, better known as 2Baba has set social media abuzz after confirming his romantic relationship with Edo State lawmaker, Natasha Osawaru.

The legendary musician's confession comes in the heels of his recent divorce from wife of over 12 years, Annie Macaulay, with the singer expressing his desire to consummate the affair with the lawmaker.

Their relationship began gathering intensified attention after the singer was spotted at the Edo State Assembly and a video of the duo at a Lagos club hit the Internet.

To clear the air concerning the rumours, 2Baba took to Instagram on Tuesday to post a video captioned "To Whom It May kwansighn. #I don yarn my truth. Feel free to continue alleging. We shall all be alright," he dismissed false narratives and defended Osawaru, stating she played no



role in his separation from Annie.

In the video, he said in part, "Allegedly, I have been seeing so many things, so many people coming up with their own false narratives and malicious nonsense after I posted that stuff that I posted. Yes, I posted what I posted."

"Hon. Natasha has been dragged, she has been called all sorts of names, she has

been labelled as a home breaker.

"She is a young brilliant amazing woman and she had nothing to do with what is happening between me and Annie in our marriage."

"Yes I love her, she is amazing, she is cool, I want to marry her."

I'm going for BBL – Actress Wumi Toriola

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Delectable Nollywood actress, Wumi Toriola has disclosed her intention to undergo a Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL) procedure.

She shared this information in a post on her Instagram account.

Toriola said that she has no attachment to her natural physique.

She wrote: "I am already going for BBL. Nothing 'consign' me with natural body allegedly."

The feisty Nollywood actress' post must have come as a shock to many lovers of the Nigerian movie industry considering the fact that the actress is one of the most



endowed in 'Nollywood'.

Expectedly, Netizens have flooded the post to comment. Read some of them:

@Eriata Esther Omotayo wrote, "With the whole full package behind you, eh mama. Abi make we lower our voice?"

@f_f_collection wrote, "I support you Aunty Wunmi"

@Olu_wapelumi23 wrote, "You have natural BBL already ma"

@Omojesu Jesu Feranmi wrote, "Naso. U need am for your fingers already"

@Moyinsola7 wrote, "BBL bawo. After all this nice shape wey you carry?"

17th Headies Awards unveils nominees, Odumodublvck dominates with six nods

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Headies Awards has officially announced the nominees for its 17th edition, with Odumodublvck, Qing Madi, and Ayra Starr among the artists leading the nominations.

The organizers revealed the nominee list in a post on X on Wednesday, stating that only songs and music videos released between April 1, 2023, and July 31, 2024, were considered for nominations.

“Only music materials including singles, videos, video live recordings, EPs & albums released & distributed on digital streaming platforms, & physical music media (cassettes, CDs & vinyl) within the year in review (April 1, 2023 & July 31, 2024) were considered for nomination,” the post read.

Odumodublvck, the Nigerian rapper, bagged six nominations, including Best Rap Single and Best Collaboration categories.

The late singer, Mohbad, also received three nominations in the Afrobeats Single of the Year, Best Collaboration, and Best Street-Hop Artiste categories, marking a posthumous recognition of his impact.

In the Rookie of the Year category, Zerry DL, Taves, Kaestyles, and Llona will compete for the award, highlighting emerging talents in the Nigerian music industry.

The 17th edition of The Headies is scheduled to take place on April 5, 2025, celebrating the best of Nigerian



and African music.

Meanwhile, the 18th edition is set for December, though the exact date has not been disclosed.

FULL LIST OF NOMINEES

Best Recording of the Year

- Tems – ‘Burning’
- Seyi Vibe – ‘Different Pattern’
- Burna Boy – ‘Higher’
- Ayra Starr and Giveon – ‘Last Heartbreak Song’
- Sarz and Lojay – ‘Billions’

Best Collaboration

- ‘Emotions’ – Tiwa Savage ft Asa
- ‘Blood on the Dance Floor’ – Odumodublvck, Bloody Civilian, and Wale
- ‘Cast’ – Shallipopi ft Odumodublvck
- ‘Egwu’ – Chike ft Mohbad
- ‘Ole’ – Qing Madi ft Bnxx
- ‘Twe Twe Remix’ – Kizz Daniel ft Davido
- ‘IDK’ – Wizkid ft Zlatan

Best Street-Hop Artiste

- Seyi Vibe – ‘Different Patterns’
- Ayo Maff – ‘Dealer’ ft Fireboy

- Shallipopi – ‘Cast’ ft Odumodublvck
- Zhus Jdo – ‘Johnbull’
- Mohbad – ‘Ask About Me’

Afrobeats Single of the Year

- ‘Big Big Things’ – Young John ft Kizz Daniel and Seyi Vibe
- ‘Twe Twe Remix’ – Kizz Daniel ft Davido
- ‘Egwu’ – Chike ft Mohbad
- ‘Remember’ – Asake
- ‘Ogechi Remix’ – Hyce, Boypee and Brown Joel ft Davido
- ‘Big Baller’ – Flavour

Producer of the Year

- Sarz – ‘Happiness’
- London – ‘Ozeba’
- Magicsticks – ‘Basquiat’
- Rema / Producer X/Cubeats/Deatz/Klimperboy – ‘Hehehe’
- Dibs – ‘Different Pattern’

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Best Vocal Performance (Female)

- Ayra Starr – ‘Last Heartbreak Song’
- Niniola – ‘Level’
- Simi – ‘Stranger’
- Liya – ‘I’m Done’
- Yemi Alade – ‘Tomorrow’

Best Rap Single

- ‘Cast’ – Odumodublck and Shallipopi
- ‘Blood on the Dance Floor’ – Bloody Civilian, Wale, and Odumodublck
- ‘Hallelujah’ – Ladipoe, Rozzz, and Morello
- ‘Canada’ – Magnito
- ‘Ije Nwoke’ – Jeriq

Rookie of the Year

- Zerry DL
- Taves
- Kaestyles
- Llona

Best R&B Single

- Qing Madi – ‘Vision’
- Johnny Drille – ‘For You’
- Simi – ‘Stranger’
- Tems – ‘Burning’
- Ayra Starr – ‘Last Heartbreak Song’ ft Giveon

Songwriter of the Year

- Simisola Kosoko – ‘Stranger’ (Simi)
- Chimamanda Pearl Chukwuma – ‘Vision’ (Qing Madi)
- Michael Ajuma Attah – ‘Can’t Breathe’ (Llona)
- Emoseh Khamofu – ‘Family Meeting’ (Bloody Civilian)
- Fuayefika Maxwell – ‘Stages of Life’ (Wizard Chan)

Music Video of the Year



- ‘Charm’ – Rema, Oerlinks and Folarin Oludare
- ‘Metaverse’ – Jyde Ajala
- ‘Like Ice Spice’ – Perlinks and Emeka Shine Shine
- ‘Ojapiano’ – Mattmax
- ‘Egwu’ – Director Pink
- ‘Showa’ – TG Omori
- ‘Na Money’ – Dammy Twitch

Lyricist on the Roll

- ‘Mogadishu’ – A-Q
- ‘Chocolate City Cypher’ – M.I Abaga
- ‘Chocolate City Cypher’ – Blaqbonez
- ‘Hallelujah’ – Ladipoe
- ‘Efeleme’ – Alpha Ojini

Best Inspirational Single

- ‘Gratitude’ – ANENDLESSOCEAN
- ‘Worthy Of My Praise’ – Dunsin Oyekan ft Lawrence Oyor
- ‘Good God 2’ – Limoblaze ft Naomi Raine
- ‘Particularly’ – Gaise Baba ft Tope Alabi
- ‘You Do This One’ – Mercy Chinwo

Best West African Artiste of the Year

- Black Sherif (Ghana)
- King Promise (Ghana)
- Himra (Ivory Coast)
- Josey (Ivory Coast)
- Toofan (Togo)

Best East African Artiste of the Year

- Bien (Kenya)
- Diamond Platnumz (Tanzania)
- Juma Jux (Tanzania)
- Bruce Melodie (Rwanda)
- Azawi (Uganda)

Best North African Artiste of the Year

- Mohamed Ramadan (Egypt)
- Elgrande Toto (Morocco)
- Soolking (Algeria)
- Balti (Tunisia)
- Abu (Egypt)

Best Rap Album

- ‘Sideh Kai’ – Illbliss
- ‘Eziokwu’ – Odumodublck
- ‘Alaye Toh Se Gogo VOL. 1’ – Reminisce
- ‘Family Time’ – Erigga
- ‘Shiny Object Syndrome’ – Modenine
- ‘Full Time Job’ – Phyno.

Trump, allies attack judges, courts as agenda hits legal roadblocks

By Dave Oludare Oso

Elon Musk on Wednesday called a federal judge “evil,” saying he “must be fired.”

As courts block parts of his agenda, President Donald Trump and his allies are ramping up criticism of judges and continuing to question judicial oversight of the executive branch.

While he’s said he would abide by their rulings — but also appeal them — he kept up the effort to undermine the authority of the courts on Wednesday, alleging in a social media post that a “highly political, activist judge” wanted to stop the work of Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency.

Musk’s aggressive and controversial cost-cutting effort has faced several lawsuits, one resulting in his team being temporarily restricted from accessing the Treasury Department’s vast federal payment system containing sensitive information of millions of Americans.

Vice President JD Vance

The court action prompted swift rebuke from Musk and Trump’s team. Vice President JD Vance went so far as to suggest judges “aren’t allowed to control the executive’s legitimate power.”

“Maybe we have to look at the judges because I think that’s a very serious violation,” Trump said in the Oval Office on Tuesday afternoon alongside Musk, who defended his team’s work.

Musk on Wednesday lashed out at another judge who blocked the Trump administration from removing public health data from multiple government websites. Musk called the judge “evil” and said he “must be fired.”

White House press secretary, Karoline Leavitt continued to blast the courts at Wednesday’s press briefing, claiming “each injunction is an abuse of the rule of



law and an attempt to thwart the will of the people.”

Elon Musk and Karoline Leavitt

“We will comply with the law in the courts, but we will also continue to seek every legal remedy to ultimately overturn these radical injunctions and ensure President Trump’s policies can be enacted,” she said.

The escalating clash between the new administration and the courts has some legal experts sounding the alarm, and is prompting fears of a potential constitutional crisis.

“The entire premise of our constitutional system of limited government of checks and balances and separation of powers involves deference to judicial determinations of what the law says and complying with it. This goes back to the beginning of the republic,” said David Schultz, a constitutional law professor at Hamline University.

Ray Brescia, a professor at Albany Law School, called the theory being pushed by Trump allies that the executive branch should operate free of judicial checks

“preposterous.”

“They are velociraptors testing the fence. They’re looking for holes. They’re looking for weaknesses. They’re checking to see where they can push the envelope,” Brescia said of the Trump administration. “I think for now, the system has largely held but we’ll see as these cases get to the appellate courts, and ultimately, many of them are likely to go to the Supreme Court.”

Leavitt lashed out at Democrats and other critics calling the confrontation a brewing constitutional crisis.

She said “the real constitutional crisis is taking place within our judicial branch, where district court judges in liberal districts across the country are abusing their power to unilaterally block President Trump’s basic executive authority.”

Much of Trump and Musk’s attempt to overhaul the federal government is being met with lawsuits, including the dismantling of USAID and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau as well as the buyout offer extended to tens of thousands of federal employees.

Russia pounds Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, rejects swapping occupied territories

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Russia on Wednesday rejected swapping occupied territory with Kyiv in any peace deal, after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy floated the idea.

“This is impossible. Russia has never and will never discuss the topic of exchanging its territory,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, ruling out Zelenskyy’s idea of a swap involving Ukrainian-held parts of Russia’s western Kursk region.

Peskov spoke not long after Russia hit Ukraine’s capital Kyiv with a deadly drone and missile attack that President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called proof the Kremlin is not interested in pursuing peace.

Journalists with the French news agency, AFP heard a volley of explosions ring out over Kyiv early Wednesday and then saw the body of one person killed covered with a black plastic sheet on a street littered with debris.

A view of a destroyed building after a Russian missile attack, Feb. 12, 2025, in Kyiv, Ukraine. Yan Dobronosov/Global Images Ukraine/Getty

Russia’s defense ministry said it had carried out a “group missile strike” on Ukrainian military-industrial sites that produce drones, claiming in a social media post that, “all planned targets were hit.”

Zelenskyy said one person was killed and at least four others were wounded — including a child — in the attack that he said had damaged apartment blocks, office buildings, and civilian infrastructure.

Russian President, Vladimir Putin is “not preparing for peace — he continues to kill Ukrainians and destroy cities,” Zelenskyy



wrote on social media after the strike. “Only strong steps and pressure on Russia can stop this terror. Right now we need the unity and the support of all our partners in the fight for a just end to this war.”

Zelenskyy’s comments come amid increasing rhetoric from Moscow, Washington, and Kyiv over the possibility of negotiations that could end the nearly three-year Russian invasion. Zelenskyy is due to meet U.S. Vice President JD Vance on Friday on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, which will be dominated by the war that has cost tens of thousands of lives.

President Trump’s special envoy for Russia and Ukraine, Keith Kellogg, who is tasked with drawing up a proposal to halt the fighting, is also due to visit Ukraine next week, after the Zelenskyy-Vance meeting in Germany.

That trip would come just days before the three-year anniversary of Russia’s full-scale invasion, on February 24.

Trump took office vowing to end the war in Ukraine, possibly by leveraging billions of dollars in U.S. assistance sent under former president Joe Biden, to force Kyiv into territorial concessions.

On Tuesday, Trump welcomed to the White House, Marc Fogel, an American who had been jailed in Russia since 2021 on drug charges, but who was released by Moscow and returned to the U.S. Trump said his envoy to Russian and Ukraine, Steve Witkoff, whom he’s tasked with ending the war, secured Fogel’s release.

The president said another American would be released Thursday, but he didn’t provide any information on who that would be, or what Russia had been granted in return for the Americans’ release.

Trump said Russia had acted “very nicely” regarding Fogel’s release and that he hoped it would be the “beginning of a relationship where we can end that war.”

Emergency services in Kyiv said some 120 rescue workers had been deployed to three districts of the capital in the aftermath of the Wednesday morning attack, and that fires sparked by the barrage had been extinguished.

North of Kyiv in the Chernihiv region, governor Vyacheslav Chaus said Russian forces had targeted “critical infrastructure” in the barrage and that two people were wounded there.

Israel vows to resume hostilities if hostages not freed by Saturday

By Dave Oludare Oso

Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu has warned Hamas it will end the ceasefire in Gaza and resume intense fighting if the Palestinian group "does not return our hostages by Saturday noon [10:00 GMT]".

Netanyahu said he had ordered Israeli forces to mass inside and around Gaza in response to Hamas's announcement that it was postponing freeing more hostages until further notice.

He did not specify whether he was demanding the release of all 76 remaining hostages, or just the three due to be freed this Saturday – but a minister said he meant "everyone."

Hamas responded by saying it remained committed to the ceasefire deal and that Israel was "responsible for any complications or delays."

The group has accused Israel of violating the three-week-old ceasefire deal, including by blocking vital humanitarian aid – a claim Israel has denied.

Hamas's decision to delay this weekend's scheduled release prompted US President Donald Trump to propose that Israel cancel the agreement altogether and "let hell break out" unless "all of the hostages" were returned by Saturday.

Following a four-hour meeting of Israel's security cabinet on Tuesday, Netanyahu said in a video statement that he "welcomed President Trump's demand."

He added, "In light of Hamas's announcement regarding its decision to violate the agreement and not release our hostages, last night I instructed the IDF (Israel Defence Forces) to amass forces



inside – and surrounding – the Gaza Strip.

"This action is being carried out at this hour and will be completed very soon."

He then issued an ultimatum that he said had the security cabinet's unanimous approval.

"If Hamas does not return our hostages by Saturday noon, the ceasefire will end the IDF will resume intense fighting until the final defeat of Hamas."

There were conflicting messages from Israeli officials about whether Netanyahu meant Hamas should release all the remaining hostages or not.

One source told the Israeli newspaper, Haaretz that it would be willing to continue the ceasefire if the next group of three hostages were freed as planned on Saturday.

But later, transport minister and war cabinet member, Miri Regev wrote on X: "We made a very clear decision: We adhere to US President Donald Trump's statement regarding the release of the hostages – on Saturday, everyone will be

released!"

The IDF said it had raised the level of readiness of its Southern Command – which is responsible for operations in Gaza – and that it would be reinforced with additional troops, including reservists.

Hamas also reiterated on Tuesday its rejection of Trump's controversial plan for the US to take over post-war Gaza and permanently relocate the two million Palestinians living there so that it could be rebuilt and turned into the "Riviera of the Middle East."

Hamas said Trump's remarks were "racist and constitute a call for ethnic cleansing, aimed at liquidating the Palestinian cause and denying our people's inalienable national rights."

The Palestinian Authority and Arab states have also categorically rejected the plan, while the UN warned that any forced displacement would be prohibited under international law and "tantamount to ethnic cleansing."

Musk defends DOGE as Trump orders agencies to comply with cuts

By Dave Oludare Oso

Elon Musk, standing beside President Trump in the Oval Office on Wednesday, defended the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE's) efforts to drastically cut spending and dismiss workers across the federal government, insisting that Americans voted for major change and the Trump administration is delivering.

Musk, the world's wealthiest man, took questions for the first time since the president gave him broad authority to overhaul the executive branch.

"The people voted for major government reform and that's what the people are going to get," Musk said, with his young son by his side. "They're going to get what they voted for."

Underscoring his support for Musk's work, Trump signed an executive order requiring federal agency heads to coordinate with DOGE to shrink the size of the federal government. The order, according to a White House fact sheet, directs heads of agencies to "coordinate and consult with DOGE to shrink the size of the federal workforce and limit hiring to essential positions."

President Trump listens as Elon Musk, joined by his son, speaks in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday, Feb. 11, 2025. Alex Brandon/AP

Musk said it's "essential" that the federal government reduce spending, with interest on the debt accounting for a growing portion of the budget. The Trump administration and DOGE in particular are going agency by agency, seeking to slash workforces and programmes.

The rapid downsizing and freezing of government programs, which Democrats call illegal, has run into widespread legal



opposition in the courts, with dozens of lawsuits challenging the constitutionality of Musk and his team dismantling agencies and programmes established by Congress.

Judges have blocked the administration's actions on a range of fronts, including by barring Musk's team from gaining access to sensitive Treasury Department data and pausing a deadline for "deferred resignations" offered to federal workers.

Musk told reporters that federal workers need to be held accountable, calling the bureaucracy an "unelected" fourth branch of government. Musk's own financial disclosure report will remain confidential.

Asked about any personal conflicts he has and whether he's policing himself, Musk did not answer directly but said the DOGE website is explaining what it's doing, an apparent reference to the group's account on X, which details contracts that federal agencies have canceled. Pressed a second time, Musk said the public can question whether he's benefiting from DOGE's actions.

"You can see whether I'm doing something that's benefitting one of my companies or not," Musk said. "It's totally obvious."

Musk, whose web of companies have billions of dollars worth of contracts with the federal government, said he doesn't think he'll be able to get away with anything untoward.

"I'll be scrutinized nonstop," he said.

The president said if he thought Musk had a conflict of interest with some project, he wouldn't let Musk proceed.

Mr. Trump was asked if he plans to abide by the courts' decisions limiting his administration's actions. Vice President JD Vance and other Trump allies have said the court's had no role in constraining the executive branch's legitimate authority, raising fears among Democrats that Mr. Trump could defy a court order and spark a constitutional crisis.

"Well, I always abide by the courts, and then I have to appeal it," the president said, while questioning why a judge would want to block his agenda.

Musk recognized there could be errors, and acknowledged that "some of the things that I say will be incorrect," referencing a false claim that the U.S. was planning to send tens of millions of dollars worth of condoms to Gaza.

100 women kept as slaves on “human egg farm” in Georgia

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



A harrowing human-egg harvesting racket where around 100 women were kept as slaves has been uncovered in the former Soviet nation of Georgia.

Operated by Chinese gangsters, the egg farm was exposed after three Thai women were freed from the “egg mafia” by a Thailand-based NGO, according to a report in Bangkok Post.

Pavna Hongsakula, founder of the Pavna Foundation for Children and Women, said she first learned about the racket from another woman victim that had been released and returned to Thailand after paying the gang about Rs 1.8 lakh.

According to victim, other Thais were still trapped at the human egg farm as they could not pay for their freedom.

Most of the women were lured in by a job offer on Facebook promising them a salary between Rs 10 lakh (11,500 euros) and Rs 15 lakh (17,000) euros if they worked as surrogates for Georgian couples who were unable to have children.

The organisation advertising the job took care of the passports and visas of the victims but once the women landed in the Eastern European country, they were quickly shepherded into four large properties with around a hundred other women.

The victims soon realised that the job offer was a sham and that they had been dragged into something far more sinister.

During a press conference, one of the victims revealed that they were pumped up with hormones to

stimulate their ovaries and were forced to have their eggs removed once a month.

“The women would be injected to get treatment, anesthetized and their eggs would be extracted with a machine. After we got this information and it was not the same as the advertisement, we got scared, we tried to contact people back home,” the victim said.

According to Ms Pavna, the collected eggs were believed to be sold and trafficked in other countries for use in in-vitro fertilisation (IVF).

Surapan Thaiprasert, commander of the Foreign Affairs Division of the Royal Thai Police, told Reuters that Thai authorities were further investigating the case.

Why UK didn't sign up to global AI agreement

By Dave Oludare Oso

A two-day summit in Paris was supposed to bring the world's leaders together to create a united front AI – but the UK and US left without signing anything.

World leaders and tech bros descended on Paris this week, with some determined to show a united stance on artificial intelligence.

But at the end of the two-day summit on Wednesday, the UK and the US walked away empty-handed, having refused to sign a global declaration on AI.

Earlier on Tuesday, US vice president JD Vance told his audience in Paris that too much regulation could “kill a transformative industry just as it's taking off” and Donald Trump has already signed an executive order removing rules imposed by Joe Biden.

US vice president JD Vance attends a meeting with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during the Paris AI summit. Pic: Reuters

But for the UK, the declaration did go far enough.

“The declaration didn't provide enough practical clarity on global governance and [didn't] sufficiently address harder questions around national security,” said a UK government spokesperson.

So what is the UK government so concerned everyone is missing?

Aside from taking jobs and stealing data, there are other existential threats to worry about, according to Carsten Jung, the head of AI at the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR).

He listed the ways AI can be dangerous, from enabling hackers to break into computer systems to losing control of AI bots that “run wild” on the internet to even helping terrorists to create bioweapons.



“This isn't science fiction,” he said.

One scientist in Paris warned the people most at risk of unregulated AI are those with the least to do with it.

“For a lot of us, we're on our phones all the time and we want that to be less,” said Dr Jen Schradie, an associate professor at Sciences Po University who sits on the International Panel on the Information Environment.

“But for a lot of people who don't have regular, consistent [internet] access or have the skills and even the time to post content, those voices are left out of everything.”

They are left out of the data sets fed into AI, as well as the solutions proposed by it, to workforces, healthcare and more, according to Dr Schradie.

Without making these risks a priority, some of the attendees in Paris worry governments will chase after bigger and better AI, without ever addressing the consequences.

“The only thing they say about how they're going to achieve safety is ‘we're going to have an open and inclusive process’, which is completely meaningless,” said Professor Stuart Russell, a scientist from the University of California at Berkeley who was in Paris.

“A lot of us who are concerned about the safety of AI systems were pretty disappointed.”

One expert compared unregulated AI to unregulated food and medicine.

“When we think about food, about medicines and [...] aircraft, there is an international consensus that countries specify what they think their people need,” said Michael Birtwistle from the Ada Lovelace Institute.

“Instead of a sense of an approach that slowly rolls these things out, tries to understand the risks first and then scales, we're seeing these [AI] products released directly to market.”

And when these AI products are released, they're extremely popular.

Just two months after it launched, ChatGPT was estimated to have reached 100 million monthly active users, making it the fastest-growing app in history. A global phenomenon needs a global solution, according to Mr Jung.

“If we all race ahead and try to come first as fast as possible and are not jointly managing the risks, bad things can happen,” he said.

Tulsi Gabbard confirmed as intelligence head despite fears of pro-Russia stance

By Dave Oludare Oso



Tulsi Gabbard, a former Democratic congresswoman who has been publicly questioned over her affinity for foreign dictators and promoting conspiracy theories, has been confirmed as director of national intelligence by the US Senate.

The Senate voted 52 to 48, with just one Republican – the senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky – voting against her confirmation.

Gabbard, 43, faced a tense confirmation hearing last month that saw her respond to questions from both Republicans and Democrats over her past comments sympathetic to Russia and defense of the government of the former Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad, who she visited in 2017 while

he was under US sanction.

During the hearing, Gabbard refused to call the whistleblower Edward Snowden a “traitor”, partially recanted her views that Russia was provoked into invading Ukraine, and insisted she had “no love” for Assad.

Republicans have since rallied behind Gabbard despite initial doubts over the 43-year-old former Democrat’s lack of significant intelligence experience.

Lisa Murkowski, a Republican senator from Alaska and a potential swing vote, said on Monday that she would vote to confirm Gabbard, noting that despite “concerns about certain positions she has previously taken” she believed Gabbard “brings independent thinking and necessary

oversight to her new role”.

Gabbard, a former presidential candidate and military veteran who served in Iraq, has ruthlessly criticised the US intelligence community she will now lead.

As director of national intelligence, she will oversee 18 intelligence agencies – including the CIA and FBI – that employ more than 70,000 people engaged in collating and safeguarding the country’s most sensitive secrets.

After Gabbard’s confirmation vote, the Senate immediately moved to a procedural vote on Robert F Kennedy Jr’s nomination for health and human services secretary.

British family 'utterly heartbroken' after young daughter fatally shot in Texas

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Lucy Harrison, from Warrington, was on holiday in the US when she was fatally shot with a firearm.

A young British woman was fatally shot while on holiday in Texas, an inquest has heard.

Lucy Harrison, 23, from Warrington was found dead at her father's home in Prosper, in Texas, on January 10.

An inquest into her death opened today, (Wednesday, February 12) hearing Ms Harrison was abroad in the US "when she was fatally shot with a firearm".

It is unclear how Ms Harrison was

shot – or if a police criminal investigation is currently under way.

Her family said she was "truly thriving in life" – and she had "a huge capacity to love and be loved".

Following the hearing, Ms Harrison's mother and boyfriend paid tribute to her – in a statement shared by police.

They said: "Lucy was life. She lived it fiercely and fearlessly, not being afraid to feel all that life has to offer.

"Lucy unashamedly loved – she had a huge capacity to love and be

loved.

"She was the embodiment of wonderful contradictions; she adored travel and being away, experiencing new places and cultures, yet at the same time, she loved nothing more than snuggling up in her pyjamas with her candles on at home."

They added she was: "truly thriving in life and although this gives us great comfort, we are utterly heartbroken at the loss of our beautiful, gorgeous Luce".

The inquest has been adjourned until 28 March.



ACLU sues over immigrants sent to Guantanamo

By Dave Oludare Oso

Angela Sequera heard from her son in immigration detention twice a day every day for nearly five months, until Sunday.

That afternoon, another detainee called her with a message that left her panic-stricken: Her son, 25-year-old Yoiker David Sequera, had been taken away to a notorious offshore prison.

“Señora Angela, I’m calling to tell you that your son is going to Guantanamo,” she recalled the man saying, “he gave me your number.”

“We’re in a country where the laws should be respected,” she told USA TODAY by phone in California, after three days without word from her son.

“To me, and I’m speaking sincerely,” she said, “I believe my son was kidnapped by U.S. authorities.”

Sequera is one of several plaintiffs in an ACLU lawsuit filed Wednesday against the Trump administration demanding attorney access for people removed from the U.S. to the Guantanamo prison on the island of Cuba, where the Trump administration has set up a 30,000-bed immigrant detention camp.

The United States is “warehousing them on a remote island with no access to attorneys or the outside world,” said Lee Gelernt, ACLU lead counsel who spearheaded high-profile litigation against the first Trump administration, including family separation. “This should concern anyone who believes in the rule of law.”

Multiple attempts by USA TODAY to reach U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement by email and phone, at the agency’s Washington, D.C.; South Florida and West Texas offices went unanswered.

At least seven military flights carrying an undisclosed number of detainees have left



El Paso’s Fort Bliss for Guantanamo Bay, according to social media posts by the Department of Defence Transportation Command. The Trump administration hasn’t published a roster of detainees held at the camp.

Sequera thinks her son, who has never been charged with any crime other than the misdemeanor of entering the U.S. illegally, was on the fifth flight, which departed Sunday.

She has tried to reach him. She knows his “alien number” by heart, the code that’s required to track him in the immigration detention system.

When she plugged it into the government’s online “detainee locator,” he would show up at the El Paso Processing Center, an ICE detention center in El Paso, Texas. Now his name appears, confirmed by USA TODAY, at a building in Plantation, Florida, where U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement shares office space with the Food and Drug Administration.

It’s one of the addresses that appears when detainees have been transferred to Guantanamo, said Jennifer Babie, director of advocacy and legal services for the El Paso-based Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center, which has been trying to keep tabs on detained

clients.

“We can’t say for absolute certainty they’ve been transferred, because most aren’t showing up as being in Guantanamo,” she said. “But for the folks we’ve been tracking, it was a combination of their families calling and saying, ‘My son was told he was going to Guantanamo,’ and the ICE locator would change” to a Florida field office.

“Every American should be concerned that the government feels comfortable taking people in civil proceedings to a place where no one knows where they are,” she said. “They are being effectively disappeared.”

Sequera, who is in the country legally with Temporary Protected Status, worries about her son, whether he is being treated badly. She has heard stories about Guantanamo, about the documented abuse and torture that occurred there when accused terrorists were the main occupants. She wants to know with certainty where he is.

“They didn’t even give him a chance to tell me where he was going,” she said. “I have a right to know. I’m his mother.”

The ‘worst of the worst’?

President Donald Trump opened the

Trump says he discussed ending Ukraine war with Russia's Putin

Reporting by Katharine Jackson, Doina Chiacu Writing by Peter Graff; Editing by Jon Boyle

U.S. President Donald Trump said he spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday about starting negotiations immediately to end the war in Ukraine.

“We have also agreed to have our respective teams start negotiations immediately, and we will begin by calling President Zelenskiy, of Ukraine, to inform him of the conversation, something which I will be doing right now,” Trump said in a post on his social media platform.

Trump had spoken for nearly an hour and a half by telephone and that the two men had agreed to meet.

Trump has long said he would quickly end the war in Ukraine, without saying how he would accomplish this.

Earlier on Wednesday, Trump's Defense Secretary, Pete Hegseth, said a return to Ukraine's pre-2014 borders was unrealistic and the U.S. administration did not see NATO membership for Kyiv as part of a solution to the war.

Ukraine's military allies at NATO headquarters in Brussels on Wednesday, Hegseth delivered the clearest and bluntest public statement so far on the new U.S. administration's approach to the nearly three-year-old war.

“We want, like you, a sovereign and prosperous Ukraine. But we must start by recognising that returning to Ukraine's pre-2014 borders is an unrealistic objective,” Hegseth told a meeting of Ukraine and more than 40 allies at NATO headquarters in Brussels.

The Kremlin said Putin and

Speaking at a meeting of

Credit: The Reuter



Premier League seeks power to access club premises during investigations

By Dave Oludare Oso

...Ability to enter buildings would relate to financial rules

...It could be used if club has not complied with inquiry

The Premier League has asked its clubs for expanded investigatory powers, including the right to access club premises, as part of new financial rules.

The proposals are included in the latest draft of the squad cost ratio (SCR) mechanism which is expected to replace the profitability and sustainability rules that limit spending.

It is understood that the league has asked for the ability to enter buildings in the event that a club is found not to have complied with an inquiry it has initiated. Such a power is commonly used by law enforcement agencies to seize documents related to an investigation.

Under existing rules, clubs are expected to give “full, complete and prompt assistance” to any Premier League inquiry, but should this fail to happen the league must resort to fines, a tribunal or the Football Association to resolve the problem.

Premier League sources played down any suggestion that such powers would be the equivalent of a dawn raid. Clubs would be given notice and any intervention would be at an agreed time, they said.

However, the powers the league is seeking to acquire would be stronger than those proposed for the Independent Regulator for English Football, which must, under the current drafting of the



bill, request a warrant from a tribunal or court before taking action.

Debate over the SCR rules has heated up before the latest Premier League shareholders’ meeting in a central London hotel on Thursday. Last week the Professional Footballers’ Association wrote to the league and its 20 clubs warning of possible legal action were the rules to be voted through at the meeting.

The letter, which was first reported by PA Media, argued the union had not been given timely access to documentation and claimed the “withholding of relevant documentation pertaining to the proposals is clear evidence of [the league’s] failure to comply with its

duties”.

The letter also suggested the league had failed in its obligations to properly discuss the measures through the professional football negotiating and consultative committee (PFNCC), which comprises representatives of the PFA, EFL, Premier League and FA.

In a statement issued in response to the letter, the Premier League said: “We strongly disagree with the PFA’s views regarding the proposed financial rules and the consultation process we are conducting with our clubs and other stakeholders. We have complied with PFNCC requirements and the PFA has had multiple opportunities since March 2024 to provide feedback on the rules and the principles that underpin them.”

FIFA bans Russia, Pakistan, Congo from 2026 World Cup

By Dave Oludare Oso

World football ruling body, the Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) has suspended the football federations of Pakistan and Congo, further limiting the pool of nations eligible to compete in the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

These suspensions add to the existing ban on Russia, bringing the total number of barred countries to three.

The World Cup, the most prestigious tournament in international football, is held every four years and is set to return in the summer of 2026. This edition will be jointly hosted by Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

Reigning champions Argentina, led by Lionel Scaloni, will aim to defend their title, while teams such as France and England, now under newly appointed coach, Thomas Tuchel and Euro 2024 winners, Spain will be among the top contenders seeking to dethrone them.

Russia has remained banned from international competitions since 2022 due to its invasion of Ukraine, with FIFA and UEFA jointly upholding the restriction.

Now, FIFA has expanded its list of banned nations, suspending the football associations of Pakistan and Congo due to what it describes as “serious circumstances.”

The Congolese Football Association (FECOFOOT) has been suspended due to alleged third-party interference in its operations—an act that directly violates FIFA’s regulations.

A statement from FIFA confirmed, “FECOFOOT has been suspended with immediate effect due to a particularly



serious situation of undue interference by third parties in the affairs of the organization, which constitutes a clear violation of FECOFOOT’s obligations in accordance with the FIFA statutes.”

FIFA, in collaboration with the Confederation of African Football (CAF), made the decision after conducting two investigative missions in Brazzaville.

However, FIFA has left the door open for Congo’s reinstatement, provided certain conditions are met, including restoring full control of the federation’s headquarters and facilities to FECOFOOT before 2026.

Pakistan’s suspension stems from its failure to implement a revised football constitution that guarantees fair and democratic elections within its football governing body.

FIFA has previously sanctioned the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) in both 2017 and 2021 due to similar governance issues.

In its statement regarding the latest suspension, FIFA clarified: “The suspension will only be lifted subject to the PFF Congress approving the version of the PFF Constitution presented by FIFA and the AFC.”

Pakistan’s previous suspension was lifted in June 2022 after the federation regained full control of its premises and financial operations.

However, the failure to enact necessary reforms has once again led to FIFA’s intervention.

\Congo currently sits at the bottom of Group E in CAF’s World Cup qualification standings, significantly diminishing their hopes of making it to the 2026 tournament.

Pakistan, on the other hand, has already concluded its AFC qualification campaign, finishing at the foot of Group G under coach Stephen Constantine.