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WORLD NEWS

India has launched missiles deep inside Pakistan in a major escalation. Here's the latest

India launched early-morning strikes on both Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir on Wednesday, and Islamabad claimed it had shot down five Indian Air Force jets in "self-defense," a major escalation between the rivaling neighbors.

The strikes came more than two weeks after a massacre of tourists in Indian-administered Kashmir that New Delhi blamed on its neighbor — which Islamabad denied.

Here's what we know:

• India's strikes: India's missile strikes targeted "terrorist infrastructure" across nine sites in Pakistan's densely populated Punjab province and Pakistan-administered Kashmir, it said. Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif described the attack as "an act of war," and Islamabad has vowed to retaliate.

• Indian jets "downed": Pakistani military sources said they shot down five Indian Air Force jets and one drone in "self-defense," claiming three Rafale jets – sophisticated multi-role fighters made in France – were among those downed.



CNN cannot independently verify the claim and has reached out to the Indian government for a response.

• Unidentified aircraft crash: A resident and government official told CNN that one unidentified fighter aircraft had crashed on a school building in Indian-administered Kashmir. It was not immediately clear from the pictures of the wreckage who the aircraft belonged to.

• Water infrastructure hit: Indian shelling hit an intake structure on the Noseri Dam on the Neelum river in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, a Pakistani security source told CNN.

• Casualties: Pakistan's military said the attack killed at least 26 civilians, according to Reuters. Shelling by the Pakistani military has killed at least eight people on the Indian side of the Line of Control in Kashmir, a senior Indian defense source told CNN.

• High-level meeting: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has chaired a meeting with senior ministers from his cabinet following the strikes. Modi has not spoken publicly since India launched the strikes early Wednesday. Modi has also briefed Droupadi Murmu, the country's president, on the latest military action, according to a post on Murmu's official X account.

• Massacre fallout: Muslim-majority Pakistan and Hindu-majority India have inched closer to open conflict since gunmen massacred 26 people in a popular holiday spot in Indian-administered Kashmir last month, with India's Hindu-nationalist government under intense pressure from its base to respond to the attack. Pakistan was swift to deny any link to the attack but in the days following, both countries swiftly downgraded ties with each other and have since been engaging in escalating tit-for-tat hostilities. Analysts said it was a question of when, not if, India retaliated.

• Wider impact: The strikes have put the region on alert, with commercial airlines keeping almost entirely clear of Pakistani airspace, flight-tracking website Flightradar24 showed. The airport in Srinagar, Indian-administered Kashmir's biggest city, has been closed to civilian traffic, and several airlines have suspended or diverted flights to Pakistan and northwest India.

Xi Jinping set to arrive in Moscow as Putin's 'guest of honor' ahead of Victory Day military parade

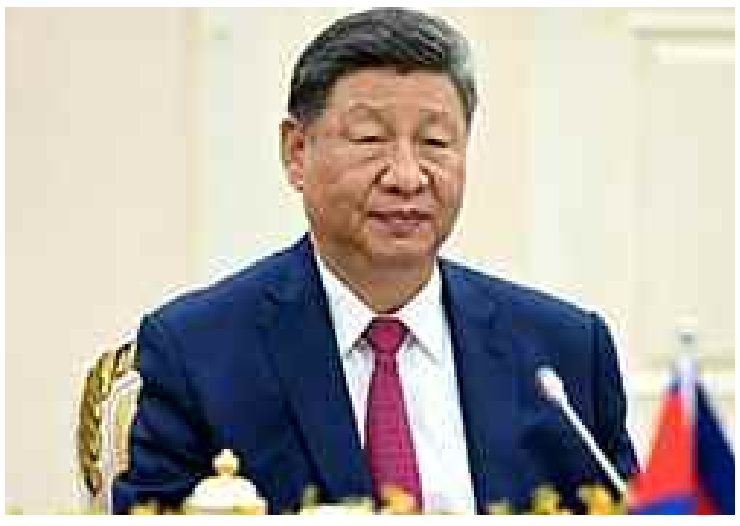
As Russian President Vladimir Putin prepares for his heavily choreographed May 9 "Victory Day" military parade, he's been clear who's at the top of his guest list: Xi Jinping.

The Chinese leader is set to arrive in Moscow on Wednesday for a four-day state visit, where he'll deepen "mutual trust" with Putin, according to Beijing, and attend activities commemorating 80 years since the Allied forces' World War II victory over Nazi Germany.

Xi's attendance marks a strong showing of unity between the two autocrats and their nations at a moment when US President Donald Trump's "America First" diplomacy has shaken global alliances and reshaped relations between Washington and both powers. In remarks last month, Putin described Xi as his "main guest."

An article credited to Xi published in Russian state media ahead of the trip said the two countries must "resolutely oppose all forms of hegemonism and power politics" and "resist any attempts to interfere with or undermine" their friendship.

"The strong camaraderie between our two nations, forged in blood and sacrifice, surges onward unceasingly … It is an eternal wellspring nourishing our everlasting friendship," said the article as cited by China's Foreign Ministry, referencing their allegiance during World War II.



Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Vietnam's President To Lam and Belarussian leader Aleksandr Lukashenko are among other leaders expected to attend the celebrations. Contingents from the Chinese People's Liberation Army honor guard will also join the parade, which takes place in the shadow of Putin's assault on Ukraine.

Ad Feedback

To commemorate the event, Putin proposed a three-day ceasefire with Kyiv – a decision some analysts say was motivated by a desire to show off Russia's military might uninterrupted in front of foreign dignitaries. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky rejected the proposal, calling it a "theatrical performance" and reiterated his support for an earlier US proposal for a 30-day ceasefire.

Earlier this month, Zelensky warned dignitaries traveling to the event that Kyiv "cannot be responsible for what happens on the territory of the Russian Federation," amid the ongoing conflict – which the Kremlin later said amounted to a threat.

Ukraine has launched multiple drone attacks on Moscow over the course of the war, including in recent days – prompting temporary closures of airports in the capital for several hours. Its biggest attack on the Russian capital in March killed three people.

Ukraine says its attacks are aimed at destroying infrastructure key to Moscow's war efforts and are in response to Russia's continued assault on Ukrainian territory, including residential areas and energy infrastructure.

Russia's May 9 "Victory Day" is one of the country's largest celebrations and marks Nazi Germany's 1945 surrender to the Soviet Union, a day which has become increasingly important under Putin, who has falsely claimed his war in Ukraine is a "denazification." Previous years have seen a diminished supply of military hardware as Russian tanks are instead mobilized on that war's front lines.

Europe celebrates its VE Day, marking Germany's surrender on all fronts, a day prior.Shifting landscape

The visit is Xi's third time in Russia since Putin launched his war more than three years ago, but much has changed since his last visit just over six months ago.

China and the US are now locked in an escalated trade war that threatens major impact to both economies, and Beijing finds itself in need of strengthening its friendships – and trade partnerships – with other nations, including Russia. Top officials from the US and China are set to meet in Switzerland later this week, in what could begin a lengthy process of trade talks to end frictions.

Moscow, meanwhile, has found a much more sympathetic America under Trump compared with his predecessor, but is now warily eying recently warming ties between Washington and Kyiv as the US president appears to lose patience with Putin in his push for an end to the conflict.

LOCAL NEWS

39,000 Graduate Teachers Employed Without Necessary Financial Clearance

Prosper AGBENYEGA

Education Minister Haruna Iddrisu has defended the government's handling of recent teacher salary delays, explaining that many of the aggrieved graduate teachers picketing at the Ghana Education Service (GES) were employed without proper financial clearance.

The Minister's comments come in response to growing frustration among newly posted teachers who have been at post for several months without pay.

Speaking to the picketing teachers, Iddrisu clarified that the previous administration issued 39,000 appointment letters without securing the necessary financial clearance, a move he described as problematic. "Appointment letters were issued to persons numbering up to 39,000 when there was no financial



clearance to do that. That is problematic, so of the 39,000, probably the government may be able to absorb nine, eleven, or twelve thousand, but certainly not 39,000," he stated.

Iddrisu further indicated that the current administration is conducting a thorough audit to determine which of these appointments can be validated based on qualifications, legitimate postings, and budget availability.

He urged the teachers to exercise patience as the audit continues, emphasizing that only those with the right credentials and verified postings will be absorbed.

Meanwhile, the protesting teachers, some of whom have been at post for up to nine months without pay, continue to push for immediate resolution. Myers Assibi Akudbilla, one of the aggrieved teachers, described her experience as deeply frustrating.

"I came here mainly because of my staff ID, or let me say, the recruitment process. I had my appointment dated 8th November. I went to the region for my regional posting letter, but when I got to the school, I was asked to go for my IPPD document to be processed. When I got there, the revocation had started, so my IPPD couldn't be processed. As it stands now, I am at post in the Ashanti Region, but I do not know my fate," she said.

The issue has gained significant attention, with some teachers attempting to draw the President's attention during a recent visit to the Ashanti Region, only to have their concerns go unaddressed as his convoy moved past them.

North Tongu Flood Relief Controversy: My Hands Are Clean; Fmr. MCE Declares

In the aftermath of the devastating Akosombo Dam spillage, a dispute has emerged in the North Tongu District over the distribution and management of relief funds and donations meant for flood victims.

This controversy has drawn in key local figures, including former North Tongu Municipal Chief Executive (DCE) Mr. Divine Osborn Kwadzo Fenu.

A press conference was recently held in Mepe by the Tongu Flood Victims Association where allegations were made against the former MCE, Mr. Divine Osborn Kwadzo Fenu.

According to leaders of the Association, there has been lack of transparency in the handling of earlier donations to the victims and alleged although over GH₵200 million, along with substantial foreign aid, was mobilized between 2023 and 2024, most flood victims received little to no direct financial support, only sporadic relief in the form of food items and modest cash donations from agencies like the World Food Programme (GH₵1,000) and the Red Cross Society (GH₵1,200).

They asked "Where is the money?" pointing fingers at former North Tongu Municipal Chief Executive, Mr. Divine Osborn Kwadzo Fenu, and other local officials.

Meanwhile, in an interview, Mr. Fenu has firmly denied allegations that he embezzled funds and donations intended for the affected residents.



The former MCE insisted that he has never received any donations or funds from corporate organizations, individuals, or governmental agencies for this purpose.

According to him, any concerns about mismanagement should be directed to the MP, Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, who, he claims, has been the primary recipient of such donations.

"I have not received anything or any donation from anybody for the flood victims," Mr. Fenu stated.

"Those raising these accusations should rather direct their anger and questions to the MP, Okudzeto Ablakwa, who received such donations."

Further checks conducted by this paper however revealed that in recent months, several high-profile organizations and individuals have provided substantial support to the flood-stricken communities in North Tongu. Among them are:

The National Chief Imam, Sheikh Osman Nuhu Sharubutu - Donated relief items valued at over GH₵300,000, including rice, water, clothing, footwear, and hygiene supplies, along with a cash donation of GH₵70,000.

The Chief Justice, Gertrude Sackey Torkornoo - Presented GH₵125,000 on behalf of the Judiciary and staff of the Judicial Service of Ghana (JUSAG) at a ceremony in Accra.

The Ya-Na Abukari II, Overlord of Dagbon - Presented relief items to the MP and traditional leaders from the affected areas at the Gbewa Palace in Yendi.

Corporate Entities - Organizations such as GOIL, McDan Shipping Company, and the German and American embassies have also made significant contributions, with items handed over in Accra to the MP, Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa; sometimes the MCE present upon invitation for those ceremonies, although the MP formally received these cash donations and items on behalf of the district.

It has also been established that the MP, Mr. Ablakwa formed a seven-member committee known as the 'Accountability Elders Council' to oversee the distribution of relief items.

The council is tasked with ensuring transparency, proper coordination, and fair distribution of resources to the affected families.

The former MCE also believes that the said Committee could also received some donations on behalf of the victims.

As this controversy continues to unfold, it underscores the critical need for transparency and collaboration between local government officials and elected representatives in managing disaster relief.

The affected communities, already burdened by the trauma of the flooding, deserve clarity and accountability in the distribution of much-needed support.

For now, all eyes remain on the North Tongu District as residents and donors alike seek answers and assurances that every contribution reaches those in need.

LOCAL NEWS

Domelevo Calls for Review of GHC20k Gift Threshold



Former Auditor-General Daniel Yaw Domelevo has expressed reservations over the GHC20,000 gift threshold outlined in the newly launched Code of Conduct for political appointees, describing the limit as excessive and potentially harmful to public sector integrity.

Speaking in an interview with Citi FM, Domelevo acknowledged that the Code is a step in the right direction for promoting ethical leadership, but he argued that the gift policy falls short of global best practices.

"It is a good start. I see a lot of clarity in defining the role of a minister. I am very happy to read about the receiving of gifts, except that the threshold, I think, is too high. GHC20,000 is just too high, and that is more than 1,000 dollars," he remarked.

Domelevo, who previously served at the World Bank, noted that international standards on gift acceptance are much stricter, pointing to a $50 limit at the global financial institution. "At the World Bank, where I was, the threshold was 50 dollars. If you receive a gift above the value of $50, you surrender it; you do not take it home. But in this case, it is about 1,000 dollars, and 20,000 Ghana cedis to be specific. I think it is too high," he said.

The newly introduced Code of Conduct, unveiled by President John Dramani Mahama on May 5, allows political appointees to accept gifts valued up to GHC20,000. However, any gift exceeding that amount must be declared to Cabinet and handed over to the state upon the appointee's exit from office, unless the President grants permission for the individual to retain it.

While the Code has been praised as a progressive move towards ethical governance, Domelevo's critique has sparked fresh debate over the effectiveness of the measures in curbing corruption and ensuring public accountability.

His comments highlight a growing call for tighter regulations and stronger oversight in Ghana's public sector, reflecting broader concerns about transparency and the need to align local standards with global norms.

Grassroots Tensions Erupt In Asokore Mampong Over MCE Nomination



The nomination of Ben Abdallah Alhassan as the Municipal Chief Executive (MCE) for Asokore Mampong has sparked protests among some grassroots supporters of the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) in the municipality.

Disgruntled party members, led by a faction supporting Faisal Dawuda, the Constituency Chairman of Asawase, gathered in Aboabo to express their discontent, insisting that their preferred candidate, Dawuda, has a stronger connection to the community and a proven track record of service.

They argue that his experience as a long-serving party executive makes him better suited to lead the municipality.

At a press conference on Wednesday, Suleiman Massawud, speaking on behalf of the protesting group, accused the local MP and Interior Minister, Muntaka Mubarak, of sidelining the grassroots by pushing for Abdallah's nomination.

"We are not here because of violence; we are here to give just an insight into why we think the chairman should be selected as the MCE," Massawud stated. "The chairman has served through the ranks, from treasurer to chairman, without any controversy. Ignoring his candidacy is a clear message that the grassroots are not valued."

However, not all party members share this sentiment. Some constituency executives have come out in support of Abdallah's nomination, praising President John Mahama's decision as a move toward inclusive governance.

"We are here to express our profound gratitude and profound optimism to His Excellency President John Dramani Mahama for his visionary leadership and thoughtful decision in appointing Ben Abdallah as the MCE of Asokore Mampong Municipality," said Aminu Mohammed, a spokesperson for the group backing the nominee.

The split within the constituency highlights the growing internal tensions within the party, as both factions insist that their preferred candidate has the right experience, community support, and vision to effectively lead the municipality.

The final decision now rests with President Mahama, as the Asokore Mampong community waits to see how the leadership dispute will be resolved.

"6 Years, Nothing to Show"

Asafoatse Lartey Bantama IV, a senior warlord of the Prampram Traditional Area, has launched a scathing attack on the embattled Paramount Chief, Nene Tetteh Wakah II, accusing him of poor leadership and failing to initiate a single developmental project in the area since his enstoolment in 2019.

Speaking in a recent interview, Asafoatse Bantama IV described the six-year tenure of Nene Tetteh Wakah II as deeply divisive and unproductive, alleging that his reign has done more harm than good to the people of Prampram.

"We have a chief who has contributed little or nothing to the development of Prampram but is always stoking division and conflict among the people. What kind of leadership is that?" he questioned.

His comments follow a reported summons from the Prampram Traditional Council over accusations of defaming the Paramount Chief in his public remarks.

Asafoatse Bantama defended his criticism, stating it was born out of frustration with the deepening divisions in the area under the current traditional leadership. He accused Nene Tetteh Wakah II and his allies of turning chieftaincy into a commercial enterprise, misusing proceeds from land sales and stool land royalties for personal gain rather than community development.

"Since I was enstooled as warlord of the Lapkle Division, which comes with no financial benefits, I have undertaken tangible projects, rehabilitating the main lorry terminal, providing water during shortages, and grading poor roads in both Prampram and Miotso. Where are the Paramount Chief's achievements?" he asked.

He further expressed shock that despite the resources available to the Paramount Chief including income from land sales and donations from businesses, Nene Tetteh Wakah II has failed to deliver even a basic public toilet facility to the community.

On the long-running chieftaincy dispute in Prampram, Asafoatse Bantama claimed he once brokered a peace accord between Nene Tetteh Wakah II and the Paramount Stool Father, Numo Osabu Abbey IV, which was later undermined by the chief himself.

"I personally led efforts to restore peace between the factions, but Nene Tetteh Wakah wrecked that accord for his parochial interests. We cannot continue down this path, we are moving backward as a community," he lamented.

He also raised doubts about the legitimacy of the Paramount Chief's title, arguing that there has never been a predecessor with the name Nene Tetteh Wakah to warrant the "II" designation.

Asafoatse Bantama warned the Traditional Council against using his summons to spread fear or misinformation, cautioning that any attempts to intimidate him or escalate tensions would be met with fierce resistance.

Looking ahead to the annual Kpledzo Festival, scheduled for May 13, 2025, the warlord called for peace and unity. He urged the youth, particularly the Kple groups, to resist being used as agents of violence during the festivities.

"This year, I will increase the prize money for the best Kple group as part of my continued support for youth development. Let's use the festival to unite, not divide," he said.

Asafoatse Bantama's bold statements have added new intensity to Prampram's long-standing chieftaincy disputes, as the community prepares for one of its most significant traditional events.

FEATURE

The divides behind the scenes in the Vatican ahead of the conclave

The Vatican's Santa Marta guesthouse has 128 rooms. From 7 May, it will be filled with cardinals participating in the conclave to elect the next Pope. But one room in the guesthouse is still sealed with a red ribbon, as it has been since its occupant died there on Easter Monday.

That suite will only be reopened when the new pope is chosen. The ribbon remains a tangible reminder of the man whose shoes the cardinals are looking to fill – but Pope Francis' presence looms large over this conclave in many profound ways.

He spent 12 years in the role and appointed around 80% of the cardinals who will select his successor. He also looked to radically shake up the workings of the Catholic Church, moving its centre of gravity away from its hierarchy at the Vatican in the direction of the rank-and-file faithful all over the world, and focused on the poor and marginalised.

My conversations with cardinals and those assessing the needs of the Church in the days leading to this papal election almost always end up looking at what is required through the prism of what Pope Francis did in the role.

While in recent days there appears to have been a growing coalescence around the idea that Francis' work should be built on, some of his critics remain far from convinced. So might there be enough of them to sway the vote as the Church attempts to reconcile the different outlooks and realities it faces around the globe?

A most diverse conclave

During the two weeks that followed the Pope's death, the cardinals met almost daily at the Vatican for pre-conclave gatherings known as general congregations.

While the conclave in the Sistine Chapel is limited to cardinals who haven't yet reached the age of 80 (133 will participate in this one), these preliminary meetings are open to all 252 cardinals. Each attendee was given up to five minutes to air their views, though we know that some took longer.

It was during such a meeting ahead of the last conclave of 2013, in a speech lasting less than four minutes, that Pope Francis - then known as Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio of Argentina - made an impact, talking of a need to connect with those in the far reaches of the Catholic world.

As Pope, he made a conscious drive to appoint cardinals from such places. It is why this is the most diverse conclave there has ever been. For the first time Cape Verde, Haiti, South Sudan, Tonga, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea and Rwanda will be represented.

That diversity has already made its mark: the pre-conclave meetings are said to have brought to the fore just how different the needs of the Church appear to be depending on where in the world they are viewed.

In Europe, for example, a primary consideration for some might be finding ways to reinvigorate and make relevant the mission of the Church in the face of shrinking congregations, whereas elsewhere - in African or Asian countries - concerns may revolve around social issues, poverty and conflict resolution.



A prospective pope is likely to be one who has at least shown recognition of those very different realities.

Spiritual leader, statesman, global influencer

The official titles that the new pope will inherit gives a sense of the breadth of the role: Bishop of Rome, Vicar of Jesus Christ, Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church, Sovereign of the State of Vatican City among them.

While some relate to the deeply spiritual, the last of those titles suggests the need for a statesman too, given that the pope is leader of a country, albeit the world's smallest.

"Unlike your average state, the agenda of the Vatican is driven to an extent by where the pope reigning at the time puts their emphasis," says Chris Trott, British ambassador to the Holy See. "On the face of it a very tiny state, [but it is] one that punches many, many times above its weight.

"And Pope Francis had 50 million followers on Twitter, so [it is] a very, very small state and an incredible global influencer."

Pope Francis chose to amplify this part of the role, becoming a powerful global spokesman on behalf of those on the margins, including the poor and victims of war.

He also tried to play the role of peacemaker, though not everyone thought he was successful in that regard, in relation to China and Russia in particular.

According to Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the most senior Catholic figure in England and Wales, this expansion of the role is one reason so many even outside the faith are invested in the outcome of the conclave.

"There is a sense that the Pope in the person of Pope Francis became a figure who addressed everybody in the world… religious people and even those who do not have a religious affiliation," he says.

"I'm more and more aware that it's not just Catholics who are interested in this."

Confusion around Pope Francis' vision

For many voting cardinals, it is primarily issues within the Catholic Church that are under the spotlight, which brings about the question of the type of pope they want as a manager, and someone who runs the Church's administrative body and its ministries.

While Pope Francis worked on improving the way the Church deals with the huge issues of sexual abuse and of financial corruption, it is his successor who will have to ensure that reforms are evenly applied across the Catholic world.

Even supporters of Pope Francis' efforts to make changes to the way the Church relates to its rank-and-file believers, and the way he built bridges with those outside the faith, were sometimes left confused about how exactly he envisioned things should work.

Pope Francis changed the tone on social issues through comments he made, talking openly about subjects ranging from climate change to financial transparency within the Vatican. But throughout his papacy, some were unclear about what he meant or how it would be applied.

One mission he had was to take some of the power and decision-making away from the Vatican hierarchy and into the hands of rank-and-file Catholics.

Over nearly four years, at great effort, he commissioned what was, in effect, a poll of many of the world's Catholics to find out what mattered to them. Lay people were invited to participate in the most recent bishop's conference where the results of the survey were discussed.

The biggest issues raised related to greater roles for women in the running of the church and welcoming LGBT+ Catholics. But the meeting ended in some confusion, with little in the form of tangible steps forward and little clarity as to how lay people will help steer the future direction of the Church.

So, there is a general keenness for greater clarity from the new pope.

An ugly divide: supporters and detractors

Throughout his pontificate, some vocal traditionalists opposed what they saw as Pope Francis straying from Church teaching and long-standing tradition.

In the pre-conclave meetings of cardinals, a number of those over the age of 80 (who because of their age would not be involved in voting) took the opportunity to play their part.

Most contributions remained secret, but one that was reported was that of 83-year-old Italian cardinal, Beniamino Stella. He criticised Pope Francis for "imposing his own ideas" by attempting to move Church governance away from the clergy.

And yet during the homily, or religious speech, at Pope Francis' funeral, what appeared to resonate with the public in attendance – judging by the volume of the applause – was talk of the themes Francis chose to champion: the dignity of migrants, an end to war, and the environment.

This applause would have been heard loud and clear by the rows of cardinals.

In some senses, Pope Francis did have clarity in focusing on the Church being relevant to people in their daily lives and, indeed, their struggles. He was clear about connecting with the world outside the faith too.

"There is a sense that in the voice of the pope, there's a voice of something that is needed," says Cardinal Nichols. "For some people it's a moral compass, for some people it's the sense of being accepted, for some people it's the insistence that we must look at things from the point of view of the poorest.

"That's a voice that has fallen silent and our task is to find someone who can carry that forward."

From the death of Pope Francis to the moment cardinals checked into the Santa Marta guesthouse and its overflow residences, there appeared to be a trend towards a desire for continuity of what Pope Francis had achieved.

Though perhaps that vision of continuity is one that could bring along more of his sceptics, in a way that was pragmatic. The word "unity" has been talked of a lot, after a period where the divides between supporters and detractors of the Pope's vision could sometimes become ugly.

But in the end, when they step into the Sistine Chapel, the holiest of voting chambers, for all the pragmatism they may have taken into consideration before they cast their ballot, they will be urged to let God and the Holy Spirit guide them.

LOCAL NEWS

UCC School of Business holds orientation for Ghana Armed Forces MBA students

The School of Business at the University of Cape Coast (UCC) in the Central Region has held a one-day orientation programme for sixty personnel of the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) who have gained admission to pursue various Master of Business Administration (MBA) programmes.

The personnel have been enrolled in specialised MBA programmes including Accounting, Finance, Management, Human Resource Management, Marketing, Entrepreneurship, and Procurement and Supply Chain Management.

The orientation was organised to familiarise the new students with the academic governance structure of the university and provide them with an opportunity to engage with faculty and administrators.

It also served as a platform for the students to ask questions and gain clarity on academic expectations, policies, and support services available to them throughout their studies at UCC.



CJ's suspension injunction application mischievous-Lawyer



The Supreme Court of Ghana has, by a narrow 3:2 majority decision, dismissed an injunction application seeking to restrain President John Dramani Mahama from proceeding with the constitutional process to remove Chief Justice Gertrude Torkornoo from office.

The legal challenge, filed by Vincent Ekow Assifuah, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) Member of Parliament for Old Tafo in the Ashanti Region, sought to halt the removal process following the President's establishment of a prima facie case against the Chief Justice, in consultation with the Council of State.

Reacting to the development, private legal practitioner Mintah Larbi described the injunction application as "mischievous" and lacking merit.

Speaking in an interview on Accra 100.5 FM's evening news on Tuesday, May 6, 2025, Mr. Larbi argued that the move was designed merely to delay proceedings and waste the apex court's time.

"The application had no good intent," he said, accusing the applicants of seeking to undermine a legitimate constitutional process.

The Supreme Court's decision marks a critical turning point in what has become a politically charged legal standoff.

In addition to the dismissal of the injunction, the court also unanimously rejected a preliminary objection raised by former Attorney-General Godfred Yeboah Dame.

Mr. Dame had questioned the participation of Acting Chief Justice Paul Baffoe-Bonnie in the panel, citing a possible conflict of interest.

However, all five justices dismissed the objection, allowing Baffoe-Bonnie to remain on the case.

The final 3:2 ruling saw Acting Chief Justice Baffoe-Bonnie, Justice Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu, and Justice Amadu Tanko forming the majority that dismissed the application. Justices Yonni Kulendi and Ernest Gaewu dissented, backing the applicants' attempt to block the President from proceeding.

With the injunction now dismissed, President Mahama is legally cleared to continue with the removal process, despite ongoing legal and political tensions surrounding the matter.

This decision has added a new layer of complexity to the ongoing debate over judicial independence and execut**ive oversight, with legal observers watching closely** as the process unfolds.

GES employment scandal: Ibrahim Kofi Sessah granted GHS 6.5 million bail

Ibrahim Kofi Sessah has been granted bail by the Financial and Economic Division of the High Court after pleading not guilty to charges related to the alleged sale of employment slots within the Ghana Education Service (GES).

Sessah is facing three counts of financial misconduct involving significant sums of money, in connection with a scheme purportedly involving the illegal sale of GES employment opportunities.

The court set bail at GHS 6.5 million, with two sureties required.

Both sureties must justify the bail with landed property located within the Greater Accra Region.

The prosecution has been directed to file all disclosure materials within 21 days to facilitate the judicial process.

The case has been adjourned to Tuesday, June 3, 2025, for mention.



LOCAL NEWS

Suhuyini: Mahama determined to leave a legacy of impact



A member of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) communication team, Hamza Suhuyini, has confidently stated that President John Dramani Mahama is focused on building a lasting legacy—one defined by purpose, integrity, and respect, even from political opponents.

Speaking ahead of President Mahama's scheduled national address on Wednesday, May 7, where he is expected to update the nation on his administration's performance under the 120-day social contract, Suhuyini took aim at the New Patriotic Party (NPP), accusing it of ineptitude and internal disarray.

"Even in opposition, they are legendary incompetent, and that is staring all of us in the face. Even the internal management of their party activities, which we haven't seen in the past few days? That tells you the kind of incompetence that presided over the Republic of Ghana, the kind of arrogance and vigilantism that was injected into our body politic," he stated.

Ghanaian fashion

In an interview on Breakfast Daily on Channel One TV, Suhuyini praised President Mahama's character and leadership qualities, describing him as a figure respected across the political divide.

"Thankfully, we have a president in the name of President John Dramani Mahama, whom even leading members of the NPP respect for his intelligence, emotional composure, and trustworthy nature," he said.

While acknowledging that not all national challenges can be resolved within 120 days, Suhuyini emphasized the president's dedication to fulfilling his mandate and advancing the aspirations of Ghanaians.

"I can assure you, the people of Ghana, that unlike them, we are not saying that we will resolve all the problems and matters in 120 days, but we can assure them that we are dealing with a leader who is committed to leaving a legacy. So he will do everything in his power to meet the aspirations of the Ghanaian people," Suhuyini affirmed.

Korle-Bu dialysis centre: Patients forced to seek treatment outside amid shortage of consumables

A growing number of dialysis patients at the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital in the Greater Accra Region are expressing frustration and concern after being unable to receive treatment at the facility's main dialysis unit for nearly a week due to a reported shortage of critical consumables.



The unexpected disruption has left many patients scrambling to access lifesaving treatment at private dialysis centres, often at higher costs and with great inconvenience.

The development comes as a shock to patients and caregivers, particularly following the recent launch of the MahamaCare programme—an initiative aimed at addressing long-standing gaps in Ghana's healthcare delivery, including access to dialysis services.

"We are baffled. Just when we thought help had finally arrived with the MahamaCare programme, this happens," said one affected patient, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"We don't know if this is a case of sabotage or negligence, but whatever it is, it is putting lives at risk."

MahamaCare, which was introduced by the current administration to improve universal healthcare coverage, has been hailed as a game-changer for vulnerable populations, including chronic disease patients.

The current situation at Korle-Bu, however, has left many questioning whether some individuals or entities may be undermining the programme's early efforts.

"This is not just an administrative failure—it's a matter of life and death," said another caregiver.

"If anyone is deliberately sabotaging this programme, we won't forgive them.

This is a lifeline for so many."

While hospital authorities are yet to release an official statement on the matter, reports suggest that the disruption stems from a shortage of essential supplies needed for dialysis sessions.

Calls are mounting for urgent government intervention to investigate the root cause of the supply gap and ensure uninterrupted treatment for patients who rely on dialysis to survive.

Stakeholders are also urging the Ministry of Health and the National Health Insurance Authority to step in and reinforce the implementation of MahamaCare, ensuring that the programme delivers on its promise of equitable and consistent healthcare access for all.

Govt to inaugurate task force to fast-track National Airline establishment



Plans to establish a national airline in Ghana are set to receive a significant boost with the inauguration of a high-level task force to oversee and accelerate the process.

This move signals a renewed commitment by authorities to revive the country's aviation ambitions, following years of stalled efforts to launch a flagship carrier.

Ghana has been without a national airline for nearly two decades, after operations were suspended due to a U.S. ban linked to operational debts.

The country's original flag carrier, Ghana Airways, operated from 1958 until its collapse in 2004. It was succeeded by Ghana International Airlines, which served from 2005 to 2010 before also ceasing operations.

Momentum to revive a national airline gained traction in September 2022 when Ashanti Airlines was selected as the government's strategic partner.

The move rekindled hopes for the re-launch of a rebranded 'Ghana Airlines' and attracted interest from multiple stakeholders.

The new task force, to be inaugurated under the directive of President John Dramani Mahama and led by the Ministry of Transport, is expected to generate fresh investor interest and foster strategic partnerships within the aviation sector.

Transport Minister Joseph Bukari Nikpe earlier this year indicated that the government is actively seeking collaborative partnerships to realize the national airline project, acknowledging that the country's current economic constraints make it difficult to pursue the initiative independently.

EDITORIAL

Leadership, Restraint, and the Duty to Set a Higher Standard

In the wake of the recent confrontation between Minority Leader Alexander Afenyo-Markin and a police officer during the #SaveTheJudiciary demonstration on May 5, 2025, a troubling discourse has emerged regarding the conduct of our elected representatives.

As leaders entrusted with the public's confidence, it is critical that our Members of Parliament set an example of restraint, respect for law enforcement, and adherence to the principles of democratic protest.

The incident, captured on a widely circulated video, shows Mr. Afenyo-Markin in a heated exchange with a police officer, culminating in what has been described as a physical altercation.

Deputy General Secretary of the governing National Democratic Congress (NDC), Mustapha Gbande, has publicly condemned the Effutu MP, accusing him of physically assaulting the officer without provocation.

He has called for an apology from both Mr. Afenyo-Markin and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), describing the incident as a stain on their commitment to peaceful protest.

In his defense, Mr. Afenyo-Markin has offered a contrasting account, asserting that his actions were in response to an unprovoked physical strike to his chest by the officer, identified as Constable Forson, as he approached a police barricade to deliver a petition.

According to the MP, senior officers and colleagues quickly intervened, helping him to regain his composure.

This situation, CURRENT ISSUES believes demands a careful, unbiased investigation by the Ghana Police Service, which has rightly invited Mr. Afenyo-Markin for questioning.

It is essential that this process be conducted transparently, ensuring that the facts are established without political interference or public bias.

However, regardless of the findings, this incident should prompt a broader reflection on the behavior expected of our political leaders.

In an era when public trust in democratic institutions is being tested globally, Ghana's politicians must hold themselves to the highest standards of conduct. Physical confrontations, especially with those charged with maintaining public order, undermine the very principles they seek to defend.

As this matter unfolds, we on CURRENT ISSUES urge all parties to prioritize dialogue over confrontation and to model the kind of leadership that reflects the dignity and respect expected by the people they represent.

The eyes of the nation are watching, and in moments like these, the true character of leadership is revealed.

LOCAL NEWS

NDC Greater Accra Constituency Organisers demand fair share of appointments



Constituency organisers of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in the Greater Accra Region are calling on President John Dramani Mahama and the party's national leadership to recognise their contributions by allocating a fair share of government appointments to them.

At a press conference held in Accra, the organisers expressed frustration over what they described as continued neglect and lack of recognition despite their critical role in securing electoral victories for the party.

Speaking on behalf of the group, Mr. Gad Nene Ackwreh, the NDC Ada East Constituency Organiser, urged President Mahama to act swiftly to address their concerns.

"We are calling on President Mahama to immediately address this matter and ensure that the organisers who sacrificed their time, energy, and mindset to ensure the success of the election get what is due to them," Mr. Ackwreh said.

He emphasised that the efforts of Constituency Organisers were instrumental in mobilising grassroots support and ensuring voter turnout, which significantly contributed to the party's success.

"We want the parliamentarians to know that without us, the organisers, they might not have received the votes they had," he added.

The organisers appealed to the party leadership to correct what they described as a longstanding oversight, warning that continued neglect could affect morale and party unity going forward.

IMANI Africa to present findings on NDC gov't's first 120 days in office

Policy think tank IMANI Africa is set to host a special live presentation on Wednesday, May 7, 2025, to unveil findings from its assessment of the new National Democratic Congress (NDC) administration's performance during its first 120 days in office.

The review is based on the NDC's own "120 Days Social Contract," a policy document outlining key commitments the government pledged to fulfil within the first four months of assuming office.

The presentation will evaluate how well the government has adhered to these promises and the broader implications for governance and reform in Ghana.

According to IMANI, while Ghana has made modest yet commendable progress under the current International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme, particularly in stabilising the economy and addressing governance issues, sustained reform requires robust citizen oversight and accountability.

The organisation warns that without such pressure, governments often opt for politically expedient actions rather than sustainable, long-term solutions.

The forthcoming presentation will cover several key areas:

An overview of fulfilled commitments within the NDC's 120-day social contract;

Identification of urgent structural challenges that Ghana must address.

An analysis of how current policy actions align with the country's long-term development needs;

Practical recommendations to enhance citizen-led advocacy for transparency and reform.

"This exercise is part of our broader effort to deepen democratic accountability, promote structural reform, and ensure inclusive development," said Franklin Cudjoe, Founding President and CEO of IMANI Africa.

He also acknowledged support from IMANI staff and donors, including the organisation's first donor of the year—an African international business and development executive with a background in emerging markets on Wall Street.

IMANI has encouraged public participation in the event and emphasised the importance of continued civic engagement to keep the government accountable.



BU$IN€$$

Analysts warn of cedi volatility risk despite recent gains

Market analysts want both monetary and fiscal authorities to consolidate the recent gains of the Ghana cedi and guard against a potential reversal.

The local currency, which crossed the GH¢17 mark on the retail market in 2023, is now trading around GH¢14 — showing signs of resilience many describe as one of the best performances in recent years.

Macroeconomic Research Manager at GCB Bank PLC, Courage Boti tells Citi Business News, the performance is being driven by a mix of improved forex liquidity, but cautioned against any slippage in fiscal discipline.

"Ghana has a history of improved market sentiment following elections and changes in political leadership, particularly reflected in a strengthened exchange rate. However, this trend isn't new, and the key issue now is how to sustain the momentum."

"The tone at the top is good but we have seen this before, so the question is about what to do to sustain it. We have talked about about fiscal discipline, we have talked about bringing inflation down".

"The responsibility lies with the Finance Minister and the government to back their promises with action by maintaining investor confidence and economic stability by demonstrating real progress in revenue generation and expenditure control without accumulating excessive arrears."



President Mahama sets $10 billion target for non-traditional exports by 2030

President John Dramani Mahama has unveiled an ambitious plan to triple Ghana's non-traditional export (NTE) earnings from the current $3.5 billion to $10 billion annually by the year 2030.

Speaking at the inauguration of the Accelerated Export Development Advisory Committee (AEDC) at the Jubilee House, President Mahama outlined a bold export-led growth strategy anchored on value addition, industrial expansion, and the removal of long-standing trade barriers.

The president stressed the urgent need to diversify Ghana's export base by investing in value-added products and boosting local manufacturing.

He highlighted the country's potential to become a regional export powerhouse if structural challenges, particularly those affecting exporters, are decisively addressed.

As part of the government's export agenda, President Mahama announced a series of strategic infrastructure and policy reforms aimed at reducing Ghana's notoriously high logistics costs.

These include the modernisation of the country's ports, the revamping of the Volta Lake Transport Company, and the fast-tracking of key infrastructure projects such as the Mpakadan and Boankra inland ports.

"These upgrades will significantly improve the efficiency of our export logistics, making Ghana more competitive across West Africa," the president said.

To further support exporters and local producers, the government also plans to introduce performance-based tax incentives, expedite export certification processes, and provide funding to businesses poised for export growth.



Hand over Saglemi housing project to TDC- Parliamentary Select Committee to gov't



The Chairman of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Works and Housing, Vincent Oppong Asamoah, has appealed to the government to hand over the stalled Saglemi Housing Project to the Tema Development Company (TDC) for completion and management.

Mr. Asamoah made the call during a working visit to assess ongoing housing projects, including TDC's Estate project, where 800 housing units are currently under construction.

He expressed satisfaction with the progress of work and commended the contractors for their commitment and presence on site.

He also praised the leadership of TDC's acting Managing Director, Courage Nunekpeku, for steering the company effectively.

According to Mr. Asamoah, TDC has demonstrated its capacity to deliver and, with the necessary support, is well-positioned to complete the long-abandoned Saglemi Housing Project.

He further urged President John Mahama and the government to resist calls to hand over the project to private developers, arguing that a public institution like TDC is better suited for the task.

Echoing the Committee Chair's sentiments, Mr. Nunekpeku expressed confidence in TDC's ability to manage and complete the Saglemi project. He highlighted the company's technical expertise, track record, and available resources as strong indicators of its readiness to take on the responsibility.

Congratulations to MADAM JUDITH ADJOBAH BLAY on Her Confirmation as CEO of Ghana Gas

On behalf of the entire team at Prestige Group of Companies, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to Madam Judith Adjobah Blay on her appointment as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Ghana National Gas Company.

This remarkable achievement is a testament to her exceptional leadership, deep industry knowledge, and unwavering commitment to advancing Ghana's energy sector.

With over 20 years of extensive experience in strategic leadership, policy development, and sustainable business practices, Madam Blay brings a wealth of expertise to this critical role. Her impressive track record includes:

- Successfully managing multi-million-dollar projects that have driven growth and innovation in the energy sector.
- Strengthening regulatory compliance and championing local content development to create lasting value for Ghanaian businesses.
- Driving operational excellence, stakeholder engagement, and governance improvements across various roles, including her time as Deputy Director of Contracts Administration at the Petroleum Commission Ghana and as Manager of Community Relations at the Commission.
- Establishing and managing the Procurement Department at the Bui Power Authority, demonstrating her ability to create robust operational frameworks from the ground up.
- Coordinating significant national projects, including her role as Project Coordinator on the MCC Compact II at the Ministry of Energy/USAID.



Madam Blay's academic achievements further underscore her qualifications, with degrees and certifications that reflect her dedication to continuous learning and professional excellence:

- Chartered Member of the Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply (CIPS-UK)
- MA in International Transactions from George Mason University, USA
- MSc in Procurement & Supply Chain Management from KNUST
- BA in French and Linguistics from the University of Ghana
- Candidate for the LLM in Public Procurement Law & Policy at the University of Nottingham

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Madam Blay is a proud alumna of Wesley Girls' High School and a respected member of the Nzema community, fluent in the Nzema language and deeply committed to the development of her home region.

She has also served as an advisory board member for the Western Regional Coastal Foundation, reflecting her commitment to sustainability and social impact.

As she steps into this critical role, we have no doubt that Madam Blay will lead Ghana Gas into a new era of growth, innovation, and opportunity, creating a lasting impact for the energy sector and the nation as a whole.

Once again, congratulations, Madam Blay, on this well-deserved appointment. We look forward to witnessing the positive transformation you will undoubtedly bring to Ghana Gas.

With warmest regards,
Prestige Group of Companies

Congratulations to Michael Kpakpo Allotey on His Confirmation as Mayor of Accra

On behalf of the entire Prestige Group of Companies, we extend our warmest congratulations to Mr. Michael Kpakpo Allotey on his unanimous confirmation as the Chief Executive of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA).

This significant endorsement by Assembly Members, securing all 30 valid votes, reflects the confidence and trust placed in his leadership to guide Accra into a new era of progress and transformation.

Mr. Allotey's impressive ascent to this critical role is a testament to his commitment to public service, community development, and effective governance.

As a young and dynamic leader, he brings fresh energy and a forward-looking vision to the capital city, inspired by his deep-rooted connections to the community of North Kaneshie and his unwavering dedication to the residents of Accra.

His bold declaration to "restart Accra – starting now" demonstrates a clear commitment to innovative solutions and transformational leadership.



We are confident that under Mr. Allotey's stewardship, Accra will continue to strengthen its position as a vibrant, globally competitive city, reflecting the aspirations of all its residents.

Once again, congratulations, Mr. Allotey, on this well-deserved appointment. We wish you every success as you take on this critical role and lead Accra towards a brighter, more prosperous future.

With our best wishes,
Prestige Group of Companies

ENTERTAINMENT

Efya is 'still hustling' to make $10m, fulfil some salient dreams



"I've not succeeded to the level I desire," Efya has revealed.

Speaking to Nana Romeo on Accra 100.5 FM's Ayekoo Ayekoo, she said she was not slowing down on her hard work.

According to her, there was "US$10 million that I want that I've still not got – I'm still hustling".

Apart from making piles of money, she said she desired to "build a music school, and I want to do so many things that'll benefit my community, and for me to do that I need to be at a [certain] level financially.

"That's why I'm still working to be able to make the money I need to make so that I can make all these dreams come true."

In addition, the music star who has thrilled audiences locally and internationally for close to 20 years dreamed of "going on a world tour, and perform on bigger, bigger stages than I already have. So I still have dreams that I want to capture. I'm very young and vibrant, and energetic. My legs are working; my hands are working".

EFCC breaks silence on VeryDarkMan's arrest: "He ignored several invitations"



The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has finally spoken out regarding the arrest and detention of Martins Vincent Otse, popularly known as VeryDarkMan, amid a storm of public interest and social media buzz.

In an official statement, the EFCC stated that Otse was invited in connection with "a series of petitions bordering on sundry issues of alleged financial crimes."

According to the anti-graft agency, despite multiple invitations sent through "his known addresses and medium of communication," Otse failed to appear.

A spokesperson for the Commission clarified, "The petitions pertain to grave allegations of financial malfeasance which cannot be ignored by the Commission."

Addressing rumors that Otse's arrest was a retaliatory action due to his frequent criticism of the EFCC on social media, the spokesperson remarked, "It is needful to admit that the Commission is aware of several unguarded attacks of the suspect against its operations. While such conduct is condemnable, his arrest was not informed by such attacks."

The agency added that any threats or attacks from Otse will be handled by the appropriate law enforcement body.

On the matter of his detention, the Commission emphasized the legality of its actions:

"The EFCC has a lawful right to hold Otse in custody like any other suspect being investigated by the Commission. The appropriate Remand Order was obtained in this regard."

However, the statement also confirmed that Otse has been granted administrative bail. "He would be released after fulfilling all the bail conditions," the spokesperson added.

The EFCC took the opportunity to commend the public for their vigilance and involvement in matters of national interest.

"The Commission appreciates the interest of Nigerians in its operations. The passion, enthusiasm and torrential reactions to all of its activities are welcome," the statement read.

Nevertheless, it warned against misrepresenting the agency's intentions. "Insinuations about its motive in carrying out its assignment should no longer continue. The EFCC should be allowed to do its job without fear or favour."

As the investigation unfolds, the public has been assured that charges will be filed if sufficient evidence is found. "As soon as investigations are concluded, charges will be filed," the agency concluded.

This bullshit must stop – Article Wan decries TGMA 2025 Artiste campaign madness

Ghanaian singer and songwriter Article Wan has strongly criticised the ongoing campaigns surrounding the 2025 Telecel Ghana Music Awards (TGMA), particularly the intense lobbying and promotional tactics for the coveted 'Artiste of the Year' title

Speaking in an interview with Amansan Krakye on Property FM, Article Wan expressed deep concern over what he described as a toxic and overwhelming atmosphere that has taken over the award space.

"Truth be told, the recent incessant campaign for this year's TGMA Artiste of the Year has become so ugly, nasty and very annoying to say the least," he said, as monitored by MyNewsGh.com.

He pointed fingers at some artistes for appointing public relations officers (PROs) solely to push aggressive agendas on their behalf, a move he believes is worsening the already suffocating tension in the music scene.

"What kind of basabasa, nyama nyama thing are we doing to ourselves to suffocate the industry? Please, they should let us have breathing space," he bemoaned.

According to Article Wan, while the desire to win is understandable, the extent to which some acts are going — from aggressive social media campaigns to divisive fanbase antics — is unhealthy for the growth of the creative industry.

"There's only one person that will be given the award. But nowadays, even if you want to come online, then you get angry due to this bullshit campaign," he fumed.



'A liability', 'the aura' & 'a phenomenon' - the big Lions calls

The action is over, the auditions are done.Last weekend's European semi-finals were the final chance for British and Irish Lions contenders to sway head coach Andy Farrell their way.

On Thursday, the talking finishes too.

Back in March, Farrell said he had a list of about 75 potential tourists.

When he announces his squad for Australia this summer, he and his coaches will have boiled that group down to about 37 players.

The squad has been debated for months and will continue to be after Wales and Lions legend Ieuan Evans reads out the names of the chosen few from 14:00 BST on Thursday at the O2 arena.

Here are some of the hottest pre-announcement topics chewed over by BBC Sport's team of pundits.

Who will be the Lion king?

Might one of the two horses in the race to captain the Lions have fallen at the final hurdle?

Ireland number eight Caelan Doris picked up a shoulder injury in Leinster's Champions Cup semi-final defeat by Northampton this weekend, putting his touring hopes in danger.

Maro Itoje may well have earned the accolade ahead of Doris regardless, but with such uncertainty over his rival for the post now, the way seems even more clear for the second row.

The 30-year-old, who had not been either his club or country's regular skipper until the start of this season, would be completing a captaincy clean sweep on his third Lions tour.

"I would agree with it going to Maro," former England and British and Irish Lions scrum-half Matt Dawson told BBC Radio 5 Live.

"There are a couple of absolute fundamentals with Lions tour captains - first and foremost they have to be in the team and for me he is, without a shadow of a doubt.

"Secondly, he has to be held in that regard, not just by the coaches, but also



by his team-mates as well. The players have to look at their captain and think 'this guy is the man'.

"Thirdly, for Maro specifically, he has blossomed beautifully this season for England.

"He has gone from being a player who was a certainty to be in the team, but was a bit short of the form of his early 20s and a little bit too ill disciplined, to being right in the groove.

"The captaincy has given him a new lease of life and he is ready to step into the role for the Lions."

Shane Horgan, who toured New Zealand alongside Dawson with the 2005 Lions, agrees.

"I think Itoje is the frontrunner," he said.

"You need a different type of charisma to be Lions captain because within your own nation, you can get 20 caps, build relationships with the team, become a senior player and then captain. There is none of that with the Lions.

"There are lots of players you won't have a relationship with at all - you have to be 100% respected and have a bit of an aura."

Russell puzzle at 10

Four years ago, he was ushered into the fray early in the deciding third Test against the Springboks and, although the tourists lost, Russell's dexterity and daring stood out.

However after a modest Six Nations campaign with Scotland and the appointment of Russell-sceptic Johnny Sexton as one of the Lions coaches, doubt has been cast over whether the 30-year-old could even make the squad.

Former Ireland hooker and Scarlets coach Bernard Jackman believes Russell should be straight into the team.

"For me, Russell is the starting 10," he told Scrum V.

"I think the stuff around Johnny joining the coaching staff - I think that will be done.

"The area Andy Farrell is most comfortable in coaching is attack.

"When you think of Ireland's attack going into the last Rugby World Cup in 2023, it was so patterned and intricate. Someone with Russell's instinct, with his passing, running and kicking game, could be unbelievably strong in that.

"I would be shocked if he wasn't on the plane. I think it is the job of the coaches to set the team up to bring the best out of him because that would bring the best out of everybody else."

Horgan agrees, adding that Russell's Lions credentials have been proven.

"Given Scotland have won just one of their past 16 meetings against his Ireland team, it will be hard for Andy Farrell to eliminate some of the doubts he may have about some of their players," he told 5 Live.

"But, I don't think that counts for Finn. If there was ever any doubts about Finn, they were blown out of the water by his performances on the tour in 2021.

"He was phenomenal and should have played more."

Prendergast stock sinks in semi shock

Twenty-nine minutes into Northampton's shock win against Leinster in the Champions Cup semi-final on Saturday, Henry Pollock took a short ball off Alex Mitchell, punched a hole and pinned back his ears.

The ease with which he rounded Leinster fly-half Sam Prendergast to scorch in for a try set tongues wagging among those on the look-out for Lions.

"That must have been the worst performances Prendergast has had this season," said 2009 British and Irish Lions winger Ugo Monye on Rugby Union Weekly.

"You can forgive missed kicks at goal, but there was a lack of control.

"He looked like he was the fly-half playing away, he couldn't impose himself on the game.

"No-one missed more tackles in the Six Nations this year and, as well as being ruined by Henry Pollock, he looked non-committal in defence, making tap tackles.

"He will become such a focus for an attack."

"I don't think you can take Sam, as great as his attacking ability is at the line," agreed former Wales and Lions wing Alex Cuthbert on 5 Live.

"His defence is a real liability and Australia coach Joe Schmidt will be clued into that.

"His tackle completion is way, way too low to be chosen.

"By contrast, I think Northampton fly-half Fin Smith played his way onto the plane.

"That game was as close to an international as you can get, in terms of ferocity and physicality, and Fin Smith was at the heart of it, controlling things in one of the best away wins I have ever seen in Europe."

Taylor named Canvey Island manager

Former Leicester, Hull and Crystal Palace manager Peter Taylor has been named as the new boss of non-league Canvey Island.

The 72-year-old began his career as a youth team player at the club before moving on to Southend United, Palace, Tottenham Hotspur and Leyton Orient, as well as winning four England caps.

He replaces Brad Wellmen, who resigned after The Islanders finished 17th in Isthmian League Premier Division, having been in charge for four years.

Taylor has also managed in India and New Zealand and was England caretaker boss for a game in Italy in 2000 when he gave David Beckham the captain's armband for the first time.

His last job in football was as Maldon & Tiptree manager in 2023, which ended when he was sacked just three games into a new season.



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