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Court outlaws Lakurawa, designates sect as terrorist organisation **PAGE 2**

Court outlaws Lakurawa, designates sect as terrorist organisation

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Lakurawa sect has been proscribed.

The Federal High Court, Abuja presided upon by Justice James Omotosho, on Friday, proscribed the Lakurawa sect, classifying it as a terrorist organisation.

The court made the order following an ex-parte application filed by the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Lateef Fagbemi (SAN).

Justice Omotosho, in the ruling, equally proscribed similar groups operating in Nigeria, especially in the North West and North Central regions of the country.

The judgment held, "It is hereby ordered as follows: That an order is hereby made declaring the activities of the Lakurawa Sect and other similar groups In any part of Nigeria, especially in the North West and North Central Regions of Nigeria as acts of terrorism and illegality.

"That an order is hereby made proscribing the existence of the Lakurawa and other similar groups in any part of Nigeria, especially In the North West and North Central Regions of Nigeria either in groups or as Individuals by whatsoever names they are called and publishing same in the Official Gazette and two (2) National Dailies.

"That an order is hereby made proscribing any person or group of persons from participating in any manner whatsoever in any form of activities evolving or concerning the



prosecution of the collective intention or otherwise of the Lakurawa under any other name or platform however called or described.

"That an order is hereby made proscribing ali other groups in Nigeria by whatever name called with similar objectives as the Lakurawa which Include but not limited to banditry, kidnapping for ransom, kidnapping for marriage, mass abduction of school children and other citizens, cattle rustling, enslavement, imprisonment, severe deprivation of physical liberty, torture, rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, other forms of sexual violence, attacks and killings n communities, commuters and wanton destruction of lives and properties in Nigeria,"

The federal government had in the ex-parte application, prayed the court for four orders.

An Assistant Director in the Federal Ministry of Justice, mister David Kaswe, moved the motion that was initially filed on January 14 by the

Director of Public Prosecutions of the Federation (DPPF), Mr Mohammed Abubakar.

In a supporting affidavit that was deposed to by Mr Michael Akawu, a litigation officer in the Department of Public Prosecutions of the Federation (DPPF), the federal government told the court that the Lakurawa sect/group had been involved in acts of terrorism, including cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, hostage taking, attack on top government officials, attack on security personnel, propagation of their ideology to the local communities, encouraging the locals to disregard constituted authorities, within Nigeria.

The federal government maintained that it had reasonable grounds to believe that the Lakurawa sect met the criteria to be proscribed as a terrorist group under the Terrorism (Prevent and Prohibition) Act.

It told the court that it would be in the overall interest of justice, peace and security of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to proscribe the sect.

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Tinubu appoints Ganduje, Afikuyomi, 41 others to head federal agencies

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Bola Tinubu has appointed National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Abdullahi Ganduje as Chairman of the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN).

This was disclosed in a statement released on Friday by Bayo Onanuga, the President's Special Adviser on Information and Strategy.

In addition to Ganduje's appointment, the President named chairpersons for 41 federal organizations, alongside new leadership roles, including a Managing Director for the Nigerian Railway Corporation and a Director-General for the National Board for Technology Incubation (NBTI).

President Tinubu disclosed that board chairpersons are non-executive roles and urged appointees to avoid interfering in the management of the respective organizations.

The appointments take effect immediately.

Complete List of President Tinubu's Appointments for Federal Boards and Agencies

National Youth Service Corps, Ministry of Youth Development – Hon. Hillard Eta (Chairman, Cross River)
 Nigerian Institute of International Affairs – Prof. Bolaji Akinyemi (Chairman, Lagos)
 Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria, Ministry of Aviation – H.E. Abdullahi Ganduje (Chairman, Kano)
 National Sugar Development Council – Sen. Surajudeen Bashiru Ajibola (Chairman, Osun)
 Nigeria Bulk Electricity Trading Company – H.E. Sulaiman Argungu (Chairman, Kebbi)
 National Agency for Great Green Wall –



Sen. Magnus Abe (Chairman, Rivers)
 National Teachers Institute – Barr. Festus Fuanter (Chairman, Plateau)
 National Board for Technology Incubation (NBTI) – Raji Kazeem Kolawole (Director-General, Oyo)
 Nigerian Institute of Educational Planning and Administration – Chief Victor Tombari Giadom (Chairman, Rivers)
 Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria – Comrade Mustapha Salihu (Chairman, Adamawa)
 Industrial Training Fund – Hon. Hamma Adama Ali Kumo (Chairman, Gombe)
 Nigerian Institute of Science Laboratory Technology – Donatus Enyinnah Nwankpa (Chairman, Abia)
 Sheda Science and Technology Complex – Sen. Abubakar Maikafi (Chairman, Bauchi)
 Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria – H.E. Nasiru Gawuna (Chairman, Kano)
 National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion – Sen. Tokunbo Afikuyomi (Chairman, Lagos)
 Nigerian Postal Service – Chief D. J. Kekemeke (Chairman, Ondo)
 National Inland Waterways Authority – Hon. Musa Sarkin Adar (Chairman, Sokoto)
 National Steel Council – Prof. Abdulkarim Kana Abubakar (Chairman, Nasarawa)
 National Environmental Standards and

Regulations Enforcement Agency – Hon. Garba Datti Muhammad (Chairman, Kaduna)
 National Bio-Safety Management Agency – Mu'azu Bawa Rijau (Chairman, Niger)
 Nigerian Building and Road Research Institute – Hon. Durosimi Meseko (Chairman, Kogi)
 Federal Teaching Hospital, Gombe – Hajia Zainab A. Ibrahim (Chairman, Taraba)
 Nigerian Railway Corporation – Dr. Kayode Isiak Opeifa (Managing Director, Lagos)
 Federal Teaching Hospital, Ido-Ekiti – Aare (Hon.) Durotolu Oyebo Bankole (Chairman, Ogun)
 Federal Medical Centre, Abeokuta – Mr. Abdullahi Dayo Israel (Chairman, Lagos)
 Federal Medical Centre, Asaba – Dr. Mrs. Mary Alile Idele (Chairman, Edo)
 Federal Medical Centre, Lokoja – Nze Chidi Duru (OON) (Chairman, Anambra)
 Federal Medical Centre, Owerri – Hon. Emma Eneukwu (Chairman, Enugu)
 Civil Defence, Immigration and Prisons Services Board – Major Gen. Jubril Abdulmalik Rtd (Secretary, Kano)
 Federal Medical Centre, Umuahia – Mr. Uguru Mathew Ofoke (Chairman, Ebonyi)

Retired generals behind illegal mining – Oshiomhole

By Dave Oludare Oso

Chairman of the Senate Committee on Interior, Senator Adams Oshiomhole, has raised the alarm over the involvement of retired military generals and influential elites in the rampant illegal mining activities across Nigeria.

He made the allegation when the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Solid Minerals Development, Senator Sampson Ekong, submitted his 2025 budget report before the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

Oshiomhole, a member of the Appropriations Committee, said the country's efforts to diversify its economy would remain a mirage if the President Bola Tinubu's administration failed to address the issue of illegal mining.

In a scathing indictment, Oshiomhole disclosed that certain retired generals and their foreign collaborators sponsor illegal mining operations, arming miners and using helicopters to extract and export gold and other valuable minerals.

“This issue goes beyond the surface to the root cause. Let me explain: those involved in illegal mining are heavily organized.



They use choppers, procure arms, and operate sophisticated systems,” he said.

“They do this in much the same way as oil bunkering was done in the South-South. They even use apps to coordinate operations, bringing in choppers to cart away gold, smuggling it out of the country, and making billions of U.S. dollars in the process.

“The federal government isn't doing enough to address this. When I was the National Chairman of the APC, I took a letter to the former President, asking him to call in the generals for a briefing.

“I warned that what is happening now was exactly what those generals had foreseen: powerful individuals have weaponized criminal groups.

“These illegal operators deploy armed men to secure mining sites, primarily to protect the Chinese and other foreign nationals they employ for illegal mining. These same weapons are later used for banditry, kidnapping, and other crimes.

“Let's be honest: some retired military officers and high-ranking officials are involved. The truth is, unless we confront this issue head-on, this country can not flourish.

“We must not turn a blind eye just because certain individuals are seen as ‘above the law.

**Continue reading
on next page**

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“We know where illegal mining is happening and who is responsible. We’ve heard complaints about the involvement of certain personalities, yet these individuals operate freely, enriching themselves while our people grow poorer.

“They can afford to buy choppers, land at illegal mining sites, extract gold, and fly it out of the country with ease. Meanwhile, ordinary Nigerians bear the brunt of the consequences, banditry, insecurity, and economic hardship.

“As senators, we must do more than lament. We should demand that the executive deploy the same force used against illegal oil bunkering to tackle illegal mining.

“It doesn’t matter who is involved, a retired general, a public servant, or even a labour leader. Criminals must face justice. The government needs to show Nigerians that it does not condone these activities.

“The solid minerals sector has immense potential. Let us not forget that oil was discovered by accident; what we were originally looking for were solid minerals.

“Now, we’re at a crossroads where we must recommit to developing this sector.

“Through the leadership of the Senate and the National Assembly, we must draw the President’s attention to the urgent need for political will to decisively address these crimes and harness our natural resources for the good of our economy.”

He criticised the Federal Government for applying double standards in addressing illegal mining compared to its crackdown on oil bunkering in the Niger Delta.

“If we can deploy joint military task forces to combat oil bunkering, why are we lenient with illegal miners? It’s time to deploy the same level of force and ruthlessness,” he added.

Oshiomhole emphasised that the economic potential of the solid minerals sector remains untapped due to weak enforcement of regulations.

He claimed the sector could contribute up to 50% of Nigeria’s GDP if properly managed but currently accounts for only 0.05%.

He urged the Federal Government to take decisive action by deploying military task forces to mining areas, targeting not just the miners but also their influential sponsors.

The senator also highlighted the need for increased funding for the Ministry of Solid Minerals Development.

Senator Ekong’s committee has recommended a capital budget of ₦539 billion, up from the ₦9 billion initially proposed.

“The paltry budget allocated to the solid minerals sector shows we are not serious about diversifying our economy. Despite its meagre allocation last year, the ministry generated ₦37 billion in revenue. Imagine what could be achieved with proper funding,” Oshiomhole said.

Oshiomhole’s revelations cast a spotlight on the deep-seated issues plaguing Nigeria’s mining sector. His call for urgent reforms, increased security measures, and adequate funding underscored the critical need to address illegal mining and harness the sector’s full potential for national development.

Shettima returns to Nigeria after WEF 2025 engagements

By Friday Omosola

Vice President Kashim Shettima returned to Nigeria on Friday following his impactful engagements at the 2025 World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland.

In a statement, his spokesperson, Stanley Nkwocha, noted that the Vice President, who represented Nigeria at the prestigious global summit, showcased the country's investment opportunities, championed African economic integration, and held strategic discussions with global leaders and international organizations.

During his time in Davos, Shettima participated in high-level forums that underscored the need to drive investments into Africa's frontier markets.

At one such session titled "Roadmap to Co-create Investment Opportunities for Africa's Frontier Markets", organised by the African Development Bank and WEF, he reiterated Nigeria's readiness to attract capital for sustainable economic growth.

In another forum, the Vice President reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and emphasised the nation's resolve to leverage digital trade as a transformative tool for economic growth, projecting Africa's potential to achieve a \$29 trillion economy by 2050.

In bilateral meetings with global leaders such as Botswana's President Duma Boko and South



African President Cyril Ramaphosa, Shettima discussed strategies to strengthen intra-African relations and foster partnerships for trade and development.

He also engaged with the Director-General of the World Trade Organization, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, and the President of the World Economic Forum, Børge Brende, exploring collaborative solutions to Africa's pressing challenges, including energy security, food crises, and ecological threats.

Highlighting Nigeria's reform agenda under President Bola Tinubu, Shettima detailed initiatives such as subsidy removal, exchange rate alignment, and tax reforms, asserting that these measures position the country on a trajectory of sustained economic growth.

Other notable moments included his role as a panellist in the "Financial Times Global Risks 2025" dialogue, where he emphasized the importance of multilateral

collaboration in addressing global crises.

He further advocated for innovation in education and agriculture as critical tools to empower Nigeria's youth and drive economic progress.

Accompanied by senior government officials, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Yusuf Tuggar; Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister for the Economy, Wale Edun; Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Jumoke Oduwole; and the Executive Secretary of the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission, Aisha Rimi, the Vice President returned to Abuja after the successful conclusion of his engagements in Davos.

Upon his arrival at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in Abuja, Shettima was received by Borno State Governor, Professor Babagana Zulum, alongside other government officials.

FG lists prisoners eligible for presidential pardon

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Relieve seems to be coming the way of some inmates as the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCS) is preparing a list of prisoners eligible for a nationwide presidential pardon.

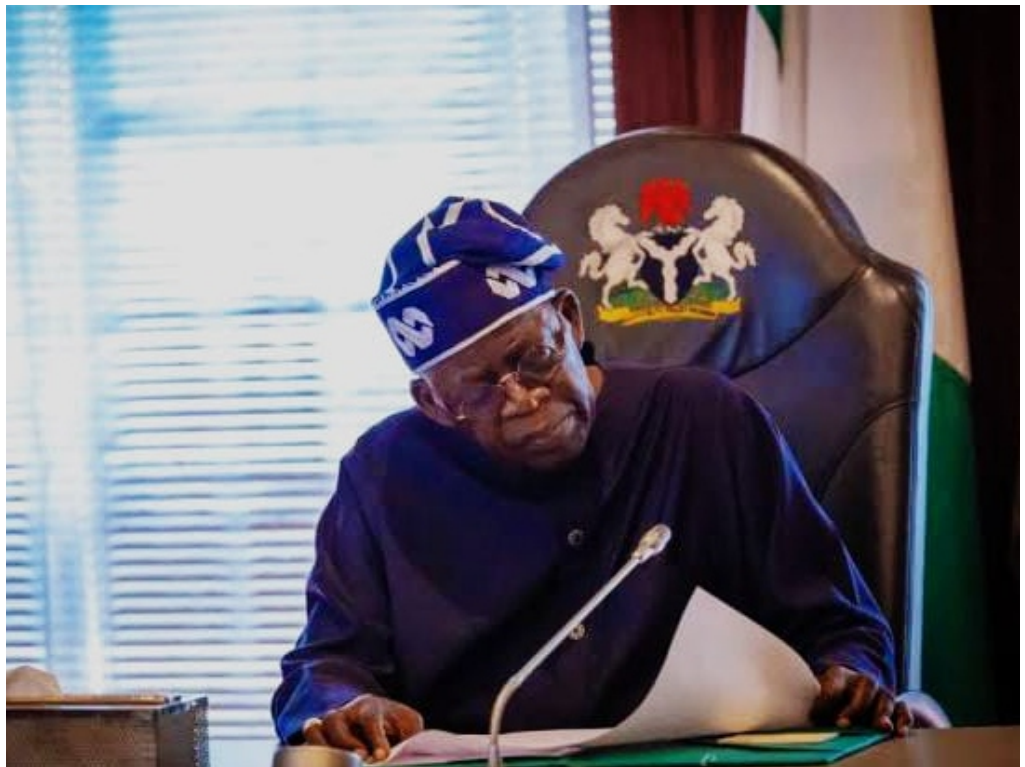
According to reports, this directive, issued by Acting Controller General of Corrections Sylvester Nwakuche, applies to inmates in all state and Federal Capital Territory commands.

Nwakuche assumed office on December 16, 2024, after President Bola Tinubu appointed him following the retirement of Haliru Nababa.

According to a memo dated January 17, 2025, factors such as old age, poor health, and length of time served in prison will determine eligibility for the clemency.

Inmates over 60 years old, terminally ill prisoners, young offenders under 16, and those who have served more than 10 years with good conduct are among those being considered.

Others include awaiting trial prisoners detained for over three years for minor offenses and long-term convicts with less than six



months left to serve.

The memo instructed state controllers to urgently provide the list of qualified inmates.

Only prisoners convicted of federal offences or Nigerians deported and awaiting trial qualify for the pardon.

The memo read, "I am directed to write and request you to as a matter of urgency, furnish the office the Controller-General of Corrections with list of ALL qualified prisoners/Inmates in your Command for Presidential Pardon/Clemency.

"For avoidance of doubt, Inmates other than Nigerian Prisoner-citizens deported to the Country,

must have been convicted or awaiting trial for Federal offences only.

"Note that in determining eligibility, regard shall be had to the following criteria: Old age – (60 years and above); ill-health, likely to terminate in death; young persons, 16 years and below; long term convicts who have served 10 years and above with good record; long awaiting trial persons in custody for 10 years and above; convicts serving 3 years and above and have less than 6 months to serve; awaiting trial persons (ATPs) who have been in custody for 3 years and above for minor offences and ATPs who must have stayed longer than sentence that would have been imposed."

FG adds GSM repairs, makeup, plumbing, 12 others to basic education curriculum

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Federal Government has announced the addition of plumbing, makeup, hairstyling and 12 other new trades (new subjects) to the Basic Education curriculum.

This was contained in a short statement issued on Thursday by the National Orientation Agency (NOA).

According to NOA, the new trades were added to the Basic Education curriculum to boost students' practical skills and employability.

The statement noted that the new subjects will take effect from January 2025 for primary and junior secondary students across the country.

The new subjects include plumbing; tiling and floor works; POP installation; event decoration and management; bakery and confectioneries; hairstyling; makeup; interior design; GSM repairs and satellite/TV antenna installation.

Others are CCTV and intercom installation and maintenance; solar installation and maintenance; garment making; agriculture and processing (including crop production), beekeeping, horticulture, and livestock farming like poultry and rabbit rearing, and Basic Digital Literacy (including IT and robotics).

Recall that the government first announced that inclusion of the 15 trades in the basic education curriculum in October 2024.

Former-Minister of Education, Prof Tahir Mamman, who announced the development noted in the the new curriculum that pupils in basic schools



will be required to acquire at least two skills.

He said private primary schools were required to adopt the new curriculum, as he promised that an updated curriculum for secondary schools would be ready by September 2025.

“The idea is that by the time children finish school, they should have at least two skills. Students should be able to finish school with a minimum of two skills so that they can have a very productive life.

“The basis for the curriculum is the National Skills Framework, and it has been approved. It’s a very big project; it affects all schools in Nigeria, public and private.

“Whether in the public sector or private sector, all schools are going to implement it. So this is already determined. It doesn’t require anybody’s consent or any institution can depart from it.

“And then, we want to use this school year to set off on this, while, simultaneously, the relevant agencies with the Ministry of Education work on the senior secondary school curriculum along the same line, so that from September to October next year, that of the senior secondary school can be

ready for implementation.

“Our projection is we should be able to conclude on this by December so that in January, schools across the country can commence implementation,” the minister said.

On the implementation, Mamman said, “We do not expect comprehensive, full implementation from January because, when you roll out something new, there’s a lot of preparation that has to take place by the schools, acquiring new things, equipment, and small things that they will need.”

The minister noted that plans were ongoing to ensure the teachers were well-equipped for the new curriculum.

He said the ministry would meet with stakeholders in the private schools for the successful implementation of the new curriculum.

He said, “There is a need for the preparation of classrooms and teachers’ development. We are also working on teachers’ support and development for them to be able to implement this. So we want to use the next three months for all these three stages.

“We’ll also have a national stakeholders’ engagement on publicity, particularly with the private schools. So, that’s part of what we will be doing and then teachers’ capacity.”

Explaining the benefits of the curriculum, the minister said it would rekindle the desire of parents and students to acquire formal education.

Simon Ekpa: Tinubu says Nigeria indivisible, praises Finnish govt

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has praised the Finnish government for its decisive intervention in the case of Simon Ekpa, whose actions, according to the President, threatened Nigeria's unity and peaceful coexistence.

Speaking on Friday in Abuja while receiving the Letters of Credence from the Finnish Ambassador to Nigeria, Sanna Selin, at the State House, President Tinubu affirmed his administration's resolve to uphold stability and cohesion in the country.

"We will not tolerate actions or statements that foster divisiveness among our citizens. Nigeria is indivisible," President Tinubu declared, commending the Finnish authorities for taking action against Simon Ekpa.

The President described the intervention as timely, noting it safeguarded Nigeria's integrity and upheld peaceful coexistence.

While acknowledging Finland's contributions to Nigeria, particularly in ICT, agriculture, and education, President Tinubu emphasised that his administration's ongoing reforms aim to stimulate growth and prosperity.

READ ALSO: FG, Nigerians seek Simon Ekpa's extradition

He expressed appreciation for Finland's humanitarian support in Nigeria's North East and looked forward to greater cooperation between the two nations.



In her remarks, Ambassador Selin lauded President Tinubu for initiating critical reforms to reposition Nigeria's economy, describing the measures as necessary for the country's long-term progress.

She also reaffirmed Finland's commitment to strengthening bilateral relations, particularly in energy and peace mediation, while addressing challenges like those posed by Simon Ekpa.

Tinubu
Bola Tinubu

President Tinubu also met with Gautier Mignot, Ambassador of the European Union, urging the EU to expand its economic partnership with Nigeria.

He highlighted the need for digital transformation and automation of services in Nigeria, which would complement the country's vibrant, youthful population.

"The EU remains one of Nigeria's largest trading partners, and I encourage you to elevate the volume of transactions and strengthen our ties," President Tinubu said.

Ambassador Mignot praised

Nigeria's vast potential, noting that leveraging development cooperation and technology could unlock even greater economic opportunities.

READ ALSO: Finnish court begins Simon Ekpa's trial May 2025

"We share solid partnerships built on shared values," the EU envoy remarked.

In his meeting with Algerian Ambassador Hocine Mezoued, President Tinubu reiterated the importance of Africa's unity and cooperation to foster sustainable development.

He emphasised the strategic significance of the Trans-Saharan African Gas Pipeline project, urging both nations to expedite its implementation to benefit the continent.

"We must lift one another in Africa. Together, we will be stronger and more impactful. We don't have to prove anything to anyone but ourselves," the President stated.

Ambassador Mezoued conveyed greetings from Algeria's President and reaffirmed Algeria's commitment to supporting Nigeria on regional development initiatives and multilateral platforms.

He stressed the transformative impact of the pipeline project and other proposed collaborative efforts across the continent.

Abiodun rewards Ogun teacher shortlisted for \$1m global prize with house, N5m

By Friday Omosola

Ogun State Governor, Dapo Abiodun, has announced a reward of N5 million and a bungalow for Kayode Adewale, a Mathematics teacher who has been shortlisted among the top 50 teachers globally in the prestigious Global Teacher Prize.

The Global Teacher Prize is a US \$1 million award presented to an exceptional teacher who has made an outstanding contribution to their profession.

Adewale employs innovative teaching methods and integrates the local language to teach Mathematics at Imagbon/Imaka Comprehensive High School, Imagbon, in the state.



Announcing this on his X page, the governor stated that the teacher's dedication to education and commitment to transforming lives in the state deserve recognition and celebration.

He wrote: "We are proud to celebrate Kayode Adewale, a mathematics teacher at Imagbon/Imaka Comprehensive High School, who has been recognized among the Top 50 teachers globally in the prestigious Global Teacher Prize.

"An alumnus of Tai Solarin University of Education, Kayode's innovative teaching and dedication to education have earned him both local and international acclaim.

"In recognition of his achievements, we are honouring him as the Ogun State Education Ambassador, awarding him a bungalow in any location of his choice within the state, and supporting him with a cash prize of ₦5,000,000.

Alaafin did not abandon traditional rites – Media Team

By Dave Oludare Oso

Following recent reports suggesting that the newly appointed Alaafin of Oyo, Oba Akeem Owoade has abandoned the traditional rites midway through the process, the monarch's media team has rebuked the purveyors, saying since the process has yet to begin, the Alaafin could not have abandoned it.

Bode Durojaiye, a key member of the team said the report was not only misleading but also alarmingly deceptive.

"This headline is designed to mislead the public and misrepresent the esteemed Alaafin throne," he asserted, emphasizing that the content of the article fails to align with its sensationalised headline.

Clarifying the situation, Durojaiye stated that Oba Owoade has not yet commenced the traditional rites required for his coronation, which is scheduled for April 4, 2025.

"It is impossible for the Alaafin to abandon rites he has not even begun.



The report itself acknowledges this fact," he noted, referencing the publication's admission about the timeline.

He further explained that the Oyo State Government is fully informed of the Alaafin's movements and supports his decisions, reinforcing that there is no discord regarding his absence.

"Once traditional rites begin, they cannot be paused or interrupted. Tradition dictates that these rites must be completed without deviation,"

Durojaiye reiterated.

Addressing the necessity of the Alaafin's trip, he clarified that it falls well within the timeline leading up to his coronation, saying, "Oba Owoade returned to Canada solely to manage his professional responsibilities and ensure everything is in order before his upcoming coronation."

Durojaiye urged the media to exercise greater caution when reporting on matters of cultural significance and traditional leadership.

"We must respect our rich heritage and the values that distinguish our society. Misrepresenting these elements only serves to undermine our cultural identity," he emphasised.

He rallied the support of the people of Oyo and beyond to unite in support of Oba Owoade, adding, "Let us all come together to assist our new monarch in the significant tasks that lie ahead. Your involvement and backing are invaluable."

Bello Turji ready to surrender — Defence Chief

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Christopher Musa has disclosed that the most wanted terrorist kingpin, Bello Turji has declared that he is ready to lay down his arms.

Speaking on Channels Television's Politics Today on Friday, General Musa said with his son, second in command and other lieutenants recently killed by the military, Turji has been forced to discard most of those under him, signalling his willingness to lay down his arms.

The Chief of Defence Staff said, "They (terrorists) are within the communities; the people know them. So, sometimes when they see them, before you get the information, it's like two hours – the man has moved. So, when the information gets to you before you move, he has left that area.

"But I can tell you, we have taken out his second in command, we have taken out most of his lieutenants, in fact, he is forced now to release most of the people under him. I am telling you that recently he is



beginning to say that he doesn't want anything, he is ready to surrender."

However, the Defence Chief maintained that despite Turji's reported willingness to surrender, anybody who has engaged in killing innocent citizens must not be spared.

"We want to take everybody out. Anybody who has killed should go, people like him should not be allowed to stay," General Musa said.

Following its continued onslaught on Turji, the military on Wednesday said troops of Operation Fansan Yamma neutralised his second in command, Aminu Kanawa.

A statement by the Defence

Director, Edward Buba, said the troops also inflicted terminal injuries on some of Turji's close allies identified as Dosso (Bello Turji's younger brother) and Danbokolo (one of Turji's closest allies).

The military also said the troops neutralised several of Bello Turji's key commanders namely: Abu Dan Shehu, Jabbi Dogo, Dan Kane, Basiru Yellow, Kabiru Gebe, Bello Buba and Dan Inna Kahon-Saniya-Yafi-Bahaushe, among others.

Over 24 fleeing terrorists from Bello Turji's Camp around Gebe and Isa LGA of Sokoto State, as well as around Gidan Rijija in Shinkafi LGA of Zamfara State were also neutralised, according to the statement.

Minister approves passport printers for Nigerian Consulates in US

By Friday Omosola

The Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, has instructed the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) to urgently deploy new passport printers to the Nigerian Consulates in Atlanta and New York, USA.

This decision follows a petition from a group of Nigerians in the diaspora, highlighting the difficulties faced by citizens requiring consular services in these cities.

Acknowledging the petition through a statement issued by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Alao Babatunde, the minister confirmed the directive for immediate deployment.

The statement read: “The Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, has acknowledged receipt of a petition requesting passport printers for the Nigerian Consulates in Atlanta



and New York. In response, he has approved and directed the immediate deployment of new printers to these locations. These printers are ready for installation as a short-term measure to address the current challenges.”

The minister also unveiled a long-term plan to improve the passport issuance process.

This includes the activation of a Passport Personalisation Centre in Abuja, scheduled to commence operations within weeks, and the expansion of the contactless passport solution to more countries.

“Innovations such as the end-to-end automation of the passport application process and the introduction of a contactless system, which has already launched in Canada, are part of this ongoing transformation,” the statement added.

Tunji-Ojo reassured Nigerians that the government under President Bola Tinubu is committed to delivering a streamlined passport regime that prioritises convenience, innovation, and national security as part of the Renewed Hope agenda.

258 escape death as US-bound plane makes emergency return to Lagos

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

245 passengers, eight flight attendants, and three pilots escaped certain death as a Boeing 787-8, belonging to United Airlines flight, flying from Lagos to Washington declared an emergency and made an air return to Lagos on Thursday.

According to a PUNCH report, the aircraft crew having established a return track to Lagos, maintained the emergency transponder code 7700 (Emergency signal) with the control tower till it landed.

The report said the aircraft, an over 13-year-old widebody aircraft belonging to the US carrier, United Airlines, was initially bound for Washington Dulles International Airport with registered N27903, adding that it had 245 passengers, eight flight attendants, and three pilots on board.

Reports say some of those on board sustained varying degrees of injuries.

Online videos and pictures from the distressed passengers in the aircraft showed that food and passengers' luggage were scattered, littering the aircraft owing to the shaky nature of the



flight.

The real cause of the pandemonium is yet to be ascertained as of the time of filing this report but the passengers are of the opinion that it was an engine-related issue.

However, only the Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau can ascertain the real cause of such incidents.

The Director of Public Affairs and Consumer Protection of the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), Michael Achimugu, when contacted, confirmed the development, saying the passengers have been lodged in a hotel as stipulated by the regulatory act.

Achimugu said, "Yes, it is true, and no problems, the passengers have been lodged in a hotel as stipulated by the NCAA Act."

The airline also confirmed the development in a terse statement, attributing it to "a technical issue."

The statement read, "Flight UA 613 from Lagos to Washington D.C. returned to Lagos to address a technical issue.

"After landing safely, the aircraft was met by first responders to address reports of minor injuries to several passengers and crew."

Expert calls for reinstatement of cashless policy to deter kidnappers

By Friday Omosola

This report features retired Assistant Director of Internal Security (SSS), Adam Abuh, urging citizens to prioritize personal security by learning tips, staying vigilant, and reporting suspicious activities.

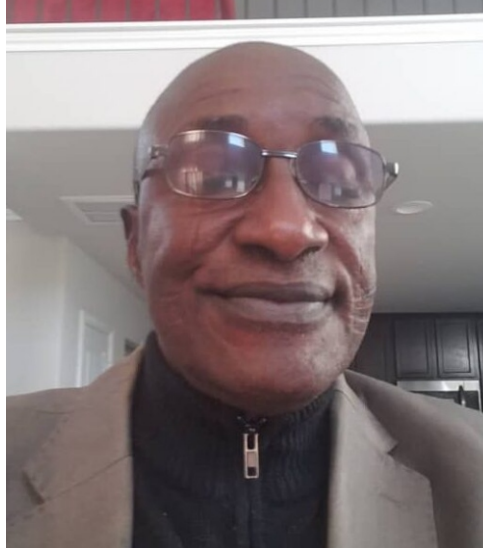
For years, Nigeria has faced persistent security challenges that have severely impacted its economy. These issues vary geographically, with Boko Haram's terrorism plaguing the northern regions, while separatist movements such as the Biafra agitation in the southeast and the Yoruba nation agitation in the southwest further complicate the country's security dynamics.

Under the administration of former President Muhammadu Buhari, incidents such as Boko Haram attacks, militancy, armed robbery, banditry, and kidnapping for ransom surged significantly. These challenges were compounded by Fulani herder-farmer clashes and cultism.

A recent Crime Experience and Perception Survey by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) highlighted alarming data: from May 2023 to April 2024, over N2.23 trillion was paid as ransom for kidnapping victims under President Bola Tinubu's administration.

The report estimated a staggering 51.89 million crime incidents nationwide, with 51% occurring in rural areas. Kidnapping incidents alone accounted for 2.24 million cases, with rural areas recording more occurrences (1.67 million) compared to urban centres (567,850).

The North-West and North-Central zones reported the highest prevalence, while the South-East experienced the fewest cases. Nearly half of the abductions (49.3%) occurred at or near victims' homes, followed by street kidnappings (19.4%) and incidents during vehicle travel (15.2%). Alarming, of the reported cases, 12.8% of victims were killed, while 3.3% remained in captivity.



Households that reported kidnappings to the police accounted for 80.5% of cases, and 65% of victims' families paid ransoms, amounting to an average of N2.7 million per case. Urban households paid higher ransoms (N3.7 million) than those in rural areas (N2.3 million).

Meanwhile, a Dataphyte report revealed that despite substantial federal funding allocated to seven key security agencies, these crimes persist.

The report stated that between 2020 and 2024, the federal government approved N9.17 trillion for seven security units, including the Nigerian Army, Nigeria Air Force, Nigeria Navy, the NSCDC, and the Ministries of Police and Defence. Despite this investment, there has been no significant improvement in the security situation.

In an exclusive interview with NEW DAILY PRIME, a leading security expert and retired Assistant Director of Internal Security (SSS), Adam Abuh, provided recommendations on how kidnapping and ransom payments can be prevented.

The member of the American Society of Industrial Security and a Fellow of the International Institute of Professional Security (FIIPS) urged the government to

adopt a more proactive approach to ensure the safety of citizens and restore public trust in the nation's security systems.

Excerpt

NEW DAILY PRIME: How effective have Nigeria's security agencies been, considering the amount of money paid in ransom?

ADAM: The security agencies are doing their best, considering the resources available to them—personnel, technology, armaments, and cooperation from stakeholders, including governments and citizens, among others.

To that extent, they are making notable efforts. However, to the average Nigerian, the situation appears to be worsening, and as a result, there is little perception of success in the fight against kidnapping and insecurity overall.

Perhaps we'll delve into the reasons for this in your next question, but for now, it's clear that this is the unfortunate reality we are dealing with.

Despite the commendable efforts of the security agencies, the outcomes have fallen short of significantly improving the situation to a level that reassures the public.

At present, citizens do not feel secure. Many cannot go to bed and sleep with peace of mind, knowing they are safe. This underscores the gravity of the challenges we face.

NEW DAILY: What are the main challenges faced by security operatives in preventing and responding to kidnapping cases in Nigeria?

Continue reading
on next page

Cont from page 15

At present, citizens do not feel secure. Many cannot go to bed and sleep with peace of mind, knowing they are safe. This underscores the gravity of the challenges we face.

NEW DAILY: What are the main challenges faced by security operatives in preventing and responding to kidnapping cases in Nigeria?

ADAM: If we are talking specifically about kidnapping, as you know, for those of us in security and intelligence, it is the modus operandi used by terrorists, insurgents, and other criminal elements to carry out their activities. In our country, it has also become a business for some unscrupulous individuals who claim they cannot cope with the economic situation.

But let me outline the challenges. First, we must consider the size and scope of the criminal elements involved in the kidnapping industry. This will help you understand the enormity of the situation.

We have terrorists, for instance, who kidnap to generate funds to support their activities. Then there are bandits who also resort to kidnapping to fund their acts of banditry. Banditry is primarily driven by economic motives, but when resources are lacking, they turn to kidnapping as an alternative means of income.

In Nigeria today, there are so many groups involved in terrorism and criminal activities that you might not even imagine. For instance, we have Boko Haram, bandits with 3G payloads, and newer groups like the Lakurawas.

Retired Assistant Director of Internal Security (SSS), Adam Abuh
In the East, we have the Eastern Security Network (ESN) and several other groups operating under the guise of businesses. Moving to the herdsmen, some of them have also turned to kidnapping. Cases involving them are reported almost daily.

Additionally, there are independent

individuals who do not belong to any of these groups but engage in kidnapping purely as a business. This trend has become widespread, even in places like Lagos and other urban areas.

The sheer number of people involved in this kidnapping enterprise is alarming. And it's worth noting that there was a time when kidnappers released victims after ransom payments. Nowadays, kidnappers often threaten or even kill victims after collecting ransom, making the situation even deadlier and leaving people living in constant fear.

Why does it persist? During the experimental phase of the cashless policy, there was a notable reduction in kidnappings because cash for ransom payments was unavailable. However, when Nigeria reverted to a cash economy, the problem resurfaced.

It's also important to note that the ransom amount reported by the NBS is likely underestimated because many cases go unreported. Victims' families often avoid involving the authorities due to threats from kidnappers, who promise to harm their loved ones if the police are contacted.

There are numerous other challenges. Security operatives often risk their lives, and we've seen instances where officers lose their lives in the line of duty, leaving their families to fend for themselves. Recently, the government announced plans to address this issue, and immediate implementation could provide some relief.

Another issue is that some Nigerians are hesitant to support security operatives by providing information or intelligence. They fear their identities might be exposed, putting them at risk of retaliation.

Lastly, there is inadequate technology to support security agencies in conducting covert operations. These challenges collectively contribute to the persistence of the kidnapping crisis in Nigeria.

NEW DAILY: You mentioned the cashless policy. Does this mean you believe that if Nigeria had continued with the cashless policy, incidents of kidnapping, terrorism, and other related issues would have been minimized?

ADAM: Yes, it would have been significantly minimized because there would be no cash readily available. If you consider past cases where individuals used banks to transfer ransom money, security agencies have often been able to trace those accounts and make arrests. Criminals don't want to be exposed or apprehended. For me, even beyond security, the cashless policy is the best option for our economy.

NEW DAILY PRIME: What steps can security agencies take to improve their response to kidnapping incidents?

ADAM: The first step begins with the citizens. Citizens need to take responsibility for their personal safety by educating themselves on basic security tips, even if it's through online resources. Most importantly, they need to implement these tips in their daily lives. Many people lack situational awareness—they often fail to pay attention to those around them, their environment, or subtle signs of potential danger.

For example, when traveling by road, many neglect to assess the safety of their surroundings. They don't consider whether the road is isolated or if suspicious activity might be occurring—they simply keep driving without caution.

Even within their communities, people tend to overlook potential risks. For instance, when unfamiliar vehicles or individuals, such as repair workers or other strangers, enter the neighborhood, they fail to observe their behavior or question their activities. We must foster a culture of vigilance where citizens are proactive in monitoring their surroundings and promptly reporting any suspicious activity to the appropriate authorities.

Police warn Kano residents of possible terrorist attack

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Kano State Police Command has alerted residents to intelligence reports of a suspected plan by terrorists to target public gatherings in strategic locations across the state.

In a statement signed by the Command's Public Relations Officer (PPRO), SP Abdullahi Haruna Kiyawa, the Police urged residents to exercise caution and avoid crowded areas until further notice to enable security agencies identify and neutralise potential threats.

The statement read, "The Kano State Police Command in liaison with other security agencies has received intelligence reports of suspected terrorists planning to launch attacks on public gatherings in strategic locations within Kano State.

"In response, we hereby urge residents to exercise caution and avoid crowded places and environments until further notice as a preventive measure to enable security operatives identify and dislodge possible attackers."

The statement added that to address the threat, the police have deployed experts from the Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear units to strategic areas of the state.



Reassuring the public of its commitment to peace and security, the Police Command stated, "The Kano State Police Command remains committed to protecting lives and properties as well as maintaining law and order in Kano State. We appreciate the support and cooperation of the good people of Kano State and urge everyone to remain vigilant."

He said as part of an effort to ensure a peaceful Kano State, necessary security arrangements have been put in place.

"A team of experts from the command's Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear units have been deployed to strategic locations and are on high alert.

"The unit can be contacted

through: 08169884988 or 07067157218 for report of suspicious persons or item(s)," the police spokesman said.

He urged members of the public to report an emergency or suspicious activity to the nearest police station or contact the state command through the designated mobile phone numbers.

He said the command remains committed to protecting lives and properties as well as maintaining law and order in Kano State.

"We appreciate the support and cooperation of the good people of Kano State and urge everyone to remain vigilant. Your vigilance and cooperation are crucial in ensuring public safety," the statement added.

Benue to launch initiative for returning IDPs to their homes

By Friday Omosola

Benue State Governor, Hyacinth Alia, has announced that his administration will soon unveil an ‘Action Plan on Durable Solutions’, an initiative aimed at facilitating the safe return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their ancestral homes.

IDPs are individuals compelled to flee their homes within their country due to conflicts, violence, human rights abuses, natural disasters, or other crises.

The governor made this announcement during a visit to the dry season farm project site along Gboko Road, Makurdi.

He was accompanied by the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, the UN Resident Coordinator in Nigeria, and members of the diplomatic community.

As part of the initiative, Governor Alia revealed the creation of 210 Farmers’ Cooperatives across all IDP camps in Benue, benefitting over 4,200 displaced persons.

He explained that these cooperatives would receive comprehensive training in rice, maize, cassava, and vegetable farming, ensuring their active participation in every stage of the production cycle—from planting and germination to harvesting.

The governor emphasised that the



government’s objective is not only to support displaced persons but also to strengthen Benue’s agricultural value chain for rice, maize, cassava, and vegetables.

“Our IDPs will gain: (a) Access to land, subsidized inputs, and improved seedlings (b) Increased rice, maize, cassava, and vegetables yields and revenue (c) Guaranteed market access with government-controlled prices (d) Integration into the larger rice, maize, cassava, and vegetables value chain

“This is just one of the six project locations across the state, and we are committed to transforming these areas into thriving agricultural hubs. As we work towards Building Back Better, we

are not just focusing on providing a solution for our displaced

people, but we are also restoring dignity and livelihoods, while planting the seeds for long-term prosperity in Benue”, added the governor.

He further stated that the path forward lies in agriculture and agro-based value chains, which form the foundation of Benue’s future.

The governor emphasized that unity will restore peace, renew hope, and transform the state into one of opportunities and shared prosperity.

“Let us all stand together as one Benue, as one Nigeria. It is time to leave behind the suffering and build a brighter and peaceful future for our people.”

Former FCT Minister, Gen Jerry Useni dies at 82

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Retired Lieutenant-General Jeremiah Useni, who served as the minister of the Federal Capital Territory, died at 82.

The death of Useni, who served as minister in the government of late General Sani Abacha, was confirmed on Thursday night by the Plateau State governor, Caleb Mutfwang.

The governor's Director of Press and Public Affairs, Gyang Bere in a statement said, "The governor of Plateau State, Caleb Mutfwang, deeply regrets to announce to the citizens of Plateau State and all patriotic Nigerians, the passing of the former Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Lt.



General Jeremiah Timbut Useni.

"The distinguished elder statesman passed away on Thursday, January 23, 2025, at the age of 82, following a

protracted illness. The passing of General Useni is a tremendous loss not only to his immediate family but also to the Nigerian Armed Forces, Plateau State, and the entire nation."

Useni, after retirement from the military, joined politics. In 2003, he was Deputy National Chairman, North for the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP).

In May 2006, he dumped the ANPP and became chairman of a new party, the Democratic People's Party.

In 2015, he ran for election as Senator for Plateau South In 2015 under the People's Democratic Party and won.

Two Rivers clerics caught with sword, coffin, other 'strange' items

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Operatives of the Nigeria Police Force have arrested two suspected fake pastors identified as Bassey and Elijah with fetish items recovered from their churches in the Rumuduru community of Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

The spokesperson for Rivers Police Command, SP Grace Iringe-Koko, in a statement she issued on Friday in Port Harcourt, said Bassey and Elijah were arrested by youths of Rumuduru who later handed them over to the police.

The police spokesperson said Bassey and Elijah were operating two separate churches within the community.

Iringe-Koko said, "The fake pastors were handed over to the police by youths from Rumuduru, led by their President, Henry Worlu, on Jan. 20.



"The youths raided the area and arrested Bassey and Elijah from their respective churches.

"During interrogation, Bassey admitted to using spiritual materials, such as water and oil, to heal individuals suffering from spiritual afflictions..

"He also revealed that he used a small

casket and a 'miracle life oil' to pray for people with mental issues, claiming they would recover within three months."

She added that the Bassey had been residing and operating in the Rumuduru community for 17 years.

Items recovered from the suspects include a firearm cartridge, small wooden caskets, a sword, a fake Nigerian Navy identification card, and thousands of photographs.

Others items seized were children's footwears, a police lanyard, and various crosses and spiritual materials.

"The suspects and the recovered exhibits are currently in police custody, and a discreet investigation is ongoing," Iringe-Koko confirmed.

APC must be 'fumigated' out of power in Lagos – Rhodes-Vivour

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

The 2023 governorship candidate of the Labour Party (LP) in Lagos State, Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour, has accused the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) of fostering corruption in Lagos, emphasizing that it is time to remove the party from power.



Rhodes-Vivour, who spoke in a post on his verified X (formerly Twitter) account, lamented that the level of corruption within the party reflects their utter disregard for the citizens of Lagos.

His comments follow allegations that the Lagos State House of Assembly, under the leadership of the impeached former Speaker, Mudashiru Obasa, spent N17 billion to construct a gate.

Weeks ago, the Lagos State Anti-Corruption Coalition, an anti-corruption group, petitioned the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), accusing the Assembly's leadership of spending this massive sum on a gate.

The group also alleged that the Assembly spent N200 million on its 22nd thanksgiving service.

In response to the accusations, Obasa denied the claims, describing them as politically motivated, especially in light of the 2027 elections.

However, Rhodes-Vivour criticized the spending, suggesting that the N17 billion could have been better utilized to build a standard school in each of the state's local governments.

The former candidate added that it could have covered the salaries and welfare of every teacher in Lagos for an entire year.

representative, who feels the pulse of his/her constituents agree to spend N17 billion on a gate?," Rhodes-Vivour queried in a post on X (formerly Twitter).

"That amount can build a standard school in every local government in Lagos. That Amount can pay for the salaries and welfare of every teacher in Lagos for a whole year."

He continued, "The level of corruption in the APC and the audacity with which they carry on demonstrates their complete disregard for citizens, most of whom they view as subjects. These parasites must be fumigated out of office in Lagos."

"How does any reasonable

Enrol medical lecturers on CONMESS to curb brain drain, MDCAN tells FG By Helen Okechukwu

In an increased rate of japa syndrome among medical professionals and a retirement age set at 60, the Medical and Dental Consultants Association of Nigeria (MDCAN) has urged the Federal Government (FG) to enrol medical lecturers on the Consolidated Medical Salary Structure (CONMESS) to curb brain drain.

At the National Executive Council (NEC) meeting held on Friday in Ilorin, Kwara State, the president of MDCAN, Prof. Muhammad Mohammad, explained that about 1,300 consultants have relocated abroad due to poor working conditions and japa syndrome.

During the NEC meeting tagged, “Policy Making for Quality Healthcare Services: Engaging Policy Makers for Quality Healthcare Delivery,” the role of policies to improve healthcare service across the country were highlighted.

It was revealed that the country only has 6,000 medical consultants, leaving a significant effect on healthcare delivery nationwide.

Explaining more, MDCAN President, drawing his fact from the retirement age set at 60, the country should



expect a decline among consultants.

Read Also: Japa: UK issued Nigerians 300,000 visas in recent years – Envoy

Stressing the effect of retirement age and low consultants in Nigeria, Prof. Mohammad said, “Approximately 1,700 consultants are above 55 years of age, which means that in the next five years, they will leave the system for retirement. Meanwhile, Nigeria produces only one or two consultants per annum, making it impossible to replace those leaving,” he said.

Dr. Amina El-Imam, the Kwara State Commissioner for Health, underscored the importance of effective policy-making in delivering adequate healthcare services.

To improve healthcare delivery, the guest speaker, Dr. Amos Magaji, a lawmaker from Kaduna State, stressed the need for vigorous policies.

Public health expert, Prof. Tanimola Akande, underscored the need for doctors to focus on self-care by engaging in regular check-ups, exercise, and overall wellness.

Similarly, Prof. Kazeem Ibrahim, chair of the local organising committee, expressed concerns over the shortcomings of previous healthcare policies and called for effective strategies to address pressing issues, including the ‘Japa’ syndrome..

WHO declares Georgia malaria-free

By Helen Okechukwu

As the anti-malaria fight continues, the World Health Organization (WHO) on Thursday has certified Georgia malaria-free, marking her the 45th country and 1 territory to have achieved this remarkable milestone.

This came following a nearly century-long effort.

Tedros Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, while congratulating the country, described their commitment as a source of hope, marking the possibility of making the world malaria-free.

Ghebreyesus said, “Today we congratulate the people of Georgia for their decades of targeted and sustained actions to eliminate malaria, one of the world’s leading killers.”

Dr. Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe, underscored the significant outcome. Kluge said, “This is a huge milestone worth marking; with Georgia’s achievement, the WHO European Region is another step closer to initiating certification as the first malaria-free region in the world.”

Kluge highlighted that this achievement was successful due to sustained investment, a dedicated health workforce and preventive efforts, early detection, and effective treatment of all malaria cases.

According to WHO, it said that certification of malaria elimination is granted when a country has proven, beyond reasonable doubt, that the chain of indigenous transmission has been interrupted nationwide for at least the previous three consecutive years.

The Minister of Health, Mikheil Sarjveladze, explained that with this achievement of the sustainable



healthcare system, the country can address important health challenges.

The revolution

In the early 1900s, being plagued in the country, it was recorded that at least 3 malaria parasite species—*P. falciparum*, *P. malariae*, and *P. vivax*—were endemic in the country. 30% of the population in the 1920s are said to have suffered from malaria caused by the *P. vivax* malaria species.

Georgia experienced a significant reduction in malaria cases after the launch of a control programme in 1940 through improved access to diagnostic and treatment facilities.

“A few years later, however, World War II caused a surge again due to population movement and the strain on health facilities.”

“In the post-war period, Georgia launched an intensive programme aimed at eliminating malaria, using newer medicines, insecticide spraying, and robust entomological surveillance. The campaign successfully interrupted the transmission of *P. falciparum* by 1953, *P. malariae* by 1960, and *P. vivax* by 1970.”

“Georgia remained malaria-free for 25 years, but by 2002, malaria had reemerged in the country with 474 cases reported.”

Georgia joined 9 other countries in the WHO European Region in 2015 to sign the Tashkent Declaration, reinforcing their commitment to eliminate malaria.

In 2009, the country witnessed a reduction in incidence following intensified interventions, and then in 2015, 53 countries of the WHO European Region, including Georgia, reported zero indigenous cases of malaria.

“To prevent further re-establishment of malaria transmission in the region, the original signatories of the Tashkent Declaration issued the Ashgabat Statement in 2017 committing to take all efforts to remain malaria-free. Türkiye is the only country in the WHO European Region remaining to be certified.”

“In 2024, during Georgia’s malaria-free certification process, members of the Technical Advisory Group on Malaria Elimination and Certification, an independent WHO advisory body, noted that Georgia has a well-functioning and adequately resourced health system, strong public-private cooperation, and political commitment to maintaining a malaria-free status,” the document noted.

Alhaja Halimot Anifowoshe: Woman behind K1 De ultimate's success

By Michael Damilola

My mother was my biggest supporter and my greatest inspiration. Without her unwavering belief in me, I wouldn't be where I am today – K1 De Ultimate

Sadly, the Nigerian music industry, particularly the Fuji genre, was plunged into deep mourning on January 15, 2025, following the news of the passing of Alhaja Halimot Shadiya Anifowoshe, the mother of Fuji maestro K1 De Ultimate. She passed away at the age of 105.

New Daily Prime reported that a stream of movie makers, including Mercy Aigbe, Femi Adebayo, Eniola Badmus, Bukky Wright, and others, paid condolence visit to the music maestro.

Alhaja Halimot was more than just a mother to K1; she was his guiding light, close confidant and greatest supporter and fan.

Early Life and Influence

Alhaja Halimot was born into a traditional Yoruba family, where music and art were deeply ingrained in their culture. Her love for music was evident from an early age, and she encouraged her children to explore their musical talents. K1, whose real name is Wasiu Ayinde Marshal, has often spoken about the significant influence his mother had on his music career.

When he started his music career, Halimot initially was not comfortable with K1 leaving school for music. However, the singer eventually had the backing of her mum, "I was doing music because that's what I wanted to do. At first, my mother didn't like it, but later, she was forced to change her mind and support me on the day I went for the Ajisari Ajisere competition on my 16th birthday, and I won the trophy," K1 told



the Vanguard Newspaper in an earlier interview.

Support and Encouragement

Throughout K1's music career, Alhaja Halimot was his rock, offering guidance, support, and encouragement whenever he needed it. She was often seen at his performances, beaming with pride as she watched her son entertain the crowd. K1 has credited his mother with teaching him the importance of humility and hard work. Following the relationship between him and his mother, the singer often praises her during performance on stage. The singer described her mum as someone gifted with music but was not allowed to extend her singing prowess because she was from a royal family.

"I was blessed with the gift of music from a young age, I was born into music. My mother was a singer before she got married. She had the gift of music and she was a princess. "She was not allowed to sing back then because she was a princess and her parents were worried that allowing her to be a musician would delay her from getting married sooner. Her parents said my mother won't be allowed to sing because she is the daughter of a king," he said.

Philanthropy and Legacy

Alhaja Halimot was not only a supportive mother but also a philanthropist who gave back to her community. She was involved in various charitable activities, including supporting education and healthcare initiatives in her community. K1 has continued his mother's philanthropic work through his foundation, the K1 De Ultimate Foundation, with the aim of preserving the legacy of Yoruba music and investment in the vibrant tapestry of talents, research, and instruments.

Tributes and condolences

Following Alhaja Halimot's passing, tributes and condolences poured in torrents from the music industry, fans, and well-wishers. K1's colleagues, including Fuji musicians and other celebrities, took to social media to pay their respects to the matriarch of Fuji music.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, has also commiserated with the family of K1. The Lagos State Government has also consoled the singer over the demise of his mother, acknowledging her contributions to the development of Fuji music and her role as a mother and mentor to K1.

Finally, Alhaja Halimot Anifowoshe has exited this mortal world, but her legacy lives on through her son, K1 De Ultimate, and the countless lives she touched through her music, philanthropy, and guidance.

Her memories will also remain evergreen in the minds of many for her unwavering support and encouragement of her son's music career, as well as her contributions to the development of Fuji music in Nigeria.

“Speed Darlington won’t beg Burna Boy” – Lawyer

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Stanley Alieke, legal counsel for Speed Darlington, has made a firm statement on his client’s stance in the ongoing defamation lawsuit against Burna Boy.

Alieke has clarified that Speed Darlington will not offer an apology or seek reconciliation with Burna Boy.

This development follows the high-profile arrest of Speed Darlington in November 2024. He was detained after accusing Burna Boy of inappropriate relations with American rapper and music executive Diddy, who was embroiled in legal troubles.

Case updates and legal standpoints

The trial is set to resume on March 18, 2025, at the Federal High Court in Abuja. This follows Speed Darlington’s release on bail earlier this month.

In an interview with BBC Pidgin, Alieke reiterated that his client has no intention of pleading with Burna Boy.

He stated, “Speed Darlington will never beg Burna Boy. He has suffered too much to even consider it. As his counsel, I would never advise him to beg.”

This matter is already in court, and it is up to the court to decide whether Speed Darlington defamed Burna Boy.”

Alieke further argued that apologizing could imply guilt. Burna Boy’s petition alleges that Speed Darlington’s claims damaged his reputation and led to the loss of endorsements.

“If Burna Boy believed his reputation was harmed, he could have pursued civil action instead of a petition. Financial damages could have been sought through that route,” Alieke added.

Financial losses and rights violations

Beyond the defamation claims, Speed Darlington is countering with a N300 million fundamental rights enforcement lawsuit against the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Kayode Egbetokun. This



suit seeks redress for alleged unlawful detention and its consequences.

According to Alieke, his client’s extended detention led to significant financial losses. “He missed numerous December and January shows, about 20 events in total, many of which had already been paid for. Promoters have started demanding refunds, ranging from N2 million to N5 million,” the lawyer explained.

Alieke emphasized that the financial losses are only one part of the case. He noted, “Even if the claim increases to N1 billion, it would not match the hardship he endured. Speed Darlington is an artist of international repute who was treated unfairly.”

Harsh detention conditions

Alieke also criticized the conditions of his client’s detention. He alleged that Speed Darlington was held in a facility meant for serious criminals, including Boko Haram suspects and Fulani herdsmen.

“This was unnecessary and unjust. He was kept at the SARS office in Abuja, known as the ‘Abattoir,’ which is no place for someone accused of defamation.”

The lawyer dismissed claims that his behaviour justified such treatment. “Some people argue that his careless words led to this, but that does not excuse the police from holding him for such a long time or

exposing him to such conditions.”

The origin of the feud

The conflict between Speed Darlington and Burna Boy dates back to October 2024. Speed Darlington publicly mocked Burna Boy’s association with Diddy, who was under FBI investigation.

This sparked a diss track from Speed Darlington titled ‘Baby Oil,’ which gained popularity on Spotify Nigeria.

The situation escalated when he demanded an apology from Burna Boy’s mother and N12 million in compensation.

On November 27, 2024, the feud reached its peak when he was arrested during a performance in Owerri.

Looking ahead

As both parties prepare for the next court date, the case highlights broader concerns about freedom of expression, the limits of defamation, and the treatment of individuals in detention.

His legal team has vowed to fight for justice and accountability, emphasizing the need for fair treatment in both the courtroom and the public sphere.

This legal battle promises to be closely watched, with implications for the entertainment industry and beyond.

EFCC withdraws arrest warrant against Mercy Chinwo's manager

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has withdrawn the arrest warrant against Ezekiel Onyedikachukwu, the former manager of gospel musician Mercy Chinwo.

Justice Alexander Owoeye issued a bench warrant against Onyedikachukwu last week after the EFCC filed an ex parte motion seeking to compel the music producer's appearance in court to answer to alleged criminal charges.

The motion, presented by EFCC counsel Mrs. Bilikisu Buhari, cited constitutional and legal provisions for the warrant.

Buhari explained that the manager was accused of criminal activities related to financial mismanagement, including diverting royalties from Chinwo's digital platforms and events.

The EFCC claims the manager misappropriated approximately \$345,000 and failed to remit Chinwo's share.

Buhari added that the EFCC was unable to arrest Onyedikachukwu after several attempts.

However, on Friday, January 24, 2025, Buhari applied to withdraw the arrest warrant.

During Friday's proceedings, Responding, EFCC counsel,



Ezekiel's lawyer, Monday Ubani (SAN) told the court that the EFCC misled the court in granting the order for the arrest of his client as the subject matter was purely a contractual dispute.

Ubani told the court that his client filed a fundamental human rights enforcement suit against the EFCC before another court seeking to stop his arrest.

Ubani also told the court that his client filed a preliminary objection to the charge against him and urged the court to vacate the earlier arrest warrant issued against him.

He also told the court that his client had not been served with any charge by the EFCC.

Bilikisu Buhari told the court that the commission has been unable to arrest the defendant since the court ordered his arrest.

She requested the court's permission to serve the charge on Ezekiel's lawyer in the open court and further noted that there might be no need for the arrest warrant since Ubani has accepted the charge on behalf of his client.

Ubani, who received the charges on behalf of his client, however prayed the court for a date for the court to hear the preliminary objection against the fraud allegation charge.

Justice Owoeye thereafter fixed February 14 for possible arraignment and hearing of pending applications before the court.

Record labels not always blamed for disputes – Odumodublvck

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Rapper Odumodublvck discusses tensions between artists and labels, focusing on personal differences and accountability issues.

Contrary to the common belief that artists are always the victims, he argued that the reality is far more complex.

Personal differences behind disputes

In a recent interview with Hip TV, the rapper explained that many disputes stem from personal differences rather than systemic issues within the music industry.

According to him, human traits play a significant role in business relationships. These traits often lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, and, at times, broken agreements.

“It’s not always about the system being flawed,” he said. “Sometimes, it’s about how people handle situations and interact with each other.”

Artists are not always victims

Odumodublvck cautioned against painting record labels as the sole villains in these disputes. He acknowledged that some artists develop challenging attitudes after gaining fame.

In some cases, they make demands that are unreasonable or difficult to fulfill.

The rapper urged artists to remember the significant investments and hard work that record labels put into developing their careers.

“Everybody must be accountable,” he stated. “It’s not a case of record labels being bad. There are things artists don’t talk about when conflicts arise.”

Industry drama: The dapper music controversy
Odumodublvck’s perspective arrives



during a time when tensions between artists and record labels have been making headlines.

A recent controversy involving Dapper Music and its former signees, Shallipopi and Muyezez, has sparked widespread discussion.

The artists ended their contracts with the label, citing a lack of financial transparency and unfair business practices.

Dapper Music, however, denied the allegations, claiming they had acted in good faith throughout their partnership. These disputes highlight the recurring challenges within the music industry.

A call for accountability and respect

While some artists accuse labels of exploiting their talents, labels argue that they face difficulties dealing with artists who fail to meet contractual obligations.

Odumodublvck believes this dynamic creates a cycle of blame, with neither side taking full responsibility for their actions.

He emphasized the importance of communication and mutual respect in resolving these disputes.

Misunderstandings, he explained, can often be avoided if both parties are clear about their expectations from the start. “It’s about setting boundaries and being transparent,” he said. “When both sides understand what they’re signing up for, there’s less room for conflict.”

Educating artists and reforming labels

While the rapper acknowledged the shortcomings of record labels, he also stressed that artists have a role to play in maintaining professional relationships.

He encouraged artists to educate themselves about the music business, contracts, and the financial realities of running a record label.

By doing so, they can better understand the challenges faced by their partners.

At the same time, Odumodublvck called for record labels to treat artists fairly and address their concerns promptly.

He believes this balanced approach is crucial for building trust and fostering long-term success.

Moving toward an equitable future

The debate over artist-label dynamics is not new. It has been a recurring issue in the music industry for decades.

However, voices like Odumodublvck’s bring a fresh perspective to the conversation.

By highlighting the human element behind these conflicts, he hopes to encourage more empathy and understanding on both sides.

As the music industry continues to evolve, the relationship between artists and record labels will remain a critical topic.

97th Oscars nominations: full list released

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced the nominations for the 97th Oscars, celebrating the best films and performances of 2024.

The long-awaited list was revealed Thursday after two delays caused by the Los Angeles wildfires.

The Oscars ceremony is set for March 2, 2025, at the iconic Dolby Theatre in Ovation Hollywood. The winners will be unveiled during a live, televised broadcast, promising an evening of glamour and celebration. For the first time, the event will also stream live on Hulu, expanding its reach to a broader audience.

This year's awards highlight the Academy's ongoing efforts to promote diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion. These values have shaped the nominations, which showcase a wide range of voices and stories.

The ceremony will feature awards in 23 categories,



honoring achievements across various aspects of filmmaking. From acting and directing to sound design and visual effects, the Oscars celebrate excellence in all forms.

Comedian and podcaster Conan O'Brien will host the show for the first time, bringing his signature humor to Hollywood's biggest night. Raj Kapoor and Katy Mullan will return as executive producers, ensuring a seamless and memorable production.

The 97th Oscars aim to be more

than just an awards show. They promise a celebration of creativity, diversity, and the power of storytelling. Fans can tune in live on ABC or stream the event on Hulu to witness this unforgettable night.

As the countdown to March 2 begins, movie lovers worldwide are eagerly awaiting the results, ready to honor the cinematic achievements that defined the year. With a blend of tradition and innovation, this year's Oscars are poised to make history.

Trump orders deportation of immigrants who came legally under Biden

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Donald Trump administration is issuing a new round of heavy-handed measures that could rapidly deport immigrants who entered the United States through recently established legal pathways, according to an internal Department of Homeland Security (DHS) memo obtained by the New York Times.

The directive, signed on Friday by the acting homeland security secretary, Benjamin Huffman, grants Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials unprecedented authority to expedite deportations for immigrants who entered the country with government authorization through two key Biden-era programmes.

These programmes, which have allowed more than a million immigrants to enter the country since 2023, had provided scheduling for migrants or asylum seekers through the government-run app, CBP One or temporary legal status for up to two years through a parole programme for certain countries.

The newly reported memo instructs Ice officials to identify and potentially rapidly deport immigrants who have been in the country for over a year and have not yet applied for asylum, in effect sidestepping traditional immigration court proceedings.

In no waste of time, Trump's press secretary, Karoline Leavitt, posted on X on Friday: "Deportation flights have begun," accompanied by official pictures of people boarding a military-style aircraft.

Despite such flights being routine under successive administrations, the White House is promoting such images strongly and also deployed troops to the border late on Thursday, including US marines arriving in Boeing Osprey aircraft in California.

The developments come as so-called sanctuary cities like Chicago, Newark and Denver are experiencing direct impacts of the administration's hardline immigration



stance.

In Newark, Mayor Ras Baraka condemned a small-scale local ICE raid on Thursday that he claimed resulted in the detention of both undocumented residents and citizens – including a US military veteran.

And Denver's mayor, Mike Johnston, told CNN the city would cooperate with ICE to deport "violent criminals," but pushed back against arrests in schools and churches.

A DHS spokesperson defended the new policies, writing in a statement that "Criminals will no longer be able to hide in America's schools and churches to avoid arrest," and that the administration "trusts law enforcement to use common sense."

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has already challenged the policy in federal court, with the senior staff attorney Anand Balakrishnan characterizing the approach as a "mass deportation agenda" that circumvents constitutional due process.

Stephen Miller, a key architect of Trump's hardline immigration policies, has been vocal in his opposition to the immigration programmes of the last administration, previously criticizing the admission of

immigrants from what he termed "failed states."

Thousands who had received or were waiting for CBP One appointments south of the border were left devastated this week after the app was abruptly shut down moments after Trump was sworn in, while those already in the country using the app and who were preparing to apply for asylum may now be in the line of fire.

Later on Friday, the Trump administration followed up, announcing that it was expanding a fast-track deportation authority nationwide, allowing immigration officers to deport people without appearing before a judge.

The administration said it was expanding the use of "expedited removal" authority so it can be used across the country, in a notice in the Federal Register outlining the new rules.

"Expedited removal" gives enforcement agencies broad authority to deport people without requiring them to appear before an immigration judge. There are limited exceptions, including if they express fear of returning home and pass an initial screening interview for asylum.

Critics have said there is too much risk that people who have the right to be in the country will be mistakenly swept up by agents and officers and that not enough is done to protect immigrants who have genuine reason to fear being sent home.

The powers were created under a 1996 law. But these powers were not widely used until 2004, when homeland security said it would use expedited removal authority for people arrested within two weeks of entering the US by land and caught within 100 miles of the border. That meant it was used mostly against immigrants recently arrived in the country.

In the notice on Friday, the administration said the authority could be used across the country and would go into effect immediately.

Illegal Immigration sparks debate: Should UK adopt Trump-style deportation policies? By Agency Reporter

Reform UK MP Rupert Lowe has stirred controversy by calling for a “national emergency” to address illegal immigration, proposing hardline measures including mass deportations. Speaking on GB News, Lowe emphasized the need for drastic action to tackle the issue, drawing inspiration from the United States’ approach under former President Donald Trump.

“We have to declare a national emergency, just like Trump is doing, and be prepared to take hard decisions—deport, deport, deport,” Lowe stated. He accused the Labour Government of mishandling immigration policies and claimed that Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is “up to his neck in this.”

Alarming Figures on Illegal Migration in London

Lowe’s comments come on the heels of a confidential report commissioned by Thames Water, obtained through a Freedom of Information request, which suggests that as many as one in 12 Londoners may be living in the capital illegally. The report estimates up to 585,000 illegal migrants reside in London. Shadow Home Secretary Chris Philp described the figures as “deeply alarming.”

Lowe proposed a controversial solution: “Put them on a West Coast island with a limited, uncomfortable tented camp and minimal food, and encourage them to go back to where they came from and apply to return legally.”

The Reform UK MP criticized the current immigration system as “weak,” claiming it relies too heavily on applicants’ self-reported statements. He argued that the majority of arrivals are economic migrants rather than legitimate asylum seekers.



“What worries me is, after six years, if we’re not very careful, these people will have full voting rights,” Lowe added, raising concerns about the long-term impact of illegal immigration on the electoral system.

Lowe pointed to Australia’s immigration policies as a model for the UK to adopt. “The Australians have shown us what to do. They stop the boats, and people realize it’s a waste of time spending 500 euros to get here,” he said.

He also advocated for Britain to withdraw from international treaties beyond the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) to regain full control over its borders.

Government Response

In response, a Home Office spokesperson defended the government’s efforts to tackle illegal immigration. “This Government is strengthening global partnerships and rooting out the criminal gangs who

profit from small boat crossings, which threaten lives. We have also removed 16,400 illegal migrants in just six months, the highest figure in half a decade, making it clear that those who arrive illegally will be returned,” the statement read.

Divided Opinions on Lowe’s Stance

Lowe’s hardline rhetoric has drawn sharp criticism from opponents. Scottish Labour Islands spokeswoman Rhoda Grant condemned his comments, calling them divisive and out of touch with the complexities of migration.

Lowe’s libertarian and conservative stances have frequently placed him at odds with liberal perspectives, but his views continue to resonate with portions of the electorate seeking stricter immigration controls.

As the debate over illegal migration intensifies, Lowe’s proposals have reignited discussions on the balance between border security and humane treatment of migrants in the UK.

Trump bans transgender women from US female prisons

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

President Donald Trump has issued an executive order banning transgender women from being housed in female prisons across the United States.

He also ordered that any medical treatments related to gender transition be halted.

The ban was part of a broader executive order by Trump aimed at limiting the federal government's recognition of gender to an individual's biological sex at birth.

The order also impacts transgender immigration detainees and is among the most concrete aspects of the broader initiative.

While Trump had imposed some restrictions on housing and medical care for transgender inmates during his previous term, this new order extends those limitations significantly.

New York Times reports that the Women's Liberation Front, a group that advocates for single-sex prisons and defines women based on biological sex, praised the order as a "major victory."

The group is currently challenging a California law allowing transgender prisoners to request housing that aligns with their gender identity, claiming it violates the rights of non-transgender female inmates, especially their Eighth Amendment protections against cruel and unusual punishment.



Trump's order echoes these concerns, arguing that efforts to undermine the biological reality of sex are harmful to women's dignity, safety, and well-being.

Transgender advocates and legal experts have criticized the order, warning it could endanger transgender inmates.

"There will be rapes and physical assaults because of this policy," said Shannon Minter, legal director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights.

He added that the policy would also complicate matters for prison officials who currently have the discretion to prioritize the safety and security of their facilities.

Legal experts note that the order may face legal challenges, as courts have ruled that prison systems must protect vulnerable inmates and provide necessary medical care,

including hormone therapies for those with gender dysphoria.

In 2022, a federal judge ordered the Bureau of Prisons to provide gender-transition surgery for a transgender inmate, citing a violation of the Eighth Amendment.

Trump's executive order, titled "Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government," specifically impacts transgender women, but not transgender men.

While the total number of transgender prisoners is small (about 1,500 transgender women in federal prisons), they make up a significant portion of the incarcerated female population—around 15%.

There are about 750 transgender men in federal custody.

Bishop Mariann Budde says 'I won't apologize' for sermon addressing Trump

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

Following the fallout of her address to President Donald Trump during a prayer service at Washington's National Cathedral Tuesday, the Episcopal Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde joined NPR's "All Things Considered" on Friday to discuss her hope that the new administration would show compassion toward vulnerable communities following a sermon she made on Tuesday.

Addressing concerns that the President did not take her address in a good light, as his (Trump) utterances regarding the issue have shown, the Bishop said she has nothing to apologise for as she has said the right thing.

During the Tuesday prayer service, Bishop Budde had directly confronted President Trump while he and Vice President J.D. Vance were seated in the front row.

In her 15-minute sermon, Bishop Mariann Budde said, "Let me make one final plea, Mr. President.

Millions have put their trust in you. And as you told the nation yesterday, you have felt the providential hand of a loving God. In the name of our God, I ask you to have mercy upon the people in our country who are scared now."

"There are gay, lesbian and transgender children in Democratic, Republican, and independent families, some who fear for their lives."

This came just one day after Trump issued a slate of executive orders, including one which has a section dedicated to "recognizing that women are biologically distinct from men," one that declared a national emergency at the country's southern border and issued several others related to immigration, including one attempting to do away with birthright citizenship.

Budde challenged these orders and much of the rhetoric that has surrounded them.

Trump and his allies quickly criticized the bishop's remarks, with one Republican congressman saying that the American-born Budde should be "added to the deportation list."



Despite the backlash, Budde told NPR that her remarks were sincere, and she did not have any regrets in bringing them to the president's attention.

"I don't hate the president, and I pray for him," Budde said. "I don't feel there's a need to apologize for a request for mercy."

"I regret that it was something that has caused the kind of response that it has, in the sense that it actually confirmed the very thing that I was speaking of earlier, which is our tendency to jump to outrage and not speak to one another with respect," she continued. "But no, I won't, I won't apologize for what I said."

"I decided to ask him as gently as I could to have mercy," Budde, said of her plea to Trump, telling "All Things Considered" on the Friday show, "how dangerous it is to speak of people in these broad categories, and particularly immigrants, as all being criminals or transgender children somehow being dangerous."

"To be united as a country with so many riches of diversity, we need mercy. We need compassion. We need empathy. And rather than list that as a broad category, as you heard me say, I decided to make an appeal to the president."

Budde's entreaty came just a day after Trump rolled out a series of executive orders to make good on some of his most

controversial campaign promises, including one that amounts to the rejection of transgender identity, calling it a "false claim," and another that would seek to do away with birthright citizenship, which has already met legal challenges.

Budde said these orders and Trump's rhetoric have stoked fear among society's most vulnerable.

"There are gay, lesbian and transgender children in Democratic, Republican and independent families, some who fear for their lives," Budde said.

"The people who pick our crops and clean our office buildings; who labor in poultry farms and meat packing plants; who wash the dishes after we eat in restaurants and work the night shifts in hospitals, they — they may not be citizens or have the proper documentation. But the vast majority of immigrants are not criminals. They pay taxes and are good neighbors."

Trump criticized Budde's remarks, writing after midnight Wednesday morning on his Truth Social platform: "The so-called Bishop who spoke at the National Prayer Service on Tuesday morning was a Radical Left hard-line Trump hater."

"She brought her church into the World of politics in a very ungracious way. She was nasty in tone, and not compelling or smart."

Novak Djokovic booed off court after Australian Open semi-final exit

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Novak Djokovic faced an uncharacteristically harsh reception from some sections of the Rod Laver Arena crowd after retiring injured from his Australian Open semi-final against Alexander Zverev.

The 37-year-old Serbian star, aiming for an unprecedented 11th Australian Open title and a record-breaking 25th Grand Slam crown, withdrew following a grueling first set, which he lost 7-6 (7-5). Djokovic, who had heavily taped his upper left leg after sustaining a muscle tear during his quarter-final match against Carlos Alcaraz, appeared visibly hampered throughout the contest.

“I did everything I possibly could to manage the muscle tear,” Djokovic said post-match. “But towards the end of that first set, the pain became unbearable.”

Djokovic’s decision to retire came as a surprise to the 15,000-strong crowd. Audible boos rang out as the former world number one shook hands with Zverev and waved to the audience, offering a double thumbs-up despite their reaction.

Speaking to Serbian media about the crowd’s response, Djokovic expressed understanding but admitted to feeling disappointed. “People paid for tickets expecting a great match, which they didn’t get. I understand their frustration, but I’m not sure if they understand mine.”

Zverev, the German second seed, will now face defending champion and world number one Jannik Sinner in Sunday’s final. The Italian booked his place in the championship match with a straight-sets victory over Ben Shelton earlier in the day.

‘Don’t Boo an Injured Player,’ Says



Zverev
During his on-court interview, Zverev addressed the crowd’s reaction, defending Djokovic’s decision to retire.

“Please, don’t boo when a player is injured,” Zverev said. “Novak has given everything to tennis. He has played and won here with serious injuries before. If he cannot continue, it means he truly cannot.”

Former Australian player and television commentator John Millman echoed Zverev’s sentiments, calling the crowd’s reaction “a total lack of respect” in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter.

A Legacy of Defying Injury
Djokovic’s career is punctuated by remarkable triumphs over adversity. In 2021, he clinched the Australian Open title despite tearing an abdominal muscle in the third round. Two years later, he won again while battling a hamstring tear.

However, this year’s injury appeared insurmountable. Djokovic revealed that he had not practiced between his

quarter-final victory over Alcaraz and Friday’s semi-final, citing the need for recovery.

“I knew even if I won the first set, it would be an uphill battle to stay physically fit enough to compete,” Djokovic admitted.

Despite his struggles, Zverev praised Djokovic’s efforts, noting the high level of play in the opening set. “We had long, physical rallies, and I didn’t notice he was struggling much until the tie-break,” said the German, still in pursuit of his first Grand Slam title after two previous final losses.

What’s Next for Djokovic?
Djokovic’s future at the Australian Open remains uncertain. While he has previously pushed through severe injuries, his withdrawal this year raises questions about how much longer he can sustain his pursuit of greatness.

For now, fans will watch as Zverev and Sinner battle for the 2025 Australian Open title, but the memory of Djokovic’s early exit—and the controversial reaction it provoked—will linger long after the final serve.

Arsenal eye January striker signing amid injury crisis

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta has confirmed that the club is “actively looking” to sign a striker during the January transfer window to bolster their attacking options amid an injury crisis.

The Gunners have been hit hard by the loss of key players Gabriel Jesus, who is out for the season with an anterior cruciate ligament injury, and Bukayo Saka, sidelined with a long-term hamstring problem. These setbacks have left Arsenal short in the frontline as they aim to challenge for the Premier League title for the third consecutive season.

Arteta acknowledged the impact of the injuries during a press conference, stating, “We lost two very important players. We lack goals, options, and people in the frontline. Ideally, we need help, but we’ll only bring in the right player who can make an impact.”

Arsenal, currently six points behind leaders Liverpool, have also faced disappointing cup runs. They were knocked out of the FA Cup by Manchester United and trail Newcastle 2-0 after the first leg of



the Carabao Cup semi-final. Missed goalscoring opportunities have been a recurring issue.

The Gunners have been linked with potential targets such as RB Leipzig’s Benjamin Sesko and Wolves forward Matheus Cunha. However, Arteta stressed that completing a deal is not guaranteed, saying, “It doesn’t just depend on us—it’s about the market and various factors.”

Arteta also revealed that he sometimes consults his players about potential signings, especially if they’ve played with the target before, to gain insights into their character and adaptability.

“There’s more to a player than their stats,” Arteta explained. “How do they react during goal droughts? What kind of goals do they score? Do they thrive under physical pressure? These details are vital for success in this league.”

Midfielder Declan Rice recently hinted that the squad wouldn’t be surprised if Arsenal signed a striker, but Arteta emphasized that the team recognizes and adapts to the current challenges.

With time ticking in the January window, Arsenal fans will hope the club can secure a key addition to reignite their title challenge and strengthen their squad depth.

Garnacho's future uncertain as Man Utd edges Rangers in Europa League

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Manchester United took a step closer to the Europa League last 16 with a dramatic 2-1 victory over Rangers at Old Trafford, but questions linger over the futures of Alejandro Garnacho and Marcus Rashford as the January transfer window nears its close.

Head coach Ruben Amorim expressed uncertainty post-match, stating, "I don't know what will happen before the window closes on 3 February."

Rumours swirl around several United players, including Antony, linked with a loan to Real Betis, and Tyrell Malacia, who hopes to revive his career following injuries. However, Garnacho and Rashford remain the focal points of speculation.

Garnacho: A Rising Star with an Unclear Path

Chelsea and Napoli have reportedly shown interest in Garnacho, with Chelsea rumored to have submitted a bid nearing United's £60m valuation. Garnacho started against Rangers and impressed fans, twice coming close to scoring.

The Argentina international, signed from Atletico Madrid in 2020, has made 118 appearances for United, scoring 23 goals. This season, he has netted eight times in 32 games.



Fans chanted his name throughout the match, reflecting their affection for the 20-year-old. Amorim praised Garnacho's development but acknowledged the club's precarious financial position under Premier League Profit and Sustainability (PSR) rules. Selling Garnacho, a homegrown talent, would ease financial pressure but risk alienating supporters.

"Let's see in the next days," Amorim said. "He's improving in every aspect of the game. He has the potential to be so much better."

Rashford's Uncertain Standing

While Garnacho remains pivotal, Rashford's situation appears more definitive. Despite participating in training, Rashford has been absent from matchday squads since December. Sources close to the player insist he has no issues with Amorim and is willing to play, but options for a transfer are limited.

A potential move to AC Milan fell through due to the club's acquisition of Kyle Walker, while Barcelona's interest hinges on offloading players like Eric Garcia and Ansu Fati, neither of whom seem willing to leave.

Former United star Rio Ferdinand weighed in, suggesting Rashford's future likely lies away from Old Trafford. "The club wants to get him out. He needs a fresh start, and so does United," Ferdinand said.

Rashford, who debuted with immense promise, has struggled to replicate his early success. Ferdinand added, "When he burst onto the scene, he was full of joy. That spark has been missing for a while now."

As United gears up for their next match against Crystal Palace, set for the eve of the transfer deadline, fans wonder if Garnacho's standout performance was a farewell and if Rashford will get the chance to reignite his career elsewhere.

Club Under Pressure

Amorim's squad faces mounting challenges as injuries and inconsistent form threaten their title hopes. With financial constraints looming large, United must balance immediate needs with long-term sustainability, leaving fans and players alike in a state of uncertainty.