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Natasha denies apologising to senate, says 'I won't be intimidated'

By Dave Oludare Oso

Suspended Kogi Central Senator, Mrs. Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan has debunked reports claiming that she has apologised to the Senate over the controversy that led to her suspension.

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) lawmaker, in a statement on Monday, March 24, 2025, described the claims as "false and misleading," reaffirming her stance on the issue that resulted in her six-month suspension.

Her statements read, "The reports suggesting that I have apologized to the Senate and retracted my position are completely untrue. I stand firmly by my words and actions and have not issued any apology to the Senate or anyone regarding this matter."

She condemned those spreading the misinformation, accusing them of attempting to distort the truth and mislead the public.

The senator, who was suspended following a heated exchange with Senate leadership, maintained that she remains committed to her principles and the defense of her constituents' rights.

She further alleged that certain individuals were trying to manipulate public perception with fabricated statements.

"I urge the public to disregard these rumors and publications as they do not represent my position. My commitment remains to truth, justice, and the people I represent."

Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan also expressed concerns over what she



described as an orchestrated campaign to silence her voice in the National Assembly.

She said, "This is not just about me; it is about the integrity of our democracy. I will not be intimidated or forced into submission through false narratives."

She urged her constituents and Nigerians to remain vigilant against misinformation, emphasizing that any official statement from her would only come from her verified channels.

"I appreciate the support and solidarity of my people. Rest assured, I will continue to fight for what is right and just."

Read the full statement here:

RE: PURPORTED APOLOGY TO THE SENATE OVER MY SEXUAL ALLEGATIONS CLAIM AGAINST SENATE PRESIDENT GODSWILL AKPABIO

"I, Senator Natasha Akpoti-

Uduaghan stand firm in my resolve to never apologise for speaking my truth. The desperation to silence me is palpable, but I will not be intimidated. The games being played in full view of the Nigerian people will be exposed, and the individuals who have hijacked our institutions will be held accountable.

"As a senator, I have a duty to represent my constituents and uphold the principles of justice and transparency. My allegations against Senate President Godswill Akpabio were not made lightly, and I will continue to seek justice and accountability, no matter the cost.

"My six-month suspension is a clear case of political victimisation, but I will not be deterred. I will continue to fight for the rights of Nigerian women and ensure that our voices are heard.

"I urge the public to ignore the viral report claiming that I apologised to the Senate, as it is entirely false. I will continue to stand by my truth and fight for what is right, even in the face of adversity."

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

PRODUCT COLOUR

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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	372,500.00
HALF PAGE	213,000.00
QUARTER PAGE	106,500.00
14X2	118,000.00
10X6	261,585.50
10X5	255,238.00
10X4	206,890.50
10X3	179,608.00
9X6	254,977.00
9X5	225,738.00
9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
5X2	42,916.50
4X4	60,166.50
4X3	36,499.50
4X2	29,333.50
3X3	28,000.00
3X2	17,400.00
2X2	13,000.00
2X1	8,600.00
1X1	4,400.00

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
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HALF PAGE	192,500.00
QUARTER PAGE	100,000.00
14X2	109,500.00
10X6	242,500.00
10X5	237,500.00
10X4	192,500.00
10X3	171,000.00
9X6	232,500.00
9X5	206,000.00
9X4	177,500.00
9X3	150,000.00
8X6	216,000.00
8X3	98,500.00
7X4	164,002.00
6X4	94,010.50
6X3	78,500.00
6X2	47,500.00
5X5	100,000.00
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2X1	8,630.00
1X1	4,315.00

POLITICAL COLOUR

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DOUBLE SPREAD	885,000.00
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HALF PAGE	213,250.00
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POLITICAL BLACK & WHITE

SIZE	RATE
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DOUBLE SPREAD	745,000.00
FULL PAGE	315,777.50
HALF PAGE	184,700.00
QUARTER PAGE	95,222.50

CORPORATE BLACK & WHITE

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HALF PAGE	142,787.50
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10X6	217,830.00
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1X1	2,795.50

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DOUBLE SPREAD HALF COLOUR	432,881.00
DOUBLE SPREAD STRIP COLOUR	144,294.00
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CENTRE SPREAD HALF PAGE B & W	550,000.00
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DOUBLE SPREAD HALF B & W	425,000.00
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HALF WRAP AROUND	8,500,000.00
HALF PAGE FRONT	5,500,000.00

PUBLIC NOTICE BLACK & WHITE

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10X4	149,440.00
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9X5	169,050.00
9X4	137,875.00
9X3	112,875.00
8X6	179,368.00
8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
6X2	40,000.00
5X6	98,749.50
5X4	65,833.00
5X3	49,375.00
5X2	32,916.50
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3X2	19,750.00
2X2	13,000.00
2X1	6,500.00
1X1	3,292.00

PRODUCT BLACK & WHITE

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HALF PAGE	124,236.00
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10X5	162,222.445
10X4	103,963.00
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9X6	162,222.445
9X5	168,191.50
9X4	N/A
8X6	N/A
8X3	N/A
7X4	72,676.00
6X4	65,000.00
6X3	41,124.50
6X2	29,858.00
5X6	71,378.00
5X4	42,825.00
5X3	29,858.00
5X2	22,841.00
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3X2	14,923.00
2X2	10,200.00
2X1	5,439.50
1X1	2,700.00

ALLURE RATE

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CENTRESPREAD		967,500.00
DOUBLE SPREAD		806,250.00
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(IFC) Inside Front Cover		430,000.00
(BC) Back Cover		483,750.00
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10X5		295,625.00
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EVENT		250,000.00

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PHOTO NEWS PAGE 2	50,000.00	3,750.00	53,750.00
PHOTO NEWS (3X3)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
PHOTO NEWS (4X4)	53,333.30	4,250.00	57,583.30
PRESS RELEASE (4X4)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
EVENT COVERAGE	100,000.00	7,500.00	107,500.00
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CONTACT US

Correspondent Address:
Real Group Plaza, No.1 Junaid Dosumu
Street, CBD, Alausa, Ikeja, Lagos
Call the Editor on: 07025014298, 09014323792

E-mail Address:
info@newdailyprime.news
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Tinubu launches NiYA to boost global competitiveness

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to equipping Nigerian youths with the skills needed to compete on the global stage.

Speaking at the official launch of the Nigerian Youth Academy (NiYA) in Abuja, the President described the initiative as a bold response to unemployment, poverty, and other socio-economic challenges hindering national progress.

Represented by Vice President Kashim Shettima, Tinubu emphasised that Nigeria, with a median age of 17 years and projected to become the third most populous country by 2050, must prioritize youth development to secure its future.

"The success of a nation is guaranteed when its children can go to bed assured of their place in a rapidly changing world," he said.

NiYA will focus on three core areas: education and skills Development by providing world-class training in digital literacy, technical skills, entrepreneurship, and creative industries to prepare youths for the global economy.

Another area is economic empowerment by offering financial support, mentorship, and resources through initiatives such as the Youth Investment Fund and the Presidential Initiative for Youth Enterprise Clusters.

NiYA will also address leadership and civic engagement through training the next generation of leaders in governance, policymaking, and community development.

Tinubu stressed that the academy is designed to close Nigeria's human



capital development gap, ensuring that millions of young Nigerians gain the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive.

"This is not just an investment in their future; it is an investment in the future of our nation," he declared.

Speaking at the launch, Minister of Youth Development, Ayodele Olawande, highlighted the academy's role in bridging the skills gap in Nigeria's job market.

"The President promised Nigerian youths a platform to achieve their dreams—whether securing a job, launching a business, or mastering a skill. NiYA is that platform," Olawande said, urging young people to take advantage of the opportunity.

Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, also commended the initiative, describing it as a transformational step toward economic self-reliance for Nigerian youths.

He emphasised that in today's digital economy, skills—not just certificates—are the real currency, making NiYA a vital tool for producing globally competitive entrepreneurs, professionals, and creators.

To kickstart the program, six NiYA participants—one from each geopolitical zone—received ₦1 million** as a startup package to help them implement their business ideas and develop their skills.

NiYA is open to all young Nigerians aged 18 to 35, both within the country and in the diaspora, offering a structured pathway to self-reliance and global relevance.

"The future belongs to those who are prepared. With NiYA, Nigerian youths now have the tools to shape their own destiny and contribute meaningfully to national development," Tinubu said.

African billionaire set to build continent's first AI factory

By Dave Oludare Oso

Cassava Technologies, founded by Zimbabwean telecoms mogul, Strive Masiyiwa, has partnered with Nvidia Corp. to establish Africa's first artificial intelligence (AI) factory.

The company plans to integrate Nvidia's computing and AI software into data centres in South Africa, with expansion to Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, and Nigeria.

The AI factory aims to provide access to cutting-edge AI computing capacity for African businesses, governments, and researchers. According to a statement on Cassava's website, the company will integrate Nvidia's cutting-edge computing and AI software into its data centres in South Africa by June 2025, with further expansion planned for Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, and Nigeria.

"This will give African businesses, governments and researchers access to cutting-edge AI computing capacity, helping them develop smarter AI products, streamline operations and stay competitive in a fast-changing world. It provides the supercomputers and software needed to train AI while keeping data within Africa's borders," the statement read.



Masiyiwa stressed that developing AI infrastructure is crucial for Africa to fully harness the opportunities of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, positioning the continent for technological and economic transformation.

He said, "Our AI factory provides the infrastructure for this innovation to scale, empowering African businesses, startups and researchers with access to cutting-edge AI infrastructure to turn their bold ideas into real-world breakthroughs and now they don't have to look beyond Africa to get it."

Also speaking, Jaap Zuiderveld, VP EMEA at NVIDIA said, "AI is helping innovators solve our greatest challenges in agriculture, healthcare, energy, financial services and many other industries creating opportunity in Africa.

"As an NVIDIA Cloud Partner, Cassava is providing essential infrastructure and software to help pioneering companies and organizations accelerate AI development to foster innovation across the continent."

Tech giants betting big on Africa's digital future

Cassava Technologies is set to become the first company to introduce accelerated computing to Africa as an Nvidia cloud partner.

Meanwhile, global tech firms are also eyeing Africa's digital future. Last year, Microsoft Corp. and G42, the UAE's leading AI company, announced plans to invest \$1 billion in a geothermal-powered data centre in Kenya.

Fubara denies links to militants, rejects claims of sabotage

By **Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

Suspended Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara, has strongly denied any affiliation with militant groups, warning against attempts to incite violence or economic sabotage in his name.

The governor's comments followed the circulation of false videos alleging explosions at oil and gas installations in the state.

In a statement issued on Monday, March 24, by his Chief Press Secretary, Nelson Chukwudi, in Port Harcourt, Fubara described the videos as "fake" and "malicious," adding that they were part of a broader misinformation campaign intended to cause unrest.

The governor's statement reads: "Our attention has, once again, been drawn to a flurry of malicious, fake and imaginary videos of purported explosions on oil and gas facilities in Rivers State. Virtually all the fake videos have been linked to alleged militant groups in the state, with the creators of such content trying very hard to connect them to supporters of Governor Siminalayi Fubara."

Fubara emphasised that the communities where the alleged incidents were said to have occurred had already dismissed the claims, assuring that all critical government assets in their areas were safe, secure, and functioning efficiently.

The statement continued: "For the



avoidance of doubt, Governor Siminalayi Fubara has no link to any militant group, does not contemplate any such association, and has no reason to encourage any criminal group or elements, anywhere in the state or Niger Delta, to undertake any action inimical to the peace of the people or the safety and security of oil and gas facilities, and by extension, the economy of the country."

The governor reiterated his commitment to maintaining peace and security in the state, which he stressed was vital for governance and development.

"The peace of the state is paramount to me, and I would pay any price to secure and sustain peace in the state. Only in an atmosphere of peace and security can governance and development thrive."

Fubara also issued a stern warning to

those seeking to exploit the current political climate for violence, stating: "Governor Fubara vehemently warns purveyors of violence and economic sabotage to steer clear of the state and avoid any attempt to use his name or capitalise on the present political crisis to foment trouble in the state."

The governor condemned the spread of false information, accusing those behind the fake videos of trying to destabilise the region. He called on security agencies to investigate the origin of these misleading videos and take appropriate action against those responsible.

"Security agencies should take note of these fake videos designed to misinform the people, and further paint the state in a bad light, and take every necessary step to contain them and bring those behind them to book," Fubara concluded.

Olukoyede urges students to uphold integrity for Nigeria's betterment

By Friday Omosola

The Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Ola Olukoyede, has charged Nigerian students to uphold integrity in all aspects of their lives, emphasising that it is a crucial foundation for the country's development.

Olukoyede gave this charge at a sensitization and reorientation program for members of the Integrity Club at Anglican Girls Grammar School, Apo, Abuja.

Represented by the Head of EFCC Radio, Deputy Commander of the EFCC (DCE) Nwanyinma Okeanu, he highlighted the significance of the Integrity Club in schools, stressing that students are the future of Nigeria, and their choices today will shape the nation's future.

"If Nigeria is going to be better tomorrow, we must start today by doing what is right and following the path of integrity," he stated.

Okeanu further noted that the EFCC Chairman is committed to nurturing the younger generation, recognizing their role in Nigeria's progress.

"We have people from all parts of the country here today. If Nigeria is to be better, you will make it good with integrity.

"That is why the EFCC is keen on mentoring young people. With integrity, you can achieve anything. You will not embezzle what is placed in your care, and the sky will be your stepping stone," she added.

Addressing the students on the dangers of sextortion, Assistant Superintendent of the EFCC (ASE1) Eniola Kayode warned them against exposing personal information and explicit content online.

She cautioned that cybercriminals could



use such materials for blackmail, leading to devastating consequences such as depression, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts.

"You have to be very careful about the people you meet online. There is no need to have explicit content of yourself on your phone. Hackers and scammers can manipulate you into clicking dangerous links, which may lead to blackmail. Protect yourselves and uphold moral integrity," she advised.

Kayode further urged students who find themselves in such situations to seek help from trusted adults and law enforcement agencies.

She also emphasised the importance of preserving evidence by not deleting conversations with blackmailers.

Speaking on patriotism and honesty, Assistant Commander of the EFCC (ACE II) Aisha Mohammed urged students to remain truthful, even in difficult situations.

"Your conscience should be your guide. If you do what is right, your family and community will be proud of you. Cybercriminals are damaging our nation's reputation, and we need future leaders like you to stand against corruption.

"Spread this message and become foot soldiers in the fight against corruption—Nigeria is counting on you," she said.

The Principal of the college, Nkiruka Nwofor, expressed her appreciation for the EFCC's efforts in mentoring young minds and welcomed further collaboration to expand the anti-corruption campaign.

In her remarks, the President of the school's Integrity Club, Chidinma Okeanu, thanked the EFCC for the enlightening session, noting that the lessons learned would have a lasting impact on the students.

A quiz competition was also held during the event, where winners were rewarded with brand-new mobile phones and appointed as EFCC Ambassadors to help spread the anti-corruption message among their peers.

The Integrity Club is an initiative of the EFCC, established in Nigerian primary and secondary schools to instil anti-corruption values in students from an early age.

Gombe youths loot truckload of Seyi Tinubu's Ramadan palliatives

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



Ramadan palliatives meant to be distributed in Gombe State by Seyi Tinubu, son of President Bola Tinubu were reportedly looted by some youths in the state on Monday.

Seyi Tinubu has been touring northern states, participating in Iftar with residents and political leaders while launching Ramadan feeding programmes for the less privileged.

However, the initiative has generated heated debates on social media, with some welcoming the gesture and others condemning it as inadequate for addressing the region's pressing needs.

Some northern elites argue that northern Nigeria deserves more substantial support beyond food handouts, while supporters view it as a charitable effort.

Former governor of Jigawa State, Sule

Lamido, criticised the Ramadan food distribution initiative by Tinubu's son, calling it an insult to the rich heritage of Northern Nigeria.

"It's a disgrace to Arewa (Northern region) and our founding fathers that Tinubu's son came to Sokoto and Kano to share cooked rice. It is insulting and demeaning," Lamido stated.

The former governor further emphasised that Northern Nigeria, known for its cultural and historical significance, should not be reduced to receiving handouts.

"Arewa, with our rich culture and heritage, should not be brought down to this level. Aminu Kano, Sardauna, Tafawa Balewa, Joseph Tarka and many others are the pride of our region, so we need to stand up and do the right thing," he added.

Also, son of the Bauchi State

governor, Shamsuddeen Bala Mohammed, has criticised Seyi's initiative in a Facebook post, urging him to implement sustainable empowerment programmes instead.

In a video, a group of hungry youths was seen looting cartons of food items from a truck parked by the roadside.

The youths threw the items to those on the ground, who eagerly grabbed them and fled.

The cartons contained rice, sugar, oil, salt, and pasta.

According to reports, two trucks carrying 3,500 cartons of these items were allocated to Gombe.

While the contents of one truck were distributed, the second truck was intercepted and looted by the aggrieved youths.

INEC receives petition for recall of Senator Natasha

By **Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has officially received a petition calling for the recall of Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, representing the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The petition was submitted on Monday, with the Secretary to the Commission, Rose Oriaran-Anthony, confirming its receipt.

This move follows a series of legal developments, including a recent court order which temporarily halted the recall process and barred INEC from accepting the petition.

Despite this, the call for the senator's recall continues to gain traction, with constituents citing claims of 'international embarrassment' as a key reason for the action.

The constituents claimed the signed petition met the requirements as stipulated by the Constitution 1990 as amended.

It was learnt that more than one-half of the registered voters in the district, over 200,000 people, signed in support.

The recall petition followed a series of contentious events involving Akpoti-Uduaghan, who was suspended from the Senate on March 6 for alleged "gross misconduct" after a dispute with Senate President Godswill Akpabio.

She had previously accused Akpabio of sexual harassment.

After receiving the petition, Oriaran-Anthony, emphasised that the



Commission, as an institution established by law, would adhere to the due process outlined by the Constitution regarding the recall process.

She noted that their petition will be processed.

A representative of the Kogi Central constituents, Comrade Salihu Habeeb, expressed confidence in the success of the recall effort, stating that the community had united in calling for a more accountable representative.

He criticised Akpoti-Uduaghan for failing to engage with her constituents, even offering no message in response to their concerns.

The representative stated, "From the process, the Kogi Central Indigenous people have carried out so far, this would be the first recall that will be successful. We have spoken with one voice. We need a credible representative."

Another representative, Comrade Hamza Yakubu, stressed that the recall process was driven by logic and the needs of the

people, not emotions.

He urged INEC to act swiftly on the petition.

Yakubu noted, "We believe that the recall process will be successful. The commission should review the submitted petition and immediately move into action."

Charity Jesse, a representative of the Kogi Youths and Women, echoed similar sentiments, stating that the petition was a response to Akpoti-Uduaghan's alleged misconduct and her failure to effectively represent the interests of Kogi Central.

On March 22, a Federal High Court sitting in Lokoja lifted a restraining order that had prevented INEC from receiving the petition.

The court ruled that the recall process was constitutionally valid, affirming the civic rights of the constituents to initiate such a procedure. It encouraged the petitioners to continue exercising their rights peacefully.

Lagos govt reaffirms commitment to clean, livable city amid dirtiness viral claims

By Friday Omosola

The Lagos State Government has reiterated its commitment to a cleaner, more sustainable city, dismissing claims circulating on social media that the state has an unpleasant odour.

In a statement released yesterday, the Commissioner for the Environment and Water Resources, Tokunbo Wahab, emphasized that Lagos is undergoing a transformation driven by strategic environmental initiatives.

“Lagos is not smelling; it is evolving towards sustainable waste processing, modernized landfill management, cleaner waterways, and structured sanitation systems,” Wahab stated.

“Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu’s administration remains steadfast in its commitment to building a resilient and livable city.”

The commissioner highlighted several steps taken by the government to address waste and sanitation challenges in the fast-growing megacity.

He said the Lagos State Waste Management Authority (LAWMA) has expanded waste collection services to hard-to-reach areas.

In partnership with Ibeju Lekki Local Government, Wahab said the state has introduced tricycle compactors for waste collection in areas with non-motorable roads. There are also plans to deploy 500 more of these compactors later this year.

To improve landfill management, he noted that Lagos will transition the Olusosun and Solous 3 landfills into Transfer Loading Stations over the next 18 months.

These stations, he said, will serve as hubs where waste will be sorted, compacted, and redirected for recycling.



Wahab said: “As part of its efforts to generate clean energy, the state is advancing its Waste-to-Energy project in Epe. This facility will process 2,500 tonnes of municipal solid waste daily and generate between 60 to 80 megawatts of electricity, contributing to the Lagos power grid.

“Lagos has also taken steps to reduce plastic waste. The state has banned styrofoam food packs and is gradually phasing out single-use plastics. Additionally, the government is encouraging manufacturers to adopt sustainable alternatives through Extended Producer Responsibilities (EPR).

“To monitor environmental conditions, over 50 air quality monitors have been installed across the state. The government is also implementing bio-remediation techniques to improve water quality in lagoons and canals. Furthermore, stricter regulations on industrial effluent discharge have resulted in a 25% reduction in pollution over the past two years.

“In addition to waste management, the state is prioritizing public sanitation and urban greening. To maintain clean streets, 15,000 street sweepers are

deployed daily across highways, inner roads, and markets.

“To curb open defecation and improve hygiene, the state is constructing 150 additional public toilets. Another 250 will be built through public-private partnerships.

“To enhance the city’s greenery, the Lagos Parks and Gardens Agency recently launched the “Trees for Lagos” initiative. Under this campaign, 50,000 trees will be planted over the next two years in key locations such as highways, schools, and hospitals.”

Wahab assured residents that Lagos remains at the forefront of waste recovery, recycling, and environmental sustainability.

“The state government has signed multiple agreements with international partners to develop waste-to-resource initiatives, ensuring Lagos stays ahead in environmental innovation,” he said.

He called on residents to support its efforts by adhering to waste disposal regulations and embracing a cleaner, greener lifestyle.

Ondo govt launches digital payment platform for revenue collection

By Friday Omosola

Ondo State Governor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa, has finalised plans to deploy a digital payment platform to streamline the collection of taxes and other government-related payments.

The initiative follows a strategic partnership between the state government through the Ondo State Internal Revenue Service (ODIRS) and BBA Consult Ltd., a consulting firm specializing in digital financial solutions.

Speaking after a demonstration meeting with BBA Consult at the Governor's Office in Akure, Governor Aiyedatiwa reaffirmed his administration's commitment to leveraging technology to improve revenue collection.

He emphasised that the new platform would not only enhance the ease of tax payments for individuals and businesses but also boost the state's overall revenue generation.

"This digital payment system will help curb leakages, improve compliance, and create a more transparent and accountable tax structure," the governor stated.

"With increased revenue, we will have the financial capacity to invest in critical infrastructure such as roads, healthcare, schools, and other essential public services."

Governor Aiyedatiwa also urged residents and businesses to embrace the new platform, assuring them of its security, ease of use, and long-term benefits for Ondo State's economic growth.



Providing further insights into the platform's functionality, the Director of BBA Consult Ltd., Maryam Abisola, explained that every taxpayer in the state would be assigned a unique taxpayer ID linked to their personal profile, including key details such as phone number, address, and age.

She assured residents that all records would remain confidential and accessible only to the individual taxpayer.

She described the platform as an all-in-one system designed to eliminate bottlenecks associated with manual payments, ensuring seamless transactions across various sectors.

Beyond tax payments, it will facilitate financial transactions related to commerce and industry, land and housing, billboard advertising, hospital management, natural resources, and education fees.

During a live demonstration, the consultant showcased how the governor, as the first registered taxpayer, could effortlessly generate and pay his annual tax bill.

The system offers multiple payment options, including card payments, bank transfers, USSD codes, and in-person transactions at designated banks.

Upon completion of a transaction, taxpayers can download receipts with unique verification codes, which tax officials can authenticate through the platform.

The demonstration event was attended by top government officials, including the Secretary to the State Government, Taye Fasoranti; Commissioner for Finance, Omowumi Isaac; Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Olukayode Ajulo, and the Chairman of the Internal Revenue Service, Bayo Rojgbokan.

Kogi jailbreak: One officer dead, 2 inmates recaptured – NCoS

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Nigeria Correctional Service (NCoS) has disclosed that it lost one of its officers during the jailbreak at the Koton Karfe Medium Security Custodial Centre in Kogi in the early hours of Monday.

The Service also revealed that two out of 12 inmates that escaped from the correctional centre have been rearrested.

The Service Public Relations Officer (SPRO), NCoS, Mr Abubakar Umar, made this known in an interview in Abuja.

Umar said efforts are being made to recapture the remaining 10 inmates.

Umar assured that a comprehensive



investigation had been launched to

unravel the circumstances surrounding the jail break.

“We are still investigating the circumstances surrounding the incident especially to determine how the inmates managed to break out without causing structural damage.

“Unfortunately, one of our officer lost his life during the incident.

“We are working closely with the police and other security agencies to ensure that the escaped inmates are rearrested and brought back to custody,” he said.

Bitcoin hits \$87,480 as crypto market rallies despite economic uncertainty

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

In Monday’s early trading, Bitcoin saw a significant uptick, reaching approximately \$87,480, marking a 3.71% increase. Ethereum also experienced notable growth, rising 4.05% to trade at \$2,093.

The overall cryptocurrency market capitalisation rose by 2.94% over the past 24 hours, now standing at a robust \$2.84 trillion. Despite concerns about upcoming U.S. tariffs and key economic data releases later this week, investor confidence in the crypto sector remains strong.

Other notable performers include XRP, Cardano, and Dogecoin, which posted gains of 3%, 2%, and 3.8%, respectively. Chainlink, Avalanche, Hedera, and Stellar also saw significant growth, with rises ranging from 3% to 10%.

“Bitcoin is holding above \$86,000, with a 3% gain today. The key resistance level to watch is \$86,700; a



breakout could push us toward \$90,000,” said Vikram Subburaj, CEO of Giottus.

Bitcoin’s market capitalisation surged to \$1.727 trillion, with dominance rising to 60.73%. Trading volume also spiked by 93%, reaching \$18.2 billion.

Solana stood out with a surge of over 7%, trading above \$139. This rally was driven by easing market concerns over President Trump’s April 2 tariffs, which may be more targeted than initially feared.

Solana’s growth is supported by unprecedented adoption, with its total value locked (TVL) hitting 54.87 million SOL, and over \$72 million recently bridged from Ethereum to Solana.

Institutional interest in Solana continues to rise, with two Solana futures ETFs launched on Nasdaq, and major asset managers like Franklin Templeton and VanEck applying for spot Solana ETFs.

Overall, the cryptocurrency market shows continued resilience, with optimistic projections for Bitcoin, with some experts predicting the asset could reach \$110,000 before a potential retest of \$76,500.

Anti-Tinubu coalition accuses INEC of blocking new party registration – Lukman

By Alade Adisa

A coalition of politicians from different factions and parties in the country has expressed frustration over attempts to get their political party registered for the 2027 general elections

The coalition consists of individuals opposed to the re-election bid of President Bola Tinubu.

In a statement on Monday, Salisu Mohammed Lukman, a former National Vice Chairman (Northwest) of the All Progressives Congress (APC), criticized the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for its reluctance to fulfill its responsibilities.

Leading the coalition are former Vice President and 2023 presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Alhaji Atiku Abubakar; former Anambra State Governor and 2023 presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), Mr. Peter Obi; former Governor of Kaduna State, Malam Nasir el-Rufai; and Tinubu's estranged ally and former Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Babachir Lawal.

They are joined by some aggrieved members of the APC, including former Governor of Nasarawa State and former National Chairman of the APC, Senator Abdullahi Adamu; former Rivers State Governor and ex-Minister of Transportation, Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi; and former Ekiti State Governor and ex-Minister of Solid Minerals, Dr. John Kayode Fayemi.

Lukman noted that while responding to a question during a press conference, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar confirmed that discussions on forming a coalition ahead of the 2027 general election were ongoing.

According to Lukman, this has generated widespread interest and national debate, with varied interpretations.

He stated that, to set the record straight, it was important to clarify that negotiations were ongoing and nothing had been finalized.

"Once concluded, formal announcements will be made with all the details regarding the composition of membership, the program of action for 2027, the



framework for contesting the 2027 elections, and other relevant matters.

"At this stage of negotiations, the primary focus is on getting leaders to agree to work together. There is a strong recognition that prospective members should set aside personal ambitions to contest the 2027 elections.

"The second key issue being negotiated is the political party that will serve as the platform for the 2027 electoral contest.

"These two issues are being carefully negotiated. While acknowledging that setting aside personal ambitions is a requirement, strong interests have been expressed regarding zoning by individual leaders. However, these issues have yet to be formally discussed at any consultation meeting.

"The speculation by some media analysts that disagreements have stalled the coalition negotiations is untrue. The consensus among leaders is that the final decision regarding candidate selection processes can only be addressed once an agreement is reached on the political party through which the coalition will field candidates.

"The negotiation over the choice of a political party remains the most challenging aspect. Many coalition members have been engaging in this discussion in different ways for over a year. It is also important to highlight that several groups, including some members of the coalition, have submitted

applications to register political parties.

"For reasons best known to INEC, these applications are being frustrated. The only logical conclusion is that INEC has decided not to register new parties.

"To make matters worse, many existing registered parties that failed to meet the electoral threshold of winning any seat in the last general elections face the threat of deregistration. Given this reality, members of the coalition have opened negotiations with some of the existing parties that have met the electoral threshold. Interestingly, some of these prospective parties are being remotely pushed into crisis, similar to the existential challenges faced by the PDP, Labour Party, and NNPP. This appears to be a deliberate effort to undermine the legal basis for any party other than the ruling APC to field candidates in 2027.

"The extent to which Nigeria's democratic space is rapidly shrinking is reminiscent of conditions under military rule. The determination and resilience of Nigerians are being called into question under the current APC-led government of President Tinubu.

"The leaders of the coalition are committed to providing the necessary leadership to rescue Nigeria's democracy. We must appeal to all patriotic Nigerians to recognize the urgency of the situation. We cannot afford to wait until 2027 only to discover that Nigerians have been legally boxed into a one-party state.

New coalition rallies political heavyweights against Tinubu's 2027 re-election bid

By Friday Omosola

Nigeria's 2027 presidential election is already shaping up to be a high-stakes contest, with various opposition figures coming together to form a formidable coalition aimed at unseating the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

At the forefront of this movement is a coalition led by former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, who has aligned with other political heavyweights including former Governor of Kaduna State, Nasir El-Rufai; 2023 Labour Party presidential candidate, Peter Obi; former Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Babachir David Lawal; former governorship aspirant in Ogun State, Segun Sowunmi; former Director-General of the Progressive Governors Forum (PGF), Dr. Salihu Lukman; Alhaji Adamu Maina Waziri; Chief Peter Ameh; and Soni Monidafe.

Announced last week by Atiku, the coalition is being touted as a potential game-changer in the build-up to the 2027 general elections. Atiku, the 2023 presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), has declared his commitment to leading a united front to challenge the APC and its presidential candidate.

Other prominent figures, including Lawal, Waziri, former Minister of Transportation Rotimi Amaechi, and former Ekiti State Governor Kayode Fayemi, are also reportedly aligning with the coalition's goals.

The primary objective of the coalition is to consolidate opposition forces and present a credible alternative to the ruling party. However, the question of who will emerge as the coalition's presidential candidate remains unresolved and is expected to be decided through internal primaries once the coalition



formalizes its structure.

According to political economist and opposition figure Pat Utomi, several disenchanted members of both the APC and PDP are in talks to join the coalition.

"The Social Democratic Party that you have referred to is a work in progress. About five other parties are going through similar processes. Also bear in mind that large numbers are preparing to leave the APC and PDP and have been reaching out. But the core must be firmly fixed," Utomi said.

Coalition-building is not new in Nigerian politics. The current ruling APC itself was born out of such an alliance. In 2013, parties including the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), and the new PDP (nPDP) came together to form the APC, which went on to defeat the then-ruling PDP in the 2015 presidential election. It marked the first time an opposition party unseated an incumbent government in Nigeria's democratic history.

However, previous coalition efforts have met with mixed success. In 1964, the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) — formed by the Action Group (AG) and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) — attempted to challenge the Northern People's Congress (NPC) but failed to achieve its goals. Similarly, in 2003, the Alliance for Democracy (AD) and the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) formed an alliance to oppose the PDP but were unsuccessful in their efforts.

As the 2027 elections approach, it remains to be seen whether this new coalition can replicate the APC's 2015 success or falter like its predecessors. Much will depend on its ability to unite behind a single candidate and platform.

Meanwhile, former Kano State Governor Ibrahim Shekarau has expressed skepticism about the viability of the coalition. In a statement obtained by The New Daily Prime, he said:

"This is just a gathering of certain individuals with political ambitions; none of them has officially consulted their party leadership

Fans react as Davido's Ghana performance sparks 'upcoming singer' comments

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian singer Davido's recent performance at the birthday party of Ghanaian billionaire Richard Nii Armah has triggered a wave of reactions online.

A viral video from the event has drawn mixed opinions, with some fans criticizing his vocal delivery while others rushed to his defence.

Criticism over vocal performance

Many social media users expressed disappointment in Davido's singing, claiming he did not sound like a seasoned artist. Some compared his vocals to those of an upcoming musician, arguing that his performance lacked energy and precision.

A user, @aremogucci001, wrote, "This one just be like upcoming." Another, @zhouv9, commented, "Zero vocals, noise always."

Some critics went further, questioning his ability to deliver live performances. @maxika99 stated, "I swear, this guy no sabi sing." @elon_musk1son sarcastically asked, "Where is the performance energy? Abi hin don too much banku when he come? God too bless Wizkid sha. Make non of us here lie."

Fans defend the singer

Despite the backlash, some fans came to Davido's defence, pointing out that the crowd's lack of engagement could have contributed to the dull atmosphere. One supporter, @phemonz_, noted, "These people don't show love at all as they can't sing along with him."

Another user, @kodakblaine2x, dismissed the criticisms, stating, "Always performing for big people. The other werey de mumu for Twitter."



Some fans also compared him to fellow Nigerian artist Wizkid, claiming Davido was unfairly judged. @creamycozy wrote, "Wizkid is their godfather, the father that fathered their fathers. Popsy dey ever give me reason to brag differently."

Concerns over Davido's voice

Others speculated that something might have been wrong with Davido's voice. @victoria_may_7 questioned, "What took his voice? Because I barely heard him say anything. Make artist dey lip-sync ein own song. Nawa for una 001."

The debate continued with varying opinions on whether the performance was subpar or simply misunderstood. Some pointed out that Davido has had many successful live performances in the past and that one event should not define his entire career.

A history of divisive reactions

Davido is no stranger to mixed reactions regarding his performances. While he has built a strong fanbase over the years, he has also faced criticism, particularly regarding his live vocals. His energetic

stage presence and ability to entertain large crowds have often made up for any vocal shortcomings.

However, this latest performance has reignited discussions about the importance of vocal delivery in live shows. Some believe that artists should always deliver high-quality live performances, while others argue that even the best musicians have off nights.

What's next for Davido?

Despite the online criticism, Davido remains one of Africa's biggest artists. His influence in the music industry continues to grow, and he has proven his ability to bounce back from setbacks.

As discussions continue, many are eager to see how he responds to the criticism. Will he address the concerns, or will he let his future performances speak for themselves? Only time will tell.

For now, fans and critics alike remain divided over his latest show, proving once again that when it comes to music, opinions will always differ.

Iyabo Ojo offers reward for return of Mercy Aigbe's missing phones

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



Delectable Nigerian actress, Iyabo Ojo has announced a financial reward for the return of the missing phones of her colleague, Mercy Aigbe.

The phones got lost during the star-studded premiere of Iyabo Ojo's latest movie, *Labake Olododo*, held at Imax Cinemas in Lekki, Lagos, on Sunday, March 23rd.

At the red carpet event which was attended by numerous celebrities, the celebrations took a sour turn when Mercy Aigbe discovered her two phones had gone missing.

According to reports, the phones were in the care of her assistant before they vanished.

In a video circulating online, the visibly upset actress was seen confronting her assistant over the loss.

During the event, Iyabo Ojo made a public appeal, urging anyone who found the phones to return them. She further incentivized the search by offering a financial reward for their recovery.

"Please, we are looking for phones. Did you help us see them? If anyone sees a phone that isn't theirs, I beg you to return it. I will personally give you money. Two phones, locate me, and I will give you money," Iyabo Ojo said.

The incident has stirred reactions from social media users, with many expressing empathy towards Mercy Aigbe while others criticized her assistant for negligence.

Actress Sarah Martins stated, "Losing two phones? The assistant should face some consequences for being extremely careless."

Joke Jigan added, "Two phones in this economy? That's unacceptable."

Others noted the importance of personal data, with one user stating, "It's not even about the money but the private information on those phones."

He stood by me when I was rejected – Daddy Freeze admits friendship with Hushpuppi

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular media personality Daddy Freeze has admitted his friendship with convicted Nigerian fraudster Ramon Abbas, also known as Hushpuppi.

This revelation comes years after he was criticized for associating with the now-jailed socialite.

Hushpuppi's rise and fall

Hushpuppi gained fame for flaunting a lavish lifestyle on social media. He was known for expensive designer outfits, luxury cars, and exotic vacations, presenting himself as a successful businessman. However, in 2020, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) arrested him in Dubai for orchestrating large-scale internet fraud. He was later extradited to the United States, where he pleaded guilty and received an 11-year prison sentence.

Daddy Freeze's past defense

Before Hushpuppi's arrest, Daddy Freeze visited him in Dubai in 2019. He shared videos of their meeting at Hushpuppi's luxurious Palazzo Versace residence on YouTube. The videos showed them dining and engaging in friendly conversations.

When news of Hushpuppi's crimes broke, Nigerians criticized Daddy Freeze for associating with him and allegedly promoting his extravagant lifestyle. At the time, Daddy Freeze defended himself, insisting he did not know about Hushpuppi's fraudulent activities. He described him as an influencer, not a criminal.

New admission: "I suspected his wealth"

However, in a video shared on Sunday by blogger Tunde Ednut, Daddy Freeze admitted that he suspected Hushpuppi's wealth was illegitimate. Despite this, he maintained their friendship.



"Hushpuppi never gave me a single dollar," he stated. "But he gave me friendship when nobody wanted to be my friend. At that time, people believed I was the devil."

Daddy Freeze recalled how he first met Hushpuppi. He said he was among a group of influencers invited to Dubai. However, he felt isolated because many influencers disliked him due to his controversial stance against religious leaders, which he called the #FreeTheSheeple movement.

According to him, even his church, where he had worshiped for a decade, rejected him. During this period of isolation, Hushpuppi reached out.

"He sent me a DM asking where I was and told me to come over," Daddy Freeze recounted. "We hung out with some friends, chatted, took pictures, and he put them on his Snapchat."

Justifying the friendship

When questioned about his continued association with Hushpuppi, Daddy

Freeze stood firm.

"Why wouldn't I be friends with someone who was my friend?" he asked. "How could I suddenly turn against him? Maybe I guessed that his money wasn't legitimate, but he was there for me when no one else was."

Quoting Nigerian musician Davido, he added, "'Dey for who dey for you'—stand by those who stand by you."

Public reactions

Daddy Freeze's latest admission has sparked mixed reactions. Some social media users believe he is being honest, while others argue that he should have distanced himself from Hushpuppi once he suspected foul play.

For years, Daddy Freeze has built a reputation for challenging popular beliefs, particularly on religious matters. His latest confession may add to his list of controversial moments. However, one thing remains clear: his friendship with Hushpuppi is a chapter he is unwilling to erase.

Despite decades in Nollywood, still not wealthy - Jide Kosoko

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Veteran Nollywood actor Jide Kosoko has revealed that despite spending over 60 years in the Nigerian film industry, he has not amassed significant wealth.

Speaking on The Honest Bunch podcast, the 71-year-old actor explained that while he lives comfortably, he does not consider himself rich by Nigerian standards.

“I have been in this industry for decades. I thank God that I can afford three square meals. But can I say I am a rich man in Nigeria? No,” he stated.

Piracy and its damage to Nollywood

Kosoko pointed to piracy as one of the biggest threats to the Nigerian movie industry. He urged the government to impose stricter penalties on those who profit from illegally distributing films.

“The punishment for piracy under the current copyright law is too weak,” he said. “Some of these pirates have made billions from stealing creative works. If you fine them N500 million, they can easily pay from what they have already made.”

He argued that only severe jail sentences could stop piracy. “If a 20-year prison term with no option of a fine is attached to piracy, people will think twice before engaging in it,” he added.

For years, Nollywood has suffered massive financial losses due to piracy. Many actors and producers struggle to earn fair compensation for their work because illegal copies of films flood the market soon after release.

A lifetime in the movie industry

Kosoko’s journey in entertainment started early. He began acting as a child in 1964 when he appeared in the



television production Makanjuola.

they deserve.

Over the years, he has starred in hundreds of Nollywood films, performing in both English and Yoruba movies. His contributions to the industry have made him one of Nigeria’s most respected actors.

Despite his fame and experience, Kosoko’s statement reflects the financial struggles many Nollywood actors face. Unlike Hollywood, where actors can earn millions from films, Nollywood performers often deal with lower pay and limited financial security.

The reality of Nollywood earnings

The veteran actor’s revelation sheds light on a growing concern in Nigeria’s entertainment sector. Many actors, directors, and producers struggle to make sustainable incomes despite the industry’s massive output.

Nollywood ranks among the world’s largest film industries, producing thousands of movies annually. However, the financial rewards do not always match the industry’s success. Limited funding, low cinema ticket prices, and widespread piracy hinder many filmmakers from earning what

Kosoko’s concerns about piracy echo the frustrations of many Nollywood professionals. While streaming platforms have provided some relief, illegal distribution remains a serious problem.

Calls for stronger copyright laws

Industry experts agree that stricter copyright laws are necessary to protect Nigerian filmmakers. Without stronger legal action, piracy will continue to undermine the hard work of actors, producers, and directors.

Kosoko’s call for tougher penalties adds to the ongoing conversation about Nollywood’s financial future. As the industry grows, addressing these issues will be key to ensuring that actors receive fair compensation for their work.

The veteran actor’s words serve as a reminder that fame does not always equal fortune. While Nollywood has brought him recognition, financial security remains a challenge — not just for him, but for many in the industry.

I'll always speak out against oppression, bad governance - Mr Macaroni

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian actor Mr Macaroni vows to keep speaking out against injustice and bad governance, reaffirming his long-standing commitment to activism.

He vowed to continue opposing oppression, a stance he had upheld long before gaining fame.

Mr Macaroni made this statement in a recent post on his X (formerly Twitter) account. He declared that he would not stop advocating for the people, regardless of the challenges.

“I will never stop speaking up against the oppression of the people and against bad governance. That is what I have always stood for, even before fame,” he wrote.

However, he cautioned against holding other celebrities to the same standard. He stressed that activism is a personal choice and should not be forced on public figures.

“But please do not hold other celebrities to the same standard, especially when the people themselves are not accountable,” he added.

A history of activism

Mr Macaroni has built a reputation as one of Nigeria's most vocal entertainers. He frequently uses his platform to call out government



failures and demand justice for ordinary citizens.

During the 2020 #EndSARS protests against police brutality, he played a major role in mobilizing youths. He was arrested during a demonstration at the Lekki Toll Gate and later shared his experience of police brutality.

Since then, he has remained outspoken on social issues. He often criticizes corruption, police misconduct, and poor governance. His activism has earned him both praise and backlash from different sections of the public.

The pressure on celebrities

In his post, Mr Macaroni pointed out the unfair pressure placed on celebrities. Many expect public figures to take a stand on political and social issues. However, he argued that responsibility for change lies with everyone, not just a few famous

individuals.

His statement sparked reactions online, with some agreeing that activism should be a personal choice. Others, however, believe celebrities must use their influence for positive change.

A consistent voice

Despite the debates, Mr Macaroni remains committed to his cause. He continues to use comedy and social media to highlight societal problems. His skits often address police harassment, corruption, and abuse of power.

As Nigeria faces economic hardship and political uncertainty, voices like his remain crucial. Whether or not others join him, Mr Macaroni has made it clear—his fight against injustice is far from over.

Nigerian music industry demands resilience – Jaywon

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian Afrobeats star Jaywon shares his thoughts on dealing with social media trolls, urging celebrities to develop thick skin and stay strong.

He believes the best approach is to develop thick skin and not let online criticism affect their careers.

The music industry, according to Jaywon, is not for the weak. He stressed that any artist who cannot handle public scrutiny will struggle to survive. He pointed to global superstars like Davido, Wizkid, and Burna Boy, who constantly face online attacks but continue to thrive.

Jaywon speaks on social media pressure
On Sunday, Jaywon took to his X handle to share his thoughts. He revealed that many of his colleagues reach out to him for advice on navigating the harsh realities of social media. His response remains the same:

“Today’s industry is not for the weak.”

Jaywon highlighted how even top artists deal with heavy criticism. He explained that disrespect and negativity are part of the entertainment world, especially in the digital age. He believes that any artist hoping to last in the industry must be mentally prepared for it.

Quitting social media is not the solution

Despite the challenges, he advised against quitting social media. Instead, he encouraged artists to use these platforms to promote their music and build their brands. He acknowledged that leaving social media might seem like an escape, but in reality, it is not an option for artists. He wrote:

“Just look at the level of disrespect thrown at artists like Davido, Wizkid,



Burna Boy, and many others on social media. If you’re not prepared, you won’t last. They will always come for you, and the only real escape is to go offline. But we can’t do that. This is our life, our craft, and no matter what, we will keep pushing forward!”

The dark side of fame

Jaywon’s statement sheds light on the struggles musicians face beyond their music careers. Social media, while a powerful tool for promotion, also exposes artists to constant judgment. Many entertainers face insults, false rumors, and harsh criticism from anonymous users. These attacks can sometimes lead to anxiety, depression, or even career setbacks if not handled properly.

By mentioning Davido, Wizkid, and Burna Boy, Jaywon illustrated how even the biggest names are not immune to online negativity. Despite their massive success, they still face scrutiny from fans and critics alike. Yet, they continue to dominate the industry, proving that resilience is key.

Mental strength is essential

Jaywon’s advice comes at a time when many artists struggle with the pressures

of social media. Some entertainers have taken breaks or completely withdrawn from these platforms due to intense criticism. However, he believes that staying active and focused on one’s craft is the best way forward.

His message resonates beyond the music industry. Public figures from different fields, including actors, influencers, and athletes, also deal with similar online challenges. The rise of social media has given fans direct access to celebrities, making them more vulnerable to public opinions.

A lesson for aspiring artists

Jaywon’s perspective aligns with those who advocate for mental strength in the entertainment world. While ignoring trolls is easier said than done, developing resilience can help artists maintain their careers without being emotionally drained.

For aspiring musicians and young artists, his words serve as a crucial reminder: criticism is inevitable, but perseverance is the key to success. The music industry rewards those who remain dedicated despite challenges. Those who let online negativity control them risk losing sight of their goals.

Final thoughts

In an era where social media plays a massive role in shaping public perception, Jaywon’s advice is both timely and relevant. He urges artists to stay strong, focus on their work, and continue pushing forward despite the noise.

Gospel singer, Steve Crown announces engagement with lover

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian gospel singer Steve Crown has shared exciting news with his fans—he is officially engaged.

The singer announced his engagement in an Instagram post on Sunday night, accompanied by a touching video of his proposal.

A symbolic proposal

In the video, Crown is seen placing a crown on his fiancée's head while they hold hands affectionately. The moment was filled with love and symbolism, representing his deep commitment to his future wife.

Sharing his joy, Crown described this as the beginning of his best days. He expressed gratitude and excitement for this new chapter in his life. "Officially off the market," he wrote. "Two hearts fused by God. A walk to forever and the beginning of my best days."

Fans and colleagues react

Following the announcement, social media buzzed with congratulatory messages. Friends, fellow musicians, and fans expressed their happiness for the gospel star. Many praised the creativity and meaning behind his proposal, calling it both romantic and inspiring.



Some colleagues in the gospel music industry left heartfelt comments, wishing him and his fiancée a lifetime of love and happiness. Fans also shared their excitement, with many eager to learn more about the woman who captured his heart.

The mystery fiancée

Despite the joyous announcement, Steve Crown has not yet revealed the identity of his fiancée. This has sparked curiosity among his followers, who are eager to see the woman behind the engagement.

Speculation is already growing on social media, with fans wondering when he will introduce her to the public. Many are hopeful that he will share more details soon, perhaps even revealing their wedding plans.

A new chapter for Steve Crown

Steve Crown is known for his uplifting gospel music and deep spirituality. His engagement marks a new phase in his life, one that his supporters are thrilled to witness.

As excitement builds, fans continue to send well wishes. Many believe that his marriage will not only bring him happiness but also inspire others with his love story.

For now, the gospel singer remains focused on celebrating this special moment. His followers eagerly await the next update, hoping to finally meet the woman who has won his heart.

Congratulations continue to pour in for Steve Crown as he embarks on this beautiful journey of love and commitment.

Legendary actor, Depardieu faces sexual assault trial in Paris

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

French actor, Gérard Depardieu went on trial Monday in Paris on charges of sexually assaulting two women on a movie set, in a case seen as a potential watershed for the #MeToo movement in France.

Depardieu, 76, is accused of having groped a 54-year-old set dresser and a 34-year-old assistant director during filming in 2021 of “Les Volets Verts” (“The Green Shutters”).

The actor faces up to five years in prison and a 75,000 euros (\$81,000) fine if convicted.

Depardieu, who denies any wrongdoing, told the judges that he was prepared to answer the court’s questions.

“We will be able to show in an impartial, objective and incontestable manner that all of the accusations are lies,” his attorney, Jérémie Assous, told journalists massed outside the courtroom.

“The truth will be obvious and the truth is on our side,” he said.

Prosecutors say Depardieu trapped the set dresser with his legs before groping her waist and breasts in front of witnesses. She says the actor also used obscene language and had to be pulled away by bodyguards.

The assistant director alleged that Depardieu groped her both on set and in the street.

The women sat side by side in court. The Associated Press doesn’t name people who say they were sexually assaulted unless they consent to being identified. Neither has in this case.

France has often been ambivalent — even resistant — toward the #MeToo movement. While Hollywood saw powerful men fall swiftly and publicly, the French film industry was slower to respond.



Some dismissed #MeToo as an American export incompatible with French values, citing concerns over free expression and what they viewed as an erosion of flirtation culture.

At the time of the alleged assaults, Depardieu was already under formal investigation for rape. In 2018, actor Charlotte Arnould accused him of raping her at his home. That case is still active, and in August 2024, prosecutors requested that it go to trial.

The sexual assault trial that opened Monday is expected to last at least two days, but could be extended beyond Tuesday, if the chief judge wants more time.

The trial was initially scheduled for October, but then postponed because of Depardieu’s health. A verdict is expected at a later date.

Depardieu grasped his lawyer’s shoulder as he strode calmly into the courtroom. The actor has undergone a quadruple heart bypass and has diabetes, according to his lawyer.

A court-appointed medical expert determined that he’s fit to stand trial, but recommended that the hearings don’t exceed six hours, with a 15-minute pause and snack every three hours.

This is the first time that Depardieu, one of France’s most prominent film actors, has been tried over sexual assault allegations. He has previously been accused publicly or in formal complaints of misconduct by more than 20 women, but no other case has proceeded to court. Some were dropped because of a lack of evidence or the statute of limitations.

Carine Durrieu Diebolt, the lawyer for one of the two plaintiffs, said on France Info radio that her client “is calmly awaiting the outcome of the case ... because the case is solid.”

Durrieu Diebolt said that four additional women who say they have been sexually assaulted by Depardieu will speak at the trial.

In an open letter published in Le Figaro in October 2023, Depardieu wrote: “Never, but never, have I abused a woman.”

Campaigners for women’s rights demonstrated outside the courthouse. A dozen performed a choreographed dance to techno music while chanting: “Sexist violence, complicit judicial system.”

Depardieu had dropped out of sight in recent months, his film career seemingly on hold. But he still has friends in the industry. Actors Vincent Perez and Fanny Ardant were among those who took seats on his side of the courtroom.

Nigerians risk permanent ban, criminal prosecution for overstaying visas - US

By Dave Oludare Oso

The United States government has issued a stern warning to Nigerian travelers about the severe consequences of overstaying their visa, emphasising that violators could face permanent bans from re-entering the country and criminal prosecution.

The US Mission in Nigeria posted the warning via its X on Monday.

The immigration authorities have clarified that consular officers can access an individual's full immigration history, making it nearly impossible to avoid penalties for past violations.

They further emphasised that travelers are responsible for adhering to the terms of their visa and that ignorance of visa regulations will not be accepted as an excuse.

The post read, "If you overstay your US visa, you could face a permanent ban on traveling to the United States. Consular officers have full access to your immigration history and will know about past violations. There is no such thing as an "honest mistake" – it is your responsibility to use your visa correctly."

It further emphasised that US consular officers have full access to individuals' immigration history and past violations.

The statement added, "Consular officers have full access to your immigration history and will know about past violations."

"There is no such thing as an "honest mistake" – it is your responsibility to use your visa correctly."



US immigration laws and policies have undergone significant changes since President Donald Trump took over power.

Recall also that Trump's presidency between 2017–2021 saw the introduction of strict immigration enforcement measures, many of which continued under subsequent administrations.

One of Trump's most controversial actions was the implementation of the "zero tolerance" policy, which resulted in the prosecution of all illegal border crossings and led to family separations.

Additionally, the travel ban, commonly known as the "Muslim Ban", restricted entry from several predominantly Muslim countries, including Nigeria, though it was later lifted by President Joe Biden in 2021.

In 2019, the Trump administration imposed stricter public charge rules,

making it harder for immigrants to obtain green cards if they relied on government assistance.

Furthermore, in 2020, citing the COVID-19 pandemic, the administration enacted the Title 42 policy, which allowed for rapid expulsion of migrants at the border without asylum hearings.

While President Biden has reversed or modified some of these policies, visa overstay penalties remain stringent.

The US government continues to emphasise legal compliance, warning that individuals who violate their visa terms risk severe immigration consequences.

This latest warning highlights the ongoing US strict enforcement of visa and immigration regulations since Trump's current administration

Fix potholes or lose funding, PM Starmer orders UK councils

By Fatimah Idera

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said that starting Monday, local authorities in England will be required to publish annual reports laying out the state of their roads and how many potholes they've managed to fill, as failure will risk crucial funding.

Starmer said the move would force councils to 'prove they're delivering for their communities' as If they don't, they face missing out on a share of £1.6 billion in highway maintenance funding from the government, which includes half a billion pounds specifically for tackling potholes.

But the Local Government Association (LGA) has said many English councils are already struggling to work out how they'll balance their budget for next year.

Recall that earlier this month, it was revealed that completely fixing pothole-pocked roads across England and Wales could cost around £17 billion and take 12 years.

A survey from the Asphalt Industry Alliance also found one in six miles of local highways has less than five years of structural life left and it cost of restoring britains roads back to a good condition had reached 16.8 billion euro, a record high.

On Monday, Transport Secretary, Heidi Alexander announced £4.8 billion funding for National Highways over the coming year, which will go towards maintenance as well as new road projects.

Starmer Explains Reasons for the policy

Sir keir said: "Potholes are an ugly scar on Britain's roads. They're dangerous. And they cost families, drivers and businesses hundreds,



sometimes thousands, in repairs. They're a visible sign of decline under 14 years of Tory chaos, allowing our infrastructure to crumble and never bothering to make the basics work for working people."

"This government is on the side of drivers. That's why we've frozen fuel duty. And I know the state of our roads affects millions of people and businesses across the country. Whether you're trying to get to work or take your kids to school, or whether you drive a delivery van that businesses rely on, people depend on our roads for their lives and livelihoods.

"At the budget last year, the Chancellor announced a record 1.6 billion investment to maintain our roads. That's £500m higher than the previous sum. It's enough to fill an extra 7 million potholes this year alone. Our message to local councils was clear – you have the funding, now get it fixed.

"But we need to go further and faster. That's why today we're announcing £4.8 billion to invest in our road infrastructure. We'll make transport easier and more efficient

for everyone who relies on our roads, from commuters to companies.

"We've also given the go ahead for major road schemes that have been sitting gathering dust on desks for too long. We'll upgrade roads across the country to deliver smoother, safer journeys for drivers. It's not just the roads we're sorting out. We're committed to rebuilding Britain, so we'll fast-track 150 major infrastructure parliaments in the next five years. That's more than the last 14 years combined. We're getting shovels in the ground to build new railways, grid connections, hospitals, schools – and 1.5 million new homes.

"And they'll all be well served with good roads to connect the country.

"However the public deserves to know how their councils are improving their local roads, which is why they will have to show progress or risk losing 25% of their £500m funding boost. This is part of my Plan for Change. We're rebuilding Britain, boosting growth and improving people's lives."

Britain pledges 600 million pounds to tackle construction skills shortages

By **Fatimah Idera**

Britain had announced plans to invest 600 million pounds (\$775 million) to train more construction workers and help tackle severe skills shortages that could undermine its plan to build 1.5 million homes by 2029 and boost economic growth.

House Building and improving British infrastructure are key parts of the Labour government's growth strategy. Construction represents around 6% of gross domestic product, but underpins growth in other sectors.

"We are determined to get Britain building again, that's why we are taking on the blockers to build 1.5 million new homes and rebuild our roads, rail and energy infrastructure," finance minister Rachel Reeves said in comments emailed by the Treasury on Saturday.

"We've overhauled the planning system that is holding this country back, now we are gripping the lack of skilled construction workers."

Britain's struggle to fill construction jobs was exacerbated by the 2016 Brexit vote and later COVID-19, which has led to higher vacancy levels than before the pandemic



Official figures published earlier this week showed there were 38,000 construction vacancies in the three months to February.

Many skilled workers are also nearing retirement age. The Construction Products Association estimates that the industry will lose 500,000 employees, representing 25% of the total workforce, to retirement over the next 10 to 15 years.

The government said it would spend 165 million pounds of the planned investment to deliver more construction courses at colleges, and 100 million pounds to upskill existing, new and returning workers.

The Construction Industry Training

Board, which represents homebuilding as well as infrastructure sectors, will contribute an additional 32 million pounds to fund over 40,000 industry placements a year over the next four years.

The government expects the total package to train up to 60,000 bricklayers, electricians, engineers, and carpenters by 2029.

Reeves is likely to announce belt-tightening measures to get back on track to meet her fiscal rules when she delivers her spring statement next Wednesday alongside new economic and public finance forecasts from Britain's fiscal watchdog.

Outrage after White House accidentally texts journalist Yemen strike plans

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The White House has confirmed that a journalist inadvertently was added to a group chat in which US national security officials planned a strike against the Houthi rebel group.

Jeffrey Goldberg, editor-in-chief of The Atlantic, reported on Monday that he was added to a Signal message group that included accounts labelled as White House National Security Adviser Michael Waltz and Vice-President JD Vance.

“At this time, the message thread that was reported appears to be authentic,” Brian Hughes, a spokesman for the National Security Council, said in a statement to the BBC. “We are reviewing how an inadvertent number was added to the chain.

“The thread is a demonstration of the deep and thoughtful policy co-ordination between senior officials,” he said.

President Donald Trump told reporters on Monday afternoon that he was not aware of the Atlantic magazine article.

On 15 March, the US launched what it described as a “decisive and powerful” series of air strikes against the Houthis in Yemen.

Four days earlier, on 11 March, Goldberg writes that he received a connection request on the encrypted messaging app Signal from an account that purported to be Mr Waltz’s.

Signal is used by journalists and Washington officials because of the secure nature of its communications, the ability to create aliases, and sent disappearing messages.

Two days later, Goldberg said he was added to a Signal chat entitled “Houthi PC small group.”

A number of accounts that appeared to belong to cabinet members and national security officials were included in the chat, Goldberg reported.

Accounts labelled “JD Vance,” the name of the vice-president; “Pete Hegseth,” the Defence Secretary; and “John Ratcliffe,” the director of the Central Intelligence Agency; were among names in the chat. Top national security officials from various agencies also



appeared to be added.

At one point during the communication over the strikes, the account labelled “JD Vance” seemed to disagree with Trump, Goldberg reported.

“I am not sure the president is aware how inconsistent this is with his message on Europe right now,” the Vance account wrote at approximately 8:15 on 14 March.

“There’s a further risk that we see a moderate to severe spike in oil prices.

“I am willing to support the consensus of the team and keep these concerns to myself.

“But there is a strong argument for delaying this a month, doing the messaging work on why this matters, seeing where the economy is, etc.”

In a statement to the BBC on Monday, Vance spokesman William Martin said the vice-president “unequivocally supports this administration’s foreign policy.

“The president and the vice-president have had subsequent conversations about this matter and are in complete agreement,” Martin said.

Goldberg writes that he initially “had very strong doubts that this text group was real, because I could not believe that the national-security leadership of the United States would communicate on Signal about imminent war

plans.”

Yet Mr Goldberg reports he continued to watch the conversation play out.

On 15 March, he writes that he was sitting in a supermarket car park, watching Signal communications about a strike.

When Mr Goldberg checked X for updates about Yemen, he wrote, he saw reports of explosions in the capital city of Sanaa.

The Trump administration did launch strikes on 15 March. In a Truth Social post, Trump wrote that “Funded by Iran, the Houthi thugs have fired missiles at US aircraft, and targeted our Troops and Allies”.

The president wrote that the Houthis’ “piracy, violence, and terrorism” had cost “billions” and put lives at risk.

A Houthi official posted on X that 53 people had been killed, the BBC reported.

Publicly, Trump administration officials fanned out on television to speak about the strikes.

“We just hit them with overwhelming force and put Iran on notice that enough is enough,” Waltz said on ABC News.

The US strikes against the Houthis have been ongoing. They launched additional strikes against the Houthis overnight into Monday, the Associated Press reported.

US, Russia begin talks on Ukraine ceasefire in Saudi Arabia

By Dave Oludare Oso

US and Russian officials have begun talks in Saudi Arabia as Donald Trump pushes to broker a limited ceasefire that Washington hopes will mark the first step toward lasting peace in Ukraine.

Ukraine and Russia have agreed in principle to a one-month halt on strikes on energy infrastructure after Trump spoke with the countries' leaders last week. But uncertainty remains over how and when the partial ceasefire would take effect – and whether its scope would extend beyond energy infrastructure to include other critical sites, such as hospitals, bridges, and vital utilities.

US officials held initial talks with Ukraine on Sunday evening and negotiated separately with Russia on Monday, with most meetings taking place at the Ritz-Carlton hotel in Riyadh. Monday's talks were still going after more than eight hours, according to Russian state media.

The US is expected to shuttle between the two countries to finalise details and negotiate separate measures to ensure the safety of shipping in the Black Sea. "The ultimate goal is a 30-day ceasefire, during which time we discuss a permanent ceasefire. We're not far away from that," said the US special envoy Steve Witkoff in a podcast with the far-right commentator Tucker Carlson over the weekend.

Moscow meanwhile appears to be exploiting the window before any ceasefire takes hold, launching mass drone attacks on Ukraine on Monday. Ukrainian officials said that a Russian missile had also damaged a school and a hospital in Ukraine's north-eastern city of Sumy, wounding at least 74 people including 13 children.

"Moscow speaks of peace while carrying out brutal strikes on densely populated residential areas in major Ukrainian cities," the country's foreign minister, Andrii Sybiha, said. "Instead of making hollow statements about peace, Russia must stop bombing our cities and end its war on civilians."

The Ukrainian and US delegations on Sunday discussed proposals to protect



energy facilities and critical infrastructure, Ukraine's defence minister said.

Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said his country's delegation to Sunday's talks was working in "a completely constructive manner", adding: "The conversation is quite useful, the work of the delegations is continuing."

Zelenskyy earlier said he would hand the US a list of energy infrastructure that would be off-limits for strikes by the Russian military.

The Ukrainian delegation could hold additional discussions with US officials on Monday. "We are implementing the president of Ukraine's directive to bring a just peace closer and to strengthen security," Rustem Umerov, the Ukrainian defence minister who heads the country's delegation, said on Facebook.

Russia is represented in the talks by Sergey Beseda, a secretive adviser to Russia's FSB services and Grigory Karasin, a former diplomat who negotiated the 2014 Minsk accords between Russia and Ukraine.

As the Russia-US talks began in Riyadh, Trump said he expected Washington and Kyiv to sign a revenue-sharing agreement on Ukrainian critical minerals soon.

Trump also told reporters the US was talking to Ukraine about the potential for its firms to own Ukrainian power plants.

Ukrainian officials have backed the signing of a minerals deal, but Zelenskyy

has publicly rejected the idea of US firms owning Ukrainian power plants.

The lead-up to the talks was marked by a series of controversial pro-Russian statements by Witkoff – tapped by Trump as his personal envoy to Putin – in which he appeared to legitimise Russia's staged referendums in four Ukrainian regions.

Speaking with Carlson, Witkoff claimed that in the four regions where Moscow held widely condemned referendums on joining Russia, "the overwhelming majority of the people have indicated that they want to be under Russian rule."

The referendums in Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia provinces were widely rebuked in the west as illegitimate and are viewed as a thinly veiled attempt to justify Russia's illegal annexation of the regions. Their annexation marked the largest forcible seizure of territory in Europe since the second world war.

In the interview with Carlson, Witkoff also claimed Putin had commissioned a portrait of Trump "by a leading Russian painter" that the envoy had brought back with him after a trip to Moscow.

Witkoff went on to say that after the assassination attempt on Trump last July, Putin told him that he visited his local church, met his priest and prayed for Trump. "Not because he was the president of the United States or could become the president of the United States, but because he had a friendship with him and he was praying for his friend," Witkoff said.

"I don't regard Putin as a bad guy. That is a complicated situation, that war and all the ingredients that led up to it," he added.

Witkoff's willingness to echo Kremlin talking points and his praise for Putin are likely to heighten anxiety in Ukraine and across European capitals.

In an interview with Time magazine published on Monday but conducted before Witkoff's remarks, Zelenskyy said some US officials had begun to take Putin at his word even when it contradicted their own intelligence.

Trump accuses British artist of painting 'truly worst' portrait of him

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

President claims Sarah Boardman 'must have lost her talent as she got older', despite previous artwork of Barack Obama and George W. Bush

Donald Trump has called for a portrait of himself to be taken down from the Colorado State capitol, lashing out at the artist for "truly the worst" attempt to capture his features.

"Nobody likes a bad picture or painting of themselves," the president wrote, but the Colorado portrait was "purposely distorted to a level that even I, perhaps, have never seen before."

The painting depicts the president with a "serious, thoughtful, non-confrontational" expression, Sarah Boardman, the British artist, said after it was commissioned in 2018.

In the artwork, Trump's lips are softly pursed, his cheeks and chin a little pudgy, and his hair less buoyant than in the president's preferred portraits (several of which he subsequently posted).

"The artist also did President Obama," Trump wrote, "and he looks wonderful, but the one on me is truly the worst."

He added: "She must have lost her talent as she got older."

There was little sign of dissent when the artwork was unveiled in August 2019. John Cooke, a Republican state senator, said the piece showed "the strength of the American spirit."

In the commissioning process, Ms Boardman presented the capitol building advisory committee with two sketches and four photographs to choose the basis of the image from. They agreed with her preferred option, shunning a snapshot of



the president looking "marginally less confident."

Speaking to the Colorado Times Recorder, the artist said her feelings on Trump played no part in the creative process.

"It is the portrait, likeness, and 'essence' of the subject which I strive to portray," she said. "Any personal feelings about any subject are not relevant and are left outside the studio per my training to 'leave those emotions at the door'."

Ms Boardman added there was always opposition to her portraits from political opponents of the president in question.

Sarah Boardman

Sarah Boardman's artwork has been sharply criticised by her subject, Trump
Credit: AP

"There will always be anger at a president from one side or the other. It is human nature," she said.

But she said the anger was "directed at the subject, not the actual piece of art, as it

is/will be with this portrait of Trump."

On Sunday night, the president upended this status quo. Making the point about the kind of representations he prefers, he posted the official portrait from his second term in which he appears with his jaw clenched, chin tucked in and eyes steeled below a determined frown.

In Mar-a-Lago, a painting dubbed The Visionary shows the young president in tennis whites and bathed in glorious light. The artist Ralph Wolfe Cowan was known for his depictions of monarchs.

'The Visionary' greets visitors to Mar-a-lago Credit: Ralph Wolfe Cowan

"Nobody ever dislikes my portraits," Cowan told Town and Country magazine. "I know how to make them 'healthy' is the way I put it."

In his complaint on TruthSocial about the Colorado portrait, Trump said: "I would much prefer not having a picture than this one."

First black Republican congresswoman, Mia Love dies at 49

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The first US black Republican congresswoman, Mia Love, has died aged 49 in Utah.

Announcing the death, her family stated, “She passed away peacefully” on Sunday, surrounded by family at her home in the town of Saratoga Springs.”

Love, a daughter of Haitian immigrants, had represented the state of Utah in the House of Representatives.

Her daughter, Abigale said earlier this month that Love had no longer been responding to treatment for brain cancer.

The family statement, which was posted on X stated, “In the midst of a celebration of her life and an avalanche of happy memories, Mia quietly slipped the bands of mortality and, as her words and vision always did, soared heavenward.”

Paying tributes to Love, Utah Governor Spencer Cox wrote: “A true trailblazer and visionary leader, Mia inspired countless Utahns through her courage, grace, and unwavering belief in the American dream.

“Her legacy leaves a lasting, positive impact on our state. We will miss her deeply.”

Mia Love’s political career formally started in 2003 when she won a seat on the Saratoga Springs’ city council, and she later became the mayor, aged 34.



In 2014, she was elected to the US House of Representatives. She made history as the first black Republican woman to take up the role, and served two terms.

Love was critical of Donald Trump when he was running for president in 2016, endorsing instead his Republican nomination rival, Texas Senator Ted Cruz, who dropped out of the race a few months later.

She also called for Trump to publicly apologise for making derogatory comments about Haiti in 2018.

Her bid for a third term ended in a razor-thin defeat to her Democratic rival, Ben McAdams.

Trump reacted to that by saying at a news conference: “Mia Love gave me no love, and she lost.”

Before entering politics, the mother of three worked for some time as a flight attendant.

As a teenager, she dreamed of an acting career, later graduating from the University of Hartford in Connecticut with a degree in musical theatre.

In 2022, Love was diagnosed with glioblastoma, a fast-moving and aggressive form of brain cancer, and was given just 10-15 months to live – which she surpassed.

Her death comes nearly two weeks after Love wrote an opinion piece for Deseret News, which she said was “not to say goodbye but to say thank you and express my living wish for you and the America I know.”

Greenland leaders slam U.S. delegation visit amid Trump's annexation remarks

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Greenlandic leaders have sharply criticised the planned visit of a high-profile U.S. delegation to the semi-autonomous Danish territory, which President Donald Trump has previously suggested the U.S. should annex.

The delegation, set to visit later this week, includes Usha Vance, wife of Vice President JD Vance, White House national security adviser Mike Waltz, and Energy Secretary Chris Wright.

The visit is scheduled to include a trip to the U.S. military base at Pituffik and attendance at Greenland's national dogsled race.

Greenland's outgoing Prime Minister Mute Egede described the visit as a "provocation" and confirmed that his caretaker government would not meet with the American delegation.

In comments to local newspaper *Sermitsiaq*, Egede expressed frustration, stating, "Until recently, we could trust the Americans, who were our allies and friends, and with whom we enjoyed working closely. But that time is over."

Greenland is currently in a caretaker government period following a general election on March 11, which was won by the pro-business Democrats.

The party advocates for a more gradual approach to the island's independence from Denmark.

Jens-Frederik Nielsen, leader of the Democrats, also expressed concern over the timing of the U.S. visit, which comes during coalition talks and ahead of upcoming municipal elections.



He accused the delegation of showing a "lack of respect for the Greenlandic people."

The U.S. delegation, led by Vance, is expected to visit Pituffik, the U.S. military base in Greenland, where they will receive briefings from American service members.

Following that, the group will tour historical sites and attend the national dogsled race, an event that the U.S. sponsors.

White House National Security Council spokesperson Brian Hughes downplayed any tensions, stating, "This is a visit to learn about Greenland, its culture, history, and people, and to attend a dogsled race the United States is proud to sponsor, plain and simple."

However, the visit comes against the backdrop of controversial remarks from President Trump, who has made the annexation of Greenland a repeated talking point since his second term began.

Trump has suggested that Greenland, with its strategic location and rich mineral resources, could be beneficial to the U.S. The island's position along the shortest route from Europe to North America is seen as crucial for U.S. ballistic missile defence systems.

Both the governments of Greenland and Denmark have repeatedly voiced opposition to Trump's proposal. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen responded to news of the visit, stressing that "this is something we take seriously."

While Denmark is open to cooperation with the U.S., she emphasised that such cooperation must adhere to the "fundamental rules of sovereignty."

Frederiksen added that any discussions regarding Greenland would be conducted in close coordination with both Denmark and Greenland's future government.

Oil prices edge up as investors weigh U.S. sanctions, ceasefire talks

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Oil prices saw a modest increase on Monday as investors weighed the potential impacts of new U.S. sanctions on Iranian exports against ongoing ceasefire talks aimed at resolving the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which could boost Russian oil supplies to global markets.

By 0735 GMT, Brent crude futures had risen by 4 cents to \$72.20 per barrel, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude gained 8 cents, or 0.1%, reaching \$68.36. Earlier in the day, prices had fallen slightly.

Both benchmarks had closed higher on Friday, marking a second consecutive week of gains. The uptick was driven by the fresh U.S. sanctions on Iran and a new output plan from the OPEC+ group, which raised expectations of tighter oil supply.

Improved Market Sentiment

The market sentiment towards oil prices has improved recently, largely due to a technical rebound from previous oversold conditions.

IG market strategist Yeap Jun Rong attributed the shift to the heightened supply risks caused by U.S. sanctions on Iranian exports, along with growing optimism that U.S. reciprocal tariffs might be less severe than initially anticipated.

Iran's oil exports, particularly to China, are expected to fall in the near term due to the latest U.S. sanctions targeting a privately-owned refiner and tankers.

These measures have driven up shipping costs. However, traders anticipate that buyers will seek alternative routes to maintain some level of Iranian crude imports.

Mixed Demand-Supply Outlook

Despite recent gains, the broader demand-supply outlook for oil remains uncertain. Yeap noted that the ongoing



ceasefire talks between Ukraine and Russia could lead to increased Russian oil exports if a resolution is reached, while the planned output increase by OPEC+ as early as April suggests further supply additions to the market.

A U.S. delegation is set to meet with Russian officials on Monday in a bid to make progress on a ceasefire in the Black Sea region and a broader cessation of violence in the ongoing war in Ukraine. This follows discussions held with Ukrainian diplomats on Sunday.

OPEC+ Production Cuts

Oil prices also reflect concerns over OPEC+'s upcoming production trends. On Thursday, the organisation announced new schedules for seven member nations to implement further oil output cuts to compensate for production levels that exceeded agreed limits.

These additional cuts will surpass the planned production hikes scheduled for April.

Since 2022, OPEC+ has been working to support the market by cutting output by 5.85 million barrels per day, around 5.7% of global supply. On March 3, the group confirmed that eight of its members would increase production by 138,000 barrels per day starting in April, citing

improved market fundamentals.

Investor Caution Amid Uncertainty

Toshitaka Tazawa, an analyst at Fujitomi Securities, pointed out that while expectations for progress in peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, along with the potential easing of U.S. sanctions on Russian oil, had put downward pressure on prices, investors are still hesitant to take large positions in the market.

This caution is driven by uncertainty surrounding OPEC+'s production strategies beyond April.

Additionally, BP's upcoming shareholder meeting on April 17 is expected to see activist investor Follow This call for a vote against the reappointment of BP Chair Helge Lund, as part of ongoing debates about the company's environmental and sustainability strategies.

As the situation develops, investors continue to monitor geopolitical tensions, supply risks, and OPEC+ production plans closely, all of which will play a critical role in shaping oil market dynamics in the coming months.

Starmer's Ukraine peacekeeping plans criticised as "Political Theatre"

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Sir Keir Starmer's proposal for a "coalition of the willing" to keep the peace in Ukraine has been dismissed by military sources and critics as "political theatre" and "posturing" with little substance.

The UK Prime Minister introduced the peacekeeping initiative earlier this month, suggesting that several countries were prepared to enforce any peace deal between Russia and Ukraine.

However, his plan has faced significant criticism due to the lack of concrete details about the troops, equipment, and logistical support that would be needed.

On Sunday, senior military sources expressed their doubts about the proposal, with one source telling The Telegraph that Starmer had "got ahead of himself." The source criticised the plan as lacking a clear military strategy, pointing out the absence of defined end-goals and military assumptions. "It's all political theatre. Starmer got ahead of himself with talk of boots on the ground before he knew what he was talking about," the source said. "Now we hear more about jets and vessels, which are easier to do and don't need basing in Ukraine."

In response to Starmer's announcement, Donald Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, dismissed the plan as a "posture and a pose," accusing Starmer and other European leaders of having a "simplistic" view of the situation, reminiscent of the wartime rhetoric of Winston Churchill.

Meanwhile, reports suggest that the White House is working towards brokering a peace deal between Russia and Ukraine by April 20, coinciding with Easter Sunday for both Western and Orthodox Christian denominations.

The plan calls for a ceasefire to take effect by Easter, provided that the Trump administration can successfully negotiate a truce. This initiative has added further pressure to Starmer's peacekeeping proposal.



Military experts remain highly sceptical about the practicality of Starmer's coalition, with concerns about its military legitimacy and effectiveness. One senior Army source highlighted the challenges posed by the size and positioning of the coalition force. "What is a 10,000-international force based 400 km from the front line supposed to do? It cannot even protect itself. What is its mission? What is its legitimacy? What are the rules of engagement?" the source asked.

Another military expert added that the coalition lacked the necessary clarity on its mission and purpose, making it hard to determine what role international forces could play in the conflict. "No one knows what the mission is," he said. "What is its legitimacy? How is it commanded, supplied and housed? How long is it there for and why?"

Despite this criticism, the UK Ministry of Defence has insisted that momentum is building for the coalition, with some nations reportedly "prepared to step up" in securing peace in Ukraine.

Last week, discussions at Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) in Northwood, London, revealed that the UK had

proposed RAF fighter jets providing air cover for Ukrainian troops. However, the number of troops that might be sent remains unclear.

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

In the midst of these discussions, UK Defence officials continue to work closely with their French counterparts, with plans for further talks this week. Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, Chief of the Defence Staff, alongside service chiefs, is due to meet with French officials at the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall.

The ongoing collaboration between the UK and France aims to ensure both nations remain aligned in their support for Ukraine's security.

Sir Tony dismissed the criticism surrounding the peacekeeping discussions as "nonsense," asserting that the planning process was serious and necessary for future stability in Ukraine.

"The process under way, led by Prime Minister Starmer and President Macron, is preparing Europe and Ukraine for whatever comes next," he said, adding that "providing a running commentary"

Turkey detains journalists as protests over Erdogan rival's jailing intensify

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Turkish authorities detained several journalists from their homes, a media workers' union reported Monday, in what it said was a crackdown amid escalating protests triggered by the imprisonment of the mayor of Istanbul and top rival to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

On Sunday, a court formally arrested Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu and ordered him jailed pending a trial on corruption charges. His detention on Wednesday sparked the largest wave of street demonstrations in Turkey in more than a decade and deepened concerns over democracy and the rule of law in the country.

In an apparent escalation of the government's response to the growing protests, the Disk-Basin-Is union said at least eight reporters and photojournalists were detained in what it said was an "attack on press freedoms and the people's right to learn the truth."

"You cannot hide the truth by silencing journalists!" the union wrote on the social media platform X, calling for their immediate release.

There was no immediate comment from the authorities concerning the detentions.

The mayor's imprisonment is widely regarded as a political move to remove a major challenger to Erdogan from the next presidential race, currently scheduled for 2028. Government officials strongly reject the accusations and insist that Turkey's



courts operate independently.

Imamoglu was jailed on suspicion of running a criminal organisation, accepting bribes, extortion, illegally recording personal data and bid-rigging — accusations he has denied. A request for him to be imprisoned on terror-related charges was rejected although he still faces prosecution.

The Interior Ministry later announced that Imamoglu had been suspended from duty as a "temporary measure." The municipality had previously appointed an acting mayor from its governing council.

The politician was taken to Silivri prison, west of Istanbul, as more than 1.7 million members of his opposition Republican People's Party, or CHP, held a primary election, endorsing him as its presidential candidate. Millions of non-members also cast votes in a "solidarity ballot," the party said.

Alongside Imamoglu, 47 other people were also jailed pending trial, including a key aide and two district mayors from Istanbul, one of whom was replaced with a government appointee. A further 44 suspects were released under judicial control.

Imamoglu was elected mayor of Turkey's largest city in March 2019, in a major blow to Erdogan and the president's Justice and Development Party, which had controlled Istanbul for a quarter-century. Erdogan's party pushed to void the municipal election results in the city of 16 million, alleging irregularities.

The challenge resulted in a repeat of the election a few months later, which Imamoglu also won.

The mayor retained his seat following local elections last year, during which the CHP made significant gains against Erdogan's governing party.

M23 rebels in East Congo announce withdrawal from Walikale amid peace efforts

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

M23 rebels, backed by Rwanda, have announced they will withdraw their forces from the town of Walikale in eastern Congo, a move they say supports ongoing peace initiatives.

The group, which has been advancing through the region, previously indicated their intention to leave troops in Walikale as they moved towards the capital, Kinshasa.

The Congolese government has expressed hope that this announcement will be followed by concrete action, particularly after the M23 rebels unexpectedly pulled out of planned talks with the Congolese authorities earlier this week.

The talks were called off due to EU sanctions imposed on some of the M23 leadership and Rwandan officials.

Withdrawal and Ceasefire Commitment

The M23-led Congo River Alliance stated in a press release that it had decided to "reposition its forces" from Walikale and the surrounding areas that were recently captured by the rebels.

This move, according to the group, aligns with the ceasefire declared in February and is meant to bolster peace efforts in the region.

However, the announcement has been met with scepticism from both local military officers and Congolese officials.

A senior member of the alliance explained that the withdrawal was part of an effort to "give peace a chance," although they declined to specify where the forces would be repositioned.

The alliance has requested that Walikale and its surroundings remain demilitarised, warning that any return of the Congolese army (FARDC) and its allies would signal the resumption of hostilities.

Congolese Foreign Affairs Minister Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner expressed cautious optimism, telling reporters that the government would observe whether the M23 rebels would indeed follow through with the withdrawal and prioritise dialogue



over further conflict.

"We hope this will be translated into concrete action," she said.

Military Uncertainty

The situation on the ground remains fluid. While Congo's army has not yet commented officially on the announcement, some military officers have voiced doubt about the sincerity of the M23's withdrawal.

One officer suggested that the rebels would likely advance towards Mubi, another town in the region, after the Congolese army and pro-government militias launched airstrikes on Walikale's airport and severed some of the M23's access routes.

"They now have a provision problem," said the officer, who spoke anonymously.

"They will not withdraw, they will move in front of (Walikale) and behind it." A M23 officer had previously told Walikale residents that a small group of soldiers would remain in the town to provide security, while others would continue advancing toward Kinshasa.

Walikale is the furthest west the M23 rebels have reached in their offensive, which has seen them overrun some of the largest cities in eastern Congo since January.

Its capture brought the rebels within 400 km (250 miles) of Kisangani, Congo's fourth-largest city, and approximately 1,500 km (930 miles) from the capital.

Regional Conflict and Diplomatic Stalemate

The M23 offensive is deeply rooted in the long-standing tensions between Rwanda and Congo, dating back to the 1994 Rwandan genocide and the competition for the region's mineral wealth.

Despite several failed ceasefire attempts and regional summits aimed at resolving the conflict, fighting continues to escalate.

Both Congo and the United Nations, along with Western governments, have accused Rwanda of providing support to the M23 rebels, including arms and troops.

Rwanda denies these allegations, maintaining that its military actions are in self-defence against militias in Congo that are linked to the perpetrators of the genocide.

On Friday, M23 leader Corneille Naanga rejected a joint call for an immediate ceasefire from both Congo and Rwanda. He reiterated that direct negotiations with the Congolese government were the only viable solution to the crisis.

I'll not rest England players to help clubs – Tuchel

By Dave Oludare Oso

Thomas Tuchel has warned that club managers cannot expect favours from him over the fitness of their England players, insisting “we do what’s good for us.”

England play their second World Cup qualifier in four days against Latvia at Wembley on Monday night, with Tuchel preparing to name his second line-up as head coach.

Anthony Gordon has returned to Newcastle United with a hip injury he suffered in the victory over Albania and Tuchel will make some changes, with Aston Villa’s Morgan Rogers pushing to make his first England start, having won three caps as a substitute.

But Tuchel has made it clear that he will not make any allowances for the fact clubs face busy and pivotal domestic and European schedules after the international break, or worry about upsetting other managers.

Captain Harry Kane, Jude Bellingham and Declan Rice could all start again for England on Monday night and Tuchel said: “Given the fact Declan Rice played in the next [Champions League] match after a 7-1 first leg [win] with Arsenal, I didn’t have the feeling that they think so much about us. So I don’t think we have to break our heads about this [keeping clubs happy].

“I take care of the players. We take care about the schedule. But it would be the wrong signal to tell players now ‘hey, you have tough [club] matches coming up so I rest you now’.

“We have a qualifier to play, we do what’s good for us. We monitor them,



we are in contact with the clubs, we are in high-level monitoring where the statuses are known and we won’t take any unprofessional risks. Because first of all I feel responsible for the players. I don’t want the player to be injured, I want the players to play in the quarter-finals of the Champions League – all of them – because I want to watch it, I want to see it.

“So this is where it is and in the end we take care of ourselves and the clubs take care of themselves, and the main focus is taking care of the players.”

Last October, Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said he had never been “so angry” that John Stones was injured while playing for England before the club’s Champions League quarter-final against Real Madrid last season.

Tuchel, the former Chelsea head coach, acknowledged that he would have preferred his players not to start two games in four days for their countries when he was a club manager, but added: “I know that this window, this camp, is a window where the clubs play at a very crucial time of the season. They play for championships, they play in the quarter-

finals of the Champions League.

“We are very well aware of it, but we also have our own goals, we have our own targets. The players are keen to play and it has to be like this.

“I experienced it many, many times in clubs that players from South American countries don’t even think about dropping one minute because they want to play for their country, they’re proud to play for their country. This is also something that we have to understand and accept.

“I always accepted it as a club manager. I never got involved in line-ups. I never pushed any national coach because I was hoping that my players get picked. I was also hoping that they are proud to play.

“Of course, you’re never happy if something happens. No one can predict that there is no accident, but we have a World Cup qualifier and we’ll make responsible decisions.”

Omeruo: Osimhen must experience playing at the World Cup

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Super Eagles defender Kenneth Omeruo has emphasized the importance of star striker Victor Osimhen experiencing the FIFA World Cup, calling it a milestone every top player should reach.

Osimhen played a crucial role in Nigeria's 2026 World Cup qualifying campaign, scoring twice in their 2-0 victory over Rwanda. The win marked the Super Eagles' first in the qualifiers, moving them to fourth place with six points.

The Galatasaray defender, who represented Nigeria at the 2014 and 2018 World Cups, shared his thoughts ahead of their next qualifier against Zimbabwe on Tuesday.

"Just a few players in the Super Eagles have been to the World Cup, and they



understand the importance and the amazing atmosphere," Omeruo said on Brila FM.

"For a player like Victor Osimhen, he has to be at the World Cup. He has to experience it. I have spoken to him, and

he knows how important the game against Zimbabwe is."

Nigeria failed to qualify for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar after losing to Ghana on away goals in the playoffs. Osimhen, who was already a key player then, missed out on the opportunity to play on football's biggest stage.

Omeruo, however, remains confident that the Super Eagles will not take their upcoming games lightly.

"The players are not going there (against Zimbabwe) to joke, and I believe they will get six points from the two games."

With Osimhen leading the charge, Nigeria will be aiming for back-to-back wins as they push to secure their place at the 2026 World Cup.

Chelsea face £5m Fee to back out of Jadon Sancho deal

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Chelsea will have to pay Manchester United £5m if they decide against signing Jadon Sancho permanently this summer, despite an initial obligation to buy the winger for between £20m and £25m—provided they finish at least 14th in the Premier League.

The 24-year-old joined Chelsea on loan from United last August after a fallout with then-United manager Erik ten Hag. While he initially impressed at Stamford Bridge, his form has dipped significantly. Since scoring his last goal on December 8 against Tottenham, he has managed just one assist in 18 appearances.

Sancho's struggles have raised concerns at Chelsea, where his stats rank among the weakest of the club's senior attacking players. His inability to create chances is

particularly worrying, with none of his last 19 Premier League crosses reaching a teammate.

With Chelsea looking to reinforce their attack by signing a new winger and striker this summer, Sancho's long-term future at the club remains uncertain. Although club officials have publicly dismissed the idea of backing out of the deal, the option to pay £5m and return him to Old Trafford could become an attractive alternative.

Sancho's contract with Manchester United runs until 2026, with an option for an additional year. Meanwhile, United co-owner Sir Jim Ratcliffe recently mentioned the winger in an interview, revealing that United are still paying half his wages and must settle outstanding



payments from his £73m transfer from Borussia Dortmund in 2021.

As Chelsea approach a crucial summer transfer window, the decision on Sancho will be one of many that could shape their squad for next season.

W'Cup Qualifiers: Nigeria face Zimbabwe, plus 21 other matches on Tuesday

By **Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

The battle for a spot at the 2026 FIFA World Cup, set to be co-hosted by the USA, Canada, and Mexico, has entered a decisive phase.

African teams are preparing for Matchday 6 of the qualifiers, with some aiming to strengthen their hold on top positions, while others fight to keep their hopes of qualification alive.

Nigeria's impressive 2-0 victory over Rwanda on Friday has set the tone for what promises to be an exciting week of football.

With the stakes higher than ever, both leaders and challengers alike will need to bring their A-game to secure a coveted place at the global tournament.

As the qualifiers unfold on Monday and



Tuesday, fans across the continent will be eagerly watching to see which teams can rise to the occasion and edge closer to a spot in the World Cup.

Tuesday, 25 March 2025 fixtures:

13:00: Botswana vs Somalia (Group H)

16:00: Angola vs Cape Verde (Group D)

16:00: Benin vs South Africa (Group C)

16:00: Nigeria vs Zimbabwe (Group C)

16:00: Rwanda vs Lesotho (Group C)

16:00: Uganda vs Guinea (Group G)

19:00: Burundi vs Seychelles (Group F)

19:00: Cameroon vs Libya (Group D)

19:00: Egypt vs Sierra Leone (Group A)

19:00: Sudan vs South Sudan (Group K)

21:00: Algeria vs Mozambique (Group G)

21:00: Comoros vs Chad (Group I)

21:00: Mauritania vs DR Congo (Group C)

21:00: Senegal vs Togo (Group L)

21:30: Morocco vs Tanzania (Group E)

With the competition heating up, every match will be pivotal. Teams at the top of the standings will seek to extend their dominance, while those further down will be desperate for points to stay in contention.

Zimbabwe's Jalai: We will give our all against Super Eagles

By **Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi**

Zimbabwe defender Emmanuel Jalai has vowed that the Warriors will give their all when they take on Nigeria in a crucial 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifier on Tuesday.

Michael Nees' side is still searching for their first win in the qualifiers and will be looking to cause an upset when they face the Super Eagles at the Godswill Akpabio International Stadium in Uyo.

Jalai, 26, acknowledged Nigeria's strength but remains confident that Zimbabwe can pull off a surprise result.

"Of course, it is not going to be an easy game, but football is always unpredictable and full of surprises. We have to do our best and give our all when we face them," Jalai said in a video posted on the Zimbabwe Football Association's official



X account.

Despite Nigeria's squad boasting top talents, Jalai believes the Warriors also have enough quality to compete.

"They have quality players, and we have quality players too. We have to impose

ourselves on the game."

The Zimbabwean squad arrived in Nigeria on Saturday and had their first training session at the Godswill Akpabio International Stadium's practice pitch on Sunday.

Jalai noted that the team is working hard to adjust to the hot weather conditions ahead of the clash.

"It was a good training session, despite the weather. It's hot, but we have to adapt. I'm sure when we play on Tuesday, the weather will be the same. We have to adjust and acclimatize."

With both teams eager to secure valuable points, the match promises to be a fiercely contested encounter in Uyo.

Tiger Woods, Donald Trump Jnr's ex-wife announce their relationship

By Dave Oludare Oso

As if the game of golf at the moment was not bizarre enough, Tiger Woods confirmed on Sunday night that he is in a relationship with the former daughter-in-law of President Trump.

Woods, 49, is in the habit of making his sport draw breath with his social media posts, as he proved with the recent revelation that he has undergone yet more surgery – this time on his Achilles – and will almost certainly be sidelined for the entirety of this season.

However, because of his guarded nature when it comes to his private life, his message on Sunday night was perhaps the most jaw-dropping of the lot.

There were reports that Woods has been dating Vanessa Trump, the 47-year-old ex-wife of Donald Trump Jr, and so the father-of-two provided confirmation.

“Love is in the air and life is better with you by my side!” Woods said on his social media channels. “We look forward to our journey through life together. At this time, we would appreciate privacy to all those close to our hearts.”

If the words, themselves, are thoroughly un-Tiger, then the accompanying images are yet more incongruous. One of them shows the pair embracing on a hammock.



Vanessa's eldest daughter Kai, 17, and Woods' children Charlie, 16, and Sam, 17, all attend the same school. Charlie and Kai are both highly rated amateur golfers.

The couple's children attend the same school, with Woods's son and Trump's daughter both promising golfers.

Donald Trump Snr and Woods have played golf recently and have both been integral to the ongoing negotiations to try to reach a peace deal between the Sundai Public Investment Fund – which bankrolls LIV, the breakaway circuit – and the PGA Tour. Of course, this disclosure adds another level to the discussion, although reports

indicate that the president – and indeed, his son, is comfortable with the burgeoning courtship.

Woods has been involved in a number of relationships, since being divorced by Elin – the mother of his two children – in the wake of a sex scandal that tore apart his reputation and, many believe, his game.

After he and multiple world champion skier Lindsey Vonn split up in 2015, Woods lived with Erica Herman, but that ended in acrimony when she took him to court having been evicted from his mansion. His fans will hope that this is the stability he needs as he tries to launch another comeback.

Juventus sack Thiago Motta, appoint Igor Tudor as new manager

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Juventus have sacked head coach Thiago Motta after just nine months in charge and replaced him with Croatian Igor Tudor.

Motta, 42, took over in June 2024 but struggled to maintain consistency. The 36-time Serie A champions currently sit fifth in the league, one point outside the Champions League qualification spots. His tenure ended after back-to-back heavy defeats—3-0 to Fiorentina and 4-0 at home to Atalanta.

Juventus also crashed out of the Coppa Italia and failed to qualify for the Champions League after losing to PSV Eindhoven in the play-off round.

His replacement, Tudor, is a former



Juventus defender who made over 150 appearances for the club between 1998 and 2007. The 46-year-old has managed several clubs, including Galatasaray, Udinese, Verona, and Marseille. His most recent job was a brief spell at Lazio

last season.

Tudor will take charge of his first match when Juventus host Genoa in Serie A on Saturday.

Livramento left out of England squad for Latvia clash

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Newcastle United defender Tino Livramento has been omitted from England's squad for Monday's World Cup qualifier against Latvia at Wembley.

The 22-year-old was an unused substitute in Friday's 2-0 victory over Albania, but will now sit out the next fixture as Thomas Tuchel reshuffles his squad.

England initially selected 26 players for the two qualifiers, but UEFA regulations require teams to trim their matchday squad to 23 for each game. As a result, Livramento, alongside goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale, has been left out for the Latvia match.

Meanwhile, Morgan Gibbs-White and Jarrel Quansah return to the squad after missing the Albania game. Anthony



Gordon, however, has withdrawn due to injury and has returned to Newcastle.

Tuchel emphasized the importance of squad balance over individual talent:

"We have to find the best group, not just

the most talented 26 players. Team spirit is crucial, especially in tournament football."

The Three Lions will aim to maintain their strong form as they take on Latvia at Wembley on Monday at 19:45 GMT.

Elanga: No regrets leaving Manchester United

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Nottingham Forest winger Anthony Elanga has expressed his satisfaction with his decision to leave Manchester United, insisting that the move has been beneficial for his career. The Sweden international, who has been in impressive form for Forest this season, revealed in an interview with Fotbollskanalen that he still holds Manchester United close to his heart but has no regrets about moving on.

A Fresh Start at Nottingham Forest

After struggling for regular playing time at Old Trafford, Elanga made the switch to Nottingham Forest in the summer of 2023 in search of more opportunities. Since joining, he has established himself as a key player for the club, delivering performances that have attracted interest from top European sides. Despite this, the winger remains focused on his current team.

“United are one of the best teams in the world. I still love the club. I watch their games and they have a special place in my heart. When I see them not doing very well, it hurts a little,” Elanga admitted.

“I think I made a good decision. I’m happy about it. If I have a good season, there will always be teams that want to talk, but right now, I’m in Nottingham and I’m happy here.”

Nottingham Forest’s Progress and European Aspirations

Elanga has played a crucial role in Nottingham Forest’s campaign, helping the team push towards a strong finish in the Premier League. He emphasized the club’s ambition



and determination to compete at the highest level, with European qualification still within reach.

“Nottingham is going pretty well. We’re doing pretty well. Hopefully, we’ll finish as high as possible,” he said.

While Forest has performed admirably this season, Elanga believes the squad has the potential to do even better.

“We can do even better. I know all the players in the squad, and I know we can all be even better, but we’ve done fantastically well so far.”

With just nine games remaining in the season, the Swedish international remains optimistic about Forest’s chances of securing a European spot, though he acknowledges the challenge ahead.

“Many people are talking about Europe (Champions League place), and that is a possibility, but we have to win our games. We have done well so far, but the season is long. We have to keep winning. I always want more,” he added.

Elanga’s Rise and Future Prospects

Elanga’s performances at Nottingham Forest have not gone unnoticed, with several top European clubs monitoring his progress. His pace, dribbling ability, and versatility have made him a key attacking threat, and at just 22 years old, he has plenty of room for growth.

His journey from Manchester United academy prospect to first-team regular at Nottingham Forest is a testament to his determination and ambition. While he remains grateful for his time at United, he is now fully committed to making an impact at his new club.

With Forest’s season entering a crucial phase, Elanga’s contributions could be decisive in helping them achieve their goals. Whether they secure European football or not, the winger has already proven that his decision to leave Manchester United was the right one.