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# The New Daily Prime

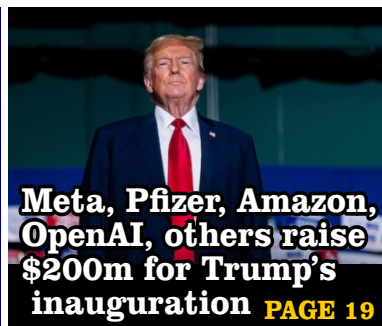


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# We won't let Nigeria become one-party state – Makinde

By **Dave Oludare Oso**



**G**overnor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State has said that Nigerians and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) will not allow Nigeria to slide into a one-party system.

Speaking during a visit by the National Working Committee (NWC) of PDP weekend, the governor said Nigerians want a situation where they will be able to kick out non-performing leaders, adding that this would only be possible if there are alternatives.

The visit was to commiserate with the governor on the death of 35 children during a stampede and to present the new National Secretary of the party, Rt. Hon. SKE Udeh-Okoye, to him.

According to the governor, “The leaders in the party and members of the NWC came to commiserate with us on the unfortunate incident that happened towards the end of last year. Because of that, I cancelled my birthday celebration. Even though belated, they still felt they should come and wish me well at the beginning of a New Year.

“Yes, this New Year has given us the opportunity to talk about happenings within our party, especially the issues surrounding the rule of law.

“There is a court pronouncement on the issue of the National Secretary. My position was clear from day one and I will always follow the rule of law. This is the new National Secretary by court pronouncement. I said without mincing words that we will stay on the side of the law.

“We deliberated a little bit on what are the things ahead of us. 2025 is going to be a pivotal year for us as a party.

“Four years ago, I was the secretary of the Convention Planning Committee that midwived this NWC, and four years after, we have to conduct the exercise again.

“We do know that Nigerians are

waiting for the PDP to get its acts together. You can see how united the members of the NWC of our party are. There is no faction and this will give a headache to some people.

“Well, this is the beginning of a lot of good things to come in terms of party administration and commitment. I heard good things from these leaders; things that I was not even thinking deeply about.

“One of them said to us that there should not be any sacrifice that would be too big to make in the interest of our party and the interest of Nigerians. We are looking forward to not a one-party state.

“Nigerians don't want a one-party state. They want alternatives. They want to be able to kick people out if they are not delivering on their promises.

“So, there is commitment to ensure that Nigeria does not slide into a one-party state.”

Speaking earlier on behalf of the NWC members, the new National Secretary of the PDP, Udeh-Okoye, commiserated with the government and people of Oyo State on the unfortunate stampede that resulted in death.

He said, “We commiserate with Oyo State people through the governor and our wonderful leader.

“We also want to appeal to the family that lost their loved ones to bear it, having it in mind that it was the will of God that they should go through that channel.

“We also want to say that, we in the PDP, we are one. And when one cries, the other one also joins. And Oyo State being a PDP state, we are mourning with the state and we commiserate with

the affected families and Oyo State at large.

“As the new Secretary, I am bringing unity and cohesion on board. I am going to make sure that from this year onward, the party would function effectively well as the leading opposition party in Nigeria.

“And by the grace of God, by 2027, we will take over Nigeria and give Nigerians the good governance they desire.

“I know that Nigerians are waiting for us. Very soon, you will see the majority of them, including members of the ruling party coming back to the PDP.”

The NWC members in attendance include Amb. Taofeek Arapaja, Deputy National Chairman; Hon. Mrs Amina Bryhm, National Women Leader; Kamaldeen Ajibade SAN, National Legal Adviser; Hon. Setonji Koshedo, Deputy National Secretary.

Others are Alhaji Ahmed Yayari, National Treasurer; Obi Okechukwu, National Auditor; Hon. Barr. Debo Ologunagba, National Publicity Secretary; Dr Woyengikuro Daniel, National Financial Secretary; Dr. Bovoa Emmanuel, National Vice Chairman PDP North-East and High Chief Ali Odefa, National Vice Chairman PDP South-East.



# THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

## PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

## PRODUCT COLOUR

**EFFECTIVE FROM  
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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	372,500.00
HALF PAGE	213,000.00
QUARTER PAGE	106,500.00
14X2	118,000.00
10X6	261,585.50
10X5	255,238.00
10X4	206,890.50
10X3	179,608.00
9X6	254,977.00
9X5	225,738.00
9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
5X2	42,916.50
4X4	60,166.50
4X3	36,499.50
4X2	29,333.50
3X3	28,000.00
3X2	17,400.00
2X2	13,000.00
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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	329,868.50
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14X2	109,500.00
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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
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5X4	61,500.00
5X3	57,819.00
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### POLITICAL BLACK & WHITE

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2X1	5,588.50
1X1	2,795.50

### PUBLIC NOTICE BLACK & WHITE

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10X4	103,963.00
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9X5	168,191.50
9X4	N/A
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5X2	22,841.00
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4X3	N/A
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2X1	5,439.50
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5X6 FRONT PAGE	3,350,000.00
10X6 FRONT PAGE	8,250,000.00
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EARPIECE INSIDE PAGE(1.5X2)	117,875.00
EARPIECE BACK PAGE	236,796.50
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**CONTACT US**  
Correspondent Address:  
Real Group Plaza, No.1 Junaid Dosumu  
Street, CBD, Alausa, Ikeja, Lagos  
Call the Editor on: 07025014298,09014323792

**E-mail Address:**  
info@newdailyprime.news  
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# 2027: Allow people choose their leaders, Kwankwaso tells Northern leaders

By Dave Oludare Oso

The presidential candidate of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) in the 2023 general elections, Senator Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso, has expressed displeasure at the way some few Northerners who have declared themselves as the "leaders of the North" were interfering in the selection of candidates, especially in the presidential election.

In an interview with BBC Hausa, the former governor of Kano State said it was wrong for such people to claim they represent the region.

Kwankwaso lamented that their action not altruistic and was causing division in the region while also hindering democracy by entrenching ill-qualified leaders.

The NNPP leader said events that unfolded in the previous elections should make the leaders refrain from anything related to the selection of candidates and allow the people to choose who they really want to be president.

He said, "This oppressive thing they are doing is causing discord in the community. Whatever you do, do it based on the truth. It should not be said that the elders, some of them are our parents and some of them are brothers, especially in this area, here in the north and west, they shouldn't show favouritism in bringing out candidates.

"Many of them come to spread lies,



gather people, and tell them that the North has agreed on its candidates, and all these people are not more than two or three, but you see a man going and saying lies, instead of going to Port Harcourt or going to Abuja to go and promote us, who are their children, but then they go and show favouritism."

He recalled that during the 2019 election, in which seven candidates came from the Northwest, "Even if you are a former governor, you are there; if you are a former minister, you are there, whether you want to be tall or short, but in the end that's how they went and dumped us and did what they wanted."

The former governor also denied rumours making the rounds that an agreement had been reached between him and the former presidential candidates, Atiku Abubakar of PDP and Peter Obi of LP, that each of them will be

president for a term.

He said he was not aware of such arrangements, even though he learnt that the Atiku group was holding meetings with local leaders, including Mallams, ahead of 2027.

Kwankwaso said, "This issue really hurts me. It is said that the elders are lying; they are saying things that have not been done. I was told that about 45 Mallams were gathered, and they are telling the people. But there is no such thing. I am not at all happy about this thing.

"They were told that I agree that Atiku will serve for four years, I will also serve for four, and Peter Obi will serve for eight years. This pact does not exist; it has not been made."

## Saudi Arabia frees 3 Nigerian women detained for cocaine possession

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

The Authorities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have released three Nigerian women who were arrested and detained for possession of illicit drugs.

Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Kimiebi Ebienfah disclosed the development in a statement on Sunday in Abuja.

Ebienfah said the release followed high-level diplomatic engagement between the Nigerian government and Saudi authorities.

He listed the released Nigerians as Hadiza Abba, Fatima Malah and Fatima Gamboi. They were arrested for alleged possession of substance suspected to be cocaine while on pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia.

The Nigerians were apprehended on March 5, 2024 at Prince Mohammad bin Abdul Azeez International Airport Madinah, Saudi Arabia, and released after spending 10 months in detention.

The statement said, "The arrest of the

three women was a result of the earlier arrest of two Nigerian nationals who were found in possession of 80 capsules of cocaine weighing 900.28 gm and 70 capsules of Cocaine weighing 789.5gm, respectively.

"The women were detained by the Saudi authorities on suspicion of being accomplices and abating the trafficking of the banned substance found on the aforementioned arrested Nigerians.

"The Ministry wishes to recall that the trio's arrest attracted much attention in Saudi Arabia and Nigeria.

"Their successful release was achieved after prolonged diplomatic and legal engagements, which culminated in



their discharge and acquittal, as well as subsequent handover to the Consulate-General of Nigeria in Jeddah.

"The ladies were received by Amb. Muazam Nayaya, Consul-General of Nigeria in Jeddah and currently awaiting relevant immigration processes for their return to Nigeria to reunite with their families."

## Tinubu for John Mahama's inauguration in Ghana on Monday

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

President Bola Tinubu will depart Abuja, Nigeria, on Monday, January 6, for Accra, the capital of the Republic of Ghana, to attend the inauguration of President-elect John Dramani Mahama, which is scheduled to be held the same day.

This was contained in a statement on Sunday by presidential spokesman, Bayo Onanuga.

Mahama, who served as the 12th president of Ghana between 2011 and 2017, was reelected in December 2024. He will succeed President Nana Akuffo-Addo (2017-2025), thereby succeeding his successor.

President Tinubu's trip to Accra is at the invitation of the president-elect, who had visited the Nigerian leader earlier in December.

Mahama and President Tinubu have a longstanding personal relationship, just like Nigeria and Ghana maintain a longstanding bilateral relationship



The incoming Ghanaian leader was in Nigeria shortly after his electoral victory to thank President Tinubu for his personal support and as the region's leader.

President Tinubu, as Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, will join other African leaders at the ceremony.

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu, and other senior government officials will accompany President Tinubu on the trip.

This is the first foreign trip President Tinubu will embark on in 2025.



# Ondo gov declares 3 days of mourning for late SSG

By Friday Omosola



Lucky Aiyedatiwa signing the condolence book (PHOTO CREDIT)

**G**overnor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa of Ondo State has declared three days of mourning and prayers, from today, January 5, to Tuesday, January 7, in honour of the late Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Temitayo Oluwatuyi.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that Oluwatuyi passed away on Saturday while receiving treatment in the hospital after a car accident.

Governor Aiyedatiwa described the late Oluwatuyi as a remarkable public servant who lived a fulfilled life and positively impacted many lives.

The governor made these remarks today during a condolence visit to Oluwatuyi's wife and family members in Akure, alongside

members of the State Executive Council.

Aiyedatiwa

The governor highlighted Oluwatuyi's enduring influence on Ondo State politics and governance, stating that the state's history would be incomplete without acknowledging his contributions.

In a show of compassion, Governor Aiyedatiwa also connected via video call with the deceased's children, who are based abroad.

The governor praised Oluwatuyi as a complete gentleman who conducted both his public and private life with humility and grace.

READ ALSO: Ondo SSG is dead

He prayed for the repose of his soul and assured the family of the government's unwavering support during this challenging time.

In the condolence register, the governor wrote: "Hon. Tayo Oluwatuyi, you came, you lived, you fulfilled your God-given tasks, and you touched lives. Though you left us unexpectedly, God has called you home. May you rest in the bosom of your Creator. Amen."

Ayoade Babalola, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Infrastructure, led a special prayer session for Oluwatuyi's family, the Akure community, and Ondo State at large.

# Lagos socialite-cum drug queen busted by NDLEA

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



**6**1-year-old drug kingpin and Lagos socialite, Alhaja Aishat Feyisara Ajoke Elediye, popularly known as 'Iya Ruka' has been arrested by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA). Announcing the arrest in a statement on Sunday, the agency's Director of Media and Advocacy, Femi Babafemi, disclosed that Alhaja Ajoke, whose identity had remained concealed for years, has long been on the NDLEA's wanted list for allegedly leading a notorious drug cartel operating in the Mushin area of Lagos.

Babafemi said she was arrested in her mansion at Okota, Lagos on New Year's Day.

The NDLEA spokesman revealed that her capture followed the interception of a truckload of illicit drugs transported by one of her staff.

He noted that NDLEA operatives, acting on intelligence, intercepted a white Isuzu truck on January 1, 2025.

The vehicle, driven by 41-year-old Abideen Adio, was found carrying 44 jumbo sacks containing 1,540 kilograms of imported cannabis.

The arrest was finalized when operatives stormed Alhaja Ajoke's residence at 33 Adebayo Oyewole Street, off Ago Palace Way, Okota, leading to her apprehension.

The statement reads, "On the surface, Alhaja Ajoke is a businesswoman who imports fabrics and shoes from China but beneath is a massive illicit drug trade. She is also recognized as the Iyalaje of Blessing Sisters, an influential club of society women in Lagos."

Babafemi further said, "An ex-convict, Sodade Sunday Eniola, who was arrested by operatives of the Tincan Command of NDLEA in June 2024, for drug trafficking, prosecuted and sentenced to four years in prison has been arrested again by officers of the MMIA Strategic Command of the Agency for passport racketeering.

"When he was convicted by a Federal High Court in Lagos on 14th June 2024, the trial judge gave him an option of paying N750,000 fine, which he paid and was let go.

"However, in series of operations in December 2024, NDLEA operatives at the export shed of the Lagos airport

intercepted no fewer than 52 passports of different countries from shipments going to Canada, Russia, and other countries concealed in shoe soles and food items. Further investigations led to the arrest of four members of three syndicates involved in the racket.

"The arrested suspects include: Sodade Sunday Eniola; Ayinde Saheed Awwal; Salaudeen Afeez Ayode; and Sheriff Adebayo Bamigbade. Both the exhibits and the suspects were on Monday 30th December, 2024 handed over to the Zonal Command of the Nigerian Immigration Service in Lagos for further investigation and possible prosecution.

"Not less than 316, 800 bottles of codeine-based syrup were recovered from two containers by NDLEA officers at the Port Harcourt Ports Complex, Onne, Rivers State during a joint examination of the shipments with men of Nigeria Customs and other security agencies on Tuesday, 31st December 2024. The seizure followed credible intelligence processed by the Port Harcourt Port Command of the Agency."



# Gunmen kill Miyetti Allah boss, kidnap wives, daughter

By Dave Oludare Oso

**G**unmen suspected to be terrorists have killed the Acting Chairman of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) in Katsina State, Alhaji Amadu Surajo.

According to reports, the terrorists also abducted the first and second wives of the MACBAN chieftain, along with one of his daughters, who is an undergraduate at one of the public universities in the country.

In the attack, which occurred in the late hours of Saturday night into the wee hours of Sunday morning, the hoodlums attacked Mai Rana village in Kusada Local Government Area, killed three other people, and injured several others.

A source familiar with the incident, however, said the hoodlums later released Surajo's first wife.

Before his death, Surajo was the state Secretary of MACBAN before he was elevated to Acting Chairman.

His current portfolio came about after the National Vice President of MACBAN, who doubled as Chairman of the association in the state, Munnir Lamido, disappeared

mysteriously in June last year.

According to reports, Lamido left his Katsina residence on June 23 and traveled to Kaduna State.

He was said to have informed family members by phone that he had stopped in Zaria to eat at a restaurant.

But his whereabouts became unknown after family and friends tried to reach him some hours later. His vehicle and two phones were later recovered along Maraban Jos, just before entering Kaduna town.

He was declared missing by security operatives a few days later, and his whereabouts have remained unknown ever since.

Following Saturday night's incident, sources said security operatives had been deployed to the community to ensure peace and investigate the incident.

The remains of Surajo and the other deceased persons are expected to be buried later on Sunday morning according to Islamic rites, while the injured have been hospitalized and are receiving treatment.



Though several council areas face security challenges in the state, Kusada Council is not among them.

This has led to speculation from some quarters that the attack was more than just a bandit attack.

Meanwhile, the spokesperson for the police command in the state, ASP Abubakar Aliyu, was yet to respond to inquiries about the incident at the time of the report.

# Two die in Delta fuel tanker explosion

By Dave Oludare Oso

**T**he explosion of a tanker laden with diesel has reportedly left two people dead at Agbor, Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State.

The incident, which occurred on Sunday also destroyed many properties, including vehicles caught in the ensuing inferno.

Though details of what caused the tanker explosion are still sketchy at the time of this report, NEW DAILY PRIME learned that the tanker fell on a vehicle while the driver was trying to avoid hitting the same vehicle.

In a statement to newsmen, the Police

Public Relations Officer of Delta State Police Command, SP Bright E d a f e , confirmed the development, noting that the tanker was laden with diesel, not fuel, as some sections of the media widely reported.

The police spokesperson also confirmed the death of two persons, adding that the state Police Commissioner, CP Olufemi Abaniwonda, has deployed some officers to keep the peace in the area and



prevent breakdown of law.

NEW DAILY PRIME learnt that a man and a woman lost their lives in the tragic incident.



# Seven injured in Rivers as 3-storey building collapses

By Helen Okechukwu

The Rivers State Commissioner for Physical Planning and Urban Development, Hon. Evans Bipi has that a total of seven people sustained severe injuries from a collapsed three-storey building at Aboga along Igwuruta-Etche road in Ikwerre.

In a statement Bipi shared today through his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Mr. Emeka Idika, he noted that the building under construction collapsed on Saturday.

The Commissioner attributed the collapse of the building to substandard materials, acknowledging that no life was lost as emergency teams were on the ground to rescue those who were affected.

He further stated, “Specifically, the use of 12mm rods for decking a building is a clear violation of construction standards. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident, as similar cases of building collapses in the state have been linked to the same cause—the use of



inferior materials.”

He added that all the rescued victims have been taken to a hospital for immediate medical care.

He expressed sadness that the latest building collapse makes it the fourth case since his assumption of duties as a commissioner.

e since his assumption as

Commissioner for Physical Planning and Urban Development, he expressed sadness.

Call To Action

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# Hajara Egbunu becomes first female Infantry Corps Army Warrant Officer

By Helen Okechukwu

In a landmark moment for the Nigerian Army, Hajara Egbunu has made history as the first female soldier from the Infantry Corps to achieve the rank of Army Warrant Officer.

A statement shared on their social media platform today, noted that the historic promotion ceremony took place on Friday, January 3, 2025, at the Command Conference Room in Abuja.

This achievement underscored the growing recognition of women’s contributions within the military.

During the ceremony, Lieutenant Maureen Ogbuka, Acting Assistant Director of Army Public Relations for the Women Command, shared Brigadier General Mathias

Amatso’s remarks.

Read Also: Nigerian Army Chief laments inadequate security personnel

He praised Egbunu’s exceptional commitment, discipline, and professionalism, noting that her promotion reflects her dedication and service.

He further encouraged her to continue inspiring junior personnel and upholding the values of the Nigerian Army.

In response, Egbunu expressed her gratitude to the Chief of Army Staff,



Lt.Gen.OO Oluyede, for fostering an environment that supports career progression.

She also thanked Brig. Gen. Amatso for his mentorship, which she credited for her achievements as the Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) of the Command.

# Police arrest 17 suspects for murder in Ebonyi, rescue kidnap victims

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



**P**olice operatives attached to the Ebonyi State Command have arrested 17 suspects in Enohia Itim village, Afikpo LGA, for the murder of one Uromchi Okorocho.

Disclosing the development in a statement on Sunday, the Force Public Relation Officer (FPRO), ACP Muiwa Adejobi, said some youths had accused the deceased of being involved in the killing of several individuals through alleged witchcraft and spiritual means.

The PPRO said, “The suspects had mobilised and apprehended the deceased, but instead of handing him over to legal authorities and committing to the rule of law, decided to take the law into their hands, becoming judge, jury, and executioner.

”The police operatives of the Uwana Division mobilized tactical teams to the scene on a rescue mission, but the angry mob had already killed and burned Mr Okorocho before the arrival of the police team.

”Inspector-General of Police, IGP

Kayode Egbetokun condemned the act of jungle justice in totality. Citizens are once again urged to refrain from taking the law into their hands and to report any suspected criminal activities to the nearest police division or formation for necessary action.

“The efforts of the police are constant reaffirmations of their dedication to bringing to book perpetrators of heinous acts of crime in our societies. The IGP once again reiterates the unwavering commitment of the Force to public safety and justice for victims of violent crimes.

”Citizens are encouraged to engage with security agencies, providing any information that may assist in the ultimate goal of creating a utopian society for all.

“The Nigeria Police Force remains ever committed to ensuring a safe environment for everyone”, the statement added.

In a related development, operatives of the Imo State Police Command have rescued four victims of kidnapping in the Umuokanne area of Ohaji Local Government Area (LGA) of the state.

n a statement, Force FPRO, Muiwa Adejobi, said the operation was carried out yesterday after the operatives received a distress call reporting the abduction of four persons in Umuokanne, Ohaji LGA, Imo State.

He added that the police operatives swiftly swung into action, locating the criminal hideout and engaging the kidnapers in a fierce gun duel, during which two of the kidnapers were killed.

He said the success of the operation led to the rescue of the four victims and the recovery of one AK-47 rifle, one AK-47 magazine, and 21 rounds of live 7.62mm ammunition.

The police spokesman said, “The Force reaffirms its resolute devotion to combating heinous crimes such as this and assures members of the public that efforts to rid our society of criminal elements will continue relentlessly, ensuring the safety and security of all residents.”



# Tinubu discloses details of meeting with Oba of Lagos

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

President Bola Tinubu, who paid an official visit to the Oba of Lagos, His Majesty, Oba Rilwan Akiolu, at the Iga Idunganran Palace on Friday, has disclosed details of the meeting.

The president, in a statement shared on his X handle on Saturday, praised traditional institutions and their leaders, emphasizing their crucial role in shaping society.

President Tinubu wrote, "Today, I had the honour of visiting His Majesty, Oba Rilwan Akiolu of Lagos, at the historic Iga Idunganran Palace, a site rich in culture and tradition. During our meeting, we had meaningful discussions about the role of traditional institutions in governance and development.

"We also explored how these institutions can contribute to building a cohesive society that promotes prosperity for all. Thank you,



Kabiyesi, for this important and enlightening conversation."

Tinubu also reiterated his mission to improve the lives of Nigerians. After Jummat prayers on Lagos Island, he expressed gratitude to supporters who welcomed him warmly.

In a tweet, he stated, "People are at the heart of our mission. Thank you, Lagos Island, for the warm and rapturous welcome this afternoon. Your support strengthens my resolve to create a

brighter future for a Nigeria that works for everyone—one we can all proudly call our country. Together, let us work and pray for a better nation."

In his New Year address, Tinubu promised a better 2025, pledging policies that would enhance food production, promote local manufacturing, and reduce the high cost of living. He emphasized his administration's goal to bring

# NDLEA nabs Nollywood filmmaker for drug offences

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has arrested a US-trained Hollywood and Nollywood filmmaker, Emeka Emmanuel Mbadiwe for drug offences.

According to a statement by NDLEA's Director of Media and Advocacy, Femi Babafemi, on Sunday, operatives arrested Mbadiwe, who is also motivational speaker in a hotel in Lekki, Lagos on December 27, 2024.

This, the spokesman said, followed the arrest of Mbadiwe's partner, Uzoekwe Ugochukwu James, earlier same day at a warehouse in Ajao Estate, Ikeja, where he was sent by Mbadiwe to collect a shipment of 33 parcels of Loud, a strong strain of cannabis.

James was allegedly caught while retrieving the parcels of Loud, weighing 17.30 kilogrammes after the shipment had arrived at Murtala

M u h a m m e d International Airport (MMIA) from the United States on December 24, 2024.

The NDLEA spokesman said the drugs arrived the country on a Delta Airline flight, concealed in wooden boxes.

He said NDLEA also arrested Khadijat Abdulraheem, 24, and Ayomide Morakinyo, 20, for producing and distributing drug-laced cupcakes in Ilorin, Kwara State on December 29, 2024.

Babafemi said authorities recovered 42 drugged cupcakes during a raid on their residence.

The statement reads, "In Kwara State, a fresh graduate, Khadijat Abdulraheem, 24, and a 20-year-old student of the University of Ilorin, Ayomide



Morakinyo were on Sunday 29th December 2024 arrested by NDLEA operatives at Tanke University of Ilorin road, Oke Odo, Ilorin based on credible intelligence that they were producing and selling drug-laced cupcakes to students in the community.

"When their apartment was searched, 42 pieces of drugged cakes were recovered from them."

# Abuja mother who abandoned day-old baby'll be prosecuted – Police

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



The Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Police Command has detained a woman, Khadija Ali for allegedly abandoning her one-day-old baby along a bush path in Abuja.

The Police Public Relations Officer in the FCT, Josephine Adeh, said this in a statement on Sunday in Abuja.

She said the abandoned one-day-old baby was recovered and rescued along a bush path near Crush Rock, behind an uncompleted Red Bricks Market in Mpape area.

The PPRO stated that Ali would be charged to court for allegedly violating Sections 14 and 16 of the Child Rights Act, 2003

Explaining further, the police spokesperson said the baby was discovered at about 10am on January 3, 2025 after police operatives from the Mpape Division's Juvenile and Women Care Section responded to a distress call.

Adeh stated that the infant, wrapped in a cloth, was rescued and taken to the Mpape Primary Health Care Centre for medical evaluation.

She added that, following an examination, medical personnel confirmed the child was in stable condition.

The statement partly read, "On 3 January 2025, at about 10:00 a.m., police operatives from Mpape Division's Juvenile and Women Care Section responded to a distress call and found the baby wrapped in a cloth. The child was promptly rescued and taken to Mpape Primary Health Care Centre, where medical evaluation confirmed the baby is in stable condition."

Adeh disclosed that acting on a tip-off from concerned residents, police apprehended Khadija Ali, who confessed to abandoning her baby.

"Following a tip-off from the community, the baby's mother, Khadija Ali, was arrested. During interrogation, she confessed to abandoning the baby, citing her inability to care for the child

following her husband's abandonment," Adeh said.

Condemning the incident, Adeh described it as a grave violation of the rights of the child.

She added that Ali would be charged to court for allegedly violating Sections 14 and 16 of the Child Rights Act, 2003.

"The FCT Police Command vehemently condemns this act of child abandonment and reassures the public of its commitment to protecting the most vulnerable members of society.

"The rescued baby will be handed over to the Department of Social Welfare for proper care, while the mother will face prosecution according to the provisions of Sections 14 and 16 of the Child Rights Act, 2003, upon the conclusion of investigations," the statement added.



# SERAP wants NNPC to account for missing N825bn, \$2.5bn refinery funds

By Friday Omosola



The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has called on the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC) and its Group Chief Executive Officer, Mele Kyari, to account for an alleged missing N825 billion and \$2.5 billion allocated for refinery rehabilitation and other oil revenues.

The funds, highlighted in the 2021 annual report by the Auditor-General of the Federation, were reportedly unaccounted for, raising concerns about transparency and possible corruption.

SERAP, in a letter dated January 4, 2025, and signed by its Deputy Director Kolawole Oluwadare, urged the NNPC to recover the funds and hand over suspects to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC).

The organisation stated that the auditor general's report highlights significant financial discrepancies, including N82.9 billion meant for refinery rehabilitation and repairs, which was deducted from crude oil and gas sales but remains unaccounted for.

Additionally, SERAP noted that N343.6 billion from domestic crude sales was allegedly diverted under the guise of pipeline maintenance, while N204.8 billion in unjustified oil royalty deductions due to the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) was reportedly missing.

Furthermore, the organisation stated

that N28.6 billion in outstanding bridging allowances from NNPC retail remains unpaid, and \$2.26 billion alongside N48 billion in outstanding oil royalties from oil companies remain uncollected.

The report also unveiled numerous other financial irregularities, including unaccounted debts, miscellaneous income, and unjustified payments to companies, which may have contributed to funding difficulties for the 2021 budget.

SERAP commended Kyari for his recent invitation to former President Olusegun Obasanjo to tour Nigeria's refineries, including those in Port Harcourt and Warri, but urged him to formalize the invitation and include the EFCC and ICPC to ensure transparency in refinery operations and spending.

"The invitation to Obasanjo is not disrespectful but rather consistent with constitutional and international anti-corruption obligations," SERAP said, urging Kyari to embrace this opportunity to rebuild public trust.

SERAP warned that failure to take corrective action within seven days would result in legal action to compel compliance in the public interest.

"These allegations, if true, constitute a grave violation of public trust and undermine Nigeria's economic development," SERAP noted.

The group also called on NNPC to ensure that oil revenues were remitted fully to the Federation Account without unauthorized deductions.

It also urged the organization to recover and account for all missing funds, prioritize local refineries, and implement digital tracking systems to monitor petroleum products and prevent smuggling.

The alleged missing funds have far-reaching implications, contributing to Nigeria's reliance on imported petroleum products, limited refining capacity, and the economic burden on citizens, who continue to face high energy costs post-subsidy removal.

SERAP emphasised that transparency and accountability in public finance management are essential for Nigeria's economic stability and growth.

# FG commission 20-bed PHC in Lagos, Plans for expansion

By Helen Okechukwu

The Federal Government (FG) under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) initiative led by Her Excellency Princess Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire has inaugurated 20-bed Primary Healthcare Centre in Oreta Community of Igbogbo/Baiyeku LCDA, Lagos State.

This initiative aims to improve access to essential healthcare services in the community.

In a publication shared on Sunday, it was learnt that the inauguration ceremony was held on Saturday.

Speaking at the event, Orelope-Adefulire, the Senior Special Assistant (SSA) expressed delight while underscoring the importance of the healthcare development for residents especially for mothers and children.

The SSA to President Bola Tinubu said, "This healthcare centre is a testament to our commitment to

improving the health and well-being of our citizens."

Read Also: We'll improve healthcare services nationwide – NPHCDA

The centre, equipped with essential facilities including a maternity unit, consultation rooms, and a pharmacy, is set to cater to the healthcare needs of over 51 Community Development Associations (CDAs).

During the commissioning, Orelope-Adefulire revealed plans to expand the facility with additional units for immunization, antenatal, gynecology, and postnatal care, alongside a Doctors' Quarters, security house, and reinforced fencing for enhanced safety.

She reassured the community that government efforts would yield



noticeable improvements in 2025, urging patience and support for ongoing reforms.

She also commended the efforts of Bldr. Olusesan Daini, Executive Chairman of Igbogbo/Baiyeku LCDA, describing him as an invaluable leader in the region.

Daini expressed his appreciation for the federal government's commitment, highlighting the centre's potential to transform local healthcare access.

# US Surgeon General links alcohol consumption to greater cancer risk

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Dr. Vivek Murthy, the United States Surgeon General, has issued a warning about the link between alcohol consumption and cancer risk.

In a new Surgeon General's Advisory released on Friday, Dr. Murthy emphasised the dangers of alcohol use, describing it as a significant, preventable cause of cancer in the United States.

"This advisory highlights alcohol use as a leading preventable cause of cancer in the United States, contributing to nearly 100,000 cancer cases and about 20,000 cancer deaths each year," the advisory states. "The more alcohol consumed, the greater the risk of cancer."

The advisory added that even minimal alcohol consumption can elevate cancer risk for certain types. "For certain cancers, like breast,



mouth, and throat cancers, evidence shows that this risk may start to increase around one or fewer drinks per day."

A Surgeon General's Advisory "is a public statement that calls the American people's attention to an urgent public health issue and provides recommendations for how it should be addressed. Advisories are reserved for

significant public health challenges that require the nation's immediate awareness and action."

Previous advisories have addressed pressing concerns such as youth mental health, health misinformation, addiction and substance misuse, and tobacco.



## Nathaniel Bassey for Trump's inaugural prayer breakfast **By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

**R**enowned gospel singer and pastor, Nathaniel Bassey, has been invited to minister at the Presidential Inaugural Prayer Breakfast of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump on January 20 in Washington, D.C.

According to NAN, the Akwa Ibom-born cleric disclosed this on his Instagram page, sharing a poster of the event.

He wrote: "Let's raise a sound in America. See you on January 20, 2025."

The U.S. prayer breakfast is a non-political and faith-based event that emphasises prayer and worship as a spiritual support for the U.S. government and presidency.

The event is held once in four years



preceding every new administration, and this edition is scheduled to be held ahead of Trump and Vice President-elect JD Vance's swearing-in ceremony.

The prayer breakfast will be hosted by Reverend Merrie Turner at the prestigious Waldorf Astoria Presidential Ballroom, featuring a distinguished lineup of speakers, including Dr Alveda

King and Pastor Mario Bramnick. Bassey, an acclaimed trumpeter and convener of the Hallelujah Challenge, an online Christian worship movement, is known for his hit songs, including "Imela", "Onise Iyanu", and "Olowogbobo."

Share

## I don't know man gifted money by Burna Boy – Cubana Chief Priest **By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

**P**opular socialite Pascal Okechukwu, widely known as Cubana Chief Priest, has denied being related to Bethel Okechukwu, a phone repairer who recently gained attention after being promised money by Grammy award-winning Afrobeats star, Damini Ogulu, AKA Burna Boy.

Cubana Chief Priest, in his Instagram story on Sunday, clarified that the man in the viral video, who was alleged to be his brother, has no ties whatsoever to him.

The Grammy award winner had pledged and reportedly given \$30,000 to Bethel, sparking widespread interest and speculation about the socialite's connection to the young man.

However, Cubana wrote, "Alleged brother! Skit makers f\*\*kin oppressors. Dem don kneel am down, you go still bend am down because



the pain must reach everybody, but my own be say no alert oh no cash, oh I wan just dey sure say my village boy collect for real. Na still my glorious glory. Make una show workings; na musician you fit even give am verse."

The popular nightclub owner further emphasized that he has only three biological siblings, one brother and two

sisters, who are all self-sufficient and do not rely on him for financial support.

NEW DAILY PRIME reported that Burna Boy and Cubana have been exchanging brickbats since Saturday, sparking widespread attention online.

# Denzel Washington admits he 'got bitter' after losing Oscar to Kevin Spacey

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

**D**enzel Washington reached for the bottle after losing out on the Academy Award for Best Actor to Kevin Spacey in 2000. The "Gladiator II" star, 69, who had already won an Oscar in 1989, received his fourth nomination for his role as Rubin Carter in the 1999 film "The Hurricane."

But in addition to Spacey — who was nominated for "American Beauty" — Washington was up against Russell Crowe for "The Insider," Richard Farnsworth for "The Straight Story" and Sean Penn for "Sweet and Lowdown."

Spacey ultimately emerged victorious and earned his second Academy Award.

"At the Oscars, they called Kevin Spacey's name for 'American Beauty,'" Washington told Esquire Magazine.

"I have a memory of turning around and looking at him, and nobody was standing but the people around him. And everyone else was looking at me."



"Not that it was this way. Maybe that's the way I perceived it. Maybe I felt like everybody was looking at me. Because why would everybody be looking at me? Thinking about it now, I don't think they were," he added.

Washington said he "went home and drank that night."

"I had to," he said. "I don't want to sound like, 'Oh, he won my Oscar,' or anything like that. It wasn't like that."

"And you know, there was talk in the town about what was going on over there on that side of the street, and that's between him and God. I ain't got nothing to do with that. I pray for him. That's between him and his maker," he added.

Washington, who has received a total of 10 Oscar nominations in his career so far, has won a total of two Academy Awards.

After winning the Oscar for best supporting actor for 1990's "Glory," Washington went on to pick up his second gong in 2002 for "Training Day."

"I went through a time then when [my wife] Pauletta would watch all the Oscar movies — I told her, I don't care about that. Hey, 'They don't care about me? I don't care,'" he said.

"You vote. You watch them. I

ain't watching that. I gave up. I got bitter. My pity party. So I'll tell you, for about 15 years, from 1999 to 2014 when I put the beverage down, I was bitter."

The Academy Award for Best Actor ultimately went to Spacey. AFP via Getty Images

Elsewhere in the interview, the actor opened up about his past drug and alcohol use, admitting he's "done a lot of damage" to his body.

Washington, who has been sober for almost 10 years, said his unhealthy habits started with wine.

"Wine is very tricky. It's very slow. It ain't like, boom, all of a sudden," he told the outlet. "I never got strung out on heroin. Never got strung out on coke. Never got strung out on hard drugs. I shot dope just like they shot dope, but I never got strung out."

"And I never got strung out on liquor. I had this ideal idea of wine tastings and all that — which is what it was at first. And that's a very subtle thing. I mean, I drank the best."

Washington said he often splurged thousands of dollars of premium wine bottles that he stashed in his wine cellar at home.





# Heavy snow unleashes chaos across the UK

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

The UK is facing major disruptions due to heavy snow and freezing rain, snowfall of up to 40cm has caused road closures, rail disruptions

The UK is reeling from severe weather as heavy snow, freezing rain, and sub-zero temperatures disrupt travel, power supplies, and daily life. The Met Office has issued amber weather warnings for large parts of England and Wales, while yellow warnings for snow, ice, and rain extend across much of the country. The extreme weather has created hazardous conditions on roads, disrupted rail services, and temporarily shut down major airports.

Heavy snowfall overnight in Wales and northern England has left roads impassable and rail services disrupted. Up to 40cm of snow has been recorded in higher areas such as the southern Pennines, with rural communities at risk of being completely cut off. National Highways warned of treacherous driving conditions with up to 25cm of snow on some northern roads, and black ice adding to the danger. Rail services in northern England were severely impacted, with the line between Leeds and Halifax via Dewsbury closed in both directions. Northern routes are expected to face delays well into Monday.

Airports have also been hit hard. Manchester, Liverpool John Lennon, and Leeds Bradford airports closed their runways early Sunday morning due to heavy snow. Manchester Airport resumed limited operations mid-morning, while Liverpool reopened shortly after 10 a.m. Some flights were rerouted, including a plane from Toronto to Manchester, which had to divert to Paris before eventually reaching Manchester. Passengers across the country were urged to check with



airlines for the latest updates.

The National Grid reported power outages affecting thousands of homes in areas including the Midlands, south Wales, southwest England, and Cornwall. Efforts to restore power are ongoing, with utility companies assuring customers that teams are working around the clock to address the outages. In Devon, flood warnings were issued for the River Taw and River Torridge, with the Environment Agency warning residents to prepare for potential flooding as the heavy snow transitions into rain in some southern areas.

The Met Office's amber warnings predict freezing rain and rapid thawing in southern regions, creating additional hazards. Yellow warnings for snow and ice cover Northern Ireland, Scotland, and remaining parts of England and Wales. These warnings are expected to remain in place through Monday, as frosty conditions and icy patches persist into the early part of the week. The UK Health Security Agency has issued cold weather health alerts, warning of an increased risk to vulnerable populations. Emergency measures have been introduced in London and southern England to provide additional shelter for rough sleepers. The severe weather has disrupted major events, including Sunday's

football fixture between Liverpool FC and Manchester United at Anfield. While the match is set to go ahead following a safety meeting, officials cautioned fans to exercise care while traveling. Councils and local authorities across the UK are urging residents to prepare for ongoing disruptions and to avoid unnecessary travel. With more freezing rain forecast, conditions are expected to remain hazardous in many areas.

The Met Office predicts that freezing rain will shift northward, with milder conditions expected in southern regions by Monday. Frost and icy patches will persist, but Monday and Tuesday may bring drier weather with sunny spells and scattered wintry showers. However, temperatures will remain below average, prolonging the challenges caused by the current weather. As the nation grapples with widespread travel delays, power cuts, and health risks, authorities are urging the public to stay informed, take precautions, and prioritize safety during these extreme weather conditions.

# Democrats object to Trump's expected pardons of Jan. 6 defendants

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



**D**emocratic Rep. Jamie Raskin on Saturday urged Americans to demand President-elect Donald Trump justify each Jan. 6 defendant pardon if he issues them on his “first day” in office, as promised.

The Maryland congressman, who sat on the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the U.S. Capitol, said it would be an “extraordinary event in the history of the republic to have a president pardon more than 1,000 criminal convicts who were in jail for having engaged in a violent insurrection incited by that very president.”

“And if it is actually going to happen, people should demand a very specific accounting of how there is contrition and repentance on part of each of the people being pardoned,” said Raskin, who will be the top Democrat this Congress on the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability.

Raskin spoke alongside other panelists for a virtual event hosted by the State Democracy Defenders Action, a nonpartisan advocacy group that describes its mission as fighting

against “election sabotage and autocracy.”

Trump promised on the campaign trail to pardon those who attacked the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, in a violent effort to stop Congress from certifying Joe Biden’s 2020 presidential election victory.

Trump has repeatedly characterized the rioters as “patriots,” “warriors” and “hostages.”

The president-elect, who will be sworn into office on Jan. 20, said during a December interview on NBC News’ “Meet the Press with Kristen Welker” that he will act “very quickly” to pardon the defendants on day one — though he indicated he might make exceptions “if somebody was radical, crazy.”

More than 140 police officers were assaulted during the attack, and the rioters caused roughly \$2.8 million in damage to the Capitol.

The U.S. Department of Justice has charged approximately 1,572 people in connection with the attack, including charging 171 defendants for using a deadly or dangerous weapon to inflict serious bodily harm on a law enforcement officer.

Raskin highlighted the case of a 56-year-old New York man who was sentenced to

10 years in prison for assaulting an officer during the riot.

Thomas Webster, a former Marine and police officer, tackled and choked a Washington Metropolitan Police Department officer while other rioters kicked him.

“That’s just one example,” Raskin said. “The press has gotten to know several police officers who’ve been outspoken about the outrageous, medieval-style violence that was trained on them.”

According to the latest Justice Department figures, approximately 996 defendants have pleaded guilty — 321 to felony charges and 675 to misdemeanors.

About 215 defendants have been found guilty at contested trials in federal court, including 10 who were convicted of seditious conspiracy.



# Meta, Pfizer, Amazon, OpenAI, others raise \$200m for Trump's inauguration

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

**U**S President-elect Donald Trump's allies have successfully raised over \$200 million to fund a range of initiatives, including his inauguration, political operation, and eventual presidential library, The New York Times reported.

This significant sum underscores the ongoing efforts by donors and corporate interests to strengthen their relationships with Trump ahead of a potential second term, the news report stated.

The fundraising blitz has garnered substantial contributions from some of the biggest names in business, including Pfizer, OpenAI, Amazon, Meta, and several cryptocurrency firms.

The \$150 million already raised for the inauguration alone, with more expected, will surpass the \$107 million collected for Trump's 2017 inauguration, according to individuals, who spoke to The New York Times under anonymity.

This record-breaking amount reflects a concerted push from industry leaders eager to align themselves with Trump's political agenda and avoid the backlash some faced following the violent Capitol attack by his supporters on January 6, 2021, the news report said.

Despite some earlier criticism, corporate donations to Trump's operation have surged, with Trump boasting of the fundraising success during the holiday season.

Other beneficiaries of the fundraising include Trump's super PAC, Make America Great Again Inc., and its associated nonprofit group, which are expected to support his policy initiatives and candidates aligned with his views.

While Trump's transition and inaugural committees did not respond to inquiries,



David Tamasi, a prominent lobbyist raising funds for the former president, dismissed suggestions, the report said, that corporate donations were an attempt to avoid retribution.

He emphasized that such donations are part of a longstanding political tradition in Washington, with corporations eager to engage more openly after staying on the sidelines during previous cycles.

# Russian journalist killed by Ukraine drone strike

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

**R**ussian state newspaper, Izvestia said on Saturday that one of its freelance reporters has been killed in a drone strike near the Russian-occupied city of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine.

Moscow has accused Ukraine's military of deliberately targeting Alexander Martemyanov. Ukraine has not commented.

Izvestia said a civilian vehicle carrying Martemyanov was struck as it travelled on a highway in a Russian-occupied zone.

Five other media workers were reportedly injured in the same attack.

"The Ukrainian army launched a drone strike on a civilian car carrying Izvestia's freelance correspondent, Alexander Martemyanov," the news outlet reported on its Telegram channel.



"The car was located far from the line of contact."

The vehicle was returning from covering shelling in the Russian-held city of Gorlivka when it was hit, Russia's state, RIA news agency said.

Two RIA journalists were wounded in the attack, the agency added.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova called the incident "deliberate murder."

In a statement, she described it as "another brutal crime in a series of bloody atrocities" carried out by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's government.

The EU blocked Russian outlets – including Izvestia and RIA – in May, accusing them of enabling the "spread and support of the Russian propaganda and war of aggression against Ukraine."

The Committee to Protect Journalists says at least 15 journalists have been killed since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

## Biden awards Clinton, Messi, Magic Johnson, others Presidential Medal of Freedom By Dave Oludare Oso



**O**utgoing US President Joe Biden on Saturday awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom to 19 individuals, bestowing the highest civilian honour in the United States to entertainers, sports stars, politicians, and diplomats.

Prominent among the honourees are; Hillary Clinton, the former first lady, senator and US secretary of state, who unsuccessfully ran against Donald Trump for the presidency in 2016, soccer superstar, Lionel Messi, singer and activist, Bono, basketball legend, Earvin "Magic" Johnson, longtime fashion editor, Anna Wintour, actors Denzel Washington and Michael J. Fox, and fashion designer Ralph Lauren.

The White House said in a statement, "The honorees are great leaders because they are good people who have made extraordinary contributions to their country and the world."

Some of the recipients selected by the 82-year-old Democrat have a more

political profile, such as billionaire financier and left-wing philanthropist, George Soros — a boogeyman of sorts for Republicans.

Soros was honored because he "has supported organizations, and projects across the world that strengthen democracy, human rights, education and social justice," according to a White House statement.

Clinton, meanwhile, "made history many times over decades in public service," including being the first woman nominated by a major party for a US presidential election.

Also honoured in this year's crop are chef Jose Andres, founder of the World Central Kitchen NGO, and primate researcher Jane Goodall, a leading environmentalist voice

Biden also chose to posthumously award a Presidential Medal of Freedom to Robert Francis Kennedy, better known as "Bobby" Kennedy or his initials, "RFK." RFK served as US attorney general while his brother John F. Kennedy was president, and was assassinated in 1968

while campaigning for the Democratic presidential nomination.

"His legacy continues to inspire those committed to justice, equality, and public service," Biden said in a statement.

RFK was also the father of Robert Kennedy Jr., "RFK Jr.", a vaccine skeptic who has been tapped by president-elect Donald Trump to be the next Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Biden's selections for the Medal of Freedom illustrate a desire to leave one final mark before leaving office.





# US plans fresh \$8bn arms sale to Israel

By Dave Oludare Oso

The State Department on Saturday informed Congress of a planned \$8 billion weapons sale to Israel, U.S. officials say, as the American ally presses forward with its war against Hamas in Gaza.

Some of the arms in the package could be sent through current U.S. stocks but the majority would take a year or several years to deliver, according to two U.S. officials Saturday who spoke on condition of anonymity because the notification to Congress hasn't been formally sent.

The sale includes medium-range air-to-air missiles to help Israel defend against airborne threats, 155 mm projectile artillery shells for long-range targeting, Hellfire AGM-114 missiles, 500-pound bombs and more.

The weapons package would add to a record of at least \$17.9 billion in military aid that the U.S. has provided Israel since the Hamas attacks on Oct. 7, 2023, launched the war.

The Biden administration has faced criticism over mounting deaths of Palestinian civilians. There have been demonstrations on college campuses and unsuccessful efforts in Congress by Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., and some Democrats to block sales of offensive weapons to Israel.

The United States paused a shipment of 2,000-pound bombs to Israel in May over concerns about civilian casualties if the bombs were to be used during an assault on the southern Gaza city of Rafah. The Biden administration has demanded that Israel increase humanitarian aid into the enclave.

But in November, citing some limited progress, it declined to limit arms transfers as it threatened to do if the situation did not improve.

In recent days, Israel has been conducting airstrikes in Gaza that have killed dozens of people, adding to the tens of thousands of deaths since the war began more than a year ago.

The Israeli army said Friday that it had struck dozens of Hamas gathering points and command



centers throughout Gaza. Israel's military says it only targets militants and blames Hamas for civilian deaths because its fighters operate in dense residential areas.

The war has caused widespread destruction and displaced about 90% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million, many of them multiple times. Winter has now arrived, and hundreds of thousands are sheltering in tents near the sea.

The informal notice to Congress isn't the preliminary notification gives congressional committees an opportunity to scrutinize the proposed sale, ahead of a formal notification to Congress.

The weapons package includes medium-range air-to-air missiles to defend against aerial threats; Hellfire AGM-114 missiles; 155mm projectile artillery shells for long-range targeting; and 500-pound (226-kilogram) warheads, the official said.

The Biden administration has provided Israel with billions in arms aid since Israeli forces launched a massive attack on Hamas militants in Gaza response to their deadly October 7 surprise attack in southern Israel.

The outgoing US president has repeatedly vowed "ironclad" support for Israel.

But against the backdrop of a rising Palestinian death toll – now over 45,700, according to the Hamas-run health ministry in Gaza – and the increasingly dire conditions facing civilians, the US support has become a sensitive political issue.

Many Arab and Muslim Americans, joined by some progressives, vowed not to vote for Biden in the November presidential election unless he halted the weapons aid to Israel. Students on dozens of US campuses protested the aid.

But the official said Saturday that "the president has made clear Israel has a right to defend its citizens, consistent with international law and international humanitarian law, and to deter aggression from Iran and its proxy organizations. We will continue to provide the capabilities necessary for Israel's defence."

Donald Trump, an outspoken supporter of Israel, said during the US presidential campaign that if elected, he would quickly end the Gaza war, although he did not explain how.

United Nations officials say as many as 70 percent of those killed in the Gaza hostilities have been women or children, and aid agencies have described harrowing conditions facing civilians.

The Biden administration has urged Israel to increase humanitarian aid, but after threatening to curb arms shipments if the aid situation did not improve, it declined in November to do so.

Recent Israeli airstrikes in Gaza have killed several dozen people, according to the Gaza health ministry.

# Escorted deportees from Canada to pay \$12,800 from April

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) has announced that it is set to significantly raise the fees it charges deportees for removal from Canada.

According to a press statement from CBSA on Friday, beginning in April 2025, foreign nationals facing deportation will be required to pay up to \$12,800 for escorted removals and over \$3,800 for unescorted removals, a sharp increase from the current flat fee of \$1,500.

CBSA said the new cost recovery framework is designed to better align with the rising costs associated with deportation and to encourage compliance with removal orders.

According to the statement, deportees will be responsible for their own travel expenses, but in cases where they cannot or will not pay, the CBSA will cover the costs. However, the government will seek to recover these costs if the individual attempts to return to Canada.

The revised fee schedule marks a departure from the previous cost recovery system, which had not been updated since 1993. The new charges are based on the full cost of the removal process, including airfare, interviews, travel documents, and case management.

With the new framework, individuals will be required to pay significantly more, with fees now reaching as high as \$12,800 for those requiring escorted removals.

The CBSA stated, "This change establishes a cost recovery framework that is more in line with the current costs of removals and encourages voluntary compliance with removal orders."

In instances where deportees are unable or unwilling to pay, the CBSA will cover the cost of their removal to ensure they are sent back to their home country in a timely manner. However, the government will recover these costs if the deported individual later attempts to return to Canada.



The costs are recovered by the Government of Canada when an individual who was removed at the government's expense seeks to return to Canada, the CBSA explained.

Public Safety Minister, David J. McGuinty highlighted that the increase in fees is part of a broader plan to improve border security and the immigration system in Canada.

McGuinty said, "This update in cost recovery for the removal of inadmissible foreign nationals builds on our plan to strengthen border security and our immigration system."

"In recent months, we re-imposed a visa requirement on Mexican visitors... and aligned the hours of service between Canada and the U.S. at many ports of entry."

McGuinty also emphasized the importance of the security partnership between Canada and the United States, aiming to ensure safety on both sides of the border.

The CBSA's deportation process begins with an inadmissibility report and a hearing to determine whether a removal order should be issued. Deportees are entitled to due process, and all removal orders are subject to appeal.

On average, the CBSA recovers about \$497,100 annually from individuals who apply to return to Canada after being removed. The new fee structure is designed to more accurately reflect the full cost of deportation, which includes case management, travel arrangements, and securing necessary documents.

The new cost recovery framework aims to align with current operational expenses and improve compliance with removal orders. This change is part of the government's ongoing efforts to strengthen Canada's immigration and border security systems.



# Amorim's Man Utd regain pride at Anfield

By Dave Oludare Oso



**M**anchester United demonstrated the spirit that has been missing under new manager Ruben Amorim to earn a superb point at Premier League leaders Liverpool.

United, attempting to avoid four straight league defeats for the first time since 1979, took a shock lead when Lisandro Martinez powered a finish high past Alisson after 52 minutes.

Liverpool were level seven minutes later when Cody Gakpo scored with a superb angled drive before all United's good work looked to be in vain.

Mohamed Salah equalled Thierry Henry's tally of 175 Premier League goals from the penalty spot with 20 minutes left after handball was awarded against at Matthijs de Ligt following a video assistant referee intervention.

United were not to be denied, however, and Amad Diallo scored another big goal after his winner at Manchester City when he turned home Alejandro Garnacho's cut-back.

Harry Maguire could have won the game for United with almost the final kick but he blazed Joshua Zirkzee's bobbled pass over the bar from 12 yards.

United arrived at Anfield in a Merseyside blizzard – with most fearing they were walking into a Liverpool hurricane.

Instead, United were resilient, determined and only that shocking last-ditch miss by Maguire denied them a win that would have topped even their triumph in the Manchester derby.

United stood up to the challenge presented by a Liverpool side threatening to extend their lead at the top of the Premier League to eight points, a sign of their improvement

shown by the fact they will be disappointed not to claim all three points.

This was easily their best performance under Portuguese manager Amorim, who also deserves credit for stiffening United's midfield with Kobbie Mainoo and Manuel Ugarte, who worked well alongside the promptings of captain Bruno Fernandes.

It looked like they would suffer the agony of defeat when Salah put Liverpool in front but United's response was outstanding, not only getting that equaliser but looking just as likely as the league leaders to snatch a late winner.

United and Amorim have come under heavy and justified criticism in recent weeks, but both manager and players can take huge heart and confidence from this display.

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## Osimhen shines in Galatasaray's 2-1 triumph over Goztepe

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Super Eagles star Victor Osimhen delivered another standout performance, scoring in Galatasaray's 2-1 victory over Goztepe in the Super Lig on Saturday.

The Nigerian striker, in his 12th league appearance for the Turkish giants, opened the scoring in the 10th minute with a clinical penalty, sending the home fans into raptures. Osimhen's tally for the season now stands at an impressive 10 goals and three assists, underscoring his value to the team.

Goztepe responded in the 27th minute through Romulo, briefly silencing the vibrant Galatasaray supporters. However, Yunus Akgün restored the lead in the 61st minute with a brilliant strike,



securing all three points for the league leaders.

The victory cements Galatasaray's position at the top of the Super Lig table with 47 points, maintaining their title charge. Goztepe, meanwhile, remain in fifth place

with 28 points.

Osimhen's form continues to draw praise as he solidifies his reputation as one of the league's top performers this season. Galatasaray will now focus on their next challenge as they aim to extend their dominance in the Turkish top flight.

## Lineker hails Iwobi's stellar season at Fulham

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Former England striker Gary Lineker has heaped praise on Alex Iwobi for his outstanding performances for Fulham this season.

Iwobi, who joined the London club last summer, has quickly established himself as a key player under manager Marco Silva. The Nigeria international has contributed five goals and three assists in 19 Premier League appearances, helping Fulham secure eighth place in the league standings.

Speaking on his podcast, The Rest is Football, Lineker highlighted Iwobi's impact. "Iwobi has had a terrific season. He's been around the Premier League for a while, and his performances have been pivotal for Fulham's success this year," Lineker said.



table.

Iwobi's versatility and creativity have been instrumental in Fulham's strong campaign, and fans are hopeful his form will continue as the Whites aim to push higher up the

Fulham will look to extend their good run of form when they host Ipswich Town at Craven Cottage in their next Premier League match later today.



## Why Messi didn't attend Medal of Freedom Award ceremony

By Dave Oludare Oso

Legendary soccer player, Lionel Messi was conspicuously absent at the Saturday White House ceremony where he was scheduled to receive his Presidential Medal of Freedom.

The eight times Ballo D'Or winner was to receive the recognition, which is America's highest civilian honour, alongside Mrs Hillary Clinton, Billionaire George Soros, ex-Basketball great, Magic Johnson and Hollywood icons, Denzel Washington and Michael J. Fox.

The Inter Miami player was noticeably absent reportedly due to a "scheduling error." Also, no one was sent in his place to collect the award.

A statement issued on Messi's behalf reads: "The White House informed FIFA, which informed the club at the end of

December that Leo was to be awarded this recognition.

"Leo, through the club, sent a letter to the White House saying that he feels deeply honoured and that it is a great privilege to receive this recognition but that due to scheduling conflicts and prior commitments, he will not be able to attend.

"He thanked the gesture and noted that he hopes to have the opportunity to meet with him in the near future."



Messi was recognised for his unprecedented success on the pitch and his charity work.

On being named among the honorees, the White House said of the Argentine: "He supports healthcare and education programmes for children around the world through the Leo Messi Foundation and serves as a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador."

## Osimhen keen on January move to Man United

By Dave Oludare Oso

Super Eagles striker, Victor Osimhen is reportedly eager to secure a transfer to Manchester United during the January transfer window, following interest from the English Premier League giants.

The Nigerian forward, who joined Galatasaray on a loan deal in September, 2024, from Napoli after failed transfer deadline day moves to Chelsea and the Saudi Pro League, could see his situation reassessed in January.

According to reports, Galatasaray could receive around €10 million as compensation if the loan agreement is terminated early.

Sources indicate that Osimhen is determined to join Manchester United,

with preliminary moves already underway to finalise the deal. Napoli is believed to have inserted a €90 million release clause in Osimhen's contract, with €10 million of that earmarked for Galatasaray. However, there are rumours that the clause could drop to €75 million to facilitate the transfer.

This development follows news that new Manchester United manager Ruben Amorim has assured Sporting CP he will not sign Viktor



Gyökeres mid-season.

Osimhen has been in prolific form for Galatasaray, scoring 12 goals and providing five assists in 15 competitive matches this season. The striker celebrated his 26th birthday last month