

FG begins overhaul of electricity DisCos

The Federal Government has announced the launch of a pilot reform programme targeting two underperforming electricity distribution companies (DisCos) as part of sweeping efforts to revitalise Nigeria's troubled power sector.

The announcement was made by the Minister of Power, Chief Adebayo Adelayo, following a

strategic meeting with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which presented a detailed roadmap for the restructuring under a document titled Revamping of the Distribution Sector in Nigeria.

Speaking to journalists after the meeting, Adelayo declared that the government would no longer tolerate the inefficiencies

and chronic underperformance of the DisCos, many of which are grappling with obsolete infrastructure, poor governance, and inadequate customer service delivery.

"We can no longer fold our hands and watch the inadequacies of DisCos, whose performances fall short of expectations. This pilot is not optional,"

Adelayo said.

"We will use our regulatory authority to restructure non-performing DisCos and compel compliance where necessary."

The pilot scheme, which is expected to commence between May and August 2025, will target one DisCo in the North and another in the South, with the goal of testing a new operational and

regulatory framework that could be scaled nationwide.

The move comes after repeated warnings from the minister over the DisCos' failure to invest in expanding and maintaining their network, an issue he says continues to frustrate the government's plans to transition customers to higher, cost-reflective tariff bands.

The Ministry of Power says the pilot phase will also serve as a testbed for new accountability

measures, performance benchmarks, and service delivery improvements, all designed to address longstanding inefficiencies in the distribution arm of Nigeria's electricity value chain.

The federal government's resolve marks a significant turning point in its decades-long struggle to fix the power sector, and signals a willingness to adopt both regulatory pressure and international technical partnerships to drive long-awaited change.

The Nigerian Observer



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Nigeria's economy records strong growth despite persistent inflation
—World Bank

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Ahead 2027 polls: INEC mulls electoral reforms • Says he's still in charge

The Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Professor Mahmood Yakubu, has firmly dismissed growing speculation over his alleged removal from office, stating unequivocally on Monday that he remains the duly appointed Chief Electoral Commissioner of the Federation.

Speaking to journalists at the Presidential Villa in Abuja during the swearing-in of two new INEC National Commissioners by President Bola Tinubu, Yakubu reiterated that not only is he

still at the helm of the electoral commission, but work is also underway to reform the nation's electoral laws before the 2027 general elections.

"Under the Constitution, I remain the Chief Electoral Commissioner of the Federation and, under the Electoral Act, the Returning Officer for the presidential election," Yakubu said, calling ongoing rumours of his exit "unnecessary speculation".

He revealed that INEC had concluded a review of the 2023 general elections, generating a total of 142 reform propos-

als—eight of which will require amendments to either the Electoral Act or the Constitution.

"We have already had engagements with the National Assembly's electoral reform committees in Lagos," he said, adding that a public hearing would soon follow, after which a new electoral amendment bill would be prepared for presidential assent.

The Chairman expressed confidence in the progress being made, noting that the National Assembly had shown a commendable level of urgency and commitment to the reform process.

"In the end, the goal is to have some of the necessary amendments passed well ahead of the 2027 general elections," he affirmed.

Yakubu also addressed the newly completed appointments to the commission, stating that INEC now has almost the full complement of its 13-member structure, following the swearing-in of Mallam Tukur Abdulrazaq Yusuf (Northwest) and Professor Sunday Nwambam Aja (Southeast).

He also acknowledged the

recent passing of one of INEC's commissioners, Major General Modibbo Alkali (retd), whose position remains to be filled.

President Tinubu also used the opportunity to swear in two commissioners for the Code of Conduct Bureau: Ikpeke Kenneth Ndem from Cross River State and retired Justice Buba Ibrahim Nyaure from Taraba State.

JAMB launches emergency review of 2025 UTME

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) has ordered an urgent and comprehensive review of the 2025 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), following an unprecedented wave of complaints from candidates, parents, and education stakeholders over alleged technical failures, incomplete questions, and widespread low scores.

The directive, issued over the weekend, marks an extraordinary deviation from the Board's tradition of conducting such reviews months after the examination cycle.

In a statement signed by Fabian Benjamin, JAMB's Public Communication Advisor, the

Board admitted that it had received an "unusual volume of complaints" since the release of this year's UTME results last Friday, prompting an accelerated review process.

According to Benjamin, the Board is particularly concerned about the concentration of complaints emerging from certain states, with candidates alleging system crashes, unanswered questions due to software issues, and discrepancies between what was attempted and what was marked.

"We are currently scrutinising these complaints in detail to identify and rectify any potential technical issues," the

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PRESS BRIEFING:

Chairman, Senate Committee on Finance and other Financial Institutions, Senator Mohammed Sani Musa, flanked by (left) Senate Spokesman, Senator Yemi Adaramodu, and (right) Senator Babangida Hussein, during a briefing on the successful passage of Tax Reform Bill at the National Assembly complex, Abuja.

PHOTO BY OMOYE AMINU

Nigerian nurses urge FG to prioritise health workforce funding

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Tragedy in Benin: Girl dies mysteriously in alleged 'Yahoo boyfriend's home

What began as a routine Saturday in Benin City ended in horror and heartbreak, as a 23-year-old girl, Blessing Oshiomeshian, was found dead in her boyfriend's home under disturbing and mysterious circumstances.

Her death has now sparked outrage, speculation, and a police investigation that is unravel-

ling a web of secrets, blood, and an eerie spiritual message.

In the early hours of Sunday, 11 May 2025, Blessing's lifeless body was discovered drenched in blood in a remote house in Utesi community, off the Sapele Road bypass, the residence of her boyfriend, 24-year-old Smart Davis, who is said to be in police custody alongside his brother.

Blessing, the first daughter of her family and a humble snack vendor, was said to live with her uncle, Mr Ojo Omoregbe, at No. 35 Idumwonyi Street, Idogbo, in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area. Her father hails from Opoji, in Esan Central LGA.

On Saturday morning, she had finished her chores and washed her uncle's clothes be-

fore heading out to visit Davis, according to her uncle, Ojo Omoregbe. She never returned.

By 1:00 a.m. the next day, Omoregbe's phone rang with dread. It was Gloria John, Blessing's close friend and neighbour, who had just received a call from Davis. His message was vague and alarming: Blessing was sick and vomiting.

Sensing something was wrong, Omoregbe called his niece repeatedly. When Davis finally picked up on the third attempt, he echoed the same claim, Blessing was unwell.

Omoregbe demanded a video call. What he saw on the screen chilled his bones, Blessing, his niece, lying unconscious, soaked in her own blood.

He rushed to gather help. With a friend and a car, he made his way to the desolate residence of Davis. There, under the cover of night, they found the young woman lifeless.

Alongside Davis and his brother, they raced her to a private hospital where a Doctors confirmed she was brought in dead.

Her body was deposited at a mortuary, and the police were swiftly informed. Detectives soon descended on the crime scene, arresting Davis and his brother, and transferring the case to the homicide department at the Edo State



Police Command headquarters.

Before the police could arrive, some persons, whom Davis claimed were neighbours were seen frantically evacuating property. They were said to have fled when officers showed up.

Gloria John insisted that Blessing was perfectly healthy when she left for Davis's house a day earlier.

Both she and Omoregbe cast doubt on Davis's image. While Omoregbe portrayed him to have claimed to be an interior designer living in his father's house, though a 'Yahoo boy,' Gloria said he was known in the area as a 'street boy.'



COMMENDATION SERVICE:

L-R: The 2023 presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), Mr Peter Obi; Bayensa State Governor, Douye Diri, and former President Goodluck Jonathan, during the commendation service of elder statesman, Chief (Dr.) Edwin Clark, at the National Christian Centre, Abuja, yesterday.

Nigerian nurses urge FG to prioritise health workforce funding

The National Association of Nigerian Nurses and Midwives has called on the Federal Government to prioritise health workforce financing.

It also called for the engagement of over 115,000 graduate nurses eager to contribute their skills and expertise to the nation's healthcare system.

The President of the association, Haruna Mamman, made the remark at an event to commemorate the International Day of the Midwife and the commencement of the 2025 International Nurses Week.

Mamman said this year's event, with the theme, 'Our nurs-

es, our future: caring for nurses, strengthening economies,' underscored the importance of a healthy nursing workforce.

He, therefore, called for immediate funding and workable solutions to safeguard nurses and midwives from emotional, mental, and physical difficulties.

He, however, noted that nurses must confront issues of negligence and attitude in patient care, that has so far tarnished the image of the profession.

He, further, expressed his commitment to driving initiatives that would promote professionalism, continuing education and ethical standards

within the nursing profession.

The NANNM's call for better protection for nurses reechoes the general concern over the spate of insecurity in the country, especially as it affects medical workers.

In January, the Katsina State council of the association declared the withdrawal of nurses and midwives working in the hospitals located along the frontline and vulnerable areas in the state over the abduction of one of the association's members, Nurse Yusuf Mai-Ruwa, by gunmen.

MaiRuwa was said to have been abducted while on duty at the General Hospital, Kankara,

on January 15, 2025.

The Chairman of the association, Nura Mu'azu, who spoke during a press briefing held at the State Council Secretariat with the title, 'Health Worker You Are On Your Own,' said Mai-Ruwa was kidnapped while on duty.

He added, "He (Mai-Ruwa) falls victim while in the line of duty, and this has aggravated the fear in every health worker serving in the frontline and vulnerable areas, as it has proven beyond any reasonable doubt that no healthcare worker is safe despite our immeasurable sacrifices to society and humanity.

JAMB launches emergency review of...

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statement read.

To ensure a credible and independent audit, JAMB announced the involvement of external professionals and institutions in the review process.

These include members of the Computer Professionals Association of Nigeria, Chief External Examiners drawn from the leadership of tertiary institutions, the Educational Assessment and Research Network in Africa, measurement experts, and university vice-chancellors.

"If it is determined that there were indeed glitches, we will implement appropriate remedial measures promptly, as we do in the case of the examinations

themselves," Benjamin assured.

The development follows growing agitation across the country over the performance statistics released by JAMB, which revealed that over 1.5 million of the 1.9 million candidates scored below 200 out of a possible 400, a performance level that has triggered widespread disbelief and uproar.

The hashtag #ThisIsNotMyResult has since trended across social media platforms, as frustrated candidates and their guardians demand answers from the examination body.

Some candidates claim their exam sessions were interrupted by software errors and erratic question display patterns, further

fuelling public suspicion that the problem may not lie with student performance but with the exam's technical integrity.

In a further twist, reports emerged over the weekend that groups of affected candidates are mobilising for a class-action lawsuit against JAMB, citing irregularities and damages suffered as a result of the alleged technical breakdowns.

Despite the backlash, the Minister of Education, Dr. Tunji Alausa, appeared on Channels Television's The Morning Brief last week to defend the examination body, attributing the mass failure to JAMB's increasingly robust anti-malpractice systems. He praised the computer-based testing model,

saying it had rendered cheating "nearly impossible" and called for its extension to other examination bodies, including WAEC and NECO.

Similarly, JAMB Registrar, Prof. Is-haq Oloyede, dismissed the outrage as exaggerated. He noted that low performance statistics were not unique to 2025 and had occurred in past examination years.

Nevertheless, the pressure on JAMB is mounting, with calls from civil society, education professionals, and legislators for transparency, fairness, and a thorough investigation into what many now describe as a "crisis of credibility" in Nigeria's tertiary admission process

Use AI with caution, IPC boss urges journalists

The Executive Director of the International Press Centre, Mr. Lanre Arogundade, has urged journalists to navigate the new media landscape with caution and courage.

Arogundade made this call on Monday at the public lecture held in honour of the 60th birthday celebration of Professor of Journalism, Tunde Akanni and Dr Omolade Sanni of the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies at the Lagos State University.

In March, the Governing Council of the Lagos State University approved the elevation of Akanni to the position of full professor of Journalism and Development Communication, while Sanni is a senior lecturer in the faculty.

On his paper presentation, Arogundade, who was recently removed from the Department of State Services' watchlist after about 40 years, argued that Artificial Intelligence has disrupted the media landscape and presented journalists with new challenges.

He said, "AI comes with the good, the bad and the ugly. Know

this and use it wisely. Whatever you do, never forget the tenets of journalism. This year's World Press Freedom Day focuses on Reporting in the Brave New World. You have to be brave to report in our new world today.

"Our own recommendation from the International Press Centre is that perhaps we now need a national AI that expressly provides for the protection of journalists and press freedom. AI is here to stay, and my concluding words are 'shine your eyes.'"

He asserted, "We have seen situations where AI is being weaponised against the media, which means that AI can be the tool that disables press freedom. You would agree with me that it's hard to conceptualise journalism today in the context of AI without doing so in relation to its own pervasive difference, or let's say, seeming pervasive difference.

"Like I said, for some, this difference is positively disruptive, and for others, it could be negative. Part of the argument, really, is that the Internet technologies and the social media components are already disruptive enough."

TETFund threatens to cut off support from non-performing institutions

The Tertiary Education Trust Fund has warned that beneficiary institutions that fail to meet performance benchmarks or mismanage allocated funds risk being delisted from its support programmes.

Executive Secretary of TETFund, Sonny Echono, gave the warning at a one-day strategic engagement with heads of institutions, bursars, and heads of procurement of the Fund's beneficiary institutions in Abuja on Monday.

Echono said the policy was not meant to punish, but rather to

safeguard the credibility and impact of TETFund interventions.

"Let me be clear, institutions that consistently fail to access, utilise or retire funds appropriately, or that fall short of enrollment and academic performance thresholds, risk being delisted as TETFund beneficiary institutions," the executive secretary said.

He also disclosed the intention of the Fund to ensure that its resources are directed towards institutions that are committed to high standards of governance,

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NEWS

Nigeria's economy records strong growth despite persistent inflation —World Bank

Nigeria's economy achieved its fastest growth in nearly ten years in 2024, according to the World Bank, which attributed the development to a robust fourth quarter and improved fiscal conditions.

Speaking during a presentation on Monday, Alex Sienaert, the bank's lead economist for Nigeria, revealed that the economy expanded by 4.6% year-on-year in the fourth quarter of 2024.

Citing high-frequency business indicators, he noted that the momentum has continued into early 2025.

Nonetheless, Sienaert cautioned that high inflation remains a pressing concern.

The remarks came ahead of the launch of the Nigeria Development Update report in Abuja, a bi-annual World Bank publication that explores key economic and policy issues while analysing Nigeria's developmental landscape.

The economic uptick coincides with significant reforms introduced by President Bola Tinubu's administration, including the removal of petrol subsidies, reductions in electricity allowances, and a major devaluation of the naira, all of which have contributed to inflationary pressures.

In February 2025, the country's annual inflation rate eased to 23.18%, the lowest since June 2023, down from 24.48% in January.

Food inflation followed a similar trajectory, falling to 23.51%, its lowest since September 2022, from 26.08% the previous month.

However, core inflation, which excludes volatile agricultural and energy prices, rose to 24.43% from 23.01%.

On a monthly basis, consumer prices climbed 3.90% in March, up from 2.04% in February. The World Bank projects Nigeria's GDP growth for 2025 at 3.6%.

Sienaert noted that foreign

exchange reforms have helped stabilise the naira through the creation of a unified, market-reflective rate.

This has enabled the Central Bank to rebuild its foreign reserves, which now exceed \$37 billion.

He described the reserves as a crucial buffer against external shocks.

He further reported a 4.5% increase in government revenue in 2024 relative to GDP, calling it a remarkable milestone driven

by the end of foreign exchange subsidies, improved tax enforcement, and a rise in remittances.

These gains helped reduce the fiscal deficit from 5.4% of GDP in 2023 to an estimated 3% in 2024.

Yet, Sienaert cautioned that the full fiscal benefits from the petrol subsidy removal are still unfolding.

Despite these strides, he stressed the need for continued tight monetary and disciplined fiscal policies to rein in inflation and sustain growth.

Oborevori, Diri gets honorary Doctorate degrees

Delta State Governor, Hon. Sheriff Oborevori and his Bayelsa State counterpart, Senator Douye Diri have been honoured with honorary Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) degrees in Social and Economic Development by the Nigerian Maritime University (NMU), Okerenkoko.

The awards were conferred during the university's second combined convocation ceremony.

Also honoured were Senator James Manager, who received an honorary doctorate in National Development, and Engr. Ebipador Ogonwo, who was awarded a Doctor of Science in Industrial Development.

Speaking through Professor Nyerewho Tonukari, the Delta State's Commissioner for Higher Education, Governor Oborevori described the recognition as a testament to the resilience of the Delta people and his administration's inclusive vision.

He thanked the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, and university management for acknowledging leadership and service, stressing the institution's role in advancing social development.

The governor lauded the NMU for its role as a catalyst for growth in previously neglected communities, describing the award as especially meaningful due to the institution's location in the heartland of Delta's riverine communities.

He reaffirmed his belief in education as the most endur-

ing investment a government can make and praised the NMU for delivering top-tier maritime education and fostering human capital needed for Nigeria's blue economy.

Highlighting the state's strategic support, Oborevori emphasised ongoing collaborations with the Federal Government to improve infrastructure, strengthen security, and advance the university's overall development.

In his message to the graduates, the governor congratulated them and encouraged them to uphold the values of integrity, innovation, and excellence.

"You are the torchbearers and future captains of a new era in Nigeria's maritime sector. Be bold, dream big, work hard, and let your contributions reflect the excellence and pride of the Nigerian Maritime University, Okerenkoko," he urged.

He expressed hope that NMU would continue to thrive and that Delta State would remain a beacon of progress and unity.

Vice Chancellor, Professor Emmanuel Adigio highlighted the significance of the university's 10th anniversary and the convocation ceremony, noting it marked a defining moment for Nigeria's premier maritime institution.

He also commended Governor Oborevori for facilitating the construction of a faculty building and a key access road linking Okerenkoko to the university's permanent site.

locally driven training.

Echono further said this year's intervention budget prioritises consolidation, sustainability, and the completion of abandoned projects.

"This engagement is not merely a meeting but a strategic convergence. It is designed to address recurring issues of concern, streamline project implementation and enhance the overall quality of tertiary education delivery in our nation.

"As we move forward, let us approach today's discussions with openness, collaboration, and a shared vision to elevate our institutions and the students we serve," he added.



SWEARING IN:

President Bola Tinubu (right), during the swearing in of the newly appointed Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) commissioners and members of the Board of the Code of Conduct at the State House in Abuja.

Delta health commissioner felicitates Ozoro monarch on birthday anniversary

The Delta State Commissioner for Health, Dr Joseph Onojaeme, has extended warm greetings to His Royal Highness, Anthony Uvietobore Ogbogbo Ibuka I, the Ovie of Ozoro Kingdom, in celebration of his birthday, describing the monarch as a symbol of visionary leadership and community harmony.

Dr Onojaeme acknowledged the monarch's commitment to fostering unity and mutual understanding within his domain and beyond, while highlighting

his relentless drive towards the development of the ancient town of Ozoro.

He praised the monarch's strength and clarity of purpose in upholding the cultural heritage, traditions, and values that define the identity of the Ozoro people.

Commending the royal father for attracting both physical development and social cohesion, Dr Onojaeme remarked that His Majesty's efforts have fortified not just the local traditional institution but also con-

tributed meaningfully to broader state and national unity.

"It is with delight that I felicitate with Ozor Idudu, His Royal Majesty Anthony Uvietobore Ogbogbo Ibuka I, the Ovie of Ozoro Kingdom, on the joyous occasion of his birthday. This celebration marks not only the King's life of enduring service but also the abundant grace with which he continues to dedicate himself to humanity," he said.

He further noted that the monarch's esteemed role as a custodian of cultural values re-

mains widely respected.

As the Ozoro community marks the occasion, Dr Onojaeme commended the King's efforts to showcase the rich Isoko culture both at home and on the global stage.

He offered prayers for continued good health and divine wisdom for His Majesty, expressing hope that the monarch would remain an anchor of tradition and a vital force in the development of Isoko land, Delta State, and Nigeria as a whole.

TETFund threatens to cut off...

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transparency, and accountability.

According to Echono, the strategic engagement was targeted at addressing recurring challenges in Nigeria's tertiary education sector, improve project execution, and enhance the quality of education.

A key focus, he said, was the Academic Staff Training and Development intervention.

He said due to rising costs and incidents of scholars absconding, the foreign component of the TETFund Scholarship for Academic Staff was suspended as of January 1, 2025 with emphasis now shifted to cost-effec-

EIRS boss plans Bankole-Balogun Media Foundation

Otunba Oladele Bankole-Balogun, Chairman of the Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS), has announced plans to establish the Bankole-Balogun Media Foundation in memory of his father, Chief James Bankole-Balogun of blessed memory.

The proposed foundation will aim to celebrate media excellence and dedication among practitioners in Edo State.

He made the announcement during a Music Extravaganza

organized in Benin City by the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council

The occasion also featured a posthumous award conferred on Chief Bankole-Balogun, the pioneer General Manager of the defunct Bendel Broadcasting Service for his "Distinguished Service."

Expressing appreciation during his acceptance speech, Otunba Balogun encouraged journalists to always strive for excellence, assuring them that their dedication would eventu-

ally yield rewards.

He commended the Edo Broadcasting Service (EBS), the successor to Bendel Broadcasting Service, for upholding the high professional standards laid down by his late father.

Balogun also praised the leadership of the Edo State NUJ Council for recognising his father's contributions to media development, describing the moment as one of joy and pride for his family.

He was joined at the event by friends, senior government

officials, and kinsmen from Akoko Edo.

Another honouree at the occasion was Elder Francis Onoiribhola of Daily Independent newspaper, who received the NUJ's "Long Service Award" in recognition of his over five decades in journalism practice.

In his remarks, the Chairman of Edo NUJ, Comrade Festus Alenke, reiterated the union's commitment to eliminating yellow journalism by promoting balanced and accurate reporting.

NEWS

Tinubu swears in INEC commissioners, CCB board members

President Bola Tinubu has administered the oath of office to two National Commissioners for the Independent National Electoral Commission: Abdulrazak Tukur, representing the North West region and Sunday Aja

from Ebonyi State, representing the South East Zone.

This followed their nomination last November and subsequent screening by the Senate.

The brief ceremony was held at the Council Chambers of the Aso Rock Presidential

Villa, Abuja, before the commencement of the 27th Federal Executive Council meeting on Monday.

Meanwhile, Ikpeme Ndem from Cross River State and Justice Buba Nyaure from Taraba State were sworn in as mem-

bers of the Code of Conduct Bureau.

Afterwards, the Council entered into a closed-door session.

Attending today's meeting are the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Senator

George Akume; Chief of Staff to the President, Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila; and National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu.

Also present are the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun; Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Senator Atiku Bagudu; and Minister

of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, among others.

At its last meeting on May 5, the Council approved the Renewed Hope Nigeria-First Policy aimed at prioritising the use of locally produced goods and services in all government procurement processes.



MEETING: L-R: Governors Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri (Adamawa State); Engr. Seyi Makinde (Oyo State), and Bala Mohammed (Bauchi State), during meeting of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)'s Governors Forum and stakeholders, yesterday.

Over 7,000 Nigerian pilgrims reach Madinah as 2025 Hajj airlift gathers pace

The National Hajj Commission of Nigeria confirms that a total of 7,263 Nigerian pilgrims have so far been transported to Madinah, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The 2025 Hajj airlift operation is gathering momentum with 18 outbound flights since the exercise began on May 9

This is according to an updated obtained from the NAHCON website flight update.

While progress has been swift for some states, others, including notable northern states like Kano, Sokoto, Zamfara, and Borno, are yet to commence airlifting.

Among the most remarkable developments is Bauchi State having successfully completed three flights, all operated by Max Air, with a combined total of 1,322 pilgrims, comprising 1,003 males and 319 females.

Other states are making

steady progress with some already conducting multiple flights.

Kebbi State, for instance, has featured prominently with three Flynas-operated flights, moving a total of 1283 pilgrims so far.

Osun State has also marked a significant milestone, completing two full flights with Flynas and transporting 846 pilgrims — one of the highest so far from the South West.

Oyo State, working with Max Air, has recorded 1,079 pilgrims across two successful operations from Lagos.

In the North Central region, Niger State has recorded 792 pilgrims in two flights via UMZA Air, while Nasarawa State has transported 605 pilgrims also with UMZA, including some from a combined flight with Adamawa State, which had three pilgrims on board.

Kogi State, in collaboration

with Air Peace, has seen 559 pilgrims flown to Madinah in two operations.

Ogun State has completed a single Flynas-operated flight, taking 428 pilgrims from Lagos. From the South East, Imo and Abia States shared a joint Air Peace flight, with Imo contributing 232 pilgrims and Abia just 8.

Even the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) has had a limited start, with five pilgrims included in a joint Kebbi-bound Flynas flight.

So far, the airlift has been coordinated through six major departure points: Bauchi, Abuja, Lagos, Minna, Owerri, and Kebbi, with operations carried out by four airlines — Flynas (6 flights), Max Air (5 flights), UMZA Air (4 flights), and Air Peace (3 flights).

Of the 7,263 pilgrims already airlifted to Madinah, the gender breakdown stands at 4,390 males

and 2,873 females, as compiled cumulatively after each flight.

Meanwhile, in a separate report yet to be included in the flight update on its website, the Ondo State Muslim Welfare Board says the first batch of 316 pilgrims have departed to Saudi Arabia.

The State Board Chairman, Alhaji Dhikirulahi Chandy-Adam, disclosed this on Monday.

Their schedules are expected to unfold in the coming days, following NAHCON's phased deployment strategy.

NAHCON has commended the states and service providers for the smooth takeoff, reiterating its commitment to a seamless and dignified pilgrimage experience for all Nigerian pilgrims.

As the operation enters its second week, the Commission is "urging state welfare boards to sustain the pace and maintain the high standards set so far."

Childhood cancer treatable, not death sentence —Paediatricians

Paediatricians have dispelled common misconceptions about childhood cancer, including the belief that it is contagious and a death sentence.

The paediatricians, in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria on Monday in Osogbo, said that the society lacked adequate knowledge of cancer, especially in children.

Dr Oyetoke Oderanti, Consultant Paediatrician, Osun State University Teaching Hospital, attributed people's reasoning about childhood cancer to lack of knowledge on cancer.

"Most people believe children are too innocent to be cursed by God, therefore, they should not have devastating diseases.

"However, this is not the case. Tumours or cancers can occur in anyone once they are genetically predisposed, and some environmental factors can play a role.

"Although, most cancers have no known causes, risk factors for the cancers have been established," she said.

The paediatrician said the most common type is lymphoproliferative disease blood

cancer (leukaemias and lymphomas), and solid tumours.

She said most cancer cases were misdiagnosed which led to the underreporting of statistics.

"Many children in low-income and middle-income countries, like ours, die of cancer and it contributes significantly to under-five mortality.

"The survival rate is about 20 per cent and about 200,000 cases are diagnosed yearly," she said.

Oderanti, who advised that children diagnosed with blood cancer to take blood medication, noted that "these medicines are not readily available."

The paediatrician said the best places for the management of cancer were the tertiary hospitals and teaching hospitals.

According to her, there is no specific centre for screening but Nigeria has the National Institute for Cancer Research and Treatment in Abuja, which promotes early screening.

Oderanti said that more awareness of childhood cancer could be raised through jingles on radio and television stations, town hall meetings, and discussions with religious and cultural leaders.

Corruption: Ribadu calls for stronger institutions, attitudinal change to combat menace

The National Security Adviser (NSA), Nuhu Ribadu, has called for building stronger institutions and attitudinal change on the part of every Nigerian at all levels to win the war against the menace of endemic corruption impeding the country's growth and development.

Represented by the Director General of the Department of State Services, Oluwatosin Ajayi, the former EFCC Chairman disclosed this on Saturday while delivering the 9th Oba Sikiru Adetona Annual Professorial Lecture of the Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye, with the theme "Corruption and National Security: Impacts and Consequences."

The NSA said that the theme of the annual professorial lecture is deeply relevant to the country's current reality, as corruption undermines the very fabric of the state's legitimacy, weakens institutions, and diverts critical resources that are meant to develop the country.

"We can not talk about the insecurity in Nigeria without acknowledging that corruption has played a role in eroding

public trust, compromising law enforcement effectiveness, and in some cases enabling impunity," he said.

"Whether it is the diversion of funds meant for military hardware or the undermining of due process in arms procurement, the impact is a clear weakening of national capacity to respond to the threat."

Ribadu, however, said that the country's security and corruption challenges are not beyond redemption, but the path to their resolution runs through the corridor of integrity, leadership, and institutional reforms.

"Therefore, we must fight corruption not by responding but by building a strong system that prevents corruption itself," he added.

"Arrest and prosecution of corrupt officials in Nigeria are only reactive, we must build a system that will make it impossible for the people to be corrupt even if they want to be.

"Corruption is endemic in the country; it cuts across individuals, too, not government alone. So the fight must be institutional and attitudinal.

Dangote refinery offers N10 refund on petrol to customers

Dangote Petrochemicals Refinery has effected another reduction in the ex-gantry price of its Premium Motor Spirit also known as petrol below the publicly announced N835 per litre.

Sources confirmed on Monday that the refinery has reduced its price to N825 per litre for its customers, through a rebate of N10 after successful loading of products at the refinery.

The sources said marketers are still paying N835 per li-

tre for products but receive a N10 refund after loading and evacuating them from the refinery.

The covert price adjustment has allowed its customers and marketers to retail the product at a lower band of N830 to N835, outpricing importing marketers and private depot owners.

The official said, "The Dangote refinery has started giving a rebate on its products. It's not an official reduction yet, but paid back after marketers buy

products from them."

Last month, the Dangote refinery effected a price reduction twice within the space of a week, crashing its gantry price by N45 from N880 to N835 per litre.

This followed the restart and full implementation of the Naira-for-Crude agreement with local refiners after an earlier suspension.

Efforts to get an official reaction from Dangote Spokesperson, Anthony Chiejina, on the price reduction were futile.



PRESIDENT, DANGOTE GROUP, ALHAJI ALIKO DANGOTE

Court cautions parties, adjourns suit challenging Fubara, others' suspension

A Federal High Court sitting in Port Harcourt has adjourned until May 26, 2025, the constitutional suit challenging the suspension of the Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara, Deputy Governor Prof. Ngozi Odu, and all members of the State House of Assembly by President Bola Tinubu.

The suit was filed by a former federal lawmaker and People's Democratic Party Rivers State Governorship aspirant in the 2023 general election, Dr. Farah Dagogo.

President Tinubu had, on March 18, 2025, declared a State of Emergency in Rivers State, citing security concerns.

He further announced the suspension of the state's democratically elected leadership and appointed Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ibas (rated) as the Administrator of Rivers State.

In response, Dr. Dagogo filed Suit No: FHC/PH/CS/50/2025 on April 9, 2025, arguing that the President's actions were ultra vires and lacked any constitutional backing.

At the hearing on Monday, counsel to the plaintiff, Cosmas Enweluzo, SAN, informed the court that all defendants had been

duly served and expressed readiness to proceed with the case.

The defendants in the suit include President Bola Tinubu, Senate President, Senator Godswill Akpabio, the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Tajudeen Abbas and Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ibas (retired), Rivers State Administrator.

Of all the named defendants, only the fifth defendant, Vice Admiral Ibas (retired), appeared through his counsel, Kehinde Ogunwumiju, SAN, who requested additional time to respond to the originating summons.

After hearing from both counsels, Justice Adamu Mohammed granted the request but cautioned that the matter would proceed on the next adjourned date regardless of further delays.

Speaking to journalists after the court session, Enweluzo reiterated that President Tinubu acted outside the Constitution.

He stated, "The case challenges the President's unilateral appointment of an Administrator for Rivers State and the suspension of duly elected officials, including the Governor, Deputy Governor, and House of Assembly members.

EFCC says Tompolo has questions to answer over alleged Naira abuse

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) says it will take action against Chief Government Ekpeumopolo, better known as Tompolo, over an allegation of Naira abuse.

Tompolo was spotted in a viral video, reportedly during his 54th birthday celebration in April, dancing as a man sprayed ₦1,000 notes before him.

The footage drew widespread criticism and renewed calls for the EFCC to investigate the matter.

Responding to the public outcry, the anti-graft agency said the Niger Delta chieftain will have questions to answer over the viral video.

Nobody is above the law. Tompolo will have questions to answer! #EFCCNigeria pic.twitter.com/xWkMrdoMck

"Nobody is above the law. Tompolo will have questions to answer!" the EFCC stated in a post shared via its official social media handles on Monday.

In the clip, Tompolo, dressed in white and red attire, is seen dancing while a man repeatedly throws ₦1,000 notes into the air — a practice outlawed by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

According to Section 21(3) of the CBN Act, 2007 (as amended), "spraying of, dancing or matching on the Naira or any note issued by the bank during social occasions or otherwise howsoever shall constitute an

abuse and defacing of the Naira... and shall be punishable under the law by fines, imprisonment, or both."

The EFCC has increasingly relied on this provision to prosecute individuals who spray or mishandle the national currency at social events, and previously cautioned that enforcement of the law is non-discriminatory.

Tompolo's video resurfaced just weeks after a series of crackdowns on celebrities and public figures accused of Naira abuse.

In January, sons of billionaire businessman Chief Razaq Okoya — Wahab and Raheem Okoya — were reportedly invited by the EFCC for spraying money in a promotional video for a music project.

However, some Nigerians have accused the EFCC of selective prosecution. Critics argue that enforcement is more aggressive against individuals without political or financial influence.

In 2024, socialite Idris Okuneye, alias Bobrisky, was sentenced to six months in prison without the option of a fine for similar offences. Musician Terry Apala was also remanded by a Lagos court after being arraigned for allegedly spraying and mutilating Naira notes.

Nollywood actress Iyabo Ojo confirmed last week that she was contacted by the EFCC while abroad and honoured the invitation upon returning to Nigeria.

Hajj: Okpebholo bids Edo pilgrims farewell, reaffirms commitment to religious inclusion

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State has reiterated his administration's dedication to fostering religious inclusion and harmony as he bade farewell to the state's Muslim contingent for the 2025 Hajj.

Represented by the Secretary to the State Government, Barrister Umar Musa Ikhlor, the Governor addressed the pilgrims ahead of their journey to Saudi Arabia, urging them to embrace the spiritual opportunity before them, while

being Ambassadors of the state. Governor Okpebholo underscored the vital role of merit, justice, inclusivity, and fairness as essential pillars for sustainable national development.

Recognising Hajj as a central tenet of the Islamic faith, he described the pilgrimage as a moment for deep spiritual renewal and a chance to reconnect with one's faith.

He encouraged the pilgrims to seize the opportunity to, not only reflect spiritually, but also to offer prayers for Edo State, particularly for peace, security, and prosperity.

He further urged the pilgrims to be worthy ambassadors of Edo State throughout their stay in the Holy Land, reminding them that their conduct abroad would reflect on the entire state.

His message of unity and inclusivity resonated with the spirit of the gathering and was welcomed warmly by those present.

The Chairman of the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Mallam Musah Muhammad Uduimoh, appreciated the Governor for his continued support, noting the

administration's efforts in ensuring a smooth and well-prepared pilgrimage experience. Alhaji Eranga Abdulkabir, the Board's Secretary, also provided assurances regarding the board's logistical and spiritual readiness for the journey.

Adding his voice, the Leader of the Delegation (Amir Hajj), HRH Mallam Ali D. Suleiman, the Oghiaga of Ibivies,

encouraged the pilgrims, offering guidance for their time in Saudi Arabia and reminding them of the responsibilities they carry as spiritual envoys of the state.



FAREWELL TO PILGRIMS:

A cross section of Edo Muslim pilgrims, during the governor's visit to bid farewell to pilgrims from Edo State traveling to Saudi Arabia at the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board's office in Benin City on Monday.

Igbinedion University marks 26th Founder's Day with renewed commitment to educational sustainability

EDWARD OSEGHE

Igbinedion University, Okada, has reaffirmed its commitment to invest in infrastructure and technological advancement to enhance the learning experience, drive research, and encourage innovation aimed at solving real-world challenges.

The institution's Founder and Chancellor, Chief Gabriel Osawaru Igbinedion, the Esama of Benin Kingdom, made this declaration during the university's 26th Founder's Day celebration held in Okada, Edo State.

Represented by the Deputy Chancellor and former Edo State Governor, Chief Lucky Nosakhare Igbinedion, the Chancellor highlighted the

university's enduring focus on academic distinction and national development.

He noted that the institution commenced operations in 1999 with a modest intake of 111 students and has since grown into a respected centre of higher learning, producing alumni who are making meaningful contributions worldwide.

Reflecting on the university's journey, Chief Igbinedion described the past 26 years as a period marked by vision, determination, and an unwavering pursuit of excellence.

He emphasised the importance of sustained investment and strategic partnerships to confront the current challenges confronting Nigeria's educa-

tion system.

He also paid tribute to those whose sacrifices and support made the university's founding possible, while commending the efforts of the Vice Chancellor and his team for preserving and enhancing the university's academic flame.

In his keynote address, "Reimagining University Education in Nigeria for a More Sustainable Future: Opportunities and Challenges," former Minister of Finance and current Chairman of the Bank of Industry, Dr Mansur Muhtar, OFR, lauded Igbinedion University for pioneering private higher education in Nigeria.

He encouraged the institution to once again take the lead in

enacting transformative reforms essential for rescuing Nigeria's beleaguered university system.

Muhtar, a renowned economist and banker, described the current state of tertiary education in the country as dire, citing problems such as outdated curricula, rote learning, neglected infrastructure, underfunded research, and a disconnect from contemporary societal demands. He insisted that the time had come not merely to reform, but to fundamentally reimagine the role of universities, urging them to become engines of innovation and relevance in a rapidly evolving world shaped by digital disruption, artificial intelligence, and climate change.

Rivers crisis: Fubara visited me with two govs —Wike

The Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike has said that suspended Governor Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers State is making reconciliatory moves and had, alongside two other governors, visited him.

Wike, the immediate past governor of Rivers State, said

this on Monday following reports that Fubara, who was suspended earlier in the year, visited the FCT minister.

"The President has called for peace severally and I cannot sit down when the President has called for peace and I say, 'I don't want peace,'" Wike said during a media parley.

"Yes, he came with two governors and one elder person. Unfortunately, the two governors are APC governors. So, I will not pursue him. He said he wants peace. That's fine. I also want peace."

The rift between Wike and Fubara threw Rivers into a political crisis, which lingered for months and reached a crescent

do when President Bola Tinubu suspended Fubara, the Rivers Assembly, and the state's deputy governor, Ngozi Odu.

Tinubu thereafter appointed a state administrator whom he saddled with running Rivers affairs for six months in a major political event that split opinions among Nigerians.

News

Foreign

Entire Gaza population at critical risk of famine, UN-backed assessment says

A UN-backed assessment has said that Gaza's population of around 2.1 million Palestinians is at "critical risk" of famine and faces "extreme levels of food insecurity" as an Israeli blockade on humanitarian aid continues.

The latest report by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) said there had been a "major deterioration" since October 2024, but concluded famine

was not currently occurring.

The two-month ceasefire between Israel and Hamas "led to a temporary reprieve" in Gaza, the report said, but renewed hostilities and an Israeli blockade on aid - ongoing since early March - had "reversed" any improvements.

Some 244,000 people were currently experiencing the most severe, or "catastrophic" levels of food insecurity, it said, and called for urgent action to prevent the

"increasingly likely" risk of famine.

Israel renewed its military operations in Gaza in mid-March and has prevented food, medication and other aid from entering Gaza for 70 days, saying it is putting pressure on Hamas to release its remaining hostages.

There has been international condemnation of the blockade, including from the UN which has said it has supplies at Gaza's border crossings, ready to en-

ter if Israel allows. Aid agencies have said the blockade could be a war crime and amounts to a policy of starvation.

The IPC assessment, released on Monday, found half a million people - or one in five - were facing starvation in Gaza. It said nearly 71,000 children under the age of five are expected to be acutely malnourished over the next 11 months to April 2026.

It added: "Many households

are resorting to extreme measures to find food, including begging, and collecting garbage to sell to buy something to eat."

The report said the current situation, compared to its October 2024 analysis, represented "a major deterioration in one of the world's most severe food and nutrition crises driven by conflict and characterised by untold human suffering".

Its analysis found that 1.95 million people, or 93% of Gaza's population, were living through high levels of acute food insecurity, including 244,000 experiencing "catastrophic" levels.

The IPC - a global initiative by UN agencies, aid groups and governments - is the primary mechanism the international community uses to conclude whether a famine is happening.

Israeli officials have denied there is a hunger crisis in Gaza because of the quantity of aid that entered during the ceasefire.

It comes as Hamas said it would release Israeli-American hostage Edan Alexander as part of efforts to reach a ceasefire agreement. The group said it was also intended to facilitate a deal for the entry of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

The Israeli PM's office said it had not committed to any ceasefire but only to a "safe corridor" for Mr Alexander's release.

US President Donald Trump arrives in the Middle East on Tuesday, and Israel has vowed to expand its military offensive against Hamas if no deal is reached by the end of his visit.

Israeli officials have said the plans for their expanded offensive include seizing all of the territory indefinitely, forcibly displacing Palestinians to the south, and taking over aid distribution with private companies despite opposition from the UN and its humanitarian partners, who say they will not co-operate because it appears to "weaponise" aid.



Ibrahim Traore of Burkina Faso (right), with Vladimir Putin of Russia, during the meeting of both leaders in Russia.

Kurdish group PKK says it is laying down arms and disbanding

Outlawed Kurdish group the PKK, which has waged a 40-year insurgency against Turkey, has announced it is laying down its arms and disbanding.

The move followed a call in February by the group's jailed leader, Abdullah Ocalan, for it to disband.

The PKK insurgency initially aimed to create an independent homeland for Kurds, who account for about 20% of Turkey's population. But it has since moved away from its separatist goals, focusing instead on more autonomy and greater Kurdish rights.

More than 40,000 people have been killed since the insurgency began.

The PKK - which is banned as a terrorist group in Turkey,

the EU, UK and US - said it has "completed its historical mission" and would "end the method of armed struggle."

From now on, the Kurdish issue "can be resolved through democratic politics", the group said in a statement published on the PKK-affiliated news agency ANF.

In February, Ocalan, 76, called on his movement to lay down its arms and dissolve itself. The PKK leader has been in solitary confinement in prison on an island in the Sea of Marmara, southwest of Istanbul, since 1999.

Ocalan wrote a letter from prison in February saying "there is no alternative to democracy in the pursuit and realisation of a political system. Democratic consensus is the fundamental way."

It is unclear what Ocalan and his supporters will get in return for disbanding but there is speculation that he may be paroled.

Kurdish politicians will be hoping for a new political dialogue, and a pathway towards greater Kurdish rights.

Both sides had reasons to do a deal now.

The PKK has been hit hard by the Turkish military in recent years, and regional changes have made it harder for them and their affiliates to operate in Iraq and Syria.

President Erdogan needs the support of pro Kurdish political parties if he is to be able to run again in Turkey's next presidential election, due in 2028.

The decision to disband was an important step towards a "terror-free Turkey", and the

process would be monitored by state institutions, a spokesperson for President Tayyip Erdogan's AK Party said, according to Reuters news agency.

Winthrop Rodgers, from the international affairs think tank Chatham House, said it would take "a major democratic transition by Turkey" to accommodate demands from Kurdish political parties.

There has been "some goodwill" from some Turkish leaders in recent months, Mr Rodgers said, which allowed the PKK disbandment to play out.

He added: "But whether that extends to the major changes needed to ensure full Kurdish participation in politics and society is far less clear.

"In a lot of ways, the ball is in Turkey's court."

First white South Africans fly to US under Trump refugee plan

The first set of 49 white South Africans to be granted refugee status by President Donald Trump's administration have successfully traveled to the US.

On Sunday they boarded a flight from Johannesburg which landed in Washington DC later on Monday.

This comes after a weekend of speculation about when the Afrikaners would leave for America, amid criticism from the South African government who described the US resettlement scheme as "politically motivated".

Relations between South Africa and the US have been tense for months, after an executive order in February in which President Trump stated that Afrikaners were victims of "racial discrimination".

The US has criticised domestic South African policy, accusing the government of seizing land from white farmers without any compensation - something which the southern African nation says has not happened.

Top Trump adviser, South African-born Elon Musk, has previously said there was a "genocide of white people" in South Africa and accused the government of passing "racist ownership laws".

The claims of a genocide of white people have been widely

discredited.

In a statement on Friday, South Africa's foreign ministry said accusations the government discriminated against the country's white minority were "unfounded" and that the US's resettlement scheme was an attempt to undermine the country's "constitutional democracy".

The statement added that the country had worked "tirelessly" to stop discrimination, given its history of racial oppression under apartheid.

Bilateral tensions have been strained for some times as President Trump tasked his administration with formulating plans to potentially resettle Afrikaners, a group with mostly Dutch ancestry, in the US.

In March, South Africa's ambassador to the US, Ebrahim Rasool, was expelled after accusing President Trump of using "white victimhood as a dog whistle", leading to the US accusing Mr Rasool of "race-baiting".

The US has also criticised South Africa for taking an "aggressive" position against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), where Pretoria has accused Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government of genocide against people in Gaza - a claim which the Israelis strongly reject.

Pope calls for journalists to be released from prison

Pope Leo XIV has called for the release of imprisoned journalists in his first address to members of the media at the Vatican.

He expressed solidarity with journalists who were jailed "for seeking and reporting the truth" and said their suffering "challenges the conscience of nations and the international

community".

Press freedom must be defended, he said. The media must ensure that the "precious gift" of free speech is protected.

The Committee to Protect Journalists said 361 journalists were in jail in 2024.

Pope Leo, who was chosen as the new leader of the Catholic Church on Thursday, also

highlighted the role journalists can play in bringing attention to injustice and poverty in the world.

He urged the media to focus on reporting the truth instead of taking part in partisan divisions, and not to give space to "fanaticism and hatred."

Speaking in the Vatican's Paul VI audience hall, he said

"the way we communicate is of fundamental importance: we must say 'no' to the war of words and images, we must reject the paradigm of war."

"We do not need loud, forceful communication," he said, "but rather communication that is capable of listening and of gathering the voices of the weak who have no voice."

The new pope also raised concerns about artificial intelligence, telling the assembled media they should use AI with "responsibility and discernment."

Reporters should ensure that AI can be used for the "benefit of all of humanity," he said.

Leo XIV spoke mainly in Italian, but opened with a

quip in English about the huge round of applause he received when he walked into the room.

"Thank you for this wonderful reception," he said.

"They say that when they clap at the beginning, it doesn't matter much. If you're still awake at the end and still want to applaud, thank you very much."

Foreign

News

India-Pakistan top military officials to speak as ceasefire holds

Top military officials from India and Pakistan are due to speak on Monday to discuss finer details of the ceasefire agreed between them over the weekend.

The US-brokered ceasefire between the nuclear-armed neighbours appears to have held overnight after nearly four days of intense shelling and aerial incursions from both sides.

On Saturday, President Donald Trump announced the ceasefire between India and Pakistan, saying "it was time to stop the current aggression that could have led to the death and destruction of so many, and so much".

Both nations have ceased hostilities since then but say they remain vigilant, warning each other of the consequences of violating the ceasefire.

India announced on Monday that it was reopening 32 airports

for civilians that it had earlier said would remain closed until Thursday due to safety concerns.

The tensions were the latest in the decades-long rivalry between the neighbours who have fought two wars over Kashmir, a Himalayan region which they claim in full but administer in part.

The recent hostilities threatened to turn into a full-fledged war as both countries appeared unwilling to back down for days.

Both countries have said that dozens of people from both sides died over the four days of fighting last week, partly due to heavy shelling near the de facto border.

After the ceasefire, however, both the rivals have declared military victory.

On 7 May, India reported striking nine targets inside Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir - this was in response to a deadly militant

attack in Indian-administered Kashmir that killed 26 people.

The attack took place in a meadow in the picturesque Pahalgam valley on 22 April.

India blamed a Pakistan-based group for the attack but Islamabad denies any involvement.

In the days since the first strike, India and Pakistan accused each other of cross-border shelling and claimed to have shot down rival drones and aircraft in their airspace.

As the conflict escalated, both nations said they struck the rival's military bases.

Indian officials reported striking 11 Pakistan Air Force bases, including one in Rawalpindi, near the capital Islamabad. India also claimed Pakistan lost 35-40 men at the Line of Control - the de facto border - during the conflict and that its air force lost a few aircraft.

Pakistan has accepted that some Indian projectiles landed

at its air force bases.

Indian defence forces have also said that they struck nine armed group training facilities in Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir, killing more than 100 militants.

The Pakistan military, in turn, claims it targeted about 26 military facilities in India and that its drones hovered over capital Delhi.

India has confirmed that some Pakistani projectiles landed up at its air force bases,

though it did not comment on the claim about Delhi.

Pakistan also claims to have shot down five Indian aircraft, including three French Rafales - India has not acknowledged this or commented on the number, though it said on Sunday that "losses are a part of combat".

Pakistan denied the claims that an Indian pilot was in its custody after she ejected following an aircraft crash. India has also said that "all our pilots are back home".

Crates full of Nazi documents found in Argentine court's basement

Crates containing documents from Nazi Germany have been rediscovered in the basement of Argentina's Supreme Court.

The unusual find was made as workers were clearing the building's basement ahead of its archives being moved to a newly created museum.

The documents were sent by the German embassy in Tokyo and arrived in Argentina on 20 June 1941 inside 83 diplomatic pouches aboard a Japanese steamship, according to information gathered by court officials.

They ended up in the Supreme Court that same year after they were confiscated by Argentine customs officials who had opened five pouches at random and found Nazi propaganda material inside.

They were rediscovered last week by workers who were intrigued by a number of wooden champagne crates they stumbled upon while moving archival material from the Supreme Court's basement.

"Upon opening one of the boxes, we identified material intended to consolidate and propagate Adolf Hitler's ideology in Argentina during [World War Two]," the court said about the find.

The crates were quickly moved to a secure office in the building and court officials alerted the Buenos Aires Holocaust Museum to their existence and asked for its help in creating an inventory of all their contents.

Photos published by the court show the experts sifting through black-and-white photos and membership booklets bearing swastikas on their covers.

Historians hope the documents will yield clues to the Nazis' financial networks and their international ties.

In a statement, Argentina's Supreme Court revealed the information it had managed to piece together so far.

It said the documents, which arrived in Argentina on board the Nan-a-Maru steamship from Tokyo in June 1941, had been declared as "personal effects" by the German embassy in Buenos Aires at the time.

However, Argentine custom officials were suspicious because of the size of the shipment and alerted the Argentine foreign minister, fearing it could contain material which could endanger Argentina's neutral stance in World War Two at the time.

Five of the pouches were opened at random and found to contain postcards, photographs and Nazi propaganda material.



A picture of Edan Alexander can be seen at a demonstration in Israel calling for the release of the remaining hostages.

Hamas to release US-Israeli hostage as part of efforts to reach Gaza ceasefire

Hamas says it will release Israeli-American hostage Edan Alexander, who is believed to be the last living captive with US nationality in Gaza, as part of efforts to reach a ceasefire agreement.

The decision comes ahead of President Donald Trump's visit to the Middle East on Tuesday. Hamas said it was also intended to facilitate a deal for the entry of humanitarian aid. Gaza has been under an Israeli blockade for 70 days.

Earlier a senior Hamas official told the BBC that the Palestinian armed group was holding direct negotiations with a US administration official in Qatar.

The Israeli PM's office said it had not committed to any ceasefire but only to a "safe corridor"

for Mr Alexander's release.

Benjamin Netanyahu's office said preparations to intensify fighting were still continuing, and the release of Mr Alexander had been made possible because of military pressure on Hamas.

A senior Palestinian official familiar with the negotiations with the US in Qatar told the BBC that Hamas's announcement was intended as a goodwill gesture before Trump's arrival.

He said another meeting between Hamas and the mediators was scheduled for early Monday morning to finalise the process of Mr Alexander's release, which would require a temporary halt to Israeli military activity and a suspension of aerial operations during the handover.

President Trump confirmed Alexander's release in a post on Truth Social, calling it "monumental news" and "a step taken in good faith".

Born in Tel Aviv but raised in New Jersey, 21-year-old Alexander was serving in an elite infantry unit on the border with Gaza when he was captured by Hamas militants during the 7 October attack.

Of the 251 hostages taken during Hamas's 2023 attack, 58 remain in the enclave, as well as another hostage who was taken at an earlier date. Up to 24 of them are believed to be alive.

Five of those in Gaza are believed to be US citizens and Alexander was thought to be the only one still alive.

Mr Alexander's family said

they had "received the greatest gift imaginable - news that our beautiful son Edan is returning home after 583 days in captivity in Gaza".

They added: "We express our deepest gratitude to President Trump, Steve Witkoff, and the US administration for their tireless work to make this happen."

"We urge the Israeli government and the negotiating teams: please don't stop. We hope our son's release begins negotiations for all 58 remaining hostages, ending this nightmare for them and their families. No hostage should be left behind."

Egypt and Qatar also released a joint statement saying that Hamas agreeing to free Alexander was an "encouraging step toward a return to the negotiating table".

White House and Qatar discuss transfer of luxury jet for Air Force One

The White House is in discussions with the royal family of Qatar to possibly receive a luxury jumbo jet, intended for use as an Air Force One presidential plane.

In a statement, Qatar denied that the plane would be a gift, but said the transfer of an aircraft for "temporary use" was under discussion between the two countries.

According to CBS News, the BBC's news partner in America, the plane would be donated to Trump's presidential library at the end of his term.

The news comes as Trump is set to visit Qatar this week as part of the first major foreign trip of his second term.

Ali Al-Ansari, Qatar's Media Attaché to the US, said negotiations were ongoing between Qatar's Ministry of Defense and the US Department of Defense.

"The matter remains under review by the respective legal departments, and no decision has been made."

Sources told CBS News that the plane, reported to be worth about \$400m, will not be ready for use right away as it will need

to be retrofitted and cleared by security officials.

The potential value of the plane and its handling is likely to raise legal and ethical questions among critics. Democrats were quick to accuse Trump of breaching ethics violations.

Senator Adam Schiff from California quoted a section of the US Constitution on social media that said no elected official could accept "any present... of any kind whatever" from the leader of a foreign state without congressional approval.

Laura Loomer, a longtime

Trump ally, also criticised the move. After writing on social media that she would "take a bullet" for Trump, she said: "This is really going to be such a stain on the [administration] if this is true."

On Sunday, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said "any gift given by a foreign government is always accepted in full compliance with all applicable laws. President Trump's Administration is committed to full transparency".

Defending the negotiations with Qatar, Trump referred to the plane as a gift and said it was

offered for his use at no cost in a post to his Truth Social website on Sunday.


"So the fact that the Defense Department is getting a GIFT, FREE OF CHARGE, of a 747 aircraft to replace the 40 year old Air Force One, temporarily, in a very public and transparent transaction, so bothers the Crooked Democrats that they insist we pay, TOP DOLLAR, for the plane," he wrote.

The White House's current fleet includes two Boeing 747-200B planes customised for presidential use with special commu-

nications equipment and features like a stateroom, office and conference room, according to the US Air Force. The planes have been in use since 1990 and 1991.

Air Force One planes usually carry over to other administrations. According to the National Archives, only the Reagan presidential library has an Air Force One jet, and it flew seven presidents before being donated.

Qatar is said to be offering a version of a Boeing 747-8, a much newer model that ABC News reports has been upgraded into a "flying palace".

 <p>The Nigerian Observer ...That the people may know</p>	<h2 style="margin:0;">ADVERTISEMENT RATES</h2> <h3 style="margin:0;">(PRINT)</h3>
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SIZES	COLOUR		BLACK AND WHITE		BLACK AND WHITE		MULTI NATIONALS			
			PUBLIC NOTICE		PRODUCT		COLOUR		BLACK & WHITE	
	RATE	TOTAL (Per year rate)	RATE	TOTAL (Per year rate)	RATE	TOTAL (Per year rate)	RATE	TOTAL (Per year rate)	RATE	TOTAL (Per year rate)
FULL PAGE	517,144	556,447	369,500	397,213	375,150	349,532	665,155	713,040	443,440	476,699
1/2 X 2	369,500	397,213	295,600	314,079	306,938	283,405	443,500	476,800	300,550	320,250
1/3 X 2	340,000	365,200	275,200	294,011	177,400	190,905	370,000	397,390	255,000	273,750
HALF PAGE	295,200	314,079	235,500	251,250	147,800	158,205	340,000	365,200	273,450	292,925
1/3 X 3	391,500	418,378	117,500	125,589	128,800	137,175	260,000	281,090	251,000	270,149
1/3 X 2	305,000	325,418	135,500	145,039	103,500	111,767	221,800	238,418	143,500	153,809
QUARTER PAGE	192,150	206,561	18,250	197,119	85,090	95,342	230,500	254,258	15,000	16,075
CENTER SPREAD	1,306,898	1,456,882						3W	1,148,181	1,311,276
HALF CENTER	991,590	1,071,889						3W	887,272	957,317

FRONT PAGE POSITIONS					OTHER SIZES				
SIZES	PRODUCTS		PUBLIC NOTICE		SIZES	PUBLIC NOTICE		PRODUCTS	
	RATE	TOTAL (Per year rate)	RATE	TOTAL (Per year rate)		RATE	TOTAL (Per year rate)	RATE	TOTAL (Per year rate)
FP 6X2	90,800	96,535	105,400	113,379	6 X 2	60,640	65,185	49,140	52,305
FP 5X2	81,100	87,185	97,300	104,508	5 X 2	51,950	55,840	42,120	45,279
FP 4X2	61,000	65,405	80,700	86,051	4 X 2	45,260	48,600	34,400	36,399
FP 3X2	54,800	59,035	71,000	75,405	3 X 2	30,500	33,218	26,600	28,599
FP 2X2	58,000	63,425	64,000	69,200	2 X 2	10,680	11,081	15,000	16,140
					2 X 1	17,400	18,391	7,415	7,911
					CAC	30,000	30,890		

SPECIAL POSITIONS				
SIZES	RATE	TOTAL (Per year rate)	RATE	TOTAL (Per year rate)
8 X 10	118,250	127,119	147,800	158,889
SIZE INSIDE	88,600	95,345	118,250	127,119
SPECIAL PAGES				
FRONT PAGE	ADD 30% SURCHARGE			
PAGES 2 & 3	ADD 15% SURCHARGE			
PAGES 4 & 5	ADD 10% SURCHARGE			
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PAGES 4 & 5	ADD 40% SURCHARGE			
BACK PAGE	ADD 60% SURCHARGE			

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EFFECTIVE FROM FEBRUARY 1, 2023

Sports

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MKO Abiola Sports Complex to host international football matches, says NFF President

The President of the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF), Alhaji Ibrahim Musa Gusau has disclosed that Nigeria's senior female football team, the Super Falcons, will play the Indomitable Lionesses of Cameroon in an international friendly match at the newly renovated MKO Abiola

Sports Complex, Abeokuta, on May 31st and June 3rd.

The NFF boss also stated that the Sports Complex would host Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Togo, Benin, Ghana, and Nigeria in a West Africa Football Union (WAFU) Under-17 Championship in September 2025.

Alhaji Gusau made this known when he led other executive members of the NFF on a courtesy call to the Ogun State Governor, Prince Dapo Abiodun, in Abeokuta on Sunday.

"We are organizing a friendly match for our senior female national team, the Super Falcons, against the Indomitable Lionesses

of Cameroon, which will take place at the end of this month.

"We have arranged two-legged matches; the first leg will be played on May 31st, and the second will be played on June 3rd.

"So, we plan to play the first match on May 31st at Remo Stars Stadium, and the second match will be played in Abeokuta, so the match on June 3rd will be held at the MKO Abiola Sports Complex.

As the acting President of WAFU B, I have tried to secure the hosting rights for the Under-17 qualifications from WAFU B, which will consist of about seven countries: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Togo, Benin, Ghana, and Nigeria.

"We secured the hosting rights, and I informed them that we are going to host it in Ogun State," he said.

Gusau also noted that the federation under his leadership had been able to sanitize the Nigeria Professional Football League.

"When we came on board, everybody knew you could not talk about the Nigeria Premier League because nobody could tell you when the league would

start or when it would end.

"But we made a promise to ensure we do what is right, and we must do our best to make sure that the Nigeria Premier League aligns with other leagues around the world, and by this season, we were able to achieve that," he said.

In his remarks, Governor Abiodun appreciated the management of the NFF for restructuring and repositioning the Premier League, which he said now occupies its pride of place among premier leagues all over the world.

Governor Abiodun also stated that his administration is working towards developing a sports economy in the state, saying that all hands are on deck to ensure that the National Sports Festival becomes a reference point in hosting festivals in the country.

The Governor also praised Remo Stars Football Club for lifting the Nigeria Professional Football League trophy, noting that it had been over twenty years since a football club from the state or the Southwest achieved such a feat.

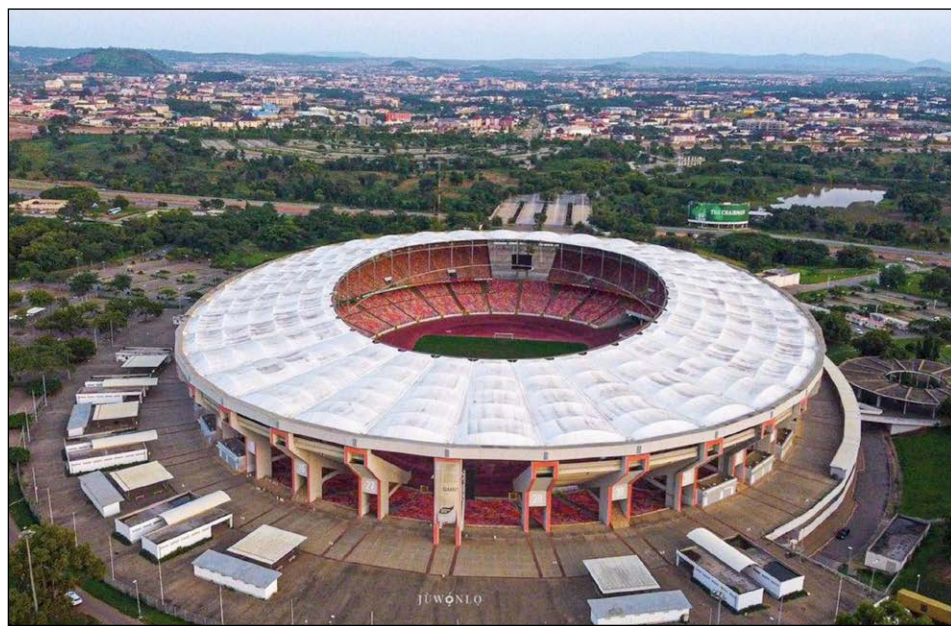
"We will build an economy around sports, and I want to thank you for supporting us in that. Besides that fact, we are going to host the All African Under-18 and Under-20 athletics in July, which will take place here because of the facilities we now have.

"You have also announced that there will be a few matches played here, and we are very excited about that. This will help us strengthen the sports economy that we have begun to ensure we sustain this stadium that we have built," he said.

The Governor also pledged the support of his administration towards ensuring that the state-owned team reclaims its place of pride among the comity of football teams in the country.

"As a government, I want to pledge that we will do everything to support sports, particularly football. Our Gateway Football Club—whatever it is that we are going to do, whichever way—we will invest.

"Because they say charity begins at home, we couldn't have made such an investment and then they will not win the Premier League," he said.



PSG's Moroccan international Hakimi named top African player in French league

The Atlas Lions of Morocco and PSG defender Achraf Hakimi has been voted the top African player in the French league after helping his club win a record-extending 13th Ligue 1 title and reach the Champions League final.

The 26-year-old Moroccan right back won the Marc-Vivien Foe award ahead of Nice forward Evann Guessand, from Ivory Coast, and Senegalese midfielder Habib Diarra,

who plays for Strasbourg.

The prize is named after the late Foe, the popular Cameroon player and two-time African champion who collapsed and died on a field in France in 2003 while playing for his country.

Hakimi, regarded as one of the best right-backs in the world, scored last week as PSG defeated Arsenal 2-1 in the second leg of their Champions League semifinal.

He is the second defender to

win the award after Congolese player Chancel Mbemba in 2023.

Gabonese international Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang won the honor in 2024 in the colours of Olympique Marseille.

PSG is hoping for its first-ever treble this season. In addition to the Champions League final against Inter Milan on May 31, the club from the capital faces Reims in the French Cup final.



NSC advances vision of Nigeria as a global sporting hub, as international gymnastics course holds in Abuja

The National Sports Commission (NSC) continues to make significant strides in positioning Nigeria into a global sporting hub, as the ongoing 2025/2028 International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) Men's Artistic Gymnastics (MAG) Judges Course takes center stage in Abuja.

Running from May 10th to 14th, 2025, the prestigious FIG MAG International Judges Course has drawn participants from across the continent — including Algeria, Egypt, Cameroon, South Africa, and host nation Nigeria — under the expert

guidance of Russia's Dimitri Andreev, a respected FIG official.

The course aims to develop high-caliber gymnastics judges, laying the groundwork for a brighter future for the sport in Africa.

Under the leadership of Chairman Mallam Shehu Dikko and Director General Hon. Bukola Olopade, the NSC has tasked national sports federations with raising the bar in local talent discovery and international relevance — a challenge they are meeting with renewed vigor.

Commending the Nigeria Gymnastics Federation

for its exceptional hosting of the event, the NSC noted that such achievements are part of a broader national strategy to attract international sports events and foster capacity development.

"This course is yet another step in our mission to make Nigeria a preferred destination for international sporting activities," said DG, Hon. Bukola Olopade.

Nigeria's credentials as a regional sports powerhouse continues to grow. Earlier in the year, Nigeria hosted the ECOWAS African Wrestling Championship with 11 countries participating in celebration of ECOWAS's 50th

anniversary. Similarly, in late 2024, Nigeria hosted the 2nd African Military Games — "AMGA Abuja 2024" — further solidifying its leadership in African sports diplomacy.

A number of Nigerian sports Federation presidents are also gaining traction in global sports governance. Francis Orbih (badminton), Daniel Igali (wrestling) and Prince kelvin Erhunmwunse (gymnastics) have recently secured influential international appointments in their respective international sports federation bodies, while more are poised to follow in this footsteps.

Gov. Abiodun lauds NPFL for harmonised calendar

Ogun State Governor, Prince Dapo Abiodun is excited with developments in the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) which he said has been able to establish a pattern for its calendar.

Abiodun spoke while receiving a delegation from the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) led by the President, Ibrahim Gusau and Chairman of the NPFL, Hon. Gbenga Elegbeleye. They were in Abeokuta to felicitate the Governor following the official presentation of the 2024/25 NPFL season trophy to Remo Stars.

The Governor said it is commendable that the NPFL season has been adjusted to run parallel to most global leagues which are concluded before the month of June.

"While the champions, our own Remo Stars from Ogun State was crowned on Sunday,

there is just one more game to conclude the season which means the season will be shutting down this May just as will be the case with most European leagues. This is commendable", remarked Abiodun who was in Ikenne for the elaborate trophy presentation ceremony.

He also lauded the NPFL Board led by Elegbeleye for organising a hitchfree season that produced a champion without rancor.

"It is to the credit of the NPFL Board led by my brother, Elegbeleye that we had this beautiful trophy celebrations today with all stakeholders united in agreement that we have a worthy winner in Remo Stars", the Governor told his guests which also had in attendance, some NFF Board members including Ganiyu, Aisha Falode and Silas Agara.



SPORTS

NWFL Super Six: Remo Stars Ladies pip naija ratels, set up blockbuster clash with Bayelsa Queens

Remo Stars Ladies have continued their blistering form at the 2024-25 NWFL Premiership Super Six Playoffs, edging Naija Ratels 1-0 in a gritty Game of Day 2 encounter in Ikenne.

Bolaji Olamide's 14th-minute strike proved decisive as the Ogun-based side held firm to secure back-to-back victories and climb to six points from two matches.

Though Naija Ratels reg-

istered more shots overall—eight off target and none on target—the Remo Stars Ladies were more clinical and better organized.

Key match stats highlight the intensity: Remo Ladies had 5 shots on target to Ratels' zero, 10 fouls to Ratels' 14, and a yellow card count of 2-0. Goalkeeper saves also told the story, with Remo's keeper enjoying a quiet afternoon while Ratels' shot-stopper was forced into

four crucial saves.

With this result, Remo Stars Ladies now top the standings, setting the stage for a high-stakes showdown against fellow unbeaten side Bayelsa Queens on Wednesday, Game Day 3.

The Prosperity Girls, also coming off a strong start, will be looking to halt the Remo momentum in what promises to be a blockbuster clash in the race for the NWFL crown.



AMUSAN

Egypt 2025: Nigeria is first African country to qualify for 2025 FIFA U20 World Cup finals as Flying Eagles beat Senegal

Two-time runners-up Nigeria have again booked their ticket to the FIFA U20 World Cup finals after edging out Cup holders Senegal from the CAF U20 Cup of Nations in Egypt on Monday. In the event, the Flying Eagles hearkened to the charge by NFF General Secretary, Dr Mohammed Sanusi on Saturday, for the team to play with a different spirit and character.

A battling encounter at the Suez Canal Authority Stadium in Ismailia finished scoreless even after extra time, and the encounter had to be settled after penalty shootout in Egypt's third city.

Goalkeeper Ebenezer Har-

court turned out to be the hero, punching over a vicious shot by the dangerous Ibrahima Dieng in the 54th minute, and then saving two kicks in the shootout before Ousmane Konate blasted his kick against the sticks to hand victory to the Flying Eagles.

An intense opening stage in sunny Ismailia soon gave way to back-and-forth, and the defending champions came close in the 27th minute when Harcourt inadvertently dropped the ball but Dieng failed to find gold. Fifteen minutes later, the Lion Cubs again broke forward, but Dieng's header saw the ball kiss the upright.

Nigeria largely controlled proceedings in the last quarter-hour,

with Divine Oliseh, Kparobo Arrierhi and substitute Precious Benjamin all missing good chances.

In extra time, substitute Tahir Maigana rattled Senegal goalkeeper Mouhamed Sissokho with a great shot from distance, and Israel Ayuma's heaved effort from a free-kick on the left forced Sissokho to backtrack quickly and punch the ball over the bar.

After substitute Pierre Diatta Dorival's first kick in the shootout was saved by Harcourt and Precious Benjamin scored, Nigeria rose to the ascendancy, and won after further goals by Emmanuel Chukwu and Israel Ayuma, while the Senegalese could only score one of their four kicks.



U20 EAGLES

UEFA drops referee Szymon Marciniak from Champions League final after Barca complaint

UEFA has decided not to assign Polish referee Szymon Marciniak to the 2025 Champions League final, despite being the frontrunner for the role.

This decision follows his contentious performance in the Inter vs Barcelona semifi-

nal second leg, where several of his calls sparked major controversy.

Barcelona had expressed frustration over key decisions, including a penalty conceded and two potential spot-kick incidents that were not awarded.

The team's concerns were fur-

ther amplified by Pedri's complaint to UEFA, requesting an investigation into Marciniak's performance.

Instead, the UEFA Referees Committee has appointed Romania's István Kovács to officiate the Champions League final between Paris and Inter.

Ancelotti named Brazil's national team manager

The Brazilian Football Federation has named Carlo Ancelotti new manager of its national team.

The 65-year-old Italian who leaves Real Madrid later this month, has agreed a deal with the BFF and is due to begin his role on May 26.

His final match in charge of Madrid will be at home to Real

Sociedad the previous weekend, concluding the La Liga season.

Mirror reports that Ancelotti will wave goodbye to the Bernabeu after a trophy-laden second spell which so far includes two Champions League crowns and two Spanish titles.

Having returned to Madrid in 2021, the former Chelsea

and Everton boss still had one year left on his contract but club chiefs have agreed to part ways after a disappointing season.

Real have been dominated by arch rivals Barcelona this season, with Sunday's 4-3 defeat all but securing Hansi Flick's team the league title.

That was their fourth loss to Barca this season, two of which were in domestic cup finals. Ancelotti will be replaced by Bayer Leverkusen manager Xabi Alonso, who's already confirmed to be leaving his current position.

Brazilian businessman Diego Fernandes has brokered the deal on behalf of the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) after months of speculation.

Ancelotti becomes the first foreigner to manage the five-time World Cup winners, who sacked Dorival Junior in March amid their World Cup qualifying campaign.



ANCELOTTI

Alonso poised to take over at Real Madrid as Ancelotti leaves

Former Spain midfielder Xabi Alonso is set to become the next Real Madrid manager on a three-year deal when he leaves Bayer Leverkusen after this season, Spanish media reported on Monday.

Alonso, 43, is expected to replace current Real boss Carlo Ancelotti, who is being lined up for the vacant Brazil job ahead of the 2026 World Cup, soccer sources told Reuters.

Despite the Italian having a year remaining on his contract, Real's underwhelming season and his desire to coach Brazil have led to a mutual agreement to part ways, the sources added.

Alonso, who said earlier

this month that he was leaving Leverkusen after guiding them to the double last term, will join Real before the inaugural Club World Cup in the United States from June 14 to July 14, multiple media reports said.

Alonso, who also played for Liverpool and Bayern Munich, last season steered Leverkusen to their first Bundesliga title, ending the Bavarians' 11-year domination, and they also won the German Cup and German Super Cup.

Reports of Ancelotti's likely departure come as no surprise after Real's 4-3 defeat at Barcelona in a thrilling 'El Clasico' on Sunday left his side on the

brink of a trophyless season.

The 65-year-old Italian, who returned for a second stint at Real in June 2021, led the Spanish giants to two Champions League and LaLiga doubles, the last of which came last season.



ALONSO