

# Obasa remains impeached, Lagos Assembly insists

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# FG denies sharing N50,000 child support to parents

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction has described as fake the purported Federal Government's N50,000 Child Support Grant for all Nigerian parents trending on social media.

the ministry's director of Information, Rhoda Iliya described the information as fake in a statement in Abuja on Saturday.

The statement cautioned parents to be wary of the activities of fraudsters trying to scam them.

"This is a scam trending on social media and the Ministry has tagged it as fake news.

"We are not aware of this registration portal and if the ministry will undertake such programmes there will be a proper enlightenment.

"Nigerians should be careful, don't be a victim of these scammers on social media.

"Also, alert your families, friends and well-wishers not to apply," the statement added.

Meanwhile, the Federal Government earlier announced the approval N4bn for conditional cash transfers to vulnerable households in Nigeria.

During the launch of the 2025 Nigeria Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan at the United Nations House in Abuja on Thursday, the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction, Professor Nentawe Yilwada, announced the interventions aimed at addressing the country's deepening humanitarian crisis.

This initiative is expected to support at least 10 million displaced

households, primarily targeting the most vulnerable members of society.

The cash transfer programme is set to commence in February and continue through April, focusing on alleviating the immediate needs of families affected by displacement, particularly in the Northeast.

Additionally, the government has approved N2bn in interest-free loans for farmers, specifically those in rural communities, to boost food production and self-sufficiency.

Professor Yilwada stated: "We are prioritising women, especially widows, pregnant women, and those with disabilities. The experiences of displaced women, particularly those facing pregnancy or disability, are

especially challenging. We understand these vulnerabilities and will continue to support those who are most in need.

"The President has approved the Ministry's plan to begin paying conditional cash transfers to 10 million displaced households between February and April. This initiative aims to support those most in need, particularly vulnerable families affected by displacement."



# THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

## PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

## PRODUCT COLOUR

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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
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HALF PAGE	213,000.00
QUARTER PAGE	106,500.00
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10X5	255,238.00
10X4	206,890.50
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9X6	254,977.00
9X5	225,738.00
9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
5X2	42,916.50
4X4	60,166.50
4X3	36,499.50
4X2	29,333.50
3X3	28,000.00
3X2	17,400.00
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10X4	192,500.00
10X3	171,000.00
9X6	232,500.00
9X5	206,000.00
9X4	177,500.00
9X3	150,000.00
8X6	216,000.00
8X3	98,500.00
7X4	164,002.00
6X4	94,010.50
6X3	78,500.00
6X2	47,500.00
5X5	100,000.00
5X4	61,500.00
5X3	57,819.00
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# Obasa remains impeached, Lagos Assembly insists

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

The Lagos State House of Assembly has reiterated its unwavering support for the new Speaker, Mojisola Meranda, reaffirming the impeachment of the former Speaker, Mudashiru Obasa.

Obasa, who was recently impeached by his colleagues over allegations of misconduct, during a welcome event organised in his honour by supporters at Ikeja GRA on Saturday, claimed that the process of his impeachment did not comply with constitutional procedures.

But in a statement signed Saturday by Ogundipe Olukayode, the Assembly dismissed Obasa's attempts to challenge the decision as "uncalled for and unparliamentary."

The Assembly stated, "It is imperative to clarify that over 2/3 of the members of the Lagos State House of Assembly are solidly united behind the new Speaker, Rt Hon Mojisola Lasbat Meranda, therefore we stood by the decision taken on the 13th of January where Rt Hon Mudashiru Ajayi Obasa

was impeached and we shall defend our positions to the latter.

"As elected representatives of the people of Lagos, we owe them good governance and harmonious relationship with other arms of government.

"The position of the House remains the same and nothing has changed. The position being canvassed by former Speaker, Rt Hon Obasa is uncalled for and unparliamentary," the statement read.

The lawmakers emphasized that their actions were in line with statutory orders and were a reflection of the Assembly's commitment to good governance.

The Assembly stated, "The majority of members elected Rt. Hon Mudashiru Obasa as Speaker for the 10th Assembly and we also at the said Plenary took majority decision to remove him and stand by the new Speaker so, nothing has changed.

"All members were elected from their various constituencies across the state



and we all have the inalienable rights under the necessary Statutory orders to remove their Principal officers, including the Speaker."

They appealed to Obasa to embrace peace, warning that his current "intransigent posture" risks destabilizing the state.

The statement added, "I therefore, appeal to the former Speaker to toe the line of peace and harmony as being followed by others, as the current intransigent posture will heat up the polity and not augur well.

"Any attempt to heat up the polity will be resisted by the majority of distinguished members who unanimously elected Rt Hon Meranda. Peace we want in Lagos and Peace we will achieve."

# Drone attack on Sudan hospital kills 70, injures 19

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

An attack on the Saudi Hospital in El-Fasher, located in western Sudan's besieged Darfur region, has resulted in the deaths of 70 individuals, with 19 others injured, the World Health Organisation (WHO) announced on Sunday.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus condemned the assault, noting that the hospital was crowded with patients when the attack occurred.

"The appalling attack on Saudi Hospital in El Fasher... led to 19 injuries and 70 deaths among patients and companions," Ghebreyesus wrote on social media.

Saudi Arabia also condemned the assault, labelling it a violation of international law and international

humanitarian law.

The kingdom called for the protection of medical and humanitarian workers and urged restraint in the ongoing conflict.

Since April 2023, Sudan has been embroiled in a violent conflict between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, leader of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

The RSF has laid siege to El-Fasher since May, although militias loyal to the army have successfully thwarted repeated attempts to capture the city. The war has devastated Sudan,



leading to tens of thousands of deaths and the displacement of more than 12 million people.

Widespread famine has also gripped the country, with many families in the west and south struggling to survive on grass and animal fodder.

# Boko Haram kills Army Commander, 2 senior officers, 17 soldiers in Borno

By Dave Oludare Oso

**B**oko Haram terrorists have killed over 20 Nigerian Army personnel, with many still missing following an attack on a military base in Borno State.

It was learnt that for several hours on Friday, January 24, 2025, the terrorists attacked the 149 Battalion in Malam-Fatori, the headquarters of Abadam Local Government Area of Borno State.

Malam-Fatori is a border town between Nigeria and Niger Republic, and thousands of people displaced by the Boko Haram insurgency are currently taking refuge in the town.

Sources confirmed to SaharaReporters that the insurgents attacked the base with multiple gun trucks.

The sources added that the terrorists razed many buildings and military operational vehicles during the attack.

Apart from the dead bodies recovered, many other soldiers were seriously injured while a yet-to-be ascertained number of personnel were still missing as of Saturday.

The commanding officer of the battalion, two senior officers including the base medical director were among those killed.

This comes a few days after the terror group launched a brutal attack on the military's Forward Operating Base in the Damboa Local Government Area of Borno State, killing a yet-to-be confirmed number of soldiers, with many believed to still be missing.

"25 Taskforce Bde was attacked during the weekend with so many casualties, so far we have recovered over seven bodies," a source had told SaharaReporters.

"The terror group invaded the camp FOB Sabon Gari around 4am on Saturday, using various weapons."

ISWAP subsequently claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement.

Also attached to the statement were pictures of members shooting



sporadically towards the military facility.

Since the death of JAS leader, Abubakar Shekau, ISWAP has been consolidating its grip in locations around Lake Chad.

The sect's membership has swollen with the defection of hundreds of Boko Haram fighters under Shekau.

The Nigerian Army has repeatedly claimed that insurgency had been largely defeated and frequently underplays any losses.

The terror group has caused over 100,000 deaths and displaced millions of people mainly in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states.

# EFCC names Academy building after officer killed in Anambra

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**T**he Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has named the administrative block of its Academy in Karu, Abuja after Aminu Sahabi Salisu, one of its operatives who was recently killed on duty in Anambra State.

Salisu, an Assistant Superintendent, ASE 1, was shot to death by a suspected internet fraudster identified as Joshua Chukwubueze Ikechukwu during a sting midnight operation in Awka, the state capital on January 17, 2025.

The killer was later arrested by the Anambra State Police Command while hiding in the ceiling of his neighbour's room following the crime.

Salisu was later flown to Sokoto State for burial.

EFCC Chairman, Mr. Ola Olukoyede disclosed in Abuja on Saturday, January 25, 2025, that the gesture was

done to immortalize the slain officer.

He said this while addressing staff of the Commission at the Annual Rewards and Recognition Ceremony held at the EFCC's Academy.

According to him, Salisu paid the supreme price in the service of the nation and his memory should be kept alive.

"We are saddened by the loss of our officer while on official assignment. He was a gallant officer and to this effect, the administrative block of the Academy is hereby named after him," he said.

At the ceremony, 36 officers of the Commission were rewarded in different categories. The categories include section with highest recovery, section with highest conviction, lawyer with highest conviction, best departmental staff, best zonal directorate, staff of the year, among

others.

Commenting on the winners of various rewards, the EFCC boss said, "I want to congratulate all the winners for their roles. I can only charge you all not to rest on our oars.

"Excellence is not about doing things right once in a while, it is about doing things right all the time. You need to continue to offer the best as the reward for hard work is more work."

Among recipients of the rewards, Chief Superintendent of the EFCC, CSE Alvan Gurumnaan emerged as the Staff Member of the Year while the Sokoto Zonal Directorate emerged as the Best Directorate of the Year. The other awardees are Bitrus Yakubu, Katmi Kefas, Halilu Dauda, Nenman Danladi, Oluwakemi Aaron, Yusuf Umar, Michael Adukwu Uchechika, David Solomon, among others.



# NYSC awards corps members over N3.2m grants to foster entrepreneurship

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) has awarded over N3.2 million in business grants to Corps members in a bid to encourage entrepreneurship and reduce unemployment among Nigerian graduates.

The grants were presented as part of an ongoing effort to empower Corps members towards self-employment.

Brigadier General YD Ahmed, the NYSC Director General, made the announcement in a statement issued on Sunday, January 26, by the Acting Director of Information and Public Relations, Caroline Embu.

In his statement, Ahmed reaffirmed his administration's commitment to partnering with stakeholders to provide empowerment opportunities for Corps members.

"As part of my five-point policy thrust, my administration will continue to work relentlessly towards reducing the number of unemployed graduate youths in Nigeria," Ahmed said, adding that efforts would remain focused on enhancing the prospects of Corps members through self-

employment initiatives.

The grants were awarded to five Corps members, whose business ideas spanned sectors such as fashion, food and confectioneries, and horticulture.

The recipients are: Enwemeka Blessing, Abdumalik Ibrahim, Akande Olaitan Sunday, Blessing Ijeoma Omachi, and Emmanuel Ali.

The first three recipients each received N750,000, while the latter two were awarded N350,000 each.

The grants were presented by Love Uloko, the founder of Activate Success International Foundation, at the NYSC National Directorate Headquarters in Maitama, Abuja.

Uloko highlighted that the beneficiaries were selected based on a rigorous, merit-based process, with each demonstrating creativity, resilience, and strong potential for success.

"We have supported 53 Corps members



through this initiative, investing in their dreams, nurturing their potential, and sowing seeds of success that will grow for years to come," Uloko stated. For over seven years, Activate Success International Foundation has partnered with the NYSC to provide transformative opportunities for Corps members, helping them discover their talents, pursue their passions, and build purposeful lives.

Uloko also expressed appreciation for the NYSC Director General and his management team for their unwavering support in empowering Nigerian youth.

# Lagos set to refund over N223m to 2023 Hajj pilgrims

By Friday Omosola

The Lagos State Muslims Pilgrims Welfare Board has finalized arrangements to refund a total of N223 million to pilgrims who participated in the Y2023 Holy Pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia through the state.

This was disclosed in a statement by the Board Secretary, Saheed Onipede, and released by the Board's Public Affairs Officer, Taofeek Lawal.

Onipede revealed that the sum of N223 million was received from the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) as a refund for services that were not rendered by Saudi Authorities during the pilgrimage.

He further stated that each of the 3,651 pilgrims/beneficiaries is entitled to N61,080, a measure aimed at addressing the inconveniences they encountered during the exercise.

To facilitate the refund, the Board outlined specific requirements for both living and deceased pilgrims.

Living pilgrims are required to submit an

application letter, photocopies of their International Passport data page, Nigeria/Saudi Immigration stamped pages (in-bound and out-bound), and their account details.

For deceased pilgrims, families must present a death certificate, details of the next of kin as indicated in the Hajj form, an affidavit, and the relevant immigration-stamped pages. Addressing concerns over the process, Onipede assured that the State is committed to a seamless and stress-free refund for all beneficiaries. "As the Centre of Excellence, the State will not deny its pilgrims their rights and privileges in any way," he affirmed.

This refund follows NAHCON's announcement in November 2024 of a nationwide disbursement totalling N4.48 billion to State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Boards, the Federal



**LAGOS STATE**  
Muslim Pilgrims' Welfare Board

Capital Territory (FCT), the Armed Forces, and accredited Tour Operators.

The refund was necessitated by services not properly rendered to Y2023 Hajj pilgrims, particularly at Muna and Arafah.

The Lagos State Government reiterated its commitment to ensuring transparency and accountability in the process, urging all eligible beneficiaries to adhere to the specified requirements for prompt disbursement.

# Troops destroy 13 illegal N'Delta refineries, nab 15 oil thieves

By Dave Oludare Oso



In one of its clear-out operations, troops of the 6 Division of the Nigerian Army have dismantled 13 illegal refining sites and recovered 300,000 litres of stolen crude oil.

The troops also arrested 15 suspected oil thieves.

Confirming the development, the Acting Deputy Director, 6 Division Army Public Relations, Jonah Danjuma, in a statement issued in Port Harcourt on Sunday, said this was achieved in a major operation targeting oil theft in the Niger Delta in one week.

He said the operations, conducted from January 20 to 26, 2025, spanned Rivers, Delta, Edo, and Akwa Ibom states.

The statement read, "Troops of 6 Division, Nigerian Army, have continued to tighten the noose against oil thieves, with numerous successes resonating across the joint operations area.

"These successes included the dismantling of 13 illegal bunkering hubs, four boats demobilised, the arrest of 15 oil thieves, over 150 locally made ovens deactivated, and the recovery of over 300,000 litres of stolen products.

"The operations were conducted closely with other sister services from

January 20-26, 2025."

The statement further said, "At Ugo Community in Orhiomwon LGA, Edo State, troops discovered a vandalised point containing 252,000 litres of stolen crude oil. Further searches led to the recovery of a pumping machine, hoses, and pipes.

"Also in Delta State, troops intercepted a red 30,000-litre capacity tanker truck without a plate number siphoning crude oil from a PAN Ocean Nigeria Limited pipeline in Ethiopie West LGA. Over 15,000 litres had already been siphoned before the truck was stopped."

According to Danjuma, "In Rivers State, along the Imo River corridor, over 10,000 litres of stolen products were confiscated from Lekuma, Abiama, and Oyigbo. Troops also uncovered an active illegal refining site near Owaza general area, recovering a pump-action rifle after the criminals fled.

"At Obiafu Oil Field in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGA, troops dismantled three illegal refining sites containing ten cooking drums, eight reservoirs, and two rolls of hose. Meanwhile, at Abalama Community in Asari-Toru LGA, troops seized over 1,500 litres of illegally refined Automotive Gas Oil (AGO) and Dual Purpose Kerosene (DPK).

"At Abacheke in ONELGA, troops

dismantled four illegal refining sites containing 145 locally made oven drums and 5,700 litres of stolen AGO. Another 3,500 litres of stolen products were found in a concealed reservoir, and eight suspects were arrested.

"Troops raided an AGO storage facility at Ikot Abia in Ikot Ekpene LGA, Akwa Ibom State, recovering 30 polythene bags filled with stolen AGO and several empty jerricans.

"In the Isonogbene area of Brass LGA, Bayelsa State, troops dismantled two illegal refining sites and recovered over 5,000 litres of stolen crude oil."

The statement also said the General Officer Commanding (GOC) 6 Division, Major General Emmanuel Emekah, lauded the troops for their efforts in combating oil theft and pipeline vandalism.

"The days of criminal elements masquerading as economic saboteurs are numbered.

"They must either turn a new leaf and embrace legitimate means of livelihood or be ready to face renewed onslaught," Emekah said.



# Soyinka bags Lifetime Achievement Award at 1st-ever African Literature Festival

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



**W**orld-renowned writer and Nobel Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka has been honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award.

The distinguished poet was given the award at the first-ever Sharjah Festival of African Literature on 24 January 2025 at University City Hall in Sharjah, the third-most populous city in the United Arab Emirates.

Organised by the Sharjah Book Authority (SBA), the festival brings together 29 Emirati and African authors, including Nobel laureates, Abdulrazak Gurnah and Wole Soyinka, across eight book discussions and three seminars.

The award was conferred by Sheikha Bodour Al Qasimi, recognizing Soyinka's extraordinary contributions to African literature and his impact as a global literary icon. This landmark event, which began on January 24 and will run until January 27, is co-curated by the Book Buzz Foundation, founded and directed by Lola Shoneyin, a prominent literary figure renowned for curating the Ake Arts and Book Festival and the Kaduna Book and Arts Festival.

The festival has brought together a stellar lineup of African literary voices, including Prof. Wole Soyinka; Prof. Abdulrazak Gurnah, Alain Mabanckou, Jennifer Makumbi, Petina Gappah, Nnedi Okorafor,

Peter Kimani, Yvonne Owuor, Chika Unigwe, Tendai Huchu, Wole Talabi.

Others include Cheryl Ntumi, Fatima Bala, Nnamdi Ehirim, Umar Abubakar Sidi, and poets Wana Udobang, Maryam Bukar Hassan, Deborah Johnson, Dami Ajayi (author and poet), Ann Masina (South African singer), and notable guests like Ifeoma Esiri, Mara Menzies, Ade Bantu, Aryn Bawa-Allah, Kenanao Phele, Wendy Njoroge, Abdulkareem Baba-Aminu, and Dr Olaokun Soyinka.

The festival reflects the UAE's dedication to fostering global literary exchange and highlighting African stories and culture on an international stage.

The event has transformed into an immersive, open-air experience. Live music flows seamlessly alongside over 15 food trucks offering everything from African to global cuisine. Family seating areas are spread across the grounds, turning the festival ground into a vibrant carnival of flavours, sounds, and entertainment for all visitors.

Visitors are treated to a wide range of activities, from traditional African dance performances steeped in cultural heritage to workshops where children learn the art of traditional pottery. They can enjoy interactive dance, art exhibitions laced with African folklore, and cooking workshops offering a glimpse into Africa's culinary secrets.

One of the festival's standout performances will be by Ann Masina on Sunday, January 26, from 9–10 pm. The renowned artist, known for blending opera with South African rhythms, will captivate the Sharjah audience with a fusion of classical and contemporary sounds, drawing them into a musical narrative that bridges tradition and innovation.

In addition, the festival lineup is brimming with vibrant performances, including a unique blend of Sudanese melodies, Arabic tunes, and infectious African beats, all of which promise to leave a lasting impression on the audience.

These vibrant activities are part of a broader program that includes panel discussions and literary sessions featuring 29 Emirati and African authors, including Nobel laureates, who will engage in eight book discussions and three seminars.

The sessions will delve into the profound contributions of African literature and art to global culture, fostering a meaningful dialogue among writers, intellectuals, artists, and the audience alike.

The sessions will highlight the invaluable contributions of African literature and art to the global cultural landscape and facilitate networking between writers, intellectuals, artists, and audiences.

The festival's programme features 12 creative workshops designed for children, including African storytelling stones, African Pottery, and African jewellery making.

The workshops introduce young participants to the continent's rich traditional and artisanal arts. Additionally, reading sessions of African Folk Tales will bring Africa's popular and folkloric heritage to life in an engaging and inspiring manner.



# Kwara govt launches regional offices to boost health accessibility

By Friday Omosola

The Kwara State Health Insurance Agency (KWHIA) has further strengthened its commitment to providing affordable and quality healthcare services by opening three regional offices across the state's geopolitical zones.

The move aims to improve accessibility and ensure that no resident is left behind in the quest for better health outcomes.

Speaking at an inter-ministerial press briefing organised by the Kwara State Ministry of Communications, the Executive Secretary of KWHIA, Olubunmi Jetawo-Winter, emphasised the agency's mandate to deliver accessible healthcare services to all residents, regardless of tribe or religious beliefs.

Represented by the Controller of Finance and Accounts, Mr. Atobiloye Muffiu, Jetawo-Winter revealed that the agency is targeting the enrollment of at least 250,000 individuals from formal, informal, and indigent sectors into the health insurance scheme.

"The commissioning of regional offices is part of our efforts to ensure the benefits of this scheme reach every corner of Kwara State," Jetawo-Winter stated.

She highlighted the government's significant investment in the scheme, particularly for indigent residents, reflecting the administration's prioritization of healthcare for all.

The Executive Secretary also underscored the importance of staff capacity building to enhance service delivery.

She noted that the agency recently organised training on health insurance administration, digital literacy, and marketing for its staff to ensure effective and efficient healthcare service delivery.

"Kwara Care remains committed to improving health outcomes for all residents of Kwara State through



effective service delivery," Jetawo-Winter said.

In her opening remarks, the Commissioner for Communications, Bola Olukoju, lauded the strides of Governor Abdulrahman AbdulRazaq's administration across various sectors, including healthcare. She described the press briefing as an opportunity for heads of Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) to highlight their achievements to the public.

# Gov Alia launches initiative for returning IDPs back home

By Friday Omosola

Benue State Governor, Hyacinth Alia, has unveiled the 'Action Plan on Durable Solutions', an initiative aimed at facilitating the safe and sustainable return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their ancestral homes.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that the governor, during a visit to the dry season farm project site along Gboko Road, Makurdi, announced the initiative. However, in a statement yesterday, he emphasised the robust and strategic framework designed to return, integrate, and resettle over 500,000 displaced persons in Benue State.

Governor Alia described the initiative as a pivotal milestone in his administration's journey toward securing lasting solutions for IDPs.

He further noted that, with the collective support of local and international partners, the initiative seeks not only to address displacement but to transform it into an opportunity for sustainable

development.

"Already, lands have been generously donated by communities in Makurdi, Guma, Kwande, Gwer-West, Agatu, and Logo for relocation and farming, ensuring that our displaced population can rebuild their lives with dignity.

"This journey has been made possible through ongoing community dialogues, government initiatives, and partnerships with agencies such as the IOM, UNHCR, and the Federal Government. Notable projects include the construction of over 4,000 dignified shelters with access to essential services in Guma LGA", said the governor.

He further announced that 10% of the 2025 State Budget had been allocated to ensuring the successful implementation of this Action Plan, reaffirming his administration's commitment to building a future



where no one is left behind.

He stated that, together, the state was creating a new narrative—one of peace, prosperity, and enduring hope for the people—while urging the Federal Government, UN agencies, international partners, and citizens to unite in making this vision a reality.

"I would like to thank President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, UN agencies such as UNHCR, IOM, UNDP, the RC's office, and other development partners for their support."

# World Bank charges CBN on inflation-control measures

By Dave Oludare Oso

The World Bank Group has advised the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to sustain efforts to tackle inflation, as Nigeria's inflation rose to 34.8 percent in December — up from 33.6 percent in November.

Senior economist for Nigeria at World Bank Group, Sameer Matta, said this at the launch of the 2025 macroeconomic outlook of the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) weekend.

Matta said during a panel sessions at the event that the CBN must focus on taming inflation.

The economist said, "I think what is critical in terms of inflation is to stay the course. I think that the central bank needs to continue to be focused on making sure that inflation is under control.

"Obviously, part of it is related to the supply side. What can be done to improve the yield on the agriculture side? What can be done to improve the link between rural and urban areas?"

"There is the question of what can be done on the trade policy side. One would be to increase production locally, but that would take time.

"One of the things that can be done on the trade policy side is to think through which sectors could be targeted to allow some tariffs to be adjusted."

Matta said the cost of not doing reforms is 2 percent of Nigeria's gross domestic product (GDP) for fuel subsidy and 2 percent of GDP for foreign exchange (FX) subsidy.

"That's five percent of GDP, and that is extremely high," he said.

"I would liken these reforms to someone with a hard medical condition who had to make tough choices.

"Let's not forget that at some point in Nigeria, the debt service to revenue was 100 percent; now, the good news is that we are around 50 percent, and that is a big decline.

"The cost of reforms comes mainly from high inflation, and in the case of Nigeria specifically, food inflation is impacted by FX and the fact that lots of agricultural products are impacted by the price of petrol.

"That means the impact of these reforms is being felt by the most vulnerable.

"It is very important that the government continues on the reforms on social



protection but also accelerates the roll-out of these cash transfers. It is more important to finance them over the future.

"It will be very important to continue to encourage the authorities to scale up and accelerate these interventions, which are time-bound and targeted at those who are really impacted and done through a digital way to avoid any potential misuse in the future."

Also speaking on inflation, Christian Ebeke, Nigeria's country representative at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), reiterated the need for coordination between the fiscal and monetary authorities.

He said it is important that efforts to bring inflation down by the fiscal authorities are done in the "context of better coordination."

Ebeke said, "For example, one of the key decisions that took place last year was the commitment by both the central bank and the fiscal authorities to strengthen coordination.

"We didn't see Ways and Means accrue again as we have seen in the past year in Nigeria, and it was welcome.

"This is something that should bring inflation down by tightening financial conditions but also by reducing money in circulation.

"The other important thing for the fiscal authorities to do is to tackle any distribution consequences of the reforms that have been implemented.

"Naira reforms or the completion of the fuel subsidy removal. We know that these key reforms in Nigeria will have redistributive consequences on

the most vulnerable, and they may not be able to cope.

"Fiscal authorities have a key role to play because the transmission lag of fiscal policies is shorter compared to monetary policies.

"So, issues of social protection are very important. That is how fiscal policies can complement what the monetary authorities are doing."

On the ways and means, Ebeke said Nigeria should not have been in that position.

"Cleaning up this big problem is taking time, and the persistent effect of the Ways and Means on inflation and, in general terms, on financial conditions," he said.

"The CBN is trying to mop up liquidity. Just the practice of having deficit monetisation, as has been practiced in Nigeria for years, is now over.

"Again, big congratulations to both the CBN and the fiscal authorities for curbing that.

"Now, when it comes to the securitisation of these, central banks around the world have a memorandum of understanding with the fiscal authorities on this type of liability management.

"The securitisation has the benefit of spreading out the maturities. Also, this has been done transparently, so this is good."

According to Ebeke, with the independence and fiscal prudence of the CBN, the country ought not to experience macroeconomic pressure, as well as the effect on the parallel exchange rate and



# I'm not desperate to be president – Peter Obi

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

The presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP) in the 2023 general elections, Peter Obi has said he is not desperate to become president of Nigeria.

Speaking at the fourth convocation ceremony of Nexford University, a US-based online school on Saturday, Obi decried the state of leadership in the country, describing it as “an imposition on the people.”

A former governor of Anambra State, Obi urged the graduating students to embrace the spirit of servitude to lead effectively and “ignite the needed change.”

Maintaining that he is “desperate to see the country work,” the former governor said, “All of these that we are saying is for you to use it and ignite that change and support. It is not for you to start saying ‘I want to be in charge. I want to do this. I want to do that.’”

“When people say I am desperate I say ‘No.’ I am not desperate to be Nigeria’s president.’ I am desperate to see Nigeria work because it can work.”

He said Nigerian youths must help to

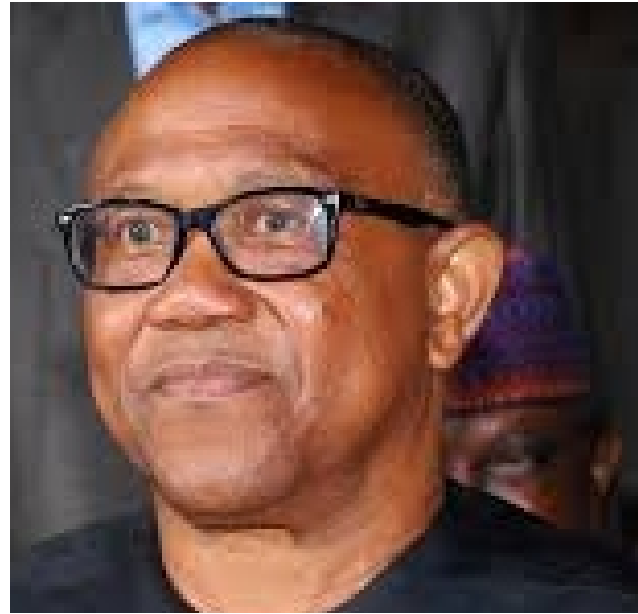
reignite the “right leadership that the country requires for development.

“James Robinson, one of the Nobel laureates in economics, last year said it openly that Nigeria is a country that knows what to do to prosper and refuses to do it.

“How can you allow drivers and people who are at their destinations to drive you? You will lose. They have passed their destinations. They have passed their time.

“That is what you should help to reignite. Use what you have henceforth to help us change the society. Do not go and be part of this. You are a victim of Nigeria. Because our age and the one before refused to do what is right and we are suffering for it.”

Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples



Democratic Party (PDP) picked Obi as his running mate in the 2019 presidential election.

Four years later, Obi contested for the presidential office under the LP but polled third behind Abubakar and Bola Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

## Anambra hotel pulled down after discovery of 30 graves, shrine

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

Following the discovery of 30 graves, a shrine, an army uniform, and live cartridges, the Udoka Golden Point Hotel and Suites, aka “La Cruise Hotel” along Onitsha-Owerri Road, Oba in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State, has been demolished by the state security outfit ‘Operation Udo Ga-Achi’ codenamed ‘Agunechemba.’

The security outfit said the hotel served as a den of kidnappers and hideout for other criminals.

According to a statement by the Anambra State New Media shared on X Saturday night, the hotel has well-partitioned graves of over 30 individuals on the top floor of the two-story building, along with a shrine.

According to SaharaReporters, the newly launched security outfit had successfully busted notorious kidnappers’ hideouts in Isiagu, Awka South Local Government Area on January 20.

However, in a video clip seen by SaharaReporters on Sunday, the leader of the team is overheard saying, “They have their shrine and live cartridges and ammunition were recovered by the time we were removing the pot. The pot is presently

at the SARS Office in Awkuzu.

“The pot has blood content and we have some live ammunition and cartridges that we recovered from here and we have already moved them out and we have handed them over to the police at IRS in Awkuzu; they are currently with them.

“They kept it as evidence and also as exhibit. So you can see feathers. This thing, they built it on top of the hotel where they perform most of the spiritual activities.”

The voice added, “You can also see how well they partitioned graves of over 30 people on the last floor with a shrine.”

Confirming the development, the Chief Press Secretary to Governor Chukwuma Soludo, Christian Aburime said the demolition was carried out on Saturday by the State Security outfit, Agunechemba.

He said, “The hotel was destroyed because of investigation leading to that place as being a kidnappers’ den.

“A lot of things were discovered there – graves, army uniform, live cartridges and something like that. In short, after

the hotel was brought down, the community people were happy because they had been complaining that every night they heard gunshots there.

“You know the people who should be giving the government information about these criminal activities were afraid, because if you give credible report, someone who knows you will say you are the one who told the police. But with this Homeland Security Law 2025 now in place and everything that the government has put in place, it will be much easier to get these criminals and flush them out of Anambra State.

“We are making serious progress ridding the state of criminals and we must commend this drastic action the government has taken. It is already yielding positive results. More buildings will be destroyed if there are links that they are connected to any kidnapping, robbery and hired killers, especially kidnapping. The house will be brought down and the owner will be prosecuted.



# SERAP sues FG over 50% telecom tariff hike

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has filed a lawsuit against the Federal Government over the recent 50 per cent hike in the telecom tariff by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC).

Joining the NCC as a defendant in the suit, SERAP regards the tariff increase as “arbitrary, unconstitutional, unlawful, unfair, and unreasonable.”

With the increase, the average price of calls will rise to N16.5 per minute from N11; the cost of 1GB of data will rise to N431.25 from N287.5/GB; and SMS prices to N6 from N4.

In the suit number FHC/ABJ/CS/111/2025 filed on Friday at the Federal High Court, Abuja, SERAP is asking the court to determine “whether the unilateral decision by the NCC to authorise telcos to hike telecom tariffs by 50 percent is not arbitrary, unconstitutional, unlawful, unfair, unreasonable and inconsistent with citizens’ freedom of expression and access to information.”

It also wants “a declaration that the unilateral decision by the NCC to authorise telcos to hike telecom tariff by 50 per cent is arbitrary, unfair, unreasonable and inconsistent and incompatible with citizens’ freedom of expression and access to information, and therefore unconstitutional and unlawful.

“An order of interim injunction restraining the NCC, its officers, agents, privies, assigns, or any other person or persons acting on its instructions from further implementing, enforcing and doing any act to give effect to the decision of the NCC authorizing telecom tariff hike by 50 per cent.”

In the suit, SERAP is arguing that: “The legal and constitutional provisions as well as international standards on freedom of expression and access to information constitute the repository of legality. The requirements of legality constrain the exercise of statutory powers by the NCC to authorise any increase in telecom tariffs.”

The suit filed on behalf of SERAP by its lawyer, Ebun-Olu Adegboruwa, SAN, read in part: “The demands of legality impose clear duties of fairness and reasonableness on the NCC in the exercise of its powers to authorize the telecom tariff hike by 50 percent, which is the subject-matter of this suit.



Socio-Economic Rights  
& Accountability Project

“The NCC is required under the legal provisions on consumers’ rights and constitutional and international standards on freedom of expression and access to information to base its decision on reasonable interpretations of its enabling statutes and guidelines and other relevant legal frameworks and to follow due process.

“The exercise of the statutory powers of the NCC in approving the telecom tariff hike is a grave violation of the provisions of the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2018, the Nigerian Constitution 1999 (as amended) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights to which Nigeria is a state party.

“These legal and constitutional provisions and international human rights standards recognize that every individual has the right to an equal opportunity to receive, seek and impart information through any communication medium without discrimination.

“The constitutional and democratic anomalies complained of by SERAP is more apparent when the said unilateral decision of the NCC approving a 50 per cent increase in telecommunication tariffs is juxtaposed with the apparent procedural breaches of the condition-precedent for any approval of the increase.”

SERAP is therefore asking the court for the following reliefs:

”A declaration that the unilateral decision of the NCC approving the increase of telecommunications tariff by 50 percent is arbitrary, unfair, unreasonable, and a deliberate attempt to stifle the constitutional and international human rights of citizens to

freely express themselves and share information, and breach of sections 104 and 127 of the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2018, section 39 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 [as amended] and Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) Act and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Nigeria is a state party.

”An order setting aside the unilateral decision of the NCC approving the increase of telecommunications tariff by 50 percent contained in a press statement published by the NCC on 20th January 2025 for being arbitrary, unfair, extortionate, unreasonable, unconstitutional and a breach of the provisions of Sections 104 and 127 of the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2018, section 39 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) Act and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Nigeria is a state party.

”An order restraining the NCC, its agents, assigns, privies and or representatives or such other persons acting on its behalf, and all telecommunication companies in Nigeria from implementing and/or enforcing the unilateral decision of the NCC approving the increase of telecommunications tariff by 50 percent as contained in a press statement published by the NCC on 20th January 2025.

# Ex-Gombe perm sec killed after payment of N10m ransom

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**K**idnappers of a retired Permanent Secretary from Gombe State, Atiku Mu'azu, have killed him in Kano after collecting a ransom of N10 million from members of his family.

Mu'azu, a former Chairman of the Gombe State Board of Internal Revenue Service was residing at Kabuga/Jan Bulo Estate along Gwarzo Road, in Kano State when tragedy struck.

According to NAN, the deceased received a phone call from his mechanic that his stolen car was found, with the mechanic telling him to meet him (mechanic) at an undisclosed location to recover the stolen vehicle.

Unfortunately, Atiku met them at the said location where he was forcefully held hostage.

A source narrated to newsmen that, "Later, the abductors reached his family with a ransom demand of N20 million. but the family could only raise N10 million, which the abductors collected, only to later drop his dead body by the roadside of a different location. A suspect has been arrested, but the mechanic is on the run."

However, the Kano State Police Command could not be reached for confirmation at the time of filling this report.

Governor Muhammadu Yahaya of Gombe State confirmed the tragic incident on Saturday, expressing deep dismay and shock over the gruesome murder.

In a condolence message signed by the Director-General, Press Affairs, Gombe Government House, Governor Yahaya commended the swift response of security agencies, who have since apprehended a suspect in connection with the killing of Atiku.

Calling for a thorough investigation and justice in the case, the statement reads, "On behalf of the government and people of Gombe State, Governor Inuwa Yahaya extends his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family, friends, and associates of the deceased, as well as the people of Kalishen in Shongom Local Government Area, where he hailed from."

NEW DAILY PRIME reports that on Friday, police in Kano raised the alarm



over plots by terrorists to launch deadly attacks at strategic public facilities in Kano.

A statement by the state Police Command spokesperson, SP Abdullahi Haruna Kiyawa urged members of the public to report suspicious movements to the police.

Kiyawa said 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.

The statement added, "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.

"To ensure a peaceful Kano State, necessary security arrangements have been put in place. A team of experts

from the Command's Explosive Ordinance 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 reporting suspicious persons or item(s).

"We encourage residents to report any emergency or suspicious activity to the nearest Police Station or contact the Kano State Police Command through the following e m e r g e n c y numbers:08032419754,08123821575,09029292926.

"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."



# Obasanjo calls for preservation of African cultural heritage

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo has urged for the preservation and celebration of African cultural heritage, stressing its importance to the continent's identity.

Obasanjo made these remarks on Sunday, January 26, during a luncheon hosted in honour of renowned female drummer, Aralola Olamuyiwa, also known as Ara, at the Green Legacy Resort within the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library in Abeokuta.

Lamenting the relegation of African traditions in favour of Western cultures, Obasanjo stated, "Culture is the totality of who we are. Unfortunately, we have relegated some aspects of our culture to the background—our food, our language, our dress, and so on."

He also expressed concern over the diminishing status of African languages, notably Yoruba, which he emphasised should be celebrated as "authentic" and not dismissed as "vernacular."

Reflecting on the cultural significance of African beliefs, he said, "I am a Christian, but whoever says Ifa Orunmila is nothing must be a fool. Orunmila has been with us before Christianity or Islam."



Obasanjo praised Ara for breaking cultural taboos and helping to preserve African heritage through her mastery of the talking drum, a traditional instrument.

"Growing up, there were two things you would never see a woman doing: climbing a palm tree or drumming. But Ara, with her tenacity, has broken that barrier," Obasanjo said.

"She is now known all over the world as a drummer, helping sustain our cultural heritage."

He encouraged young people to be inspired by Ara's determination,

saying, "Whatever good your hands find to do, do it well, and I will celebrate you."

Ara, who had survived a life-threatening illness the previous year, expressed her deep gratitude to the former President, acknowledging the honour as a moment she would treasure for the rest of her life.

The Ondo State-born drummer shared that the celebration of her 50th birthday was a way of giving thanks to God for her recovery and continued success on the global stage.

# NAUS condemns 50% telecom tariff hike

by NCC By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The National Association of University Students (NAUS) has condemned the recent 50% tariff hike announced by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC).

In a press statement, by its National Director of Campus Interventions, Comrade Ologe John Oluwatobiloba, he said that the tariff hike "ill-advised" and urged the federal government, and the National Assembly to stop the increase.

NAUS strongly believes that this significant increase in tariffs will create an unnecessary financial burden on students and other vulnerable populations who depend on affordable communication



services for academic and daily activities.

In response to this move, NAUS has issued a 72-hour ultimatum to the NCC to reverse this decision and restore the previous tariff rates.

The association warned that failure to meet this demand will result in mass protests and calls for the resignation of NCC officials responsible for what it describes as an unjustifiable hike.

Comrade Oluwatobiloba urged students and concerned citizens to unite in solidarity against this oppressive action and to demand fair and affordable communication services for all

Nigerians.



# Young Nigerian lady breaks UK university's 121-yr-old record

By Dave Oludare Oso



**B**ecomes 1st black woman to graduate with a first-class degree

A young Nigerian lady named Osarieme Omonuwa broke the 121-year-old record of the University of Reading after she made history as the first-ever black woman to graduate from the university with a first-class degree.

Omonuwa obtained a Bachelor of Law (LL.B) at the University of Reading, England in the United Kingdom with first-class honors in 2024. Her achievement is history-making as she became the first black woman to graduate from the university to earn a degree with first-class grade.

He also received the University of Reading scholarship award and won recognition as the overall best in the international foundation programme. The university's vice chancellor described her as a representative of their brightest and best students.

Omonuwa's father, Augustine Omonuwa said he is very proud of her achievement adding that it is a

testament of her hard work.

"I feel on top of the world as a father. I am a proud and happy father. She dedicated herself to the study and she got the reward," he said.

Augustine, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) said he influenced his daughter's decision to study law. Given his legal background and that of his son, who is an engineer, he felt a strong desire for his daughter to follow in his professional footsteps.

To achieve this, he exposed her to top law firms and encouraged her to pursue a law degree. He said he felt a sense of responsibility to guide her towards this path and would have felt guilty if she had chosen a different career.

Augustine said despite her high school's recommendation for a science-based path, he insisted on law due to their shared initials and his professional aspirations.

Omonuwa stated that she is honored and grateful to God for bringing her

this far and also thankful to her family members who have encouraged her over the years to be a success.

"My father is a legal practitioner, who is so passionate about law. Anytime I have doubt he is always there to put me through difficult situations. He has been my rock and foundation. My mother has been wonderful and my big brother too is there advising me," she said.

Talking about how she felt when she learned about her achievement, Omonuwa said she felt delighted to win the Chancellor's Award. She added that she was not aware the kind of award existed, but she was sure she would graduate as one of the top students.

She said her greatest fear in life is failure or disappointment and believes the higher you go the farther you can fall.

"The fact that I am on a particular platform always urges me to push on," she said.



# ‘Historic day,’ says Ganduje as he welcomes opposition defectors

By Friday Omosola

The National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Abdullahi Ganduje, described the defection of supporters from opposition parties in Katsina State as a “great and historic day.”

On Sunday, several defectors, primarily from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), Accord Party, and Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), among others, officially joined the APC.

While addressing the defectors, including Rabiun Bakori, the PDP deputy governorship candidate for the 2015 election in Katsina, Ganduje assured them of equal treatment.

He emphasised that the APC remains the only party committed to delivering true dividends of democracy to the citizens.

APC National Chairman Abdullahi Ganduje and others during the official flag-off of the APC Local Government Elections Campaign held in Ingawa Local Government Area

Ganduje and others during the official flag-off of the APC Local Government Elections Campaign held in Ingawa O



Speaking at the official flag-off of the APC Local Government Elections Campaign held in Ingawa Local Government Area, Ganduje, along with the party’s National Working Committee (NWC), welcomed the defectors.

He commended them for their dedication, hard work, unity, hospitality, and religious values.

Katsina State Governor Dikko Radda also reaffirmed his administration’s commitment to continuing its

developmental initiatives under the APC.

He expressed confidence in the party’s victory in the forthcoming local government elections scheduled for February 15, 2025.

As part of the ceremony, the APC presented the party’s flag to its 33 chairmanship candidates, marking the official commencement of its local government election campaigns.

# Tinubu arrives in Tanzania for energy summit

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu arrived in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on Sunday, where he will participate in the Africa Heads of State Energy Summit scheduled for January 27–28.

Earlier, The New Daily Prime reported that Tinubu will depart for the summit, which is jointly organised by the government of Tanzania, the African Development Bank Group, and the World Bank.

The summit focuses on advancing “Mission 300,” an ambitious initiative aimed at providing electricity access to 300 million people across Africa by 2030.

He was welcomed by the Foreign Minister of Tanzania, Amb. Mahmoud Thabit Kombo, and the Chargé d’Affaires of the Nigerian High Commission to Tanzania, Amb. Salisu Suleiman.

The Special Assistant to the President on Social Media, Dada Olusegun,

announced on his X page that Tinubu was also greeted at his hotel by the President of the African Development Bank Group, Akinwunmi Adesina.

He wrote: “President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has arrived in Dar es Salaam, where he was welcomed by the Foreign Minister of Tanzania, Amb. Mahmoud Thabit Kombo, and the Chargé d’Affaires of the Nigerian High Commission to Tanzania, Amb. Salisu Suleiman. He was also greeted at his hotel by the President of the African Development Bank Group, Akinwunmi Adesina.”

In Dar es Salaam, African leaders, private sector stakeholders, development partners, and civil society groups will converge to strategize on accelerating energy access across the continent.

The event will serve as a platform for exchanging ideas, expertise, and resources to address Africa’s pressing energy challenges.

Key discussions will centre around enhancing energy access in underserved regions, promoting renewable energy, improving energy efficiency, and encouraging private sector investment in the sector.

On the first day, ministerial representatives, including Nigeria’s, will present national energy strategies, known as “compacts,” outlining their approaches to achieving universal energy access within the next five years.

On the second day, Heads of State will formally adopt the Dar es Salaam Energy Declaration, a unified roadmap to propel Africa’s progress toward the Mission 300 targets.

President Tinubu is expected to deliver a national statement reaffirming Nigeria’s commitment to universal energy access and its leadership role in Africa’s energy transformation.

# Global Elections in 2024: What we learned in a year of political disruption

By Agency Reporter

The year 2024 proved to be one of political upheaval across the globe, marked by high-profile elections and significant shifts in voter sentiment. In the United States, the Democratic Party lost its hold on the presidency as former Republican President Donald Trump defeated Vice President Kamala Harris. Republicans also secured majorities in both houses of Congress, signaling a major political realignment in the country.

Globally, more than 60 countries held elections in 2024, making it a pivotal year for democracies worldwide. However, it was also a challenging year for incumbents and traditional political parties. Voters, disillusioned by rising prices, cultural divisions, and dissatisfaction with the political status quo, delivered a clear message of frustration and demand for change.

This wave of discontent was not confined to any one region or political system. Across the globe, citizens expressed their dissatisfaction with economic challenges and entrenched political elites, reshaping the political landscape in unexpected ways. The year's elections underscored a growing demand for accountability, transparency, and solutions to pressing cultural and economic issues. As countries continue to grapple with these shifts, 2024 will likely be remembered as a turning point in global political dynamics.

It was the third straight U.S. presidential election in which the incumbent party lost. And it was one of many notable losses for incumbents around the world in 2024:

In the United Kingdom – unlike in the U.S. – political power swung to the left. The Labour Party won an overwhelming parliamentary majority, bringing 14 years of Conservative Party rule to an end.

The most dramatic defeat for a longtime incumbent party may have occurred in the southern African nation of Botswana, where the Botswana Democratic Party lost power for the first time in nearly 60 years.

In April, South Korean voters gave the opposition Democratic Party a majority of seats in the National Assembly in what was seen as a check on President Yoon Suk Yeol of the People Power Party. In early December, President Yoon imposed martial law and accused Democratic Party leaders of “anti-state” activities. The National Assembly quickly reversed Yoon's decision, voting unanimously to lift martial law.

Opposition parties of various ideological stripes won power in a diverse set of nations, including Ghana, Panama, Portugal and Uruguay.

Elsewhere, incumbent parties held on to



power but still suffered significant setbacks:

In South Africa, the African National Congress failed to win a majority of National Assembly seats for the first time since the end of apartheid.

Japan's Liberal Democratic Party – which has governed the country for most of the post-World War II era – and its coalition partner, Komeito, lost their majority in the parliament.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party won a third consecutive victory but were forced into a coalition government.

In France, President Emmanuel Macron's decision to hold snap elections in the summer backfired. Macron's centrist Ensemble alliance lost ground to both the left-wing New Popular Front and the right-wing National Rally.

What made 2024 such a tough year for incumbents? While every election is shaped by local factors, economic challenges were a consistent theme across the globe. That included the U.S., where the economy was the top issue for registered voters – especially for those who supported Trump.

A survey we conducted in 34 countries earlier this year illustrated the extent of global economic gloom. Across these nations, a median of 64% of adults said their national economy was in bad shape. In several nations that held elections in 2024 – including France, Japan, South Africa, South Korea and the UK – more than seven-in-ten expressed this view.

Inflation was an especially important issue in this year's elections, although economic concerns were prevalent in many countries before the post-pandemic wave of global price increases. The past two decades have seen financial crises, the Great Recession, the COVID-19 economic downturn, inflation and ongoing economic inequality, all of which may have shaped the mood in nations around the globe.

But the economy wasn't the only thing driving voter discontent. Our global surveys over the past few years have highlighted a broader frustration with the functioning of representative democracy. Across 31 nations we surveyed in 2024, a median of 54% of adults were dissatisfied with the way democracy is working in their country. And in several high-income nations, dissatisfaction has increased significantly over the past three years.

Our surveys have shown that many people feel disconnected from political leaders and institutions. Large majorities in many nations believe elected officials don't care what people like them think. Many say there is no political party that represents their views well. And large shares say people like them have little or no influence on politics in their country. Frustrations with the political class have created opportunities for right-wing populists and other challengers to traditional parties and the political status quo. Several elections this year in Europe highlighted this trend:

Right-wing populist parties, many of which campaigned on sharply anti-immigration platforms, gained ground in this year's European parliamentary elections.

Parties on the left and in the center worked together to keep Marine Le Pen's right-wing populist National Rally out of power in France in this year's parliamentary elections. But Le Pen's party nonetheless significantly increased the number of seats it holds in the National Assembly. In early December, National Rally voted with New Popular Front, a coalition of left-leaning parties, to end the government of conservative Michel Barnier after just three months.

In Austria, the far-right Freedom Party won 29% of the vote in September elections – a higher share than any other party and its best-ever result.



# The world is moving on to trade without the US

By Agency Reporter

While Donald Trump has yet to act on his multiple tariff threats, it's likely he will. So the fear lingers that the US president's aggressive trade posture will sow global disorder, depressing growth and roiling markets, particularly if targeted nations retaliate.

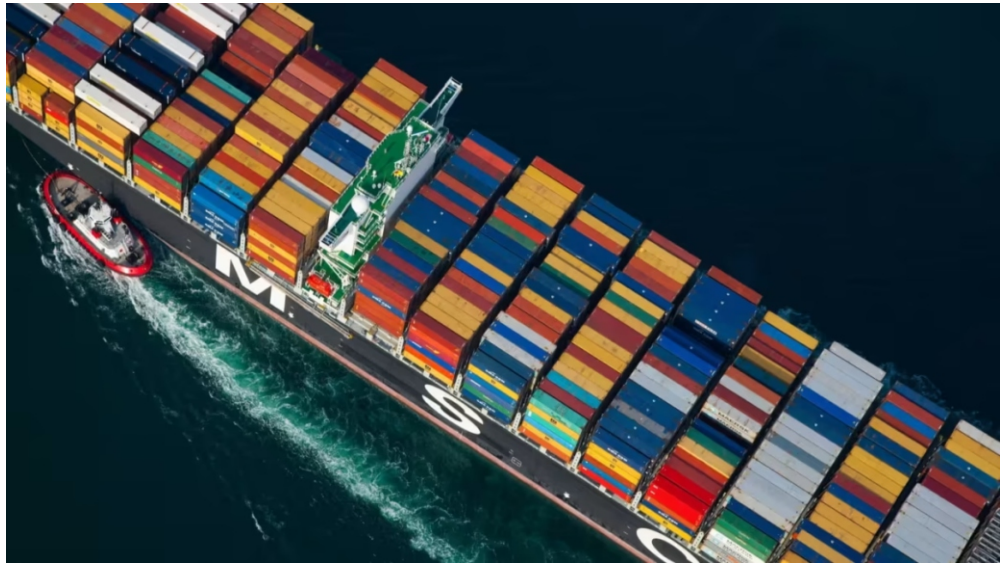
But retaliation is not the only or even the most likely response to Trump, no matter how broadly he finally delivers on his threats.

The US has wielded tariffs as a weapon for eight years now. Those imposed by Trump in his first term were mostly continued or — in the case of China — expanded by Joe Biden. Some nations retaliated; others offered concessions or challenged them before global trade arbiters. But most just quietly moved on, seeking trade with countries other than the US.

Since 2017, Trump's first year in office, trade has held more or less steady at just under 60 per cent of global GDP. But there's been a decline in the US share of trade flows offset by an increase in other regions, particularly the nations of Asia, Europe and the Middle East. Trump 2.0 seems likely to bring more of the same: trade without America.

Over the past eight years, more than four of every five nations — developed and developing — have seen trade rise as a share of their national GDP. Gains of more than 10 percentage points have been chalked up in more than a dozen major nations, from Japan, Italy and Sweden to Vietnam, Greece and Turkey. The big exception is the US, where it has dipped to around 25 per cent of GDP. The US has been growing faster than most of its peers — but with no boost from trade.

America may be increasingly dominant as a financial and economic superpower but not so much as a trading power. Its share of global equity indices has exploded to almost 70 per cent. Its share of global GDP has inched up to more than 25 per cent. Yet its share of global trade is under 15 per cent, and has declined



significantly in the last eight years.

Many of the warnings about Trump's impact focus on how new tariffs could hurt exporting nations that rely on the US as their main customer. But during Trump's first term, before the pandemic and despite his tariff offensive, developed nations saw stable growth and developing ones saw a strong acceleration in exports of both goods (led by tech products and commodities) and services (led by transport and digital services).

Global trade talks had fallen apart after 2008, as tensions stirred up by the financial crisis that year made vast multi-nation deals too difficult to conclude. But many nations continued to pursue smaller deals. The number of bilateral and regional agreements rose steadily, with fresh impetus after Trump first took office, and soon styled himself "tariff man".

The US became an outlier, looking on as others cultivated the art of the trade deal. Since 2017, the US has abandoned talks on partnerships with the EU and Asia, and cut not a single new trade deal. Meanwhile, the EU has negotiated eight agreements and China has concluded nine, including a landmark 15-nation partnership in Asia.

By late last year, dealmaking picked up anew as the start of Trump's second presidency approached. The

EU rushed to finish the outline of a difficult agreement — 25 years in the making — with members of the Mercosur alliance in South America, followed by one with Mexico. Now, Mexico is hurrying to widen trade ties with fellow nations in Latin America, in part as insurance against what Trump might do next.

The result: over the past eight years, as the locus of global trade shifted away from the US and towards the Middle East, Europe and Asia, nations registering big share gains included the United Arab Emirates, Poland and, above all, China. Of the 10 fastest-growing trade corridors, five have one terminus in China; only two have a terminus in the US.

Trump says tariffs will command respect, and help restore US power. But there's another risk worth considering. The new president's brand of populism vows to free the US from heavy government intervention through taxes and regulations, but tariffs are another form — and equally subject to the laws of unintended consequences.

To date, the "America first" tariff regime has done less to damage its prime target, China, than to compel US allies to look elsewhere for trade. So the risk of even broader tariffs may be less about triggering trade wars than undermining US relevance as a trading power, and eventually sapping its economic prowess.

# Obesity expert reveals why dieting could be killing your health goals

By Agency Reporter



**P**rofessor Fredrik Nyström, a renowned endocrinologist and internal medicine physician at Linköping University, Sweden, has spent 25 years challenging conventional health wisdom—Obesity. His findings, which often defy mainstream health advice, aim to reduce anxiety about health and empower individuals to live happier, more sustainable lives.

In his new book, *Lighten the Load on Your Shoulders*, Prof Nyström dissects health myths and argues that happiness, rather than obsessive dieting and exercise, is key to longevity. Drawing from over 113 studies, he provides evidence that challenges longstanding health dogmas.

Prof Nyström criticizes the traditional “eat less, exercise more” approach to weight loss, which he says rarely results in lasting change. Studies show that

most obese individuals do not return to a normal weight, and restrictive dieting can crush morale, leading to poorer health outcomes. He highlights the “obesity paradox,” where individuals who lose significant weight often face higher mortality rates. Instead, he recommends sustainable dietary changes, with the Mediterranean diet standing out as the only scientifically proven approach to reducing cardiovascular risk by 30% over five years.

While Prof Nyström supports exercise, he warns against overexertion. High-intensity activities, such as marathon running, can lead to heart muscle damage, increasing the risk of atrial fibrillation and heart failure. He advises focusing on moderate activities like walking, which improve glucose levels, insulin

resistance, and metabolism without overtaxing the body.

In a controversial study, Prof Nyström found that saturated fats improved cholesterol levels, contradicting decades of health advice. However, he emphasizes that sugar poses a far greater risk, contributing to conditions like fatty liver disease. His work calls for a shift in focus from fats to sugars in public health discussions.

## Key Takeaway

Prof Nyström advocates for a balanced approach to health, prioritizing happiness and sustainable habits over restrictive diets and excessive exercise. His message: stop overthinking health advice and focus on small, achievable changes for a healthier and happier life.



# Tories request parents' right to know what children are being taught in schools

By Agency Reporter



The Conservative Party is calling for new rights to allow parents full access to the materials being taught to their children in schools. This move comes after revelations that some 13-year-olds have been taught that there are 100 genders, and some primary school students have been exposed to inappropriate content, including lessons on masturbation.

As part of this campaign, the Tories, led by Kemi Badenoch, are planning to introduce an amendment to Labour's Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. This amendment aims to enhance transparency by granting parents and carers the right to view all teaching materials, including those provided by external organizations. The only exemption would apply in cases of commercial confidentiality.

In response to growing concerns about the content of sex education lessons, the amendment seeks to build on the government's 2023 pledge to ban sex education for children under the age of nine. Labour has not yet matched this commitment.

Concerns over inappropriate content in schools have been growing. A 2023 investigation by Miriam Cates, a former Conservative MP and biology teacher, uncovered widespread use of materials deemed unsuitable for young students.

These findings prompted Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's government to launch a review of classroom content, including claims that children were being taught about oral sex and methods of choking safely during sexual activity.

Neil O'Brien, a shadow education minister, stated, "It shouldn't be controversial for parents to know what their children are being taught in schools. Yet, in some cases, young children have been subjected to divisive gender ideology, and parents have been denied access to teaching materials. This is deeply concerning." Although Bridget Phillipson, the current Education Secretary, has expressed support for the principle of parental access to sex education materials, she has stated there are no plans to amend existing laws. Phillipson has also opposed allowing parents to withdraw their children from sex education classes, arguing that all students should receive comprehensive relationship, sex, and health education (RSHE).

RSHE became mandatory in 2019 with cross-party support. However, Gillian Keegan, Phillipson's predecessor, had previously proposed ensuring that sex education lessons

are rooted in scientific fact rather than gender ideology. These proposals were shelved following last year's snap general election.

The Conservative amendment is unlikely to pass due to Labour's parliamentary majority. However, it is expected to increase pressure on the government to address parental concerns about transparency and the influence of third-party organizations in schools. Critics of the current system argue that a lack of oversight has allowed controversial ideologies to infiltrate classrooms.

A government spokesperson accused the Conservatives of political grandstanding, stating, "While the Tories are making noise, we've been actively engaging parents in our curriculum review to ensure all children receive a knowledge-rich education that prepares them for life and work."

As the debate intensifies, the proposed measures reflect a growing push for balance between inclusive education and ensuring that parents retain oversight of what their children are being taught in schools.

# Why more teens are turning to ChatGPT for academic Tasks

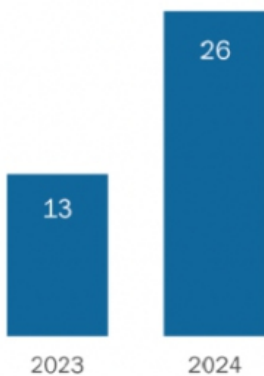
By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

ChatGPT usage among U.S. teens for schoolwork has doubled to 26% in 2024, with older students and Black and Hispanic teens leading the trend. Awareness and debates on its role grow.

A new report from Pew Research Center indicates that the use of ChatGPT among U.S. teens for schoolwork has doubled in just a year, according to a Pew Research Center survey. The share of teens aged 13 to 17 who say they use the AI chatbot for academic tasks has risen to 26% in 2024, up from 13% in 2023. Despite this increase, most teens (73%) have yet to turn to ChatGPT for school-related purposes

## Twice as many teens now say they use ChatGPT for schoolwork as in 2023

*% of U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 who say they have ever used ChatGPT to help with their schoolwork*



Source: Survey of U.S. teens conducted Sept. 18-Oct. 10, 2024.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Black and Hispanic teens lead the way in using ChatGPT for schoolwork, with 31% of each group reporting usage. In contrast, only 22% of White teens have done the same. This marks a significant shift from 2023, when usage was similar across these groups: 11% of White teens, 13% of Black teens, and 11% of Hispanic teens reported using the chatbot.

Older teens are more likely to use ChatGPT for school tasks. Usage rates are highest among 11th and 12th graders

(31%), followed by ninth and 10th graders (around 25%), and seventh and eighth graders (20%). Interestingly, teens' use of ChatGPT does not vary significantly by gender or household income.

Teens show varying levels of support for using ChatGPT in different academic scenarios. Over half (54%) believe it's acceptable to use ChatGPT to research new topics, with only 9% opposing its use for this purpose. Opinions are more divided on using ChatGPT for math problems, with 29% saying it's acceptable and 28% disapproving. Just 18% think using ChatGPT to write essays is acceptable, while 42% disapprove. A significant portion of teens (15% to 21%) remains unsure about whether it's appropriate to use ChatGPT for these tasks

Awareness of ChatGPT among teens has surged in the past year. In 2024, 79% of teens say they have heard of the chatbot, up from 67% in 2023. Furthermore, familiarity with ChatGPT has grown: 32% of teens now say they have heard "a lot" about it, compared to 23% last year. Teens who are more familiar with ChatGPT are likelier to use it for schoolwork, with 56% of those who have heard "a lot" about ChatGPT reporting usage for school-related tasks. This share drops to 18% among those who have

heard only "a little" about the chatbot.

Familiarity also influences opinions on its acceptability. For example, 79% of teens who have heard a lot about ChatGPT think it's fine to use it for research, compared to 61% of those less familiar with the tool.

White teens (83%) are more likely to have heard of ChatGPT than Black (73%) and Hispanic teens (74%). Teens from higher-income households are the most aware of ChatGPT, with 84% of teens in households earning \$75,000 or more being familiar with it. Awareness among teens from lower-income households grew the most in the past year, jumping 26 percentage points—from 41% in 2023 to 67% in 2024. In comparison, awareness grew by 11 points among middle-income teens and 9 points among those in higher-income households

The rise in ChatGPT's use among teens highlights its growing role in education. While many teens see it as a valuable research tool, its acceptability for tasks like math and essay writing remains debated. As awareness and familiarity continue to grow, discussions about the ethical and practical implications of using AI tools in education are likely to intensify.



## ChatGPT



# Europe's Most Fashionable Royals

By **Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi**

The New Year is barely underway, but European royals are already setting the tone for regal style. In Denmark, Queen Mary turned heads at a traditional celebration.

She stepped out in an elegant white and gold embroidered dress by local designer Teri Jon by Rickie. The look, reminiscent of a snow queen, perfectly balanced winter charm with royal sophistication.

Meanwhile, Spain's Queen Letizia opted for a distinctly Spanish flair during the Pascua Military ceremony. She wore a stunning burgundy maxi dress, accessorized with classic pearl earrings and a matching necklace. Her choice highlighted timeless elegance with a touch of modern refinement. Fashion enthusiasts are taking note of these royal style moments. "Each European royal family brings its unique approach to fashion," says Royal Fashion Police, a popular Instagram account tracking royal style worldwide. "Some royals embrace their country's traditions, like Scandinavia's focus on practicality, while others let their personalities shine through."

This mix of national identity and personal expression keeps royal fashion fresh and exciting. The Danish and Spanish queens exemplify this balance, blending tradition with individuality. Their sartorial choices set the stage for what promises to be a year of bold, royal fashion statements.

As 2024 unfolds, all eyes are on Europe's royal families. From Denmark to Spain and beyond, their style choices will continue to inspire trends and captivate audiences worldwide. Which royal household will dominate the fashion spotlight this year? Only time will tell, but one thing is certain: they're off to a dazzling start.

## QUEEN MARY OF DENMARK:

In just one year as Queen, Mary of Denmark has cemented her place as one of Europe's most stylish monarchs. Crowned alongside her husband, King Frederick X, she brought two decades of experience as a princess to her new role. The Australian-born royal has consistently championed Danish designers, showcasing homegrown talent at every opportunity.

Her style has evolved over the past year. She now favors structured pieces with corsets, bodices, statement sleeves, and high necklines, reflecting her focus and poise as consort. Often compared to the Princess of Wales, Queen Mary continues to shine on the global stage.

## PRINCESS SOFIA OF SWEDEN:

The 40-year-old former glamour model



turned Swedish royal is a style icon known for her minimalist, Scandinavian-inspired wardrobe. Sweden's royals are famous for their down-to-earth approach, often described as a "bicycle monarchy" due to their love of biking.

True to this image, she's frequently spotted wearing practical yet chic outfits like jeans. Now expecting her fourth child, she continues to inspire maternity fashion. Last year, she wowed onlookers in an elegant black cape dress. Her understated yet stylish choices make her one to follow for anyone seeking maternity style ideas with a touch of royal flair.

## Beatrice Borromeo of Monaco:

In Monaco, elegance runs in the royal family. It's no surprise when Grace Kelly, a Hollywood legend, serves as the late matriarch. Among today's Grimaldi family, Beatrice Borromeo, wife of Pierre Casiraghi, shines brightest. She blends her Italian heritage with a love for French fashion, often collaborating with Dior and supporting Italian designers.

Her impeccable style stands out, even alongside fashionable sisters-in-law Charlotte Casiraghi and Tatiana Santo Domingo. Whether attending Paris Fashion Week, the Monaco Grand Prix, or the Rose Ball, she dazzles in haute couture. Beatrice perfectly embodies the role of a modern-day princess with timeless elegance.

## QUEEN MAXIMA OF THE NETHERLANDS:

Over the last decade, Argentina-born Queen Máxima of the Netherlands has developed a unique and striking fashion

sense. Known for her love of bold colours and vibrant prints, she draws inspiration from her South American roots.

Early on, her choices sometimes sparked mixed reactions, as she experimented with sculptural elements and daring styles. However, as she matures, Queen Máxima has perfected her look. Today, she often embraces a single, striking colour paired with matching accessories. Tailored dresses with playful touches now define her wardrobe, allowing her to leave a lasting impression without losing her signature flair.

## QUEEN LETIZIA OF SPAIN:

Queen Letizia of Spain is a hard-working and elegant royal who also Spanish high street brands.

Queen Letizia of Spain is a hard-working and elegant royal who also Spanish high street brands. [Photo credit: Google]

At 52, Queen Letizia of Spain stands out as one of Europe's most stylish royals. Known for her impeccable elegance, she has a knack for elevating high-street fashion. The Queen frequently wears pieces from popular Spanish brands like Mango, Zara, Bimba y Lola, and Pull & Bear, showcasing her down-to-earth yet chic approach to fashion.

In 2025, Queen Letizia will continue her royal duties, remaining one of Europe's hardest-working monarchs. With her daughter, Princess Leonor, set to graduate from military college, expect to see a stylish mother-daughter duo stealing the spotlight this year.

# Stop constant complaints about your husbands, Judy Austin tells women

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



**N**ollywood actress, Judy Austin Yul-Edochie has berated married women who frequently complain about their husbands.

The actress, in a video shared on her social media platforms on Saturday, emphasized the importance of respecting the husband as the head of the home, regardless of his stature, financial status, or shortcomings.

According to Judy, women should take a different approach if their marriages are no longer fulfilling. “No matter how

small or short or poor a man is, he is still the head of the home and must be respected by his wife,” she said.

The actress also highlighted the need for tact when addressing marital issues, urging women to adopt a respectful tone when correcting their husbands.

“Regardless of how wrong he is, your manner of approach matters. You need to understand that you are talking to your husband,” Judy stated.

She further advised women to change their approach if their homes are fraught with conflict, suggesting that men, whom she described as “big babies,” require a nurturing and understanding environment.

“A lot of women always complain about their husbands year in, year out. Enough of the complaining! You cannot complain every day of your life. If you feel like your home is not working or you are always having issues with your husband, my sister, change your style!” she said.



# 2Baba announces divorce from Annie Macauley after 12 years

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**F**amed Nigerian musician, Innocent Idibia, widely known as 2Baba, has officially confirmed his split from wife Annie Macauley.

The announcement ended weeks of speculation and was made public through 2Baba's Instagram story on January 26, 2025.

The music legend, known for his soulful hits and impactful lyrics, addressed his fans directly in an emotional post.

He wrote: "Hello my people of all federations. Well, this thing to say is short and also long... Annie and I have been separated for a while now. And currently filed [for] divorce. I will grant a press release soon to share my story. Not because it is anyone's right to know about my personal life, but because I love my people and I need them to know my innocence or offense. Stay blessed, my people. I love you."

**Separation speculation confirmed**

Rumours about trouble in the couple's marriage have been swirling for months. Fans and followers noticed the pair's absence from each other's social media posts.

Speculations gained momentum when both stopped making public appearances together. Despite the growing whispers, neither party confirmed nor denied the rumours—until now.

2Baba's announcement marks a turning point in their relationship, which has been in the public eye for over a decade.

Known for their on-and-off romance before tying the knot in 2012, the couple has weathered numerous challenges, including public scrutiny and personal struggles.

**A love story turned sour**

Innocent and Annie's love story was nothing short of iconic. They met long before 2Baba became a household name.

Annie stood by him during his early years, watching him become one of Africa's most celebrated musicians.

Their relationship inspired admiration and hope for many, with fans often describing them as a power couple.

However, their union was not without controversy. Over the years, 2Baba's past relationships occasionally made headlines, including his children from previous partners.



Despite these challenges, Annie always defended her husband, even when rumours of infidelity surfaced.

The announcement of their separation and pending divorce has left fans shocked and heartbroken. Many have taken to social media to express their sadness and show support for both individuals.

**2Baba promises to share his side**

In his Instagram post, 2Baba hinted at an upcoming press release to provide clarity about the situation.

He emphasized that while his personal life is not public property, he feels a responsibility to address his fans.

His choice to open up is seen by many as a testament to his respect for those who have supported him throughout his career.

The artist's statement, "I need them to know my innocence or offence," has sparked widespread debate. Some interpret it as an indication that there might be more to the story. Others see

it as his attempt to clear his name amid any potential rumours or false narratives.

**A private matter in the public eye**

The separation of 2Baba and Annie highlights the challenges celebrities face in maintaining privacy. While their lives inspire millions, their struggles often become the subject of public discourse.

Experts in relationship dynamics suggest that high-profile couples like 2Baba and Annie endure unique pressures. Constant media attention and the demands of fame can strain even the strongest bonds. For the Idibias, years of being in the spotlight might have taken a toll on their marriage.

Fans react with love and support. Since the announcement, fans have flooded social media platforms with messages of encouragement. While some express disappointment, most have wished both 2Baba and Annie peace and healing.

# US-based Nigerians panic over Trump's mass deportation blitz

By Dave Oludare Oso



The ongoing deportation crackdown by the Donald Trump administration has thrown United States-based Nigerians and other illegal immigrants from Africa into great panic as they fear they may be the next target for deportation by the American government, NEW DAILY PRIME has gathered.

Many Nigerians who are illegally staying in the US, are gripped by the fear of deportation following President Donald Trump's declaration of war against illegal immigration.

Trump on his inauguration day as the 47th President of the US signed a series of executive orders aimed at hardening immigration policies, including the stoppage of citizenship by birth for children of illegal immigrants.

The new president has signed orders to declare a national emergency at the Mexico-US southern border, stating the deployment of more troops to the area as he threatened to deport "criminal aliens."

Following the directive, 538 illegal immigrants were deported from the United States on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Trump's Press Secretary, Karoline Leavitt, disclosed on her official X handle that 'the largest massive

deportation operation in history is well underway.'

The development has created anxiety amongst the Nigerian communities in the US, as many of them feared deportation.

Some US-based Nigerians disclosed to this reporter that the government would clamp down on illegal Nigerian immigrants after the deportation of Mexicans, Haitians, and Indians.

Trump's staunch supporter and Nigerian-American, Jacob Adegoke, said the current focus was on Mexicans and Haitians, while "The next will be Africans."

A Nigerian media entrepreneur, Obi-West Utchaychukwu corroborated Adegoke's statement saying Nigerians had been monitoring the situation but none had yet to be arrested.

NEW DAILY PRIME further learned on Sunday that many Nigerians had become cautious about their movement around the streets.

A source in New York who identified as Adebayo for security reasons said, "There's a lot of apprehension in the Nigerian community right now.

"While I haven't personally witnessed any arrest, many undocumented Nigerian immigrants are deeply worried about the policies of the new government. My neighbour even called me yesterday, warning me to be cautious when going out, as there are reports of even people with valid papers being targeted by ICE."

In carrying out Trump's deportation order, Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents have raided several establishments suspected of harbouring illegal immigrants and making arrests.

NEW DAILY PRIME gathered that Immigration officials raided a business in Newark on Wednesday, detaining an American military veteran and multiple undocumented residents.

Confirming the incident, another source in New Jersey said, "The viral case of an American veteran being arrested alongside undocumented immigrants has only heightened the panic. However, the fact that some US states are challenging the executive orders is offering a bit of reassurance."

Also, a Nigerian immigration lawyer in Maryland spoke with NEW DAILY PRIME, saying, "For example, in Newark, New Jersey, they went to a frozen food store to search for illegal immigrants.

"More Nigerians fall into that category. Again, people on student visas and similar kinds of visas hoping to transition into something more are also in this group."

Among those who can fall victims are unlawful immigrants with criminal records. Their criminal records may begin to haunt them.

The source also revealed that those in the US with student visas and other schemes were also scared of deportation.



# Brazil blasts US for deporting 88 migrants in handcuffs

By Dave Oludare Oso



**B**razilian officials demanded that U.S. agents remove handcuffs from a group of deportees flown to Brazil on Friday.

A prominent minister in President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's administration condemned the practice as a "blatant disrespect" for the rights of Brazilian citizens, Reuters reports.

Acting on orders from Justice Minister Ricardo Lewandowski, federal police met the flight, which had made an unscheduled landing in Manaus, an Amazonian city due to technical issues, according to a government statement released on Saturday.

The plane, carrying 88 Brazilian

passengers, 16 U.S. security agents, and eight crew members, was initially scheduled to land in Belo Horizonte, located in the southeastern state of Minas Gerais, according to the statement.

The handcuffs were removed from the passengers following the intervention of Brazilian police, the government reported.

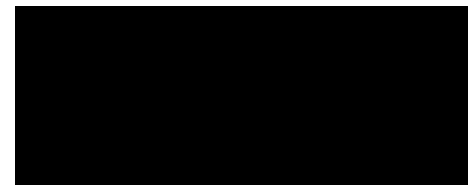
After being briefed on the incident, President Lula directed that the passengers be transported to their final destination aboard a Brazilian Air Force plane, ensuring they could complete their journey with "dignity and safety," according to a statement from the Brazilian Justice Ministry.

This flight marked the second deportation this year of undocumented migrants from the

U.S. to Brazil and the first since U.S. President Donald Trump's inauguration on Monday, according to Brazil's Justice Ministry and federal police.

The Trump administration has initiated a broad immigration crackdown, with the Republican president pledging to implement mass deportations to remove undocumented migrants from the U.S.

The use of handcuffs and other restraints on migrants deported on flights from the U.S. to Brazil has sparked controversy in the South American nation.



# US Senate confirms John Ratcliffe as CIA director

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

The US Senate has confirmed John Ratcliffe as Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) director as Republicans work to approve officials to the top posts in President Trump's administration amid delays by Democrats.

The Senate confirmed Ratcliffe in a 74 to 25 vote, Friday, making him the second of Trump's nominees to be approved by the upper chamber. He was sworn in by Vice President JD Vance on Friday afternoon.

Senate Democrats slowed Ratcliffe's confirmation after his nomination advanced out of committee earlier this week, forcing procedural maneuvers to extend consideration of his nomination in recent days.

The Republican whip, Sen. John Barrasso of Wyoming, celebrated earlier Thursday that the Senate was poised to confirm Ratcliffe's nomination, calling it "a win for our national security," while noting that it "should have been done two days ago."

"But Democrats unnecessarily delayed this important vote," Barrasso continued. "John Ratcliffe is undeniably qualified for the job, he's going to lead the CIA without bias, and with the safety of the American people being his priority."

On Tuesday, Sen. Chris Murphy, a Connecticut Democrat, objected to a time agreement that would have allowed the Senate to quickly vote on Ratcliffe's nomination, expressing "serious concerns" about Ratcliffe's ability to distance himself from Mr. Trump's political interests and urging that it wasn't too much to ask for senators to have time to debate the nomination on the floor.

Ratcliffe, a former Texas congressman, served as director of national intelligence in the final months of Trump's first term. At that



time, Trump initially picked Ratcliffe to lead the nation's spy agencies earlier in his first term, but withdrew his name amid questions about his qualifications for the role. Months later, Mr. Trump again nominated Ratcliffe, and the Senate confirmed him as director of national intelligence without any support from Democrats.

Testifying last week before the Senate Intelligence Committee, Ratcliffe said he's devoted his professional life to national security "for roughly a quarter of a century." And he promised that if confirmed, he would focus on "setting and communicating priorities and demanding relentless execution."

He pledged that if was confirmed, the CIA would be rededicated to its intelligence-gathering mission.

"We will collect intelligence — especially human intelligence — in every corner of the globe, no matter how dark or difficult," Ratcliffe said.

Ratcliffe served on the House Intelligence Committee and House Judiciary Committee during his time in Congress and was a staunch defender of Trump through his first impeachment and investigations into Russian election interference.

Democrats criticized Ratcliffe for declassifying Russian intelligence alleging damaging information about members of their party during the 2016 race, intelligence that Ratcliffe acknowledged might not be true.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said Thursday morning that he would "respectfully vote no" on Ratcliffe's confirmation, saying he's "deeply worried that Ratcliffe will be unable to stand up to people like Donald Trump."

"I have my doubts that Mr. Ratcliffe will be able to hold firm," the New York Democrat added.

Despite the concern from Democrats, Ratcliffe is considered to be a more traditional choice than some of Trump's other nominations after previously serving in a Senate-confirmed position. The Senate also generally prioritizes nominees serving in national security roles when a new administration begins.



# Israeli forces kill 22, injure 124 South Lebanese returning home

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



At least 22 people were killed and 124 others injured by Israeli forces in southern Lebanon on Sunday, the Lebanese Health Ministry said, as residents of villages near the border defied orders by Israel's military not to return to their homes.

The deaths come as a deadline expired Sunday for Israel to withdraw forces from the area, as part of a ceasefire agreement that ended months of conflict with Hezbollah.

Under the November ceasefire agreement, both Israeli and Hezbollah forces agreed to withdraw from southern Lebanon by January 26, the end of a 60-day period stipulated in the deal.

But Israel's government said Friday that the military would not withdraw all of its forces from southern Lebanon by Sunday's deadline, blaming Lebanon for failing to uphold its end of the agreement. The Lebanese army in turn accused Israel of "procrastination."

Lebanon's Ministry of Public Health said the Israeli military launched attacks on Lebanese citizens on Sunday attempting to enter towns still occupied by Israeli forces.

Of those killed, one was a soldier

"targeted by gunfire from the Israeli enemy," the Lebanese army said.

Video verified by CNN showed residents on foot in Kfar Kila, southern Lebanon, trying to return to their villages. Some were seen carrying Hezbollah flags, while others held images of militant fighters killed in the war.

It comes after Israel's military issued a fresh order on Sunday to residents of dozens of southern Lebanese villages not to return to their homes.

"Urgent!! A new reminder to the residents of southern Lebanon: Until further notice you are prohibited from moving south to the line of villages and their surroundings," Avichay Adraee, Arabic-language spokesperson for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)

The post included a map of southern Lebanon with an area along the border with Israel shaded red and a list of more than 60 villages residents were prohibited from accessing.

"The Defense Forces do not intend to target you and therefore at this stage you are prohibited from returning to your homes from this line south until further notice. Anyone who moves south of this line puts themselves at risk," Adraee said.

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) said its troops operating in southern Lebanon "fired warning shots to

remove threats in a number of areas where suspects were identified approaching the troops."

The Israeli military added it had apprehended numerous suspects for questioning, claiming they posed an "imminent threat to the troops."

Lebanon's president Joseph Aoun said he was "monitoring this issue at the highest levels" in a statement.

"Lebanon's sovereignty and the unity of its territory are not subject to compromise," he said and promised residents of the south he would "ensure your rights and dignity."

The United Nations called on both sides to urgently recommit to the agreement while its peacekeeping force said it was deploying to areas in southern Lebanon at the request of the Lebanese army.

The president of France, Emmanuel Macron urged Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to withdraw his remaining forces from Lebanon in a phone call on Sunday, according to the French President's office. France played a key role in brokering the ceasefire deal alongside the US last November.

# Crime Crackdown: UK Govt bans doorstep knife deliveries

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi



**D**oorstep deliveries of knives bought online are set to be banned in the UK, following a government crackdown aimed at preventing tragedies like the Southport killings carried out by Axel Rudakubana. Rudakubana exploited an online loophole to purchase knives despite being under 18.

The new measures will prohibit tech companies, including Amazon, from handing over knives to anyone other than the individual who placed the order. This will allow delivery personnel to verify the buyer's ID and age directly during delivery. This third verification step will supplement the two-stage online purchase process, which already requires ID, such as a passport, and a video "selfie" to confirm identity.

These measures are part of a broader effort to enforce the ban on selling knives with blades over three inches to minors, a law that carries up to six months in jail for violators. Rudakubana circumvented these safeguards by using software to hide his identity and address. The knives he ordered were delivered to an

adult, reportedly one of his parents, who showed ID to receive the parcel.

Under the proposed changes, only the buyer will be allowed to accept the delivery, ensuring stricter ID checks. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper criticized the ease with which children still acquire dangerous weapons online, describing it as a "disgrace." She stated, "Too many retailers don't have proper checks in place. It's too easy to enter false birth dates, and parcels are too often left at doorsteps without questions."

The government's plan also includes penalties for social media companies that fail to remove knife-related content inciting violence. Executives could face fines of up to £10,000 for failing to act within 48 hours to remove such material, which includes content promoting banned weapons like zombie knives, ninja swords, and machetes. However, there is no indication the the same measure will be applicable to coner shop or retails store that sell knives across the country

The measures form part of the upcoming Crime and Policing Bill, which will also strengthen police

powers to demand the swift removal of knife-related content from platforms. Commander Stephen Clayman, the national police lead on knife crime, recommended the stricter ID checks following a review requested by the Home Secretary.

The urgency for these changes is underscored by alarming statistics: knife crimes in England and Wales exceeded 50,000 incidents in the year ending June 2024, with London alone recording 15,859 cases—a 16% increase from 2023. Despite these figures, prosecutions for underage knife sales have dropped sharply, with just eight cases in 2024, compared to 64 in 2020.

Yvette Cooper emphasized the importance of these reforms, saying, "We cannot go on like this. Stronger checks and penalties are crucial to making our streets safer and ensuring retailers take responsibility." The government's comprehensive approach aims to address both the online sale of knives and the broader cultural factors contributing to knife crime in the UK.



# Impeached South Korean President faces insurrection trial

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



**S**outh Korea's impeached and arrested President Yoon Suk Yeol will stand trial along with his former defence minister and others who participated in his short-lived imposition of martial law.

Yoon Suk Yeol was formally indicted on Sunday on charges of leading an insurrection last month when he briefly imposed martial law.

Yoon's indictment means that his trial is likely to start soon. It follows the indictments of a former defence minister and several military generals and police chiefs, all of whom face criminal charges of helping Yoon commit the same crime.

He is the first president in South Korean history to face criminal charges while still in office.

His downfall began when he unexpectedly declared martial law on Dec. 3, accusing the opposition-controlled National Assembly of "paralyzing" his government. The Assembly voted the measure down, forcing him to rescind the order after about six hours. But it has set off South Korea's worst political crisis in decades.

As people called for Yoon's ouster, the Assembly impeached him on Dec. 14, suspending him from office.

The country's Constitutional Court is deliberating whether the parliamentary impeachment was legitimate and if he should be formally removed from office. Separately, criminal investigators detained Yoon on the insurrection charges on Jan. 15.

From his jail cell, Yoon has vowed to fight to regain office.

A majority of South Koreans approved of his impeachment and consider him guilty of insurrection, according to public opinion polls but Yoon's die-hard supporters have called his impeachment "fraud."

Soe of them shocked the country when they vandalized a courthouse in Seoul after one of its judges approved a warrant to arrest him on Jan. 19. Nearly 60 people were arrested in connection with that unrest.

Prosecutors said that Yoon committed insurrection during the short-lived imposition of marital law when, they said, he banned all political activities and ordered military commanders to break the Assembly's doors down "with

axes" or "by shooting, if necessary" and "drag out" lawmakers. They said Mr. Yoon sent the troops there to seize the Assembly and detain political leaders.

The nation watched the live-streamed scenes of special forces troops armed with assault rifles storming the Assembly as lawmakers were gathering there to vote against martial law. But Yoon has rejected the charge of insurrection, saying that he never intended to neutralize the Parliament or arrest political leaders. The troops were there to "keep order," he said.

Yoon's indictment, although not a surprise, came sooner than expected.

State prosecutors have been investigating the former defence minister and generals. The country's Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials took on the insurrection case against Yoon, but by law, only prosecutors can indict him.

Yoon has refused to cooperate with the inquiry; he and his lawyers have insisted that the four-year-old office has no right to investigate him.

On Thursday, the Corruption Investigation Office handed his case over to prosecutors. The two had earlier agreed that prosecutors had until early February to indict Yoon, and prosecutors had planned to further investigate Mr. Yoon's actions.

But on Friday, a judge in a Seoul court ruled that Yoon must be either be indicted sooner or released because the Corruption Investigation Office had already done an investigation.

# Trump mulls Gaza clear-out, relocating Palestinians to Egypt, Jordan

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Donald Trump of the United States on Saturday mulled a plan to ‘just clean out’ Gaza, adding that he wants to relocate Palestinians from the territory to Egypt and Jordan in a bid to create Middle East peace.

Describing Gaza as a “demolition site” after the Israel-Hamas war, Trump said he had spoken to Jordan’s King Abdullah II about the issue and expected to talk to Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi on Sunday.

Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One on his way to Florida from, “I’d like Egypt to take people. And I’d like Jordan to take people.

“You’re talking about probably a million and half people, and we just clean out that whole thing. You know, over the centuries it’s had many, many conflicts on that site. And I don’t know, something has to happen.”

The vast majority of Gaza’s 2.4 million people have been displaced, often multiple times, by the war that began with Hamas’s attack on southern Israel on October 7, 2023.

Trump said moving Gaza’s inhabitants could be “temporarily or could be long term.

“It’s literally a demolition site right now, almost everything is demolished and people are dying there.

“So I’d rather get involved with some of the Arab nations and build housing at a different location where they can maybe live in peace for a change.”

A fragile truce and hostage release deal between Israel and Hamas — which was signed on the last day of



former US president Joe Biden’s administration but which Trump has claimed credit for — has entered its second week.

Trump’s new administration has promised “unwavering support” for Israel, without yet laying out details of its Middle East policy.

Trump confirmed on Saturday that he had ordered the Pentagon to release a shipment of 2,000-lb bombs for Israel which was blocked by his predecessor Biden.

“We released them. We released them today,” Trump said. “They paid for them and they’ve been waiting for them for a long time.”

Israel’s retaliatory offensive has left much of the Palestinian territory in ruins, with infrastructure destroyed, and the United Nations estimates reconstruction will take many years.

In October during his presidential campaign, former real estate developer Trump said that war-torn Gaza could be “better than Monaco” if it was “rebuilt

the right way.”

Trump’s son-in-law and former White House employee Jared Kushner suggested in February that Israel empty the Gaza of civilians to unlock the potential of its “waterfront property.”

For Palestinians, any attempt to move them from Gaza would evoke dark historical memories of what the Arab world calls the “Nakba” or catastrophe — the mass displacement of Palestinians during Israel’s creation 75 years ago.

Israel has denied having any plans to force Gazans to move.

But some extreme-right members of the Israeli government have publicly supported the idea of Gazans leaving the Palestinian territory en masse.



# Trump terminates Fauci's government security protection

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

*Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, who was one of the nation's top health officials for decades, had received death threats during the coronavirus pandemic. He has hired his own security detail.*

President Trump said on Friday that he had terminated taxpayer-financed security protection for Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, the infectious disease specialist who led the nation through the coronavirus pandemic and received death threats after becoming a target of conservatives.

The move, which took effect on Thursday night, made Dr. Fauci the latest prominent former official to lose his security detail since Mr. Trump returned to the White House. It came after Dr. Fauci's chief critic on Capitol Hill, Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky, publicly called for Dr. Fauci's security to be withdrawn. Mr. Trump agreed.

"When you work for government, at some point your security detail comes off and, you know, you can't have them forever," Mr. Trump said on a trip to North Carolina.

He suggested that Dr. Fauci, who retired from government service in December 2022, hire private security. "I can give them some good numbers of some very good security people," the president said. A person familiar with the situation said Dr. Fauci had done just that, and now had his own security detail. Mr. Trump told reporters he would not feel responsible if harm came to Dr. Fauci.

Dr. Fauci served in government for half a century and ran the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases for 30 years, advising presidents from Ronald Reagan to Joseph R. Biden Jr., including Mr. Trump. But he and the president had a fraught relationship; in his memoir, released last year, Dr. Fauci



described it as "complicated."

In a chapter titled "He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not," Dr. Fauci described how Mr. Trump repeatedly told him he "loved" him while at the same time excoriating him with tirades flecked with four-letter words. At times, Mr. Trump publicly threatened to fire Dr. Fauci. Other Republicans, including Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida, targeted Dr. Fauci during their political campaigns.

In May 2022, a West Virginia man pleaded guilty to sending Dr. Fauci and other federal officials emails threatening to kill them and their families.

Mr. Trump's decision on Dr. Fauci's security came a day after he revoked the State Department security details for his former secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, and another former top aide, Brian Hook. Both men faced continuing threats from Iran because of actions they took on Mr. Trump's behalf during his first administration.

Mr. Trump also pulled the Secret Service detail that had been protecting another former aide who later became a high-profile critic, John R. Bolton, his former national security adviser.

Dr. Fauci did not have Secret Service protection; he was protected by federal marshals and later by a private contractor whose fees were paid by the government, according to a spokeswoman for the U.S. Marshals Service, who declined further comment.

On Thursday, Mr. Paul wrote on social media that he had "sent supporting information to end the 24 hr a day limo and security detail for Fauci," adding, "I wish him nothing but peace but he needs to pay for his own limos."

Those comments came hours after Mr. Paul criticized a pre-emptive pardon from Mr. Biden for Dr. Fauci in an appearance on Fox News, saying that by accepting the pardon, Dr. Fauci was "accepting his guilt."

Dr. Fauci declined to comment on Friday. But in a statement after the pardon was issued, he pointed to his long career in government service and said he had done nothing wrong.

"Let me be perfectly clear," Dr. Fauci said in the statement. "I have committed no crime and there are no possible grounds for any allegation or threat of criminal investigation or prosecution of me."

# Trump fires multiple federal inspectors general in overnight purge

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Donald Trump administration purged at least a dozen federal inspectors general overnight Friday, multiple sources confirmed to CBS News. It is an unprecedented move that will likely result in legal challenges.

Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One on his way to Florida, President Trump on Saturday described the firings as “standard” and a “very common thing to do.”

However, the inspector general of the U.S. Small Business Administration, Hannibal “Mike” Ware said the firings are legally dubious and will be challenged.

Ware, who was among those fired argued in a letter to a White House personnel official, which was obtained by CBS News on Saturday, that he “does not believe the actions taken are legally sufficient.”

According to Ware, he and other inspectors general were sent an email from Sergio Gor, the director of presidential personnel, on Friday informing them that “due to changing priorities, your position as Inspector General...is terminated, effective immediately.”

Ware, in his letter, recommended Gor reach out to White House legal counsel to discuss the “intended course of action” as “we do not believe the actions taken are legally sufficient to dismiss Presidentially-Appointed, Senate-Confirmed Inspectors General.”

Federal law requires the White House to give Congress a full month of warning and case-specific details before firing a federal inspector general.

A source told CBS News that the fired inspectors general include many who were appointed during the first Trump administration.

Back in 2020, Trump fired five inspector generals.

Ware, who is also the chair of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, an independent oversight body, said in a separate statement that inspector

generals are not “immune from removal.” However, he echoed that unjustified removals are a “significant threat” to the jobs they’re meant to do.

“Congress specifically established the authorities and structure of the IGs to safeguard their vital oversight role, by mandating independence under the IG Act,” he said.

“Removals inconsistent with the law are a significant threat to the actual and perceived independence of Igs.”

Ware also noted that Congress recently amended the Inspector General Act to require the president to notify Congress 30 days prior to the removal of an inspector general, as well as requiring a “substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons.”

The White House has not commented on the firings.

Among those fired was Christi Grimm, the inspector general for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Inspectors general are tasked with finding waste, fraud, abuse and misconduct in the federal agencies. They would be tasked with monitoring President Trump’s agencies and appointees.

Mark Greenblatt, who was nominated by Trump to be inspector general of the Department of the Interior during Trump’s first term, told CBS News in a phone interview Saturday that he was “stunned” when he received the notification.

When asked why he thinks Trump fired him and others, he responded: “The most charitable interpretation is that he doesn’t believe in our independence or our fairness. The least charitable interpretation is that he wants lackeys to rubber stamp what he’s trying to do.”

“It’s very bizarre,” Greenblatt added. “There’s no unifying theme as to why he chose this group of 17. It just doesn’t make sense, to be completely honest. It does not make sense. No one can figure



out what was driving the list.”

Democratic Rep. Gerald Connolly of Virginia, who is a ranking member of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, called the firings of inspectors general “an attack on transparency and accountability, essential ingredients in our democratic form of government.”

“Replacing independent inspectors general with political hacks will harm every American who relies on social security, veteran benefits and a fair hearing at IRS on refunds and audits.”

Sen. Chuck Grassley, an Iowa Republican, said in a statement on Saturday that while “there may be a good reason the IGs were fired,” he’d like further explanation from Trump.

“Regardless, the 30 day detailed notice of removal that the law demands was not provided to Congress,” he added.

In remarks on the Senate floor on Saturday, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) described the Trump administration’s actions as a “chilling purge” and called it “a preview of the lawless approach Donald Trump and his administration are taking far too often as he’s becoming president.”

“These firings are Donald Trump’s way of telling us he is terrified of accountability and is hostile to facts and to transparency,” Schumer said. “Inspectors General can be vital for keeping the government honest.”



# US officials push to exempt Ukraine from Rubio's foreign aid freeze

By Agency Reporter

US diplomats have requested an urgent exemption for Ukraine-related programmes from a 90-day freeze on foreign aid and “stop work” orders issued by secretary of state Marco Rubio, according to documents seen by the Financial Times and people familiar with the matter.

Citing national security concerns, senior diplomats in the state department's Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs have asked Rubio to grant a full waiver to exclude the work of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in Ukraine from the sweeping directive that came into effect immediately after being issued on Friday.

“We do not know at this time whether this request will be approved — in whole or in part — but there are positive signals thus far out of Washington,” said an email sent to USAID staff in Ukraine on Saturday that was reviewed by the FT.

USAID in Ukraine has temporarily held off issuing “stop work” orders while the exemption request is being considered, according to the email and officials at some of those partner organisations.

The agency has also asked staff to assess programmes “and find ways for them to more clearly support the secretary of state's directive to make the US safer, stronger and more prosperous”.

But by Saturday evening in Kyiv, some organisations began receiving “stop work” orders.

One such order shared by an organisation with the FT ordered “the contractor to immediately stop work under the USAID/Ukraine contract/task order” the organisation had been awarded.

The order said the contractor “shall not resume work . . . until notification has been received in



writing from the Contracting Officer that this Stop Work Order has been cancelled”. The state department, USAID and US embassy in Kyiv did not respond to requests for comment.

In an internal cable sent on Friday to the state department and USAID, obtained by the FT, Rubio instructed that all new foreign aid disbursements be suspended. Contracting and grant officers were directed to “immediately issue stop work orders . . . until such time as the secretary shall determine, following a review”.

The review, expected to take up to 85 days, leaves the fate of hundreds of US foreign aid contracts — valued at more than \$70bn in the 2022 fiscal year — in limbo.

Officials and NGO staff in Ukraine, where Russia's all-out war will enter a fourth year next month, have warned that, without a waiver from President Donald Trump's new secretary of state, programmes such as support for schools and hospitals as well as economic and energy infrastructure development efforts are in jeopardy.

A programme director at an NGO working in Kyiv said the funding freeze could be a “disaster” for their group and Ukraine.

There are some exceptions to Rubio's order, including “approved waivers” for military financing for Israel and Egypt, and foreign emergency food aid. But the cable does not mention such an exemption for Ukraine, which relies on

Washington for military aid to fight Russia.

The state department and US embassy in Kyiv did not respond to requests to clarify Rubio's directive as it pertains to new military aid for Ukraine.

However, a Ukrainian government official with knowledge of the matter confirmed to the FT that US military assistance did not fall under the freeze order. “Military aid to Ukraine is intact,” the official said. “At least as of now, and it is certainly not part of this 90-day freeze.”

Speaking at a press conference alongside visiting Moldovan President Maia Sandu in Kyiv on Saturday, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy confirmed that American arms had not stopped flowing to his country.

“I am focused on military aid; it has not been stopped, thank God,” he said.

The US has provided \$65.9bn in military aid to Kyiv since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, according to state department statistics.

Trump has been sceptical of US military aid to Ukraine and derided Zelenskyy as “the greatest salesman on earth” for his efforts to secure billions of dollars' worth of arms and ammunition.

# Chelsea breaks records to sign Naomi Girma for £900,000

By **Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi**

Chelsea Women's Football Club has made headlines by signing USA defender Naomi Girma for a record-breaking women's transfer fee of £900,000. The 24-year-old moves from San Diego Wave to the Women's Super League (WSL) leaders on a contract that runs until the summer of 2029.

Girma, widely regarded as one of the best defenders in women's football, was introduced to fans at Stamford Bridge ahead of Chelsea's 1-0 victory over Arsenal. The transfer fee eclipses the previous women's world record of £685,000, set when Bay FC signed Racheal Kundananji in February 2024.

"An Easy Choice," Says Girma

Speaking about her move, Girma expressed her excitement:

"I'm so happy and really excited to be here. It doesn't feel real. There are a lot of things about Chelsea that made me want to come here—the culture, the winning mentality, staff, and players. It's a top environment to

learn and grow in, and right now, that's what I'm looking to do."

Chelsea manager Sonia Bompastor described the signing as a major coup for the club:

"Naomi is a phenomenal player and a true leader. She will bring stability to our defense and help push us toward our goals, particularly in Europe."

However, Bompastor also revealed that Girma has a minor injury and will miss Chelsea's WSL clash with Aston Villa on 2 February.

A Rising Star in World Football

Girma's accolades include helping San Diego win the National Women's Soccer League Shield in 2023 and being named US Soccer's Female Player of the Year. She was also



instrumental in the USA's gold-medal victory at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Chelsea's Millie Bright expressed her excitement about partnering with Girma in defense:

"We're really lucky to have her. She's a fantastic addition, and her arrival shows the direction we're heading in as a club. We're here to win titles, and Naomi's signing reflects that ambition."

# Police probe threats against referee Oliver following Arsenal-Wolves clash

By **Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi**

Police have launched an investigation into threats and abuse aimed at Premier League referee Michael Oliver following Arsenal's 1-0 victory over Wolves on Saturday.

The abuse comes after Oliver controversially sent off Arsenal defender Myles Lewis-Skelly in the 43rd minute for a high challenge on Wolves' Matt Doherty. The decision, upheld by VAR official Darren England, has drawn criticism from fans and pundits alike.

The Professional Game Match Officials Limited (PGMOL) condemned the attacks in a statement:

"We are appalled by the threats and abuse directed at Michael Oliver. No official should be subject to such abhorrent

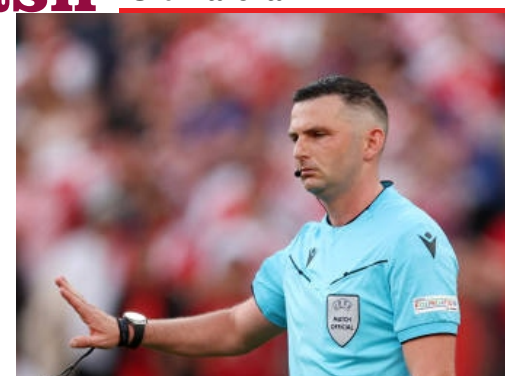
behaviour, and investigations are underway."

The Premier League echoed the sentiment, expressing strong disapproval of the actions:

"We strongly condemn the threats and abuse directed at Michael Oliver. Officials deserve respect and support in their roles."

In addition to Lewis-Skelly's dismissal, Oliver also sent off Wolves midfielder Joao Gomes later in the match. Arsenal's Riccardo Calafiori ultimately secured the win with the game's only goal.

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta refrained from defending the red card decision post-match, stating, "It's so



obvious that today you don't need my words."

The incident highlights ongoing concerns about abuse faced by match officials. PGMOL noted:

"This is not the first time an official has faced such threats. We remain committed to supporting Michael and tackling this unacceptable behaviour."



# Fulham 0-1 Manchester United: Martinez secures win, Rashfrod absent again

By Oluwatosin Ologun

**M**anchester United secured the second win in a row in the Premier League with a 1-0 win at Fulham on Sunday night.

Man Utd continued their goal-shy ways in the first half, finishing without a single shot on target but at least restricted Fulham too, going in goalless at half-time.

Despite the fact that the game lacked quality, the Red Devils made it two wins in a row Premier League as they continued to prefer life away from Old Trafford.

After an underwhelming first-half at Craven Cottage, Martinez popped up in the 78th minute to secure all three points for Ruben Amorim's men.

Amad Diallo thought he had made it two deep into added time but it was ruled out for offside by VAR, with the clash ending in a 1-0 away victory.

Fulham had a number of chances and were arguably the better team on the night but United ultimately made them pay for their wastefulness.

The result has moved United up to 12th in the top-flight table and they will be hoping to now kick on under head coach Amorim after a slow start.

Rashford still absent despite Manchester United form

Marcus Rashford was absent once again as Manchester United beat Fulham 1-0 in



the Premier League.

Ruben Amorim refuses to budge. Despite poor results in recent weeks, the Portuguese head coach has not seen enough from Marcus Rashford to recall him to the matchday squad.

Rashford's last appearance for Manchester United came at the start of December against Nottingham Forest. Since Amorim dropped Rashford for the Manchester derby, he has only returned to the bench once.

An exit now seems inevitable – and potentially imminent. Barcelona are making space for Rashford, with the United star holding talks with the Spanish giants ahead of a potential January move.

After Sunday's 1-0 win over Fulham, Amorim was asked about Rashford's absence and he delivered his most brutal response so far.

Manchester United Marcus Rashford and Ruben Amorim

Ruben Amorim explains Rashford's absence

While Alejandro Garnacho has worked his way back into Amorim's plans since being dropped, Rashford

has fallen completely out of the picture.

Just last week against Brighton, Amorim said Rashford is not best for the team as his latest justification for leaving him out of the squad.

If you can cast your mind back to when Rashford was first left out, Amorim suggested that he was not overly pleased with how the 27-year-old was training. After 11 successive games without playing, Amorim is still not impressed by what he is seeing at Carrington.

Asked after the Fulham win why Rashford was absent, Amorim replied: "The reason is the training, the way I see what footballers should do in training, in life. It's every day, every detail. So if things don't change, I will not change."

Amorim then delivered a brutal line suggesting he would rather put goalkeeping coach Jorge Vital in his squad than Rashford at the moment.

"I prefer it like that," Amorim continued. "I will put (Jorge) Vital on than a player that doesn't give the maximum every day. So I will not change in that department."

