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# Eedris Abdulkareem's song ban, threat to free expression right – Soyinka

By Dave Oludare Oso

**P**rofessor Wole Soyinka, a Nobel Prize winner, has criticised the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) for banning a protest song by controversial rapper, Eedris Abdulkareem.

The world-renowned literary icon, in a statement issued from New York University, Abu Dhabi, on Sunday, described the development as a return to the culture of censorship and a threat to the right to free expression.

The Nobel laureate condemned the action and its wider implications, saying it echoed past attempts to stifle artistic and socio-political commentary in Nigeria.

The literary guru said: “Courtesy of an artist operating in a different genre – the cartoon – who sent me his recent graphic comment on the event, I learnt recently of a return to the culture of censorship with the banning of the product of a music artist, Eedris Abdulkareem.”

He expressed irony in suggesting that the ban did not go far enough, stating, “It is not only the allegedly offensive record that should be banned – the musician himself should be proscribed. Next, PMAN, or whatever musical association of which Abdulkareem is a member, should also go under the hammer.”

Soyinka noted that he had not listened to the banned song but stressed that the issue transcends content and concerns a fundamental democratic principle.

“It cannot be flouted. That, surely is basic. This is why I feel that we should look on the bright side of any picture and thus recommend the Aleshinloye cartoon – and others in allied vein – as an easy-to-apprehend, easy-to-digest summation of the wisdom of attempting to stifle



unpalatable works of art or socio-political commentary,” he said.

He also pointed out the irony that censorship often benefits the targeted artist.

“The ban is a boost to the artist’s nest egg, thanks to free governmental promotion. Mr. Abdulkareem must be currently warbling his merry way all the way to the bank. I envy him,” he added.

The literary icon warned that such censorship was not only counterproductive but also dangerous to democratic development.

“We have been through this before, over and over again, ad nauseum. We know where it all ends. It is boring, time-wasting, diversionary but most essential of all, subversive of all seizures of the fundamental right of free expression,” Soyinka said.

He warned that it creates “a permissive atmosphere of trickle-down power,” where state authorities feel emboldened to clamp down on dissent.

Soyinka’s statement also touched on

broader issues of impunity and mob violence in Nigeria, lamenting the recent lynching of 19 youths in Edo State.

“My heart goes out to friends, colleagues and families of victims and traumatised survivors of this senseless slaughter. Our thirst for justice must remain unslaked,” he said.

Referencing the 2022 killing of Deborah Samuel in Sokoto, Soyinka criticised the culture of impunity, saying, “Identified killers were set free to gloat, and paste their photos on the Social Media... in full daylight glare, in the presence of both citizen voyeurs and security forces.”

He called for accountability, warning that “as long as the culture of impunity is given the sheerest strain of legitimacy in any given cause, such gruesome assaults on our common humanity will continue to prevail.”

Soyinka concluded by urging the relevant regulatory body to reverse what he described as a “petulant irrationality,” warning that any government that only tolerates praise-singers “has already commenced a downhill slide into the abyss.”

# THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

## PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

## PRODUCT COLOUR

## EFFECTIVE FROM DECEMBER 1, 2024

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

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	329,868.50
HALF PAGE	192,500.00
QUARTER PAGE	100,000.00
14X2	109,500.00
10X6	242,500.00
10X5	237,500.00
10X4	192,500.00
10X3	171,000.00
9X6	232,500.00
9X5	206,000.00
9X4	177,500.00
9X3	150,000.00
8X6	216,000.00
8X3	98,500.00
7X4	164,002.00
6X4	94,010.50
6X3	78,500.00
6X2	47,500.00
5X5	100,000.00
5X4	61,500.00
5X3	57,819.00
5X2	40,379.50
4X4	55,000.00
4X3	31,000.00
4X2	22,003.50
3X2	17,260.00
2X2	12,945.00
2X1	8,630.00
1X1	4,315.00

## POLITICAL COLOUR

SIZE	RATE
CENTRESPREAD	1,200,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD	885,000.00
FULL PAGE	420,000.00
HALF PAGE	213,250.00
QUARTER PAGE	115,012.50

## POLITICAL BLACK & WHITE

SIZE	RATE
CENTRESPREAD	1,050,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD	745,000.00
FULL PAGE	315,777.50
HALF PAGE	184,700.00
QUARTER PAGE	95,222.50

## CORPORATE BLACK & WHITE

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	254,533.50
HALF PAGE	142,787.50
QUARTER PAGE	80,706.50
14X2	78,222.50
10X6	217,830.00
10X5	192,305.50
10X4	142,787.50
10X3	121,355.50
9X6	192,305.50
9X3	107,757.50
8X6	170,725.00
8X3	70,390.00
7X4	58,666.50
6X4	67,048.00
6X3	53,361.50
6X2	37,694.00
5X6	83,850.00
5X4	55,900.00
5X3	43,705.00
5X2	27,938.00
4X4	44,493.00
4X3	33,524.00
4X2	22,350.00
3X2	16,763.00
2X2	10,877.00
2X1	5,588.50
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## SPECIAL POSITIONS

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5X6 FRONT PAGE	3,350,000.00
10X6 FRONT PAGE	8,250,000.00
EARPIECE FRONT PAGE(1.5X2)	246,500.00
EARPIECE INSIDE PAGE(1.5X2)	117,875.00
EARPIECE BACK PAGE	236,796.50
CENTRE SPREAD COLOUR (PUBLIC NOTICE)	1,027,000.00
CENTRE SPREAD COLOUR (PRODUCT)	929,000.00
CENTRESPREAD B&W	800,000.00
CENTRE SPREAD HALF COLOUR	575,000.00
CENTRESPREAD STRIP COLOUR	191,668.50
DOUBLE SPREAD COLOUR	721,500.00
DOUBLE SPREAD HALF COLOUR	432,881.00
DOUBLE SPREAD STRIP COLOUR	144,294.00
CENTRE SPREAD B&W	835,000.00
CENTRE SPREAD HALF PAGE B & W	550,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD B & W	725,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD HALF B & W	425,000.00
FULL WRAP AROUND	15,000,000.00
HALF WRAP AROUND	8,500,000.00
HALF PAGE FRONT	5,500,000.00

## PUBLIC NOTICE BLACK & WHITE

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	280,690.00
HALF PAGE	164,178.00
QUARTER PAGE	84,641.50
10X6	228,000.00
10X5	201,600.00
10X4	149,440.00
10X3	127,108.00
9X6	201,600.00
9X5	169,050.00
9X4	137,875.00
9X3	112,875.00
8X6	179,368.00
8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
6X2	40,000.00
5X6	98,749.50
5X4	65,833.00
5X3	49,375.00
5X2	32,916.50
4X4	52,666.50
4X3	39,499.50
4X2	26,333.50
3X2	19,750.00
2X2	13,000.00
2X1	6,500.00
1X1	3,292.00

## PRODUCT BLACK & WHITE

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	210,795.50
HALF PAGE	124,236.00
QUARTER PAGE	70,950.00
14X2	76,128.35
10X6	194,961.00
10X5	162,222.445
10X4	103,963.00
10X3	N/A
9X6	162,222.445
9X5	168,191.50
9X4	N/A
8X6	N/A
8X3	N/A
7X4	72,676.00
6X4	65,000.00
6X3	41,124.50
6X2	29,858.00
5X6	71,378.00
5X4	42,825.00
5X3	29,858.00
5X2	22,841.00
4x4	N/A
4X3	N/A
4X2	17,737.50
3x3	23,458.00
3X2	14,923.00
2X2	10,200.00
2X1	5,439.50
1X1	2,700.00

## ALLURE RATE

SIZE	RATE	TOTAL
CENTRESPREAD		967,500.00
DOUBLE SPREAD		806,250.00
ALLURE COVER		750,000.00
(IBC) Inside Back Cover		376,250.00
(IFC) Inside Front Cover		430,000.00
(BC) Back Cover		483,750.00
Full Page		430,000.00
10X5		295,625.00
Half Page		225,000.00
EVENT		250,000.00

## PICTURE & CAPTION

SIZE	RATE	7.5% VAT	TOTAL
PHOTO NEWS PAGE 2	50,000.00	3,750.00	53,750.00
PHOTO NEWS (3X3)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
PHOTO NEWS (4X4)	53,333.30	4,250.00	57,583.30
PRESS RELEASE (4X4)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
EVENT COVERAGE	100,000.00	7,500.00	107,500.00
FEATURES	200,000.00	15,000.00	215,000.00

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## CONTACT US

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

**E-mail Address:**  
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# Presidency disowns 2027 campaign billboards

By Friday Omosola



**T**he Presidency has disassociated itself from a growing number of 2027 campaign billboards featuring President Bola Tinubu and Vice President Kashim Shettima.

The Presidency, in a statement by Bayo Onanuga, Tinubu's Special Adviser on Information & Strategy, described the billboards as unauthorised and unlawful.

The Presidency expressed dismay at the proliferation of campaign materials in several cities, notably Abuja and Kano.

Some of the billboards prominently display images of President Tinubu alongside his wife, Oluremi Tinubu.

While acknowledging the enthusiasm and loyalty of their

supporters nationwide, the statement clarified that neither Tinubu nor Shettima has endorsed or authorised any individual or group to commence political campaigns ahead of the 2027 general elections.

"The Electoral Act forbids early campaigning, and any such action undermines the integrity of our democratic process," the statement read.

"As law-abiding leaders, President Tinubu and Vice President Shettima do not support actions that violate the law or subvert our institutions."

The Presidency stressed that no form of media — whether billboards, print, radio, digital, or television — should be used to promote any political ambition on behalf of the President until the Independent

National Electoral Commission (INEC) releases the official timetable for the 2027 elections.

Supporters and sponsors of the billboards were urged to immediately cease all campaign-related activities.

The presidency reaffirmed Tinubu's administration's focus on governance, highlighting its ongoing efforts in economic revitalisation, infrastructural renewal, national security, social investment, and human capital development.

"President Tinubu remains fully committed to the task of nation-building. When INEC declares the official start of the electoral process, he will make his intentions known to Nigerians."

# FBI, DEA get court order to release Tinubu's probe records

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) have been ordered by a US District Court in Columbia to release records relating to the criminal investigation of President Bola Tinubu over alleged drug trafficking.

In a ruling dated April 8, which can be found on the court's website, Judge Beryl Howell, directed both agencies to search for and process non-exempt records tied to Freedom of Information Act (FoIA) requests filed by American researcher, Aaron Greenspan.

Founder of legal transparency platform PlainSite, Greenspan had submitted 12 FOIA requests between 2022 and 2023, seeking information on a Chicago drug ring that operated in the early 1990s.

His request included records on Tinubu and three others: Lee Andrew Edwards, Mueez Abegboyega Akande, and Abiodun Agbele.

Though both FBI and DEA had previously issued "Glomar responses"—a refusal to confirm or deny the existence of requested records—the court ruled that such responses were improper in this case.

The two government agencies have now



been ordered to conduct a search and release non-exempt materials, while the parties are to report back to the court on the case's status by May 2, 2025.

Part of the judgment read, "The FBI and DEA have both officially confirmed investigations of Tinubu relating to the drug trafficking ring.

"Any privacy interests implicated by the FOIA requests to the FBI and DEA for records about Tinubu are overcome by the public interest in release of such information.

"Since the FBI and DEA have provided no information to establish that a cognisable privacy interest exists in keeping secret the fact that Tinubu was a subject of criminal investigation.

"They have failed to meet their burden to sustain their Glomar responses and provide an additional reason why these responses must be lifted."

The court upheld the CIA's Glomar response after Greenspan conceded that the agency had acknowledged the existence of responsive records.

The judge ruled, "For the reasons discussed above, plaintiff is entitled to summary judgment as to each of the four Glomar responses asserted by defendants FBI and DEA, while defendant, CIA is entitled to summary judgment, since its Glomar response was properly asserted.

"Accordingly, the FBI and DEA must search for and process non-exempt records responsive to the FOIA requests directed to these agencies.

"The CIA, meanwhile, is entitled to judgment in its favour in this case. The remaining parties are directed to file jointly, by May 2, 2025, a report on the status of any outstanding issues in this case, as described in the accompanying order."



# Reps set up committee for Rivers oversight

By Dave Oludare Oso

The House of Representatives has inaugurated an Ad-Hoc Committee on Rivers State Oversight, scheduled for Tuesday, April 15 amid the declared state of emergency in the oil-rich state.

Disclosing this in a statement issued on Sunday, the spokesman for the House, Akin Rotimi, Jr., said the establishment of the committee followed the National Assembly's approval of a modified version of the State of Emergency proclamation submitted by President Bola Tinubu.

The House spokesman stated that amendments to the proclamation were adopted after intense deliberations aimed at bolstering democratic safeguards and ensuring adherence to the doctrine of checks and balances.

Significantly, he said the amended proclamation places oversight responsibility for the emergency regulations with the National Assembly rather than the Federal Executive Council.

Rotimi stated, "In line with Section 5 of the State of Emergency (Rivers State) Proclamation, 2025, and pursuant to Section 11(4) of the



Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the House has constituted a dedicated Ad-Hoc Committee to monitor implementation and ensure that governance in the state remains within the bounds of constitutionalism and rule of law."

According to him, the committee will be chaired by Rt. Hon. Prof. Julius Ihonvbere.

Rt. Hon. Ali Isa J.C. will serve as Deputy Chairman, while other members include Rt. Hon. Isiaka Ibrahim; Rt. Hon. Idris Ahmed Wase; Aliyu Muktar Betera; Sada Soli; James Abiodun Faleke; Igariwey Iduma Enwo; Shehu Saleh Rijau, and Wole Oke.

Others are Akarachi Etinosa Amadi; Patrick Umoh; James Barka; Alex Egbona; Isa Anka; Amos Daniel;

Erhiatake Ibori-Suenu; Onuh Onyeche Blessing, and Fatima Talba.

The statement further noted that the committee's secretariat will be headed by Prof. Jake Dan-Azumi.

Rotimi emphasised the legislature's commitment to upholding the supremacy of the Constitution and maintaining democratic integrity during the period of emergency governance.

He added, "This development underscores the resolve of the House of Representatives to uphold the supremacy of the Constitution and ensure that the extraordinary measures undertaken during the emergency period remain subject to legislative oversight, guided by transparency, accountability, and the best interest of the good people of Rivers State."

# Lagos begins integration of NIN with single social register

By Friday Omosola

The Lagos State Government has commenced the integration of the National Identification Number (NIN) with the Lagos State Single Social Register (LASSR).

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget (MEPB), Olayinka Ojo said the strategic move aimed at enhancing the efficiency and credibility of social protection programmes across the state.

Ojo, announced the development at a stakeholder engagement forum titled “Unified for Impact.”

The event, organised by the Ministry’s Social Protection Coordinating Department, brought together representatives from various sectors, including Heads of Departments and Community Development Council Chairmen from the 57 Local Government Areas (LGAs) and Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs).

Ojo described the LASSR as the foundation of the state’s social intervention strategy, noting that its full potential can only be realised when linked with NIN.

“The Lagos State Single Social Register has become the cornerstone of our social intervention programmes, helping us reach those who need support the most.

“However, we know that its impact will be maximised only when integrated with the National Identification Number,” she said.

She urged stakeholders to reflect on their collective progress and collaborate to improve coordination, ensuring that “no one is left behind.”

The National Coordinator of the National Social Safety-Nets Coordinating Office



(NASSCO), Funmilola Olotu, reaffirmed the Federal Government’s support for the integration exercise.

She stated that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu remains committed to strengthening social protection by linking NIN to the National Social Register across all states.

“President Tinubu is passionate about ensuring that vulnerable Nigerians benefit from credible and accountable social intervention. The NIN integration is central to achieving that goal,” Olotu said.

Also speaking, Permanent Secretaries Kikelomo Bolarinwa (Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy Affairs and Rural Development) and Jibike Onigbanjo (Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation) praised the coordinating department for its efforts.

They encouraged stakeholders to quickly disseminate the importance of the initiative to their communities.

Director of the Social Protection Coordinating Department, Mrs. Oluwakemi Garbadeen-Adedjei, emphasised the central role the LASSR plays in Lagos’ social architecture.

“This register ensures that the right interventions reach the right people, promoting social justice and equity,” she

said, calling on community leaders to act as ambassadors for the programme.

“This is a call to action. Let’s ensure that this is truly a case of all for one, and one for all,” she added.

Following the forum, the department team visited Kosofe Local Government to continue sensitisation efforts, address field officers’ concerns, and meet with residents.

They also paid a courtesy visit to the palace of the Traditional Ruler of the area, Chief Surajudeen Lasisi, who pledged his support for the initiative.

Chairman of the Olubori Community Development Association (CDA), Mr. Balogun Tejumade, lauded the Lagos State Government’s commitment.

“This initiative will go a long way in improving lives by enhancing access to social protection,” he said.

The LASSR is a comprehensive database of heads and members of poor and vulnerable households in Lagos State.

The NIN integration process officially began on Wednesday, 9th April 2025, across all LGAs and LCDAs, in line with the Federal Government’s directive.



# FG dismisses US court order to FBI, DEA on Tinubu

By Dave Oludare Oso

...Says records did not indict the Nigerian leader



The Federal Government has dismissed the court nod given by a United States judge to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to release non-exempt files linked to past investigations involving President Bola Tinubu.

The Presidency, on Sunday, maintained that there is nothing new in the records of the United States agencies concerning the Nigerian president after a Washington DC judge directed them (FBI and DEA) to release records relating to the criminal investigation of President Bola Tinubu over alleged drug trafficking.

Special Adviser on Information and

Strategy to the President, Bayo Onanuga, said the reports in question have been in public for over 30 years and did not indict the Nigerian leader.

“Journalists have sought the Presidency’s reaction to the ruling last Tuesday by a Washington DC judge ordering the US FBI and DEA to release reports connected with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu,” Onanuga wrote in a social media post on Sunday.

He added, “Our response is as follows. There is nothing new to be revealed.

“The report by Agent Moss of the FBI and the DEA report have been in the public space for more than 30 years. The reports did not indict the

Nigerian leader.”

He added that the Presidency’s lawyers are currently examining the ruling.

This follows a ruling last Tuesday by Judge Beryl Howell of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, directing the FBI and DEA to release non-exempt documents related to a drug trafficking investigation.

The order came after Aaron Greenspan, an American and founder of legal transparency platform, PlainSite, filed a lawsuit challenging the agencies’ refusal to confirm or deny the existence of such records.



# Okpebholo: Edo, Delta will deliver Tinubu's re-election

By Friday Omosola

Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo, has expressed confidence that Edo and Delta States will play leading roles in securing President Bola Tinubu's re-election in 2027.

He gave the assurance on Saturday while welcoming a wave of high-profile defections from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Delta State.

Governor Okpebholo joined the APC National Chairman, Alhaji Abdullahi Ganduje, and other party leaders at a rally in Delta State to receive the Chairman of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Chiedu Ebie, and members of the Delta Unity Group into the ruling party.

According to the Governor, the South-South region is set to experience what he called "practical governance" under the APC, just as witnessed in Edo State.

"It is our turn to shine in the South-South. It is now your turn in Delta. What happened in Edo is now happening here. President Bola Tinubu is doing well for the country, repairing the foundation for long-term prosperity.

"In Edo, we've already started. We believe 2027 is possible. It is also possible here in Delta," Okpebholo said.

He praised Ebie, calling him an



intelligent leader who understood when and how to make decisive political moves.

"It is time for Delta to move, and that journey begins with the Ika people," he added.

In his remarks, APC National Chairman, Abdullahi Ganduje, hailed the defection as a landmark development for the party in Delta State.

He described the Delta Unity Group as "great fighters of democracy" and predicted that the APC would take control of the state in the next general election.

"With three senators, members in the House of Representatives and the State Assembly, and over 60 percent of PDP followers now in APC, we are positioned to win Delta in 2027," Ganduje stated.

He emphasised the need for unity among party members, saying, "What

we need now is unity of purpose—unity to win elections and deliver quality governance to the people of Delta."

Mr Chiedu Ebie, who led the Delta Unity Group into the APC, explained that their decision was based on President Tinubu's commitment to good governance and inclusivity.

"We believe in the President's leadership and vision. That is why we are aligning with the APC at this time," he said.

Earlier, during a visit to the Palace of the Dein of Agbor, Dr Benjamin Ikenchukwu, Keagborekuzi I, the monarch urged President Tinubu to prioritise national peace and security to ensure sustainable development.

Also present at the rally were Senator Ned Nwoko (Delta North); Teke Ibori-Swenu, Chairman of the House Committee on NDDC; former Deputy Senate President, Ovie Omo-Agege; and other prominent APC stakeholders.

# Rivers Emergency: Tompolo breaks silence, vows Fubara's return

By Friday Omosola

**P**rominent Niger Delta figure and former MEND leader, Government Ekpemupolo, known as Tompolo, has addressed the ongoing political turmoil in Rivers State.

He assured that suspended Rivers State Governor Siminalayi Fubara will reclaim his mandate.

Speaking at his 54th birthday celebration held at the revered Aziza Temple in Gbaramatu Kingdom, Tompolo used the occasion to respond to growing criticisms over his silence on the crisis that led to Fubara's suspension following the state of emergency.

"I have not abandoned the Ijaw people," he said before a gathering of traditional leaders, supporters, and activists.

"My silence was not weakness or betrayal. I have always stood for the Ijaw cause, and I will continue to do so."

Tompolo acknowledged the public outcry within the Ijaw community and clarified that efforts were underway behind the scenes to mediate between the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, and Governor Fubara.

"There are ongoing talks to resolve this situation. Fubara will return to his rightful seat. No matter the delay, justice will prevail," he stated.

He also addressed Wike's recent disparaging comments about the Ijaw nation, calling on Ijaw people to remain focused and rise above the provocations.

"Wike may have said things we didn't like, but we must respond with maturity.



The Ijaw struggle is not about exchanging insults—it's about preserving our dignity and unity," Tompolo remarked.

Turning to the recent controversy surrounding INEC's ward delineation report in Warri Federal Constituency, Tompolo defended the Ijaw position, stating that demographic realities favoured their claims.

"Gbaramatu predates many of the newer settlements. Okerenkoko alone has a population that rivals all Itsekiri towns combined. These are not sentiments — they are facts," he said.

However, he was quick to stress that this did not mean animosity between the Ijaw and Itsekiri communities.

"We are historically connected. The Olu of Warri even has maternal ties to Gbaramatu. Let's stop letting politics divide us."

Tompolo concluded with a firm message

to internal detractors within the Ijaw fold.

"Bayelsa belongs to all Ijaw people. No one will be allowed to destabilise it. Governor Diri and I may disagree at times, but we share a common heritage. The days of in-fighting must end. Unity is our strength."

He also expressed cautious optimism in President Bola Tinubu's administration.

"President Tinubu is not our enemy. Let's give him time — he may bring benefits to the Niger Delta and the Ijaw nation. But we will hold him accountable as we always have."

Tompolo's statements come amid heightened political tensions and rising calls for stability and justice in the Niger Delta.



# Poor immunization, dusty weather fuel meningitis epidemic in Nigeria

By Helen Okechukwu

Nigeria is currently battling a growing outbreak of cerebrospinal meningitis (CSM), particularly caused by the serogroup C strain of meningococcus. The disease, which has long been a seasonal threat in parts of West Africa, has intensified in severity over the past year, emerging as one of the most urgent public health challenges the country faces today.



Between 2024 and 2025, the epidemic has swept across multiple states, with the northern region reporting an overwhelming 94 percent of the country's suspected cases. The situation has reached alarming levels. Punch reported that out of 1,826 suspected cases, 126 have been confirmed, and 151 people have died — a sharp rise from the previously reported 74 fatalities.

The majority of those affected are children between the ages of five and fourteen, placing Nigeria's younger population at particular risk.

According to a 2025 report from the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), the disease has spread rapidly across 23 states, with ten northern states bearing the brunt. Among the hardest hit are Kebbi, Sokoto, Katsina, Jigawa, Yobe, and Gombe. These states have recorded hundreds of suspected cases, while sporadic outbreaks have also been reported in parts of the south.

The World Health Organization (WHO), in its 2024 update, linked the rise in cases directly to serogroup C, reporting over 1,700 suspected infections, 101 confirmed cases, and a death toll that has reached 153 across all 36 states, including major outbreaks in Adamawa, Zamfara, and Bauchi. The disease, spread primarily through respiratory droplets, causes inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord, often leading to high fever, stiff neck, headaches, and neurological complications. In young children, symptoms may include irritability and a bulging soft spot on the head.

Health experts have pointed to a number of underlying factors contributing to the surge in cases. The hot, dry, and dusty weather typical of northern Nigeria during the dry season has created a perfect environment for transmission. Other

factors such as low immunization coverage, poor sanitation, overcrowded living conditions, and malnutrition have further exacerbated the crisis. Compounding the issue is a weakened healthcare system, which continues to strain under the weight of recurring disease outbreaks including malaria, cholera, and Lassa fever.

Access to timely medical care remains a significant barrier. Delayed hospital visits and poor awareness about early symptoms have been linked to the high fatality rate. The country's ability to respond has also been hindered by cuts in international health funding, including a reduction in U.S. aid under the Trump administration, which previously supported epidemic preparedness and disease surveillance initiatives.

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In response to the escalating crisis, the NCDC, in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Health and state governments, has activated emergency response teams in affected areas. These efforts include strengthening disease surveillance, data collection, and launching public awareness campaigns to educate communities about symptoms, prevention, and the importance of early medical intervention.

Support has also come from international partners. The global vaccine alliance, Gavi, recently donated over one million vaccine doses to Nigeria to assist with immunization efforts. In a joint statement released alongside UNICEF and the World Health Organization, Nigeria's Minister of Health, Muhammad Ali Pate, reaffirmed the government's

commitment to prioritizing epidemic response as a pillar of national health security.

Some state governments have taken further steps. In Kebbi State, for instance, Governor Nasir Idris allocated ₦30 million toward the purchase of drugs and other medical supplies to curb the spread of the disease. Médecins Sans Frontières has also been active in the field, conducting public education exercises and supporting vaccination campaigns in communities such as those in Gombe State.

PC: A campaign exercise carried out by Médecine Sans Frontières at Gombe State

As the dry season continues, public health officials are urging citizens to take necessary precautions. While

public hygiene and reduced exposure to crowded spaces are vital, vaccination remains the most effective tool in stopping the spread. Ongoing campaigns are targeting children and young adults in high-risk areas, but officials warn that much more needs to be done to contain the outbreak and prevent future waves.

Nigeria's meningitis crisis serves as a stark reminder of the urgent need for sustained investment in public health infrastructure, equitable vaccine access, and a coordinated national response capable of withstanding the pressures of seasonal epidemics.

For more information on safety guidelines, symptoms, and vaccination schedules, the NCDC advises citizens to visit their official website or contact local health authorities.





# AFCON glory to super Eagles coach: Life of Christian Chukwu

By Damilola Olufemi

**C**hristian Chukwu, the iconic footballer who captained Nigeria to its first Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) title in 1980 and later served as head coach of the Super Eagles, has died at 74.

The Nigerian Football Federation (NFF) confirmed that Chukwu died in the early hours of Saturday at his residence in Enugu, his home state in southeastern Nigeria. The cause of death has not been officially disclosed.

During his illustrious playing career as a commanding defender for the Green Eagles, Christian Chukwu — fondly known as “Chairman” — shared the pitch with some of Nigeria’s most iconic footballers, including Segun Odegbami, Muda Lawal, Adokiye Amiesiema, Emmanuel Okala, and Best Ogedegbe. His influence on Nigerian football spanned more than five decades, from his dominance at the heart of Enugu Rangers’ defense in the 1970s to his pivotal leadership roles with the national team, both as captain and later as head coach.

**A National Icon on and off the Pitch**  
Born on January 4, 1951, in Enugu, Chukwu began his career with Rangers International FC, where he quickly rose to prominence as a commanding presence in defence. In 1980, as captain of the Green Eagles (now Super Eagles), he led Nigeria to its historic first AFCON title, defeating Algeria in the final.

Chukwu would later transition into coaching, where he continued to shape the sport in Nigeria. After



serving as an assistant coach during the 1994 World Cup — Nigeria’s first appearance in the global tournament — he was appointed head coach of the national team in 2002.

Under his guidance, the Super Eagles secured a third-place finish at the 2004 AFCON in Tunisia. However, his tenure was not without challenges.

Chukwu was vocal about the treatment of indigenous coaches by the NFF. In a 2024 interview with Athletic Nigeria, he revealed that he was still owed unpaid salaries nearly two decades after his dismissal in 2005.

“They don’t owe foreign coaches, but they owe Nigerian coaches,” Chukwu said. “Some of them are no longer alive, and their dues were never paid. My files are still there at the NFF.”

His criticisms sparked renewed conversations in Nigerian football circles about the perceived bias toward foreign hires and the systemic marginalization of local talent.

Chukwu’s coaching style emphasized discipline, unity, and belief in homegrown players. He was known for building team spirit and trusting local talent at a time when foreign coaches were often preferred.

“Nigerian coaches can perform even better than foreign ones — but our federation doesn’t respect them,” he once said, praising fellow Nigerian coach Augustine Eguavoen during the 2022 AFCON campaign.

After his national team tenure, Chukwu remained a guiding presence in Nigerian football, mentoring young coaches and serving as a respected elder statesman of the sport. In 2021, the Nigeria Football Federation celebrated his 70th birthday, honouring him for his lifelong service to football in the country.

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Chukwu's football journey began in the 1970s with Rangers International FC, where he played a pivotal role in the club's dominance in national competitions. His leadership on the pitch reached its peak in 1980, when he captained Nigeria to its first-ever Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) title — a historic achievement that cemented his status as a national icon.

He later joined the coaching staff of the national team and served as assistant coach during Nigeria's first appearance at the FIFA World Cup in 1994. By 2002, he had become the head coach of the Super Eagles, leading the team to a third-place finish at the 2004 AFCON in Tunisia. His time as head coach came to an end in 2005, but his influence on Nigerian football endured.

In 2019, Chukwu publicly battled health challenges and received support from prominent figures, including a \$50,000 donation for treatment from philanthropist Femi Otedola. His health improved in the years that followed, but on April 2024, he passed away in his hometown of Enugu at the age of 74, leaving behind a legacy deeply woven into the fabric of African football.

**Tributes Pour In for Christian Chukwu, Nigerian Football Icon**  
Tributes have come in from across Nigeria and the African football community. Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu described Chukwu's passing as a "painful loss to the country," while Enugu State Governor Peter Mbah called it "a personal loss to Ndi Enugu and the entire nation."

"He was a field marshal and phenomenon," Mbah said. "His legacy reaches far beyond the pitch."

Former players, including Adegboye Onigbinde and Mutiu Adepoju, hailed Chukwu as a mentor and leader whose impact will never be forgotten.

"Every player loved to associate with him," Adepoju said. "He was respected, humble, and deeply loved."

Christian Chukwu's passing marks the end of an era in Nigerian football. He will be remembered not only for his victories but for his advocacy, humility, and steadfast belief in Nigerian excellence. In life and in death, he remains one of the greatest names in African football history.





# 'One wife isn't fair', RMD sparks debate

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nollywood legend Richard Mofe-Damijo, widely known as RMD, has stirred a wave of conversation after sharing his thoughts on polygamy.

In a recent episode of the podcast Curiosity Made Me Ask, the beloved actor spoke openly about his belief that it may be unfair for a man to be married to only one woman.

Known for his charm and commanding screen presence, RMD surprised many fans with his bold and honest take on love and relationships during the candid interview.

A surprising question sparks debate

The discussion took an interesting turn when the podcast's host, Bae U Barbie, posed a playful but direct question: "You're married to only one woman. Do you think that's fair? Do you have an idea how many women want you?"

RMD laughed before responding with a straight face. "I don't, but I think it's unfair to be married to just one woman. My father had five [wives]," he replied.

His answer, though lighthearted in delivery, offered a serious insight into his personal views and upbringing.

Family background shaped his beliefs

RMD went on to explain that his views on marriage are rooted in his own family history. He grew up in a polygamous home. His father, he revealed, had five wives. This experience influenced how he sees love, commitment, and fairness in relationships.

"I grew up seeing it. It was normal for us," he said. "So, for me, I understand where the idea of polygamy comes from. It's not just about desire. It's also about culture and tradition."

Still married to just one woman

Despite his beliefs, RMD has chosen to live a monogamous life. He is currently



married to television personality Jumobi Adegbesan. The two got married after RMD's first wife, popular talk show host May Ellen 'MEE' Mofe-Damijo, sadly passed away in 1996.

The actor did not suggest that he intends to take more wives, but rather, he spoke from a place of reflection and understanding.

"Sometimes you think about how many people love you, and you wish you could return that love equally," he said. "But society has its rules, and we often have to play by them."

A broader look at polygamy in Nigeria

Polygamy is not illegal in Nigeria. In fact, under customary and Islamic laws, it is widely accepted in many communities, especially in the northern regions. While it's less common in urban centers and among the younger generation, it remains a part of many families' traditions.

RMD's comment adds a personal voice to an ongoing public discussion. For many Nigerians, his words ring true and bring back memories of extended families, shared homes, and deep-rooted customs.

Fans react with mixed feelings

Since the podcast aired, fans across social media have shared their thoughts. Some praised RMD for being honest and open-minded. Others voiced concern, saying

such views could lead to normalizing polygamy in modern times.

Still, many people appreciated his willingness to talk about a sensitive topic without shame or judgment.

Is love meant to be shared?

At the heart of RMD's statement lies a deeper question: Can love be truly exclusive? Or should people be allowed to love and marry more than one person if they choose to?

The debate continues, and there's no one-size-fits-all answer. But RMD's words have certainly pushed the conversation forward.

A star unafraid to speak his truth

Over the years, Richard Mofe-Damijo has used his platform not only to entertain but also to inspire and challenge the public. His latest remarks do just that. Whether you agree or disagree, one thing is clear he's unafraid to speak his truth.

In a world where tradition and modern values often clash, RMD reminds us that love, marriage, and fairness mean different things to different people. And sometimes, simply starting the conversation is the most important step.

# Obi Cubana gifts 50 guests 50 Samsung phones on 50th birthday

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



**T**he founder and CEO of Cubana Group, Obinna Iyiegbu popularly known as Obi Cubana, clocked 50 years on Saturday, and the flamboyant businessman celebrated his new age in a grand style.

He held a birthday party, themed '50 for 50' at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel in Abuja.

The exclusive party, which held on on Friday was so themed ('50 for 50') as the free-spending socialite distributed 50 pieces of Samsung S25 smartphones to 50 guests.

Expectedly, the creme de la creme

of the society and socialites graced the party, bearing luxury gifts of all kinds.

Ebele Iyiegbu, Obi Cubana's wife in celebrating her husband, posted a picture of him, writing, "You are my gift, Dim oma!"

Other wellwishers, friends and family members also went all out to show their love and support to the businessman.

Among notable celebrities in attendance were; Cubana Chief Priest, E-money, Zubby Michael, Kanayo O Kanayo, AY Makun and many others.

As Obi Cubana turns 50, his legacy transcends business achievements. He has become a beacon of hope for Nigeria's youth, inspiring them to dream big, work hard, and create opportunities that will not only benefit them but also elevate the nation as a whole.

Cubana's commitment to promoting local enterprises, empowering young entrepreneurs, and shaping Nigeria's future ensures that his influence will continue to inspire generations to come.

# 'My tattoos hurt my dad', says Fireboy DML

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**F**ireboy DML reveals how his tattoos have strained his relationship with his father, calling it the one thing that truly broke his dad's heart.

In a heartfelt interview, the 29-year-old singer shared how his decision to get tattoos deeply affected his father, creating a rift that still lingers today.

"My tattoos broke my dad's heart"

Speaking on a recent episode of the 90s Baby Show, Fireboy didn't hold back. He admitted that getting tattooed might be the one act his father will never truly forgive.

The artist revealed that each time his father visits, he takes extra care to cover up his inked skin with traditional clothing, particularly a jalabiya a long, flowing robe that hides most of his body.

"One thing I've done that really broke my dad's heart? It's definitely the tattoos," Fireboy said candidly. "Every time he comes around, I make sure I'm in a jalabiya, completely covered. Seeing my tattoos just hurts him every time."

Piercings accepted, tattoos rejected

Despite his father's disapproval, Fireboy explained that his love for body art isn't tied to his career as a musician. He said that even if he had pursued a more conservative profession, like banking, he still would have gone ahead with getting tattooed.

For him, tattoos are more than just a fashion statement—they are a personal form of art and self-expression.

"My dad doesn't mind the piercings," he noted. "But the tattoos? That's where he draws the line. I don't think he'll ever come to terms with them."

Art, identity, and self-expression



Fireboy's views on tattoos are deeply personal. He described them as a way to turn his body into a canvas, a walking piece of art. He believes tattoos give him presence, even when he's dressed simply or shirtless.

"I want to walk into a room in just a singlet and still feel like I'm dressed up," he said. "That's what tattoos do for me. They add to my identity."

The clash between tradition and modernity

The Peru crooner's story touches on a broader conversation about generational differences, especially when it comes to self-expression and cultural expectations.

In many traditional African households, body modifications like tattoos are still frowned upon. They are often viewed as rebellious or even disrespectful.

For Fireboy, this clash between personal identity and parental approval is a painful balancing act.

Respecting family, despite differences

Still, the singer made it clear that he respects his father deeply. His decision to hide his tattoos during visits shows a

continued effort to protect their relationship, even if they don't see eye to eye. It's a gesture of love, one that many fans can relate to trying to be true to oneself while keeping family peace.

Fame doesn't shield artists from struggles

As Fireboy continues to rise in global music circles, his story reminds fans that fame doesn't shield artists from personal struggles. Behind the glamour and stage lights are real people dealing with real emotions and complex family dynamics.

A story that resonates with many

The interview has sparked discussions online, especially among young Nigerians who face similar challenges in expressing themselves while staying connected to family traditions. Fireboy's honesty struck a chord with many who admire his courage to speak openly about a topic that's often kept private.

Finding a middle ground

In the end, his message is clear: self-expression is important, but so is family. Finding the middle ground isn't always easy, but for Fireboy, it's a journey worth taking.



# China urges Trump to 'completely cancel' reciprocal tariffs

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



**B**eijing on Sunday called upon US President Donald Trump administration to 'completely cancel' the reciprocal tariffs imposed on it, taking the total levies to 145 per cent, reported Times of India.

"We urge the US to.. take a big step to correct its mistakes, completely cancel the wrong practice of 'reciprocal tariff' and return to the right path of mutual respect," TOI quoted a

commerce ministry spokesperson as saying in a statement, adding "China is now evaluating the impact."

Both the world's largest economies have been engaged in a tit-for-tat tariff war ever since US President Donald Trump announced in April sweeping global tariffs, following escalating the blanket duty on Chinese goods to 145 percent.

Retaliatory Chinese import

tariffs of 125 percent on US goods took effect Saturday, with Beijing standing defiant against its biggest trade partner.

However, this Trump administration announced a 90-day delay for most countries after the US President's tariffs sent global markets into a tailspin. US even excluded China from the reprieve.

# White House replaces Obama portrait with painting depicting Trump assassination attempt

By Dave Oludare Oso

The White House has hung a painting of President Donald Trump depicting a moment after an assassination attempt against him last summer — bumping the official portrait of one of his predecessors, Barack Obama.

Hanging a new presidential likeness without advance notice is unusual, and Trump putting himself in that space could be seen as him breaking with norms yet again.

By tradition, portraits of the two most recent former presidents go on display in the foyer — and Trump is in the unique position of also being a former president.

Obama's portrait went on display in the foyer of the State Floor, near the staircase to the president's residence, after it was unveiled in 2022. The White House said it is still in the foyer, but has been moved to the opposite wall, where a portrait of former President George W. Bush used to hang.

Plans are to move Bush's portrait nearer to his father's, former President George H.W. Bush, which is on the staircase to the residence.

The White House announced the unexpected change in a post on its official account on X with a photo of the new painting that said, "Some new artwork at the White House" and a pair of emoji eyes. The painting captures the aftermath of an attempt on Trump's life during a July rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. Trump was wounded in the ear and thrust his fist skyward as he said, "fight, fight, fight!"

Those words became a key rallying cry of his successful reelection campaign.

The original painting on canvas was done by artist Marc Lipp and was donated to the White House by Andrew Pollock via the Blue Gallery in Delray Beach, Florida, the White House said.

Lipp's online biography as part of the Blue Gallery website describes him as "a



Modern Pop Art who translates his love for art through paintings and sculptures." Pollack is an author and school safety advocate whose daughter Meadow was among the students killed in the 2018 mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

Regardless of party affiliation, the sitting president had often genially hosted his immediate predecessor for the unveiling of his portrait, but Trump did not extend that courtesy to Obama.

It was left to then-President Joe Biden, and his wife, Jill, to welcome former President Obama and his wife, former first lady Michelle Obama, to the White House for the unveiling of their portraits in 2022, as Democrat Bill Clinton did for Republican George W. Bush and the younger President Bush did for Clinton.

The Obamas hosted George W. Bush and his wife, Laura, at the White House for their portrait unveiling in 2012.

There was an unexplained pause when Trump did not host Obama during his first term.

Biden left office nearly three months ago and it likely will be a few years before his and the former first lady's portraits are commissioned and completed.

Trump has involved himself with paintings outside of the White House, too.

Last month, a painting of Trump that had hung with other presidential portraits at the Colorado state Capitol was taken down after he complained that his likeness was "purposefully distorted."

The White House portrait collection starts with George Washington, America's first president. Congress bought his portrait.

Other portraits of early presidents and first ladies often came to the White House as gifts. Since the 1960s, the White House Historical Association has paid for most of the paintings.

The first portraits financed by the association were of Lyndon Johnson and Lady Bird Johnson, and John F. Kennedy and Jacqueline Kennedy, said Stewart McLaurin, president of the private, nonprofit organization established by first lady Kennedy.

President and first lady portraits are seen by millions of White House visitors, though not all are on display. Some are undergoing conservation or are in storage.



# Pennsylvania Gov Josh Shapiro's residence set on fire in arson attack

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro revealed on Sunday (April 13) that an arsonist set fire to the official Governor's Residence in Harrisburg, prompting an emergency evacuation of his family in the early hours of the morning.

"Last night at about 2AM, my family and I woke up to bangs on the door from the Pennsylvania State Police after an arsonist set fire to the Governor's Residence," Shapiro said in a social media post.

"Thank God no one was injured and the fire was extinguished."

Passover celebrations turn to emergency

Just hours before the fire, Shapiro—who is Jewish—had posted a photo of his family's Passover Seder table, sharing the holiday moment from within the mansion.

Authorities said the Shapiro family was in a different section of the house and were unharmed when the fire broke out.

First responders praised

In a follow-up message, Shapiro expressed gratitude to law enforcement and emergency crews.

"Every day, we stand with the law enforcement and first responders who run towards danger to protect our communities. Last night, they did so for our family – and Lori and I are eternally grateful to them for keeping us safe."

Significant damage reported

The Pennsylvania State Police, who are leading the investigation, confirmed that the fire caused "significant damage to a portion of the residence."

"While the fire was successfully extinguished, it caused a significant amount of damage to a portion of the

residence," the agency said in a statement. "While the investigation is ongoing, the State Police is prepared to say at this time that this was an act of arson."

No motive revealed yet

Officials have not provided a motive behind the attack. Investigators are offering a \$10,000 reward for information that leads to an arrest and conviction.

2028 speculation

Shapiro, a Democrat from a key swing state, is widely seen as a potential candidate for the 2028 presidential race.

The Governor divides his time between the Harrisburg mansion and his personal home in Abington, roughly 100 miles away.

# 34 killed, 117 injured in Russian missile strike on Ukrainian city

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A Russian ballistic missile strike in the Ukrainian city of Sumy killed at least 34 people and injured more than 100 as people were going to church for Palm Sunday, in the worst attack on civilians this year.

Two missiles landed in the crowded city centre on Sunday morning. One hit a trolley bus full of passengers. Footage from the scene showed bodies lying in the street, burning cars, and rescuers carrying bloodied survivors. Two of the dead were children.



injured, including 15 children.

There was widespread international outrage. Donald Trump's envoy to Ukraine, Keith Kellogg, said the attack "crosses any line of decency".

"As a former military leader, I understand targeting and this is wrong. It is why President Trump is working hard to end this war," he wrote on X.

The UK prime minister, Keir Starmer, said he was "appalled at Russia's horrific attacks on civilians". Vladimir Putin "must now agree to a full and immediate ceasefire without conditions", he said.

France's president, Emmanuel Macron, agreed on the "urgent need to impose a ceasefire on Russia". "Everyone knows it is Russia alone that wants this war," he said. The EU's foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, described the scenes from Sumy as heartbreaking and horrific.

The EU's ambassador to Ukraine, Katarína Mathernová, called the strikes a war crime. "Nothing seems to be sacred to the Russians – neither churches, nor Ukrainian children," she said.

Ukrainians contrasted the images of bodies in Sumy with photos of Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, warmly shaking hands with Putin on Friday. The two held four hours of talks in St Petersburg.

A wrecked bus after the missile attack. Photograph: Sumy region prosecutor's office/AFP/Getty Images

Putin's press spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, said on Sunday that the talks were going very well but that it was "impossible to expect any instant results".

Trump has said he is "pissed off" at Russia's failure to stop bombing, but has so far not taken any concrete measures against Moscow. Ukraine has signed up to a 30-day ceasefire that Washington proposed a month ago.

Since then, Russia has escalated its bombardment of Ukrainian cities, firing 70 missiles and 2,200 drones. Nine children and nine adults were killed earlier this month when a Russian missile hit a playground in the city of Kryvyi Rih.

Zelenskyy has been pressing allies to send another 10 Patriot air defence systems to protect Ukraine's skies. "Talks have never stopped ballistic missiles and air bombs. We need the kind of attitude towards Russia that a terrorist deserves," he said on Sunday.

Sumy is 15 miles (25km) from the border with Russia and is a major Ukrainian military hub. The missiles landed in a central civilian area where many people carrying willow branches for Palm Sunday were on their way to church.

"My seven-year-old son was running for shelter when the second missile struck. The blast ripped off a door which hit him in the leg. He has a bruise but is OK," said Volodymyr Niankin, a film director. "My son said this is the most terrible day of his life."

Niankin said he saw bodies on the ground. "Many of the people who died were sitting on the bus or walking in the road. A lot of people were out and about because it was a religious festival. I think this is genocide."

Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said there were "dozens of dead and wounded civilians". He accused Russia of carrying out an act of deliberate terror and said tough reaction was needed from the US, Europe and the rest of the world.

"Enemy missiles hit an ordinary city street, ordinary life: houses, educational institutions, cars on the street ... And this on a day when people go to church: Palm Sunday, the feast of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem," he posted on social media.

Zelenskyy said the Kremlin was ignoring a US proposal for a full and unconditional ceasefire. "Unfortunately, there in Moscow they are convinced they can keep killing with impunity. Action is needed to change this situation," he said.

Officials said 117 people had been



# Christians celebrate Palm Sunday worldwide

By Dave Oludare Oso



On Sunday, April 13, 2025, is Palm Sunday, and as it has been from time immemorial, Christians all over the world will celebrate one of the most sacred events in Christendom.

## WHAT IS PALM SUNDAY?

Palm Sunday, in the Christian tradition, is the first day of Holy Week and the Sunday before Easter, commemorating Jesus Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

It is associated in many churches with the blessing and procession of palms (leaves of the date palm or twigs from locally available trees).

Its name originates from the palm branches waved by the crowd to greet and honour Jesus Christ as he entered the city.

Palm Sunday marks the first day of Holy

Week; in Western Christianity, this is the beginning of the last week of the solemn season of Lent, preceding Eastertide, while in Eastern Christianity, Holy Week commences after the conclusion of Great Lent.

In most Christian rites, Palm Sunday is celebrated by the blessing and distribution of palm branches (or the branches of other, native trees), representing the palm branches that the crowd scattered before Christ as he rode into Jerusalem.

These palms are sometimes woven into crosses. The difficulty of procuring palms in unfavorable climates led to the substitution of branches of native trees, including box, olive, willow, and yew.

Many churches of mainstream Christian denominations, including the Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Anglican, Moravian, and Reformed

traditions, distribute palm branches to their congregations during their Palm Sunday liturgies.

Christians take these palms, which are often blessed by clergy, to their homes, where they hang them alongside Christian art (especially crosses and crucifixes) or keep them in their Bibles and daily devotional books.

In the days preceding the next year's Lent, known as Carnival or Shrovetide, churches often place a basket in their narthex to collect these palms, which are then ritually burned on Shrove Tuesday to make the ashes to be used on the following day, Ash Wednesday, which is the first day of Lent.

Nigerian Christians will not be left behind as palm, in crosses, or in fronds will be seen all over the place with both young and old, male or female, clergy or worshippers bearing one.

# Prada buys Versace in €1.25bn deal uniting Italy's biggest fashion brands

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**P**rada has agreed to buy the Versace fashion brand for €1.25bn (\$1.38bn) from the fashion conglomerate Capri Holdings.

It comes after months of speculation about a potential deal to combine the two Italian fashion houses and, more recently, rumours that the acquisition was set to collapse after market upheaval in response to President Trump's tariff policies.

Insiders say the original deal was expected to be agreed at €1.43bn, but a discount of about €180m was achieved because the recent market turmoil and trade uncertainty has hit the retail industry particularly hard.

Capri, which also owns Michael Kors and Jimmy Choo, originally bought Versace for \$2.1bn in 2018.

After an \$8.5bn attempt by Tapestry – the American group that owns Coach and Kate Spade – to acquire Capri was blocked last year by the US Federal Trade Commission, Capri has been under pressure to sell off Versace to reduce its debt.

According to those close to the deal, Prada was one of the earliest bidders.

In a statement confirming the news, Prada's group chair and executive director Patrizio Bertelli said the group was "ready and well positioned to write a new page in Versace's history". Bertelli added that both companies "share a strong commitment to creativity, craftsmanship and heritage".

While Capri failed to create an American luxury group to rival fashion companies such as LVMH and Kering, the acquisition hints at an attempt by Prada to strengthen its position as an Italian



powerhouse.

Versace will join the fashion brands Prada and Miu Miu, the footwear brands Church's, Car Shoe and Luna Rossa, the America's Cup sailing team Luna Rossa and the pastry brand Marchesi.

It is not the first endeavour by Prada to add to its portfolio. In 1999, it acquired Jil Sander and Helmut Lang and, in 2000, it added Alaïa to its lineup. However, by 2007, after a series of disputes and financial challenges, it had parted ways with all three brands. Now, the Versace acquisition offers them another opportunity to intensify the global reach of the Made in Italy group.

While the luxury fashion market has been facing a significant slowdown, the Prada Group has enjoyed rare success. It reported revenues of €5.4bn in 2024, 17% higher than the previous year.

This increase was partly driven by Miu Miu – the brand behind those viral micro-miniskirts and satin ballet shoes – which has almost doubled its profits this year, hitting close to £1bn in sales.

Last month, it was announced that Dario Vitale, a former image director at Miu Miu, would be succeeding Donatella Versace as creative director, a position Versace had held for 27 years.

Instead, Versace will take up the role of chief brand ambassador, overseeing the house's red-carpet dressing and philanthropic work.

Prada and Versace are often pitted against each other as Italian fashion rivals, but their designs are diametrically opposed. Versace champions the traditional tropes of femininity with unabashed enthusiasm – see high hemlines, high heels, big hair.

Miuccia Prada, who holds a doctorate in political science and, prior to joining the family business in 1970 was a Communist, is often referred to as "fashion's intellectual".

She has previously described her work as ugly clothes in hideous fabrics. However, the two women have a perhaps unlikely friendship.



# Israeli missiles strike Gaza hospital, forcing patients to flee

By Fatimah Idera

Israeli forces have bombed al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City, the largest remaining functioning hospital in northern Gaza, destroying its emergency unit, main entrance and medical oxygen supplies.

Health officials at the Al-Ahli Arab Baptist Hospital evacuated the patients from the building after one person said he received a call from someone who identified himself with the Israeli security shortly before the attack took place.

Critically ill patients were left on the street after fleeing the attack in the early hours of Sunday morning, with one doctor reporting that at least three people, including a child who was on oxygen, died due to the rushed evacuation.

The Israeli military said in a statement it had taken steps to reduce harm to civilians before it struck the compound, which was being used by Hamas militants to plan attacks.

The hospital, an institution of the Anglican Church, was a major medical facility in Gaza City, according to the Gaza health ministry, which is now out of operation because of the attack.

Authorities in Gaza have condemned the bombing, noting that al-Ahli Hospital was treating hundreds of patients when it was hit by at least two missiles. About 500 people were killed when Israel bombed the hospital in October 2023.

Israel has repeatedly attacked hospitals in the Palestinian enclave with impunity throughout its devastating war. The Gaza Media Office says Israel has targeted 36 hospitals since it launched its war on October 7, 2023.



“Hundreds of patients and injured people had to be evacuated in the middle of the night, and many of them are now out in the streets without medical care, which puts their lives at risk,” Khalil Al-Deqran, the ministry’s spokesperson said.

The Palestinian foreign ministry and Hamas condemned the attack at Al-Ahli, and said in a statement that Israel was destroying Gaza’s healthcare system.

Israel says Hamas systematically exploits civilian structures, including hospitals, which the militant group denies. Israeli forces have carried out numerous raids in medical facilities in the enclave.

In October 2023, a deadly blast at a parking lot in the compound of Al-Ahli hospital was blamed by Hamas on an Israeli air strike. Israel said a failed rocket launch by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group had caused the blast.

The militant group denied it was responsible. An investigation by Human Rights Watch later concluded the 2023 explosion was most likely caused by a failed Palestinian rocket launch.

The Baptist Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East said in a statement that 20 minutes before the attack on the hospital,

the Israeli military ordered all patients, employees and displaced people to evacuate the premises.

It said the two strikes destroyed the two-storey Genetic Laboratory, damaged the Pharmacy and Emergency Department buildings, and caused collateral damage to surrounding structures, including the St. Philip’s church building.

“The Diocese of Jerusalem is appalled but the bombing of the hospital is now for the fifth time since the beginning of the war in 2023 – and this time was on the morning of Palm Sunday and the beginning of Holy Week,” the Baptist Church said.

“We call upon all governments and people of goodwill to intervene to stop all kinds of attacks on medical and humanitarian institutions,” it said in a statement.

Separate strikes in the enclave on Sunday killed at least 10 Palestinians, including the head of a police station in Khan Younis, in the southern part of the Hamas-run enclave, according to Hamas media and local health authorities.

At least eight more people, including a woman, were killed further north, according to the official Palestinian news agency Wafa. There was no immediate Israeli comment on those reports.

# Long Island school has 15 sets of graduating twins

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

This Long Island high school makes the grade when it comes to staggering sibling stats.

Plainview-Old Bethpage John F. Kennedy High School has 15 sets of twins in this year's graduating class of 447 seniors.

The plethora of twins at the Plainview school even includes two pairs of siblings with identical names: Rebecca and Josh.

There are 15 sets of twins in Plainview-Old Bethpage John F. Kennedy High School's class of 2025.

The teens' school ties have been strong since grammar school.

"Most, if not all, have been in the district since kindergarten," Timothy Lamb, the school's assistant principal, told Today.

Thankfully, the 30 students are all fraternal twins, so their teachers don't have to add to their workload to determine who's who.

"Some teachers don't even know they're twins, even though some do look alike," Lamb continued.

When they were babies, their parents even formed their own support group, which met monthly and had a bi-annual garage sale of hand-me-downs.

"Many met as infants because the parents joined a 'parents of twins' group. They're all very friendly with each other. They're all close. It's like they have a little clique," Lamb added.



Emily and Amanda Brake one of the 15 sets of twins in Plainview-Old Bethpage John F. Kennedy High School's class of 2025

The Blake twins, Emily and Amanda, will be attending the University of Georgia and Ohio State, respectively. Emily and Amanda Brake

Meredith Brake, the mother of twins Emily, attending the University of Georgia in the fall, and Amanda, heading off to Ohio State, praised the twins' group for its unique camaraderie.

"It was a great place to know you weren't alone in this journey," she told the outlet.

The school's statistic is impressive considering that twins occur in around just 3% of all births, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Liam and Emma Heaney have been in middle and high school classes together.

Liam and Emma Heaney have been in

middle and high school classes together. Courtesy

Some of its twins have even been in some of the same classes, like Liam and Emma Heaney.

"We don't really talk in class," Emma told the outlet.

"Because we talk so much out of class," added Liam.

Chloe and Aidan Manzo, will even be going to the same college, the University of Florida.

Sydney Monka said her twin Benjamin is also her "personal math tutor."

Having her twin Ben by her side helps her both emotionally and academically, senior Sydney Monka told Today.

"It means knowing I never have to enter anything alone and I always have a personal math tutor."



# Vodafone, Three plot TV service following £15bn mega-merger

By **Fatimah Idera**



**V**odafone and Three are exploring plans to launch a TV service following their £15bn mega-merger.

The mobile providers have held initial discussions about rolling out a subscription TV service as they prepare to mount a fresh challenge to BT.

The proposed move into TV would underscore efforts by the newly merged company to establish a stronger foothold in the broadband market.

Telecom companies often bundle TV services with their internet connections as a way of enticing more customers onto their networks. BT-owned EE and Virgin Media already offer similar pay-TV bundles.

While talks are believed to be at an early stage, the mooted service would likely offer live TV as well as access to third-party streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime.

Recall that Vodafone and Three in

December secured regulatory approval for a tie-up that will create the UK's largest mobile provider with around 27m customers and reduce the number of network operators from four to three.

Bosses have long argued that the deal, which is expected to complete in the first half of this year, was necessary to give them the scale to upgrade sluggish 5G connections and challenge rivals EE and Virgin Media O2.

But discussions over a TV service highlight the companies' focus on broadband, as the rollout of full-fibre connections continues at pace.

Vodafone has been placing a greater emphasis on its broadband offering in recent years.

While the company does not operate its own infrastructure, it has signed wholesale deals with both BT's Openreach and challenger CityFibre, which insiders argue give it the broadest offering to consumers of any UK telecoms company.

Narrowing margins in the telecoms industry have prompted many operators to offer multiple services in a strategy known as convergence. This is aimed at increasing loyalty and driving a higher average revenue per customer.

But a growing focus on non-core activities has also proved controversial.

Allison Kirkby, BT's chief executive, is rowing back on plans to sell a range of products and services, including smart fridges and insurance under the EE brand, as she seeks to refocus the telecoms giant on its core offering.

Even after the merger, Vodafone and Three will remain a small player in broadband with a market share of just 6pc.

A Vodafone spokesman said it was too early to comment on the company's plans post-merger. Three was contacted for comment



# The private equity barons gambling with your retirement

By **Fatimah Idera**

Italy is no stranger to financial crises. During the mid-2000s when its economy ground to a halt, some of the country's most prestigious banks were quickly overwhelmed by bad loans.

Tens of billions of euros that had been lent to struggling businesses had to be written off, forcing a string of venerable names to raise emergency capital.

Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena, the world's oldest bank and an institution set up to provide charitable loans to the "poor or miserable", eventually had to be nationalised.

Yet it is private equity-backed life insurer Eurovita that occupies a particularly unique place among the wreckage.

In 2023, the company, at the time under the control of UK-based private equity house Cinven, became the first ever Italian insurer to crash into administration.

The authorities quickly assembled an industry-led rescue deal involving five rival insurers and 25 banks that protected the payouts of thousands of policyholders and around €10bn (£8.7bn) of assets. Cinven declined to comment.

Two years later and the shadow of that dark day still looms large over a sector that has become rich pickings for private equity bosses on the hunt for untapped pools of capital to fund their empire building.

Concerns are mounting over whether aggressive, profit-hungry private equity financiers are suitable custodians of organisations that typically invest over



many decades.

Life insurers sell annuities – a type of insurance policy that provides a guaranteed income stream, typically for retirees – and invest the premiums collected from customers in order to make a return beyond what they pay out to policyholders.

Regulators meanwhile have warned that this gigantic bet could trigger a credit crunch with potentially grave consequences for the financial system.

The industry rejects such concerns. "Private equity firms are long-term investors, with a view to creating value for all stakeholders involved. These firms are highly regulated in the UK by the FCA and subject to various frameworks," a spokesman for the British Venture Capital Association says.

However, economist Eileen Appelbaum, of the Centre for Economic and Policy Research in Washington,

claims that the private equity industry's track record as owners of businesses, as well as their poor fund performance raises serious questions about whether they can be trusted to protect the retirement savings of millions.

She points to a study conducted by the California Polytechnic State University in 2019. Researchers found that one in five private equity-owned companies bought with debt financing go bust within 10 years of being bought – a rate 10 times higher than that of publicly owned companies.

Nevertheless, the buyout industry "has been trying to get its hands on retirement savings for years", Appelbaum, a longstanding critic of private equity, says.

The Bank of England points out that this has happened at the same time as private equity's control of life insurance assets has jumped by more than \$1 trillion from very low levels since the end of the global banking meltdown in 2009.

# Another Green Eagles player, Charles Bassey dies same day as Chukwu

By Dave Oludare Oso



**A**nother member of the historic Green Eagles squad that clinched Nigeria's first-ever Africa Cup of Nations title in 1980, Charles Bassey, is dead.

Making the announcement, the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) said Bassey died on Saturday, April 12, 2025, at the age of 71, following a prolonged illness.

That brings to two the members of the 1980 Green Eagles Cup of African Nations winners who died within a few hours of each other following the death of Christian Chukwu, who was the iconic captain of the victorious side.

The former forward, who hailed from Eket in Akwa Ibom State, died in his hometown just hours after the death of Chukwu in Enugu—marking a double

tragedy for Nigerian football.

Expressing its grief, the NFF said it was “deeply saddened” by the news of Bassey’s passing, paying tribute to his contributions to Nigerian football both as a player and a coach.

NFF General Secretary, Dr Mohammed Sanusi said, “This has been a day of double tragedy, and the NFF and the entire Nigeria football fraternity are deeply saddened by the turn of events. We lost ‘Chairman’ Chukwu earlier in the day; now, we have to mourn Charles Bassey. May God Almighty grant their souls eternal rest.”

Charles Bassey was part of the 22-man Green Eagles squad that famously defeated Algeria 3-0 at the National Stadium in Surulere, Lagos on March 22, 1980, securing Nigeria’s

first AFCON title.

After his playing career, Bassey ventured into coaching, handling various clubs across the country.

His coaching journey included stints with Wikki Tourists of Bauchi, Calabar Rovers, BCC Lions of Gboko, Flash Flamingoes of Benin, and his local team, Mobil Pegasus.

With Bassey’s passing, the number of deceased members from the 1980 AFCON-winning squad has now risen to nine.

Others who have passed on include goalkeepers Best Ogedegbe and Moses Effiong; defenders Christian Chukwu, Okechukwu Isima, and Tunde Bamidele; midfielders Alloysius Atuegbu and Mudashiru Lawal; and striker Martins Eyo.