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# The New Daily Prime

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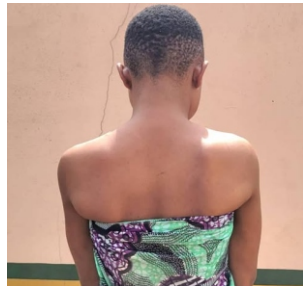
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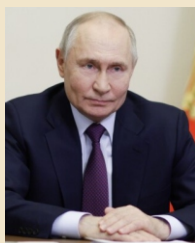
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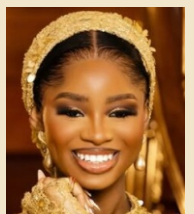
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# National Assembly passes N54.99trn 2025 budget

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Senate and the House of Representatives have passed the ₦54.99trn 2025 Appropriation Bill.

The two branches of the National Assembly passed the bill separately on Thursday.

A breakdown of the budget showed N3.645trn for statutory transfers, N14.317trn for debt servicing, N13.64trn for recurrent expenditure and N23.963trn capital expenditure (development fund), with fiscal deficit put at N13.08trn.

The Deficit-to-Gross domestic product (GDP) Ratio was put at 1.52%.

Last week, President Bola Tinubu increased the 2025 fiscal year budget from an initial N49.7trn to N54.2trn, seeking approval from the Senate and the House of Representatives.

The Chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations, Abubakar Bichi, while presenting the bill for consideration, stated that the committee met with the Presidential Economic Planning team to further discuss revenue projections and expenditure for the 2025 Appropriation Bill.

According to him, the 2025 Appropriation Bill was presented late,



compared to that of 2024.

He urged the executive to present subsequent budgets to the National Assembly not later than three months before the next financial year, to maintain the January to December budget cycle.

The passed budget reads, “A Bill for an Act to authorise the issue from the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Federation the total sum of N54,990,165,355,396 (Fifty-Four Trillion, Nine Hundred and Ninety Billion One Hundred and Sixty-Five Million, Three Hundred and Fifty-Five Thousand, Three Hundred and Ninety-Six Naira) only, of which N3,645,761,358,925 (Three Trillion, Six Hundred and Forty-Five Billion, Seven Hundred and Sixty-One Million, Three Hundred and Fifty-Eight Thousand, Nine Hundred and Twenty-Five Naira) only is for

Statutory Transfers.

“N14,317.142,689,548 (Fourteen Trillion, Three Hundred and Seventeen Billion, One Hundred and Forty-Two Million, Six Hundred and Eighty-Nine Thousand, Five Hundred and Forty-Eight Naira) only is for Debt Service, N13,064,009,682,673 (Thirteen Trillion, Sixty-Four Billion, Nine Million, Six Hundred and Eighty-Two Thousand, Six Hundred and Seventy-Three Naira) only is for Recurrent (Non-Debt) Expenditure.

“...the sum of N23,963,251,624,250 (Twenty-Three Trillion, Nine Hundred and Sixty-Three Billion, Two Hundred and Fifty-One Million, Six Hundred and Twenty-Four Thousand, Two Hundred and Fifty Naira) only is for contribution to the Development Fund for Capital Expenditure for the year ending on the 31 December, 2025.”



# THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

**EFFECTIVE FROM  
DECEMBER 1, 2024**

PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR		SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	=		372,500.00
HALF PAGE	=		213,000.00
QUARTER PAGE	=		106,500.00
14X2	=		118,000.00
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10X3	=		179,608.00
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9X5	=		225,738.00
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2X2	=		13,000.00
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1X1	=		4,400.00

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9X5	=		206,000.00
9X4	=		177,500.00
9X3	=		150,000.00
8X6	=		216,000.00
8X3	=		98,500.00
7X4	=		164,002.00
6X4	=		94,010.50
6X3	=		78,500.00
6X2	=		47,500.00
5X5	=		100,000.00
5X4	=		61,500.00
5X3	=		57,819.00
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SPECIAL POSITIONS		SIZE	RATE
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2X6 INSIDE PAGE	=		155,000.00
3X6 FRONT PAGE	=		1,200,000.00
4X6 FRONT PAGE	=		2,250,000.00
5X6 FRONT PAGE	=		3,350,000.00
10X6 FRONT PAGE	=		8,250,000.00
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DOUBLE SPREAD STRIP COLOUR	=		144,294.00
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DOUBLE SPREAD HALF B & W	=		425,000.00
FULL WRAP AROUND	=		15,000,000.00
HALF WRAP AROUND	=		8,500,000.00
HALF PAGE FRONT	=		5,500,000.00

ALLURE RATE		SIZE	RATE	TOTAL
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ALLURE COVER	=			750,000.00
(IBC) Inside Back Cover	=			376,250.00
(IFC) Inside Front Cover	=			430,000.00
(BC) Back Cover	=			483,750.00
Full Page	=			430,000.00
10X5	=			295,625.00
Half Page	=			225,000.00
EVENT	=			250,000.00

PICTURE & CAPTION			
SIZE	RATE	7.5% VAT	TOTAL
PHOTO NEWS PAGE 2	50,000.00	3,750.00	53,750.00
PHOTO NEWS (3X3)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
PHOTO NEWS (4X4)	53,333.30	4,250.00	57,583.30
PRESS RELEASE (4X4)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
EVENT COVERAGE	100,000.00	7,500.00	107,500.00
FEATURES	200,000.00	15,000.00	215,000.00

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**CONTACT US**  
Correspondent Address:  
Real Group Plaza, No.1 Junaid Dosumu  
Street, CBD, Alausa, Ikeja, Lagos  
Call the Editor on: 07025014298, 09014323792

**E-mail Address:**  
info@newdailyprime.news  
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# World Radio Day: FG urges stations to raise climate change awareness

By Friday Omosola

As the world celebrated World Radio Day, the Federal Government (FG) called on all radio stations in Nigeria to leverage their platforms to raise awareness about climate change and its impact on the nation.

World Radio Day, observed annually on February 13, was established by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) to highlight the vital role of radio in shaping societies.

In a statement on Thursday, Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, emphasised that through informative and educational programming, radio stations can equip communities with the knowledge and tools needed to adapt to climate change and mitigate its effects.

He stressed the importance of collaboration between radio stations, climate experts, and relevant organizations to ensure accurate and reliable information reaches the public.

By featuring interviews with scientists, environmentalists, and policymakers, he said, Nigeria can deepen citizens' understanding of climate challenges and drive sustainable solutions in alignment with President Bola Tinubu's 'Renewed Hope Agenda.'

Idris highlighted that this year's theme, 'Radio and Climate Change', is particularly significant for Nigeria, given the severe environmental and economic consequences of climate change on communities.

He reaffirmed that radio remains a trusted source of information and a crucial



lifeline, especially during crises, reinforcing its role in addressing one of the most pressing global issues of our time.

"In recent years, it has played a crucial role in raising awareness about climate change and its impact on our planet. With its wide reach and accessibility, radio has the power to educate and mobilize individuals towards taking action against climate change.

"At the 29th session of the Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29) in Baku Azerbaijan, President Tinubu highlighted Nigeria's vulnerability to climate change and outlined the nation's strategies to mitigate its impact.

"He also emphasised Nigeria's effort to implement a policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance resilience, and integrate climate solutions into national planning", Idris stated.

He urged the community to seize this moment to reflect on the nation's actions and their impact on climate change.

He emphasised that small adjustments in daily routines—such as minimizing plastic use, conserving energy, and supporting sustainable agriculture—could yield significant long-term benefits.

Highlighting the global nature of climate change, he stressed that radio's role in combating it transcends national boundaries.

He noted that its effects are felt worldwide, making it imperative to collaborate with other nations in seeking solutions and securing a sustainable future for generations to come.

"In conclusion, I congratulate UNESCO on this initiative. Let us use the power of radio to bring about positive change in our communities and combat the harmful effects of climate change. With concerted efforts, we can create a more sustainable and resilient Nigeria. On this occasion of World Radio Day, let us pledge to make a difference and protect our planet for future generations."

# FG imposes moratorium on new polytechnics, monotronics applications

By **Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

**D**r Tunji Alausa, Nigeria's Minister of Education, has approved a one-year moratorium on new applications for polytechnics and monotronics, with immediate effect.

However, health institutions have been exempted from this ban due to challenges with low enrolment rates.

The announcement was made in a statement by Prof. Idris Bugaje, the Executive Secretary of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), on Thursday, February 13, in Kaduna.

The moratorium will pause any new applications for the establishment of polytechnics and monotronics for 12 months, allowing for a review of the existing institutions.



For institutions currently under assessment, they will need to pay specific fees to continue the registration process. Polytechnics awaiting ministerial approval will be required to pay an application fee of N4 million and a processing fee of N2 million per programme of study.

Meanwhile, monotronics must pay an application fee of N2 million and a processing fee of N1 million per programme. Applicants will have 30 days to make these payments, after which their registration process will be terminated if the fees are not paid.

Health institutions, which are excluded from the moratorium, will follow the same fee structure as monotronics for registration.

Prof. Bugaje stated that the goal of this moratorium is to ensure that Nigeria's tertiary Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions are properly populated within their approved capacities, ensuring that institutions do not become overcrowded or operate below capacity.

# 3,907 arms unaccounted for since 2019, not under Egbetokun – Police

By **Friday Omosola**

**T**he Nigeria Police has clarified that 3,907 arms were unaccounted for in its armoury before Kayode Egbetokun assumed office as the Inspector General of Police (IGP).

In a statement, the Force spokesperson Olumuyiwa Adejobi said some of these weapons were taken by hoodlums during episodes of civil unrest.

“The Force wishes to clarify that this report appears to be based on an assessment of a 2019 audit by the Office of the Auditor-General of the Federation (AuGF), likely reflecting records compiled before the current Inspector-General's tenure,” he stated.



According to the report—specifically, Issue 3b, Subsection (iii)—the 3,907 arms were classified as unaccounted for, not missing, as widely speculated.

Adejobi emphasised the difficulties the

police faced during periods of civil unrest, noting that officers were killed, their weapons seized, and police facilities, including armouries, were attacked and looted, leading to losses.

“Nevertheless, extensive efforts have been made to track and recover these arms, with many already returned to the Force's inventory,” he added.

He further noted that when auditors visit police armouries, they may not find all weapons present, as some are issued to officers for extended operational duties.

This, he said, could sometimes lead to misinterpretations of audit reports.



# 2027: Peter Obi remains our presidential candidate – Labour Party

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

The Labour Party (LP) has declared that Peter Obi remain its presidential candidate for the 2027 elections.

According to Abayomi Arabambi, the party's National Publicity Secretary, the choice of Obi is a clear indication of the party's seriousness in taking on the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

"Tinubu is not just going to have it very easy in 2027, we are coming back with that Peter Obi to them so that they will know we are very serious," Arabambi stated during an appearance on Channels Television's 'Politics Today'.

Obi, who was the party's candidate in the 2023 election came second runner-up behind Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples



Democratic Party (PDP) and the eventual winner, Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the APC.

Arabambi also criticized Kenneth Okonkwo's decision to leave the party, calling his exit a relief. He alleged that Okonkwo was working for President Tinubu and the APC, and questioned his

loyalty to the Labour Party.

"And we wish Kenneth Okonkwo well, his resignation is good riddance to bad rubbish. He should not speak about the Labour Party anymore."

The Labour Party has also dismissed claims of a leadership crisis, with Arabambi stating that the party is united and focused on removing the current administration in 2027.

Kenneth Okonkwo, a Nollywood actor-turned-politician was the mouthpiece of the Labour Party presidential campaign during the 2023 elections but the lawyer resigned from the party a few days ago.

# Driver gets 15 strokes of cane for assaulting policeman

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

A 36-year-old driver, Mustapha Aminu is set to receive 15 strokes of the cane as ordered by a Chief Magistrate Court in Kaduna State on Thursday.

Aminu would be receiving the strokes as punishment and a sentence for his conviction after he was found guilty of assaulting a police officer who was on duty.

A resident of Ungwan Sanusi in Kaduna State, Aminu was convicted of hitting Sergeant Adamu Maigari on his head with a log of wood.

Pleading guilty to the charges read against him, Ibrahim Emmanuel, the Magistrate said the punishment



handed to Aminu is aimed at making him fully understand the gravity of his offence.

"This will also serve as a warning to others who may consider committing such crimes. I hereby order a court official to administer 15 strokes of the cane," Emmanuel said in his judgement.

He also warned the convict to desist from assaulting officers of the law and focus on going about his activities as a responsible Nigerian.

Prior to Aminu's sentencing, Inspector Chidi Leo, the prosecutor had told the court that the convict assaulted the police officer at about 2 pm on January 29.

According to Leo, Aminu was driving recklessly when the Maigari stopped him and rather than adhering to traffic rules, he hit the police officer with a log of wood, an offence which he said contravenes Section 237 of the Kaduna State Penal Code, 2017.

# South-west govts plan to beat back ISWAP, others

By Dave Oludare Oso



**G**overnors of the six southwest states rose from a meeting in Lagos, on Thursday, saying that they are ready to counter any attempt by the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) to enter the region, and undermine its security.

To this effect, the governors' forum has resolved to establish a Joint Surveillance and Monitoring Team.

The team will be tasked with coordinating security operations across the region.

This is part of the communique issued at the end of the Forum's meeting held Thursday at the State House in Lagos.

Chairman of the South West Governors Forum, Mr Babajide Sanwo-Olu, addressing the media after a four-hour meeting by the governors, stated that the move is a

direct response to the emerging threats of ISWAP and other criminal groups whose activities are inimical to the peace and stability of the southwest.

Sanwo-Olu, also the governor of Lagos State hosted the meeting at The Lagos House in Ikeja.

The governor said the forum commended the board and management team of Odua Investment Limited for its ongoing efforts in repositioning the investment company.

Sanwoolu added that the forum commended President Bola Tinubu over the ongoing economic reforms that have ensured stable naira and supply of petrol across the country.

He further said the president was commended for establishing the South Western Development

Commission and that the governors agreed that its head office should be located at Ibadan within Cocoa House of Odua Investment Company Limited.

As part of efforts to ensure food security and check inflation, Sanwo-Olu stated that governors said a food inflation joint monitoring team was agreed on curbing food inflation within the region while each state should establish a food logistics hub in their domain.

Other governors present at the meeting include: The governor of Oyo State, Seyi Makinde, and Governors Lucky Aiyedatiwa and Biodun Oyebanji of Ondo and Ekiti respectively.

Governors Dapo Abiodun and Ademola Adeleke of Ogun and Osun states, respectively were also present.



# Ribadu tells Canada 'Go to hell' for denying military chiefs visa

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

The Canadian government has come under severe criticism over its decision to deny visas to Nigeria's Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Christopher Musa and other top military officers, with the National Security Adviser (NSA), Nuhu Ribadu telling the country to 'go to hell'.

Speaking at the maiden annual lecture of the National Association of the Institute for Security Studies in Abuja on Thursday, the National Security Adviser described the visa snub as "disrespectful" and declared that Canada "can go to hell."

His reaction came after Gen Musa narrated how he and some senior military officers were denied entry into Canada for an official engagement.

The CDS explained that the delegation had been invited to an event honouring war veterans but was left in limbo after the embassy denied visas to some of its members.



"Every disappointment is a blessing.

"Yesterday, I was meant to be in Canada for an event to honour our veterans—those injured in battle. We were invited along with our team, but while half of us got visas, the other half was denied. It's very disappointing," Musa said

He described the move as a wake-up call for Nigeria to strengthen its sovereignty.

"This is a reminder that we must stand on our own, stand strong as a nation, and refuse to be taken for granted," he added.

Reacting to the development, Ribadu commended the CDS for publicly addressing the issue, insisting that Nigeria must focus on building its own strength rather than seeking validation from foreign nations.

"Thank you for the courage to say Canada denied you visas. They can go to hell," Ribadu declared.

"Even though it's painful and disrespectful, we are peaceful, we are strong, and I agree with you—it is time to fix our country. This is yet another reason we must work hard to make Nigeria work."



# DSS DG calls for recruitment of first-class graduates to boost security

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Director-General of the Department of State Services (DSS), Mr. Oluwatosin Ajayi, has called for a policy requiring the recruitment of first-class graduates into the intelligence agency to bolster national security.

Ajayi made the appeal while delivering the 2025 Distinguished Personality Lecture at the Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies at the University of Ilorin, Kwara State.

In his lecture titled “The Roles of the DSS in Security, Peacekeeping, and National Integration,” Ajayi emphasised the need for a paradigm shift in recruitment to ensure that only the brightest minds are enlisted in security agencies.

Represented by the DSS Deputy Director, Mr. Patrick Ikenweibe, Ajayi likened the policy to Israel’s selective university admission system, where top academic performers are automatically inducted into national service.

He argued that recruiting first-class graduates into the DSS should be a compulsory national policy.

“Intelligence work requires exceptional intellect to track sophisticated criminal networks. How would a ‘Dundee’ (dullard) keep security in a gang made up of first-class criminals?” he questioned.

Ajayi also stressed that security agencies must be seen as allies rather than adversaries, urging for a shift in public perception, which has often hindered effective intelligence gathering and national integration.



Ikenweibe, who also spoke at the event, highlighted that Nigeria’s security landscape has evolved, with traditional threats now compounded by terrorism, insurgency, cybercrime, and separatist agitations.

He reiterated the DSS’s commitment to tackling these challenges through collaboration with other security agencies and continuous engagement with stakeholders.

In his overview of the DSS mandate, Ikenweibe pointed out that the agency’s role in safeguarding Nigeria’s internal security is defined by the National Security Adviser Act and the SSS Instrument of 1999.

The DSS is tasked with preventing crimes related to national security, such as espionage, subversion, and sabotage, and advising the government on matters of national security.

Meanwhile, in a related development, First Lady Oluremi Tinubu met with a

delegation from the DSS, led by Deputy Director-General Mrs. Afolashade Adekayaoja, at the State House in Abuja.

The visit highlighted the administration’s commitment to promoting women in leadership roles within the security sector.

Tinubu praised the DSS for appointing a woman to such a high-ranking position and encouraged female leaders in the agency to support one another in their duties.

Adekayaoja expressed gratitude for the administration’s support for gender inclusivity and reaffirmed the DSS’s dedication to ensuring national security and stability.

With Ajayi’s push for a policy to recruit the country’s top graduates, the DSS aims to enhance its capacity to address Nigeria’s evolving security challenges and contribute to national peace and integration.

# NEMA receives 148 repatriated Nigerians in Lagos

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Some Nigerians, including women and children stranded, have been repatriated with support of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the Libyan Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM), and the Nigerian consulate.

It was gathered that the migrants were flown into Lagos from Mitiga International Airport in Tripoli on Wednesday, through the Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) flight.

The migrants, a combination of 13 men, 124 women, and 8 children, were brought back to Lagos following an assisted effort to help migrants who are stranded in Libya and facing difficult situations, especially as Libya stands as a transit route to many European countries.

In a statement issued on X, Nigeria's National Emergency Management



Agency (NEMA) said it received the migrants who arrived at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport Cargo at exactly 17.35 hours.

The agency said the migrants arrived on Tuesday aboard a Boeing chartered flight

with registration no. 5A-BAA.

It added, "After the mandatory profiling and biometric exercise, the Returnees were moved to for further reintegration programmes spearheaded by IOM."

# Edo Election Petition: Tribunal to hear final submissions in March

By Friday Omosola

The Edo State Governorship Election Petition Tribunal has set March 3 as the date for parties involved in the petition to present their final written arguments.

This decision follows the All Progressives Congress (APC) closing its case without introducing additional witnesses to support Governor Monday Okpebholo's victory in the September 21, 2024, election.

The tribunal is currently reviewing a petition filed by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and its candidate, Asue Ighodalo, who are contesting the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) declaration of Okpebholo as the election winner.

On Wednesday, the APC had indicated plans to present 28 witnesses to validate



Okpebholo's win.

However, only four were ultimately called to testify.

Three of these witnesses alleged incidents of over-voting but noted that the results from the affected polling units had been annulled.

During Thursday's proceedings, APC's

lead counsel, Ferdinand Orbih (SAN), announced that the party would not be presenting any further witnesses.

He explained that key documents needed for the defense were still in Benin City and had not arrived in time for the hearing.

"After reviewing our case and considering the logistical challenges, we have opted not to proceed with additional witness testimonies," Orbih stated.

"Given the tribunal's time constraints, we are prepared to close the third respondent's case."

With no objections from either the petitioners or respondents, the tribunal closed the APC's defence and adjourned the proceedings to March 3.



# Nigerian Migrant joins IPOB to claim asylum in the UK

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

**A** Nigerian migrant wins UK asylum after joining IPOB, despite a judge admitting her claims were false. Case sparks debate over UK immigration laws and reforms.

A UK Judge Grants Asylum Despite Acknowledging Deception. A Nigerian migrant, who had unsuccessfully sought asylum in the UK eight times, was ultimately granted the right to stay after joining the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a group classified as a terrorist organization in Nigeria but not proscribed in the UK.

The ruling judge, Gemma Loughran, admitted that the 49-year-old woman's political beliefs were not genuine and that her involvement with IPOB was solely to strengthen her asylum claim.

The woman arrived in the UK in 2011 and joined IPOB in 2017. IPOB, a separatist movement, has been linked to violent clashes with Nigerian authorities, leading to its designation as a terrorist organization by the Nigerian government. However, the UK has not classified IPOB as a terrorist entity.

Judge Loughran ruled that, despite her dishonest motives, the woman's IPOB activities meant she had a "well-founded fear of persecution" under human rights laws due to her "imputed political opinion."

UK Immigration System Under Scrutiny



The case is the latest example of migrants using human rights laws to overturn deportation orders or obtain legal residence in the UK.

Other controversial cases exposed by New Daily Prime include:

An Albanian criminal who avoided deportation after claiming his son had an aversion to foreign chicken nuggets.

A Pakistani pedophile, convicted of child sex offenses, who was allowed to remain in the UK as deportation would be "unduly harsh" on his children.

The growing number of such cases has fueled concerns that UK immigration laws are being manipulated.

Starmer stated that Parliament, not judges, should set immigration rules and vowed that Home Secretary Yvette Cooper would work on closing legal loopholes.

Meanwhile, Chris Philp, the Shadow Home Secretary, labeled the Nigerian asylum case as "patently absurd", stating:

"This shows judges are inventing new and comically ludicrous interpretations of vague European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) articles to allow foreign criminals and illegal immigrants to stay in the country."

Philp further argued:

"It is clear to me that a radical overhaul of human rights law is needed to end this abuse by the judiciary, who have taken for themselves what amounts to legislative powers."

Manipulation of Asylum Claims?

The case highlights a growing concern over migrants manipulating asylum claims by adopting new religious or political affiliations.

Continue reading  
from next page

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Similar tactics have included converting to Christianity or falsely claiming persecution due to sexual orientation.

In the Nigerian woman's case, she made eight unsuccessful asylum appeals between 2011 and 2021, using claims under ECHR Article 8 (Right to Family Life) and alleging she was a victim of trafficking. All were rejected.

However, in her ninth appeal, she argued that her IPOB membership and participation in protests made her a target for persecution. She was supported by IPOB's UK-based medical director, who verified her involvement in protests, rallies, and campaigns.

She also claimed that protesters at the Nigerian High Commission were photographed and could be identified via CCTV surveillance.

She further argued that if deported, she faced immediate arrest and possible disappearance, as Nigeria's anti-terror laws permit indefinite detention of IPOB members.

### Judicial Ruling & Legal Implications

Initially, Lower Tribunal Judge Iain Burnett rejected her asylum claim, citing a lack of evidence regarding her protest activities. He found that she had only joined IPOB to fabricate an asylum claim.

However, Upper Tribunal Judge Loughran overturned the ruling, despite agreeing that her IPOB involvement was not a reflection of genuine political beliefs.

Judge Loughran ruled that:

"There is a reasonable likelihood that the Nigerian woman has been identified as an IPOB activist by the country's security services and would be targeted upon her return."

She further cited reports of arbitrary arrests, detentions, and violence against suspected IPOB members, stating:

"It is clear from country background evidence that the security services act arbitrarily and arrest, harm, and detain those it believes may be involved with IPOB without assessing their level of involvement or motivation."

Based on this reasoning, the woman's asylum appeal was granted on the grounds of 'imputed political opinion'.

## 'We don't cast' – MTN apologises to customers over 200% data price hike By Friday Omosola

**M**TN, Nigeria's leading telecom provider, has apologised to its customers after widespread backlash over a sudden surge in data prices.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that an unexpected increase saw the cost of a 15GB weekly data plan jump from N2,000 to N6,000—a staggering 200 per cent hike that left many subscribers frustrated.

The increase led to customers flooding social media with complaints on Wednesday as users expressed their outrage.

In response, MTN, in a statement on its social media on Thursday, acknowledged customers' frustrations and attempted to ease tensions.

"To our 15G digital bundle lovers. You dey vex. We know. We know how



upsetting it must have been to suddenly wake up to a 200% increase on your favourite digital bundle.

"We could share several reasons, and provide explanations, but omo, all that one na story. We don't cast. We get it and admit it. Let's just say na mistake.

MTN

"In this love season, don't stay angry with us. Please forgive and forget. You

matter die and we will never stop showing you how much. Let's continue our relationship. Thank you for your understanding," the statement read.

The increase came after the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) approved a 50% tariff hike in January.

This newspaper learned that, so far, only MTN has raised its prices, but Airtel and Globacom are expected to follow suit.

Meanwhile, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has strongly condemned the implementation of the tariff hike, demanding an immediate reversal.

The NLC urged MTN users to boycott the network and others, warning that it would shut down their operations entirely if the tariffs were not reversed before March 1.



# UN allocates \$5m for flood preparedness in Nigeria

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, Tom Fletcher, has allocated \$5 million from its Central Emergency Fund (CERF) to support flood preparedness efforts in Nigeria.

The announcement was made in a statement issued on Wednesday by the UN's Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria, Mohamed Malick Fall.

The funding aims to help mitigate the impact of anticipated floods, particularly in northern states, where flooding is often linked to food insecurity and disease outbreaks.

The UN emphasized the importance of proactive measures in responding to these risks, highlighting that taking action before crises strike can save lives, protect livelihoods, and reduce the overall cost of humanitarian responses.

The \$5 million allocation is part of a broader strategy that involves Nigerian agencies, including the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet) and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), with support from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Mohamed Malick Fall, the UN's Humanitarian Coordinator for Nigeria, stressed the importance of anticipatory



action in response to predictable shocks like flooding, especially given the global decline in humanitarian funding.

He noted that such an approach is crucial in the current global landscape, where funding for humanitarian action is decreasing.

“Anticipating and acting ahead of crises such as floods saves lives. It also helps to protect people’s livelihoods, which in turn reduces their vulnerability,” Fall said.

“In a global landscape characterised by reducing funds for humanitarian action, this proactive approach is critical as it does not only reduce the worst impacts of emergencies, but it also helps to reduce the overall cost of the humanitarian response.”

The CERF funding complements government-led efforts through the anticipatory action task force, which aims to minimize the impact of floods by preparing in advance.

In addition to the CERF allocation, Nigeria’s 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan has earmarked 5% (\$45 million) of its total budget for anticipatory action.

However, officials have warned that more funds are urgently needed to scale up early action and address the increasing flood risks, with a growing need for sustained preparedness efforts in the face of unpredictable weather patterns and the challenges posed by climate change.

# Hon Natasha obtains JAMB forms for 150 Edo students

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Edo lawmaker Natasha Osawaru launches an education initiative to support students preparing for the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) exams.

Osawaru, who recently made headlines due to her relationship with Nigerian music icon 2Baba, announced that she will sponsor the registration of 150 students for the upcoming JAMB examinations.

The free JAMB registration forms will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis, giving students in Edo State an opportunity to sit for the exam without financial burden. The initiative aims to ease the financial strain on students and families while promoting access to higher education.

**Scholarships for Outstanding Students**  
In addition to covering JAMB registration fees, Osawaru also pledged to award full university scholarships to the five students who achieve the highest JAMB scores. The scholarship program will fully fund their education, ensuring that outstanding students receive the support needed to excel in their academic pursuits.

Osawaru made the announcement in a video message, emphasizing her commitment to education and youth empowerment. “The time has come to push education to a higher level,” she said. “As a politician, I am using my position to offer 150 JAMB registration forms to students in Edo State. It will be on a first-come, first-served basis. The top five students with the highest scores will receive full sponsorship for their

university education.”

Her initiative aligns with her broader vision of investing in education as a means of fostering development in Edo State. By reducing financial barriers, she hopes to encourage students to strive for academic excellence.

## A Growing Public Profile

Osawaru’s scholarship announcement comes amid growing public attention surrounding her personal life. Recently, Nigerian music legend 2Baba publicly acknowledged their relationship and expressed his intention to marry her. The



revelation has sparked widespread discussion, drawing further interest in Osawaru’s political and philanthropic activities.

Despite the media buzz, Natasha remains focused on governance and social impact. Her latest initiative reinforces her dedication to empowering young people and investing in the future of Edo State.

## Encouraging Academic Excellence

As JAMB registration opens, many students struggle to afford the required fees. Natasha’s intervention will provide much-needed relief and motivation. The

promise of scholarships for top performers further incentivizes students to aim for high scores.

Education advocates in the state have applauded her move, calling it a “game-changer” for students from low-income backgrounds. Many believe that such initiatives can bridge the gap between ambition and opportunity, ensuring that talent does not go to waste due to financial constraints.

## How Students Can Apply

Students interested in benefiting from Natasha’s initiative are encouraged to act quickly, as the registration process follows a first-come, first-served approach. Further details on the application process are expected to be released in the coming days through her official channels.

With this program, Osawaru not only cements her influence in politics but also strengthens her reputation as a leader who prioritizes education and youth development. If successfully implemented, her initiative could set a precedent for other politicians and public figures to invest more in education.

As Edo State students gear up for JAMB, Osawaru’s support provides hope for many who aspire to further their education but face financial hurdles. Her promise of scholarships for top scorers sends a clear message: hard work and excellence will be rewarded.



# Lagos moves to translate state laws into Yoruba

By Friday Omosola

The Lagos State government has reaffirmed its commitment to making legal information more accessible by translating state laws into Yoruba.

According to the state government, the initiative aims to bridge the language barrier that prevents many residents from fully understanding their legal rights and responsibilities.

The announcement was made yesterday at the Stakeholders' Meeting organised by the Lagos State Law Reform Commission (LAWRECOM) in collaboration with the Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget.

The meeting, held at the STO Resource Centre, Debt Management Office, Ikeja, focused on the findings of the 2024 People's Perception Survey on translating state laws into Yoruba.

Speaking at the event, LAWRECOM Secretary Oluyemisi Adefoluke Ogunlola, emphasised that Lagos, with a population exceeding 25 million, is predominantly Yoruba-speaking.

She noted that having state laws codified solely in English creates challenges for many residents, particularly those in the informal sector, where Yoruba is the primary language of communication.

“Our legal system has traditionally been in English, making it difficult for many citizens to fully comprehend legal texts. Translating the laws will enhance voluntary compliance, business transparency, and civic engagement,” Ogunlola stated.

She further explained that 82 per cent of Lagosians work in the informal sector, where legal misunderstandings often lead to business disputes and governance



challenges.

By translating laws into Yoruba, Ogunlola believes the government will democratize legal information, improve public awareness, and encourage civic participation.

Also, Adejoke Deborah Olajide, Yoruba Consultant to the Lagos State House of Assembly, highlighted that this initiative is not just about accessibility but also about preserving and modernizing the Yoruba language.

She stressed that incorporating legal terminology into Yoruba would enrich the language, making it relevant in contemporary governance and legal discussions.

“The translation of laws into Yoruba will promote accountability, respect for the rule of law, and empower marginalized groups, such as women, artisans, traders, and the elderly, who predominantly communicate in Yoruba,” she added.

Olajide also pointed to the newly approved National Language Policy, which recognises indigenous languages as essential for effective communication and cultural preservation.

She stressed that ignorance of the law is no excuse, making translation a crucial step in ensuring widespread legal understanding.

Additionally, Bodurin Mendes, Assistant Secretary-General of the Lagos State Community Development Advisory Council, described the initiative as a milestone that will foster grassroots development.

He noted that findings from the 2024 People's Perception Survey revealed strong public support for translating state laws, reinforcing the government's democratic approach to policy-making.

“The Lagos State Government has set a commendable precedent by seeking public opinion rather than imposing the translation of laws,” Mendes stated.

He urged community leaders and stakeholders to intensify efforts in sensitizing the public about the benefits of this initiative.

# I sleep with 12 men daily – 14-yr-old Ogun sex worker

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

In a heart-breaking narration, a 14-year-old survivor of sex trafficking in the Ifo Local Government Area of Ogun State has disclosed that she slept with at least 10 to 12 men daily while in the sex camp.

The teen survivor, who said she hailed from Akwa Ibom State and was trafficked into Ogun State on January 29, 2024, was arrested by men of the Ogun State Amotekun Corps during a raid at the sex trafficking camp in Ifo local government area of the state on Wednesday,

15 other suspected sex workers and their boss identified as Idem Joy were arrested in the raid.

The victims, aged between 12 and 39 were allegedly serving as prostitutes at the Railway Line Hotel, located along the old bank road in Ifo. Some of the Items recovered included a sum of N819,600, various types of drugs, cartons of condoms, energy enhancers, lubricants, and packs of tissue papers, among others.

The Corps Commandant, Brigadier General Alade Adedigba (retd.), while parading the suspects at the command's headquarters in Abeokuta, said 14 of the girls were trafficked from Akwa Ibom, with the others from



Cross River and Delta states.

According to Adedigba, the survivors on questioning disclosed that they were coerced into taking an oath, a traumatic experience that involved being stripped naked and having parts of their pubic hair cut off for alleged ritual purposes to scare them from running away or confessing.

When interrogated, the 14-year-old survivor, who says she is a JSS3 dropout, said before her arrival, she was told that she would serve as a sales girl, but on getting to the state, she found herself in prostitution.

She said, "They did not tell me that

this is what I will be doing; they only told me that I would be a sales girl when I arrive. So I came with my friend, Glory, but she works at another hotel.

"On getting here, I was given some drugs to take before I started the work. She (Idem Joy) cut some hair from my head, saying whenever I run she would use my hair to kill me.

For some she took their pictures and others their blood,"

When asked how much she was paid, she said, "Sometimes I make N20,000 per day depending on the turnout. I sleep with 10 to 12 men a day, they pay N1,000 or N2,000 it depends."



# Legal hurdles stall Ganduje's corruption trial, next hearing set for April **By Friday Omosola**

**A** Kano State High Court has rescheduled the hearing of all pending preliminary objections in the bribery and misappropriation case involving APC National Chairman Abdullahi Ganduje, his wife Hafsat Umar, and six others.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that the Kano State Government levelled an eight-count charge against the defendants, alleging bribery, mismanagement, and the diversion of public funds worth billions of naira.

Others named in the case include Abubakar Bawuro, Umar Abdullahi Umar, Jibrilla Muhammad, Lamash Properties Limited, Safari Textiles Limited, and Lasage General Enterprises Limited.

During Thursday's proceedings, the prosecution counsel, Adeola Adedipe, informed the court of his readiness to move forward, stating that his team had filed a motion on notice to extend the



deadline for regularizing their preliminary objections.

Counsel representing Ganduje, his wife, and Umar, Lydia Oluwakemi-Oyewo, also confirmed their readiness for defence.

However, some defence lawyers requested additional time to complete their filings.

Adekunle Taiye-Falola, representing the

3rd and 7th defendants, sought an extension to respond to further affidavits, while Sunusi Musa, representing the 5th defendant, filed a motion for extra time to submit legal arguments.

Meanwhile, Abubakar Ahmed, counsel for the 6th defendant, indicated his preparedness to proceed, having already filed a preliminary objection.

On the other hand, Ibrahim Aliyu-Nasarawa, representing the 8th defendant, requested more time to finalize his legal response.

After reviewing the submissions, Justice Amina Adamu-Aliyu approved all requests for an extension and adjourned the case.

Justice Adamu-Aliyu further adjourned the case, and it will now be heard on April 15, 2025.

"The matter is adjourned to April 15, 2025, for the hearing of all pending preliminary objections," she ruled.

# AfDB President dismisses 2027 presidential ambition claims **By Friday Omosola**

**A**kinwumi Adesina, President of the African Development Bank (AfDB), has refuted reports linking him to Nigeria's 2027 presidential race.

Recent media speculation suggested Adesina hinted at a possible run during a recent interview.

However, he has categorically denied any such intention.

Addressing the rumours on his X handle on Thursday, Adesina clarified that his remarks had been taken out of context and misrepresented by several Nigerian media outlets.

"A segment of my recent interview on ARISE TV has been both misinterpreted



and misrepresented in several Nigerian media outlets. What I said was, 'I will be available to serve in any capacity, globally, in Africa, anywhere, including my own country.'

"A listen to the substantive and robust interview, which is available online, will show this to be the case. For clarity and

for the record, I did not say that I am running for the office of President of Nigeria," Adesina said.

This was not the first time Adesina, whose tenure as AfDB president will conclude in May 2025, will dismiss any involvement in Nigeria's presidential race.

Before the 2023 elections, he had already shut down similar speculations, issuing a statement to make it clear that he was not in the running.

The statement he issued read partly: "While I am deeply honoured, humbled and grateful for all the incredible goodwill, kindness, and confidence, my current responsibilities at this time do not allow me to accept to be considered.

# UNICEF provides 3m supplements to boost maternal health in Nigeria

By Helen Okechukwu



The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), through the support of the Child Nutrition Fund (CNF), has provided 3 million bottles of Multiple Micronutrient Supplements (MMS) to Nigeria to boost maternal health.

The healthcare products were donated by Kirk Humanitarian.

However, with 12 million pregnancies annually, wider MMS availability is essential.

Nigeria faces a high maternal mortality rate (1,047 deaths per 100,000 live births), with many babies born underweight or

prematurely.

Micronutrient deficiencies in iron, zinc, Vitamin A, and folate significantly contribute to poor maternal and child health, as revealed by the National Food Consumption and Micronutrient Survey (2024).

Cristian Munduate, UNICEF Representative in Nigeria, emphasized MMS's role in reducing maternal mortality and improving child health.

The Nigerian government is making strides by including MMS in the Essential Medicines List and investing in local production.

Coordinating Minister of Health, Professor Mohammed Ali Pate, reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to expanding MMS access.

Spencer Kirk, Founder of Kirk Humanitarian, highlighted the impact of scaling MMS distribution on pregnancy outcomes.

UNICEF, in partnership with global donors like the Gates Foundation and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, continues to support Nigeria's efforts through CNF's 1:1 match fund mechanism, ensuring sustainable access to MMS.



# Marriage is scary, but mine will be unique — Priscilla Ojo

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Priscilla Ojo, daughter of Nollywood actress Iyabo Ojo, has expressed her optimism about her recent marriage to Tanzanian singer Juma Jux.

Speaking at a private gathering with friends and family, she expressed confidence in the bond she shares with her husband.

She emphasized that their strong friendship would serve as a foundation for a lasting and peaceful marriage.

## Defying societal pressure

Despite societal pressures and widespread concerns about marriage, Priscilla remains unwavering in her belief that her relationship will stand the test of time.

She acknowledged the fears many have about commitment but stressed that she and Juma Jux are determined to build a different story—one based on trust, understanding, and faith.

“There are a lot of distractions in life, and sometimes, people tell me to just go with the flow,” she said. “But this journey has turned out to be more than I expected. It is not about social media. My husband and I are about peace.”

## Choosing faith over fear

Priscilla also addressed the common fears surrounding marriage, recognizing that many view it as a challenging and uncertain path. However, she believes that her deep friendship with Juma will set their union apart.

“Marriage can be scary, but I see us as friends first,” she explained. “That makes all the difference. My story will not be like others. This is a journey God has planned, and no one can stop it.”

Her words reflect a firm resolve to embrace marriage on her own terms. She



dismissed external influences and made it clear that she will focus on what truly matters—her relationship and personal happiness.

## A love story that defies expectations

Priscilla and Juma Jux’s love story has captured public attention, with many fans closely following their journey. Their union, which brings together two cultures, has sparked conversations online. While some have questioned their compatibility, Priscilla remains unshaken.

She reiterated that their bond goes beyond the glitz and glamour of social media. “People often get caught up in appearances and public perception,” she said. “But for us, it’s different. We focus on our peace and the love we share. That’s what matters most.”

## Guided by faith and destiny

The young couple’s commitment to each other is evident, and Priscilla’s faith plays a significant role in her outlook. She trusts that their journey together is divinely guided.

“I believe in God’s plan for us,” she said. “When something is meant to be, no force can change it.”

Her statement reflects a deep sense of assurance, reinforcing her belief that their marriage will not be defined by external expectations. Instead, she and Juma are determined to create their own narrative—one filled with love, mutual respect, and companionship.

## A positive outlook on marriage

In a world where high-profile marriages often face intense scrutiny, Priscilla’s unwavering confidence stands out. She is choosing to approach marriage with a positive mindset, focusing on the strength of their bond rather than the doubts of outsiders.

As the couple embarks on this new chapter, fans and well-wishers continue to express their support. Many have praised Priscilla’s mature perspective, noting that her emphasis on friendship and faith could be key to a successful marriage.

While only time will tell how their love story unfolds, one thing is clear—Priscilla Ojo is entering this union with hope, determination, and a belief in the power of love.

# Tuface proposes to Natasha, ending speculations about relationship

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Legendary singer, 2Baba, born Innocent Idibia, has proposed to Edo State House of Assembly member, Natasha Osarawu, according to a viral video seen on Thursday.

In the video, the highly elated musician was seen hugging the lawmaker, while spraying money on her as they both danced before bringing out a ring to put on her finger while friends and well-wishers cheered on.

The development comes just a day after the singer set the social media agog with a video on Instagram confirming his romantic relationship with the Edo State lawmaker.

His confirmation of the relationship with Osarawu followed an earlier announcement of separation



from his wife, Annie Idibia.

While fans kept speculating about 2baba's relationship with the Edo Lawmaker, the singer appeared at the Edo State House of Assembly on Monday.

However, in the video he posted early Wednesday morning, 2baba set the record straight by stating his intention to marry Osarawu.

He also stated that his relationship with Osarawu has nothing to do with the marital tension between him and Annie.



He said: "I said what I said. All of us will be alright... Honourable Natasha, I see she has been dragged, she has been called all sorts of names. She has been labelled as a home breaker. She is a young, brilliant and amazing woman.

"She has nothing to do with what's happening between me and Annie. But I see everybody trying to allegedly want to rope her into everything. Yes, I love her. She is amazing, she is cool, I want to marry her."



# I never considered leaving my marriage – Omoni Oboli

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Actress and filmmaker Omoni Oboli, along with her husband, Nnamdi Oboli, recently shared personal insights into their 23-year marriage.

Speaking on a new episode of Pulse Fun Facts, the couple reflected on their relationship, discussing both the struggles they faced and the lessons they learned.

## Early challenges in marriage

Omoni and Nnamdi, who exchanged vows on October 28, 2000, admitted that their marriage was not always smooth. In the early years, frequent arguments tested their patience. The reason? They never dated before getting married.

“When we first got married, we quarreled every single day. We argued a lot—so much,” Omoni revealed. She explained that because they skipped the dating phase, they had to learn about each other while already married. “That first month was all about getting to know each other,” she added.

Doubts about marrying young  
Despite the challenges, Omoni



never considered walking away from her marriage. However, she did question whether she had married too young.

“I’ve had moments where I thought, ‘Why did I get married so early?’ But never ‘I’m done.’ Ever,” she said firmly.

Her honesty sheds light on the doubts many young couples face. Still, her commitment to the marriage never wavered.

## Lessons on commitment

Nnamdi also shared his thoughts on what makes a marriage work. He stressed that marriage is not something that just happens—it requires active effort from both partners.

“Marriage is a responsibility. You don’t go into it expecting it

to just happen to you,” he explained. “You are not a third party in your own marriage. It’s between two people, and you have to make it work.”

His advice serves as a reminder that lasting relationships require dedication, understanding, and effort from both sides.

## A love that endures

After more than two decades together, the Obolis have built a strong foundation. Their experiences show that marriage is not always perfect, but with communication, patience, and commitment, couples can overcome challenges.

Their story offers a valuable lesson: love grows when both partners put in the work.

# Toyin Abraham vows unwavering loyalty and support to Iyabo Ojo

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Renowned actress and filmmaker Toyin Abraham has penned an emotional tribute to her senior colleague, Iyabo Ojo, applauding her resilience, kindness, and unwavering strength.

In a touching Instagram post, Toyin shared a video from the engagement ceremony of Iyabo's daughter, Priscilla. She expressed her deep joy at witnessing Iyabo's happiness on such a special occasion.

Acknowledging Iyabo's struggles and dedication

Toyin highlighted Iyabo's struggles, acknowledging the challenges she has faced over the years. She praised her dedication as a mother, emphasizing that Iyabo raised her children with strong values and the fear of God. According to Toyin, Iyabo's sacrifices and determination have shaped her into an exceptional woman and mother.

Beyond her personal life, Iyabo has been a vocal advocate for others, often using her platform to support those in need.

Defending Iyabo against online criticism  
Toyin defended Iyabo against frequent online criticism, stating that people attack her not because of any wrongdoing but because she always stands up for others. She noted that Iyabo's willingness to fight for justice and ensure the happiness of those around her has sometimes made her a target.

Despite the negativity, Toyin reaffirmed her loyalty to Iyabo, promising to always stand by her side. She described Iyabo as a woman with a beautiful soul who deserves all the happiness and blessings coming her way.

A heartfelt message of love and support  
In her tribute, Toyin wrote:



“Aunty Iyabo @iyaboojofespris, I just want to speak from my heart. I see your struggles. I see your pain. I know how you raised your children with strong values and the fear of God. People often criticize you on social media, not because of anything you have done, but because you always fight for others. You always want everyone around you to be happy—even those you don't know.

Today, I am overjoyed to witness your years of hard work and sacrifice being rewarded. Seeing Priscilla get engaged to a wonderful family fills my heart with happiness. You deserve this joy.

Aunty Iyabo, I give you my word—I will always stand by you. No matter what happens, I will be there for you. Even if you walk into deep waters, trust me, I will follow you. I may not know how to swim, but I won't hesitate. I love you so much, and I am grateful to share this moment with you.

You are a wonderful woman with a pure heart. You deserve every blessing God has given you. I loved you yesterday, I love you today, and I will love you forever. Aunty mi @iyaboojofespris.”

Fans celebrate Iyabo and Toyin's friendship

The tribute resonated with fans, who flooded the comment section with messages of love and support. Many praised Toyin for openly appreciating Iyabo's kindness and strength, while others celebrated Iyabo for being an inspiration to many.

Iyabo Ojo, a respected actress and entrepreneur, has built a reputation for standing up against injustice and supporting her colleagues in the entertainment industry. Despite facing numerous challenges, she remains a symbol of resilience and courage. Her dedication to her children and her career has earned her admiration from fans and colleagues alike.

A joyous milestone for Iyabo's family  
Priscilla's engagement marks a joyous milestone for Iyabo and her family. The ceremony, which brought together loved ones and well-wishers, was filled with love, laughter, and heartfelt moments. For Iyabo, this moment signifies not only a celebration of love but also a testament to her hard work as a mother.



# Morayo Afolabi-Brown criticises 2Baba, calls for justice

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**T**V host Morayo Afolabi-Brown weighs in on the controversy over 2Baba's split from Annie Idibia and his new relationship with Edo lawmaker Natasha Osawaru.

Speaking on a recent episode of *Your View*, Brown did not hide her disappointment. She strongly criticized 2Baba's handling of the situation and questioned his treatment of Annie.

"2Baba must take responsibility" – Brown

Brown accused the musician of leading Annie on for years, only to suddenly move on with another woman. She argued that 2Baba owed Annie—and even the public—an explanation for his actions.

"I don't think 2Baba should walk away without being held accountable for what he has done," Brown said. "He has caused serious emotional damage to this young woman. I believe he misled her. Maybe he stayed in the marriage because of societal pressure. But if that's the case, he should tell us the truth. The public was there when they got married, so he should explain—at what point did he decide he was done with Annie? When did he fall out of love with her? What gave him the audacity to walk away?"

## Public reactions

Brown's comments have added fuel to an already heated debate. Many fans have taken to social media to express their views. While some defend the singer's right to move on, others accuse him of lacking commitment and respect for his marriage.



2Baba and Annie Idibia's relationship has been in the public eye for years. Despite facing several ups and downs, they were considered one of Nigeria's most admired celebrity couples. However, rumors of trouble in their marriage had been circulating for a while. The confirmation of his new romance with Natasha Osawaru—and his reported proposal—has intensified the backlash.

Critics say 2Baba acted too fast. Many believe that 2Baba's quick transition into a new relationship raises questions about whether he had emotionally checked out of his marriage long before making it public. Some argue that his actions show a disregard for the vows he made to Annie.

Others feel that celebrities who build a public image around their marriages should be more transparent when those relationships end. They insist that 2Baba cannot simply walk away without addressing the situation, especially considering Annie's emotional investment in the marriage.

Supporters defend 2Baba's right to move on

On the other hand, some of 2Baba's

supporters argue that he has a right to pursue happiness. They believe relationships do not always last forever and that he should not be judged for starting a new chapter in his life. Some have also pointed out that the public does not know all the details of what went wrong in his marriage.

Annie Idibia remains silent amid controversy

As the discussions continue, neither 2Baba nor Annie has made a detailed public statement about their separation. While 2Baba has confirmed his relationship with Osawaru, he has not responded to the backlash. Annie, on the other hand, has remained mostly silent, leaving fans to speculate about her thoughts and emotions.

What's next for 2Baba?

With emotions running high, it remains to be seen whether 2Baba will address the concerns raised by Brown and others or if the controversy will gradually fade. For now, his love life continues to be a trending topic, with opinions sharply divided over whether he acted irresponsibly or is simply moving on.

# Popular comedian, Bovi loses father

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nigerian comedian and actor Bovi Ugboma has announced the passing of his father, Dr. Edward Sagini Ugboma, mourning the loss of his beloved father.

The comedian shared the heartbreaking news on Thursday, February 13, 2025, via his social media pages. In an emotional statement, he revealed that his father passed away peacefully.

“We, the Ugboma family, wish to announce the peaceful passing of our father, grandfather, and uncle, Dr. Edward Sagini Ugboma (PhD), on this day, February 13, 2025,” he wrote.

A life well-lived

The late Dr. Ugboma is survived by his children—Judy, Edna, Bovi, Zino, Tano, Tome, and Jiji—along with many grandchildren and other loving relatives.

Though he did not share further details about his father’s life, Dr. Ugboma was known to be a respected figure in his community. Many believe he played a significant role in shaping his son’s journey to success.

Outpouring of support



Bovi expressed gratitude for the love and condolences pouring in from friends, fans, and well-wishers.

“We are grateful for all the calls and messages during this period of mourning and gratitude. Funeral rites will be announced soon,” he added.

Following the announcement, his social media pages were flooded with messages of support. Fans, colleagues, and celebrities shared their condolences, praising Dr. Ugboma’s legacy and offering comfort to the family.

Bovi’s close bond with his father Despite his comedic persona, Bovi has always been open about his deep respect for his father. In past interviews, he credited his upbringing for teaching him discipline, resilience, and the

importance of family.

His father’s passing marks a significant loss, but Bovi and his family have found solace in the love and support of their community.

Funeral arrangements to be announced

As the Ugboma family prepares for the final farewell, many are eager to pay their respects. Funeral arrangements will be communicated in due time.

The entertainment industry and fans stand by Bovi, honoring his father’s memory and legacy. Though he has yet to make further statements, many expect him to share more in the coming days.

For now, the world joins him in mourning a beloved father, grandfather, and family man.



# Damola Olatunji condemns reputation wreckers

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**N**ollywood actor and producer Damola Olatunji has strongly responded to those spreading false news about him, urging the public to disregard misleading reports.

In a heated Instagram post, he condemned the spread of defamatory stories and invoked harsh consequences on those responsible.

Olatunji, known for his roles in Yoruba cinema, made it clear that he would no longer remain silent. He expressed frustration over continuous misinformation and warned that legal action might follow.

## A strong warning

The actor did not hold back in his response. He directly addressed those tarnishing his reputation, saying their actions would lead to severe consequences. “Enough is enough. Whoever is behind spreading defamatory news about me will die an untimely death. Iku gbona lo ma ku,” he wrote, using Yoruba to emphasize his anger.

He went further to state that he had endured false reports for too long. “I have been quiet enough, and this time, it shall never be well with you. I am unapologetic about this. Some individuals need to face incarceration,” he added.

## Frustration over misinformation

Olatunji’s outburst reflects a growing problem in the entertainment industry—false reports damaging public figures’ reputations. Many celebrities have spoken out about fake news and cyberbullying, urging the media and social media users to verify information before sharing.

For Olatunji, this issue has reached a breaking point. His post suggests he is ready to take action against those



responsible, possibly through legal means.

## Legal consequences for defamation

Defamation laws in Nigeria protect individuals from false accusations that harm their reputation. If Olatunji decides to take legal steps, he could seek justice through the courts. In recent years, several celebrities have sued individuals or media outlets for spreading falsehoods.

This case raises questions about accountability. While freedom of speech is important, spreading false information can cause irreparable harm. Many public figures are now advocating for stricter measures to combat fake news.

## Reactions from fans and colleagues

Following his post, social media users had mixed reactions. Some supported Olatunji, agreeing that false news can destroy careers and personal lives. Others suggested he should handle the situation more calmly, possibly through legal channels instead of emotional outbursts.

Some fellow actors and industry insiders have also weighed in. While they understand his frustration, many urge caution in dealing with such matters publicly. Legal experts advise that instead of threats, individuals should

gather evidence and take formal action.

## The battle against fake news

Fake news remains a persistent issue in the digital age. Celebrities, politicians, and business figures often fall victim to false stories, which can spread quickly on social media. While some fake news is harmless gossip, others can lead to serious consequences, including reputational damage and legal trouble.

Olatunji’s response highlights the emotional toll such stories take on individuals. His reaction may be strong, but it reflects a deeper issue—many public figures feel helpless against the spread of misinformation.

## What comes next?

It remains to be seen if Olatunji will take legal action against those spreading false news about him. His post serves as a warning to bloggers, journalists, and social media users who engage in defamation. If he follows through with legal steps, it could set a precedent for others in the industry facing similar issues.

For now, his message is clear: he will no longer tolerate defamatory reports, and those responsible should prepare for the consequences. Whether through legal action or public outcry, he intends to fight back.

# Phone addiction affects relationships – IK Ogbonna

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**N**igerian actor IK Ogbonna warns that phone addiction is harming relationships, stressing that excessive screen time weakens real connections and intimacy.

He expressed concern that excessive phone use is damaging human connections, leading to emotional and social disconnection.

Ogbonna took to Instagram to share his thoughts on how smartphones are affecting interactions. He criticized the trend of people being physically present in social gatherings but mentally absent due to constant scrolling. According to him, this habit is weakening friendships, straining romantic relationships, and even affecting work productivity.

## The silent relationship killer

The actor highlighted how mobile devices have become a major distraction in daily interactions. He pointed out that people have normalized being together yet emotionally distant. Instead of engaging in meaningful conversations, individuals often find themselves glued to their screens.

“We have normalized being present but absent at hangouts, parties, and even in relationships. One person talks, the other scrolls,” Ogbonna wrote.

He emphasized that once someone picks up their phone during a conversation, they immediately lose focus on the moment. Their mind splits between two places, causing their relationships to suffer.

“The second you pick the phone, you miss the moment. Your mind is in two



places, but it’s your connection that suffers,” he added.

## A call for mindful phone use

Ogbonna urged people to be more conscious of their phone habits. He encouraged them to set aside their devices and focus on real-life interactions. According to him, making the choice to prioritize human connection over digital distractions can help strengthen relationships.

“Friendships are failing. Relationships are dying. Work is losing focus. Choose connection over distractions. Drop the phones and be present,” he advised.

## The bigger picture

His message resonates with a growing concern worldwide. Studies have shown that excessive phone use can reduce the quality of conversations, lower empathy, and create emotional distance. Many couples and friends struggle with “phubbing”—the act of ignoring someone in favor of a phone. This behavior can lead to frustration, misunderstandings, and even breakups.

Workplaces are also feeling the impact. Constant phone notifications and social media distractions affect productivity and focus. Employees often find it hard to complete tasks efficiently when they frequently check their phones.

## Finding a balance

While smartphones have become essential in daily life, experts suggest setting boundaries. Simple habits like putting phones away during meals, turning off notifications during conversations, and dedicating screen-free time can improve relationships.

Ogbonna’s message serves as a reminder to be present. In a world where technology dominates, human connections should not take a backseat. His call to action encourages people to drop their devices and fully engage in the present moment.

As society continues to rely on technology, the challenge remains: Can we strike a balance between digital convenience and meaningful human interaction?



# Edo lawmaker, Natasha reportedly pregnant for 2Baba

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**R**enowned singer, Innocent '2Baba' Idibia and his new lover, Honorable Natasha Osawaru are allegedly expecting their first child.

This was made known by controversial journalist, Stella Dimoko Korkus in a post via Instagram on Wednesday, February 12th.

According to the blogger, 2Baba and Natasha are in love and about to start a family.

The journalist revealed that Natasha comes from the influential and popular Igbinedion family of Benin Kingdom in Edo State.

The post reads, "Tuface Idibia, the singer you can't stop talking about (at the moment) Honorable Natasha Irobosa Igbinedion of the famous Igbinedion family of Benin Kingdom. They are in love and about to start a family. They are pregnant with their first child



and the singer confessed in a video early Tuesday February 12, 2025 morning that he loves her and wants to marry her.

"Tuface is estranged from his wife Annie and announced on January 27, 2025 that they have been separated for a while and are headed for divorce."

Natasha is a lawmaker at the Edo State House of Assembly.

The 'African Queen' crooner disclosed that he loves Natasha, and would like to marry her via a video on his Instagram page.

He also added that his new lover, Natasha has nothing to do with him and Annie breaking up.

In a follow-up post, the former Plantation Boys band member shared a photo of Natasha as he urged Nigerians to help beg his new partner to marry him. He went on to describe her as his world.

Note that 2Baba, on January 26th, 2025, confirms to all and sundry that his 13-year marriage with his wife Annie Idibia has come to an end.

# Appeal Court upholds R. Kelly's 30-year sex trafficking sentence

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

A federal appeals court in Manhattan has upheld R. Kelly's 30-year prison sentence, rejecting his appeal and reaffirming his convictions for sex crimes.

The court also upheld his convictions for racketeering and sex trafficking, rejecting his legal team's efforts to overturn them.

The ruling marks another legal defeat for the disgraced R&B singer, who was first convicted in 2021 on charges of racketeering and sex trafficking. In 2022, he received an additional 20-year sentence in Chicago for child sex crimes, including producing child sexual abuse material.

## Judges reject Kelly's defense

On Wednesday, February 12, 2025, the appeals court ruled that Kelly, now 58, used his celebrity status to manipulate and sexually exploit underage girls and young women.

A three-judge panel dismissed his argument that prosecutors had failed to prove he orchestrated a criminal scheme to recruit victims for sex.

The court's decision emphasized the systematic nature of Kelly's actions. "Enabled by a network of managers, assistants, and other staff for over 25 years, Kelly used his fame to lure young women and girls into his control," the judges stated.

They noted that evidence at trial showed he isolated his victims from their families and friends, imposed strict rules on their lives, and subjected them to physical, sexual, and verbal abuse.

## Kelly's lawyer plans supreme court appeal

Kelly's legal team, led by attorney Jennifer Bonjean, responded swiftly to the decision. In a statement, Bonjean said she intends to take the case to the U.S.



## Supreme Court.

The ruling cements Kelly's status as one of the most high-profile figures convicted in the wake of the #MeToo movement. His sentencing followed years of allegations, investigations, and public outcry.

From superstar to convicted criminal Kelly, once a best-selling artist with millions of fans worldwide, fell from grace as survivors came forward with harrowing testimonies of abuse. The allegations gained momentum after the 2019 documentary *Surviving R. Kelly*, which exposed his pattern of predatory behavior.

During his trial, prosecutors detailed how Kelly maintained control over his victims through intimidation and coercion. Witnesses described a disturbing system in which he dictated every aspect of their lives, from what they wore to when they could eat or use the bathroom.

## Survivors applaud the ruling

The court's decision sends a strong message about accountability in the entertainment industry. Advocates for survivors praised the ruling, calling it a victory for those who had the courage to

Despite the legal setbacks, Kelly maintains his innocence. His legal team argues that his conviction was based on flawed evidence and an unfair trial. However, with multiple convictions across different jurisdictions, his chances of overturning his sentence remain slim.

## What's next for R. Kelly?

Kelly is currently serving his time in federal prison. Even if his latest appeal to the Supreme Court moves forward, legal experts say it is unlikely to succeed. His convictions are based on extensive evidence, including testimonies from numerous victims, former employees, and other witnesses.

As the case progresses, survivors and advocacy groups continue to call for justice beyond Kelly's conviction. Many argue that those who enabled his abuse should also be held accountable.

For now, R. Kelly remains behind bars, serving a sentence that reflects the severity of his crimes. With the latest ruling, his legal battle continues, but the path to freedom appears increasingly narrow.



# The night I lost everything—the love I never got back

By **Fatimah Idera**

“By 400 level, still single, I gave up. No one else had ever loved me like Adewale did.” – The pain of waiting for a love that never returned.

It was late 2018, and the year was wrapping up when I received the best news of my life—I had finally gained admission into my dream university! Excited beyond words, I packed my bags and left Lagos for Ondo, eager to start this new chapter.

Determined to be a serious student and make my parents proud, I embraced the life of night reading at Intercontinental Hall, a lecture hall that always seemed to call my name. One fateful night, while engrossed in my books, a tall, fine-looking guy named Adewale (not his real name) approached me in the dimly lit hall.

“Can we read together?” he asked, his voice smooth.

At first, I hesitated. Who randomly asks to read together? But when he pleaded that he couldn’t concentrate alone, I finally gave in. That night, a spark ignited—though I acted like I didn’t notice.

Adewale had this effortless charm. I liked him instantly, but of course, I had to keep up my “hard girl” reputation. We soon became reading buddies, meeting every night, discussing everything from schoolwork to family and life, all while munching on snacks.

Then came the night that changed everything. I didn’t show up at Intercontinental Hall, and Adewale noticed. He called.

“Why are you not here?”

My weak, barely-there voice must have alarmed him because five minutes later, my phone rang again.

“Come pick me up at Chicken Rep Junction,” he said.



Confused but curious, I dragged my sick self there with my friend Lydia. It was late, and Adewale insisted on walking us home.

The real shocker came after he left. Sitting on my table was a nylon bag filled with Milo, milk, snacks, chocolates, drinks, and—wait for it—medicine. I nearly screamed. Imagine being a 100-level student and having a whole graduate, doing his Master’s, pampering you like a baby.

That night, despite my fever, I smiled. Adewale had spent the evening with me, making me laugh, teasing me about my dimples, and basically turning my sickbed into a comedy show. By 10 p.m., it was time for him to go. Lydia walked him out while I stayed behind, unboxing my surprise package like a kid on Christmas morning.

When I recovered, we resumed our late-night reading sessions, except now, we had a new routine—studying under the tree in front of the hall. We would read, quiz each other, and “bribe” our brains with hugs after a job well done.

Then came my matriculation day.

Dressed in my finest, I stepped onto campus, ready to shine. My phone rang—it was Adewale. Within

minutes, he found me in the crowd of freshers struggling to take pictures. Leaning in, he whispered words that sent my heart somersaulting:

“My fantasy, Omo Alhaji Idera, you look stunning. I love you.”

I froze.

My brain? Blank.

My friends? Staring, waiting for my reaction.

I panicked, smiled awkwardly, and quickly changed the subject. Hard girl, remember?

The celebration continued, and somehow, I ended up visiting three different eateries, eating like my life depended on it. The result? A bloated tummy in all my matriculation pictures. Everyone thought I was pregnant.

But life moved on, and so did our bond. Adewale continued spoiling me, waking me up with sweet messages, sending love poems, and taking me on dates. He made his feelings clear, but I played the long game, making him wait three months before finally saying yes.

Our relationship flourished until he completed his Master’s and moved to Lagos. I felt uneasy, but we promised to make it work—video calls, texts, and love notes kept us connected. He chased his clothing business, and I found solace in writing.

Then, disaster struck.

# EU leaders shocked by Trump's private talks with Putin

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

Trump's Ukraine plan may cost the EU \$3 trillion. His secret talks with Putin shock EU leaders, fueling NATO tensions and raising concerns over U.S. support.

The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022, when Russia launched a full-scale invasion, continues to escalate as geopolitical tensions rise. Russia has long opposed NATO's eastward expansion, perceiving it as a direct threat to its national security.

U.S. President Donald Trump is now pressuring European Union (EU) leaders to take the lead in ensuring peace in Ukraine. However, according to Bloomberg, his demands could stretch EU resources and financial capabilities to their limits.

Unnotified Talks with Putin Shock EU Allies

On Wednesday, Trump reportedly held telephone talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, a move that stunned European allies, who were not informed of the discussions.

According to two senior European officials, the call was unexpected and raised concerns over Trump's intentions. Another European official labelled the call a "sell-out," suggesting that the U.S. was conceding to Putin's demands before formal negotiations even began.

A top EU defence official warned that



Russia currently holds a significant manpower advantage over Europe and produces military equipment at a faster rate than the needs of the Ukrainian army on the front lines.

Another concern among EU leaders is that Trump's team lacks experience in negotiating with Russia, while most of Putin's inner circle consists of former intelligence officers with decades of experience dealing with U.S. and Ukrainian officials.

"For all of Trump's confidence, the path to a deal remains highly uncertain," Bloomberg notes. "Putin has shown no willingness to compromise on his longstanding demands, and his goal of controlling Ukraine appears unchanged."

EU Defense Spending to Counter Russian Aggression

According to Bloomberg Economics, European leaders will likely try to persuade Trump to maintain U.S.

support for Kyiv until the EU can strengthen its own defence capabilities.

However, if the U.S. refuses to back NATO efforts to counter a potential Russian attack, Putin would achieve his goal of dividing the U.S. and its European allies.

Trump has frequently accused European nations of not contributing enough to Ukraine's defence, stating that America cannot continue financing Ukraine at Europe's expense. He has also criticized NATO members, particularly Germany and France, for failing to meet their defence spending obligations.

Trump has long argued that the U.S. is disproportionately funding NATO, while several European nations fall short of the 2% GDP military spending requirement.

Continue reading  
on next page



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The Cost of Rebuilding Ukraine's Military.

Bloomberg analysts estimate that rebuilding Ukraine's military could cost around \$175 billion over 10 years, depending on the state of its armed forces and the territory it needs to defend.

Recent discussions at NATO headquarters in Brussels indicate that the majority of EU defence funding will go toward:

- ✓ Expanding military capabilities of EU members
- ✓ Increasing the total defence budget to 3.5% of GDP
- ✓ Strengthening artillery stockpiles, air defence systems, and missile infrastructure
- ✓ Enhancing EU military readiness for rapid deployment
- ✓ Growing Europe's defence industry to boost domestic arms production

Bloomberg economists estimate that if European defence expansion is financed by debt, it would increase borrowing needs by \$2.7 trillion for the five largest European NATO members over the next decade.

In total, Europe's military buildup and continued support for Ukraine could cost EU nations an additional \$3.1 trillion over the next 10 years.

### Trump's Position on Ukraine

Trump has expressed scepticism over Ukraine's ability to regain the territories seized by Russia since 2014, stating that a return to pre-war borders is unlikely.

He also believes Ukraine's NATO membership is impractical, though he has promised continued assistance—albeit under “safer” terms.

Instead, Trump hopes to negotiate a rapid settlement to the conflict and announced plans for a U.S.-Russia partnership agreement.

U.S. Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth has reinforced that European allies should take primary responsibility for defending Ukraine.

“Protecting European security should be the primary duty of European NATO members,” Hegseth stated. “Future military

and non-military assistance to Ukraine should come predominantly from Europe.”

### Putin's Peace Talks Proposal

On February 12, 2025, Trump and Putin spoke by phone, during which Putin suggested a long-term peace settlement for Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov stated: “President Putin highlighted the need to address the root causes of the conflict and agreed with Trump that a long-term solution could be found through peace talks.”

In addition, Putin invited Trump to visit Moscow, saying that Russia was “ready to welcome U.S. officials” for further negotiations.

Peskov added: “This invitation is also extended in the context of seeking a diplomatic resolution to the Ukraine conflict.”

Putin and Trump reportedly agreed to continue personal contact, including possible face-to-face meetings.

# Nissan, Honda end \$60bn merger talks

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

**B**oth Japanese carmakers say they will continue to cooperate on electric vehicle technology

Japan's Nissan and Honda have said that their boards have voted to end talks over a merger that would have created a \$60bn (£48bn) auto group, but added that both companies would continue to cooperate in electric vehicles.

A merger would have spawned the world's fourth-biggest carmaker by vehicle sales after Toyota, Volkswagen and Hyundai.

Nissan, Japan's third-largest automaker, backed out of the talks with its larger rival Honda after negotiations were complicated by growing differences, including Honda proposing that Nissan become a subsidiary, Reuters previously reported.

The automakers, and junior partner Mitsubishi Motors, had announced they would consider the merger late last year. Mitsubishi was unlikely to participate, reports said.

"Going forward, the three companies will collaborate within the framework of a strategic partnership aimed at the era of intelligence and electrified vehicles," the trio said in a statement.



The key China market and the car industry in general have been upended by the rapid rise of Chinese electric vehicle (EV) makers such as BYD. Nissan and Honda, like other carmakers, are facing the prospect of tariffs in the US, another major market.

Nissan is pushing ahead with a restructuring plan, announced in November, that includes cutting 9,000 jobs and reducing global capacity by 20%. It has yet to disclose details such as which locations will be affected.

The announcement will cause uncertainty for the company's 130,000-strong workforce. However, it is thought the UK factory in Sunderland is unlikely to be affected.

Before announcing the merger discussions in December, Nissan and Honda had been holding separate talks on a technology collaboration, which they could outline the scope of later on

Thursday.

Nissan is now open to working with new partners, with Taiwan's Foxconn seen as one candidate, Reuters reported last week.

The Foxconn chair, Young Liu, said on Wednesday that it would consider taking a stake in Nissan but that its main aim was cooperation. Foxconn produces iPhones in China for Apple.

Nissan has been hit harder than others by the EV shift, having never fully recovered from years of crisis sparked by the 2018 removal and arrest of its former chair Carlos Ghosn.

The company's market capitalisation is now nearly five times smaller than that of Honda, which is about 7.5tn yen (£39bn). A decade ago, the pair were both worth about 4.6tn yen.



# Trump, Musk launch mass layoffs at several US federal agencies

By Dave Oludare Oso

Termination notices sent to Department of Education and CFPB as Musk pushes to 'delete entire agencies'

Mass layoffs have begun at several US agencies as Donald Trump and Elon Musk launch an unprecedented, large-scale plan to slash the federal workforce with the stated goal of cutting costs and boosting efficiency.

Termination notices were sent to employees at the Department of Education, the Small Business Administration (SBA), the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), and the General Services Administration (GSA), Reuters first reported on Thursday.

"The Agency finds that you are not fit for continued employment because your ability, knowledge and skills do not fit the current needs, and your performance has not been adequate to justify further employment with the Agency," according to letters sent to at least 45 probationary employees at the SBA.

Similar notices were sent to about 100 recent hires at the GSA on Wednesday and 160 employees at the education department, Reuters reported.

'Deleting entire agencies'

The latest round of layoffs came as Musk said on Thursday that the US should "delete entire agencies" from the federal government as a part of his extraordinary strategy under the Trump administration.

Musk made the latest suggestion on a video call to the World Governments Summit in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in response to a question about what changes he planned to execute under Donald Trump's direction.

"I think we do need to delete entire agencies, as opposed to leave part of them behind," said Musk, adding: "If you don't remove the roots of the weed, then it's easy for the weed to grow back. But if you remove the roots of the weed, it doesn't stop



weeds from ever going back, but it makes it harder."

Musk's appearance at the summit comes as his so-called "department of government efficiency" (DOGE) has implemented widespread cuts across the federal government, firing people and demanding resignations and layoffs.

Since 20 January, when Trump was inaugurated as the 47th president, Musk and the controversial agency have swiftly gutted several US agencies, including the US Agency for International Development (USAid). The agency has carried out humanitarian and development projects abroad to save lives and also to exert "soft power", since the agency was created by the Kennedy administration.

On Tuesday, Musk slashed nearly \$1bn in US Department of Education contracts, in effect shutting down an independent research arm meant to gather data on student achievement.

Large-scale layoffs underway

Federal employees are also preparing for large-scale layoffs as Trump and Musk promise to reduce workforces.

So far, Musk has rolled out a deferred resignation plan, the "Fork in the Road" programme, under which employees who

agreed to stop working soon would be paid through 30 September, although there is uncertainty about the validity of the payment offer.

After several legal challenges, a US district judge in Boston, George O'Toole Jr, ruled on Wednesday that the buyout offers could proceed. The programme was previously halted in advance of its 6 February deadline after unions representing employees sued. But O'Toole determined that the unions did not have legal standing to challenge the resignation offers. A new deadline for staff to sign up is awaited, amid reports that not as many are signing up as Musk and Trump want, risking more compulsory layoffs.

The White House press secretary, Karoline Leavitt, celebrated O'Toole's ruling, telling the Associated Press: "This goes to show that 'lawfare' will not ultimately prevail over the will of 77 million Americans who supported President Trump and his priorities."

Battle between the executive and judicial branches?

Such a statement highlights the battle between the executive branch and the co-equal judicial branch, with the White House pushing back against judges and uncertainty about its willingness to comply with rulings, even up to the US supreme court, in what many experts say is precipitating a constitutional crisis.

# Ukraine fought hard, but there is now no chance of them taking back their country

By By Richard Kemp

Europe must admit to itself that it was too weak to come to Ukraine's aid alone

The chances of Ukraine pushing Russia back out of its territory is now zero. If that were ever possible it would have required far greater support from the US and Europe much earlier in the war.

Instead a self-detering West, led by the vacillating former President Joe Biden, failed to provide Kyiv with sufficient arms or the freedom to use them to greatest effect. That was only too obvious when Ukraine launched its failed counteroffensive in 2023. The American defence industry could have generated a lot more munitions, but a sleep-walking Europe, which had lulled itself into believing it had seen the end of war, pretty much exhausted its supplies and lacked the political will to rapidly expand its industrial capacity. Terrified of the economic harm that a proper sanctions regime could also have inflicted on itself, the West's efforts to damage Russia financially were only ever half-hearted at best.

Meanwhile Ukraine, fighting bravely and hard, while dramatically increasing its own armaments industry, has severely depleted its own manpower resources with heavy casualties leading to a critical shortage of troops. Only now, under US pressure, is Zelensky planning to enlist 18-24 year olds, and even that will be on a voluntary basis.

In this dire situation about the only way to avoid a never-ending war would be to get American and European boots on the ground to fight the Russians. Self-evidently that is not going to happen. Therefore President Zelensky has been contemplating the prospect of temporarily ceding occupied Ukrainian land to Russia as the price he must pay to end the current fighting in which Putin's forces are slowly but steadily gaining ground. Polling shows around 50 per cent of Ukrainians are currently willing to go along with that.



Enter President Trump, who also wants to broker a peace deal with Moscow. Since taking office he has threatened Putin with greater sanctions to encourage the Russian dictator to come to the table. Given the increasingly difficult state of the Russian economy, Putin has already signalled a willingness to negotiate, though he will undoubtedly play hardball.

If anything comes of it we may be about to enter a frozen conflict in which Russia occupies much or all of the 14 per cent of Ukrainian territory it has conquered since 2022 as well as the land it seized in 2014. Negotiations might include a non-Nato peacekeeping force along the line of contact.

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth has been criticised for saying Ukraine will not join Nato. That may look like a bone thrown at Putin to encourage peace-talks. But it has never been on the cards anyway. The Biden administration pushed off any prospect of membership for at least 10 years, a decision that had consensus among most Nato countries.

Hegseth has also made clear that the US will not join any peacekeeping force in Ukraine. He's right to take that stance. European countries should for once shoulder the burden of peace and security

in Europe, giving the US greater headroom to handle growing challenges in the Middle East and Indo-Pacific.

Whatever deal can be worked out between the US, Ukraine and Russia might end the fighting in Ukraine but it will also make Europe a more dangerous place. Putin will see it as at least a partial victory and will use any cessation to prepare for his next round of aggression, whether that is against his immediate neighbours including Ukraine or perhaps towards the Baltic States. He will also be working on alliances with China, Iran and North Korea to strengthen his hand both economically and militarily.

That means European nations must at the same time build up their defensive capabilities including defence industrial bases and armed forces. They probably have no more than four years at best to get themselves into shape – the remainder of the unpredictable Donald Trump's term, which may well deter Putin from attempting to chew up any more territory for the time being. Meanwhile the West should resist a predictable temptation to ease up on sanctions against Moscow, as it did after Putin's 2014 invasion, and instead double down to further degrade Russia's economic capabilities to wage war.



# US defence secretary defends Trump's peace efforts amid European concerns

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

**U**S Secretary of Defence, Pete Hegseth, defended President Donald Trump's efforts to end the ongoing war in Ukraine by initiating peace talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, asserting that such actions were "certainly not a betrayal" of Ukraine.

Hegseth made his comments on Thursday ahead of a NATO defence ministers' meeting. He explained that Trump's initiative to engage in direct discussions with Putin was not a betrayal but rather a necessary step towards peace.

"There is no betrayal there. There is a recognition that the whole world and the United States is invested and interested in peace," Hegseth stated.

"That will require both sides recognising things they don't want to," he added, emphasising the need for compromise from both Ukraine and Russia in any potential settlement.

The US Defence Secretary's comments came after Trump surprised Ukraine and Washington's European allies by announcing peace talks with Putin in his first publicly revealed phone call since returning to power.

Trump's decision to explore a potential peace agreement was met with mixed reactions from Europe, where concerns have been raised about Ukraine's security and territorial integrity under such negotiations.

Hegseth outlined several expectations from the United States regarding the war's end, stressing that Ukraine's full territorial recovery, particularly in regions like Crimea, was not realistic.

He also rejected the possibility of Ukraine becoming a NATO member as part of the peace process, a long-



standing goal of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Hegseth reiterated that Europe must take on a larger share of financial and military responsibility for Ukraine, with the US no longer willing to deploy troops under any security guarantees.

Germany's Defence Minister, Boris Pistorius, criticised the US for making concessions to Russia ahead of any peace talks, describing it as "regrettable."

He suggested that it would have been more prudent for Washington to address the issues of NATO membership or territorial losses for Ukraine directly at the negotiating table, rather than making decisions prematurely.

In response to the growing concerns in Europe, foreign ministers from key European nations, including Germany, France, Poland, and Britain, issued a statement asserting that Ukraine and Europe must be involved in any discussions related to the war.

"Ukraine and Europe must be part of any negotiations," they stated.

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte

also underscored the importance of Ukraine being closely involved in any potential talks, as did the UK's Defence Secretary John Healey, who warned, "There can be no negotiation about Ukraine without Ukraine, and Ukraine's voice must be at the heart of any talks."

The fear among European officials is that Trump's push for a peace deal might lead to a compromise that leaves Ukraine vulnerable to a stronger, more emboldened Russia.

Estonia's Defence Minister, Hanno Pevkur, firmly stated, "Europe has to be part of these negotiations. It's not a question at all," pointing out that Europe had already made substantial investments in Ukraine's defence and recovery.

With European leaders increasingly voicing concerns over any peace deal that might undermine Ukraine's sovereignty or security, the future of peace talks remains uncertain.

Many are wary that Ukraine could be forced into a suboptimal settlement, potentially leaving it at a disadvantage in its ongoing conflict with Russia.

# Donald Trump opens the door to Vladimir Putin's grandest ambitions

By Max Seddon and Chris Cook

**R**ussian leader wants a new security architecture to give his country a sphere of influence in Europe

Vladimir Putin's initial plan to capture Ukraine in a few days ended in disaster. But after Donald Trump set up direct peace talks with Moscow, bypassing Kyiv and European allies, the Russian president is now closer than ever to getting what he wanted from his three-year-long invasion.

Putin's main ambition, said people who have spoken to him during the war, is to establish a new security architecture that gives Russia a sphere of influence in Europe — much as the Yalta conference did for the Soviet Union at the end of the second world war.

Now, the US may be open to letting him have it. Defence secretary Pete Hegseth has dismissed Ukraine's aspirations to join Nato and reclaim its territory from Russia. Putin and Trump discussed "bilateral economic co-operation", suggesting that the US was prepared to roll back its sanctions against Moscow.

And Trump appears intent on rolling back the US's commitment to Nato and leaving to European countries the job of sustaining a peace.

"The situation looks much more favourable for Putin than at any point during the entire war over the last three years," said Alexander Gabuev, director of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center in Berlin. "If the US just unilaterally ends its military and diplomatic support, as well as intelligence sharing, then Ukraine will be in a very tough position. And it'll be hard to get out of it even if the Europeans get more involved."

In Moscow, there was palpable joy following Wednesday's call between Trump and Putin.

"A single call can change the course of history — today, the leaders of the US and Russia have possibly opened a door to a future shaped by co-operation, not confrontation," said Kirill Dmitriev, a Russian sovereign wealth fund chief involved in back-channel talks with the US over prisoner exchanges.

The call marked a dramatic about-face from US policy under Joe Biden, Trump's



predecessor, who pledged to support Ukraine for "as long as it takes" while working with other western countries to isolate Russia. Now, the US has said victory on Ukraine's terms is not "realistic" — a shift that Moscow hailed as a return to reason.

"Finally, the Americans are taking things seriously without the pointless illusions they have been feeding to the Ukrainians since the start of the war. It's common sense. And a chance to stop the war," said a former senior Russian official.

"Putin rid himself of any illusions three days in," when Russia realised its plans for a blitzkrieg victory had failed, the former official added. "But the Europeans and Americans have been under them ever since, and they're only starting to see sense now."

Senior Ukrainian and western officials said Trump and Putin would probably try to secure a ceasefire by one of two significant upcoming dates: Easter, which the Orthodox and Catholic churches will both celebrate on April 20 this year; or May 9, when Russia celebrates the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany.

"Putin will want [a deal] on a notable day like this," said a Ukrainian official.

The Kremlin on Thursday said Putin would welcome Trump to Moscow for the May 9 festivities. The two leaders have floated Saudi Arabia as a potential venue for their next meeting.

In Moscow, markets reacted with glee. The rouble strengthened 5 per cent against the dollar and Moscow's main exchange index rose 2.8 per cent to its highest level in nine months.

Pro-war hardliners hailed the call as a sign that Russia's victory was at hand.

"It must really hurt for the EU and Ukraine to hear this. But their opinion doesn't matter any more," said Konstantin Malofeyev, a conservative tycoon who runs several Russian volunteer units fighting in Ukraine. "Ukraine is just the pretext for a grand dialogue between two great countries about the start of a new era in human history."

Putin told Trump he wanted to "settle the reasons for the conflict", indicating that Russia has not dropped its goal of stopping Ukraine's ambitions to join the west and rolling back the post-cold war security order.

Moscow is also demanding that Ukraine cede control over four south-eastern regions, none of which Russia fully controls, and expects the west to lift all sanctions imposed since 2014.

"The most important thing for Russia is for Ukraine to have the weakest security guarantees possible," Gabuev said. "Ideally they want Ukraine to remain a country with no investment potential that's as weak as possible and tearing apart internally."



# US man strangles 60-yr-old mother for “sleeping around”

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**A**n Illinois man, Neil Howard, 46, has been convicted of strangling his 60-year-old mother with a bungee cord in their shared home because he was sick of her “sleeping around.”

On Tuesday, Tuesday, Feb. 11, Howard was convicted on first-degree murder charges and faces a maximum sentence of 60 years in prison.

Neil was sitting alone at the family’s house in Troy when his mother Norma Caraker returned home from a date, back on Sept. 13, 2023, according to Law and Crime.

A drunk Howard snapped and wrapped a bungee cord around his mother’s neck, strangling her to death, according to Assistant State’s Attorney Luke Yager, the report states.

“This defendant had had enough of his mother. He’d had enough of her sleeping around. He’d had enough of her not giving him money,” Yager levied in Madison County court.

Howard called police to the home at about 1:30 a.m. that night, telling a dispatcher he was “worried about his mother because she was unresponsive.”



Troy Police officers arrived and found Caraker in her bed with a bungee cord still secured around her neck. Attempts to revive the 60-year-old were futile and she was pronounced dead at the scene.

Howard, visibly drunk, told investigators at the time that he had seen an unknown man run out of a sliding glass door in the home just before finding his mother, according to the Bellevue News-Democrat.

Investigators found that the door in question was locked from the inside. Howard was arrested at the scene.

On Tuesday, Feb. 11, Howard was convicted on first-degree murder charges and faces a maximum sentence of 60 years in prison.

The defence plans to appeal the verdict based on what they say is a sloppy crime scene investigation conducted by the Troy Police Department, Law and Crime reports.

Howard, convicted of killing his mother, was once questioned in the death of his father, according to the Edwardsville Intelligencer.

Back in 2005, Howard was eyed as a suspect in the Dallas County, Texas, death of George Howard Jr., the father of the accused, according to the outlet.

George Howard died at his residence and Neil Howard was arrested by Mesquite Police in connection to the death. He was released when prosecutors were unable to convince a grand jury that the 26-year-old should face trial.

# Tems becomes co-owner of MLS club, makes history

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



**A**ward-winning Grammy singer, Temilade Openiyi, popularly known as Tems has scored another first by becoming the first African female to be involved in MLS ownership.

She has now become a co-owner of Major League Soccer (MLS) side, San Diego FC's ownership group as a club partner.

The MLS made this announcement in its X page on Thursday.

According to reports, Tems joined the MLS club as a co-owner through her company, The Leading Vibe.

"We are delighted that Tems has joined San Diego FC as a club partner," SDFC chairman Sir Mohamed Mansour said in a statement.

"Tems is a globally significant artist who will help us reach new audiences and spread the word about our unique project, which, of course, has its foundations in sub-Saharan Africa through the unique Right to Dream organization."

Reacting to her addition as the latest partner in SDFC's ownership group, the singer said: "I am thrilled to join San Diego FC's ownership group and to be part of a club that celebrates creativity, culture,

and the power of community.

"Football has a unique way of bringing people together, and I am excited to help build something special in San Diego, a city that thrives on diversity and innovation."

The Lagos, Nigeria native joins a distinguished group of Club Partners who share a commitment to excellence and community engagement, including trailblazing actress, Issa Rae, World Cup-winning footballer, Juan Mata, retired U.S. Navy SEAL, Jocko Willink, and founding partner and San Diego Padres' perennial MLB All-Star, Manny Machado.



# Manchester United to sell Garnacho, Hojlund as Osimhen links grow

By Dave Oludare Oso

Three-time UEFA Champions League winners, Manchester United are considering parting ways with Alejandro Garnacho and Rasmus Hojlund in a bid to raise funds for Victor Osimhen's summer arrival, Goal.com reports.

The 26-year-old striker was adamant about a move to the English Premier League from Napoli last season, with Chelsea seeming the likeliest destination, but the move didn't happen. Instead, he joined Galatasaray on a season-long loan.

Manchester United have spent over £100m on strikers over the past two seasons (£36.5m for Joshua Zirkzee and £64m for Rasmus Hojlund), but these deals have yet to yield dividends.

Manchester United are currently 13th on the English Premier League table and are preparing for a summer squad overhaul as they want players that fit Ruben Amorim's tactical demands.

The Reds have identified Victor Osimhen as the striker that will elevate the club's status and make them compete among the European elites once again, but they face financial problems.

As per TBR, the Record Champions are considering selling Alejandro Garnacho and Rasmus Hojlund to raise fees for Osimhen. Additionally, Manchester United are considering offering a straight-swap deal with Napoli.

Reports over in Italy have suggested a



return to Serie A might be on the cards for Hojlund, who previously played for Atalanta, with Juventus already eyeing the Dane as a potential successor to Dusan Vlahovic amid interest from Arsenal.

Hojlund has left United's chiefs unconvinced in his goalscoring abilities after scoring two goals in 19 Premier League appearances this season, with the most recent contribution coming back at the start of December.

Osimhen's contract with Napoli runs till the summer of 2026, with the option of extending for another year included. Antonio Conte's side are unwilling to settle for anything less than the €75m release clause included in the Nigerian's contract.

The ex-LOSC Lille man is currently enjoying a season-long loan spell with Galatasaray, where he's scored 17 goals and provided five assists in 23 games for the Turkish Super Lig table-toppers across all competitions.

With Conte seemingly uninterested in making amends with his player, the

door has never been more open for Osimhen to seal his desired exit away from Naples – and United are waiting in the wings to present their proposal.

Victor Osimhen celebrating at RAMS Park after scoring a stunning header against Beşiktaş. [Photo Credit/ X].

However, the Red Devils face stiff competition in their pursuit of the one-time Serie A winner. Galatasaray are keen on keeping the Super Eagles star at the club after his loan spell.

Chelsea and Arsenal have also suffered key injuries to their first-choice strikers, and have learned a sore lesson in not having strength in depth, hinting they'll be going all-out for a striker in the summer. Both parties are interested in Victor Osimhen and Alexander Isak.

United's rivals for Osimhen have a high chance of playing in the UEFA Champions League next season, and that will play a vital role in the striker's final destination when the summer transfer window opens.

# Atlético target Ademola Lookman as Griezmann's replacement

By Dave Oludare Oso

Eleven-time Spanish La Liga champions, Atlético de Madrid, are weighing up an offer for Super Eagles star, Ademola Lookman as they look to replace the ageing Antoine Griezmann, NEW DAILY PRIME has learnt.

The 33-year-old Frenchman has been an integral part of the Diego Simeone side that made the Rojiblancos a force to be reckoned with in Spain and Europe for the last decade scoring 196 goals and providing 90 assists in 423 games.

Griezmann's contract at the Wanda Metropolitano winds up in the summer of 2026, but there are rumours that he might leave for the Major League Soccer in America at the end of the 2024/2025 campaign.

According to Spanish outlet, Fichajes, Diego Simeone's side are looking for an ideal replacement for Griezmann, and are ready to break the market in the summer.

The club's board is working on the signing of a forward who not only fills the void left by the 2018 FIFA World Cup winner but a player who can also form a high-impact partnership with Julián Álvarez.



The board have set forth a list including Lautaro Martinez, Alexandar Isak and Ademola Lookman.

Diego Simeone's perfect replacement for Griezmann is Lautaro Martinez, as he looks to build a formidable Argentine connection in attack with Julain Alvarez.

However, the task is considered almost impossible as the striker is the main figure at Inter Milan and is also under contract at the San Siro until the summer of 2029.

Additionally, Martinez is prized at around €100m, a fee that might be considered overboard by Atletico, considering the cost they used in securing Joao Felix from Benfica six years ago.

As per TransferFeed, the Atletico board consider Ademola Lookman as the most accessible option. The versatile Atalanta forward has scored 14 goals and provided seven assists in 27 games for La Dea this season, although he's currently nursing a knee injury.

The 27-year-old's contract with Atalanta runs out in the summer of 2026, although there's an option to extend for another year. Lookman is currently valued at €55.m by Transfermarkt, and is a relatively cheaper option to Isak and Martinez.

Ademola Lookman is yet to pen a new deal with Atalanta, and with just a year left on his contract, a move might be on the cards, but it is currently unknown if the former RB Leipzig forward will prefer a transfer to Spain.