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Obasanjo, Atiku meeting, gathering of 'indolent and lazy' politicians – APC

By Dave Oludare Oso

The All Progressives Congress (APC) has taken the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the cleaners over the Monday meeting between former President Olusegun Obasanjo and the PDP 2023 presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar, describing the meeting as a gathering of “indolent and lazy” politicians.

The ruling party also declared that a possible alliance between the former leaders pose no threat to the re-election of President Bola Tinubu in 2027.

Obasanjo’s erstwhile deputy, Atiku, led a high-powered delegation, which included former governor of Sokoto State, Aminu Tambuwal, former governor of Cross River State, Senator Liyel Imoke, and other political stalwarts to a meeting with the former president in Abeokuta, the Ogun State capital on Monday.

The delegation, which arrived at Obasanjo’s Abeokuta residence located within the precinct of the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library (OOOL) at exactly 12.37pm, was received by elder statesman, Otunba Oyewole Fasawe.

Though details of the visit could not be ascertained as of the time of filing this report, it was gathered that the meeting might not be unconnected with Atiku’s 2027 presidential ambition.

Speaking on Monday to journalists on the meeting, the National Secretary of the APC, Senator Ajibola Basiru, said the ruling party had a government to run, emphasising that they (APC) were busy strategising on how to win the



November 8 governorship poll in Anambra State.

Meanwhile, when the former vice president was asked whether the meeting was related to his 2027 presidential ambition, he said, “I am here on a courtesy call. I am not here to talk politics.”

However, the meeting has sparked rumours of a possible coalition, with the former president as the arrowhead.

The speculation was further confirmed by a source privy to the discussion, who stated, “Yes, we are trying to see how we can collectively work together to salvage this country ahead of 2027.”

Commenting on the parley, Basiru described it as the gathering of “indolent and lazy” politicians.

He said, “We don’t react to other people’s acts as a political party. We only do our own things. Presently, our plate is full. We are personally concentrating on how to win and bring Anambra on board for the APC. So, we don’t have time for talks on any political

meetings. We also have a responsibility to run the government.

“They (Atiku and Obasanjo) are indolent; they don’t have anything to do. So, they can meet any day, any time. Our government is concentrating on delivering the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Tinubu. We don’t have an issue with some indolent people meeting anybody they want to meet.”

On whether they don’t see the gathering of political bigwigs as a threat, Basiru dismissed it as non-issue.

“How can people who are in disarray be a threat to a solid political party like the APC? We are talking about a party that is not embedded in any crisis and has high-calibre people who can win elections.

“So we are not worried. We are concentrating on winning the Anambra governorship election on November 8. That’s where our concentration lies for now.”

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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
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Give Nigerians account of your service, Tinubu orders ministers

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Bola Tinubu has ordered all ministers in his administration to give an account of their stewardship to Nigerians with immediate effect.

Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, announced the presidential order at a news conference in Abuja on Tuesday.

Idris said, "The presidential order mandates ministers to brief Nigerians on the government's activities and achievements while also allowing the public to ask questions."

The minister said that the order also seeks to keep Nigerians informed about the administration's progress and ensure that ministers are accountable for their responsibilities.

"In 2024, we hosted 25 ministers at these briefings and reached millions of people in Nigeria and abroad on traditional and digital media platforms," Idris said.

There are 48 ministers in Tinubu's cabinet. Notable among them are Nyesom Wike, minister of Federal Capital Territory; Adebayo Adedun, minister for power; David Umahi, works minister, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, minister of interior, among others.

Recall that Tinubu had made the ministers to sign performance



guidelines before their swearing-in.

"Over the next three months, as we approach the second anniversary of President Bola Tinubu's administration, we will bring Honourable Ministers to this platform weekly.

"This year, 2025, is a year of consolidation, a year for building on the gains we have seen in the first 19 months of the administration," he added.

Idris highlighted the administration's commitment to lowering food costs through large-scale agricultural investments.

"Now, what the government is doing is ensuring massive production of food items. Once supply increases, prices will naturally decline," he

explained.

On security, the minister stated that in 2024, security forces neutralised over 8,000 terrorists and bandits, arrested 11,600 suspects, and recovered more than 10,000 weapons. He also noted that about 8,000 kidnapped victims were rescued.

"While we still have a lot of work ahead, our highways have grown safer. The once-notorious Abuja-Kaduna highway is one example. There is still more to be done, and we will not relent," Idris assured.

The ministerial press briefings, set to run weekly, come ahead of Tinubu's second anniversary in office, reinforcing the government's commitment to keeping citizens informed about its programs and initiatives.

FG takes full charge of Keystone bank

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Keystone Bank has announced that it is now fully owned by the Federal Government of Nigeria, following a ruling by the Lagos State High Court on Tuesday, 11 February 2025.

The bank confirmed that the takeover would bolster its stability and assist in the smooth process of recapitalisation.

The development comes after the court ordered the forfeiture of shares held by the bank's former shareholders, Sigma Golf Nigeria Limited and Alhaji Umaru H. Modibbo, effectively transferring ownership to the Federal Government.

Keystone Bank made the announcement via a statement on its official Instagram page.

In the statement, the bank clarified the media reports surrounding the judgment by the Lagos State Special Offences Court, sitting in Ikeja, Lagos.

The ruling, handed down on Tuesday, required the forfeiture of shares previously owned by the two shareholders, reinforcing the bank's transition into full



government ownership.

“Keystone Bank Limited wishes to clarify the media report on a judgment by the Lagos State Special Offences Court, sitting in Ikeja, Lagos, on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, regarding the status of the former shareholders of the bank: Sigma Golf Nigeria Limited and Alhaji Umaru H. Modibbo,” the statement explained.

“With this clarity, we are well-positioned for sustained growth, stronger partnerships, and enhanced profitability. Keystone Bank continues to strengthen its balance sheet while delivering exceptional value to its teeming stakeholders,” it continued.

The bank emphasised that the takeover marks a significant milestone in securing its future

and facilitating long-term growth. Keystone Bank reassured its customers of its financial health, underlining its commitment to regulatory compliance and stability.

“We assure our customers that the bank remains safe, healthy, strong, and resilient,” the statement added.

Keystone Bank was previously among the three banks whose boards and management were dissolved by the Central Bank of Nigeria on 10 January 2024, leading to the appointment of new leadership.

This latest development positions the bank for continued success under the full ownership and backing of the Nigerian government.

Tinubu directs takeover of Nok University

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye



President Bola Tinubu has directed the Federal Government to take over Nok University in Kachia, Kaduna State, and transform it into the newly renamed Federal University of Applied Sciences.

This follows a ruling from the Federal High Court in Abuja, which ordered the final forfeiture of the privately owned institution to the government.

Vice President Kashim Shettima made the announcement during the handover of the institution's property and assets by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) at the Presidential Villa in Abuja on Tuesday.

The renaming of the institution to Federal University of Applied Sciences, Kachia, is part of a promise made to the people of Southern Kaduna, with immediate plans for the university's operations to begin.

The Vice President affirmed that the university would be included in the 2025 budget, with plans to admit its first students by September 2025.

The transition marks a key moment for both the education sector and Kaduna State, with officials emphasising the significance of inclusivity and national development.

"This is a great day for the country and for Kaduna State," said Shettima, crediting President Tinubu for making the university's establishment a priority.

Southern Kaduna's leaders, including Kaduna State Governor Senator Uba Sani and Senator Sunday Marshall Katung, have praised the decision as a transformative moment for the region, promising positive impacts in education, job creation, and local

economic growth.

In addition to education, Shettima reiterated the administration's commitment to infrastructure development in the region, with a focus on road construction.

The handover ceremony, which involved various stakeholders, also highlighted the long-awaited achievement for the people of Southern Kaduna, with contributions from figures like General Martin Luther Agwai and Bishop Matthew Kukah.

The establishment of the Federal University of Applied Sciences is expected to enhance educational and social development in Southern Kaduna, providing access to world-class education and contributing to the country's human capital development.

FG announces application for new accountant-general, perm secs

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Federal Government has called for the applications for the appointment of a new Accountant-General of the Federation and permanent secretaries to fill existing vacancies in Oyo State and the North-West geo-political zone.

The Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (HCSF), Mrs. Didi Walson-Jack, announced this in a statement issued in Abuja on Monday through the Director of Information and Public Relations, Mrs. Eno Olotu.

According to Walson-Jack, the selection process will involve a written examination conducted by a top Federal Government security agency. The examination questions will be set and marked by serving and retired permanent secretaries.

The position of Accountant-General of the Federation will become vacant upon the retirement of the incumbent, Dr. Oluwatoyin Sakirat Madein, in March 2025.

The appointment process is open to serving Grade Level 17 officers in the mainstream Federal Civil Service who have held their current position for at least two years.

Candidates must meet eligibility criteria, including screening and confirmation by their respective permanent secretaries and the Accountant-General of the Federation.



The selection process will involve:

- Verification Screening: A Committee of Permanent Secretaries will conduct verification screening, observed by the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Department of State Services (DSS).

- Asset Declaration: Candidates will undertake an asset declaration with the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB).

- Anti-Corruption Clearance: Candidates will undergo anti-corruption clearance by the DSS, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and the ICPC.

- Written Examination: A written examination will be conducted at a top Federal Government security agency.

- ICT Proficiency Test: Candidates will be tested for ICT proficiency in Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint.

The final appointment will be made by President Tinubu, considering the best-performing candidates based on their performance throughout the selection process.

Meanwhile, the Federal Government has set February 17, 2025, as the deadline for civil servants to validate their identity on the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS).

Employees must visit the Office of the Accountant-General of the Federation's (OAGF) website (www.oagf.gov.ng) to access the validation portal. Failure to complete the validation by the deadline may lead to suspension from the payroll.

Accounting officers, finance directors, and internal auditors across Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) are urged to ensure full compliance with the directive.

Akpabio: 2025 budget report likely to be presented tomorrow

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, has stated that the Committee on Appropriations is expected to present its report on the 2025 budget proposal for consideration and possible passage by the Senate on Wednesday.

Presiding over the plenary on Tuesday, Akpabio confirmed that federal lawmakers may begin deliberations on the N54.2tn budget immediately after the report is laid before them.

He explained that the relatively low attendance in the chamber was due to members of the Appropriations Committee conducting final checks to ensure the budget aligned with the



nation's interests.

He further noted that the debate on a bill for the establishment of the Federal University of Agriculture in Abak, Akwa Ibom State, would be concluded swiftly to allow focus on the 2025 budget.

Akpabio also pointed out that the report

might be presented as early as Wednesday or Thursday, urging his colleagues to ensure a timely conclusion of deliberations to facilitate the final consideration and passage of the 2025 Appropriation Bill.

The 2025 budget was initially set at N49.7tn but was increased to N54.2tn after President Bola Tinubu's communication to both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

This increase of N4.5tn prompted the revision of the proposal, with Akpabio urging the Committee on Appropriations to expedite its work to ensure the budget is passed by the end of February.

CBN announces ATM withdrawal charges, ends free transactions

By Friday Omosola

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has announced the removal of the three free monthly withdrawals previously allowed for customers using Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) of banks other than their own.

In a circular issued on February 10, 2025, and addressed to all banks and financial institutions, the apex bank's Acting Director of the Financial Policy and Regulation Department, John Onojah, confirmed the policy change.

"The three free monthly withdrawals allowed for remote-on-us (other bank's customers/not-on-us consumers) in Nigeria under Section 10.6.2 of the Guide shall no longer apply," the circular stated.



Effective March 1, 2025, customers making withdrawals from ATMs not belonging to their banks will now be charged N100 per N20,000 withdrawn.

However, withdrawals from a

customer's own bank's ATMs will remain free of charge.

For off-site ATMs—those located outside bank premises, such as at shopping malls, restaurants, and public spaces—an additional surcharge of up to N500 per N20,000 will be applied, in addition to the standard N100 fee.

The CBN attributed the policy revision to increasing operational costs and the need to enhance ATM service efficiency across the country.

"This review is expected to accelerate the deployment of ATMs and ensure that appropriate charges are applied by financial institutions to consumers of the service," the circular stated.

You lied, Akinnola blasts Togun over allegations against Fawehinmi

By Helen Okechukwu

Veteran journalist and legal analyst, Richard Akinnola has berated retired Brigadier-General Kunle Togun over what he described as “egregious, insidious, and fallacious allegations” against the late legal luminary, Chief Gani Fawehinmi, SAN.

The explosive reaction of Akinnola comes in the wake of an interview the retired general granted on the Edmund Obilo podcast, where he claimed that Fawehinmi hated the Ibrahim Babangida regime because of an alleged business favour from the Buhari government that was disrupted by the 1985 coup.

Dismissing Togun’s claim as outright falsehood, the veteran journalist stressed that Fawehinmi was never a businessman and had no financial dealings with the Buhari administration.

Akinnola maintained that Fawehinmi’s unwavering support for Buhari’s anti-corruption campaign under Decree 3 of 1984 did not extend to violations of the rule of law, citing the lawyer’s fierce opposition to the regime’s disobedience of court orders.

He recalled an instance where Fawehinmi took a stand against the government over the wrongful interdiction of firefighter Saidu Garba, which led to the resignation of Justice Yaya Jinaadu.



Refuting Togun’s claim that Fawehinmi sought government patronage, Akinnola stressed that the late legal icon’s only engagements were in law practice, legal writing, and publishing.

He argued that if Babangida truly had any compromising information on Fawehinmi, he would have used it against him during their long-running clashes.

The legal analyst highlighted that, instead, even Babangida himself acknowledged Fawehinmi’s integrity, referring to him as one of the few genuine critics he respected, alongside Professor Awojobi and Dr. Yusuf Bala Usman.

Akinnola likened Togun’s falsehood to a similar fabrications made in the past by Fawehinmi’s erstwhile friend, Dr. Olu Onagoruwa.

He recalled how Onagoruwa, after accepting an appointment as Attorney

General under the Sani Abacha regime against Fawehinmi’s advice, later alleged in his book that Buhari facilitated the purchase of Fawehinmi’s London apartment.

Clockwise; Akinnola, Fawehinmi and Togun

Akinnola cited Fawehinmi’s rebuttal, where he provided documented evidence that he had bought the property in 1980—four years before Buhari assumed office.

Akinnola underscored the importance of setting the record straight to protect Fawehinmi’s legacy from baseless distortions.

He reaffirmed that those who knew and worked with Fawehinmi would continue to counter any false narratives designed to tarnish his reputation, even in death.

I know nothing about Nengi's pregnancy

– Gov Diri

By Dave Oludare Oso

Governor of Bayelsa State, Douye Diri has opened up on news making the rounds that he is responsible for TV star, Nengi Hampson's pregnancy.

On Monday, viral media speculations alleged that the Bayelsa governor had secretly fathered a child with 26-year-old Big Brother Naija star, Nengi.

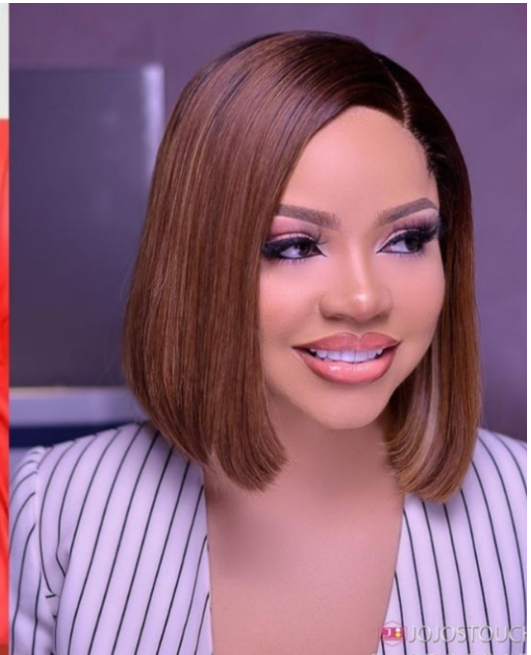
Upon the emergence of the rumour, Nengi, a prominent figure from BBN Season 5 (Lockdown), swiftly refuted the claims while confirming her pregnancy.

The Bayelsa-born TV star made a series of X posts dismissing the claim that the governor is responsible for her pregnancy.

She tweeted, "As much as I believe social media lies aren't worth my time, I've come to accept that we live in a world where people are quick to spread lies without limits. So let me be clear: I'm not pregnant for any governor.

"I've chosen to speak because this isn't just an attack on me; it involves people I hold in the highest regard. I won't allow a beautiful, personal part of my life to be turned into something ugly. While I continue to mind my business and enjoy my pregnancy in peace, I wish y'all love and a happy Valentine's weekend."

Reacting to the controversy, the Director-General of New Media to the governor, Samuel Oredipe, dismissed the claim, branding it as false and politically motivated.



In a rebuttal statement posted on Facebook on Monday evening, the governor's media aide maintained that Nengi had no personal relationship with Governor Diri.

"The BBN Nengi Trending Story has nothing to do with Gov. Diri! Nengi Rebecca Hampson has no personal relationship with Governor Diri.

"It is regrettable that purveyors of fake news are not happy with the towering political profile of the governor. Nengi herself has come out clean on social media to debunk their lies. GistLover goofed again! All fake!" the statement read.

The circulated statement further described the report as an attempt to divert attention from the governor's achievements, particularly as Bayelsa State commemorated the fifth anniversary of his administration.

The statement read, "Political enemies

of His Excellency, Senator Douye Diri, Governor of Bayelsa State are at work again. What a wicked set of people spreading falsehood on a day the Prosperity Administration commenced activities marking its 5th anniversary.

"This is a distraction, and some of us are very justified in the many reasons offered to regulate the use of various social media platforms. Sadly, while we were inaugurating a brand-new road in Yenagoa, social media spread falsehoods about the governor. Governor Diri is a man of honour and dignity."

Governor Diri is not the first Nigerian politician to be linked to a celebrity in a controversial manner. In July 2024, Senate President Godswill Akpabio was allegedly linked with extramarital affairs with several female celebrities.

Addressing the allegations, Akpabio stated on the Senate floor that his traditional norm is marriage to one wife, and he is satisfied.

El-Rufai responds to arrest rumours amid verbal war with NSA

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Former Governor of Kaduna State, Nasir El-Rufai, has addressed ongoing rumours regarding his alleged imminent arrest and torture by the office of the National Security Adviser (NSA), Nuhu Ribadu.

The claims follow a series of heated exchanges between El-Rufai and Ribadu's camp, triggered by allegations made by Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chieftain Naja'atu Muhammad.

In a viral TikTok video, Muhammad accused Ribadu of labelling President Bola Tinubu corrupt during his tenure as Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

Ribadu, in response, categorically denied these claims through a letter from his lawyer, Dr. Ahmed Raji (SAN), stating that such statements were never made, either publicly or privately. Ribadu further described the damage caused by the video as "unquantifiable" and demanded a public apology and retraction.

El-Rufai quickly countered Ribadu's denial, accusing the NSA of "serious amnesia" and asserting that the record of proceedings in the Senate and a Daily Trust report from February 2007 could confirm that Ribadu made such statements in 2006.

He also referenced Federal Executive Council conclusions from the same period, suggesting they contained evidence of Ribadu's comments about Tinubu and others.

Responding to a supporter's concerns on social media, El-Rufai revealed that since July 2024, he had heard rumours of his



potential arrest, detention, and torture, particularly following the Kaduna State House of Assembly's indictment of him for fraud in a widely circulated report.

El-Rufai, who has previously been arrested and detained three times by past governments, stated that despite the threats, he would not go into self-imposed exile.

In a post on his X handle, El-Rufai expressed his resolve: "I have been hearing these same rumours of arrest, detention, and torture in some dungeon in the NSA's office (where Emeziele was allegedly tortured to resign as CBN governor) since July 2024, when the so-called report of the Kaduna Assembly began circulating. They freaked out when we challenged the legality of the premeditated defamation and went to every length to compromise the judicial process."

He continued, "I have now put all my previous academic and language-learning plans on hold and will spend more time in Nigeria than ever before. Silence is no longer golden. Inaction has

never been an option."

El-Rufai further emphasised that the arrest, detention, and torture of political opponents were not new in the political arena, pointing to his own past experiences.

"I have been arrested and detained thrice in the past for expressing my views on previous governments. There is always a morning after the arrest, detention, or torture, and political life continues. As for death, it comes when Allah destines it, and it is ultimately the fate of every human," he said.

In conclusion, El-Rufai reassured his supporters, saying, "For the attention of the pathetic characters who don't sleep well whenever I am in Nigeria, take notice that I intend to return in time for the launch of President IBB's memoirs, in sha Allah, scheduled for February 20."

He reminded his followers, "We depend on no one but Allah. We fear no mortal but Almighty Allah. We always hope for the best but plan for the worst."

TELECOM TARIFFS: Outrage as MTN hikes data charges by 200% By Dave Oludare Oso

In response to the recent 50 percent telecom tariff hike approved by the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC), one of the leading telecommunications companies, MTN has increased the price of its data, calls and other services by at least 200 percent, irking Nigerians.

The company (MTN) on Monday, jerked the price of the weekly data package of 15GB which initially cost N2,000 to a whopping N6,000, leaving many Nigerians in rage.

The telco confirmed this in a post shared on its X (formerly Twitter) official page on Tuesday.

It wrote: “Y’ello! Thanks for stopping by, We apologise for any inconvenience and delayed response. A price increase has been implemented to enhance our services and serve you better, which is why you are seeing the updated amount.”

According to the new pricing structure, the 15GB data bundle, which previously cost N2,000, now costs N6,000. Similarly, the 1.5TB plan has increased from N150,000 to N240,000.

Other affected plans include; the 100GB bundle, which now costs



N25,000 for 90GB, up from the previous price of N20,000 for 100GB. The 600GB bundle has also increased from N75,000 to N120,000 for 480GB.

Unsurprisingly, on Tuesday morning, many subscribers in Nigeria took to social media to criticise the increase, calling it exploitative and unfair, especially amid rising economic hardships.

The angry Nigerians called the telco to reconsider the increase.

Read some comments by Nigerians on the issue.

An user, @gbolahan2211 said: “Imagine MTN @MTNNG increasing their tariff 15gb overnight without prior notice to customers. This is no way to do

things man. I even sent them a message and they told me cause they wanna serve me better. Damn!!!”

An X user, Khan wrote: “I think it’s high time we boycotted MTN. Their network is terrible, and their data plans are a rip-off. the 15GB package doesn’t even last three days. During the protest, they deliberately sabotaged their own network to prevent it from happening.”

Another user @GIFTy6286 wrote: “If they like they should increase it to 1m, we will survive.”

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@AfrokonnnectNG reacted: “This sudden price increase from ₦2,000 to ₦6,000 for 15GB is wild! How are people supposed to cope with such an outrageous hike? Internet access is essential for work, education, and staying connected, yet it’s being priced like a luxury.

“At this rate, users may be forced to look for alternatives or reduce their data consumption drastically. MTN really needs to reconsider this move because it’s not sustainable for the average Nigerian. What do you think about this development?”

@Gorilla23mp asked: “But this is almost 200% increment, I thought they said it won’t be up to 100%?”

@TheSilvapr lamented; “Nigeria is a very difficult place to live in honestly. MTN waking up one day to increase their weekly 15gb data from 2k to 6k without prior warning is textbook insanity.

“That’s 24k in a month, almost the minimum wage of the country on data, bruh, this is hell.”

While the telecom giant has yet to comment on the situation, observations suggest it may have begun implementing the 50% tariff hike approved by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC).

NEW DAILY PRIME reported that on January 20, the NCC in a statement by its Director of Public Affairs, Reuben Muoka, said implementation of the 50% tariff hike will begin in February, adding that the adjustment, though lower than the over 100 per cent requested by some network operators, was arrived at taking into account ongoing industry reforms that will positively influence sustainability.

The NCC statement had read, “These adjustments will remain within the tariff bands stipulated in the 2013 NCC Cost Study, and requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis as is the Commission’s standard practice for tariff reviews. It will be implemented in strict adherence to the recently issued NCC Guidance on Tariff Simplification, 2024.

“Tariff rates have remained static since 2013, despite the increasing costs of operation faced by telecom operators. The approved adjustment is aimed at addressing the significant gap between operational costs and current tariffs while ensuring that the delivery of services to consumers is not compromised.”

However, the NLC rejected the tariff hike and demanded a reduction to five per cent, threatening a nationwide protest if

its demands were not met.

It condemned the hike as insensitive and unjustifiable, arguing that it would impose an extra burden on Nigerian consumers.

The union’s president, Joe Ajaero, reiterated its demand for a significant reduction after the National Administrative Council meeting of the NLC.

The NLC scheduled a protest for Tuesday but suspended the action after discussions with representatives of the Federal Government.

Following extensive deliberations, both the NLC and the government agreed to set up a 10-member committee—comprising five representatives from each side—to review the issue and submit a report within two weeks.

Meanwhile, the Trade Union Congress, TUC, has threatened to down tools if the Federal Government does not rescind its approval of the 50 per cent tariff increase.

TUC condemned the proposed hike, calling it ill-timed and a deliberate act of economic oppression against Nigerians.

Adeleke unveils N1m SSCE scholarship for best students

By Friday Omosola

Osun State Governor, Ademola Adeleke, has announced the launch of the Imole Statewide Public and Private Schools Students SSCE Scholarship.

He said the initiative is aimed at rewarding academic excellence among senior secondary school students.

Commissioner for Education, Dipo Eluwole, in a statement said the scholarship—sponsored in collaboration with Electronic Collections Group (ECG)—will recognize top-performing students in the SSCE across all 30 local government areas and the area office of the state.

As part of the initiative, the overall best student in Osun State will receive a N1 million scholarship as a reward for



outstanding academic performance.

Additionally, the best students in both public and private schools from each local government area will be awarded N100,000 each to support their education.

To further encourage excellence at the institutional level, the best-performing public and private schools will be granted a N500,000 educational support fund,

aimed at enhancing their academic programmes.

Moreover, recognizing the crucial role of educators, teachers of the best-performing students from both public and private schools in each local government will be rewarded with exciting gift items in appreciation of their dedication and impact on student success.

Eluwole reiterated Governor Adeleke's commitment to improving education standards and fostering intellectual growth among students in Osun.

He urged school administrators and teachers to diligently prepare their students for the 2025 WAEC SSCE to increase their chances of qualifying for the prestigious awards.

Bwala dismisses his anti-Tinubu statements as irrelevant

By Friday Omosola

The Special Adviser to President Bola Tinubu on Media and Policy, Daniel Bwala, has downplayed his past criticisms of him, stating that his previous remarks no longer hold significance.

Speaking on 'Arise TV's Morning Show' on Tuesday, Bwala explained that his criticisms of Tinubu were rooted in his role as a member of the opposition party at the time.

During the 2023 presidential election campaign, Bwala left the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) after the party fielded a Muslim-Muslim ticket with Tinubu and Kashim Shettima as its presidential and vice-presidential candidates.

He subsequently joined the Peoples



Democratic Party (PDP) and became a spokesperson for Atiku Abubakar.

As part of the opposition, Bwala strongly criticised Tinubu's candidacy, at one point likening his election to "a night of a thousand laughs."

After the election, he dismissed Tinubu's presidency as illegitimate, referring to him as a "president-select" and accusing the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of manipulating the results.

However, now serving in Tinubu's administration, Bwala has retracted his previous stance, insisting that his past statements no longer matter.

"I criticised Tinubu's election and administration in the past because I was in the opposition," he said.

"The role of the opposition is to challenge the government and hold it accountable. My perspective changed after meeting the President, and he saw a need to appoint me."

We will admit under-16 candidates only if... – JAMB

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

After much pressure, the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) has announced that candidates under the age of 16 can be considered for admission into tertiary institutions if they demonstrate exceptional academic brilliance by scoring 80 percent and above in the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME).

Following the public outcry that trailed the recent reversal of the mandatory 18-year admission age benchmark introduced by the immediate past Minister of Education, Tahir Mamman, current education minister, Olatunji Alausa, reinstated the previous benchmark of 16 years, but with the condition that the candidates have to score a total/minimum of 320 marks.

With the total score in the UTME being 400 marks, 80 represents a minimum score of 320.

Speaking during a recent meeting with key stakeholders—including Chief External Examiners, Chief Technical Advisors, and members of the Equal Opportunity Group—JAMB Registrar, Prof. Ishaq Oloyede, stated that while the 16-year age requirement remains the standard, exceptional candidates under the age of 16 may be granted admission under strict conditions.

A transcript of the meeting, published in JAMB's bulletin quoted Oloyede as saying: "This is about complying with the law. Age plays a crucial role in maturity and academic development.

"Otherwise, we wouldn't have age limits for leadership positions such as local government chairman. Biological age is linked to



intellectual growth, and while rules exist, there must be room for exceptions.

"The Minister of Education has clearly stated that the minimum age for admission remains 16. However, we acknowledge that some gifted children exist. These individuals should not be overlooked. We must identify them and allow them to sit for the exams."

Oloyede emphasised that exceptional students must demonstrate outstanding academic ability across multiple assessments, including the UTME, WASSCE, Post-UTME, and GCE O/Level.

"If a candidate under 16 scores 200 out of 400 in the UTME, can they truly be considered exceptional? However, if they achieve 80% (320/400), that signals exceptional ability and warrants consideration," he added.

He, however, expressed concerns over the role of private universities in admitting underage students, stating that many of these candidates struggle academically, with up to 80

per cent eventually being transferred to other programmes due to poor performance.

Oloyede also condemned the manipulation of birth records by parents seeking early admission for their wards, only to later attempt to alter their ages for eligibility in the National Youth Service Corps programme.

Recently in Lagos, the JAMB Registrar disclosed that the exam body had introduced a mock UTME for underage candidates.

Oloyede explained that the mock UTME is not for the purpose of tertiary institution admission but for underage seeking to test their ability.

"We are starting the sale of forms on the 31st of January till 5th of March. There will be a mock exam on the 23rd of February and on the 8th of March there will be UTME," the JAMB Registrar said.

PDP loses another Rep member to APC amid ongoing crisis

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has suffered yet another defection in the House of Representatives, with Amos Magaji, the lawmaker representing Jaba/Zango Kataf Federal Constituency in Kaduna State, joining the All Progressives Congress (APC).

Magaji's decision to switch allegiance comes amidst ongoing turmoil within the PDP, which he described as a key factor in his departure.

In a letter read by Speaker Tajudeen Abbas during Tuesday's, February 11, plenary session, Magaji cited the unresolved crises plaguing the party from both the national and state levels as reasons for his move.

"The unresolved crises in the PDP, from



the national to the state level, have made it difficult for me to remain in the party," Magaji explained in his defection letter.

Magaji's defection marks the third such move since the inauguration of the 10th Assembly.

He follows Chris Nkwonta and Eriatheke Ibori-Suenu, who also crossed over from the PDP to the APC,

representing Abia and Delta States, respectively.

In response to the defection, Minority Leader Kingsley Chinda condemned the move and called on the Speaker to declare Magaji's seat vacant, citing section 68(1g) of the Nigerian Constitution.

Chinda argued that while the law allows lawmakers to defect from the party on which they were elected, it also specifies that such a move should result in the loss of their seat in the House.

Magaji's defection further weakens the already fragile opposition party, which is facing internal divisions and a growing list of defections to the ruling APC.

Notorious cultist arrested with arms in Rivers

By Helen Okechukwu

A 35-year-old, Innocent Chigozie, an alleged notorious cultist and leader of an armed robbery gang, has been arrested by the operatives of the Rivers State Police Command's Anti-Kidnapping Unit (AKU).

The suspect was said to have been terrorising farm lands located at Uzo Afor Road in the Okahia Community, Elele, Etche LGA.

The police spokesperson, Grace Inginge-Koko, in documents shared with journalists on Tuesday, disclosed the activities of the armed men have sparked a widespread panic and tension



in the community at large.

Chigozie was arrested on 30 January following a lead intelligence at his

hideout.

In her disclosure, Inginge-Koko said earlier last year, the security personnel engaged his gang in a gun duel but evaded arrest.

He confessed to having owned the recovered arms, which include one automatic pump-action gun and two live cartridges.

Inginge-Koko stated, "The suspect and exhibits are currently in police custody. Investigation is ongoing, with efforts intensified to apprehend other fleeing gang members and recover their operational weapons.

IGP bans mufti-clad officers from bearing arms

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Kayode Egbetokun, has warned police officers against bearing arms when dressed in civilian clothes.

The police chief spoke on Monday during a virtual meeting with senior strategic managers.

The force spokesperson, Muyiwa Adejobi, in a statement also quoted the inspector general as warning police officers against infringing on the human rights of citizens.

Egbetokun said any conduct of police officers that violates the rights of any citizen would not be tolerated.

The IGP also frowned at the indiscriminate transfer of cases without his approval.

“The inspector-general of police issued a stern warning to all officers regarding serious breaches of Human Rights, emphasizing the duty of the Force to uphold these rights,” the statement reads.



“The IGP frowns against such acts, having received various complaints regarding human rights violations through the Force’s complaint channels.

“The IGP states that any conduct violating human rights will not be tolerated and will be met with severe consequences.

“The IGP also warned all tactical squads against the misuse of power and improper dressing, emphasizing the importance of operating in approved uniforms.

“No operative should be seen carrying assault arms (rifles) while dressed in civilian attire (mufti).

“All tactical squads are to ensure compliance with the standard operating procedure, while properly dressed in the assigned uniform for the particular squad.

“The IGP further emphasized on the indiscriminate transfer of cases without the written approval of the IGP. This conduct is highly prohibited and would no longer be tolerated, as such exposes the parties to unnecessary burdens and delayed justice in their cases.”

This is not the first time an IGP would be issuing these directives — which are immediately disobeyed by police officers.

Hoodlums beat corps member to death in Plateau

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A serving member of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) identified as Safwan Fade, has been beaten to death by hoodlums in the Pankshin Local Government Area of Plateau State.

Fadec, serving with the Federal University of Education in Pankshin, was reportedly attacked and beaten to death by a group of hoodlums who stormed a local stadium within the locality.

The state Commissioner of Police, Emmanuel Adesina confirmed the incident at the Command's headquarters in Jos on Tuesday.

Adesina announced that two male suspects – one Samuel Dang Kat and Zatshinen Wubwerwe – have been arrested in connection with the attack, which led to the death of the corps member.

He added that 24 suspects were arrested for various offences.

According to the Commissioner, the suspects were arrested after a thorough investigation while promising to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The Commissioner said, "On 23/01/25 at about 07:00am, we received a report from one Umbule Boreng Reuben of Pankshin LGA, who reported that on 22/01/25 at about 06:00pm, one Safwan Adamu Fade, an NYSC corps member serving at FCE Pankshin was reportedly beaten and severely



injured by unknown hoodlums at the Pankshin township stadium.

"Upon receipt of the report, I immediately directed the DPO of Pankshin division to lead a team of policemen to the scene where the victim was quickly rushed to the hospital for medical attention.

"The victim was treated and declared stable by the Medical Doctor on duty. The victim was later transferred to Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH) as a result of some complications. The victim eventually died in the process.

"In the course of our investigation, two suspects, one Samuel Dang Kat and Zatshinen Wubwerwe, both male, have been identified and arrested in connection with the case.

"Efforts are being intensified with a view to apprehending the fleeing suspects and charge them to court."

The Commissioner thanked the law-abiding citizens of the state for their

cooperation in making the fight against crime and criminality easy for law enforcement agents.

"Within the period under review, the Plateau State Police Command had recorded some operational successes. Our aggressive onslaught against men of the underworld has led to the massive arrest of criminals and the recovery of arms and ammunition.

"The Command is poised to serve you better. The support of the media and the publicity given to Police activities has no doubt been tremendous. The Public are better informed and educated on the good intentions of the police towards them and the need to form a strong alliance against the men of the underworld.

"Once again I appreciate the good people of the state, the members of the 4th estate of the realm and the gallant, professional and indefatigable police officers of the Command that have brought about these successes," the Commissioner added.

Alleged N20bn Fraud: Court grants bail to Kuru, convicts Sigma Golf

By Friday Omosola

A Lagos Special Offences Court in Ikeja on Tuesday granted bail to the former Managing Director of the Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria (AMCON), Ahmed Kuru, setting the amount at N50 million with two sureties.

Meanwhile, the court convicted Sigma Golf Nigeria Limited, ordering its dissolution and the forfeiture of its rights, title, and interest in 6.25 billion units of Keystone Bank Limited's ordinary shares to the Federal Government.

Justice Rahman Oshodi delivered the judgment as part of a plea bargain agreement between the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Sigma Golf Nigeria Limited.

The company, represented by its Chairman, Umaru Modibbo, pleaded guilty after its arraignment.

Modibbo, the Founder of Sigma Pensions Nigeria Ltd, appeared alongside Kuru following an amended six-count charge filed by the EFCC.

The charges included conspiracy, stealing, and the unlawful transfer of assets.

According to the EFCC, N20 billion in AMCON funds was funneled through Heritage Bank to Sigma Golf Nigeria Ltd for the acquisition of Keystone Bank.

While Kuru maintained his innocence, Sigma Golf, through Modibbo, admitted guilt.

Lead EFCC prosecutor, Rotimi Oyedepo, then urged the court to adopt the plea bargain agreement as its judgment.



After confirming the agreement was reached voluntarily and aligned with the interest of justice, the court upheld its terms and delivered the ruling accordingly.

Part of the judgment read: "That upon the conviction of Sigma Golf Nigeria Ltd, all its rights, title and interest in the one (1) unit of the Keystone Bank Limited's ordinary shares allotted to Alhaji Umaru Hamidu Modibbo, the current Chairman of the company, shall forthwith also be forfeited to the Federal Government of Nigeria represented by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

"That in respect of the facts and circumstances of the instant case, the Complainant, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, agrees not to pursue criminal charges both now and in the future against Alhaji Umaru Hamidu Modibbo.

"That Sigma Golf Nigeria Limited and its Chairman, Alhaji Umaru Haridu Modibbo, agree to fully cooperate with the Prosecution in any ongoing or future investigations related to this matter,

including providing truthful testimony as required."

Following the judgment, the court proceeded to hear the bail application of former AMCON Managing Director, Kuru.

Justice Oshodi acknowledged that the alleged offence, which carries a seven-year prison sentence, is typically bailable.

With no opposition from the EFCC, the court refused to grant Kuru bail on self-recognizance but approved his release on bail set at N50 million.

He is required to provide two sureties who must submit an affidavit of means before the court.

As part of the bail conditions, the sureties will undergo screening and must present evidence of tax payment for the past three years.

Additionally, the EFCC has been directed to inform the Nigeria Immigration Service that Kuru's passport has been seized by the court registrar.

Rivers commences anthrax vaccination campaign

By Helen Okechukwu

The Rivers State Government (RSG), through the Ministry of Agriculture, has begun the anthrax vaccination campaign with a landmark at the Livestock Demonstration Farms in Rivers State University, located in the state capital.

The flagged-off event commenced yesterday, 10 February, and is scheduled to be concluded on 17 February.

A document shared on the Ministry of Agriculture Facebook page on Monday, noted that the vaccine was free and farmers were encouraged to participate for the benefit of their animals.

The Flagged Off exercise aims to protect and prevent the spread of anthrax and



ensure food security and public health among residents in the state.

This vaccine campaign came shortly after the outbreak of this zoonotic disease in Zamfara State.

Anthrax can be spread from animal to human after being in contact with infected animals or objects.

At the event, the first round of vaccines were administered in the presence of farmers, stakeholders, and veterinary experts.

The gathering underscored the importance of proactive animal healthcare, acknowledging the need for collective efforts for a healthier and safer agricultural sector.

However, the ministry lauded the effort of Governor Fubara for his proactive measures in safeguarding the residents, stressing that food security is important.

Displaced citizens in Rivers Community call for govt intervention over insecurity

By Helen Okechukwu

Natives of the Obele community in Emohua Local Government Area (LGA), Rivers State, displaced over an alleged rival cult clash, have cried for state government intervention after the murder of five persons.

Recalled that on 5 February, suspected cultists invaded the community, marched from house to house in search of their targets, leading to the death of five persons in different compounds.

Due to the fear of death, significant numbers of natives who flee their residential homes remain homeless.

In a united voice, Mr Bestman Amadi, a concerned citizen, has beckoned Governor Siminalayi Fubara to come to



their rescue, as the majority of displaced persons have nowhere to go, and they are afraid of returning to their community because of insecurity.

In the midst of the insecurity tantrum, some members of the community who are still in the community live in fear, while

some citizens have relocated to nearby communities and LGAs.

Explaining the situation and challenges faced in the community, Amadi noted that “old parents and community members have been stranded, seeking refuge from the insecurity that has plagued their homes.

“The people of Obele deserve better. They deserve to feel safe and secure in their homes.”

While expressing his displeasure over the delayed action, he said, “Deep concern and disappointment over the inaction of the local government chairman and prominent Emolga politicians regarding the plight of the people of Obele community.

Love in the Time of Recession: Nigerian lovers find creative ways to celebrate Valentine's Day

By Damilola Olufemi

Despite the economic downturn, Nigerian couples are determined to make this Valentine's Day a memorable one. From supermarket shopping sprees to surprise packages, event planning, and romantic getaways, lovers are finding creative ways to celebrate their relationships.

For Emmanuel and his girlfriend, Ada, who live in the Kurumashi area of Kaduna State, Valentine's Day is all about appreciation and togetherness.

"We're not big on expensive gifts, but we love doing little things for each other, like cooking dinner together or planning surprise picnics," says Emmanuel.

Ada echoes his sentiment, adding, "Valentine's Day is about showing love and appreciation. It doesn't have to be extravagant; small, thoughtful gestures mean the most."

In Abuja, Ahmed and Mariam took a trip to their favourite supermarket to pick up Valentine's Day essentials.

Speaking to New Daily Prime, the couple emphasized that the day serves as another opportunity to strengthen their bond.



"February 14 shouldn't be the only day to express love. Instead, we are making it special and reaffirming our commitment to each other. We want to assure ourselves of an even greater love," they said.

History of Valentine's Day

The Day has a rich and complex history that spans over 1,500 years with its roots in ancient Roman traditions.

Saint Valentine was a Christian priest who lived in Rome during the 3rd century AD, Saint Valentine defied Emperor Claudius II, who had outlawed marriage for young men, believing that single men made better soldiers. Despite the decree, Saint Valentine continued to perform marriages in secret, earning a reputation as a romantic and compassionate figure.

The Catholic Church recognizes February 14 as St. Valentine's Day, originally observed as a feast day to honour Saint Valentine's sacrifice. Over time, the holiday evolved, incorporating elements of ancient Roman festivals such as Lupercalia, a fertility festival celebrated in mid-February.

Today, Valentine's Day is celebrated worldwide. The day is marked by the exchange of gifts, flowers, and cards, symbolizing affection and appreciation.

This version improves readability, enhances clarity, and makes it more suitable for publication in a high-ranking newspaper.

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Supermarkets, event planners get more purchase

As Nigerian lovers anticipate Friday, February 14, 2025, vendors and supermarkets are capitalizing on the occasion to boost sales and revenue. Supermarket attendants who spoke to New Daily Prime revealed that sales significantly increase during the Valentine's season.

"We see a lot of couples buying chocolates, flowers, and wine," says Blessing, a sales attendant at Shoprite. "Some even shop together to pick out gifts for each other. We record extra sales of over ₦300,000 to ₦600,000 daily during the Valentine's period," added another supermarket attendant in the Ikorodu area of Lagos, who preferred to remain anonymous for safety reasons.

Meanwhile, in Lagos, event planners like Uche Paul, based in Ojodu Berger, are helping couples organize romantic getaways and surprise parties.

"We're getting a lot of bookings for Valentine's Day events. Couples are looking for unique and romantic ways to celebrate their love," Uche explained. He further emphasized the essence of the celebration, stating, "Love is not just about money; it's about the

thought and effort you put into making your partner happy."

Valentine's Day: More lovers share their plans

In Edo State, event planners like Osas are offering exclusive Valentine's Day packages, complete with decorations, music, and catering. "We're offering a 'Love in the Air' package that includes a romantic dinner for two, a bouquet of flowers, and a special Valentine's Day cake," Osas says. At one of the supermarkets in Edo State, sales of Valentine's Day items have been brisk.

"We've sold out of most of our Valentine's Day cards and gift wraps," says Ngozi, a supermarket attendant. "But we still have plenty of chocolates, flowers, and wine in stock." She added that the store makes an additional ₦200,000 in sales during the Valentine's season compared to regular days.

Romantic Getaways & Surprise Packages

For Port Harcourt-based Nneoma and her partner Ikenna, a romantic getaway to Calabar is their ideal way to celebrate.

"We've been together for five years, and we always try to do something special on Valentine's

Day. This year, we decided to take a trip to Calabar and explore the city together," says Nneoma.

The Rumuokoro-based couple plans to make the day unforgettable with a romantic boat ride, a candlelit dinner, and quality time together.

Meanwhile, in Ibadan, Oyo State, lovers like Ayomide Kalesanwo are opting for surprise packages to make their partners feel special.

"I ordered a surprise package for Victoria (my partner) that includes a bouquet of flowers, a box of chocolates, and a romantic dinner for two," he says.

Ayomide is determined to make this Valentine's Day unforgettable. "I'm so excited. I love surprises, and I know Victoria will make this day even more special," he told New Daily Prime.

Love Overcomes Economic Hardship

Despite the economic challenges, Nigerian lovers remain determined to celebrate love and appreciation for their partners, proving that Valentine's Day is not just about money but about thoughtfulness and effort in relationships.

Amid economic woes, mixed reactions trail lingering rent hikes

By Helen Okechukwu

With the rising cost of living in Nigeria, fueled by inflation and economic downturn, housing has become an increasing burden for tenants nationwide. The sharp rise in rent has forced some families to relocate to rural areas where housing is more affordable, while others continue to struggle to make ends meet in the cities.

Urban residents face escalating rental costs, largely driven by the removal of petroleum subsidies and the floating exchange rate policy of the current administration. The economic strain is severe, as many landlords continue to raise rents due to the rising cost of building materials and property maintenance.

In 2022, Nigeria recorded a 50% increase in rent across major cities in the country such as Lagos, Abuja and Port-Harcourt. Nigeria's growing population has further compounded the housing crisis. As of 2025, the country's population is estimated to exceed 223 million, making it the seventh most populous nation in the world. With an annual growth rate of approximately 2.1%, projections suggest that by 2050, Nigeria's population could surpass 377 million, highlighting the nation's rapid demographic expansion and increasing demand for housing.

Nigeria Population Projection

As a result, shop owners and prospective tenants have been significantly impacted by the skyrocketing rent prices, with growing complaints about property agents and landlords imposing exorbitant fees. New Daily Prime investigations reveal a disturbing trend in recent days, as landlords and agents aggressively demand multiple charges from tenants, particularly for new apartments and commercial spaces in major cities across Nigeria.

Public Reactions



Some Nigerian home seekers have voiced their frustration over skyrocketed housing and shop rents.

For instance, Debby Addane fingered agents as being responsible for collecting nearly half of the rent charges as agency fees.

Also, Chukwu Nonso, a new tenant, expressed dismay over an unexpected increase in house rent despite being a new tenant in the apartment. He said that he and other tenants rejected the hike, citing the already high cost of moving into the apartment for their rejection.

In the same vein, Queen Evelyn, an Awka resident in Anambra State capital, lamented that agents in Awka have made life unbearable for prospective tenants, especially students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University.

Also, Olanrewaju Samuel, a facebook user, blamed agents for pressuring landlords to raise their house rents. He therefore, called on the government to introduce policies to regulate tenancy charges.

Vanessa Uche also criticized the trend, alleging that both landlords and agents are worsening the economic crisis for Nigerians.

In Rivers State, Mr. Prince Eke told New Daily Prime, how he was visibly shocked when he was informed that his rent had increased from N80,000 to N200,000 in late 2023.

He added that following the appeal by tenants, the landlord reduced the rent to N160,000. Speaking in the most emotional manner, he admitted that the huge financial burden had impacted negatively on his mental health.

"It is like losing someone dear," he remarked, emphasizing the emotional and financial toll of the sudden rent hike. Eke urged landlords to show understanding and reduce rents in the light of the economic hardship facing many Nigerians.

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Similarly, Mrs. Abinofor Miriam, a hairdresser whose shop is located on SARS Road in Port-Harcourt, disclosed her plans to relocate to another area where shop rent is cheaper. She added that she took the decision to relocate because her new landlord who recently bought the building has increased her shop rent from N350,000.00 to N1 million, citing planned renovations as the reason for the increase. "What will I be selling after renovation to afford renewing the shop rent," she lamented.

Realtors fault Allegations

Contrary to the widespread accusation against property agents, many of them have dismissed claims of them colluding with house owners to raise rents.

Speaking on the same issue, Mr. Light Ikenna, a realtor with over two years experience, refuted the allegations, asserting that agents have no control over landlords' pricing decisions.

"It is a fallacy. No agent has the right to influence rent prices. Many agents are also tenants and understand the burden of rent payments. This idea that we conspire with landlords to hike rents," Ikenna said.

He further explained that real estate operates as a private sector, and property owners are not bound by government-imposed price regulations.

He added that in states like Delta, there is no fixed percentage on agency fees, allowing tenants to choose alternative agents if dissatisfied.

He further explained that real estate operates as a private sector, and property owners are not bound by government-imposed price regulations

Ikenna emphasized that rather than blaming agents, the government should take proactive measures to address the housing crisis. "Government cannot regulate rent prices if they do not provide basic amenities for property owners. Many landlords

struggle with the high cost of building materials and often abandon projects due to financial constraints. If the government builds affordable housing estates and leases them at lower costs, it will help regulate rent prices."

He also noted that factors such as demolitions have contributed to rent hikes. He added that for instance, the ongoing construction of the Ring Road in Port-Harcourt led to the demolition of several houses, causing a reduction in available houses and an increase in rents.

Experts, Realtors' views on rent increase

Mr Usenobong Atangaedi, a corporate member of Nigerian Institute of Building (NIOB) and a building expert, highlighted several factors contributing to rising rent in Nigeria. He pointed out that 90% of construction materials are imported, making costs highly susceptible to fluctuations in foreign exchange rates.

"The major factors behind the surge in rent prices are directly tied to Nigeria's economic conditions. The purchasing power of many citizens has declined, yet the cost of goods and services continues to rise. Landlords, who face increased costs in maintaining properties and purchasing essentials, often raise rents to keep up with inflation," he added.

Atangaedi further noted that the cost of labour has significantly increased, adding: "Unlike before, artisans and construction workers now demand higher wages, some earning up to ₦10,000 per day. This increase contributes to the overall cost of building new houses and maintaining existing ones."

In the same vein, another builder, Mr Ojo Alade, collaborated with Atangaedi's comments, saying the rising cost of building materials, labour and other logistics expenses account for high rents in Nigeria.

He added that almost on a daily basis, the

prices of goods and services rise to the rooftop. He also faulted the common perception that property agents are solely responsible for rent increases. "I don't know how much influence agents have on rent increment compared to landlords themselves. While some agents may try to convince landlords to increase fees, ultimately, landlords make the final decision. Agents are primarily middlemen, connecting landlords and house seekers. They do not set rental rates," he added."

Atangaedi further explained that neighborhoods undergoing new construction often experience rent hikes due to the rising cost of building materials. "Even older houses with little or no renovations see price increases because landlords want to keep up with market trends."

Calls for Government Intervention

Atangaedi urged the government to take a more active role in addressing Nigeria's housing crisis. "While landlords have a right to profit from their investments, tenants need fair pricing structures to avoid undue financial stress. The government must step in to provide affordable housing solutions."

"There is a population explosion across the country and people are being born on a daily basis, and require affordable houses to live in. And all of these point to the fact that very few houses are available, especially in the urban area when we have many people pushing to have access to shelter," the registered Builder with Council for Registered Builder of Nigeria (CORBON) stressed.

He suggested several policy measures, including mass housing projects for low and middle-income earners, subsidizing building materials like cement and reinforcement rods, reforming the Land Use Act of 1978 to ease land acquisition process, and supporting private estate developers to create more housing opportunities. Government can support private estate developers.

I've never had a boyfriend, just casual partner – Tems

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Grammy Award winner, Temilade Openiyi, better known as Tems in an interview disclosed that she has never had a boyfriend in her life since she was born.

The 29-year-old singer and songwriter made this known to all and sundry while featuring as a guest on the YouTube show "Is the seat taken" hosted by media personality, Chinasa Anukam.

While speaking to the host, Anukam, Tem said that she never had a boyfriend before but she has a mini boyfriend. A quick check confirmed that a mini boyfriend means a casual male partner who is not considered a serious commitment.

A mini boyfriend is someone who you're not a girlfriend to, but who is really close to



you. You do relationship things but both of you swear you don't like each other enough to date.

This revelation comes days after Tems made Nigeria proud as she bagged a Grammy Award for the second time. Tems

won the Best African Music Performance award at the 2025 Grammy Award.

See reactions below;

happiokos_comedy: "Which one be mini boyfriend again, Abi the guy na brief gu."

bazeokay: "lol, this girl wey been dey cry for opueh on X now the talk rara r."

trenchesblog: "See her look when answering the boyfriend questio ."

stevenbits1: "Na dildo be dat , make una no panic."

onyinye_joy3030: "Mini bf as per hin get Amstel Malta bottle height, abi what again.""

VeryDarkMan is gay, into men – ex-BBNaija housemate, Deeone

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Former Big Brother Naija (BBNaija) housemate and comedian, DeeOne has sent a shockwave through the media space, sparking various reactions and comments with his bold disclosure that social media activist, Martins Vincent Otse, popularly known as VeryDarkMan or VDM, is a gay.

Deeone made this disclosure to all and sundry while featuring as a guest on the audio-visual podcast tagged the "Honest Bunch" hosted by media personality, Nedu Wazobia and others.

This is coming days after Deeone says that apart from him, Bisola Aiyeola and Ebuka Obi, other graduates of the popular reality show BBNaija are



irrelevant since they left the show.

During the podcast, Deeone claims that activist VeryDarkMan his absolutely nothing but a gay as he is into "chopping the work of his fellow men" in the bedroom.

This development left Nedu Wazobia and his co-podcasters in shock as they never see it coming.

Deeone in his words said; "VeryDarkMan him dey do man, What's is ah, I go commot here oh, what is ah, una no know, all of una no know say he dey into men., You don't know that VDM is into men?"

Meanwhile, many have told reality TV star, Deeone to get himself a good lawyer as VeryDarkMan will soon file a lawsuit against him over the allegation levelled on him.

Deeone also went ahead to throw shade at former BBNaija winner, Phyna.

I make about N20m weekly on TikTok

– Peller By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular social media influencer Peller has opened up about his impressive earnings on TikTok, revealing that he makes an average of N20 million every week.

During an interview on Rubbin' Minds with Ebuka, Peller shared insights into how his TikTok live sessions have become his primary source of income. He dismissed rumours that he makes as much as N200 million, clarifying that the figures circulating online are exaggerated.

Strategy shift led to success

Peller credited his financial success on TikTok to a shift in strategy. Instead of focusing solely on regular content, he began prioritizing live sessions. This move, he said, significantly boosted his earnings and strengthened his connection with his audience.

The influencer explained that engagement plays a crucial role in his revenue. By interacting with viewers in real-time, he encourages more participation, which translates into higher earnings. He noted that fans send him gifts and virtual donations, which TikTok later monetizes.



Big payouts from live sessions

The content creator revealed that he makes substantial amounts from live streaming. In one instance, he earned \$10,000 from a single session. On average, he streams three times a week, making around \$3,000 per 30-minute session.

“I could have a live session, talk for a while, and by the end, I might have \$3,000 for just 30 minutes,” Peller said. “I don’t go live every day because I don’t want people to see my face too often. I only do it three times a week. One time, I made \$10,000 in a single session, which surprised me. I had seen \$7,000 or \$8,000 before, but \$10,000 was a shock. TikTok takes a percentage, but on average, I still make N20 million a week.”

Peller: The power of engagement

Peller’s story highlights the growing financial potential of content creation on platforms like TikTok.

His earnings show how social media influencers can turn engagement into real money. Live streaming has become a powerful tool for creators, allowing them to interact with their followers while generating significant income.

With platforms like TikTok offering multiple ways to earn, influencers who understand their audience and develop effective strategies can make a living through social media. Peller’s success is proof that content creation when done strategically, can be a lucrative career.

Portable raps father for abandoning him amid police case

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian singer Portable has publicly criticised his father, accusing him of betrayal and abandonment during a difficult time.

The controversial artist expressed his frustration in a recent Instagram post, alleging that his father mishandled funds meant for a housing project and failed to protect him from legal troubles.

In the viral post, Portable claimed that he had been financially supporting his father, only to be let down when he needed him the most.

He alleged that his father accepted money to oversee his real estate investments but did not intervene when a dispute with the police arose. As a result, Portable now faces unresolved legal issues.

Portable calls out his Father's actions

The singer did not hold back in his accusations. He described his father's actions as irresponsible and labelled him a "bad father." He stated that despite giving him money to manage his properties, his father had misused the funds and left him to deal with his problems alone.

"But why didn't my father go to the police station to defend me? He is a bad father," Portable wrote. "I give him money to handle all those houses, but he wasted it. If he had settled things, I wouldn't be in trouble now."

The singer also questioned why his father had refused to stand by him. He emphasized that the houses in question belonged to his Badmus family and that his father had an obligation to manage them properly.

"Why is my father running from the police? The house project was in his



hands. I gave him money to manage everything, but now I'm left to face these problems alone," he lamented.

A troubled father-son relationship Portable's allegations have sparked widespread reactions online. Many fans and followers expressed sympathy for the singer, while others criticized him for publicly airing family matters. Some questioned whether there was more to the story, wondering if deeper family conflicts were at play.

This is not the first time Portable has been involved in controversy. The singer, known for his outspoken nature and unfiltered social media rants, has often found himself at the centre of public debates. His latest accusations against his father have only added to his long list of dramatic online moments.

Public reactions and speculations Following the post, social media erupted with mixed reactions. Some fans supported Portable, urging him to cut ties with those who do not have his best interests at heart. Others, however, advised him to resolve his issues privately

rather than expose family matters to the public.

"This is a family issue. Portable should handle it privately instead of making it a social media spectacle," one user commented.

Another fan, however, defended the singer, saying, "If his father truly betrayed him, he has the right to speak out. Family members should not take advantage of their children's success."

What's next for Portable?

Despite his ongoing legal troubles and family drama, Portable remains active in the music industry. He continues to release new songs and engage with his fanbase. However, many wonder if these personal issues will affect his career in the long run.

As the story unfolds, it remains to be seen whether Portable and his father will reconcile or if this public fallout will create a permanent rift between them. For now, the controversy continues to dominate social media, keeping Portable in the headlines once again.

I didn't get Tems, Omah Lay arrested – Bebe Cool

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Ugandan musician Bebe Cool has denied allegations that he played a role in the 2020 arrest of Nigerian singers Tems and Omah Lay.

The two artists were detained in Uganda after performing at a concert that violated COVID-19 restrictions.

In a recent interview on the Afrobeats Podcast, Bebe Cool gave his side of the story. He claimed he was not responsible for the arrests and instead helped secure their release.

Bebe Cool's version of events

The singer recalled that he first heard about the arrests through a phone call at around 3 a.m. A friend informed him that the Nigerian artists had been detained. He immediately started making inquiries.

By 6 a.m., Bebe Cool went to the police station to speak with the officer in charge. He confirmed that Tems and Omah Lay were under arrest.

Bebe Cool questioned the decision, arguing that the artists should not be held responsible for the event's attendance. He reminded the officer that Uganda's president had allowed gatherings of up to 200 people.

"The artists are not in charge of the show," Bebe Cool explained. "They don't control how many people attend."

The officer advised him to take up the matter with his superior. However, while he was at the station, the event promoter accused him of orchestrating the arrests.

Accusations from the show promoter

The promoter pointed at Bebe Cool and said, "That's the guy. He's the reason you're in prison."



Bebe Cool explained that local Ugandan artists had been frustrated with the government's COVID-19 restrictions.

They had been unable to perform for over a year, even for small audiences. Meanwhile, Tems and Omah Lay were allowed to hold a concert. This angered Ugandan musicians, who took to social media to demand equal treatment.

Since Bebe Cool is a well-known artist, his tweets gained significant attention. This led to speculation that he had influenced the authorities' decision to arrest the Nigerian singers.

His efforts to help

Despite the accusations, Bebe Cool said he only spoke on behalf of the two detained artists. He did not advocate for the release of the show promoter. This, he believes, caused further tension.

After leaving the police station, he went to the head office to meet with senior officials. While waiting, he saw on his phone that the Nigerian artists had already been taken to court.

He immediately called the police station and questioned the decision. "I just left, I'm waiting for the big man to come so we can discuss, and you went behind me and took the artists to court?" he asked.

The officer responded that after Bebe Cool left, the promoter had caused a scene, bragging about her political connections.

The aftermath

Bebe Cool insists he did not facilitate the arrests. He maintains that his efforts were focused on getting the artists released. He blames social media for spreading false narratives.

"When the internet picks a story in a certain direction, it's hard to change it," he said.

The controversy surrounding the arrests sparked international backlash. Many fans and artists called for the immediate release of Tems and Omah Lay. Eventually, both artists were freed and returned to Nigeria.

Rema announces 'Heis' album 2025 tour

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Award-winning singer Rema is set to embark on a massive world tour this spring to promote his second album, *Heis*, with performances in top global arenas.

The 22-date tour begins on April 11 at the Edmonton Expo Centre in Canada and will take him to some of the biggest venues worldwide.

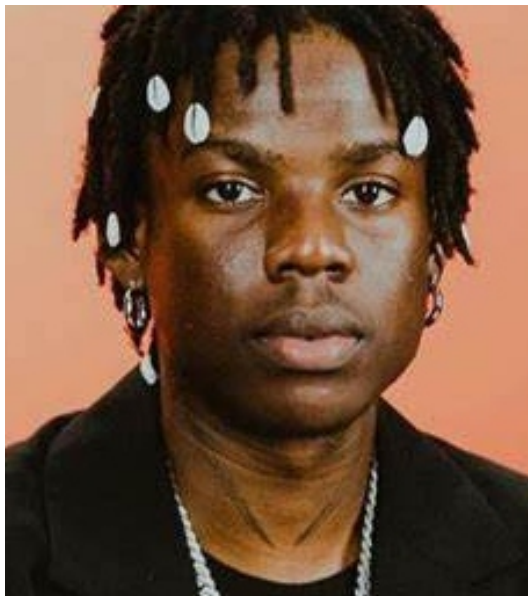
Rema will perform at renowned arenas such as London's O2 Arena and Paris' Accor Arena. A highlight of the tour includes his highly anticipated debut at Coachella, where he will take the stage on both weekends.

The *Heis* tour will conclude on August 3 in Barcelona, Spain, at the iconic Poble Espanyol. Fans eager to attend can purchase tickets in phases. The artist presale starts on February 11, followed by a Spotify presale on February 12. General ticket sales open on February 13.

Released in July 2024, *Heis* has been a major success, featuring hit tracks like *Benin Boys*, *Hehehe*, and *War Machine*.

The album climbed to No. 7 on Billboard's World Albums chart and earned Rema his first Grammy nomination for Best Global Music Album.

With his energetic performances and growing international fan base, Rema's upcoming tour is set to be one of the biggest Afrobeats events of the



year. Fans worldwide are eager to see him bring his chart-topping songs to life on stage.

HEIS World Tour 2025 — Global Tour Routing:

April 11 — Edmonton, AB @ Edmonton Expo Centre

April 13 — Indio, CA Coachella Weekend 1

April 20 — Indio, CA Coachella Weekend 2

April 24 — Mexico City, MX @ Cercle Odyssey

April 27 — Houston, TX @ 713 Music Hall

April 30 — Chicago, IL @ Byline Bank Aragon Ballroom

May 3 — New York, NY @ Madison Square Garden

May 6 — Boston, MA @ MGM Music

Hall

May 10 — Laval, QC @ Place Bell

May 11 — Toronto, ON @ Scotiabank Arena

June 6 — Berlin, Germany @ Uber Eat Halle

June 8 — London, England @ The O2

June 14 — Milan, Italy @ Fabrique

June 18 — Copenhagen, Denmark @ TAP 1

June 20 — Amsterdam, Netherlands @ AFAS Live

June 22 — Brussels, Belgium @ Ancienne Belgique

June 28 — Paris, France @ Accor Arena

July 20 — Okinawa, Japan @ Okinawa Arena

July 22 — Afro Jam Festival Osaka, Japan @ Ookini Arena

July 27 — Afro Jam Festival Tokyo, Japan @ Musashino Sports Plaza

August 1 — Malmo, Sweden @ Dream Park Festival

August 3 — Barcelona, Spain @ Poble Espanyol

Trump meets with Jordan's King Abdullah II, insists on Gaza plan

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

President Trump hosted Jordan's King Abdullah II at the White House on Tuesday and renewed his suggestions that Gaza could be emptied of residents, controlled by the U.S. and redeveloped as a tourist area — a plan that could likely only work if the Arab nation agrees to accept more refugees.

The pair met in the Oval Office, where President Trump suggested he wouldn't withhold U.S. aid to Jordan, Egypt or other Arab nations, if they don't agree to dramatically increase the number of people from Gaza they take in.

"I don't have to threaten that. I do believe we're above that," Mr. Trump said. That contradicted his previous suggestion that holding back aid was a possibility.

Abdullah was asked repeatedly about Trump's audacious plan to remake the Middle East, but didn't make substantive comments on it nor the idea that his country could accept large numbers of new refugees from Gaza.

Secretary of State, Marco Rubio is to the right of President Trump and Jordan's King Abdullah II during the parley.

He did say that Jordan would accept roughly 2,000 children with cancer and other health problems "right away."

Trump said he did not know about that commitment, which he called "a



beautiful gesture."

President Trump speaks during a meeting with Jordan's King Abdullah II in the Oval Office of the White House on Feb. 11, 2025. Aaron Schwartz/CNP/Bloomberg via Getty Images

The president also repeated suggestions that the U.S. could come to control Gaza, but he said that it wouldn't require committing funds and would come to fruition. He also said that would be possible "under the U.S. authority," without elaborating what that actually was.

"We're not going to buy anything. We're going to have it," Trump said of U.S. control in Gaza. He suggested that the redeveloped area could have new hotels, office buildings and houses and "and we'll make it exciting."

"I can tell you about real estate. They're

going to be in love with it," President Trump, who built a New York real estate empire that catapulted him to fame, said of Gaza's residents, while also insisting that he personally would not be involved in development.

Additionally, Trump used the meeting to renew his suggestions that a tenuous ceasefire between Hamas and Israel could be canceled if Hamas doesn't release all of the remaining hostages it is holding by midday on Saturday.

"I don't think they're going to make the deadline, personally," Mr. Trump said of Hamas. "They want to play tough guy. We'll see how tough they are."

The king's visit is happening at a perilous moment for the ongoing ceasefire in Gaza. Hamas is accusing Israel of violating the truce and said it is pausing future releases of hostages captured in its Oct. 7, 2023, terrorist attack.

Pope Francis criticises Trump's deportation policy as a "Major Crisis"

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Pope Francis has strongly condemned the deportation policies of US President Donald Trump, describing them as a "major crisis" that "damages the dignity of men and women."

In a letter to US bishops on Tuesday, the Pope urged the faithful of the Catholic Church and all people of good will to resist narratives that discriminate against migrants and refugees, causing unnecessary suffering to these vulnerable groups.

The Pope's remarks continue his ongoing advocacy for migrant rights and humanitarian treatment for those displaced worldwide.



British ICC prosecutor banned from US

By David Millward

Karim Khan is the only member of the court to be sanctioned so far, with his wife and children also affected

prosecutor

Karim Khan, chief prosecutor of the ICC. Any property owned by Mr Khan in the US will be subject to being seized Credit: LUISACOSTA/AFP

Karim Khan, the British chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, has been barred from entering the United States by Donald Trump.

The 54-year-old lawyer was named by the White House on Monday morning as the sole member of the ICC to be sanctioned by the US so far.

His wife, children and other immediate family members are also affected.

Any property owned by Mr Khan in the US will be subject to being seized.

Mr Trump last week signed an executive



order sanctioning unnamed ICC officials, accusing the court of engaging in "illegitimate and baseless actions targeting America and our close ally Israel".

Arrest warrant for Hamas commander

The sanctions are viewed as retaliation for the arrest warrant the court issued for Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, and Yoav Gallant, his former minister of defence, for alleged war crimes in Gaza.

An arrest warrant has also been issued for Mohammed Deif, the Hamas commander, including for "murder" on October 7 but Israel said Deif has been killed in the conflict.

Neither the US nor Israel are members of the ICC.

Mr Trump previously slapped Fatou Bensouda, Mr Khan's predecessor, and one of her deputies with sanctions over their investigation of alleged crimes by US troops in Afghanistan.

Those named in ICC warrants risk arrest should they set foot in any of the 125 countries – including the UK – which are members of the court.

In the latest executive order, Mr Trump said: "The United States unequivocally opposes and expects our allies to oppose any ICC actions against the United States, Israel, or any other ally of the United States that has not consented to ICC jurisdiction."

Trump empowers US coys to bribe foreign officials without penalty

By Dave Oludare Oso

President of the United States (POTUS), Donald Trump has lifted restrictions that previously penalized American companies for bribing foreign officials, including those in Nigeria.

Trump signed the Executive Order directing the country's Justice Department to pause prosecutions under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), the US law prohibiting American citizens and businesses from bribing foreign government officials to gain or retain business on Monday.

The president asked the US attorney general to pause prosecution under this law until a revised enforcement guidance that promotes American competitiveness is issued.

"It sounds good on paper, but in practicality, it's a disaster," Trump said. "It means that if an American goes over to a foreign country and starts doing business over there, legally, legitimately or otherwise, it's almost a guaranteed investigation indictment, and nobody wants to do business with the Americans because of it." He added: "It was a Jimmy Carter concept, and it sounds so good, but it's so bad. It hurts the country and many, many deals are unable to be made because nobody wants to do business."



The law, enacted in 1977 under President Jimmy Carter's administration, applies to US and foreign companies listed on the country's stock exchanges.

The suspension of the FCPA will likely increase unethical practices and weaken global anti-bribery efforts, experts say.

The act has been a cornerstone of US anti-corruption policies, holding multinational companies accountable for unethical business practices abroad.

A notable case involving Nigeria was the 2009 prosecution of officials of Kellogg Brown & Root (KBR), a subsidiary of US oil and energy contractor Halliburton, for bribing Nigerian government officials.

The US government ordered the company to pay a \$402 million fine.

Similarly, in 2023, the US indicted Glencore Plc, a global trading and mining firm, for paying \$100 million in bribes to officials in developing countries, including Nigeria, to secure contracts and evade audits.

Outside Nigeria, in 2017, Halliburton was fined \$29.2 million for bribing Angolan officials to obtain lucrative deals.

With the FCPA now on hold, there are concerns that enforcement actions will decline and unethical business practices will worsen.

According to Transparency International, the US anti-corruption watchdog, the FCPA made the US a leader in addressing global corruption.

The organisation said Trump's executive order could pave the way for eliminating the country's fight against global corruption.

Five security escorts for one migrant: how Britain's deportations compare to Trump's

By Charles Hymas

Home Office releases footage and photos of previously secret, high-security removals

Deportation

A Home Office image of five security escorts surrounding a single migrant as he steps onto a chartered plane to be returned to his home country in Europe

Videos and photos of foreign criminals and failed asylum seekers being deported from Britain have been published for the first time – revealing that up to five security escorts are needed for every migrant.

In an attempt to show Labour's tougher approach to illegal migrants, the Home Office has released pictures showing five escorts in high-viz yellow vests with body-worn cameras surrounding a single migrant as he is ushered up the steps onto a chartered plane to be returned to his home country in Europe.

The previously secret, high-security deportation flights have been filmed for the first time as Sir Keir Starmer tries to head off the political threat from Nigel Farage's Reform UK and demonstrate to a sceptical public that Labour is getting tough on illegal migration.

It comes after Donald Trump's administration last week published images of illegal US migrants being led single file onto a military transport plane.

However, unlike the UK, all the US migrants are prevented from escaping by chain shackles around their ankles and waist restraints clasp their hands to their bodies. A handful of armed soldiers are seen supervising the departure of up to nine migrants.

The privately contracted escorts used by the Home Office are supplied with waist and leg restraints and rigid-bar handcuffs to deal with "high-risk" criminals or



asylum seekers who are judged liable to fight back and resist removal. But only one of the migrants in the footage was subject to these restraints.

The pictures – released as stills and video on the Home Office's social media channels – show a flight of 47 foreign criminals and failed asylum seekers deported to an unnamed European destination. The video shows a coach that has pulled right up to the plane on the tarmac before each migrant is taken up the steps flanked by at least four escorts.

Any deportee assessed as high risk requires four escorts to accompany them on the entire flight, meaning a plane of 50 potentially violent migrants would require up to 200 security escorts on top of medics and interpreters.

Standard practice is for two of the four escorts to flank the migrant up the steps to the plane, with one ahead and one behind. A fifth will be on hand in case of violence, while three or four other security staff stand at the bottom and top of the steps.

In the US, migrants walk onto military aircraft.

For the British deportations, the steps are fully covered by an arched plastic tunnel from the bottom to the plane's door to

prevent the deportees from trying to jump off or falling to the ground.

About 10 per cent of migrants require force ranging from a "guiding hold" to waist or leg restraints or rigid bar handcuffs. In the rare cases where leg restraints are used, the migrants have to be carried onto the plane with an extra security officer dedicated to supporting their head and airway to prevent injury or choking.

Some of the escorts from the private contractor Miti Care and Custody Services wear body-worn cameras to record any assaults and to provide evidence if a migrant subsequently tries to sue for unnecessary use of force. It is understood there have been previous legal claims.

Force is said to be used as a "last resort" and must be "necessary, reasonable and proportionate".

Long-haul charter flights can take three to four months to plan and fight legal challenges. A high-profile flight to Jamaica in 2021 left with just four people on board after 33 others were granted last-minute legal reprieves.

The UK images coincided with new data published by Yvette Cooper, the Home

UCL: Relentless Madrid beat Man City by two late goals

By Dave Oludare Oso

Manchester City are fighting for Champions League survival and a place in the last 16 after Jude Bellingham's injury-time winner settled a tense play-off first leg in Real Madrid's favour.

Pep Guardiola's side rediscovered more of their true form early on at Etihad Stadium as Jack Grealish and Josko Gvardiol combined to set up Erling Haaland for a confident finish after 19 minutes.

Grealish, who had made a fine start, then went off injured and after Haaland hit the bar shortly after the break, Real took control.

Real let City off the hook by failing to take their chances until Kylian Mbappe scrambled home a close-range finish on the hour.

They continued to squander opportunities, including two for Bellingham, and were punished when Haaland put City back in front from the spot after 80 minutes following Dani Ceballos' foul on Phil Foden.

Real, however, hit back with four minutes left, former City man Brahim Diaz equalising before Bellingham finally hit the target, sliding in from close range to leave the holders as firm favourites to reach the knockout stage in next week's second leg at The Bernabeu.

Man City run out of steam – and luck

Manchester City's big Champions League night started with flashes of the



old form re-emerging, only to end in bitter disappointment as the failings that have characterised their disappointing season surfaced once more.

With Grealish probing and Haaland providing the cutting edge, City made the perfect start. It was a bitter blow when the former went off injured after half an hour.

Real had already started to pose a threat through the pace of Mbappe and the trickery of Rodrygo and Vinicius Junior, but the pivotal moment for City came when Haaland's deflected shot bounced back off the bar. A two-goal lead might have made a significant difference.

The 15-time champions then started to apply remorseless pressure on City, who were overcome by tired legs and were actually labouring badly when Haaland put them back in front against the run of play late on.

Once again, key men such as Bernardo

Silva and Kevin De Bruyne looked like players with too many miles on the clock, while Ruben Dias and John Stones have been managing their game time carefully.

And in that agonising conclusion, City went from thinking they might take a lead to The Bernabeu, to settling for a draw, then suffering the pain of defeat. City now face a mammoth task to take this stuttering Champions League campaign beyond the play-off stage.

Relentless Real wear down Man City

Real Madrid may not be at their best just yet, but they still possess the talent and nous to get the job done in most Champions League circumstances that confront them. This is the time of the season when they come alive.

Carlo Ancelotti was, for him at least, animated at some points as a succession of chances came and went for Real, who posed a threat all night.

UCL Playoff: Dembele shines as PSG beat Brest in UCL Playoff

By Oluwatosin Ologun

France forward, Ousmane Dembele kept up his remarkable form in front of goal with a double as Paris Saint-Germain took a big step towards qualifying for the last 16 of the Champions League with a 3-0 win over French rivals Brest in the first leg of their play-off tie on Tuesday.

PSG were overwhelming favourites coming into this tie against opponents who had never taken part in European competition before this season, and there seems little prospect of Brest recovering from this loss in next week's second leg.

Vitinha opened the scoring for PSG at the Stade de Roudourou in Guingamp with a penalty just before the midway point in the first half, and Dembele swept in a second on the stroke of half-time before netting again on 66 minutes.

The French international forward now has 23 goals for the season, including 18 in 11 appearances over the last two months.

Indeed he has 10 goals in just the last four games, a run which includes a hat-trick against Brest in Ligue 1 only 10 days ago.

He is irresistible just now, and Luis Enrique's side are unbeatable at the moment against French opponents, against whom they have not lost since last May.

The teams will meet again in the return leg of this knockout phase play-off tie next Wednesday in Paris, with the winners advancing to a last-16 showdown with either Liverpool or Barcelona.

Assuming they make it through, PSG will feel they are capable of beating either of



those sides on current form.

Paris Too Strong

Brest had not defeated the Parisians in any competition in 40 years, since January 1985, and had lost 17 of the last 18 meetings between the teams.

Once again hosting a Champions League game an hour away from Brest itself in Guingamp, they nearly got lucky early on, when an attempted clearance by PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma struck the face of forward Ludovic Ajorque and almost ricocheted into the net.

However, PSG were handed the chance to go ahead when a Dembele shot struck the arm of Pierre Lees-Melou inside the Brest box in the 17th minute.

The Bosnian referee had to come across to check the pitchside monitor before pointing to the spot, and Vitinha then stepped up to send goalkeeper Marco Bizot the wrong way with the penalty.

Brest did not let their heads go down and

Abdallah Sima had two big chances to equalise, first being denied by Willian Pacho's great recovery tackle and then heading against the far post from the resulting corner.

Achraf Hakimi almost scored an own goal too, but instead Paris struck again just before the break, majestically playing their way out of Brest's press and breaking away.

Hakimi fed Dembele, who cut in from the right and beat the goalkeeper at his near post.

Brest then saw Sima hit a post at the start of the second half, but the visitors continued to look so dangerous.

Desire Doue had the ball in the net only for his effort to be ruled out for a tight offside in the build-up, while Dembele fired wide from a good position.

Dembele did then strike again almost midway through the second half, trying to feed Bradley Barcola and then seeing the ball break back to him before shooting past Bizot with the aid of a deflection.