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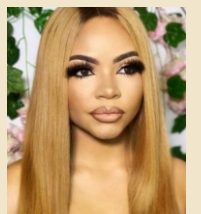


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Atiku to FG: Don't let snakes swallow \$1.07bn health budget

By Dave Oludare Oso

The presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2023 general elections, Atiku Abubakar has warned the federal government that the \$1.07 billion allocated to the health sector in the 2025 budget must not be misused.

Atiku, a former vice president noted that claims that animals such as snakes, termites, and monkeys were responsible for the disappearance of public funds should not befall the allocation to the health sector.

The Turakin Adamawa, in a statement he personally signed on Sunday, said, "To this end, the Federal Government has to be deliberate about putting mechanisms in place for public audit and accountability in its US\$1.07 billion budgetary appropriation in the health sector."

He also demanded a transparent and accountable framework to track how the allocated money is spent for the benefit of the people.

The former vice President specifically queried the Federal Government for not providing comprehensive information on how it plans to expend the over one billion dollars in the primary health sector.

Noting that while healthcare,



especially the primary sector deserves rapid investment to promote access to quality and affordable health services to Nigerians, he said, "It will be immoral of the government not to provide extensive details of how the money allotted for the purpose would be dispensed.

"We have read that the Federal Government has a plan to expend a whopping sum of \$1.07 billion in the primary health sector. This amount is in addition to the N2.48 trillion, which had earlier been proposed for the health sector in the initial draft of the budget.

"This development gets even more troubling when the government equally announced that the \$1.07 billion it is adding to the health sector at the sub-national level was mainly sourced through foreign loans and a fraction of it being provided through

an international donor agency.

"In other words, Nigeria is expected to pay these loans back and it is required that the Nigerian people know the details of these loans and that its expenditure must be conveyed in a policy envelop that will explain how it will be spent."

He said further that the "failure of the Federal Government not to commit to a single physical infrastructure in expending the budgetary provision smacks of fraud",

The former number two man stated, "Claims of animals such as snakes, termites, gorillas and monkeys swallowing public funds must never be the fate of the funds budgeted for the critical sector of health in the 2025 budget."

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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
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3X3	28,000.00
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Atiku, Tambuwal, others hold closed-door meeting with Obasanjo

By Dave Oludare Oso

A delegation led by former Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar had a closed-door meeting with former President Olusegun Obasanjo at his residence in Abeokuta, the Ogun State capital on Monday.

Among the delegation were former governors of Cross River and Sokoto states, Liyel Imoke and Senator Aminu Tambuwal.

Also, a ranking senator representing Sokoto South, Abdul Ningi was part of the entourage.

In various reports, the former vice president and his entourage arrived the Olusegun Obasanjo presidential library, Abeokuta at about 12:36 pm on Monday.

Journalists were, however barred from having access to the venue, with stern looking security operatives stationed everywhere around the house

Resultantly, the agenda of the meeting was not known as of press time but it comes amid plans by opposition politicians to map out strategies to form an alliance against the All Progressives Congress (APC) and win the 2027 presidential election.

Recently, the Turakin Adamawa hosted former Labour Party (LP) presidential candidate, Peter Obi, at his residence in Adamawa State.

Why I visited Obasanjo – Atiku

Meanwhile, the former vice president has explained why he visited his former boss, Obasanjo in Abeokuta, Ogun State on Monday.

The former PDP presidential candidate, who was accompanied by former governors Liyel Imoke and Tambuwall, and Senator,



Abdul Ningi, when asked details of the closed-door meeting that lasted about 1 hour 30 minutes., told newsmen that it was just a courtesy visit and declined further comment.

“It’s just a courtesy visit please, I am not going to talk about politics please,” he said.

NEW DAILY PRIME reports that Atiku was the Vice-President to Obasanjo between 1999 and 2007.

He has since contested to be the main man for more than three times, albeit unsuccessfully, losing to Former military head of state, Muhammadu Buhari twice and the incumbent president, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu in 2023.

Political watchers and analysts are of the opinion that the former vice president considers 2027 to be his last shot at the presidency, hence his desperation/efforts to forge alliances to upstage President Tinubu.

However, after Atiku hosted former Labour Party (LP) presidential candidate, Peter Obi, at his Adamawa State residence recently, the former Anambra governor came out to dispel any plan to go into any alliance for the

sole purpose of grabbing power for its sake or toppling Tinubu.

The former governor declared emphatically that, while he is not against alliances, he would only consider it for the sole purpose of lifting Nigerians out of poverty and developing the nation.

Similarly, the third leading opposition party in Nigeria, going by the number of votes it garnered in 2023 elections, New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) had also dismissed any proposed merger with PDP or Labour Party for the purpose of winning the 2027 presidential polls.

NNPP’s standard bearer in the (2023) election, Alhaji Rabiu Kwankwaso was furious when the news that he has conceded the hunt for the presidency to former vice president Atiku filtered into town, dismissing the news as untrue and fake.

The former Kano State governor declared that there was never a time that he agreed for a rotational agreement that would see Atiku first spend four years as the president, following which Obi will succeed him (Atiku) and lastly, him (Kwankwaso) mounting the saddle after Obi.

Shettima inaugurates PreCEFI, reaffirms Tinubu's commitment to economic inclusion

By Friday Omosola

Vice President Kashim Shettima has reaffirmed President Bola Tinubu's commitment to economic reforms aimed at fostering inclusive growth and bridging financial gaps across Nigeria.

He said this at the inauguration of the Presidential Committee on Economic and Financial Inclusion (PreCEFI) at the State House Banquet Hall, Abuja.

Shettima emphasised the administration's dedication to achieving a \$1 trillion economy by 2030.

The event also featured the signing of an investment agreement by private sector stakeholders to provide the foundational infrastructure for the Aso Accord Initiative, a key component of Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda.

Addressing attendees at the Presidential Villa, Abuja, Shettima underscored the urgent need for deliberate strategies to ensure financial inclusion, stating that economic aspirations must be backed by concrete actions.

"Our road to a \$1 trillion economy by 2030 shall remain a mere wish unless we lay a foundation strong enough to carry our dreams.

"Dreams are not built on hope alone. They are the sum of deliberate ideas and strategies, inspired by our desire to win," Shettima said.

Despite progress since the launch of the Financial Inclusion Strategy in 2012—where financial inclusion rates



rose from 60.3% to 74% by 2023—millions of Nigerians remain outside the financial system.

The Vice President called on stakeholders to support efforts to integrate unbanked citizens, particularly youth, women, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and rural populations.

"This is not merely another government initiative. This is a higher calling—a national duty to bridge the economic divide and maximize the full potential of our people," Shettima declared.

The newly inaugurated committee will function through two key bodies: the governance committee (GovCo), focused on policy direction and the technical Committee (TechCo), tasked with operational strategies.

An Implementation Secretariat will support the committees to ensure adaptability to evolving financial and economic challenges.

IQS Africa is leading a consortium of

private investors to provide the essential infrastructure for the Aso Accord's implementation.

Emmanuel Itapson, President/CEO of IQS, lauded the Tinubu administration's leadership, describing the Renewed Hope Agenda as a "moonshot moment" for Nigeria's economic transformation.

"No nation has ever achieved a great leap in its move towards greatness without a leadership that paints a vision that summons and harnesses the best and the most out of its people," he said.

Several high-ranking officials and stakeholders expressed support for the initiative, including:

Senator Ibrahim Hadejia, Deputy Chief of Staff to the President (Office of the Vice President), highlighted Tinubu's economic vision.

More so, Nurudeen Zauro, Technical Adviser to the President on Economic and Financial Inclusion, emphasized the role of collaboration in achieving the trillion-dollar economy target.

FG to meet with education unions over 12-year basic education proposal

By **Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

The Federal Government is scheduled to meet with the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) and the All Nigeria Confederation of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPPS) this Wednesday to discuss a proposal put forward by the Minister of Education, Mr. Tunji Alausa, aimed at extending basic education to 12 years.

The proposal seeks to merge junior and senior secondary education into a single, continuous programme, which has sparked mixed reactions among key stakeholders in the education sector. While some have expressed support, others have called for more in-depth deliberation before any decision is made.

In an exclusive interview, the National President of ANCOPPS, Mr. Musa Ibrahim, clarified that while the proposal had been presented by the minister, it had not yet been enacted into law.

Ibrahim emphasised that discussions are still in the early stages, and the organisation is neither endorsing nor opposing the policy at this time.

“The minister has made a proposal, but it’s not a law yet. He has simply suggested it, and we haven’t had the chance to discuss it thoroughly. We’re not backing or rejecting this policy change just yet. What we need to do is look at the blueprint, whether it’s 12 years, nine years, or 10 years—it all depends,” Ibrahim said.

He further noted that the upcoming meeting in Abuja would provide an opportunity for a more detailed discussion of the proposal.



“We’re heading to Abuja on Wednesday, February 12, for a meeting, and once we’ve had our discussions, I’ll be sure to brief you on the outcome,” Ibrahim added.

Meanwhile, Mr. Audu Amber, the National President of the Nigeria Union of Teachers, stressed the importance of analysing the proposal in full before offering any public comment.

Amber revealed that media outlets have been eager for the union’s position, but he refrained from commenting until he has a clearer understanding of the government’s intentions.

“Thank God you said it’s a proposal. Since the day before yesterday, I’ve not been talking because all the media houses, both print and broadcast, have been calling me for our comment. I don’t want to comment now because until I get the full picture and intentions of the government, I can’t speak on it,” Amber

said.

He added that the matter requires careful consideration, particularly given its national significance.

“This is a national issue, and before one should make a comment, one should be able to analyse it. By tomorrow, I’ll be in the office. We will put our heads together, and then I’ll have the opportunity to make comments,” Amber explained.

On the other hand, the National Chairman of the Parent-Teacher Association, Haruna Danjuma, expressed support for the proposal, praising it as a potential solution to reduce student dropout rates and enhance skill acquisition.

Danjuma suggested that merging junior and senior secondary school into a single programme could improve educational continuity and help retain students in the system.

Obasanjo: No leader can achieve success without stepping on toes

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo has stated that no leader can achieve success without stepping on toes.

He shared this view during a familiarisation visit by Dr. Dayo Israel, the new Chairman of the Board of Management of Federal Medical Centre, Idi-Aba, Abeokuta, on Sunday, February 9.

Obasanjo, who was hosting Dr. Israel, along with the Centre's Medical Director, Prof. Adewale Musa-Olomu, and members of the Management team, encouraged the new chairman to be prepared for the challenges ahead.

He advised him to embrace the necessity of making difficult decisions, even if it meant stepping on some toes.

The former president explained that effective leadership often requires tough decisions that may not be popular but are necessary for progress. He said, "If you're doing a job and you're not stepping on toes, then you're not effective."

Obasanjo also shared a personal story to illustrate his point. He



recounted an incident from several decades ago after he left office as Head of State when he had to take disciplinary action against his daughter.

She had been working on his farm during a long vacation, but was late for work on two occasions. Despite being his daughter, Obasanjo said he did not hesitate to send her away from the farm, which, according to him, made a profound impact on his employees.

He explained, "If Baba could do this to his daughter, who are we?"

While advising the new chairman to be firm, Obasanjo also emphasized the importance of being "just, fair, and humane" in

all actions.

Obasanjo took the opportunity to commend Prof. Musa-Olomu for his achievements at the Centre over the past seven and a half years, acknowledging the Medical Director's positive impact on the institution.

Earlier, Dr. Israel praised Obasanjo, describing him as an international colossus full of wisdom and wit.

He reaffirmed his commitment to making the Federal Medical Centre a world-class medical facility where individuals from across the globe could receive comprehensive care.

Nigeria needs better universities, not more – JAMB Registrar

By Friday Omosola

The Registrar of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), Professor Ishaq Oloyede, has stated that Nigeria does not need more universities.

Oloyede, who spoke during a media appearance on Channels TV yesterday further emphasised the importance of expanding the capacity of existing institutions.

He argued that rather than establishing new universities, the government should focus on improving infrastructure and increasing student intake in the current ones.

“It’s not just about adding more universities. Those advocating for it have their reasons, but their analysis is quite simplistic.

“If we expand the capacity of our existing universities, especially at the federal level, they can accommodate more students and perform better,” he said.

He cited the University of Ibadan as an example, explaining that while its medical faculty currently admits about 200 students, improved facilities could enable it to take in 600 or even 800 students.

“Setting up 10 new universities, even if they are specialized, may not solve



the problem immediately. A new institution may only be able to admit 200 students after a decade, whereas expanding an existing university could accommodate what two or three new ones would take in,” he explained.

Oloyede also acknowledged the political motivations behind the establishment of new universities.

“Universities have become symbols of government goodwill in communities, especially since there are no factories or industries to show development. But in reality, what we need is an expansion of existing facilities, not the creation of new ones,” he concluded.

In addition to his stance on education, Oloyede, who also serves

as the Secretary-General of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), addressed the need for Sharia courts in the South-West.

He highlighted the challenges faced by Muslims seeking legal recourse in marriage disputes.

“If I have a dispute in my marriage, where do I go? A customary court, where the judge knows little to nothing about my faith and the legal framework on which my marriage was built?” he asked.

“The Nigerian Constitution allows for Sharia Courts of Appeal where a state assembly approves it. This should be implemented to ensure fair legal representation for all.”

We won't spare corrupt officers, says EFCC Chairman

By Friday Omosola

The Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Ola Olukoyede, has reaffirmed that under his leadership, the Commission will not allow public officers who corruptly enrich themselves to go unpunished.

In a statement posted by the anti-graft agency on Monday, Olukoyede made this declaration at the opening ceremony of a three-day workshop on Anti-Corruption, Fiscal Responsibility, Transparency, and Good Governance for state and local government officials.

The event was organised by the House Committee on Financial Crimes in collaboration with the EFCC at the EFCC Academy in Karu, Abuja.

Speaking through the Commandant of the EFCC Academy, Deputy Commandant of the EFCC (DCE) Chinwe Ndubueze, Olukoyede stated, "The EFCC under my leadership will have no sympathy for public officers who breach the rules to enrich themselves or their cronies."

He further emphasised that the outcome of the training would mark a turning point in fostering a culture of accountability and integrity in public service, as it aims to equip officials across different tiers of government with financial best practices.

While underscoring the significance of fiscal responsibility in effective public service delivery, he revealed that 70% of Nigeria's public sector challenges stem from poor fiscal transparency.

Olukoyede also noted that in every



budget cycle, trillions of naira are allocated to address the country's pressing infrastructural, social, and economic needs.

However, he lamented that "Instead, we have suffered the terrible misfortune of seeing rules circumvented and funds either diverted or outrightly stolen through various sharp practices in the procurement value chain, while the rest of us bear the consequences of the indiscretions of a few corrupt public officers."

Addressing the participants, he stressed, "As public officers, you occupy a vantage position to determine the fortune of this nation. Nigeria, with all its human and natural resources, has no business being poor. However, corruption remains the albatross that has held this nation captive."

In his remarks, the Chairman of the House Committee on Financial Crimes, Honourable Ginger Onwusibe, represented by the Clerk of the Committee, Austin Adesoro, advocated for the promotion of the Whistleblower Policy in public offices.

He urged participants to view corruption as public enemy number one.

"Public office demands sacrifices, not indulgence. Nigeria needs accountable institutions to deliver on its mandate. The integrity of leaders is vital, and corrupt officers must be sanctioned for corrupt practices. That's why we need collaboration at all levels," he said.

Also speaking at the event, a representative of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Hassan Salifu, commended the EFCC and the House Committee on Financial Crimes for the initiative.

He encouraged participants to leverage the training to block loopholes in the system.

"Indeed, this is a timely and necessary intervention, particularly at a time when financial integrity and accountability must be at the forefront of governance at the federal, state, and local government levels," he said.

Similarly, Kingsley Amaku, who represented the Director/Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU), emphasized in his goodwill message that the fight against corruption requires more than enforcement.

According to him, "A well-informed public sector that understands the legal and institutional frameworks designed to promote transparency is equally essential."

Femi Falana sues Meta for \$5m over privacy invasion

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Human rights lawyer, Femi Falana (SAN), has filed a \$5 million lawsuit against Meta Platforms Inc., the parent company of Facebook, over an alleged invasion of his privacy.

Falana claims Meta used his name, image, and voice in a false advertisement for a health product, portraying him as suffering from prostatitis—a condition he says he has never had.

In the suit, filed at the Lagos State High Court on February 3, 2025, Falana argues that the unauthorized use of his identity violates his fundamental right to privacy under Section 37 of the 1999 Constitution and the Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023.

The lawsuit stems from a misleading advertisement posted on a Facebook page named “AfriCare Health Centre,” which falsely claimed that Falana had been battling prostatitis for over 16 years and had endured symptoms like pain, fatigue, and urinary issues.



Falana insists he has had no association with the page or the health claims presented.

In his legal documents, Falana describes the video as false and misleading, accusing Meta of unfairly damaging his reputation.

He seeks a declaration that Meta’s actions violated his privacy rights, an order for the removal of the video, and \$5 million in general damages for the emotional distress and reputational harm

caused by the incident.

Falana further asserts that Meta failed to verify the claims before publishing the content, thus exposing him to ridicule and emotional distress.

He argues that the false publicity was driven by Meta’s attempt to boost user engagement and ad revenue at his expense.

The court has yet to set a hearing date for the case.

S’Court dismisses gov Fubara’s appeal on Rivers assembly leadership

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Supreme Court in Abuja has dismissed an appeal filed by Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara, challenging the leadership of the Rivers State House of Assembly.

The court ruled on Monday, ordering the governor to pay a fine of two million naira to the Assembly and the Assembly Speaker, Ikuinyi-Owaji Amaewhule.

A five-member panel, led by Justice



Uwani Abba-Aji, passed the judgment. The case was withdrawn by Fubara’s lawyer, Yusuf Ali,

leading to the dismissal.

Details of the case and the court’s reasoning will be made available later.

This development comes amidst ongoing political dynamics in Rivers State, which has seen several legal challenges regarding the governance and leadership structures within the state.

BBNaija Nengi reportedly welcomes child with Gov Diri as 5th wife

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Former Big Brother Naija housemate, Nengi Rebecca Hampson has reportedly welcomed a child with a 65-year-old married governor, who already has four wives.

The news comes after months of speculation sparked by a viral video, where fans noticed visible signs suggesting the reality star was pregnant.

In a recent exposé, controversial blogger, Gistlover alleged that Nengi secretly gave birth to her first child and suggested that she is the fifth wife of the married governor.

Sharing the claims on Instagram with Nengi's picture, the blogger hinted at revealing more details, writing, "SHALL WE?? By the way, she welcomed a child with a governor ... 5th wife in the making?"

"Make I talk abi make I face front? All these girls be doing the most, owo ijoba na yansh dey chop am... this gist is super messy... all the hide and seek don end oo ."

A social media user, @notyadaddi, on the X app revealed the governor who Nengi welcomed her child with is Bayelsa State governor, Douye Diri.



He said, "So Nengi allegedly gave birth to a baby for 65yr old Bayelsa State governor, Douye Diri & rumour has it she's the 5th wife. In this life, hustle to make money. These girls are all looking for financial security, that's all."

Read some reactions are shown below:

@KomeJnrAnthony said, "Omo, I keep saying this, secure the bag first my bros. That girl you dey run follow, make one serious guy come for her hand in marriage, she go follow am without thinking am twice."

@ojomuyidefoluke said, "So she later married this bayelsaman."

@_BLACKBOIEBII said, "Ijaw men for the wi ."

@tweetsbyzyl said, "Nengi wey ozo dey convulse over is about to be a 5th wife? Na money dey move these ones."

@Dr_Pharouk said, "Nengi weh some of us dey save up for don go born for daddy. Omo, the race is now for the swift and those that have money are strong abeg."

@DjPapiLondon said, "Dear Kings, Focus on the bag. These Naija women no send you except you pull up with Bigger Bag and Power. Wey you; Fine boy, if you like dey fool yourself with love, go get the bag as ugly or older rich men go first you chow the love or your life. Learn a skill today and your tomorrow will thank you. Forsake all emotions and go harder on becoming a better version of you."

Justice Nyako adjourns Nnamdi Kanu's trial indefinitely

By Dave Oludare Oso

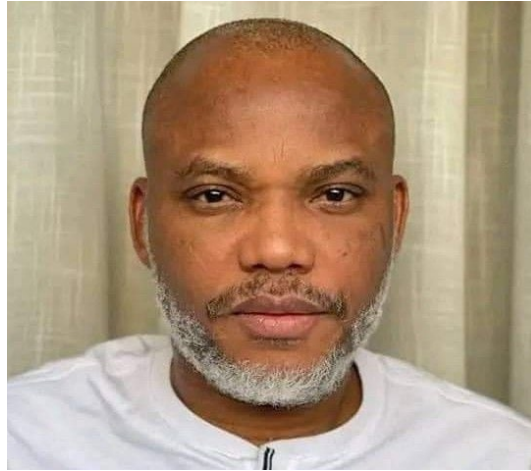
Justice Binta Murtala Nyako of the Federal High Court has adjourned the Treason and Terrorism trial of proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) leader, Nnamdi Kanu, indefinitely.

Nyako adjourned the suit on Monday following Kanu's insistence that the judge cannot preside over his case since she had recused herself.

The proscribed IPOB leader had been insisting that the Judge recuse herself from his trial over alleged bias.

On Monday, he insisted in court that the Judge is biased in the handling of his trial.

Kanu's trial was stalled after Nyako of the



Abuja Federal High Court entered a recusal order on September 24, 2024.

Nnamdi Kanu and his lead counsel, Aloysius Ejimakor in court on Monday.

The judge issued the recusal order after

Kanu asked her to step down from his trial because he lacked confidence in her ability.

Following her decision, Justice Nyako returned Kanu's case file to the Chief Judge of the Federal High Court, John Tsoho.

However, Tsoho was said to have returned the file to Nyako to continue the trial.

Kanu is currently facing charges of terrorism leveled against him by the Federal Government.

The IPOB leader has been in detention since he was rearrested in Kenya and subjected to extraordinary rendition back

India-based Nigerian arrested for N20m fraud

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A Nigerian national identified as Patrick Ngomere, has been arrested for alleged cyber fraud to the tune of ₹11.73 lakhs (equivalent to approximately \$13,361 or N20,020,800 as at February 10, 2025) in India.

According to a report by Millenium Post, Ngomere, arrested by Cyber Cell of Delhi Police was accused of hacking into the email of a pharmaceutical company and stealing Rs 11.73 lakhs.

The fraud was reported through the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal.

Ngomere, who is said to be a resident of Greater Noida, was reportedly arrested near an Automated Teller Machine (ATM), where his mobile phone was found to be linked to the fraudulent bank account.

He later confessed to the crime.



It was reported that the scam began on December 10, 2024 when Janani Family Care Pvt. Ltd. received an email posing as its vendor, Accent Pharma, instructing payment to a new account.

Unknowingly, the company transferred Rs 11.76 lakh. The fraud was uncovered upon verification.

Investigators traced the hacked email to

Nigeria and tracked the funds to a bank account in Manipur.

Surveillance footage led to Ngomere's arrest. He was found to be in India without a valid visa and is suspected of being part of a larger criminal network.

An FIR has been filed under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Foreigners Act, with further investigations ongoing.

In January 2025, it was reported that a Kuwait General Department of Criminal Investigation in Ahmadi Governorate arrested two Nigerian nationals for armed robbery.

The suspects were arrested within 24 hours after robbing an exchange office in Mahboula, a district in southern Kuwait City.

Military screens, rehabilitates 800 ex-Boko Haram fighters

By Friday Omosola

The Defence Headquarters (DHQ) has revealed that 800 former Boko Haram fighters who surrendered to the military are currently undergoing deradicalization as part of efforts to reintegrate them into society.

Maj.-Gen. Emeka Onumajuru, Chief of Defence Operations, disclosed this on Channels Television's 'The Morning Brief' programme.

He stated that 129,000 Boko Haram fighters and their families have been taken into custody, only 800 have been carefully selected for the rehabilitation initiative under 'Operation Safe Corridor.'

Clarifying the process, Onumajuru said, "To be precise, about 129,000 Boko Haram members and their families have surrendered.

"As a professional army, when an opponent surrenders, we take them in and allow the legal system to follow due process.



Some are held in detention facilities, including Kainji, while a special court reviews their cases.

"Those found guilty face legal consequences, while those deemed eligible undergo deradicalization, which typically lasts about a year."

Addressing concerns about whether a year is sufficient to fully reintegrate former terrorists, he affirmed, "It is possible because the deradicalization process is handled by professionals.

"The number undergoing the programme is not overwhelming—only about 800 are currently participating in batches after thorough legal screening."

Onumajuru emphasised that both kinetic (military) and non-kinetic (rehabilitation) strategies are essential for Nigeria to overcome insurgency.

He said deradicalization through 'Operation Safe Corridor' is part of the non-kinetic approach, noting that an asymmetrical war with military force can't be won alone.

Drug testing for appointees gains traction across states – NDLEA

By Friday Omosola

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has highlighted progress in its fight against narcotic substance abuse, particularly with support from state governments.

Speaking on Channels Television's 'The Morning Brief' on Monday, NDLEA spokesman Femi Babafemi revealed that states have adopted the agency's advocacy, making drug tests mandatory for government appointees and employees.

Babafemi emphasised that while drug testing is not yet a legal requirement, many states are integrating it into their policies.

"This advocacy has been ongoing since 2021, and a growing number of state governments are now implementing it as a policy.

"Anyone seeking an elective position or receiving a government appointment is required to undergo drug testing. However, it remains a voluntary initiative rather than a legal mandate—we can only encourage



stakeholders to support it," he explained.

He also disclosed that several politicians have faced prosecution for drug-related offences.

"In the last four years, our records show that about 65 drug barons, including former public office holders, have been arrested, prosecuted, and convicted.

"Some of them previously held positions such as local government chairmen. Even now, we have high-profile individuals currently undergoing prosecution," he stated.

Beyond politics, Babafemi noted that drug testing has gained

traction among employers and tertiary institutions as part of their screening processes.

"This initiative is expanding beyond the political sphere. Many employers now require drug tests for job applicants, and universities are implementing similar policies for incoming students. Both public and private institutions are embracing this approach to curb drug abuse among young people," he said.

Additionally, he said the NDLEA has been advocating for mandatory drug tests for prospective couples, noting that traditional and religious institutions are beginning to adopt the practice.

Albanian criminal avoids deportation from UK over son's food choice

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

Albanian criminal escaped deportation because his lawyer argued that his son would not be able to get British chicken nuggets in his home country

An Albanian criminal facing deportation has successfully delayed his removal from the UK after his legal team argued that his 10-year-old son's limited diet would make relocation unduly harsh.

Court documents revealed that the child's reluctance to eat foreign chicken nuggets played a role in the immigration tribunal's decision to allow the father to stay in Britain, citing his right to family life under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

Food Preferences Used as Legal Defence

The immigration tribunal ruled that deporting 39-year-old Klevis Disha to Albania would pose significant hardship for his son, identified as C, due to the child's "sensitivity around food." His lawyers argued that he struggles with specific textures, including clothing and food, and would refuse to eat the "type of chicken nuggets available abroad."



This argument contributed to the judge's ruling that Disha's deportation would be "unduly harsh," allowing him to remain in the UK despite his criminal record.

A Case That Sparks Immigration Outrage

The ruling has sparked widespread public and political outrage, with critics arguing that the case exemplifies how UK immigration laws are being exploited.

"It's ludicrous that a judge would even entertain this argument," said Robert Jenrick, the Shadow Justice Secretary. "Cases like this make us a laughingstock. It's an insult to the British public that our immigration laws are being abused in such an outrageous way."

Similarly, Shadow Home Secretary Chris Philp stated: "This case shows how bogus asylum seekers and foreign criminals ruthlessly exploit human rights laws and weak judges to stay in the UK when common sense clearly shows they should be removed."

Criminal History and Legal Challenges

Disha, who entered the UK illegally as a 15-year-old unaccompanied minor in 2001, initially lied about his identity, falsely claiming to be from the former Yugoslavia. Though his asylum claim was denied, he later secured UK citizenship in 2007 after being granted indefinite leave to remain.

**Continue reading
on next page**

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His troubles escalated in 2017 when he was convicted of possessing £250,000 in illicit cash—proceeds of crime. He was sentenced to two years in prison, leading to then-Home Secretary Priti Patel ordering his deportation and revocation of UK citizenship.

However, Disha appealed the deportation, and a lower immigration tribunal judge ruled in his favor, arguing that his deportation would severely impact his son's well-being.

Despite the tribunal's ruling, Judge David Merrigan of the Upper Tribunal disagreed with the lower court's assessment. He ruled that C's refusal to eat certain types of food did not constitute an extreme hardship justifying Disha's right to stay.

"We are not persuaded that the addition of this sole example approaches anywhere near the level of harshness required to justify such a decision," Judge Merrigan stated.

As a result, the case has been remitted to a new judge for reconsideration. The tribunal will now re-examine whether deportation would, in fact, be "unduly harsh" on the child.

Political Backlash and Immigration Crackdown

The case comes at a time when both the Labour and Conservative parties are under pressure from Reform UK, which has been gaining political momentum with its tough stance on immigration.

In an effort to counter claims that Britain is soft on illegal immigration, the UK government recently launched an aggressive crackdown on illegal workers, leading to:

609 arrests last month (a 73% increase from January 2024). A 48% increase in immigration raids from 556 to 828 within the same period.

Increased deportations, with the Home Office confirming that 2,580 foreign criminals have been removed since the last election, a 23% increase compared to the previous year. Additionally, the Home Office announced plans to publicly release footage of migrants being deported from the UK to counteract perceptions that the country is an easy destination for asylum seekers.

Future of UK's Immigration Laws

The UK government has reaffirmed its commitment to the ECHR, despite calls from right-wing politicians to withdraw from the treaty to allow for stricter deportation policies.

Legal experts argue that leaving the ECHR would have serious implications for international agreements, including the Good Friday Agreement, which is legally bound by human rights commitments.

As of February 2025, the debate over the UK's immigration laws and the role of the ECHR continues to intensify, with cases like Disha's fueling calls for urgent legal reforms.

The decision to allow a convicted criminal to stay in the UK over his son's picky eating habits has intensified public outrage, political scrutiny, and demands for stricter immigration policies.

As the case remains under judicial review, the outcome could set a precedent for how human rights laws are interpreted in future deportation cases.

Dubai court jails Nigerian oil tycoon, Bashar over financial crime

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The owner of Rahamaniyya Group and Ultimate Oil & Gas, Abdulrahman Bashar, has been sentenced to one year in prison over a financial crime linked to his dealings with CI Energy Company, an oil and gas firm by a court in Dubai.

In the news that broke on Saturday, this marks the second time in five years that the Nigerian businessman has been jailed, following a previous ten-month sentence handed down by a UK court in 2020.

According to PREMIUM TIMES, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) court delivered its ruling on January 30, 2025, even though 48-year-old Bashar failed to appear in court despite being notified.

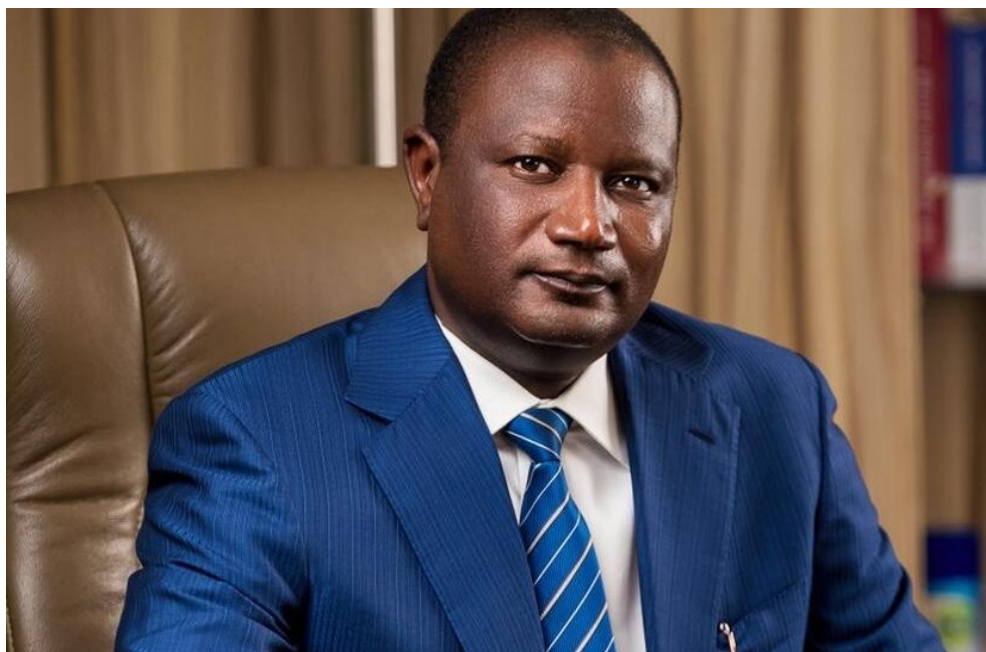
The UAE public prosecution charged him with issuing seven cheques totaling 126.45 million dirhams from an Emirates Islamic Bank account.

The cheques were dishonored due to a signature mismatch. The prosecution argued that the businessman intentionally signed the cheques in a manner that made them impossible to cash. They requested the court to punish him according to UAE financial laws.

During the proceedings led by Judge Hussein Hamdi, the court ruled: "It is established that the crime of issuing a cheque is realised merely by giving the cheque to the beneficiary knowing that there is no balance available for withdrawal."

Based on the evidence presented, including statements from Jamal Awad Nasser Hussein, an agent of CI Energy, as well as cheque duplicates and bank statements, the court found Bashar guilty.

"The court sees from the examination of the documents that the incident within the scope of what it has extracted in the aforementioned manner is sufficiently established against the accused to convict him" the court ruled.



It noted that Bashar's defence attempted to discredit the evidence but failed to convince the court. His denial of the charges was seen as a tactic to escape punishment.

To avoid delays, the court transferred a related civil compensation case to a separate civil court for further investigation.

In the UK In February 2020, the High Court of England and Wales sentenced Bashar to 10 months in jail for disobeying multiple court orders in a case involving Sahara Energy Resources.

Justice Butcher, who delivered the verdict, stated: "The basis of the sentence was that Mr Bashar had committed continuing breaches of the order of Mr Justice Robin Knowles of 1 August 2019 and of the order of Mr Justice Bryan of 6 September 2019."

The orders required Rahamaniyya Oil & Gas to supply 6,400.49 metric tonnes of gas to Sahara Energy or its agent. However, Bashar failed to comply, preventing the release of the gas from the terminal. The UK court had indicated that his jail term could be reduced to six months if he eventually obeyed the order.

Additionally, Rahamaniyya Group was fined £500,000, while its manager, Adebowale Aderemi, was fined £10,000.

Who is Abdulrahman Bashar?

Abdulrahman Bashar is the chairman of Ultimate Oil & Gas DMCC and the MD/CEO of Rahamaniyya Group of Companies, Nigeria. His businesses are involved in the trading, supply, and distribution of African crude oil and petroleum products across Africa, Europe, South Asia, and the Middle East.

According to his company website: "Through Rahamaniyya Group, Alhaji Abdulrahman Bashar directs a diversified conglomerate across various sectors, leveraging his experience in oil and gas exploration, petroleum marketing, and haulage."

With his latest conviction in Dubai, his business reputation now faces another major blow.

UI medical students disrupt FG, UCH meeting over 100-day power outage

By Helen Okechukwu

Power shortages witnessed across University College Hospital (UCH) have led some medical students from the University of Ibadan to protest at the meeting venue between the Federal Government (FG) and the hospital management.

The medical students stormed the meeting ground on Monday, demanding immediate power restoration over the 100-day total blackout at the hospital.

The meeting between the FG and UCH management was convened by Minister of Power, Adebayo Adedun, to find out the problem of power outage at the institution.

Samson Samuel, a former UI students' union president, led the group of protesters who expressed their grievance over the yet-to-be-rectified power disruption at the health facility.

Samuel at the protest ground highlighted the implications for their academic and clinical activities.

Among their requests, they asked the Minister of Power to make timeline provisions for the implementation of the 50 per cent electricity tariff discount pledged by the FG across tertiary hospitals.

In the Healthwise report, a student identified as Tola said, "We are here today to express our displeasure and frustration over the over 100 days of electricity and darkness at the University College Hospital, Ibadan.

"As medical students, we rely



heavily on electricity to power our equipment and facilities, but the prolonged power outage has made it impossible for us to carry out our academic and clinical activities effectively.

Read Also : Protest looms over Dele Farotimi's detention

Revealing their plight, the medical students said the power disruption has led to the cancellation of several surgeries and other critical medical procedures.

"The power outage has not only affected our academic activities, but it has also had a negative impact on the hospital's services," Tobi, another student, disclosed.

"Surgeries and other critical medical procedures have been cancelled due to the lack of electricity, which has put the lives of patients at risk."

In their numbers, the protester vowed to remain in the vicinity until the minister of power explained the

delay in the implementation of the electricity tariff discount; meanwhile, efforts to calm the angry student down remained fruitless.

Tobi shared their determination in getting responses for their demands. Although the total blackout experience for over 100-day has been linked to the health facility's N200 million electricity debt.

It was revealed that the health facility depends on a generator as an alternative power provider since the prolonged disconnection from the national grid by the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IBEDC) leads to insufficiency.

Also as the hospital continue to experience power outage, the revenue bears the burns, as patients has seek to find services in other hospital located within the state.

The protest by the medical students is evident of frustration and need for immediate attention in the university community.

Failed Kidney: Yobe govt deploys health experts to affected communities

By Helen Okechukwu

The Yobe Government has deployed 50 health experts to investigate the root causes of the alarming cases of kidney failure in some parts of the state.

The Director of the Biomedical Science Research and Training Centre, Yobe State University, Dr Mahmud Maina, made this known in Gashua in the Bade Local Government Area of the state.

“We are here in Bade Emirate to begin a kidney research project funded by Gov. Mai Mala Buni.

“The research aims to understand the risk and causative factors contributing to the high number of deaths related to kidney disease, particularly within this emirate,” he said,

He said the team comprises 50 experts, including neurology consultants, lab scientists, nephrologists, geologists, chemists, echo toxicologists, and collaborators from the UK, U.S., and Ghana.

“The team will conduct interviews with 2,000 people in



Bade and Damaturu Local Government Areas to determine whether the causes are environmental, lifestyle-related, or genetic,” he added.

In his remarks, the Chief Medical Director of the Yobe State University Teaching Hospital, Dr Babagoni Waru, expressed confidence in the team’s ability to identify the underlying causes of the problem.

Read Also: Experts advocate healthy eating to combat malnutrition in Nigeria

He prayed for divine guidance in uncovering the common factors contributing to the public health challenge and effective implementation of preventive measures.

Also speaking, the Chairman of Bade Local Government Area, Ibrahim Babagana, assured the team of the council’s support.

The chairman lamented the loss of six family members to kidney disease recently.

He pledged the commitment of the council, the emirate, and the entire community to the success of the research project.

NAN reports that on June 4, 2024, the state government said it had sponsored over 50,000 free dialysis sessions for patients suffering from renal diseases in the last five years.

Culled from NAN

1 in 5 UK adults diagnosed with diabetes or pre-diabetes

By Andrew Gregory

One in five UK adults now live with diabetes or pre-diabetes, according to “alarming” data that highlights the effects of rising obesity levels, poor diets, and a “broken” food system.

Diabetes UK reports that 12.2 million people are affected, including 4.6 million with diagnosed diabetes, 1.3 million with undiagnosed diabetes, and 6.3 million with pre-diabetes, marking the highest total ever recorded.

Only a small portion of cases involve type 1 diabetes or other non-lifestyle-related forms. Colette Marshall, the charity’s chief executive, attributes the rising numbers mainly to increasing type 2 diabetes cases.

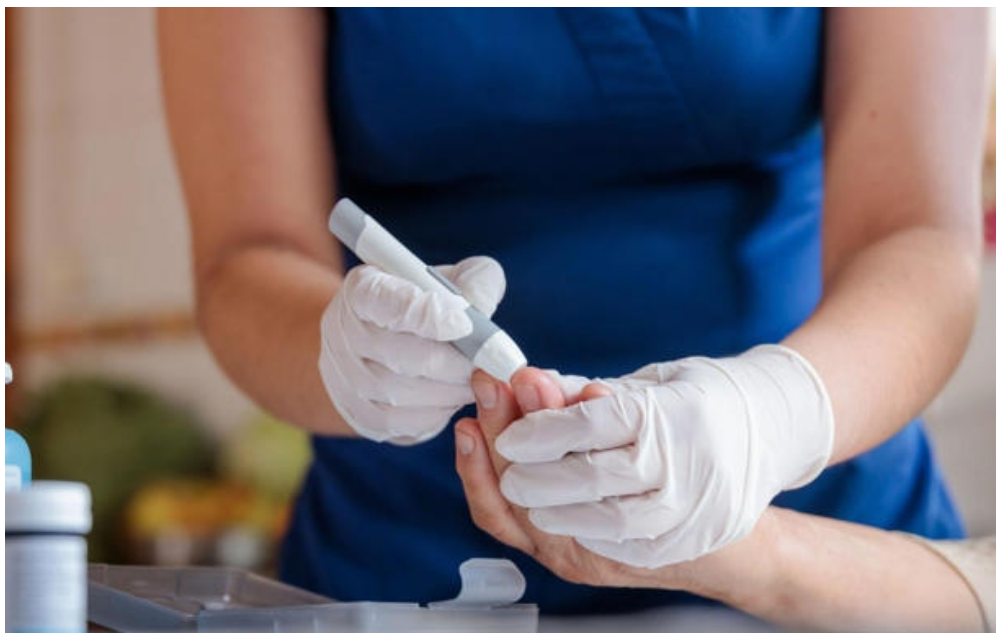
“Obesity isn’t the only risk factor, but its rise is fueling a surge in pre-diabetes and type 2 diabetes across the UK,” Marshall said.

She urged the government to take bold action to reverse these trends, criticizing the widespread availability of unhealthy food and calling for urgent policy changes.

The government’s food strategy, while a step forward, needs to move faster to fix the UK’s “broken food environment” and ensure people can maintain good health, Marshall emphasized.

“Incentivizing healthier food production and expanding the soft drinks levy to cover high-fat, salt, and sugar products could significantly impact the nation’s health,” she said.

Marshall also urged authorities to identify undiagnosed diabetes cases urgently and invest more in prevention



programs that promote lifestyle changes.

The charity’s analysis shows a record-high 4.6 million diagnosed diabetes cases, an increase from 4.4 million just a year ago.

About 8% of patients have type 1 diabetes, where the body cannot produce insulin, while 90% suffer from type 2, which results from the body’s inability to use insulin properly. Another 2% have rarer forms of the disease.

An estimated 1.3 million people remain undiagnosed with type 2 diabetes, and 6.3 million have pre-diabetes, which can develop into full-blown type 2 diabetes if untreated. However, lifestyle changes such as healthier eating and exercise can reverse pre-diabetes.

“These figures expose a hidden health crisis in the UK and show why immediate government action is essential,” Marshall warned. “Millions need better care to manage diabetes and avoid serious complications.”

Government Urged to Take Bold Action

In an open letter to Keir Starmer and Wes Streeting, Diabetes UK urged the government to prioritize pre-diabetes and undiagnosed type 2 diabetes in its upcoming 10-year health plan.

“With more people developing pre-diabetes and type 2 diabetes at a younger age, it’s critical to find the millions who remain unaware of their condition,” Marshall stressed.

The charity also called for increased investment in initiatives like the NHS diabetes prevention program, which promotes lifestyle changes for those at risk.

The Department of Health and Social Care labeled the findings “extremely concerning.” A spokesperson confirmed that the government’s 10-year health plan would focus on preventing disease to help people live healthier lives for longer.

Officials highlighted ongoing measures such as restrictions on junk food advertising and the introduction of a new NHS digital health check to help people reduce their risk of diabetes.

Why Kayode Egbetokun Should Resign as IGP

By Tunde Akingbondere

The media space is currently enmeshed in the loud argument over the tenure of the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Kayode Egbetokun as well as the propriety of the amendment made to the Nigeria Police Act in the face of clearly stipulated legislative procedures guiding the entirety of our age long laws.

This intellectual debate became quite popular with the courageous media salvo on the IGP by the presidential candidate of the African Action Congress (AAC) Omoyele Sowore.

Sowore has over the years commissioned himself as a trenchant voice of the people, particularly in the light of his vigorous but quite caustic social media remarks critical of corruption, police brutality and the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu-led administration.

It is possible that Sowore has dismissed the belief that anything good can come from the Tinubu led government, particularly in the light of his consistent civil disobedience against this administration.

Meanwhile, apologists of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), despite being scared of Sowore's politicized activism, must have tried unsuccessfully to downplay his audacity and radical anti-establishment moves in the estimation of Nigerians. One of the sensible thoughts that won the minds



of the Nigerian people about Sowore is his recent opposition to the IGP's continued stay in office.

Sowore opened the can of worms by declaring several times on the social media how illegal the Inspector-General of Police is in the light of the original pronouncement of the Nigerian Police Act with respect to the mandatory retirement of the officer of the Nigerian Police at the age of 60 and on attaining 35 years of service.

As a reply to his designation of the number one police officer as "Illegal IGP," he was at first invited formally, interrogated on his various alleged anti-police activities before being slammed with bail conditions his lawyers deemed unrealistic within a reasonable time.

Even Sowore's insistence that he preferred being detained by the police to submitting his international passport went viral on the social

media space.

He was later arraigned in court some days after his arrest on a 16-count charge under the Cybercrimes (Prohibition and Prevention, etc.) Act before Justice Musa Liman of the Federal High in Abuja. The police accused Sowore of intentionally and knowingly sending messages through his verified X account, where he referred to the IGP as 'illegal IGP Kayode Egbetokun', a publication the police considered to be false and aimed at causing a breakdown of law and order.

While Sowore is not a lawyer, he has addressed the issue from the prism of a conscious citizen who despite not being interested in the recent amendment to the constitution, is more concerned with what the law stipulates before the alleged hasty amendment.

**Continue reading
on next page**

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By virtue of this amendment, Kayode Egbetokun, who was appointed in June 19, 2023, will no longer retire on September 4, 2024 but conclude his four years tenure as the Inspector-General of the Nigerian Police irrespective of his age as at the time of the conclusion of his tenure.

The purport of Section 7 (3) of the Police Act is that the IGP shall be appointed by the President on the advice of the Police Council from among serving members of the Police Force. This provision is a restatement of section 215 (1) of the Nigerian constitution. Under section 7 (6) of this Act, the IGP is given a 4-year tenure. In the course of the deliberation of the police bill in the 9th Assembly, the consensus was around appointing a person to the office of the IGP for a 4-year term subject to his not exceeding 35 years in the force or attaining 60 years of age whichever is earlier. This is also the position of section 18 (8) of the Act. Upon Egbetokun's appointment on June 19, 2023, his tenure was ordinarily billed to end on the 4th of September, 2024, upon his attaining age 60. Tinubu, being aware of the provision of the clause in section 18(8), quickly initiated a bill that was sent to the National Assembly, seeking the amendment of section 18 (8) by smuggling in a fresh provision which states that "Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (8) of this section, any person appointed to the office of the Inspector-General shall remain in office until the end of the term stipulated in the letter of appointment in line with the provisions of section 7 (6) of

this Act.

Meanwhile, it is heard in good authority that President Tinubu who has hidden interest in the office of the Inspector-General of Police must have disrupted the existing protocol by breaking into the procedures, cadres of the Nigerian Police, particularly by exerting his influence on the legislature which reportedly exhausted the stipulated processes of transforming a bill into a law within 20 minutes. The implication of this is that the bill was considered, debated, vetted, and possibly sent to appropriate committee (s) for a proper refocusing or amendment within 20 minutes or in less than 24 hours. In the real sense of it, can this law be said to have been appropriately passed as law in the light of its glaring disconnect with the people.

Many Nigerians were not aware of this amendment until Sowore was hounded over his criticism of the IGP. In a saner climate, the protest of Nigerians against this purported law would have abolished it, just like the protest of the Nigerian undergraduates led to the abolishment of Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact in 1961. The Anglo-Defence Pact had earlier passed into law as Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1960, after a total of 166 Members of Parliament (MPs) voted in support while negligible 38 voted against it. A cumulative of these numbers amounted to 204 out of a total of 312 MPs who drew various allowances from the government's coffers. The protest by Nigerian undergraduates stalled the

proposed pact.

Nigeria is now in a sorry state and in an era where the president can have his way with the compromised legislature at any time. The recent development has validated claims by many people who have canvassed a moderate pay and unicameral legislature as against what we currently have as a bicameral legislature with huge allowances. These calls are in the light of the lawmakers' little relevance in the welfare of the average Nigerians.

If President Tinubu is desperate about retaining his former ADC as his Inspector-General of Police, he has a willing legislature that is readily available to swallow his decrees without putting any thought into them. Is the mind of the legislature expected to be a blank slate upon which anything can be written.?

Interestingly, the Police Service Commission (PSC) recently sacked some officers for different offences, including being overdue for retirement, but the number one policeman in the country who should ordinarily be resting at home by now is riding on the back of the president's immunity with brazen impunity.

The truth is: It is honourable for IGP Egbetokun to resign now.

Tunde Akingbondere, a graduate of law and author, writes from Ondo State

Trump, Putin, Xi and the new age of empire

By Gideon Rachman

You have heard of neoliberalism and neoconservatism. Now welcome to the age of neoimperialism.

The most striking moment in Donald Trump's inaugural address last month was his pledge that the US "will once again consider itself a growing nation — one that increases our wealth, expands our territory".

Hopes that Trump's talk of territorial expansion was an empty rhetorical flourish have faded. The president's references to foreign territories that he would like to acquire are too frequent to be ignored or dismissed.

Trump has confidently asserted that America will "get Greenland". He has vowed to "take back" the Panama Canal. He frequently says that Canada should become America's 51st state. Last week, he even laid claim to Gaza.

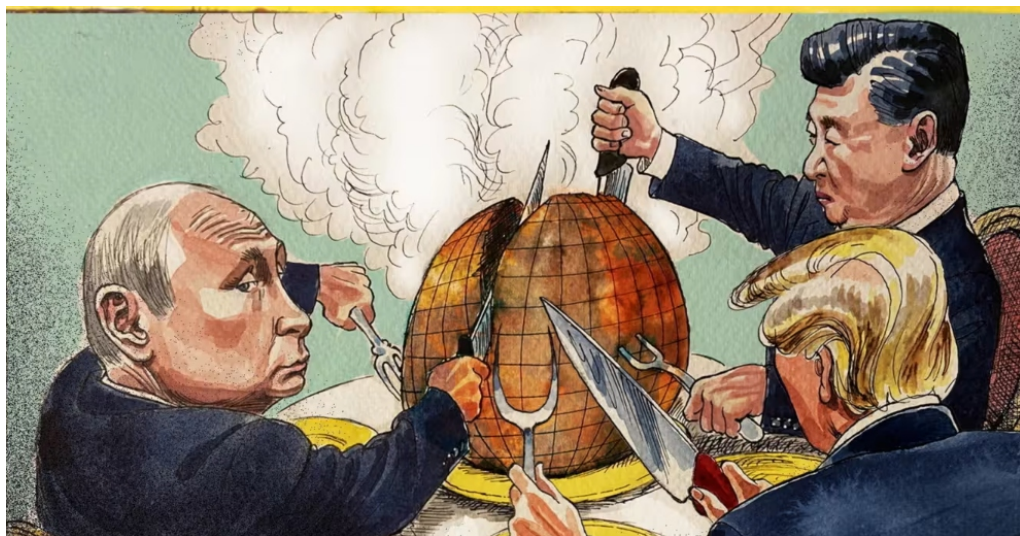
His fascination with acquiring territory has startled even some of his supporters. But Trump's expansionist ambitions are easier to understand, if seen as part of a global trend. The two other world leaders that he seems to view as genuine peers — Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping — also see territorial expansion as a key national goal and part of their personal claim to greatness.

Russian spokesmen often cite national security as a justification for the war on Ukraine. But Putin himself has obsessively returned to the idea that Ukraine is not a proper country but part of the "Russian world".

Sergei Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister, once told a confidant that before invading Ukraine, Putin had listened to three advisers: "Ivan the Terrible. Peter the Great. And Catherine the Great." These rulers presided over vast expansions of Russian territory, with Catherine advancing deep into Ukraine.

Putin would clearly love to leave the historical stage having re-established Russian control over the heart of its old empire — Ukraine — and perhaps further west as well.

Xi similarly sees gaining control of Taiwan as key to China's national destiny and to his own historical legacy. In a recent speech, he asserted: "Taiwan is China's sacred territory."



Xi has said that the issue of Taiwan can no longer be passed from generation to generation. Completing the "reunification" of China would be a signature achievement that could allow him to claim a status similar to that of Mao Zedong, the founder of the People's Republic.

Trump's interest in empire has emerged more recently. His advisers are struggling to retrospectively rationalise his statements on Greenland, Panama and even Gaza — a process that has become known as "sanewashing".

As with Putin, the initial recourse of the sanewashers is to reach for an explanation rooted in national security. Greenland has critical minerals; the Chinese are sniffing around the Panama Canal. But Canada? Gaza? Here the rational explanations give way to shrugs — or even sniggers.

With no convincing strategic rationale for Trump's territorial ambitions, the obvious alternative explanation is that this is about personal grandeur. If the Nobel Peace Prize is inexplicably unavailable, Trump could at least get his face carved on the side of Mount Rushmore by expanding American territory.

The notion that the president simply wants to enlarge America's square footage became more plausible after his now notorious phone call with the Danish prime minister, Mette Frederiksen. She is believed to have offered Trump more or less anything he might want, short of sovereignty over Greenland. The US could have more military bases or rights over minerals. But he was not placated. He wanted Greenland itself.

Trump's hopes to take over Canada or Gaza still seem implausible. But the Panama Canal and Greenland are more vulnerable: American military force would be overwhelming if deployed against the Panamanians or the Danes.

With the US, Russia and China led by men with expansionist ambitions, the implications are bleak for the current international system. The world may be moving from an era where smaller countries could claim the protection of international law to one in which, as Thucydides put it, "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must".

Such a world might be compatible with an uneasy peace between the great powers, based around spheres of influence — with the US concentrating on the western hemisphere, Russia on eastern Europe and China on east Asia. During the 19th century, the great powers even held conferences to divide up the world — such as the 1884-1885 gathering in Berlin, which took place at the height of the "scramble for Africa".

But any such carve-up would be inherently unstable. The great power understandings of the 19th century eventually crumbled away into the world wars of the 20th century.

The rise of imperialist ideologies also has implications for domestic politics. Empires tend to have emperors. Putin and Xi's expansionist foreign policies go hand in hand with a cult of personality at home and political repression. Trump's overseas ambitions are combined with an intense focus on crushing "the enemy within".

The growing problem of child homelessness in the US

By Patti Waldmeir

When three homeless people died of cold in the ice-gripped US Midwest during last month's freeze, it captured headlines — in a few local news outlets. But for most Americans, most of the time, the spectacular social failure that is US homelessness remains well below the radar. Even the news that it hit a record high last year was released quietly between Christmas and new year. In a US news cycle dominated by proposals to take over Gaza and annex Canada, this issue can't compete.



But the news is shocking. According to a recent report from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), homelessness rose 18 per cent in 2024 over the previous year, at 771,480. Nearly 150,000 children under 18 experienced homelessness, up 33 per cent from 2023. Among families with children it rose 39 per cent.

HUD, which takes a "snapshot" of homelessness on a single night every year, admits it's an undercount. It only includes people living in shelters, cars, public parks, abandoned buildings or campgrounds — not the many thousands who are "couch surfing".

Many families with school-aged children fall into the latter category, says Barbara Duffield, executive director of SchoolHouse Connection, an expert on youth homelessness. Even in the affluent suburbs of Chicago where I live — and where a lakeside mansion recently found a buyer at the asking price of \$35mn — local schools have many kids without homes.

In my upscale local school district, 5.3 per cent of kids in pre-school through eighth grade were homeless in 2022-23. In 2023-24, Chicago public schools identified 26,800 homeless students, or 8.29 per cent.

"But they fly under the radar," says

Duffield. "We don't see them in the way that we see adults who are homeless." Children tend to hide their status, ashamed to disclose it to adults, or afraid of being taken into care. This invisibility is a problem, says Duffield. "We know homelessness as a child is a strong predictor of homelessness as an adult."

HUD says America's critical shortage of affordable housing — worsened by the end of pandemic housing relief — is a major force driving the rising figures. Robin Stuht, homeless liaison for the Beloit school district in southern Wisconsin, told me this is the "new face of homelessness: dual-income families, both working full-time jobs, whose rent has doubled or tripled, sleeping in cars, tents on people's properties or in garages".

Just over 10 per cent of her district's students are without homes, she tells me: she counts 43 homeless teen mothers and 12 families with children living in cars. Her district provides washers and dryers in schools, so pupils can have clean clothes, and a "care closet" with toiletries and undergarments.

She put me in touch with a local teen mother and her sister, who have been homeless for much of their lives. (Their names are withheld to protect them.) When the baby was born, they were living in a motel room with their mother

and her boyfriend. They recall years of shuttling from sister to aunt to cousin: "People didn't know we were homeless, we kept it to ourselves. But it was very stressful having to find somewhere new to go every day, having to beg people to let us stay."

Betty Bogg, veteran chief executive of the not-for-profit Connections for the Homeless, which works in my town, sees reason for hope. "The conversation has shifted" from what she calls the "puritanical view that people just ought to [pull] themselves up by their bootstraps", to one about "system failure" in the US housing market.

But from what he has said recently, it looks as if Donald Trump still blames the people, not the system. Scott Turner, new HUD secretary, made clear he thinks lack of funding isn't the problem. HUD is "failing at its most basic mission", he said "There's record funding from HUD . . . and we're still not meeting the need".

Elon Musk, who heads Trump's Department of Government Efficiency, refers to a "homeless industrial complex" that profits from not solving the problem. Trump may be too busy figuring out how to take over Greenland to bother much about homelessness. I'm not sure if that's good news or bad news. But what we are doing now doesn't seem to be working.

Davido donates to over 500 orphanages, shares list

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Award-winning singer Davido has once again shown his commitment to philanthropy by donating generously to support those in need and uplift communities.

His charity, the David Adeleke Foundation, successfully supported over 500 orphanages across Nigeria this year.

This initiative fulfilled his promise to donate ₦300 million to organizations that provide shelter and care for motherless children while also helping young people stay away from drug abuse.

On his 32nd birthday in 2024, Davido made a bold pledge to use his influence and resources to make a lasting impact. He announced the donation in a heartfelt message, stating:

“Once again, my birthday this year, we are donating to orphanages and a charity that helps young people stay away from drug abuse and addiction. This year, it’s ₦300m. Details to follow soon.”

True to his word, Davido followed through. He took to social media to update his fans on the progress of his initiative. In a post on X, formerly Twitter, he wrote:

“My foundation was able to help over 500 motherless babies’ homes this year... we go again next year!”

His words carried a strong message of hope and determination. By emphasizing continuity, Davido reassured the public that his efforts would not stop there.

A history of giving

This is not the first time Davido has given back to society. Over the years, the Nigerian music star has built a reputation for generosity, using his platform to uplift others.

His charitable activities extend beyond



orphanages. He has supported education, healthcare, and disaster relief efforts across the country.

In 2021, Davido made headlines when he raised over ₦200 million from fans and friends on social media and donated it all to orphanages.

At the time, he added ₦50 million of his own money to the fund, bringing the total to ₦250 million. The act won him widespread praise, proving that his philanthropy was more than just a one-time gesture.

This year’s ₦300 million donation surpasses his previous contributions, showing his continued commitment to making a difference.

Nigerian Award-winning afrobeat sensation Davido. [Photo credit: Google]

Nigerian Award-winning afrobeat sensation Davido. [Photo credit: Google]

A role model for giving back

Davido’s approach to charity sets an example for other celebrities and wealthy individuals. Instead of making occasional donations, he has structured his giving through the David Adeleke Foundation. This ensures that funds are distributed efficiently and reach those who need them most.

By focusing on orphanages and charities that combat drug abuse, he is tackling some of Nigeria’s most pressing social issues.

Millions of children grow up without parental care, and many vulnerable youths fall into addiction due to a lack of guidance and support.

Davido’s contributions help bridge these gaps, giving young people a chance at a better future.

The impact of ₦300 million

The scale of Davido’s donation cannot be overstated. ₦300 million can provide food, clothing, medical care, and education for thousands of children. Orphanages often struggle with limited resources, and donations like these keep their doors open.

Beyond financial aid, Davido’s involvement brings attention to the struggles of motherless children and at-risk youths.

His efforts encourage others to contribute, creating a ripple effect that extends beyond his donations.

Looking ahead

As the year comes to an end, he has already set his sights on the future. His message “we go again next year!”—suggests that his foundation will continue its mission.

With each passing year, his philanthropic footprint grows, proving that his generosity is not just a trend but a lifelong commitment.

Fans and followers have praised him for using his success to uplift others. In an industry where fame and wealth often lead to extravagance, Davido stands out as an artist who understands the power of giving.

As he prepares for another year of music and charity, one thing is clear: Davido’s influence extends far beyond the stage. Through his foundation, he is changing lives, one donation at a time.

I didn't want to emulate my father – Clarence Peters

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Renowned music video director Clarence Peters has opened up about his deep and complex relationship with his father, Afro-Juju legend Shina Peters.

Speaking on the WithChude podcast, Clarence revealed how his father's past, particularly his treatment of women, shaped his approach to relationships.

The impact on his mother, Clarion Chukwura

He candidly discussed how his father's actions affected his mother, veteran actress Clarion Chukwura. He expressed deep emotions about how the entertainment industry treated her unfairly while his father thrived.

According to Clarence, Shina Peters failed to protect her from professional backlash, which left a lasting mark on both mother and son.

Acknowledging his Father's mistakes
In the interview, he admitted that his father made serious errors. "My dad screwed up," he said. "And using the word 'screwed up' is me putting it lightly. His colleagues blackballed my mom, and she was already dealing with a lot of trauma from her younger years."

These experiences deeply influenced Clarence's view of relationships. He made a conscious effort to avoid repeating his father's missteps.

However, he also acknowledged his own flaws, recognizing that he had made mistakes as well.

Uncovering hidden family wounds

While working on Inside Life, a



project meant to explore real-life struggles, Clarence unexpectedly uncovered a painful family history. Episode 5, written by his cousin, revealed experiences that mirrored what his mother endured. "When my mom read the script, she started crying," Clarence recalled. "She saw her own story reflected in it."

Understanding his Father's era

Despite the pain, Clarence has tried to understand his father's choices. He recognized that his father lived in a different time, one where fame and success often led to excesses. "My dad told me recently that he has been with many women, driven the best cars, stayed in luxury hotels, and had money," Clarence said. "Now, as he approaches 70, he knows death is certain. All he can do is pray for forgiveness."

A conversation about forgiveness

This realization led to an honest conversation between father and son. Clarence admitted that while he worked hard to avoid becoming like

his father, he had not always succeeded. "As much as I was raised by my mother, one of my biggest fears was becoming my father in how I treated women," he confessed. "But I have been a version of that. I am not a saint, so I cannot judge him."

Lessons in growth and redemption

Clarence's words reflected self-awareness and empathy. He acknowledged that mistakes are part of life and that true growth comes from recognizing and learning from them. While he does not excuse his father's past, he understands it. Their relationship now is built on reflection, forgiveness, and valuable lessons from the past.

Redefining his own path

His story is one of resilience, self-discovery, and the complexities of family legacies. Through his journey, he continues to redefine what it means to be a son, a man, and a storyteller.

Priscilla Ojo addresses father's absence from her wedding

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Priscilla Ojo, daughter of renowned Nigerian actress Iyabo Ojo, has addressed the controversy surrounding her father's absence at her wedding.

Many social media users speculated about a possible family rift after Ademidun Ojo, her father, was noticeably missing from the ceremony.

The wedding, which took place in Tanzania, was a grand Islamic ceremony where Priscilla tied the knot with her longtime partner, Tanzanian singer Juma Jux.

The event was filled with glamour, love, and celebration. However, it did not take long for online critics to question the absence of her father, sparking widespread debate.

Social media backlash

Shortly after the wedding photos and videos surfaced online, rumours began to spread. Many accused Priscilla of intentionally excluding her father from the wedding preparations.

Others speculated that the absence pointed to lingering tension between Ademidun Ojo and his former wife, Iyabo Ojo.

Social media platforms were flooded with reactions. Some users expressed disappointment, questioning why Priscilla's father was not present on such an important day. Others defended her, suggesting that there might be private family matters unknown to the public.

One online user commented, "How can you have a wedding without your father? No matter what, he deserves to be there." Another added, "Iyabo Ojo



has always made it clear she doesn't have a good relationship with her ex-husband. Maybe that played a role in this."

Priscilla responds to criticism

In response to the growing controversy, Priscilla Ojo took to her Snapchat account on Sunday evening to set the record straight. She shared a screenshot of a video call with her father, seemingly to prove that she still maintains a relationship with him.

Although she did not include a caption, the post appeared to be a subtle way of dismissing the rumours of a strained relationship. By posting the screenshot, Priscilla signalled that her father was not completely left out of her special day.

Iyabo Ojo's past comments on marriage

This is not the first time Iyabo Ojo's past relationship with Ademidun Ojo has made headlines. In 2023, during an interview with media personality Toke Makinwa, Iyabo opened up about her marriage. She described it as her first real encounter with poverty, implying that the relationship was far from ideal.

Her candid remarks resurfaced following the wedding drama, fueling further speculation about the family's dynamics. Many now wonder if past tensions between the former couple played a role in Ademidun's absence at the wedding.

Public reactions remain divided

Despite Priscilla's response, public opinion remains divided. Some believe she should have done more to ensure her father's presence, while others argue that every family has its private matters.

A Twitter user defended Priscilla, saying, "People need to stop making assumptions. Not everything is as it seems." Another, however, insisted, "No matter the situation, a father should be at his daughter's wedding. This isn't a good look."

As the debate continues, Priscilla Ojo has chosen to remain silent, letting her Snapchat post speak for itself. Whether her father's absence was intentional or circumstantial remains a mystery.

One thing is certain—her wedding has not only made headlines for its glamour but also for the controversy it has stirred online.

Yvonne Jegede pays tribute to late Bukky Ajayi

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nollywood actress Yvonne Jegede honours her late mother-in-law, legendary actress Bukky Ajayi, in a heartfelt tribute nine years after her passing.

In an emotional Instagram post, she reflected on her deep admiration for the late actress and expressed sadness that she never got to meet her grandson, Xavier.

Her touching post was inspired by a recent lunch with a family friend, which brought back cherished memories of Bukky Ajayi.

She shared how her mother-in-law's presence remains strong in her life and how much she continues to miss her.

A tribute from the heart

Jegede's message was filled with love and longing. She wrote:

"Mama, two days ago was your remembrance. I just want to say I miss you. Your grandson, Xavier, was born on November 1, 2018. He's a big boy now. I wish you could see him. I wish you could see the wonderful grandson you have."



She continued:

"Mama, I feel emotional today, and I don't know why. Maybe it's because Shina and his mom met us for lunch. Since then, you've been on my mind. I want to use this moment to honor you, Mama Bukky."

Her words resonated deeply with fans and colleagues, who flooded the comment section with love and prayers. Many praised her for honoring her late mother-in-law, despite not being related by blood. Others pointed out the striking resemblance between the two women, noting how Jegede carries on Bukky Ajayi's legacy.

A lasting bond

Jegede's relationship with Bukky Ajayi was built on mutual respect and admiration. Even

her passing, the veteran actress continues to hold a special place in her heart. The Nollywood industry also remembers Ajayi fondly as a talented actress who contributed immensely to Nigerian cinema.

Bukky Ajayi's son, Olakunle Fawole, popularly known as 'Abounce,' married Yvonne Jegede in February 2017 in an intimate yet elegant ceremony in Lagos. Although their marriage later ended, Jegede's tribute proves that her bond with Bukky Ajayi remains unbroken.

Her post serves as a reminder of the power of love, family, and cherished memories. Through her words, Yvonne Jegede keeps Bukky Ajayi's legacy alive, ensuring that her name and impact are never forgotten.

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Stefflon Don unfollows Chloe Bailey for dating Burna Boy

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

British rapper Stefflon Don and American singer Chloe Bailey have unfollowed each other on Instagram, sparking speculation among fans about a possible feud.

The move comes after reports of Chloe's budding romance with Burna Boy, Stefflon's ex-boyfriend.

A complicated history

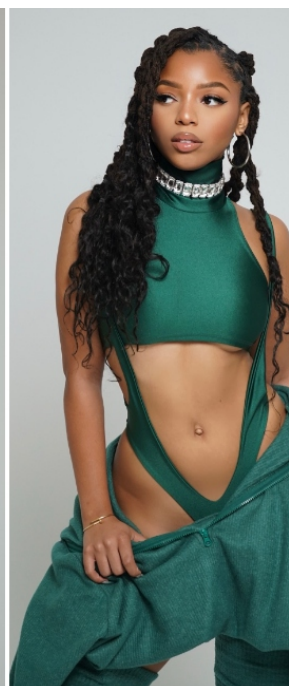
Stefflon Don and Burna Boy started dating in 2019. Their high-profile relationship ended in 2021, but rumours of a reconciliation surfaced in late 2023. Burna Boy had reportedly gifted her a luxury car for her birthday, fueling speculation that they had rekindled their romance.

However, those rumours were put to rest in December 2024 when Burna Boy and Chloe Bailey were seen together. A viral video showed the two getting cosy in a private section of a club in Nigeria. Their chemistry sparked speculation that they were more than just friends.

Romance confirmed

On February 6, 2025, Chloe Bailey and Burna Boy were spotted having an intimate dinner. They were joined by Burna Boy's close circle, including popular dancer Poco Lee.

During the evening, Burna Boy gifted Chloe a matching Rolex watch,



further fueling relationship rumours. Another video from the night captured Chloe hugging Burna Boy and saying, "I love you."

This public display of affection left no doubt—Burna Boy and Chloe Bailey were officially an item.

Social media fallout

Shortly after the dinner, Stefflon Don reacted. She unfollowed Chloe Bailey on Instagram, signalling tension between them. Chloe responded by unfollowing Stefflon as well.

Fans quickly noticed the social media snub, sparking discussions online. Some speculated that Stefflon Don felt betrayed, while others defended Chloe's right to move on.

Fans react

Social media erupted with opinions on the situation. Some fans criticized Burna Boy for his relationship history, while others praised Chloe and Burna as a power couple.

"Burna Boy always finds himself in drama," one user commented. "Stefflon Don deserves better," another wrote. Meanwhile, Chloe's supporters applauded her, with one saying, "She's living her best life!"

What's next?

With emotions running high, fans are eager to see how this love triangle unfolds. Will Stefflon Don address the situation publicly? Will Burna Boy and Chloe Bailey continue flaunting their romance? One thing is clear—this story is far from over.

Stay tuned for more updates on this developing drama.

An interesting list of Valentine's Day movie recommendations

By Eyitayo Jemimah Ajayi

Bring to you, a list of Valentine's Day movie recommendations—not the regular cliché list.

With the buzz concerning Valentine's Day, it would be incomplete without putting out movie recommendations to watch on that day. In this list, we have a range of romantic movies from the 20th century—some are romantic comedies, some tragic, and others melodramatic. So if you are single on your couch or you want something to watch with your partner, this list has you covered.

We Live in Time (2024)

This is a perfect one on the list of Valentine's Day movie recommendations. This past fall, audiences were captivated by a deeply emotional melodrama starring the incandescent Florence Pugh and the ever-compelling Andrew Garfield.

Valentine's Day movie recommendations:
Challengers (2024)

In 2024, audiences were gripped by a sizzling cinematic sensation: a film exploring the complex dynamics of a love triangle within the high-stakes world of professional tennis. Zendaya delivers a captivating performance as a tennis coach whose strategic genius has propelled her husband to Grand Slam champion status.

If Beale Street Could Talk (2018)

Another Valentine's Day movie recommendation is this gripping, Oscar-winning drama that plunges viewers into the harrowing reality faced by a young couple whose lives are irrevocably altered when the man is unjustly imprisoned for a crime he didn't commit.

Valentine's Day movie recommendations:
About Time (2013)

Synopsis: "About Time" unfolds the



extraordinary story of Tim, a young man who, upon reaching his 21st birthday, learns a remarkable family secret: he possesses the ability to travel through time. Armed with this incredible gift, Tim initially sets out with a seemingly simple goal: to improve his life, primarily by finding a girlfriend.

Valentine's Day movie recommendations:
P.S. I Love You (2007)

Synopsis: Grieving the loss of her husband, a young widow stumbles upon a series of ten messages he meticulously prepared before his passing. These posthumous missives are not merely farewells, but carefully crafted guides designed to help her navigate the difficult journey of healing and rebuilding her life.

Valentine's Day movie recommendations:
Magic in the Moonlight (2014)

Synopsis: This charming romantic comedy follows the journey of a meticulous and somewhat reserved Englishman, tasked with uncovering a potential swindle. His arrival at the scene of the suspected fraud sets in motion a series of events that quickly transcend the purely professional.

Made of Honour (2008)

Synopsis: Hannah's announcement reverberates through Tom's world, shattering the quiet hopes he's harbored for so long. The news of her engagement to a wealthy and seemingly perfect man feels like a distant echo, a reality he can't quite grasp.

Leap Year (2010)

Another interesting one on the list of Valentine's Day movie recommendations

Anna Brady, a woman driven by a mix of romantic idealism and a touch of calculated pragmatism, hatches a plan to propose to her boyfriend, Jeremy. Believing in the power of tradition, she decides to journey to Dublin, Ireland, on the auspicious date of February 29th—Leap Day.

Valentine's Day movie recommendations:
The Fountain (2006)

Synopsis: Dr. Tommy Huff, a brilliant and driven scientist at the forefront of medical research, finds himself wrestling with an all-too-human dilemma: mortality.

Trump renames Gulf of Mexico as Gulf of America

By Dave Oludare Oso

United States President Donald Trump signed a proclamation on Sunday (local time) declaring February 9 as “the first-ever Gulf of America Day,” celebrating the renaming of the area formerly known as the Gulf of Mexico.

Trump was on his way to the New Orleans for the Super Bowl 59 and signed this proclamation as Air Force One flew over the area he was renaming.

This follows the signing of Executive Order 14172 on January 20, 2025, which mandated the renaming of the US Continental Shelf area.

As part of the order, the Secretary of the Interior was directed to take the necessary actions to rename the area bounded by Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, and extend to the seaward boundary with Mexico and Cuba.

In a statement, President Trump explained his decision: “I took this action in part because, as stated in that Order, the area formerly known as the Gulf of Mexico has long been an integral asset to our once burgeoning nation and has remained an indelible part of



America.”

“Today, I am very honoured to recognize February 9, 2025, as the first-ever Gulf of America Day,” according to the White House.

“On January 20, 2025, I signed Executive Order 14172 (“Restoring Names That Honor American Greatness”). Among other actions, that Executive Order required the Secretary of the Interior, acting pursuant to 43 U.S.C. 364 through 364f, to “take all appropriate actions to rename as the ‘Gulf of America’ the U.S. Continental Shelf area bounded on the northeast, north, and northwest by the State of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida and extending to the seaward boundary with Mexico and Cuba in

the area formerly named as the Gulf of Mexico,” the statement added.

Sunday marked the President’s first visit to the Gulf of America since the renaming,

White House said, “As my Administration restores American pride in the history of American greatness, it is fitting and appropriate for our great nation to come together and commemorate this momentous occasion and the renaming of the Gulf of America.”

In his proclamation, Trump also said, “I call upon public officials and all the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate programmes, ceremonies, and activities.”

TRADE WAR: EU threatens US with counter-tariffs

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The European Union (EU) would retaliate by replicating any tariffs imposed on it by the United States, the French foreign minister, Jean-Noel Barrot, warned on Monday.

Cautioning the US authorities not to trigger a trade war, Barrot said in an interview with TF1 after US President Donald Trump announced on Sunday that Washington will this week impose 25 per cent tariffs on steel and aluminium products, "There is no hesitation when it comes to defending our interests."

Responding to questions whether France and the EU would retaliate against the measures announced by Trump, Barrot said, "Of course. It's not a surprise. This is already what Donald Trump did in 2018 (during his first term as president).



At that time, we replicated. So, we will replicate again this time."

When asked what retaliation measures would be agreed upon, Barrot replied that it was up to the European Commission to decide what sectors would be targeted.

"No one has an interest in entering into a trade war with the European Union," he warned.

The tariffs on steel and aluminium imports were the latest in a slew of trade levies the US leader has announced that have raised fears of a global trade war.

French President Emmanuel Macron told CNN that the EU should not be a "top priority" for the US after Trump's repeated threats to target the bloc.

"Is the European Union your first problem? No, I don't think so. Your first problem is China, so you should focus on the first problem," he said, adding that the EU must be ready to react to US actions.

Trump to impose tariffs on aluminum, steel imports today

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Donald Trump said on Sunday that he would announce 25% tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports into the United States on Monday.

Speaking on Air Force One on the way to New Orleans to attend the 2025 Super Bowl, Trump said he would also announce "reciprocal tariffs" on Tuesday or Wednesday, which he said would go into effect immediately. This means that the U.S. would impose import duties on products in cases where another country has levied duties on U.S. goods.

"If they charge us, we charge them... every country," he said, adding: "If



they are charging us 130% and we're charging them nothing, it's not going to stay that way."

During his first term in the White House, Mr. Trump imposed 25% tariffs on steel and 10% on aluminum before granting several trading partners duty-free quotas.

Earlier this month, the president authorized a wave of tariffs on America's three closest trading partners – Mexico, Canada and China. Last week he agreed to a 30-day pause on threats to impose 25% tariffs on imports from Mexico and Canada, with another 10% tariff on Canadian oil, natural gas and electricity.

Trump, an avowed fan of tariffs, says they are necessary to ensure greater cooperation from the countries to stop illegal immigration and prevent fentanyl smuggling, but he has also pledged to use tariffs to boost domestic manufacturing and raise revenues for the federal government.

I'm not buying TikTok – Elon Musk

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The world's richest person and a top advisor to US President Donald Trump, Elon Musk, said he has no interest in acquiring social media platform TikTok's operations in the United States, in comments released Saturday.

"I've not put in a bid for TikTok and I don't have any plans for what I would do if I had TikTok," said Musk in comments made via videolink at a German forum in late January that were released on the weekend.

TikTok is facing down a US law that ordered the company broken off from its Chinese owner, ByteDance or otherwise be banned in the United States over national security concerns regarding the data it gathers on users.

In one of his first acts in office, Trump ordered a pause on enforcing the law that should have seen TikTok effectively made illegal in the country a day before he took office for a second term.

Soon after, Trump said he would be open to Musk, the owner of social media platform X, Tesla and a slew of other companies buying the platform.

Musk, however, said he did not wish to acquire the company.

"I don't use TikTok personally, so, you know, I'm not that familiar with it," he said. "I'm not



chomping at the bit to acquire TikTok."

Musk bought social media giant Twitter, which he renamed X, for \$44 billion in 2022, insisting he was doing so in order to safeguard "free speech."

Since his takeover, rights campaigners warn there has been a spike in hate speech and disinformation on the platform.

Musk was one of Trump's main financial backers in his presidential campaign, and is heading the US president's budget-slashing initiatives.

His so-called "Department of Government Efficiency" (DOGE) has targeted a range of federal government agencies and regulators, with the apparent intent of shutting them down and firing staff, especially those not in line with Trump's political agenda.

On Saturday, a US judge issued an emergency order blocking Musk's

government reform team from accessing personal and financial data for millions of Americans stored at the Treasury Department, court documents showed.

In the comments at the forum in Germany, Musk also took aim at Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, which are meant to support historically oppressed and disenfranchised communities.

"DEI is simply racism rebranded," he said. "I'm against racism and sexism no matter who it's directed against."

US officials have been racing to enact Trump's war on DEI across the federal bureaucracy, dismantling training initiatives, scrapping grants and sidelining hundreds of workers.

In Germany, Musk has voiced firm support for the far-right anti-immigration AfD party, a political taboo in a country whose Nazi past remains a sensitive subject.

South Africa's land act targets a stark divide, Trump and Musk oppose it

By Tim Cocks

The township of Fateng Tse Ntsho houses some 7,000 Black South Africans, its huddle of corrugated metal roofs surrounded on all sides by vast tracts of mostly empty grassland owned by prosperous white farmers.

The contrast illustrates the gaping land inequalities that persist more than three decades after the end of white minority rule – and which an expropriation act President Cyril Ramaphosa signed last month partly seeks to redress.

That law, which allows the government to confiscate land – in rare cases without compensation – has reignited racial tensions that have dogged Africa's southernmost tip ever since European settlers began arriving nearly four centuries ago.

For nervous owners, it is an assault on property rights, a view shared by U.S. President Donald Trump, who last week wrongly stated that land had already been seized under it when he threatened to cut aid to South Africa. On Saturday, the White House went so far as to offer white farmers resettlement in the United States and “humanitarian relief.”

But the expanses of white-owned land in Free State province, dotted with tiny Black settlements like Fateng, illustrate why proponents deem the act necessary.

Fateng's local councillor, Malefetsani Mokoena, 51, spends his days mediating disputes between landowners and Black rural folk who live among them. Tall and wiry, he is usually decked out in the red uniform of his party, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), which wants to nationalise the country's gold and platinum mines and seize land from white farmers.

“Sometimes the white farmers don't trust me,” he told Reuters in the township's three-room brick municipal office. “But when we sit down and negotiate, we can work things out.”



One white farmer interviewed by Reuters, Danie Bruwer, confirmed that he and Mokoena were on good terms.

If a farmer has a sheep stolen, Mokoena finds the thief to get it back. A Black herder has his cows impounded for trespassing on white-owned land; Mokoena negotiates their release.

And, as with the 15 other farms in his caseload, if what Mokoena calls “farm dwellers” – squatters, legally speaking – face eviction or restrictions on their rights to graze animals, he finds them legal representation.

‘THIS IS OUR HOME’

The mostly white-owned farms around here are among the nearly 26 million hectares – about three quarters of privately-owned land – still in the hands of whites, who make up 8% of the population. Only 4% of privately-held land is owned by Blacks who are nearly 80% of South Africa's 60-million population.

On one white-owned farm, Meyerskop, 57-year-old herder Shadrack Maseko surveyed an expanse of hilly pasture stretching almost to the horizon. He complained of how it had been fenced off a decade ago by a new white owner to

prevent cattle owned by Black South Africans grazing on it.

Maseko's grandparents had come here in the early 1900s to seek work as farm hands, he told Reuters during a visit with the EFF councillor Mokoena.

The family had been there ever since, he said. His father, who died two years ago, was born here, as was Maseko.

“This is home,” he said, and then to illustrate the point: “Even some of our ancestors are buried here.”

The farm has changed hands between white farmers several times since Maseko's family has lived there, and buyers had previously been happy for them to stay on and work, he said.

But in the past decade he and 14 other families living on Meyerskop have been in a dispute with the latest white owners over grazing rights for their 30-odd cows, details of which were corroborated by six other residents interviewed by Reuters.

In 2019, farm owners the Fonteintjie Trust and trustee Fourie Scheepers sought a court order to force them to sell most of their cows. It argued the animals were badly degrading the land, according to a copy of the application seen by Reuters.

EU watchdog warns of resistance to Brussels' bid to slash red tape

By Martin Arnold

The EU's top financial markets regulator has warned that Brussels' efforts to streamline bureaucracy are likely to face resistance from national watchdogs as it pushes to become a European equivalent of the US Securities and Exchange Commission.

The European Securities and Markets Authority (Esma) is pressing for greater powers to harmonise rules, including oversight of the EU's largest exchanges, clearing houses and settlement systems that operate across borders — a role similar to that of its US counterpart.

But Esma chair Verena Ross told the Financial Times that reducing reporting burdens on financial firms would be “difficult” as national regulators remain attached to their own “gold-plated” rules and many are reluctant to fund a harmonised system.

“The only way we can do it is if national authorities contribute to the budget to build that system and make it operational,” she said. “In many cases, they have their own national system. So it is quite hard.”

Ross's comments highlight the challenge facing Commission president Ursula von der Leyen as she seeks to cut red tape through her much-touted “omnibus” legislation, due later this month.

Maria Luís Albuquerque, the EU's new commissioner for financial services and the savings and investments union, has also signalled her support streamlining rules and beefing up Esma to be more like a European SEC.

The initiative follows warnings last year from former European Central Bank president Mario Draghi that excessive regulation is undermining the competitiveness of EU companies.



The push to simplify financial rules has gained urgency amid Donald Trump's broad deregulation agenda in the US. Last month, von der Leyen and ECB president Christine Lagarde wrote in the FT that “Europe has got the message” on reducing bureaucracy, pledging an “unprecedented simplification effort” starting next month.

Esma is in talks with national regulators about a harmonised reporting system that would allow companies to submit sustainability and financial data only once. “There are things we are getting [from firms] that we don't need,” Ross said, adding that the agency has already streamlined some reporting requirements for the firms it directly supervises.

The regulator is working on a “single access point” to consolidate national data streams from EU financial firms, including sustainability reports and bond and equity prospectuses. It also plans to replace its three systems for handling market transaction data with only one.

But the watchdog, established in 2011 to improve market harmonisation, still relies on the bloc's 27 national authorities for much of its supervision.

Currently, its direct oversight is limited to credit rating agencies, non-EU central counterparty clearing houses, securitisation repositories and benchmark administrators.

“Many countries still have their own national reporting systems either on top of or gold-plated to the European system,” Ross said. “For firms operating across multiple member states, it is a real pain.”

Speaking at an Esma event in Paris, Albuquerque stressed the need for greater regulatory alignment, calling for a “level playing field” to reduce market fragmentation, simplify processes and remove barriers.

She emphasised that Esma would play a “central part” in these efforts, with its mandate set for review.

“This doesn't necessarily mean a single supervisor,” she said. “But I am very much attached to efficient, co-ordinated, harmonised, shared supervision, where an operator in Italy can expect a similar decision to one in Estonia for the same issue.”

Russia's fears over ex-Soviet nations laid bare in leaked paper

By Max Seddon and Chris Cook

Russian officials believe western pressure is hampering Moscow's efforts to draw former Soviet nations closer into its orbit and build economic ties with the global south, according to a leaked government report.

The internal presentation, shown at a strategy session led by Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin last April, offers a rare insight into how Russia's war in Ukraine has harmed ties with some of its closest allies.

The analysis notably concedes that western sanctions pressure, as well as economic overtures, had succeeded in driving a wedge between Moscow and some of its nearest trade partners.

Russia's cabinet presented the report to several dozen senior government officials and top executives at some of Russia's largest state companies, according to its website. Hardline experts such as Sergei Karaganov, who has called on President Vladimir Putin to use nuclear weapons against Europe, and Alexander Dugin, a proponent of radical violence against Ukrainians, also attended.

Moscow's ambition, the report says, is to restore its access to global trade by putting Russia at the centre of a Eurasian trade bloc that would aim to rival the US, EU, and China's spheres of economic influence.

Russia sees creating the "macroregion" as an important long-term project, which would outlast any talks with the west over the future of Ukraine, to help strengthen its footing on the "global arena", the report says.

The new bloc would connect Russia to the global south by giving each side access to raw materials, developing financial and transport ties, and uniting them through a common "world view . . . where we write rule for the new world [and have] our own sanctions policy", the report claims.



But it admits the obstacles to Russia's global resurgence remain considerable. The report says western countries have successfully threatened central Asian countries into complying with sanctions through a "carrot-and-stick" approach while offering them access to global markets, transport corridors and supply chains that bypass Moscow.

Russia's allies, meanwhile, have profited from the sanctions by driving Russian businesses out of their home jurisdiction, taking control of import and export flows, and relocating production from Russia, according to the report. It adds that central Asian countries have also sought extra commissions to compensate for the risks of violating sanctions.

The report admits Russia will have to "play the long game" to keep central Asian countries in its orbit. It suggests Moscow appeals to their shared history and respect their independence, while understanding a Russian victory in the war against Ukraine will not be enough to end western sanctions pressure. "Close relations with a country [like Russia] will be a source of difficulties," the report says.

Central Asian countries, it adds, are taking advantage of Russia's "vulnerability" and looking to "integrate without Russia" in

groups such as the Organization of Turkic States. The nations have "changed their world view" by "rethinking our collective history", promoting English as a second language instead of Russian and moving to western educational standards, as well as sending their elites to be schooled in the west.

The countries will have to "make a decision on their stance towards Russia", the report concludes, without elaborating.

Kazakhstan, the region's largest economy, has condemned the invasion, refused to recognise Russia's territorial gains and made an effort to demonstrate compliance with western sanctions. Neighbouring Kyrgyzstan, however, has thrown its lot in firmly with Russia and emerged as an important route for alleged sanctions evasion.

The report highlights Belarus as Russia's most successful example, comparing strongman President Alexander Lukashenko's call to diversify away from Russia economically in 2018 with his declaration six years later that "we will always be united with Russia".

Cristiano Ronaldo agrees one-year contract extension with Al-Nassr

...Portuguese superstar seals Saudi stay just days after celebrating 40th birthday

By Dave Oludare Oso



Cristiano Ronaldo has reportedly agreed to sign a new contract extension at Al-Nassr, just days after turning 40.

*Ronaldo agrees to extend Al-Nassr stay

*Will stay in the Saudi league until June 2026

*Portuguese star turned 40 last week

WHAT HAPPENED?

Ronaldo, who joined the Saudi giants in January 2023 on a two-

and-a-half-year deal, would have seen his contract run out at the end of the 2024/25 campaign. However, an Al-Nassr official has reportedly told the AFP that the Portuguese star has agreed to extend his stay for another year and the new deal will run until June 2026.

WHAT HAS BEEN SAID

Speaking AFP, the official said: "The sides have agreed on the renewable extension of Ronaldo's contract, but it has not been signed yet. An announcement will be made over the coming days."

THE BIGGER PICTURE

The news of Ronaldo's extension comes less than a week after he turned 40. The ex-Manchester United and Real Madrid star marked his milestone birthday with a goal against Al Feiha in a crucial Saudi Pro League clash on February 6 as Al-Nassr won the clash 3-0.

WHAT NEXT FOR AL-NASSR?

Al-Nassr will be back in action on Thursday as they take on Al-Ahli in a league clash away from home.

Man City still worst opponent for Real Madrid - Ancelotti

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti believes the winner of his side's Champions League play-off clash with Manchester City will be among the favourites to lift the trophy.

Real and City are set to clash for the fourth consecutive season in Europe's elite club competition, with the first leg in Manchester on Tuesday.

But the latest blockbuster showdown between teams more accustomed to meeting in the latter stages is earlier than usual this term after both lost three of their eight games in the new-look league phase.

City sneaked into the knockout stages thanks to a second-half fightback against Club Brugge in their final match and have suffered a staggering fall from grace in the Premier League.

After an unprecedented run of four consecutive titles, Pep Guardiola's men sit fourth in the table, 15 points adrift of leaders Liverpool.

Madrid are in pole position in a three-way title race in La Liga, ahead of Atletico Madrid and Barcelona, but have also struggled at times this season, hampered by a series of injuries to their defence.

However, the victor in the tie between Real and City has gone on to win the Champions League in each of the past three seasons and Ancelotti expects the streak could continue.

"Yes, the most difficult opponent,



most important opponent and against the best manager," Ancelotti said at a pre-match press conference on Monday.

"I'm convinced the team that goes through in this tie will go very deep into the competition."

City won just once in 13 games in a torrid spell between the end of October and December.

Guardiola's men have picked up slightly in 2025, but their frailties were still exposed in a 5-1 thrashing by Arsenal in their last Premier League match.

Ancelotti expressed his surprise at that run but believes City still have the players and coach to do damage to the Champions League holders.

"I continue to think City is one of the best teams in Europe and that they have the best coach in this competition. It is still the most difficult game we could have," he

said.

"I am surprised they had a period where it was difficult to overcome the injuries but now the team I saw in the last few games is a good team, a competitive team.

"I struggle to imagine Manchester City not being strong. They are really strong with fantastic players and a fantastic manager."

Ancelotti will have to field a makeshift defence after Lucas Vazquez became his latest injury casualty.

Dani Carvajal, Eder Militao, Antonio Rudiger and David Alaba are also absent from the Madrid squad.

Midfielders Aurelien Tchouameni and Federico Valverde are expected to start in the back four alongside Raul Asencio and Ferland Mendy.