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RIVERS: PDP gobs head for court, IYC drags FG before ECOWAS

By Dave Oludare Oso

The declaration of a state of emergency in Rivers State by President Bola Tinubu, has continued to elicit mixed reactions across the country.

The latest reponse to the emergency rule declaration is coming from the opposition Peoples Democratic Party Governors' Forum (PDPGF) which has declared its intention to take legal action against the Federal Government.

New Daily Prime reported that on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, President Tinubu declared a state of emergency in Rivers State and suspended Governor Siminalayi Fubara; his deputy, Ngozi Odu; as well as members of the state House of Assembly for six months.

He subsequently appointed retired Vice Admiral Ibok-Ette Ibas as the Sole Administrator of the state.

This comes as the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) has filed a lawsuit against the Federal Government at the Community Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Abuja, challenging the declaration of emergency rule in Rivers State.

In their opinion, the PDP governors contended that President Tinubu's actions were unconstitutional and threatened Nigeria's democratic principles.

Seeking legal intervention, Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State, criticised the declaration of a state of emergency, adding that the party's governors' forum would challenge the matter in court.

The Oyo State governor, in his bi-weekly newsletter— The Business of Governance (Issue 110)— noted that the suspension of democracy in the state was an illegal act that all well-



meaning Nigerians must condemn.

Makinde said, "I am glad that our great party, the PDP is demonstrating the needed strength and leadership. The PDP Governors' Forum rose from an emergency meeting where we unanimously decided to challenge the actions of President Tinubu in a court of competent jurisdiction. We cannot fold our hands and watch the democracy we built for almost three decades be trampled upon.

"I stand today to say that the declaration of the state of emergency in Rivers State and the suspension of the executive and legislative arms of government by the presidency is an illegality that right-thinking members of society must oppose.

"Our democratic tenets must never be trifled with, no matter our personal feelings and loyalties. This is the time to take a stand for fairness, equity and justice."

Makinde urged Nigerians to speak out whenever anything threatened the nation's progress.

IYC DRAGS FG BEFORE ECOWAS COURT

Members of the Ijaw Youth Council have filed a lawsuit against the Federal Government at the Community Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Abuja, challenging the declaration of emergency rule in Rivers State.

The suit, dated March 20, 2025, lists the applicants as Comrade Ibiso, John Benjamin, Alpheus Ngere, Tamunokuro Tomquin, Benjamin Kemuel, Fabians Abbey, Williams Toby, Dabo Briggs, Precious Otoni, Attah Ebin, and Tonye Stephen.

The applicants are seeking an order from the ECOWAS Court to set aside the suspension of elected officials and the dissolution of democratic structures in Rivers State.

Additionally, they are requesting a court order nullifying all decisions made by Vice Admiral Ibok-Ette Ibas (retd.), the sole administrator appointed by the President.

The suit also demands \$10 million in punitive and exemplary damages for the alleged violations and hardships caused by the Federal Government's actions.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

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8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
5X2	42,916.50
4X4	60,166.50
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Jonathan criticises Tinubu's emergency rule in Rivers

By Friday Omosola

Former President Goodluck Jonathan has expressed disapproval over the suspension of elected officials in Rivers State, warning that such actions could harm Nigeria's global reputation.

Speaking as the Chairman of the Haske Satumari Foundation Colloquium in Abuja on Saturday, Jonathan said he was deeply concerned about the removal of elected leaders.

"These decisions by major players in the executive and legislative arms of government do not reflect well on the country," he said.

His reaction follows President Bola Tinubu's declaration of a state of emergency in Rivers State, which led to the suspension of Governor Siminalayi Fubara, his deputy Ngozi Odu, and all elected members of the state House of Assembly for six months.

The federal government justified the move as a measure to restore political stability amid an ongoing power struggle between the governor and lawmakers.

"By this order, Governor Siminalayi Fubara, Deputy Governor Ngozi Odu, and all elected members of the Rivers State House of Assembly are



suspended for an initial period of six months," Tinubu stated.

To oversee governance during the emergency period, the president appointed retired Vice Admiral Ibok-Ette Ibas as the state's administrator.

"In the interim, Vice Admiral Ibok-Ette Ibas (retd.) will serve as Administrator to manage the state's affairs in the best interest of its people. However, this declaration does not affect the judiciary, which will continue its duties as mandated by the Constitution," Tinubu clarified.

Jonathan acknowledged that former presidents rarely comment on political conflicts to avoid escalating tensions. However, he emphasised that Nigeria's attractiveness to investors is tied to the actions of its executive, legislature, and judiciary.

According to him, many Nigerians had urged him to speak out on the crisis, especially given his strong ties

to the Niger Delta region.

He also raised concerns about political interference in the judiciary, stating that when a single individual dictates judicial decisions, it erodes public trust in the justice system.

Defending his decision, Tinubu referenced Section 305 of the 1999 Constitution, stating that the emergency measure was essential to maintaining peace.

"This proclamation has been published in the Federal Gazette and submitted to the National Assembly, in accordance with constitutional requirements," he added.

He expressed hope that the intervention would bring an end to the political crisis, urging all involved parties to respect constitutional boundaries and work towards a peaceful resolution.

Court lifts ban on Natasha's recall process

By Friday Omosola

A Federal High Court in Lokoja, Kogi State, has overturned an earlier ruling that prevented the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) from accepting a recall petition against Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan by her constituents in Kogi Central Senatorial District.

Delivering the judgment yesterday, the court upheld that the recall process remains a constitutional right of the constituents and must be allowed to proceed.

The judge also urged the petitioners to continue exercising their rights peacefully and lawfully.

This ruling came a day after the court had



issued an interim injunction restraining INEC and its representatives from receiving or acting on any petition containing signatures from Kogi Central voters.

The injunction also prohibited INEC from organising a referendum to initiate the recall process until a further decision was made.

The court had earlier granted the order based on an ex-parte application, supported by an Affidavit of Extreme Urgency, filed by Anebe Jacob Ogirima and four other registered voters from the district.

Their lawyer, Smart Nwachimere, argued that the recall petition contained fictitious signatures, raising concerns about its legitimacy.

The court, however, ruled that INEC must not accept or act on petitions containing fake signatures, nor conduct any referendum based on such petitions.

The case has been adjourned to May 6, 2025, for further proceedings.

Kwara govt removes insurance bond cap to boost local economy

By Friday Omosola

The Kwara State Government has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening state-owned businesses as part of its broader plan to achieve a self-sufficient economy.

Speaking during a working visit to HHL Insurance Brokers Limited, the General Manager of the Kwara State Public Procurement Agency (KWPPA), QS Raheem Abdulbaki, emphasised the agency's dedication to promoting local content across the state.

He noted that these efforts have been consistently implemented over the past four years, yielding significant results.

"Our framework ensures that Kwarans benefit from every contract awarded in the state, leading to financial and technical

gains.

"This, in turn, boosts internally generated revenue and creates employment opportunities," Abdulbaki said.

He credited Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq for his unwavering support, which has played a key role in the agency's successes.

He also announced a major policy shift, revealing that the ₦10 million cap on insurance bonds accessible within the state has been removed by the Governor.

"His Excellency understands that for local businesses to thrive, access to funding must be free from unnecessary bottlenecks," he added.

The Acting Managing Director of HHL



Insurance Brokers Limited, Shaaba Taofeeq, described the visit as timely, expressing the company's readiness to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to fulfil the government's economic objectives.

FAAC allocates N1.678trn for February to federal, state, local govt

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) has distributed a total of N1.678 trillion among the Federal Government, states, and local governments for the month of February.

This was revealed in a communiqué issued on Saturday, March 22, by the Director of Press and Public Relations at the Office of the Accountant-General of the Federation, Bawa Mokwa.

The total revenue of N1.678 trillion consists of several components, including statutory revenue of N827.633 billion, Value Added Tax (VAT) revenue of N609.430 billion, and Electronic Money Transfer Levy (EMTL) revenue of N35.171 billion.

Other sources include Solid Minerals revenue of N28.218 billion and Augmentation revenue of N178 billion.

According to the communiqué, the gross revenue available for the month of February was N2.344 trillion.

However, after deductions for the cost of collection (N89.092 billion) and transfers, interventions, refunds, and savings (N577.097 billion), the distributable revenue stood at N1.678 trillion.

The communiqué also highlighted that the gross statutory revenue for February was N1.653 trillion, which represented a decrease of N194.664 billion compared to January's N1.848 trillion.

Additionally, VAT revenue for the month was N654.456 billion, which was lower by N117.430 billion when compared to the N771.886 billion recorded in January.



Of the total distributable revenue, the Federal Government received N569.656 billion, while the state governments were allocated N562.195 billion. Local governments were granted N410.559 billion.

A further N136.042 billion, which represents 13 per cent of mineral revenue, was shared among the benefiting states as derivation revenue.

Breaking down the allocations, the communiqué noted that the Federal Government received N366.262 billion from the statutory revenue, with the state governments receiving N185.773 billion and local governments receiving N143.223 billion.

The 13 per cent derivation from the statutory revenue amounted to N132.374 billion, which was allocated to the relevant states.

From the N609.430 billion VAT revenue, the Federal Government received N91.415 billion, while states were allocated N304.715 billion, and local

governments received N213.301 billion.

Additionally, the Federal Government received N5.276 billion from the N35.171 billion EMTL, while state governments received N17.585 billion and local governments received N12.310 billion.

The Solid Minerals revenue of N28.218 billion was divided among the Federal Government, state governments, and local governments, with the Federal Government receiving N12.933 billion, state governments N6.560 billion, and local governments N5.057 billion. A further N3.668 billion was distributed as derivation revenue.

The communiqué also noted significant changes in the contributions to the overall revenue, with Oil and Gas Royalty and EMTL seeing notable increases.

However, other revenue sources such as VAT, Petroleum Profit Tax, Companies Income Tax, Excise Duty, Import Duty, and CET Levies experienced a decline during the month of February.

FG set to address MAN's concerns over new FRCN levy structure

By **Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

The Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC) has pledged to address concerns raised by the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) regarding the recently amended Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria (FRCN) Act, which imposes cumulative annual charges on non-listed entities.

In a statement issued on Friday, March 21, PEBEC's Director-General, Princess Zahrah Audu, assured that the federal government was carefully reviewing the grievances brought forward by manufacturers.

This follows a protest last week by the Director-General of MAN, Segun Ajayi-Kadir, who expressed concerns over the financial levies that, as they are currently implemented, present significant challenges to manufacturing companies, especially those not listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange.

The FRCN Act now classifies non-listed entities as Public Interest Entities (PIEs), a reclassification that has led to increased financial burdens for such firms. Ajayi-Kadir highlighted that under the current structure, these companies are subjected to annual dues that are both exorbitant and financially crippling.

The Act imposes a 10 per cent penalty for every month of unpaid dues, with the amount accumulating until the debt is settled in full.

“For publicly quoted companies, the



maximum payment was previously capped at N1 million per annum, but under the new law, this figure has risen to N25 million. Non-listed companies, which were once excluded, now face no payment cap and are required to pay fees based on their turnover—regardless of profitability,” Ajayi-Kadir explained.

He warned that these financial obligations, particularly for non-listed manufacturers who make up a large portion of MAN's membership, could undermine the government's Ease of Doing Business agenda and deter further investment in Nigeria's manufacturing sector.

In response, Audu reassured stakeholders that the federal government was keenly examining the situation. She confirmed that a series of stakeholder engagement sessions would be held to facilitate discussions and seek collaborative solutions to the

challenges surrounding the new legislation.

“These changes aim to enhance transparency and accountability in financial reporting and strengthen corporate governance in Nigeria. However, we acknowledge the concerns about the payment of annual dues and fees by PIEs, and we are committed to addressing them through constructive dialogue,” Audu stated.

Audu further emphasised that PEBEC would continue to uphold best practices to ensure Nigeria remains a competitive and attractive destination for businesses and investors.

“Our commitment to driving business reforms, improving the ease of doing business, and enhancing transparency and accountability remains unwavering,” she concluded.

Declare state of emergency in S-West over insecurity, Afenifere tells Tinubu

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Afenifere National Youth Council (ANYC) has called on President Bola Tinubu to declare a state of emergency on the escalating killings and kidnapping menace in the Southwestern part of the country.

ANYC has said that nothing short of that can stem the tide of insecurity in the hitherto peaceful region.

President of the group, Prince Eniola Ojajuni, in a letter to the President, said the call followed a disturbing surge in abductions and the brutal killing of victims, which had become increasingly rampant across the country.

Ojajuni, who spent 12 days in captivity after being kidnapped last month in Akunnu, Ondo State, noted that the situation had reached a critical point, with criminal elements operating with impunity and spreading fear and chaos among the populace.

The letter read, "I write to you with deep pain and urgency regarding the worsening state of insecurity in the Southwest, particularly in Ondo State. Kidnapping attacks have escalated to alarming levels, leaving citizens in constant fear for their lives and livelihoods.

"Ondo State, once known for its rich agricultural activities, has now become a danger zone where farmers no longer feel safe accessing their farmlands. Criminal elements have turned our forests into ransom negotiation camps, while major roads, especially the Lagos-Abuja expressway, have become death traps for innocent travelers who are kidnapped daily for ransom.

"Mr. President, I am a victim. I have firsthand experience of the horrors these criminals inflict on their captives. I was held hostage for twelve agonising days and nights in the wilderness, without food or clean water. I suffered AK-47 gunshot



wounds, bled for days, and received no medical attention. The excruciating pain I endured was inhumane. It is only by the grace of God that I survived.

"Beyond the physical pain, the psychological trauma is unbearable. I struggle with sleepless nights, live in constant fear, and experience distressing flashbacks. The sound of any sudden noise jolts me awake, forcing me to relive my ordeal. This is the reality of many victims, and it could happen to anyone.

"Your Excellency, I appeal to you with urgency: One; Declare a total state of emergency on insecurity in the Southwest, especially in Ondo State.

"2; Deploy a special military operation to reclaim our forests from kidnapers and criminal elements.

"3; Strengthen border security to prevent the influx of criminal herders and terrorists into our communities.

"4; Equip and empower local security agencies, including Amotekun, to effectively combat these threats.

"5; Implement long-term security reforms to ensure lasting peace and stability.

"6; Investigate the flow of ransom

payments and determine where the money is going.

"7; Increase security surveillance in Lagos and Ondo states, particularly in abandoned buildings with high fences and locked gates.

"8; Engage youth associations in the fight against insecurity. The Federal Government should mandate all political office holders to hold regular town hall meetings at their local government areas.

"9; Mandate Southwest governors to collaborate and strengthen security networks. As a matter of urgency, I urge you to call for a Southwest Youth Security Summit to address this crisis.

"From my experience, these kidnapers work with youths who have strong ICT knowledge to track and monitor mobile devices. Some of these individuals are locals who speak Ondo dialects and Yoruba fluently, acting as spies for these criminal elements.

"I have personally written to the governor of Lagos State, urging him to convene an urgent Southwest Governors' Forum meeting on security and youth engagement. However, only a strong federal directive can ensure swift and collective action.

Sanwo-Olu unveils new school in Badagry, promises quality learning for all

By Friday Omosola

Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to educational excellence with the commissioning of Ipara Junior College in Majiyagbe, Badagry.

Speaking at the event held at the school premises, Sanwo-Olu, represented by the Commissioner for Wealth Creation and Employment, Akinyemi Ajigbotafe, described the development as a major milestone aligned with the T.H.E.M.E.S Plus Developmental Agenda for high-quality and inclusive learning.

The governor emphasised his administration's literacy initiatives, ensuring that every school in Lagos has access to modern technology and resources.

He highlighted the significance of the project, not just for students, but also for empowering communities with skills to adapt to an evolving world.

Governor Sanwo-Olu reiterated his unwavering support for all schools in the state, promising that every child will receive the quality education needed to build a brighter future.

He described Ipara Junior College as a symbol of excellence, representing



the state government's investment in the future of education.

“Every child deserves a safe and conducive learning environment, and we are laying the foundation for a more prosperous tomorrow,” he said.

The governor urged stakeholders and the Ipara community to take ownership of the new school facilities, ensuring they remain a hub for learning, growth, and inspiration for generations to come.

He commended the Special Committee on the Rehabilitation of Public Schools, teachers, and community leaders for their dedication to making this vision a reality.

Sanwo-Olu revealed that the state government is set to commission nine additional schools across Lagos, reinforcing its commitment to education.

He said since assuming office, he has built and renovated 4,000 classrooms, completed over 1,500 classroom projects, established nine new schools in underserved areas and recruited nearly 10,000 teachers to improve the quality of education.

The governor emphasised that these classrooms and facilities are designed to serve every child, regardless of socio-economic status or ability.

Parents kick as FG hikes PTA levy in Unity Colleges

By Alade Adisa

The federal government's decision to increase the PTA levy in its unity colleges has sparked outrage among parents, who have expressed disgust over the more than 100 percent increase.

In a circular dated March 18, signed by the Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Education, Dr. Nasir Sani-Gwarzo, the government announced that the PTA levy would be increased from ₦5,700 to ₦12,000 per term.

The circular, addressed to all principals of Federal Unity Colleges (FUCs), stated:

“Following multiple requests from various PTA bodies in Federal Unity Colleges seeking an increase in the PTA levy to enable them to fulfill their obligations within the colleges, the ministry has approved a revised PTA levy. The new levy will take effect from the third term of the 2024/2025 academic session.”

However, parents across various unity colleges have expressed strong discontent, describing the increase as a disguised tuition hike.

Recall that just a few months ago,



the government raised tuition fees from ₦45,000 to ₦100,000 per session. A parent whose daughter attends Federal Government College, Ijanikin, condemned the increase:

“This is uncalled for, especially at this time. People are already burdened by taxes, levies, and other payments to the government in various ways, and the economic hardship is overwhelming. In many unity colleges, the administration of the PTA levy has been a source of controversy.”

The parent further cited previous issues regarding mismanagement of PTA funds, raising concerns about accountability and transparency in handling the newly increased fees.

“Not long ago, the way the PTA levy was administered here led to court cases and media discussions. How can we be sure that funds generated through this increase will be properly managed? Some

principals, in connivance with PTA leaders, are simply exploiting the levy for personal gain,” said Babatunde (surname withheld).

At King's College, Lagos, the breakdown of mandatory PTA levies paid by parents includes: Access card: ₦1,000, diesel/Waste disposal: ₦4,000, education levy: ₦2,000, feeding support: ₦2,000, PTA levy: ₦5,000 and PTA teachers' wages: ₦5,700

Meanwhile, optional PTA levies include: Laundry services: ₦9,000, barbing services: ₦1,000 and Mid-day meal: ₦15,000.

The controversy surrounding the PTA levy increase raises concerns about transparency, accountability, and the financial burden on parents. As discussions continue, parents are calling on the federal government and school authorities to reconsider the increment and ensure proper oversight in fund utilization.

44 dead, 13 injured in Niger Republic terrorist attack

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**



4 civilians have been killed in a terrorist attack on Fambita village in the Tillabéri region of Niger Republic, the government authorities have confirmed.

The government attributed the assault to militants of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS).

A counter-insurgency expert focused on the Lake Chad region, Zagazola Makama, disclosed this in a post on his X handle on Saturday.

According to a statement from the Ministry of Interior, the attack occurred on Friday while Muslim worshippers were observing prayers during the holy month of Ramadan.

The assailants, heavily armed, surrounded the mosque before launching their assault.

“These terrorists, in an act of extreme cruelty, massacred innocent civilians at prayer before systematically setting fire to the market and homes during their retreat,” the statement, broadcast on national television, said.

The attack also left 13 people injured, including four in critical condition.

In response to the tragedy, the government has declared a 72-hour national mourning period from Saturday, 23rd March, during which flags will be flown half-mast across the country.

The Minister of State and Acting Minister of the Interior, Army Corps General Salifou Modi, strongly condemned the attack, calling it a “heinous act committed on a Friday, the holy day of Islam, in the last ten

days of the blessed month of Ramadan.”

He further stated that the attack demonstrated that “terrorists and their supporters do not uphold any religious ideals.”

The government has vowed that “these heinous crimes will not go unpunished,” pledging to track down the perpetrators, their sponsors, and their accomplices to bring them to justice.

The massacre comes just two days after the Nigerien military carried out an air-to-ground raid targeting suspected EIGS militants at the Kiral gold mining site in the same region.

The operation reportedly resulted in the deaths of 45 suspected terrorists, according to an official statement.

Rivers emergency rule unconstitutional but expedient, says law professor

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

A Professor of Law at Afe Babalola University, Sesan Fabamise, has stated that the declaration of a state of emergency in Rivers State is unconstitutional. He argued that Section 305(3) of the Constitution requires a total breakdown of law and order before such a declaration can be made and that the blowing up of some pipelines alone does not justify it.

However, he acknowledged that the move was politically expedient, as the legislature was intent on removing the governor, which could have triggered a major crisis. To prevent chaos, the proclamation served as a preemptive measure. While legally flawed, the declaration helped avert a worse political crisis, demonstrating strategic intervention by the leadership.

The New Daily Prime had earlier reported that President Bola Tinubu had declared a state of emergency in Rivers State, suspending Governor Siminalayi Fubara, his deputy, Ngozi Odu, and members of the State House of Assembly for six months. Following this, the President appointed Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas as the Sole Administrator of the state and ordered the release of previously withheld state allocations. The allocations had been frozen under a court order from the Federal High Court in Abuja, which barred the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the Accountant-General of the Federation from releasing the state's funds.

In an interview with The New Daily Prime, Professor Fabamise reiterated that the constitutional conditions for declaring a state of emergency, particularly those outlined in Section 305(3), were not met in Rivers State before the declaration.

Fabamise explained that the constitution requires a complete breakdown of law and order or a situation akin to a state of war before an emergency rule can be imposed.



He stated:

“That situation did not exist in Rivers State. The fact that some pipelines were vandalized does not constitute sufficient grounds, especially since such incidents are not new. They have occurred even in times when there was no political crisis in the state.”

However, he conceded that the move could be considered expedient.

Fabamise further explained:

“The legislature was determined to remove the governor. We understand that a removal notice would have been served to him if the proclamation had not been made. This could have led to a serious crisis.

If we recall the events that led to the collapse of the First Republic, it started as a regional crisis. A politically adept leader would not wait until a political crisis becomes uncontrollable before taking preemptive actions. The proclamation prevented the planned removal of the governor, which could have had dire consequences. For me, the declaration is unconstitutional but expedient.”

Meanwhile, former President Dr. Goodluck Jonathan has also weighed in on the matter, criticizing the suspension of Governor Siminalayi Fubara and other elected officials in Rivers State. Jonathan stated that the move damaged Nigeria's international image.

Speaking at the Haske Satumari Foundation Colloquium in Abuja, Jonathan emphasized that while former presidents typically refrain from commenting on political issues to avoid escalating tensions, he felt compelled to address the situation due to its potential impact on Nigeria's global reputation and investment climate.

He noted:

“The image of a country and its ability to attract investment are heavily dependent on the actions of the executive, legislature, and judiciary.”

Additionally, governors of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) have condemned President Tinubu's emergency rule, arguing that his actions were unconstitutional and posed a threat to Nigeria's democratic principles.

“I’m fit as a fiddle” – Segun Arinze debunks illness rumours

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Veteran actor Segun Arinze firmly denies rumours of being ill or needing financial aid, assuring fans he is in good health and not facing any financial struggles.

The speculation began after photos of him looking frail and bloated surfaced on social media. However, the actor has clarified that the images were taken on a movie set and do not reflect his actual health.

In a video shared on Instagram, Arinze reassured his fans that he is in good health. He urged the public to ignore the false claims and not fall for scams that attempt to exploit the situation.

Setting the record straight

Addressing his fans and well-wishers, Arinze expressed gratitude to those who showed concern. He emphasized that he is “fit as a fiddle” and has no medical issues requiring financial assistance.

“I want to thank my fans, friends, and associates worldwide for reaching out to check on me,” Arinze said. “As you can see, I am perfectly fine. Those pictures circulating online were taken from a film set. Unfortunately, some people chose to twist the narrative for mischief.”

The actor, known for his powerful performances in Nollywood, reaffirmed his commitment to his career and the entertainment industry. “I will continue to do my work and contribute to the growth of my industry and Nigeria,” he added.

Warning against scammers

Arinze also warned the public to be cautious of fraudsters who might use the false rumors to solicit money. He made it clear that he does not need any financial help and urged people to verify such claims before believing or sharing them.



Fake fundraising campaigns often emerge when celebrities are rumored to be in distress. Many unsuspecting individuals end up donating money to fraudsters who exploit public sympathy. Arinze’s swift response aims to prevent such scams from taking advantage of his fans.

The impact of false information

Social media has become a breeding ground for misinformation. A single misleading post can quickly go viral, spreading fear and confusion. In Arinze’s case, a few out-of-context images led to widespread speculation about his health.

False rumors can have serious consequences, not just for celebrities but also for their families and fans. They create unnecessary panic and, in some cases, tarnish reputations. Arinze’s statement highlights the importance of verifying information before accepting it as truth.

Fans show support

Despite the rumors, Arinze’s fans have rallied behind him, sending messages of encouragement and support. Many praised him for addressing the issue directly and preventing further

misinformation.

One fan commented, “People need to stop spreading false news. Thank you for clearing the air.” Another wrote, “We love you, Segun! Stay strong and keep doing what you do best.”

The outpouring of support shows that while social media can spread falsehoods, it also allows individuals to counter misinformation and share the truth.

Moving forward

Arinze remains focused on his career and upcoming projects. His quick response to the rumors demonstrates his professionalism and awareness of how misinformation spreads online. He urged his followers to remain vigilant against fake news and avoid falling for deceitful schemes.

As the entertainment industry continues to grow, public figures like Arinze play a crucial role in setting the record straight when false information arises. His message serves as a reminder to always verify news before believing or sharing it.

For now, the veteran actor is back to doing what he loves—entertaining audiences and contributing to Nollywood’s success.

Davido unveils '5IVE' album tour dates

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi



Afrobeats star Davido announces a five-city tour across Europe and North America ahead of his highly anticipated fifth studio album, 5IVE.

The tour kicks off on April 5 in Los Angeles and will feature live performances of new songs alongside his biggest hits. Fans can catch him at legendary venues such as The Roxy Theatre in Los Angeles, Bowery Ballroom in New York, and Exhibition in London.

Tour details and ticket sales

Davido took to social media to share the news, urging fans to secure their tickets early.

“30BG, get ready! Starting Thursday, March 27, at 10 a.m. local time, get your tickets to see me live for the 5IVE album release event,”

he wrote. “Sign up for early access at the link in my bio.”

Tickets go on sale on March 27, giving fans the chance to experience his high-energy performances in intimate settings.

Album release date and track list

Originally set for release on March 14, 5IVE has been pushed back to April 18. The album promises a deeply personal journey, reflecting Davido’s growth as an artist.

The singer has already given fans a taste of what’s to come with three singles:

Be There Still

Awuke (featuring YG Marley)

Funds

Davido describes 5IVE as “my story, my truth, and my growth,” assuring

listeners of a heartfelt and immersive musical experience.

Tour schedule

Here’s a look at the tour dates and locations:

April 5 – Los Angeles, The Roxy Theatre

April 7 – New York, Bowery Ballroom

April 10 – Atlanta, Terminal West

April 15 – Paris, La Machine du Moulin Rouge

April 17 – London, Exhibition

With just weeks to go before the tour begins, anticipation is building. Fans eager to witness Davido’s electrifying performances live should act fast before tickets sell out.

Odumodublvck hints at Rick Ross collaboration

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian rapper Odumodublvck has sparked excitement among fans after revealing details of his conversation with American hip-hop legend Rick Ross.

The rapper shared that Ross is eager to release their collaboration, hinting that they have multiple unreleased tracks.

Taking to social media platform X (formerly Twitter), Odumodublvck quoted Rick Ross, who encouraged him to drop their joint work. In response, he reassured the Miami-based rapper that something major was on the way.

“Just got off the phone with Rick Ross,” he wrote. “E say, ‘Modu, please let’s drop.’ I say, ‘Baba, the machine is coming.’”

Multiple unreleased tracks in the works

The Nigerian star also revealed that they have recorded several songs together. However, he admitted that choosing which track to release first has been a challenge.

“Many tracks with Rozay. I don’t know which one to pick,” he added.

This revelation has fueled speculation that more than one collaboration could be on the horizon. Fans are now eager to see if the two rappers will drop a full



project or just a single.

Odumodublvck stays true to his art

Beyond the music, Odumodublvck took a moment to reaffirm his artistic integrity. He made it clear that he refuses to sacrifice his values for financial gain or mainstream success.

“That’s why I can’t be the one who sold my soul for a Benz jeep. Slave to the game, maga go forever pay,” he wrote.

His statement suggests he is focused on building a lasting career rather than chasing short-term rewards. He also used the phrase “The Machine is coming,” which hints at an upcoming major project.

A career-defining collaboration?

News of this collaboration has generated excitement across the hip-hop community. Many see it as a

significant moment for Odumodublvck, whose raw energy and unique style have been gaining traction.

Rick Ross, known for his deep voice and luxurious storytelling, has collaborated with some of the biggest names in the industry, including Jay-Z, Lil Wayne, and Drake. A joint effort with Odumodublvck could introduce the Nigerian rapper to a global audience, boosting his international profile.

Fans await the big reveal

With anticipation building, fans are now waiting for Odumodublvck’s next move. Whether it’s a single or a full project, one thing is certain—the rapper is preparing something major.

For now, all eyes remain on Odumodublvck as he continues to push boundaries and stay true to his musical vision.

MOHBAD: Naira Marley testifies in court, Sam Larry summoned

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The last is yet to be heard of the death of Ilerioluwa Aloba, aka Mohbad as his former Record label boss, Naira Marley has testified before a Magistrate Court sitting in Ikorodu, in the Coroner's inquest seeking to discover the root cause of the deceased singer's passing.

Azeez Fashola street-named Naira Marley joined the proceedings virtually on Friday to tell the court everything he knows about his colleague's passing and, in the process, wash his hands off all allegations being made against him.

The lewd lyricist told the Coroner, Magistrate Adedayo Shotobi that he signed late Mohbad on his record label, Marlian Records to produce four albums but until the artiste left, the four albums were not produced owing to constant disagreements between the artiste and his manager, Opere Babatunde.

The singer further denied threatening or molesting the late Mohbad, pointing to a police report which exonerated him of those offences.

Marley said that the allegations that he molested Mohbad existed only in people's imaginations.

When asked about the viral video, made by the late Mohbad where he stated that Naira Marley and the entire Marlian crew should be held responsible if anything happens to him, the witness testified that Mohbad and his parents subsequently apologised for that video which was made while the artiste was under the influence of drugs.

Marley insisted that there were no disputes or disagreements between him and the late Mohbad.



He also denied having a hand in Mohbad's death, claiming that the last time he saw the artiste was a year before his passing and that he was not even in the country at the time Mohbad died.

A second witness, the lawyer to the late Mohbad, Oluwasanmi Falade, faulted Naira Marley for saying there was no dispute between him and the late Mohbad.

The lawyer confirmed to the coroner that there was indeed a dispute between Marlian Records and his client over the payment of royalties.

The lawyer said at Mohbad's insistence, he wrote several times to Marlian Records over the issue but never got any response.

He, however, said the issue has since become a subject of litigation before the Federal High Court.

Falade also testified that the late Mohbad was attacked at Lekki Beach by music promoter, Sam Larry and following his advice, the late singer

had reported the incident at the Force Headquarters which had unsuccessfully tried to arrest Sam Larry twice.

After listening to the testimonies, Magistrate Shotobi summoned Sam Larry to testify before the Coroners' court at the next adjourned date.

The Coroner also directed parties in the inquest to confirm the address of late Mohbad's driver so witness summons can also be sent to him to appear before the coroner to testify.

The coroner further directed the pathologist who conducted an independent autopsy on the late Mohbad to forward a copy of his findings to the coroners' court and the same should also be forwarded to the Chief Coroner, before the next adjourned date.

The Coroner adjourned to April 11 to take the testimony of Sam Larry.

What to do if your plan A fails – Regina Daniels

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian actress Regina Daniels has shared words of wisdom with her followers, urging them always to have alternatives if their initial plans do not work out.

Her advice comes amid growing rumors of a possible separation from her billionaire husband, Senator Ned Nwoko. Social media users have been buzzing with speculation after the actress made noticeable changes to her online presence.

Speculations over Regina Daniels' marriage

Regina Daniels, known for her roles in Nollywood, recently removed her husband's surname, "Nwoko," from her social media profiles. Additionally, she deleted several pictures featuring the senator from her official pages.

This move sparked widespread speculation about potential trouble in their marriage. Some reports suggested that Nwoko was allegedly planning to marry fellow actress Chika Ike after welcoming a child with her. However, the senator firmly denied these claims.

Despite the swirling rumors, neither Regina Daniels nor Ned Nwoko has made any direct statements addressing their marital status. However, Daniels' recent social media activity has only fueled further curiosity among her followers.

Regina Daniels shares thought-provoking message

On Thursday, the actress took to Instagram to share a message that many interpreted as a subtle response to the ongoing rumors. She encouraged her followers to always



have backup plans, emphasizing that setbacks should not be seen as failures.

Her post read: "If Plan A fails, remember there are 25 other letters."

The simple yet profound statement resonated with many of her fans, who praised her for the motivational message. Some saw it as a general piece of advice, while others speculated that it hinted at her personal situation.

Social media reactions

Following her post, social media users flooded the comment section with mixed reactions. Some expressed concern over the possibility of a separation, while others applauded her for focusing on positivity.

One user commented, "Stay strong, Queen. You are loved!" Another wrote, "Whatever is happening, just know you have a strong support system."

However, some critics questioned whether her post was indirectly addressing the rumors. One person noted, "This might just be a random quote, but with everything happening,

people will surely read meaning into it."

The ongoing interest in Regina Daniels' life

Regina Daniels, who married Ned Nwoko in 2019, has remained a popular figure both in entertainment and social media circles. Her lavish lifestyle, career growth, and personal life often attract public attention.

While fans continue to speculate about her marriage, she appears focused on maintaining a positive outlook. Her recent post suggests that she believes in resilience and adaptability, values that many of her followers admire.

As discussions about her relationship continue, one thing is certain—Regina Daniels knows how to keep her audience engaged. Whether or not her message was a direct reference to her marriage, it has certainly sparked conversation.

For now, her followers can only wait and see if she chooses to address the rumors more directly. Until then, her words serve as a reminder that life comes with options, and setbacks do not mean the end of the road.

Kanye West reveals his top 12 rap kings

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Hip-hop mogul Kanye West has stirred controversy once again. This time, he ignited debate by naming his top 12 greatest rappers of all time.

The rapper, known for his outspoken opinions, shared the list on X (formerly Twitter), calling it “12 Rap Kings.” The lineup featured some of hip-hop’s most legendary figures, including himself. He ranked Lil Wayne, Jay-Z, Biggie Smalls, 2Pac, 50 Cent, Eminem, LL Cool J, Run-D.M.C., Nas, and Rakim among rap’s elite. However, one name stood out—Drake, the only modern-era rapper on the list.

Kanye’s ‘12 rap kings’ list:

Lil Wayne
Kanye West
Jay-Z
Drake
Biggie Smalls
2Pac
50 Cent
Eminem
LL Cool J
Run-D.M.C.
Nas
Rakim

The post quickly went viral, drawing both praise and criticism. Fans and critics questioned West’s choices, particularly his decision to leave out hip-hop powerhouses like Kendrick Lamar and J. Cole. Many argued that the list failed to reflect the influence of today’s rap heavyweights.

Backlash over Kendrick Lamar and J. Cole’s absence

One of the biggest talking points was West’s omission of Kendrick Lamar. Many fans consider Lamar one of the most influential artists of the modern era. His lyrical depth, storytelling



ability, and impact on hip-hop culture have earned him widespread respect.

However, he has made it clear that he is not a fan. In a recent interview, he admitted that while Lamar is “very good,” he does not personally enjoy his music. His statement fueled speculation that Lamar’s absence from the list was intentional rather than an oversight.

J. Cole’s exclusion also raised eyebrows. West has been critical of Cole in the past, especially after the rapper apologized to Lamar. Their feud dates back to a diss track Cole released in response to Lamar’s shots at both him and Drake. Instead of escalating the rivalry, Cole later apologized—a move West openly criticized. He insisted that Cole made a mistake by backing down.

Fans React: Who should have made the cut?

West’s list sparked a wider conversation about hip-hop’s greatest artists. Many fans argued that rap legends like Ice Cube, Snoop Dogg, and Andre 3000 deserved a spot. Others pointed out that modern

icons such as Travis Scott, Future, and even Tyler, The Creator have left a major mark on the industry.

Supporters of West’s list defended his choices, arguing that it reflected his personal influences and experiences in the industry. Others believed the list leaned toward classic-era rappers rather than newer generations.

A history of bold statements

This is not the first time Kanye has made waves with his opinions. The rapper, producer, and fashion mogul has a long history of stirring debate. Whether through his music, interviews, or social media posts, West is known for making bold statements that divide public opinion.

His recent list is just another example of his influence over hip-hop culture. While some fans agree with his picks, others see it as another one of his controversial takes.

One thing is clear: Kanye West knows how to keep the rap world talking.

Actress, Nkechi Nweje passes away

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Renowned Nollywood actress Nkechi Nweje has passed away on Friday after a brief illness. Her death has left fans and colleagues in deep mourning.

Movie producer Stanley Ajemba, known as Stanley Ontop, confirmed her death on Saturday. He shared the heartbreaking news on Instagram, posting a picture of the actress with a sorrowful message.

“Nollywood is in tears as we lost one of our vibrant actresses, @nkechi.nweje, after a brief illness,” he wrote. “I couldn’t post since morning because it felt like a dream. Ezigbo Nwanyi Onitsha. Rest in peace, ma’am.”

Ajemba also reflected on their close friendship. “She always called me, giving me advice,” he added. “The last time we spoke was during the Queenth saga. She told me, ‘Ontop, stop.’ I’m still speechless.”

A Respected figure in Nollywood

Nkechi Nweje was widely recognized for her talent and dedication to the Nigerian film industry. Over the years, she starred in numerous Nollywood productions, earning respect from colleagues and admiration from fans.

She was known for playing strong, motherly roles and bringing



characters to life with her emotional depth. Many in the industry described her as a warm and supportive person, always ready to guide younger actors.

Her passing is a huge loss to Nollywood, where she built a lasting legacy through her performances.

Tributes pour in from colleagues and fans

News of her death has sent shockwaves through the entertainment industry. Fans, actors, and filmmakers have flooded social media with tributes, mourning the loss of a beloved actress.

Colleagues have described her as a kind-hearted professional who was passionate about storytelling. Many recall her generosity and willingness to help others.

Her fans are also expressing their

grief, sharing memories of her memorable roles in movies. Messages of condolence continue to pour in, with many praying for strength for her family.

She leaves behind a loving family

Nweje is survived by her husband and six children. Her family has yet to release an official statement, but friends and colleagues are standing by them during this difficult time.

The Nollywood community is rallying around her loved ones, offering support as they process this devastating loss.

Her legacy in the film industry remains intact. She may be gone, but her work and impact will continue to inspire generations to come.

May her soul rest in peace.

Trump unfreezes funds for critical USAID-backed programmes in 3 African nations

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Trump reinstates funds for USAID-backed programmes in South Sudan, Sudan, and Congo

President Donald Trump's decision to unfreeze the blocked funds follows a U.S. Supreme Court ruling ordering the reversal of an aid freeze, marking a significant shift in U.S. policy.

The restored funding will enable the resumption of key initiatives in healthcare, infrastructure, and development in South Sudan, Sudan and Congo.

Samaritan's Purse, the recipient organization, confirmed that \$19 million in previously frozen USAID funds has been released to support its humanitarian efforts.

The funding had been put on hold in January under Trump's executive order imposing a 90-day freeze on foreign aid as part of broader efforts to curb government spending.

The restored funding will enable the resumption of key initiatives in South Sudan, Sudan and Congo.

This move signals a recalibration of U.S. strategic interests in Africa and is expected to strengthen diplomatic and economic relations with the affected nations.

The aid freeze and Samaritan's Purse activities in Africa

Samaritan's Purse, a North Carolina-based evangelical aid organization has been actively engaged in humanitarian efforts across Africa, providing aid, support, and hope to vulnerable communities.



Samaritan's Purse secured reimbursement for \$19 million from USAID to provide life-saving aid in Sudan.

This reimbursement is part of a funding agreement where Samaritan's Purse pays for supplies and staff upfront and is later reimbursed by USAID.

Initially, it was reported that \$13 million had been frozen due to President Trump's crackdown on USAID.

However, Samaritan's Purse's media relations director, Mark Barber revealed that the amount owed increased following the ministry's critical work in Sudan, South Sudan, and Congo.

Franklin Graham, President and CEO of the NGO, stated to MinistryWatch that Samaritan's Purse's funding grants with USAID operate on a

reimbursement basis.

"We cover the costs for supplies and staff upfront, and USAID reimburses us. We have just received \$19 million in reimbursement to provide life-saving aid in Sudan."

This agreement allows Samaritan's Purse to continue providing aid without being heavily impacted by the freeze on foreign aid

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the organization's Agape Project aids displaced families through livelihood training and Gospel outreach.

Additionally, in South Sudan, they provide emergency food, clean water, and medical care to displaced populations. Across the continent, Samaritan's Purse continues to play a vital role in addressing humanitarian crises.

Macron exploring UN alternative to Starmer's Ukraine plan

By Dave Oludare Oso

French President Emmanuel Macron is actively exploring alternatives to putting European boots on the ground in Ukraine – his plan drawn up with Sir Keir Starmer.

According to The Telegraph, the French president is considering the possibility of a mission to protect a future peace deal being led by the United Nations.

The UK Prime Minister and Macron have been leading a push to form a “coalition of the willing” of NATO and EU states to form a peacekeeping force backed by US security guarantees.

Sir Keir hosted 30 senior military leaders from European countries and beyond near London to hash out the plans.

They were moving into an “operational phase”, he has said, but it is still unclear how many countries are willing to send troops or how the plan will be implemented.

Macron raised the subject of the UN alternative at Thursday's European Council summit with Antonio Guterres, the UN security general, who was a guest of the gathered EU leaders.

It comes as the Prime Minister is showing signs of shifting his focus away from European “boots on the ground” to secure a peace deal with Russia, and is turning instead towards air and sea support to defend Ukraine.

It was reported that the RAF is in talks for British jets to police Ukraine's skies under proposals being discussed by Sir Keir's “coalition of the willing.”

Sergei Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister, has said that any NATO troops, including British and French soldiers, would be “unacceptable” to Moscow.

In a March 16 interview, Macron said it would be up to “sovereign Ukraine” not Russia who policed its soil.

Vladimir Putin rejected Donald Trump's demands for a full ceasefire earlier this week, but agreed to a partial truce exempting energy infrastructure; a promise that was broken the evening of the call between the two leaders.

The US president has been cool on the idea of providing back-up to the European force.

Any UN peacekeeping force would require the approval of the Security Council. With both Russia, and potentially the US, against its prospects appear to be slim.

The French president faced calls this week from Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the hard-Left



leader, who is soft on Putin, to get “blue helmets” to protect nuclear power plants in the war-torn country if the condition for peace was no NATO troops.

Earlier this month, Marine Le Pen, the leader of the hard-Right National Rally, said sending French troops was “madness” and that the “only possible participation that could be envisaged would be under a blue helmets mandate.”

While France has a minority government, which could be brought down by the National Rally, foreign policy remains in the power of the president. The Elysée was asked for comment.

‘Very complex, risky and ineffective’

Some European allies have also been circumspect or ruled the idea of European peacekeepers out entirely. Donald Tusk, the Polish prime minister has said he will not send soldiers to Ukraine.

This week, Giorgia Meloni, Italy's prime minister, said it would be “very complex, risky and ineffective.”

On Wednesday, the EU announced plans for a scheme offering member states €150 billion in loans to buy weapons – 65 per cent of the loans must be spent in the EU, Ukraine or Norway.

The UK, Canada, US and Turkey are currently shut out of plans to encourage members to “buy European” at this stage, but that could change in future defence pacts with the bloc.

Sources in Brussels suggested that France was behind the decision to exclude the UK for the time being, with at least one eye to looming EU negotiations over continued access to British fishing waters.

After Thursday's summit, 26 EU leaders issued a joint statement backing Ukraine. The sole exception was Hungary's Viktor

Orban, who has close ties to both Putin and Trump.

Beforehand, Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged the EU to step up weapons supplies as he accused Russia of continuing to strike Ukraine's energy system despite Putin agreeing a halt with Trump.

“Yesterday evening, another Russian strike hit our energy infrastructure,” he said. “Despite Putin's words about allegedly being ready to stop the attacks – nothing has changed.”

Over two hours of discussion on Ukraine, the EU leaders cast doubt on the negotiations between Trump and Putin.

One EU official said: “There was a shared view that no real negotiations are taking place at the moment. Leaders also exchanged about the best ways to have an influence on the process.”

Divisions over EU defence spending plans and military aid to Ukraine were also laid bare at the summit.

The leaders also discussed the European Commission's €800 billion ReArm Europe plan, which includes the €150 billion loan facility, which raises money against the EU budget.

Greece and Italy said they wanted grants rather than loans, which would not count on their national balance sheets.

Italy, France and pro-Putin Slovakia are reportedly looking to water down a plan to send €40 billion military aid to Ukraine by the end of the year because it links the military contributions to the size of states' economies.

Kaja Kallas, the EU's chief diplomat, said she would focus on securing agreement for a more limited plan to send 2 million shells worth €5 billion as a first “concrete” step.

US axes ex-Argentina President, Kirchner for corruption

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Former Argentine President, Cristina Elisabet Fernández de Kirchner (CFK) has been officially designated as a corrupt person by the United States, rendering her and her immediate family members ineligible for entry into the U.S.

The same fate befell ex-Minister of Planning, Julio Miguel De Vido.

The two former officials were axed for their involvement in significant corruption while they were in office.

Announced by U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Friday, the designation stems from multiple bribery schemes orchestrated by CFK and De Vido during their time in public office.

According to the statement, the two ex-officials financially benefited from illicit dealings involving public works contracts, siphoning millions from Argentina's government coffers.

"Multiple courts have convicted CFK and



De Vido for corruption, undermining the Argentine people's and investors' confidence in Argentina's future," Rubio stated, reinforcing the U.S. commitment to countering corruption at the highest levels of government.

The designations fall under Section 7031© of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related

Programs Appropriations Act, which mandates the U.S. Secretary of State to sanction foreign officials credibly linked to corruption or human rights violations.

With this move, Washington continues its push for global accountability, sending a strong message that abuse of public power for personal gain will not go unpunished.

Argentina suspends Telecom's purchase of Telefonica unit

By Fatimah Idera

Argentina's presidential office has issued a preventive measure to suspend Telecom's acquisition of Telefonica's local unit, claiming the pending merger could lead to excessive market concentration.

Spanish telecoms giant Telefonica (TEF.MC) said in February it was selling its unit in the country to Telecom Argentina (TECO2m.BA) for \$1.245 billion as part of a strategy to reduce exposure to Latin America, prompting a pledge from President Javier Milei's government that it would try to prevent the formation of a monopoly.

Milei's office said the suspension would remain in place until more analysis was carried out.



The government's decision follows a recommendation from the National Commission for the Defense of Competition, which raised concerns about the impact of the merger on market fairness.

According to the Argentine government, the transaction would lead to a market concentration of 61% in the mobile telephone sector, 69% in fixed lines and up to 80% in residential internet services in some areas of the country.

Telecom Argentina, which is partially owned by Argentine media conglomerate Clarin Group, has expressed its intent to continue investing in the country's telecom infrastructure, particularly in expanding 5G and fiber optic networks.

Telecom Argentina said in a statement it had not been formally notified of the preventive measure, but that it would cooperate with authorities and hand over all relevant information needed to assess the transaction.

Famed Russian double agent Oleg Gordievsky dies at UK home

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Famed KGB double agent, Oleg Gordievsky, has died at his Surrey, UK home at the age of 86.

The former Soviet secret agent defected to Britain in 1985 after being smuggled out of the country in the boot of a car.

His death is not being treated as suspicious and he died peacefully in his home, the BBC reported.

Gordievsky was the most prominent Soviet agent to defect to Britain during the Cold War.

He provided Britain with reports on Soviet operations for more than a decade, using his position as a colonel in the KGB to acquire secret information.

Oleg Gordievsky (pictured right) escaped to London from Moscow with the help of MI6 Credit: PA Archive

Originally recruited in 1974, Gordievsky became Britain's star source inside the KGB after being posted to the Soviet secret service's London bureau.

In May 1985, having just been promised the job of head of



station in London, he was suddenly summoned back to Moscow and accused of being a spy.

He eventually escaped to London with the help of MI6, who smuggled him across the border into Finland after escaping from his KGB minders.

It was another six years before he was reunited with his Leila, his wife, and children. Mariya, his eldest daughter, was 11 when she arrived in London in 1991, and his second child Anna was 10.

In 1983, Gordievsky tipped off his British handlers that Moscow was so paranoid about a potential surprise attack by the West that it had begun planning a pre-emptive nuclear strike. Nato subsequently curtailed its Able Archer military exercise, averting the crisis.

In 1985, information passed on by Mr Gordievsky led Sir Geoffrey Howe, the then foreign secretary, to expel 25 Soviet diplomats who were all accused of being undercover KGB spies.

Sir Geoffrey hailed it as “a very substantial coup for our security forces” at the time.

After his defection, Gordievsky lived under police protection in Godalming, Surrey.

“I’m more British now than Russian,” he said in 2007 after being made a Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George (CMG) by the late Queen Elizabeth II.

“Of course, I don’t have the subtlety and politeness which is typical of Britain.”

Voice of America employees sue Trump administration over shuttered news outlets

By Fatimah Idera

Voice of America journalists and their unions sued the Trump administration on Friday, saying that the shutdown of the U.S.-funded news agencies violated the workers first Amendment right to free speech.

Recall that U.S. Agency for Global Media, its acting director Victor Morales, and Special Adviser Kari Lake placed over 1,300 employees on leave and cut funding for several news services last Saturday.

Those actions were said to have violated the First Amendment and the laws by which Congress authorized and funded Voice of America, according to a complaint filed in New York federal court.

President Donald Trump and billionaire Elon Musk in a bid to shrink the federal government, which they say wastes U.S. taxpayer money on causes that do not line up with U.S. interests.



The lawsuit seeks a court order reversing the decision to shutter the U.S. Agency for Global Media, which funds VOA and other media outlets like Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and Radio Free Asia.

The rapid shutdown will embolden authoritarian regimes around the world,

according to the lawsuit.

“In many parts of the world a crucial source of objective news is gone, and only censored state-sponsored news media is left to fill the void,” the plaintiffs wrote.

The U.S. Agency for Global Media did not immediately respond to a request for comment late Friday.

Since its inception to combat Nazi propaganda at the height of World War Two, Voice of America (VOA) grew to become an international media broadcaster, operating in more than 40 languages online, on radio and television, spreading U.S. news narratives into countries lacking a free press.

Voice of America, Radio Free Europe and Radio Free Asia had more than 425 million listeners every week before they were shut down, according to the complaint.

Primary school easter ban sparks religious debate in UK

By New Daily Prime

Social media users criticise the announcement, with one questioning whether the headteacher will also cancel Christmas.

In England, conflicts between Muslim and Christian communities in UK primary schools have surfaced in various contexts, reflecting the nation’s diverse and evolving educational landscape. A primary school has scrapped its annual Easter celebration and service to “respect diverse religious beliefs.”

However, the announcement has been criticised online, with some suggesting that Christmas celebrations could be next. Norwood Primary School in Eastleigh, Hants, sent a letter to parents and carers informing them that neither their Easter Bonnet Parade nor their Easter Service



would be held this year.

Stephanie Mander, the school’s headteacher, explained in the letter that the decision was made to promote inclusivity and respect for diversity.

She stated:

“By not holding specific religious celebrations, we aim to create a more inclusive atmosphere that honours and respects the beliefs of all our children and their families.”

Public Reaction and Social Media Backlash

Norwood Primary School is a non-religious, mixed primary school for pupils aged between three and eleven.

Responding to the news online, one person asked:

“Is Miss Mander preparing to cancel Christmas as well?”

Children recount rape, abuse experiences at 1,600 UK primary schools

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Testimony features sexual harassment, groping, inappropriate touching and forced penetration

Rape culture exists in more than 1,600 primary schools in the UK and Ireland, an investigation by a campaign group has found.

The 'Everyone's Invited' list names 1,664 primary schools where pupils aged five to 11 have submitted anonymous testimonies alleging rape culture.

This includes experiences of sexual harassment, groping, inappropriate touching and forced penetration during primary school.

The report claimed that almost half of schoolchildren under seven are showing signs of misogynistic behaviour, and that "misogynistic rhetoric and harmful gender norms" are ingrained from as early as nursery.

It also found that more than 60 percent of teachers reported that children under nine had been exposed to pornography.

'SMASHED MY HEAD AGAINST SINK'

Several testimonies from pupils are included in the report.

One read: "When I was five, another five-year-old boy at primary school started calling me beautiful and sexy (which I didn't even know what it meant at the time).

"One day, he followed me into the toilets and smashed my head against the sink.

"I told my mum, and the school phoned her to tell her we were 'just playing' and said they would keep an eye on him.

"One day, he called me sexy then pushed me into the toilets again and tried to push my head down a toilet while grabbing me.

"I told a teacher after and they put me and



the boy in the same room together. A teacher tried to downplay it, and say it wasn't that bad (basically gaslighting a six-year-old for the sake of keeping their reputation).

"The boy wasn't expelled. I left school, and learnt that he did it to another girl after I had left."

'I WAS TOLD A BOY WOULD LICK MY VAGINA'

Another read: "When I was 10, a boy told me one of the boys was going to lick my vagina. A boy said they would pay another boy £20 to rape me. I didn't know what rape meant.

"I didn't tell anyone. One of the boys in my year told their mum, who told mine. I went in for a meeting with the headteacher. She told me, 'As women, we have to accept what men say to us'."

The charity, which is dedicated to eradicating rape culture, has called for relationship and sex education to begin in nursery or reception.

'Challenging and uncomfortable'

It was founded in June 2020 by Soma Sara, a former private school pupil and sex abuse survivor, and has previously exposed the issue of sexual abuse in

schools and colleges.

The charity's report acknowledged that primary school teachers often faced "challenging and uncomfortable situations within the classroom" but found that 80 per cent of those surveyed felt ill-equipped to address these issues.

It added: "Many are not trained beyond the legal minimum in safeguarding, which leaves them ill-equipped to respond to disclosures of sexual violence."

A recent report by the National Police Chiefs' Council found that child sexual abuse and exploitation had increased by 400 per cent from 2013 to 2024.

More than half of the alleged offenders in cases of sexual violence were children themselves, it added.

The report concluded that rape culture was "endemic" in primary schools.

It emphasised the role of the online world in the increase of violence, saying phones gave children access "to the most extreme content possible with a click of the finger."

Zelensky visits Ukraine's front line ahead of peace talks

By Dave Oludare Oso

Volodymyr Zelensky visited troops defending the embattled eastern city of Pokrovsk on Saturday, as diplomats from Kyiv and Moscow prepared for ceasefire talks on Monday.

In a trip designed to boost front-line morale, the Ukrainian president presented medals to teams of drone operators fighting to hold the key transport hub.

The city has been the main focus of the Russian push in the Donbas region since the autumn, but in recent weeks there have been signs of a Ukrainian push-back.

Part of that has been down to an increased use of drones, which has compensated for Ukraine's disadvantages in terms of troop numbers and artillery.

Zelensky wrote on X: "I visited the command post of the Tactical Group Pokrovsk and met with the commanders of the Drone Line, which united the finest unmanned systems units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

"I received a report on the defence of the Pokrovsk direction, the operational situation, and the progress of the missions. I honoured our warriors with state awards."

Zelensky's visit came ahead of talks scheduled in Saudi Arabia for Monday. Rather than meeting face-to-face, the teams from Kyiv and Moscow will convene separately, with US officials acting as relays between the two sides.

'Shuttle diplomacy'

The so-called practice of "shuttle diplomacy" is a common first step when convening talks between warring nations.

Last week, Vladimir Putin rejected a joint US-Ukraine proposal of a full and unconditional 30-day ceasefire, instead suggesting to halt aerial strikes on energy infrastructure.



Hours later, Russian forces carried out strikes on the power grid around the Donbas city of Slovyansk, prompting questions over the sincerity of Putin's commitment to the talks.

Further doubts have been raised over Putin's choice of envoys for the Saudi meeting, which includes a prominent spy chief as well as diplomats. Sergei Beseda, a long-time agent of Moscow's FSB security service, is on a Western sanctions list.

Grigory Karasin, a Russian diplomat who will be Mr Beseda's negotiating partner at the talks, told Russian TV this weekend that the pair would be pursuing a "combative and constructive" approach.

Karasin said: "We are going with the mood to fight for the solution of at least one issue."

Ceasefire proposals

The talks will aim to fine-tune details for a cessation of strikes on energy infrastructure and on naval assets in the Black Sea.

Donald Trump has been hoping to get Putin's agreement to a much more significant ceasefire along the 600-mile front line, but that has so far proved harder than Washington appears to have anticipated.

Russia has insisted that any such

agreement must first be linked to much more long-term commitments to curb Nato's presence on its western borders, and for Kyiv to commit never to join the alliance. Neither Ukraine nor its Western allies are willing to make such promises.

And although Ukraine is under pressure on the front lines, military sources have said there is no imminent risk of collapse, meaning that Kyiv is unlikely to accept a ceasefire on unfavourable terms.

Meanwhile, a family of three was killed in a Russian drone attack that hit buildings in the south-eastern city of Zaporizhzhia on Friday night, Ukrainian officials said. One of the victims was a 14-year-old girl.

Ivan Fedorov, Zaporizhzhia's regional governor, wrote on Telegram: "The bodies of the daughter and father were pulled out from the rubble. The doctors fought for the mother's life for more than 10 hours, but unfortunately, they failed to save her."

Yulia Svyrydenko, Ukraine's first deputy prime minister, wrote on X: "Russian terrorism continues to destroy families all over Ukraine."

The Ukrainian air force reported that Russia fired 179 exploding drones and decoys at Zaporizhzhia, some of which were intercepted. At least 12 people were reported to be injured.

Pope Francis to leave hospital on Sunday

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Pope Francis will be discharged from the hospital on Sunday — five weeks after he was admitted for treatment for double pneumonia, the doctors treating the pontiff announced Saturday.

He will return to the Vatican, but doctors said he will need at least two months of rest and rehabilitation after leaving Rome's Gemelli Hospital.

The 88-year-old pontiff has been battling double pneumonia in both lungs after he was admitted to the hospital on Feb. 14 after a bout of bronchitis that made it difficult for him to speak. He has remained out of public view since then.

His doctors held an in-person briefing on Saturday evening, the first in about a month.

"The good news is that the pope will be discharged tomorrow," Gemelli medical director Dr. Sergio Alfieri said. "During his hospitalization, he presented two critical episodes during which the Holy Father's life was in danger. He subsequently made slow but progressive improvements."

The director of the Holy See Press Office, Matteo Bruni speaks next to Professor Sergio Alfieri and doctor Luigi Carbone (L) during a press conference at the Gemelli hospital where Pope Francis is hospitalized in Rome, on March 22, 2025. TIZIANA FABI/AFP via Getty Images

Alfieri said Francis will be discharged in stable condition and will continue medication "for a long time and observe at least two months of rest."

Dr. Luigi Carbone, the pope's personal doctor, said the discharge is a "period of convalescence."



"At the Vatican, we have prepared the necessary assistance and we are ready to have him back at Santa Marta," he said, adding, "We hope that within a brief period, he can go back to his normal activity."

Carbone said the pope was very happy to be going home.

Earlier Saturday, the Vatican said that Francis will make his first public appearance in five weeks and "intends to wave and offer blessing" from the hospital after the Angelus prayers.

The pope has missed the Angelus prayers for five straight weeks for the first time in his papacy. The Angelus prayers are normally recited by the pope every Sunday from a window overlooking St. Peter's Square to the gathered faithful.

The current hospitalization is the longest of Francis' papacy. It has been marked by a rollercoaster of setbacks, including respiratory crises, mild kidney failure, and a severe coughing fit, which forced doctors to put Francis on a mechanical ventilation mask. At no

point did he lose consciousness, and doctors reported he was alert and cooperative.

The Argentine pope is prone to respiratory illnesses in the winter. He had part of one lung removed as a young man.

Though out of public view for weeks, the pope shared a recorded message in early March thanking people for their prayers for his recovery. The message — which highlighted Francis' weak and labored voice — was played in St. Peter's Square for the faithful gathered for a nightly recitation of the rosary prayer. The Vatican also released a photo of the pope at prayer.

During his hospital stay, the church celebrated the 12th anniversary of Francis' papacy with a Mass in his honor.

Pope Francis has been adamant about sharing an unprecedented level of detail when it comes to his health, going against centuries of secrecy surrounding pontiffs' medical conditions.

US boxing legend, George Foreman is dead, aged 76

By Dave Oludare Oso

Legendary United States-born heavyweight boxer, George Foreman has died at 76 years, his family has announced.

Known as Big George in the ring, the American built one of the most remarkable and enduring careers in the sport, winning Olympic gold in 1968 and claiming the world heavyweight title twice, 21 years apart – the second making him the oldest champion in history aged 45, According to BBC.

He lost his first title to Muhammad Ali in their famous Rumble in the Jungle fight in 1974.

But Foreman's professional boxing career boasted an astonishing total of 76 wins including 68 knockouts, almost double that of Ali.

He retired from the sport in 1997 but not before he agreed to put his name to a best-selling grill – a decision that went on to bring him fortunes that dwarfed his boxing earnings.

His family said in a post on Instagram on Friday night: "Our hearts are broken.

"A devout preacher, a devoted husband, a loving father, and a proud grand and great grandfather, he lived a life marked by unwavering faith, humility, and purpose."

The statement added: "A humanitarian, an Olympian, and two time heavyweight champion of the world, He was deeply respected – a force for good, a man of discipline, conviction, and a protector of his legacy, fighting tirelessly to preserve



his good name – for his family."

Foreman was born in Marshall, Texas, on 10 January 1949, and raised along with six siblings by a single mother in the segregated American South.

He dropped out of school and turned to street robberies before eventually finding his outlet in the ring.

Foreman won the heavyweight gold medal at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, aged 19, before turning pro and winning 37 consecutive matches. He lost only five bouts over his career.

He beat previously undefeated reigning champion Joe Frazier in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1973 knocking him down six times in the first two rounds.

His 1974 Rumble in the Jungle against Ali in Kinshasa, Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, remains one of the most famous boxing matches ever.

Ali, the older man, was the underdog after he was stripped of his crown seven years earlier for refusing to be drafted into the Vietnam War.

Foreman reflected on the legendary fight 50 years later in an October interview with BBC World Service Newshour, explaining that everyone thought he was going to decimate Ali.

"Oh, he's not going to last one round," the boxer said experts were predicting at the time.

Foreman told the BBC he typically would get "real nervous" and have "butterflies" before any boxing match, but that night – it was the "most comfortable" he had felt.

But the wily Ali used a tactic that later became known as "rope-a-dope", which wore out Foreman, causing him to throw out hundreds of punches before Ali unloaded on him in the eighth round and scored a knockout.

Sanwo-Olu reaffirms commitment to sports as Lagos prepares for maiden SOWEGA

By Friday Omosola

Lagos State Governor and Chairman of the South-West Governors Forum, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to sports development as the state prepares to host the maiden edition of the South-West Games (SOWEGA).

Scheduled to take place from March 26 to 28, 2025, the event will bring together athletes from Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti to compete in various sporting activities across multiple venues, including Teslim Balogun Stadium, Mobolaji Johnson Arena, Rowe Park, and Yaba College of Education.

During a courtesy visit by the South-West Games 2025 Committee at the Lagos House in Marina yesterday, Sanwo-Olu assured the organizers and participants of the state's readiness to provide safe and well-equipped sporting facilities for the competition.

Speaking at the event, the governor described the South-West Games as a platform for social inclusion, youth engagement, and healthy competition.

He emphasised that the tournament would serve as an opportunity to redirect young people's energy towards positive and creative endeavors.

"Lagos will remain a rallying point for



fostering social inclusion, youth development, and creating an enabling environment for sound minds. Through sports, we can engage young people, nurture talent, and promote community development," he said.

Governor Sanwo-Olu also commended the organizers for initiating the competition and pledged the Lagos State Government's full support for its successful execution.

In his remarks, Olanrewaju Alfred, President of the South-West Games 2025 Committee, lauded Sanwo-Olu for his visionary leadership and investment in key sectors, particularly sports infrastructure.

He described the maiden South-West

Games as a major step toward youth empowerment and development.

"The South-West Games is not just a tournament; it is a vehicle for youth empowerment, talent discovery, and regional unity," Alfred said.

Accompanied by his team, he explained that their visit was to formally notify the governor, in his capacity as the Chairman of the South-West Governors Forum, about the upcoming games.

Also speaking at the event, the Director General of the Lagos State Sports Commission, Lekan Fatodu, emphasised that the tournament would serve as a platform to discover and nurture sporting talents among young athletes in the region.