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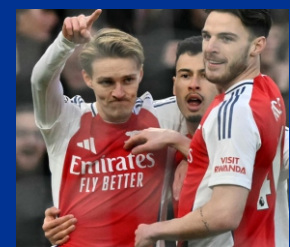
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Unpaid Pensions: Nigeria has lost humanity, compassion, says Obi

By Friday Omosola

The 2023 presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), Peter Obi, has condemned the Nigerian government's handling of pension payments, describing the country as one that had lost its sense of humanity and compassion.

Obi expressed his concerns in a statement posted on his X page on Sunday.

He made this remark while reacting to an incident involving an elderly woman who struggled while interacting with the management and students of Shanahan College of Nursing Sciences, Nsukka, Enugu State.

The former governor of Anambra State lamented that the elderly woman had to struggle to receive her rightful entitlements after years of serving the nation.

He decried the fact that elderly citizens who had dedicated their lives to building the country were now being subjected to extreme hardship due to unpaid pensions.

Obi said what was even more heartbreaking was that the woman had been sick and hospitalized for



over a week, accumulating medical bills, yet her immediate concern was that she did not even have one naira to buy food.

“I felt a surge of anger and pity. Anger at leaders like me, who out of greed and insatiable desperation for material acquisition, have made life a living hell for others, by denying them the fruits of their labour. And then pity for the poor elderly woman, and many others like her whose painful stories may never be heard. That is the nation we live in. A nation that has lost its sense of humanity and compassion.

“I have said it before, and I still maintain that any government that withholds the pensions and

gratuities of our senior citizens in their vulnerable years is wicked. As a Governor, I inherited and paid off over N30 billion in pensions and gratuities accumulated over the years, because I understood the pain the elderly citizens were going through. I instantly gave her my little support and promised to follow up her case with the hospital management.

“However, I am more concerned with the many others like her, dying in silence in many parts of the nation, because no one can speak for them. We must fix this nation. Nigeria must work for all, and everyone will get their due rewards for their productive contributions”, he added.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

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9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
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FG plans electricity tariff increase in coming months

By Friday Omosola

The Federal Government (FG) has announced that Nigerians should expect an increase in electricity tariffs in the coming months as part of efforts to improve the country's power sector.

President Bola Tinubu's Special Adviser on Energy, Olu Verheijen, disclosed this in an interview in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, during a World Bank-backed conference where Nigeria presented a \$32 billion electricity expansion plan to boost power connections by 2030.

The plan is expected to attract \$15.5 billion from private investors, while the remaining funds will come from public sources, including the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

Verheijen explained that Nigeria's electricity tariffs need to increase by approximately two-thirds for many consumers to reflect the actual cost of power supply.

She emphasised that higher tariffs, along with subsidies for low-income households, are crucial for maintaining infrastructure, improving power reliability, and attracting private investment in generation and transmission.

"One of the key challenges we aim to resolve in the next few months is transitioning to a cost-efficient but cost-reflective tariff," she stated.

According to her, this adjustment is necessary for the power sector to generate enough revenue to attract private capital while ensuring that poor



and vulnerable Nigerians are protected.

The proposed tariff increase comes amid growing concerns from debt-laden electricity distribution companies, which have long argued that government-regulated electricity prices do not reflect actual supply costs.

Nigeria privatized its power generation and distribution in 2013, but tariffs set by the Nigeria Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) remain below the cost of supply, forcing the government to subsidize the shortfall.

Despite these subsidies, achieving profitability remains a challenge for operators.

Verheijen noted that Nigeria's power sector requires significant investment to meet its energy goals.

Of the 14 gigawatts of installed power capacity, only 8 gigawatts can be transmitted nationwide, and just 4 to 5 gigawatts are effectively delivered to

homes and businesses.

The government is currently working with Siemens AG on a \$2.3 billion project aimed at improving power transmission and distribution infrastructure.

Additionally, more than 7 million Nigerians in rural areas have gained access to electricity through decentralized renewable energy projects

Verheijen highlighted the importance of aligning energy policies with Nigeria's economic ambitions.

"Our goal is to become a \$1 trillion economy in five years and transition to an upper-middle-income country within 25 years," she said.

Currently, Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) stands at just under \$200 billion, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

FG to revamp Bank of Agriculture for economic stability

By Friday Omosola

The Federal Government (FG) has reaffirmed its commitment to restructuring and recapitalizing the Bank of Agriculture (BoA) as part of a broader strategy to boost the economy and enhance food security.

The move is expected to strengthen the agricultural sector, stabilize food prices, and contribute to long-term economic stability.

At a progress report meeting held during the week, Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, emphasised the crucial role of the BoA in increasing agricultural production and stabilizing market prices.

“While monetary measures remain important, we must also implement fiscal and real-sector strategies that increase output, support economic growth, and help dampen inflation,” he stated.

The National Council on Privatization (NCP) has taken proactive steps by tasking its technical committee with developing a comprehensive roadmap to reposition the bank.

This roadmap is expected to



outline strategic reforms and operational enhancements aimed at transforming the BoA into a more robust engine of agricultural expansion.

Minister Edun expressed confidence that with the right strategy and strong leadership, the revamped BoA could significantly drive agricultural growth and secure a stable economic future.

“Our commitment to the agricultural sector is unwavering. By modernizing the Bank of Agriculture, we are not only aiming to boost production but also to ensure that farmers have the necessary support to thrive in a competitive market,” he said.

The government’s initiative comes at a critical time as the country continues to face challenges

related to inflation and food security.

The move is widely seen as a key step in aligning fiscal policies with real-sector investments, which are essential for sustainable economic growth.

With the technical committee’s roadmap in progress, stakeholders in the agricultural sector and the broader economy are hopeful that the restructuring of the BoA will yield positive outcomes soon.

The government’s proactive measures underscore its dedication to not only reforming financial institutions but also fostering an environment that supports economic stability and growth.

SERAP demands probe into alleged N26bn misappropriation in Petroleum Ministry, PTDF

By Friday Omosola

The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has called on President Bola Tinubu to order an investigation into allegations that over N26 billion in public funds were misappropriated, diverted, or stolen from the Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF) and the Federal Ministry of Petroleum Resources in 2021.

SERAP's demand follows revelations from the 2021 audited report released by the Office of the Auditor-General of the Federation on November 13, 2024.

The organization urged the President to direct Attorney General Lateef Fagbemi, and anti-corruption agencies to investigate the claims and prosecute anyone found responsible.

In a letter dated February 1, 2025, and signed by Deputy Director Kolawole Oluwadare, SERAP emphasised the importance of accountability in the oil sector.

"There is a legitimate public interest in ensuring justice and accountability for these grave allegations. Tackling corruption in the oil sector would help address the budget deficit and Nigeria's debt crisis," the letter read.

SERAP also urged the government to recover any missing funds and use them to reduce the deficit in the 2025 budget and ease the country's mounting debt burden.

According to the Auditor-General's report, several financial irregularities were uncovered in the Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF)

The report revealed that N25.6 billion was spent on contracts without supporting documents, raising concerns about possible diversion of funds.



Additionally, N326 million was deposited in two banks without proper accountability.

The PTDF also allocated N107 million for a library automation system at the Petroleum Training Institute (PTI) without securing approval from the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA).

Furthermore, the agency paid N46 million to three companies without proof of service delivery, with one contractor receiving payment for services rendered before their official engagement.

Another irregularity highlighted was the failure to remit N60 million instamp duty from capital contracts awarded in 2019 and 2020.

The report also found that N64 million was paid for store items that were never supplied, while N41 million was disbursed for goods and services that were never delivered, with no invoices or receipts to validate the payments.

The Auditor-General's report also uncovered financial misconduct within the Federal Ministry of Petroleum

Resources.

The ministry allegedly spent N137 million from capital funds on recurrent expenses without obtaining approval from the National Assembly or the Minister of Finance.

Additionally, the ministry paid N232 million to seven companies for consultancy services related to Niger Delta engagements without providing any details on the nature of the work or the locations of the engagements.

The Auditor-General described these transactions as fictitious.

Further scrutiny of the ministry's financial records revealed that N25 million in taxes collected from contractor payments was not remitted.

There were also concerns over the irregular payment of N43 million for ceiling repairs.

The report further exposed that between March and December 2021, the ministry granted cash advances totalling N74 million to officers, which remained unaccounted for.

El-Rufai: I'm no Nollywood actor, politics of pretence isn't for me

By Friday Omosola

Former Kaduna State Governor, Nasir El-Rufai, has reaffirmed his stance on political integrity, stating that he does not engage in the kind of pretense often associated with some politicians.

El-Rufai made this remark on Saturday while responding to an X user, Engr Ira Habib, who praised his book, 'The Accidental Public Servant'.

The user noted that after reading the book, he concluded that no politician would want El-Rufai in their cabinet unless they were genuinely committed to national development.

Reacting to the post, El-Rufai appreciated the compliment and emphasised that he has never been one to feign allegiance or play to the gallery in governance.

"Thanks for your kind words, @irahabib. Truly, I don't know how to pretend. Being a Nollywood actor in governance is for some others, not some of us. Have a nice day. – @elrufai," he wrote.

Recently, the 64-year-old has been vocal about his discontent with the



current state of the All Progressives Congress (APC), accusing the ruling party of abandoning its founding principles.

He said he no longer recognizes the APC because the party organ has not met in two years—no caucus, no NEC, nothing.

According to him, he doesn't even know if APC is a one-man or zero-man party.

He also condemned the quality of leadership emerging from political parties, attributing it to the selection of unqualified delegates.

El-Rufai's remarks drew a

response from Daniel Bwala, Special Adviser on Policy Communication to President Bola Tinubu, who questioned whether the former governor would have expressed the same views if he were part of Tinubu's cabinet.

In his response, the former governor dismissed the insinuation that his criticisms stemmed from being left out of Tinubu's government.

He went on to call out what he described as the "moral flexibility" of some Tinubu loyalists, stressing that his position would have remained unchanged even if he had been part of the administration.

Oyebanji urges citizens to pray for govt

By Friday Omosola

Ekiti State Governor, Biodun Oyebanji, has urged Nigerians to continue praying for the government and to remain thankful to God.

Speaking during the January edition of the monthly Evening of Praise and Worship programme held at Lady Jibowu Hall, Government House, Ado Ekiti, Governor Oyebanji called on the people of the state to stay united in supporting his administration's vision for sustainable development.

He emphasised that the state has continued to enjoy peace and progress at all levels and urged citizens to remain prayerful, grateful to God, and committed to the collective vision for a better Ekiti.

Acknowledging divine guidance in shaping the state's reforms and initiatives, the governor attributed Ekiti's remarkable achievements and transformation to God's grace.

He declared that these developments have positioned the state as a model of good governance, accountability, and integrity in the country.

Oyebanji noted that the divine support his administration enjoys has been instrumental in achieving



various milestones over the past two years.

He highlighted significant strides in infrastructure, education, healthcare, agriculture, and economic empowerment, which, he said, have improved the quality of life for residents.

He added that these accomplishments have not only enhanced living conditions for citizens but have also earned Ekiti recognition as a beacon of good governance and accountability in Nigeria.

"We started this year on a good note, a lot of good things are happening- the promotion of our SSG to the rank of Professor of Chemistry, just this week, our distinguished Senator, the Senate

Leader was also appointed a Life Bencher by the Nigerian Body of Benchers and by the grace of God, our leader, Governor Kayode Fayemi will be sixty next week, so we have every cause to thank God.

"There is also cheery news from our agriculture sector. On my way here, the Commissioner informed me that the Federal Government just appointed Ekiti as a pilot state in the Southwest for agriculture. So, God has been so good to us and we are starting this year on a positive and joyful note. And it can only get better.

"We should not relent in praying for ourselves and for the State. Ekiti State is now a poster for good governance, accountability, and integrity.", the governor added.

US-based Nigerian doctor is responsible for his death — Father-in-law

By **Helen Okechukwu**

Francis Van-Lare, the father of Suzzette Chibuogu, whose ex-husband, Ikenna Erinne, a United States (US)-based Nigerian doctor allegedly committed suicide, has debunked the claim surrounding his death.

Erinne, a 36-year-old cardiologist doctor from Anambra State, was said to have shot himself to death on 26 January, 2025.

Meanwhile, multiple claims have been unveiled on the circumstances that led to the death of the 36-year-old cardiologist.

Van-Lare, a popular businessman, shared on his Facebook page on Sunday that on that day of the tragic incident, late Dr. Erinne had gone to his daughter's house and held her and her children hostage for three hours due to losing the case of child custody to her ex-wife.

He further noted that his daughter's nanny, who escaped from the hands of the late deceased, reported the event to the police. Upon their arrival and due to the fear of facing three counts of kidnapping with a deadly weapon with 25-year jail terms each, he shot himself.

"While I sympathise with his family for his death, my daughter is not responsible for him taking his own life, and I thank God it did not degenerate to where he shoots my daughter, grandchildren, and himself," he noted while analysing that everyone is a loser, including him (Van-Lare).

Background

It was revealed that the late 36-year-old cardiologist and his wife had a prolonged



divorce and child custody right cases.

After a long chase to the custody of their children, Erinne lost and was ordered by the court to pay \$15,000 monthly child support fees.

Clayton Udo, a Nigerian-American, claimed that the court's verdict contributed to the 36-year-old's death.

Udo noted, "The abuse of African men in the USA must come to an end. In a deeply troubling case, Dr. Ikenna Erinne, an American-trained cardiologist, allegedly took his own life after an American court ordered him to pay his ex-wife \$15,000 monthly, following a prolonged and contentious divorce case. This tragic incident highlights the systemic issues within the legal system that disproportionately affect African men."

Udo, who claimed to be an expert in psychological and mental abuse, revealed

that the deceased had spent thousands of dollars in legal fees before the court's verdict turned out in favour of his ex-wife.

"License not revoked"

While refuting the claim that his daughter's ex-husband's license was not revoked despite being active in Illinois, New York, Virginia, and Maryland.

For the record, Van-lare wrote, "He has active licenses in Illinois, New York, Virginia, and Maryland, so one state cannot revoke all licenses at once, though none was revoked.

Explaining the need for the child support fee, "The child support was set that much because he has a physically challenged son needing special care from different medical facilities plus attending a special needs school that costs money, and courts consider the income of both parents before making decisions.

Your wood burner could be as bad for you as smoking

By Aniq Lasker

A study found that burning wood in our homes is one of the most dangerous types of air pollution. Here's what you need to know

Around 1.9 million people in Britain now have a wood burning stove in their homes. Wood burning stoves have become a classic British middle class status symbol. Despite the fact that they cost around £3,000 to buy and install, 1.9 million people in Britain now have one in their homes. In fact, we're so fond of their glowing embers that an episode of a virtual fireplace was Netflix's most-watched Christmas show in 2024.

But recently a report by the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) found that burning wood in our homes is one of the most dangerous types of air pollution. The tiny particles (invisible to the human eye) can make it into our lungs, enter the bloodstream and are linked to health problems such as asthma and bronchitis, as well as heart attacks and strokes.

A study published by Environmental Research linked indoor smoke from open fires to cognitive decline while another study published in Environmental International found that heating a home with a wood stove or fireplace increases the risk of lung cancer by 43 per cent.

So, what are the risks and if we can't bear to part with them, is there a way to live with them without them damaging your health?

The health risks of wood burning stoves "Anything that's very small particle size will go deep into the lungs, small airways and alveolar sacs," says Dr Jose, a consultant in respiratory medicine at Royal Brompton Hospital. "Due to their



small size, they can penetrate the alveoli, capillaries and bloodstream, circulating the body to various organs and causing problems."

1. Damage to the lungs

"The lungs are a primary site of inflammation. It starts with irritation in the airways, which can develop into a cough and over time can lead to breathlessness. If the airways become obstructed, by narrowing, these small particles cause inflammation of the blood vessel walls."

"Breathing the smoke from your stove could lead to changes in the cells in your lungs – this could mean you are at higher risk of developing lung cancer.

2. Respiratory infections

Using a wood burning stove is similar to the effect of smoking and these high levels of particulates can increase your risk of infections. "They may cause certain white blood cells to stop functioning normally so your lungs are

more likely to be infected by bacteria," explains Dr Jose.

3. Damage to arteries

Breathing in particulates can result in atherosclerosis, which is the same condition people get from a prolonged history of smoking, says Dr Jose. "Atherosclerosis is the thickening and hardening of arteries from a build-up of fats, cholesterol and other substances, also called plaque. Plaque can cause arteries to narrow, block blood flow and lead to blood clots.

Over time it can get worse and cause heart disease, particularly in people who have high blood pressure. They may have heart attacks. If you get atherosclerosis in the vessels of your neck or brain, it can lead to stroke."

**Continue reading
next page**

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4. Can increase the risk of dementia

The same inflammatory processes that can happen in the brain, which can lead to small vessel dementia, explains Dr Jose. “People talk about this inflammation resulting in similar plaques in the brain that you would see in Alzheimer’s disease. It generally has a primary lung effect, but over time, a more global systemic effect, particularly involving the cardiovascular system.”

Groups are at most risk

Children and pregnant women

If children are exposed to high levels of pollution, smoking and particulate matter, their lung function is likely to be negatively impacted, says Dr Jose. “During this period while lung function is increasing, particularly in the early years, you want to have a healthy environment with low pollution and a low incidence of infections, because when they are inflamed, there will be a reduction in lung function.”

People with respiratory disease

“People who have underlying lung disease, like asthma and COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), are more susceptible to the effects of air pollution and particulates because the airways are already irritated, inflamed, and are more likely to be hyper-responsive,” says Dr Jose. “When they inhale foreign particles, they are more likely to experience irritation, causing them to produce mucus and airways to narrow, making them feel more breathless.”

“When it comes to wood burning stoves, my advice to my patients with existing lung disease and pregnant women would be the same as smoking. If people are

worried that it’s going to exacerbate the airway or affect the growth of their foetus, I would advise them not to burn the stove.”

How can you reduce the health risks?

1. Choose a stove with the right credentials

“Since Ecodesign requirements for solid fuel local space heaters came into force in January 2022, all wood burning stoves purchased must adhere to Ecodesign requirements, which means they are low emission and emit fewer particulates than earlier designs. So, when choosing a stove ensure it’s got the Ecodesign and CE marking or opt for a ‘Cleaner Choice’ wood burning stove,” says Calvin May, the head of technical services at Heating Equipment Testing and Approval Scheme (HETAS). “Look for the wood burning stoves appearing on the market that release even fewer particulates. All stoves under HETAS’ ‘Cleaner Choice Scheme’ reduce particulate emissions by at least 50 per cent more than regulations require.”

2. Make sure it’s installed and serviced properly

“It’s critical to have your stove installed by a skilled, registered installer,” says Bruce Allen, the chief executive of Cleaner Safer Group. “Building regulations all require competent installation and there may be a need to line chimneys. As properties are all different, the best thing you can do is to get in contact with a registered installer because they’ll know what you require and what components you would need for your particular property. Once installed and in use, appliances should be serviced regularly too.”

3. Choose the right fuel

“Always make sure you use ‘Ready to Burn’ dry wood for your stove. This contains up to 20 per cent moisture and is much cleaner to burn,” says Allen.

4. Always shut down your fire properly

“Slumbering is when people don’t shut down their appliance properly, which leads to inefficient combustion and generates more particulates. It’s much better to shut it down completely before leaving it unattended or going to bed,” says May.

5. Get an air purifier

“There are many particle emitting activities in the home and some stoves emit smoke if not carefully refuelled – it would take a very sophisticated air purifier to deal with all of that. We haven’t seen any evidence that these devices are effective across a range of particle types. There should never be smoke emitting from any appliance during normal use – if there is smoke coming from your stove, don’t use it and call a registered installer to get it examined,” says May.

6. Open the door in smaller increments

“Don’t open the door in one swoop as there will be a rush of air that goes directly into the appliance, and can disturb the embers on the ash bed – rather open it in small degrees,” says May.

7. Make sure you have proper ventilation

“There is usually a permanent ventilator installed in the appliance that allows air from outside to come through to the property giving an avenue for replenishing any stale air within that property.”

People who sleep less than six hours a night at risk of developing serious condition

By Agency Reporter



Some 60 per cent of Britons are getting no more than six hours of sleep a night, despite NHS guidelines suggesting that a healthy adult usually needs between seven and nine hours, a survey suggests.

More than four fifths of people (83%) say that getting a regular, good night's sleep is the most important factor in their general wellbeing, the poll for wool bedding firm Woolroom found.

Two fifths of those polled (40%) reported heightened stress levels after a bad night's sleep and 36% said they felt anxious, with 40% saying they

felt this way one to two times a week and 7% having this feeling constantly.

Some 22% said they had sought professional help due to the ongoing effects of poor sleep. Fluctuating in temperature was one of the main causes of disrupted sleep, reported by 20% of respondents, while 24% said they were unable to get comfortable and 23% said stress prevented them from sleeping.

One in 10 said their partner's snoring kept them awake. Woolroom found peri-menopausal and menopausal women are losing on average more

than two hours sleep a night or roughly two nights sleep per week due to their symptoms.

Respondents reported suffering from poor sleep due to their menopausal symptoms for an average of four years, with only 1% of respondents saying their symptoms did not disrupt their sleep at all.

The survey also suggests that 15% of people wash their mattress protector, duvet and pillows once a week, 20% once a fortnight and 11% every few months. Some 8% wash their bedding once a year, 3% every two years and 10% never wash it at all.

2025 Grammy Awards: Tems Wins Best African Music Performance Grammy

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Nigerian Afrobeats artiste, Tems, won the Grammy for Best African Music Performance, at the 2025 Grammy Awards held at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles, US.

Earning her second golden gramophone, Tems defeated a predominantly Afrobeats-nominated category at the 67th Recording Academy Awards, with her love song “Love Me Jeje”.

She overcomes strong opposition from fellow countrymen Burna Boy, Asake, and Wizkid for their collaboration on “MMS,” Yemi Alade, and Chris Brown’s “Sensational,” which features Davido and Lojay.

Born Temilade Openiyi, the 29-year-old now joins the ranks of Burna Boy, who won the Best Global Music Album Grammy in 2021 for his album *Twice As Tall*.

The award will mark her second Grammy win. In 2023, she won in the Best Melodic Rap Performance category for her contribution to the hit song ‘Wait for U’ with Future and Drake.

Other nominees in the category

“Tomorrow” — Yemi Alade

Advertisement

Yemi Alade has gained her first solo Grammy nomination for her song “Tomorrow” produced by Dee Yasso. The song which was released in 2024 boasts of a strong African identity blending Nigerian and South African



rhythms and lyrics.

“MMS” — Asake & Wizkid

Ahmed Ololade Asake popularly known as Asake captured the hearts of his fans last year with the release of his single dubbed, “MMS”. The song is a standout on his new third studio album, “Lungu Boy”. Asake teamed up with Afrobeats sensation Wizkid for this song. The song has been nominated for the best African MUSIC performance for the 67th Grammy Awards contending with other heavyweight singers in the category.

“Sensational” — Chris Brown Featuring Davido & Lojay

This year’s nominations have sparked controversy with the inclusion of US R&B singer, Chris Brown for his song “Sensational” which incorporates Afrobeats elements and features guest vocals from Nigerian artists Davido and Lojay.

This year might just mark the first time a

non-African will be crowned winner of the category at Music’s biggest night in Los Angeles. But till then, fingers remain crossed!

“Higher” — Burna Boy

Damini Ebunoluwa Ogulu popularly known as Burna Boy is not a stranger to the awards circuit. He has been nominated in different categories for the Grammy Awards.

He won the Best Global Music Album Grammy in 2021 for his album “*Twice as Tall*.” He also ended a historic 2023 at No. 1 on the Billboard Year-End US Afrobeats Artists Chart, as well as one of the 10 most streamed male African artists on Spotify.

The ‘Dangote’ crooner has now totalled six consecutive years with Grammy nominations-including his recent single “Higher” which has been nominated for the “Best African Music Performance” at this year’s ceremony.

I borrowed clothes to look classy in movies - Funke Akindele reveals

By **Oluwatosin Ologun**

Nollywood actor and producer, Funke Akindele, has revealed how she used to borrow clothes to look classy on movie sets in the early days of her acting career.

The Nollywood box office queen shared how her colleagues, Iyabo Ojo and Tayo Oduke, popularly known as Sikiratu Sindodo, played a massive role in her rise from humble beginnings.

The actress, who is on vacation in Ghana with her best friend, Eniola Badmus, and skit maker Kamo State, shared videos on her Snapchat that revealed her humble beginning.

Funke Akindele told Badmus in one of the videos how much of a thinker she is. She spoke about the time they had no fame and how they used every opportunity to get the attention of



producers.

Speaking about Sikiratu Sindodo's integral role in her career, Akindele revealed how the veteran Yoruba actress borrowed her clothes to look classy and presentable on movie sets.

On Iyabo Ojo's contribution to her

career, she revealed how the actress used to stand up for her until many in the industry noticed her.

Funke Akindele then mimicked one of Iyabo Ojo's reactions after she was rejected by a producer on a movie set.

A few days ago, Funke Akindele opened up about her hardships on her way to becoming the Nollywood box office queen.

The actress noted that she has faced different career challenges but has learned to stand tall and use her experience to encourage others.

The box office queen, therefore, encouraged her followers to continue inspiring the next generation of women.

A lot of women have monetised relationship - Timini Egbuson

By **Oluwatosin Ologun**

Nollywood most eligible bachelor, Timini Egbuson has shared some insights into how he believes women perceive romantic relationships within the context of financial motivation.

While speaking during a recent interview on TVC, the actor opined that many women have monetised dating.

He argued that the trend is the reason some financially stable men do not attach much value to women.

According to Egbuson, known for his roles in hit movies like 'Elevator Baby' and 'Shanty Town,' some women equate lavish spending on them with love, but he cautioned that this is not always the case.



He explained that the fact that wealthy men can afford to lavish gifts on multiple women makes it difficult to discern genuine affection.

He noted that these wealthy men spend lavishly on women not as a sign of love

but simply because they can afford to.

Egbuson said, "The nonchalant attitude of some men is because there are a lot of women accessible to them. You know, once you have money, you have a lot of options. And that is also because a lot of women have monetised dating.

"Some men know that when they spend lavishly on a lady, she would think they are in love with her. But that is not love because he's a billionaire; he can afford to do the same thing for hundreds of girls."

Citing these complexities, Egbuson revealed that he has chosen to remain single, describing the dating scene as "stressful" and challenging to navigate.

EU to 'respond firmly' if Trump imposes tariffs

By Henry Foy and Andy Bounds in Brussels

Bloc warns of 'unnecessary economic disruption' after US president hits China, Canada and Mexico with trade measures

Trump sparked a global trade war this weekend in announcing the measures against three of the US's largest trading partners after the EU, which has the largest trade deficit with Washington. The Trump administration has so far refrained from imposing tariffs on the EU despite the US president saying on Friday that he would "absolutely" do so.

A spokesperson for the EU's executive said that the bloc's trade and investment relationship with the US was the biggest in the world, adding: "There is a lot at stake."

"Across-the-board tariff measures raise business costs, harm workers and consumers," the spokesperson said. "Tariffs create unnecessary economic disruption and drive inflation. They are hurtful to all sides."

EU has the largest trade deficit with the US

"At this time, we are not aware of any additional tariffs being imposed on EU products," the Commission said on Sunday. "However, the EU would respond firmly to any trading partner that unfairly or arbitrarily imposes tariffs on EU goods."

The initial approach was to negotiate areas where the EU could buy more



US products, such as liquefied natural gas, and narrow the trade deficit that the president regularly decries. Some capitals are also banking on pledges to increase their national defence spending in a bid to appease Trump, who wants Nato members to spend 5 per cent of GDP on their military.

Should all those efforts fail, the Commission's trade department has spent months drawing up lists of US imports it could hit with duties of 50 per cent or more. Brussels it has kept details of those retaliatory measures secret in order not to provoke Trump.

With confirmation hearings for Trump appointees ongoing in Washington, the EU's trade commissioner, Maroš Šefčovič, "stands ready to engage as soon as his counterparts are confirmed", said an EU official.

Klaas Knot, a member of the governing council of the European

Central Bank, said on Sunday that he expected countries to retaliate against US measures and exacerbate a trade war that would damage all sides.

"Europe will not want to be pushed around. We are also a powerful trade bloc with 400mn consumers," Knot, who is president of the Netherlands' central bank, told Dutch television on Sunday.

Trump imposed the blanket tariffs against Canada and Mexico by invoking the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, which allows him to take measures in response to "an unusual and extraordinary threat."

He would need to find justification to potentially use the same tool against the EU, or use tariffs targeting certain industrial sectors on security grounds, as he did during his first presidency.

Nigel Farage Could Take 60 Labour Seats in 'Wake-Up Call' Mega-Poll

By Dave Burke

Nigel Farage's Reform UK could take upwards of 60 seats from Labour if a general election was held now, alarming polling has found.

A survey of over 17,000 voters, commissioned by Hope Not Hate, suggested the hard-right party would win 76 seats – and the number could be far higher. The campaign group said the findings must be viewed as a “wake-up call”.

Projections released by Hope Not Hate found Mr Farage's party could take 60 seats from Labour, 10 from the Tories and one from the Lib Dems. Since the General Election polling has suggested Reform has overtaken the Tories and is closing in on Labour.

Labour would still be the biggest party with 287 MPs, down from 402, while the Tories would go up to 163. They currently have 121. At the moment Reform UK has five MPs.

Responding to the latest findings, a Labour source said the party needs to be alive to the populist threat. They said: “At the general election, the vast majority of people who voted for Reform were not considering Labour. That won't be true now, because we're in government and people are looking for change. The number of people that are feeling unsure about the future is quite big. It's not just on the fringes of the electoral system.”

Nick Lowles, chief executive of Hope



Not Hate, said: “The polling should be a wake-up call for everyone.” He went on: “Reform UK is emerging as a major political force in Britain. The idea that Reform hurts the Conservatives more than Labour is plainly nonsense.”

After analysing the figures, the groups said the UK is entering a “hyper marginal period of politics” – pointing to 266 seats that are very difficult to call. When asked by The Mirror, Hope Not Hate said it would not be releasing a breakdown of individual seats at this state.

Mr Lowles continued: ““While we categorise Reform as a far right populist party, a view supported by 60% of the British public in our polling, its supporters are drawn from across the political spectrum.

“Strong anti-immigration views were dominant amongst those who voted

Reform in the 2024 General Election, those who have begun to support the party since then have far more diverse views. This includes a sizeable group who are actually quite positive towards the benefits of immigration and multiculturalism but increasingly feel the main parties have failed and it is time for something new.”

How many seats would each party win if an election was held now?

According to the polling of 17,790 voters, carried out by FocalData between November 30 and January 8, 2024:

Labour 287
 Conservatives 163
 Reform 76
 Lib Dem 63
 SNP 22
 Greens 4
 Plaid Cymru 4

Donald Trump hits Canada, Mexico and China with steep tariffs

By Agency Reporters

US president fires starting gun on trade war with levies of up to 25% on goods imported from trading partners

Trucks waiting in line at the Zaragoza-Ysleta bridge to cross the border between Mexico and the US in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico on Friday. ©REUTERS

Trump issued an executive order applying additional tariffs of 25 per cent to all imports from Canada and Mexico, with the exception of Canadian oil and energy products, which will face a 10 per cent levy. Canada is by far the biggest foreign oil supplier to the US, accounting for about 60 per cent of its crude imports.

Imports from China will face a 10 per cent tariff over and above existing US tariffs.

Posting on Truth Social, Trump said he used emergency powers to issue the tariffs “because of the major threat of illegal aliens and deadly drugs killing our Citizens, including fentanyl”.

The tariffs would apply from Tuesday, the White House said.

An administration official said each order contained “a retaliation clause . . . so that if any country chooses to retaliate in any way, the signal will be to take further action with respect to likely increased tariffs”.

In response, Canada’s Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced 25 per cent tariffs on C\$155bn (US\$107bn) worth of goods, including US alcohol, clothing, household appliances and lumber.

Trudeau said tariffs would put US jobs at risk, “potentially shutting down American auto assembly plants and other manufacturing facilities. They will raise costs for you, including food at the grocery stores and gas at the pump”.



Mexico’s President Claudia Sheinbaum said the country would also launch retaliatory tariffs and other measures.

“You don’t solve problems by imposing tariffs, but with talking and dialogue,” she wrote on X.

In Beijing on Sunday, the foreign ministry said China “firmly deplores and opposes this move” and will take “necessary countermeasures to defend its rights and issues”.

It said the tariffs were imposed “under the pretext of the fentanyl issue”, but that it is “one of the world’s toughest countries on counternarcotics both in terms of policy and its implementation”.

Zhiwei Zhang, chief economist at Pinpoint Asset Management, said in a note that the 10 per cent tariff was “not a big shock to China’s economy” and was “unlikely to change the market expectation on China’s macro outlook this year”.

The moves were roundly condemned by industry groups and economists, with the US Chamber of Commerce warning they would “raise prices for American families and upend supply chains”.

The largest US fossil fuel lobby group, the American Petroleum Institute, warned that North American energy markets were “highly integrated,” and that free trade was “critical”.

The president used the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, an executive authority that allows him to respond to emergencies through economic means, to apply the levies without congressional approval. The law has not previously been used to enact tariffs, although Trump threatened to use it against Mexico in 2019.

Trump’s abrupt opening move will dash the hopes of countries that expected a slower and more cautious approach to trade policy after the Trump administration ordered a raft of reviews into US commercial relationships on inauguration day.

It also signals the president’s willingness to use tariffs to apply pressure to allies on issues ranging from immigration to drug trafficking. Trump has justified the tariffs by complaining about what he says is lax security at the borders with Mexico and Canada, and arguing that both — along with China — have failed to do enough to stem the flow of deadly opioids into the US.

China box office sets revenue record as sequels help overcome economic malaise

By Qiaoyi Li and Kevin Krolicki

China's movie box office took in record revenue during the Lunar New Year holiday, as sequels to popular Chinese hits drew theatregoers at a time when other types of spending have suffered during a period of relatively sluggish economic growth.

Box office revenue for the four days of the week-long holiday starting Jan. 29 topped 5.74 billion yuan (\$791.65 million), exceeding the previous high of 5.73 billion yuan in 2021, showed data from box office tracker Beacon.

Part of the boom was driven by government handouts as part of an economic stimulus package.

Local governments in Beijing, Jiangsu, Hubei, Guangdong and elsewhere issued cinema vouchers as part of a campaign to keep the economy on track for flat growth of 5% in the year ahead.

Packed theatres in small towns, where tickets are often more expensive, reported sell-out screenings. One theatre in Hunan began selling standing-room tickets in response to demand, a



local publication reported.

The sequel to the 2019 fantasy "Nezha" led the pack with over 2.3 billion yuan in ticket sales over the four days. The animated movie depicts a divine child warrior from Chinese mythology who protects the innocent.

"Detective Chinatown 1900", the fourth instalment in a comedy-mystery series, held second spot with 1.54 billion yuan.

China extended the annual holiday by one day this year to eight days in a bid to boost consumption at a time when consumers have been pulling back in the face of insecurity over jobs and income and the drag of a

prolonged housing downturn.

Some younger Chinese have shunned officials' calls to spend by doubling down on saving and swapping tips on how to spend less and save more.

The jump in movie ticket sales over the holiday highlights how the government has been getting consumers to spend through subsidies.

A trade-in program targeting older cars boosted auto and electric vehicle sales last year and lifted overall consumption growth by more than 1 percentage point in 2024, official data showed.

Trump calls to annex Canada and reclaim Panama canal

By Agency Reporter

Donald Trump is once again making headlines with his controversial geopolitical ambitions, refusing to back down on his demands over Greenland, floating the idea of annexing Canada, and issuing threats to reclaim control of the Panama Canal.

Tensions with Denmark escalated sharply after a heated exchange with Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, in which Trump reiterated his stance on acquiring Greenland. The Arctic territory, which remains under Danish sovereignty, is strategically important due to its vast natural resources and military significance. Despite Trump's insistence on the issue and Denmark's firm rejection, this issue has raised concerns about President Trump's aggressive foreign policy approach.

Meanwhile, Trump has shocked the international community by suggesting that Canada should become the 51st U.S. state. His remarks prompted an immediate response from Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who announced a retaliatory 25% tariff on \$106 billion worth of American goods. Trudeau condemned Trump's protectionist trade policies, arguing that they threaten the global economy and long-standing U.S.-Canada relations.

However, Trump remains steadfast in his economic strategy, aiming to restructure trade agreements,



repatriate manufacturing jobs, and pressure foreign nations to curb the flow of fentanyl, precursor chemicals, and illegal migrants into the U.S.. While Mexico has intensified its counter-narcotics efforts, and China has resumed limited cooperation on drug control, Canada has strongly refuted Trump's claims, stating that only 1% of illegal fentanyl and migrants enter the U.S. through the northern border. Trudeau reaffirmed that Canada is already taking additional steps to tighten security.

Beyond North America, Trump's foreign policy ambitions extend to Latin America, with his Secretary of State Marco Rubio currently in Panama amid escalating tensions over the Panama Canal. Trump has threatened military intervention, alleging that American ships, including U.S. Navy vessels, are being overcharged and mistreated

while passing through the 51-mile-long artificial waterway.

In response, Panama's President Jose Raul Mulino firmly rejected Trump's assertions, taking to social media to declare that "the canal is and will remain Panamanian." His statement underscores Panama's unwavering stance on national sovereignty, which has been a cornerstone of its foreign policy since the U.S. transferred control of the canal to Panama in 1999 under the historic treaty signed by President Jimmy Carter and Panamanian leader Omar Torrijos in 1977.

Trump, however, claims that China has gained undue influence over the canal, citing the role of Hong Kong-based CK Hutchison Holdings, which manages key port operations near the canal's entrances.

Five-star Arsenal trash Man City, keep title hope alive

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Arsenal humiliated reigning champions Manchester City at the Emirates Stadium with a brilliant 5-1 win, sparking their Premier League title challenge back into life.

Tensions between the teams were high after a 2-2 draw, in September 2024, between the teams but Arsenal earned a statement victory against Pep Guardiola's side, who had pipped them to the title in the last two seasons.

Mikel Arteta's side took a 1-0 lead into half-time after Martin Odegaard opened the scoring, but the game exploded into life in the second half.

Erling Haaland equalised with a great header but, just 38 seconds after the restart, Arsenal were back in front after a deflected strike found the back of the net. And six minutes later, Myles Lewis-Skelly scored his first Premier League goal to make it 3-1.

Kai Havertz, who missed a golden chance earlier in the game, added a fourth and substitute Ethan Nwaneri wrapped up the scoring with a beauty in stoppage time.

Aside from the hype surrounding Haaland, Gabriel and Arteta, this was the first time Arsenal have scored five against City since February 2003, and a fourth league game



unbeaten for them against Guardiola's side, after a run of 12 consecutive head-to-head defeats in the top flight.

Today's result effectively ends any hope of City winning a fifth straight title but keeps Arsenal's chances of their first since 2003-04 simmering.

Mikel Arteta reacts after Man City win

"During the game, it [my feelings] was so-so. At the end maybe more than unusual. It's a great day for us, especially against the level of opposition we played today.

"To beat them in the manner we've done, a lot has to go your way. We played aggressively, with a lot of courage.

"Even if you want it, they are that good that sometimes you have to stay deep and suffer, and enjoy those

moments as well. We had a bit of luck in some moments," he adds.

"Just enjoy the day, it's something we will learn from as well and understand still that a lot of things have to go your way to win in that manner.

"One is to create the unbelievable energy in the stadium, we cannot waste one minute. It transforms the team and makes it tough for the opposition. It makes the players believe we can beat anyone on their day. It's going to be very helpful for the future," he says.

On the situation after the match in September, he adds: "You have to focus on us and believe in anything that can happen.

"I've been in football a long time, just leave what happens."

Crystal Palace defeat Manchester United at Old Trafford

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Manchester United suffered defeat again as Jean-Philippe Mateta scored twice to earn Crystal Palace a 2-0 win at Old Trafford.

United aimed for back-to-back Premier League wins for the first time this season, it turned out to be an awful afternoon for Ruben Amorim's side as they were deservedly beaten and lost Lisandro Martinez to what looked like a serious knee injury late in the game.

The win lifts Oliver Glasner's side above their opponents into 12th spot, with United dropping down to 13th – their scoring problems underlined by Amorim benching both Rasmus Hojlund and Joshua Zirkzee as Marcus Rashford finalised a move to Aston Villa.

Manchester United manager Ruben Amorim called his side's 2-0 defeat to Crystal Palace a "really bad" result, and that Lisandro Martinez's injury could be "something serious."

United were looking to build on a run of three victories in a row when they welcomed Oliver Glasner's team to Old Trafford, but poor defending at set-pieces cost them, with Jean-Philippe Mateta scoring both goals for the away side.

Defender Martinez also jarred his left knee and had to be taken off, raising questions over one of United's better performing defenders of recent months.



Speaking to Sky Sports after the defeat, Amorim had little positive to say.

"The result is really bad," he said. "The performance was a little bit better than the last games. We controlled the transitions quite well for Crystal Palace.

"We suffered two goals that we can avoid and the injury on Lisandro Martinez was tough for the team."

Regarding his Argentina international defender, Amorim conceded that the reaction to the injury did not augur well.

"We are going to see in the next days, but I think it is a serious situation," Amorim said.

Man Utd's woes in stats

Manchester United have now lost seven of their first 13 league home

matches this season, their joint-most at this stage of a league campaign, along with 1893-94 (also seven home defeats in 13).

Manchester United have failed to score in the first half of 18 different Premier League matches this season, the most of any team in the competition.

After failing to win on any of their first 10 visits to Old Trafford in the Premier League, a run that included nine straight defeats (D1), Crystal Palace have now won four of their last six away matches against Manchester United (L2) and have won on back-to-back visits to Old Trafford for only the second time in the competition.

Since the beginning of last season, only Wolves (16) have lost more Premier League home matches than Manchester United's 13.