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13 US patients receive kidney transplants in Nigeria, says Shettima

By Friday Omosola

Vice President Kashim Shettima has said Nigeria is seeing a rise in reverse medical tourism, with patients from the United States and other countries flocking to the nation's hospitals for affordable, high-quality kidney transplants.

This surge, he said, is attributed to both the cost-effectiveness and the exceptional expertise available within the country's medical community.

Shettima made this observation during a courtesy visit by the Nigerian Association of Nephrology (NAN) at the Presidential Villa, ahead of the association's 37th Scientific Conference.

He pointed out that the affordability and expertise found in Nigerian healthcare facilities are key reasons why patients are increasingly choosing to seek treatment in the country.

"Recently, thirteen patients from the United States came to Nigeria for kidney transplants at Zenith Medical and Kidney Centre. The procedure is much cheaper here, and they receive the same level of expertise available anywhere in the world," Shettima said.

The Vice President went on to praise Dr Olalekan Olatise, Chief Medical Director of Zenith Medical and Kidney Centre, for his outstanding contributions to kidney care, calling him "a very decent man who is highly altruistic in his efforts to assist humanity."

However, Shettima acknowledged the financial challenges many patients face, noting that some are forced to sell their homes or rely on government assistance to afford the transplants.

He also highlighted the ongoing difficulties patients encounter after the transplant, especially with the cost of post-transplant care, including



immunosuppressants, which are critical for maintaining health.

"While getting a kidney transplant is a significant challenge, life after a transplant presents even more difficulties. Many patients struggle with the cost of post-transplant care," Shettima stated.

The Vice President also reflected on his time as governor of Borno State, recalling healthcare initiatives such as the free maternal care programs he introduced.

He shared that one local hospital records about 30 births daily, providing medical care and essential items such as rice and beans to new mothers.

Over 4,000 deliveries have been recorded in less than eight months, with all medical expenses covered, including cesarean sections.

Shettima emphasised the importance of building Nigeria's medical workforce, noting that as Governor of Borno, he took 60 female students to Sudan to study medicine.

"About 58 of them completed their education and passed the Medical and

Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN) licensing exams. Most of them are now in their medical residency programs. The beauty of training women in medicine is that they are more likely to stay back and serve their communities," he explained.

He called for continued, targeted investments in specialized healthcare education to sustain and grow Nigeria's medical community.

Dr Olatise, who is also the Chairman of the Local Organizing Committee for the 37th Scientific Conference and Annual General Meeting of the Nigerian Association of Nephrology, shared that the upcoming conference will take place in Abuja from February 19-21, 2025.

The theme of the conference is "Revolutionizing Kidney Care in Nigeria: Evidence-Based Innovations."

In recognition of Shettima's advocacy for kidney patients, including his funding of immunosuppressants and his proposal for the establishment of a specialized laboratory for post-transplant care, the Nigerian Association of Nephrology will honour him with the Kidney Champion Award during the conference.

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Tinubu means well for Nigeria, be patient, Wike tells Nigerians

By Dave Oludare Oso



The Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Minister, Nyesom Wike, has made a passionate plea to Nigerians to exercise a little more patience for President Bola Tinubu, assuring that better days lay ahead under his administration.

The minister, who was in Ibadan to commiserate with Oyo State governor, Seyi Makinde, on the loss of his elder brother, asked the citizens to have faith in the government and the president.

According to him, Tinubu means well for Nigerians as the policies initiated by the current administration were designed to achieve results.

The minister said, “On the current

state of the nation, I would just say that the people should be patient. But this country was something else a few years ago. This country was gone and if we want a remedy, with what Mr President is doing today, we need to be patient. It will take time.

“So, on the policies that Mr President is putting in place, they will have some effects and people will have to feel them but, at the end of the day, we will achieve what we are supposed to achieve.

“For me, nobody should panic, because Mr President means well for the country and Nigerians should expect better things.”

The minister recalled that the country

was at the brink before the current administration came to power.

According to him, the policies introduced by the Tinubu administration were necessitated by the need to change things for the good of the country.

Wike was accompanied to the South-Western state by some members of the former G-5 Governors Forum, which included former governors Samuel Ortom (Benue) and Okezie Ikpeazu (Abia).

Others are Senators Sandy Onor, Philip Aduda, Olaka Nwogu, Mao Ohuabunwa, and former House of Representatives Deputy Speaker, Chibudom Nwuche.

Tinubu removes Maikudi as UNLABUJA VC, dissolves Governing Council

By Alade Adisa

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has announced significant leadership changes at several federal universities, including the University of Abuja, now known as Yakubu Gowon University.

These changes are effective immediately.

At Yakubu Gowon University, President Tinubu dissolved the entire governing council and relieved Professor Aisha Sani Maikudi of her duties as Vice-Chancellor.

Senator Lanre Tejuoso, currently Pro-Chancellor of the University of Agriculture, Makurdi, has been appointed Pro-Chancellor of the Yakubu Gowon University. He will be succeeded in Makurdi by Senator Joy Emordi, now pro-chancellor of Alvan Ikoku University of Education.

To succeed Maikudi, President Tinubu appointed Professor Lar Patricia Manko as Acting Vice Chancellor at the Yakubu Gowon University for a six-month term. She will not be eligible to apply for the substantive Vice Chancellor position when it becomes available.



In addition, President Tinubu has removed Professor Polycarp Emeka Chigbu from his position as Acting Vice-Chancellor at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), before his tenure ends on February 14.

Professor Oguejiofu T. Ujam has been appointed as his successor for six months and will not be eligible to apply for the permanent position.

The leadership changes at UNN extend to the role of Pro-Chancellor, with Gen. Ike Nwachukwu reassigned to Pro-Chancellor at the University of Uyo. President Tinubu appointed Engineer Olubunmi Kayode Ojo as the new Pro-Chancellor of UNN. Previously, Ojo held the same position at the Federal University of Lokoja and the

Federal University of Oye-Ekiti.

Professor Zubairu Tajo Abdullahi, currently the Pro-Chancellor of the University of Uyo, has been appointed to succeed Ojo at the Federal University of Lokoja.

Senator Sani Stores is the new Pro-Chancellor of Alvan Ikoku University of Education, succeeding Senator Joy Emordi. Senator Stores is a Council Member at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Additionally, Barrister Olugbenga Kukoyi, a current Council Member at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, has been appointed the new Pro-Chancellor of Nnamdi Azikiwe University in Awka, Anambra State.

Food security: Govt planning \$30m allocation for states – Minister

By Dave Oludare Oso

States that meet specific criteria will receive an allocation of \$30 million as part of the Rural Access and Agricultural Marketing Project (RAAMP) scale-up initiative, the Minister of State for Agriculture and Food Security, Aliyu Abdullahi, has said.

According to the Minister, the funding aims to enhance Nigeria's agricultural sector and ensure national food security.

He said, "States that establish the Rural Access Road Authority and the State Road Fund by law, as well as meet additional requirements, will be eligible for the funding.

"States that meet these minimum eligibility criteria will receive a \$30m allocation, which must be disbursed within two years of effectiveness. So, this is an opportunity, and you will agree with me that when you are committed to your citizens, you want to remove the most difficult and painful part of their lives. And I think this is an opportunity for all states to grab."

While opening the RAAMP 8th mission earlier in the week, the minister said "This initiative will promote a culture of investment in sustainable farming practices, translated directly to increase food availability and food security for our citizens."

He emphasised the importance of the project in strengthening rural access and improving agricultural marketing.

The project, which is open to all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, is designed to develop climate-resilient infrastructure, especially rural roads, which are critical for transporting agricultural products to markets.

Abdullahi noted the significant impact



of poor infrastructure on farmers' ability to transport their goods, leading to economic instability and post-harvest losses.

"Poor road conditions often hinder farmers' ability to transport their products to market, resulting in decreased income and economic instability because of high post-harvest losses," he said.

He added that improving rural infrastructure would foster more efficient supply chains and create opportunities for farmers to participate in competitive markets.

The minister also acknowledged the support from international development partners, including the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

"The flurry of interest from these states already underscores the project's potential to drive widespread economic benefit and improve the livelihood of millions of our citizens," Abdullahi remarked.

The Task Team Lead from the French Development Agency, represented by its Project Manager, Sali Ibrahim,

acknowledged the importance of the mission in fostering dialogue and sharing experiences between states.

"This is an opportunity to discuss all of this in one group, one team, overall team, which is the RAMP team in Nigeria," Ibrahim said.

She expressed the agency's commitment to supporting the agricultural sector, including launching the value chain programme in 2025, which was discussed with the Ministries of Finance and Agriculture.

"We will continue putting our efforts and we will continue also trying to see how we can have an added value, especially in agricultural markets, to help the federal government boost food security," she said.

The World Bank Task Team Lead, Rakesh Tripathi recalled the early challenges in implementing the project but praised the work done so far.

"Four years back, when I looked at the SBIUs, I was like, everybody's coming from different ministries. Nobody had any experience contracting on a World Bank project," Tripathi said.

"But where we were four years ago compared to where we are now, I think it is a huge, huge improvement and achievement."

He also credited the Minister for his continued leadership and involvement in the project.

"With the visionary leadership of the minister and creation of new institutions at the federal level and with the scale-up, I think we can accomplish that sustainability in the sector," Tripathi added.

Deputy Speaker begs Tinubu to release Nnamdi Kanu

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Benjamin Kalu, has appealed to President Bola Tinubu to exercise his prerogative of mercy and temper justice with compassion by facilitating the release of Nnamdi Kanu, the detained leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

Kalu made the appeal while addressing reporters after the inaugural meeting of the House of Representatives committee on South East Development Commission (SEDC) at the national Assembly complex in Abuja on Wednesday.

The Deputy Speaker applauded the president for his continuous and tremendous support and commitment towards peace, development and stability of the South-East region.

According to him, since assuming office, President Tinubu has proven his love for the South-Easterners through his speedy assent to the South East Development Commission Bill which failed in previous assemblies.

The Deputy Speaker suggested the adoption of political approach in resolving the crisis in the region rather than the current legal option, adding that the people of the region will be eternally grateful to the President if that becomes a reality.

While expressing optimism that the President will heed to their appeal, he said when Kanu is released insecurity in the region will be reduced and as well spring up development that the SEDC is going to bring.

He said: "Only President Bola Ahmed Tinubu was able to put his feet down to say that the South East remains parts and parcel of Nigeria. It failed in previous



assemblies but when it got to him, he assented to it.

"We are very happy because we know that certain areas of our problems in the region will be prioritised such as agriculture, energy, power, infrastructure, technology we are very innovative people.

"All we need is the support of government to project the innovative mindedness of the young folks in that region to benefit the entire federation. The next one is the creative industry, how do we look at that, sports, entertainment, to take it from where it is to where it ought to be.

"In agriculture the whole nine yards, in line with the Renewed Hope Agenda on Food Security, that's what we are looking at. What's happening with these talents, can't we have something like silicon valley in the east? We can call it eastern valley, a hub where you creative minds will come together.

"These are areas we are looking at, with a lot of technology in place, development will spring up. We are thankful to Mr President for doing this

for the South-East, you know insecurity is a major concern in the area. You can't have development in midst of insecurity.

"That's why we started what we call peace in South-East project supported by the parliament. But in doing so we noticed that the insecurity there will be reduced if Nnamdi Kanu is released. We want Nnamdi Kanu to be released because we know it will give our people more security.

"Those who are using him as excuses to perpetrate all these criminal actions around our area will have no other reason to be on the street. Then the police and security agencies will catch anyone who claims Nnamdi Kanu is the reason for causing harm to the people of South-East.

"So, we are begging, you can't coase the President, he's the Commander in Chief. All we are saying is use political approach not the legal approach. We are appealing to him to temper justice with mercy and release Nnamdi Kanu to southeast people. It will ensure more security for our people and spring up development that this SEDC is going to bring."

House committee proposes creation of 31 new states in Nigeria

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The House of Representatives Committee on Constitution Review has proposed the creation of 31 new states in Nigeria, which, if approved, would bring the total number of sub-national governments in the country to 67.

The proposal was presented in a letter read out during Thursday's plenary session by the Deputy Speaker, Benjamin Kalu, who presided over the proceedings in the absence of Speaker Tajudeen Abbas.

The letter outlines the committee's recommendations and the steps required for the state creation process.

The proposal, which includes the creation of new states across various regions, suggests that six new states be created in North Central, four in North East, five in North West, five in South East, four in South-South, and seven in South West.

The committee's letter, read by Kalu, outlined specific requirements that must be met in order to initiate the state creation process.

Among these requirements is that an act of the National Assembly to create a new state can only be passed if it is supported by at least a third of the members.

"The House of Representatives, the House of Assembly in the relevant area, and the Local Government Council in the area must provide approval to the National Assembly," the letter stated.

Additionally, the letter highlighted that proposals for creating new



states must adhere to Section 8 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which includes the necessity of a referendum vote by State Houses of Assembly.

The results of the votes must then be forwarded to the National Assembly to fulfil the constitutional requirements.

The committee also emphasised that only proposals complying with the stipulated guidelines would be considered.

The process requires the submission of three hard copies of full proposals, along with electronic copies, to the Committee's Secretariat at the National Assembly Complex.

The proposed new states are as follows:

North Central: Okun, Okura, and Confluence states from Kogi; Benue Ala and Apa states from Benue; FCT state.

North East: Amana state from Adamawa; Katagum from Bauchi;

Savannah states from Borno; Muri state from Taraba.

North West: New Kaduna and Gujarat states from Kaduna; Tiga and Ari from Kano; Kainji from Kebbi.

South East: Etiti and Orashi as the 6th state; Adada from Enugu; Orlu and Aba from the South East.

South-South: Ogoja from Cross River; Warri from Delta; Ori and Obolo from Rivers.

South West: Torumbe from Ondo; Ibadan from Oyo; Lagoon from Lagos; Ogun, Ijebu from Ogun state; Oke Ogun/Ijesha from Oyo/Ogun/Osun states.

This proposed move to create additional states is expected to spark significant debate and scrutiny, particularly concerning the impact it could have on Nigeria's political landscape, resource distribution, and administrative structure.

If the proposal progresses, it could reshape the national framework by increasing the number of states and potentially altering the dynamics of governance across the country.

Ignore PSC's order on retirement, IG tells police officers

By Alade Adisa

A faceoff may be brewing between the Inspector General of Police and the Police Service Commission, PSC, as the IG, Kayode Egbetokun, has asked policemen and officers to ignore the recent order of the PSC that those who have served for 35 years or attained the age of 60 should disengage from the service.

According to a wireless message from the office of the Force Secretary, dated 11th Feb 2025, the "INGENPOL strongly directs all officers affected by the PSC's directive to stay action, pending further directive. This directive should be strictly complied with".



Recall that last week, PSC's spokesman, Ikechukwu Ani said the commission's order followed its review of its earlier stance from the 24th plenary meeting in September 2017, allowing force entrants to use

their date of enlistment instead of their initial appointment date.

The commission cited the inconsistency with Public Service Rule No. 020908 (i & ii), which mandates retirement upon spending 35 years in service or reaching 60 years of age as reasons for its decision.

The PSC, however, clarified that it lacks the constitutional authority to determine the appointment or retirement of Mr Egbetokun.

Buhari: Nigeria's economy, security improved under my administration

By Friday Omosola

Former President Muhammadu Buhari has revealed that Nigeria's economy and security improved significantly during his eight-year tenure.

Speaking yesterday at his residence in Daura, Katsina State, he addressed members of the Katsina State Correspondents' Chapel of the Nigerian Union of Journalists, emphasising the strides made under his leadership.

He claimed to have inherited a struggling economy and severe security challenges from the Peoples Democratic Party, which had governed for 16 years.



However, he maintained that his administration's policies effectively addressed these issues, reducing terrorism and economic difficulties.

"Nigeria's security and economy improved significantly under my administration compared to what we

met in 2015. Things will continue to improve in Nigeria," Buhari stated.

While acknowledging the complexities of governance, he noted that only those in power fully grasp the challenges involved.

In response, the Chairman of the Correspondents' Chapel, Yusuf Ibrahim-Jargaba, praised the former president's efforts in combating terrorism, banditry, and other security threats.

He also commended the former president's dedication and service, crediting him with helping to uphold national unity.

Reps call for harsher penalties for fake drug producers, importers

By **Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

The House of Representatives has called on the Attorney General of the Federation to propose more severe sanctions, including life imprisonment, for producers and importers of counterfeit drugs into Nigeria.

This resolution was passed following the adoption of a motion of urgent public importance, sponsored by Tolani Shagaya, a member of the All Progressives Congress (APC), during Thursday's, February 6, plenary.

Shagaya, while highlighting the gravity of the motion, expressed deep concern over the growing issue of fake and substandard products flooding the Nigerian market.

He warned that this trend, affecting goods, drugs, food, and beverages, is a serious threat to public health, national security, and economic stability.

“The World Health Organisation and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) have repeatedly cautioned that Nigeria is one of the countries most affected by counterfeit medicines, resulting in thousands of avoidable deaths annually,” Shagaya said.

He went on to cite a recent NAFDAC operation in Aba, Abia State, where counterfeit food and pharmaceutical products worth over ₦5 billion were seized, underscoring the widespread nature of this problem.

Shagaya also pointed out the staggering economic impact of counterfeit goods, with losses estimated at ₦15 trillion annually, according to the Standards Organisation of Nigeria.

The unchecked proliferation of substandard products, he added, not only puts consumer safety at risk but



also deters genuine investment in critical sectors like food and pharmaceuticals.

The lawmaker further noted that despite existing regulations, weak enforcement mechanisms, corruption, and lenient penalties have allowed offenders to continue their illicit activities without fear of significant consequences.

“The House recognises that the current legal framework does not provide sufficient deterrence,” Shagaya said, highlighting that offenders often return to the counterfeit trade due to relatively mild fines and bailable sentences, enabling them to operate with impunity.

In response to these concerns, the House has urged the Attorney General of the Federation to propose amendments to existing laws that would impose stricter penalties.

These include life imprisonment for those involved in the production and importation of fake drugs and heavy fines for businesses found guilty of dealing in counterfeit goods.

Additionally, lawmakers called on the Federal Government to strengthen the

capabilities of regulatory agencies, such as NAFDAC, the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON), and the Nigerian Customs Service, through increased funding, modern equipment, and advanced technology for better detection, surveillance, and enforcement.

The House also recommended the establishment of a special task force comprising security agencies, regulatory bodies, and the judiciary to expedite investigations and prosecutions related to counterfeiting activities.

Lastly, the House directed its Committees on Health, Commerce, and Industry to carry out a comprehensive investigation into the prevalence of counterfeit products and propose legislative measures to address existing regulatory gaps.

This latest push by the House of Representatives reflects a growing recognition of the devastating impact of counterfeit goods and medicines on Nigeria's public health and economy, and a desire to hold perpetrators accountable with more stringent legal consequences.

Police arrest 82 suspects for financial, cyber-related crimes

By Friday Omosola

The Nigeria Police Force arrested 82 individuals in January 2025 for a range of financial and cyber-related crimes, including internet fraud, romance scams, identity theft, cryptocurrency fraud, transnational fraud, and other cyber offences.

Police spokesperson Olumuyiwa Adejobi in a statement on Thursday said the operation was spearheaded by the National Cybercrime Centre (NCCC), which successfully apprehended 32 of the suspects across the country.

He added that the crackdown underscored the police's commitment, under the leadership of IGP Kayode Egbetokun, to its Action Plan aimed at redeeming the nation's reputation and moving it off the FATF Grey List.

Adejobi said police paraded several suspects linked to multi-million dollar fraud schemes that have defrauded individuals and organizations both in Nigeria and abroad.

According to him, among the arrested were Saidu Adam Usman and Yusuf Umar, who were involved in creating and distributing compromised financial accounts used in fraudulent transactions amounting to over ₦400 million.

He said the suspects used pre-registered SIM cards and email



addresses to create Moniepoint profiles, which were then distributed to local accomplices for Know Your Customer (KYC) verification.

“They fraudulently obtained Bank Verification Numbers (BVNs) and KYC details from unsuspecting individuals. Once the process was completed, the suspects would change the passwords to secure the accounts for their unknown foreign contractors.

“Another significant arrest involved Rabi Aliyu Salisu, also known as Rabo, who was linked to identity theft, computer fraud, and money laundering. Salisu had fraudulently assumed the identity of an American citizen, Matthew Ramsey, and defrauded an American national, Deborah Woods, of \$597,000.”

Adejobi noted that in addition, the police secured the arrest of Idowu

Smart Emmanuel, who was involved in criminal defamation, cyberstalking, and cyberbullying. Emmanuel confessed that the allegations he had made were false, following a filed petition.

He said the police have issued a stern warning against the misuse of social media for crimes such as fraud, defamation, and cyberstalking.

Adejobi said police remain committed to rooting out cybercriminals and syndicates, ensuring that those involved in such crimes face the full force of the law.

He urged the public to exercise caution when engaging in online transactions and ensure thorough verification of operators before committing to large financial dealings.

CBN introduces new regulations for BDCs operators

By **Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has announced new regulations that will allow Bureau de Change (BDC) operators to purchase up to \$25,000 weekly from a single Authorised Dealer Bank (ADB).

This move aims to meet the retail foreign exchange demand for eligible invisible transactions, such as Business and Personal Travel Allowance (BTA/PTA), overseas school fees, and medical expenses.

The guidelines were outlined in a circular issued on February 5, 2025, by Dr. W. J. Kanya, the Acting Director of the CBN's Trade and Exchange Department.

The circular also stipulates compliance requirements designed to ensure transparency and prevent misuse of foreign exchange (forex).

The new regulations include a series of measures to improve oversight and curb potential forex misuse.

A key rule stipulates that each BDC operator is only permitted to source foreign exchange from one ADB per week. This rule aims to prevent speculation and ensure tighter regulatory controls.

Furthermore, BDCs are prohibited from charging more than 1% above their purchase price when selling foreign exchange, regardless of its source. This is to promote fairness and avoid excessive charges.

Additionally, the CBN emphasised that BDCs can only use the purchased foreign exchange for specific transactions, with a cap of \$5,000 per transaction per quarter.



Eligible Uses for Forex Purchases
The CBN has specified the eligible uses for the forex purchases, which include:

- Business Travel Allowance (BTA) and Personal Travel Allowance (PTA)
- Overseas school fees
- Overseas medical expenses

In line with the new regulations, BDC operators are required to maintain comprehensive records of transactions, including the Bank Verification Number (BVN) of end-users.

They must also endorse disbursed amounts in the beneficiaries' international passports and ensure strict compliance with Anti-Money Laundering (AML) laws and Know Your Customer (KYC) requirements.

To promote transparency, both Authorised Dealer Banks (ADB) and BDCs are required to submit reports to the CBN.

ADB must provide weekly reports on forex sales to BDCs, while BDCs must submit daily returns on forex purchases and utilisation via the

Financial Institutions Forex Reporting System (FIFX).

Sanctions for Violations
The CBN has made it clear that BDCs and ADBs found violating the guidelines, including forex diversion, will face severe sanctions. These may include the suspension of their dealership licences.

In a related development, the CBN has extended the deadline for BDC operators to access the Nigerian Foreign Exchange Market (NFEM) for weekly forex purchases. The initial deadline of January 31, 2025, has been pushed to May 30, 2025.

This extension is expected to help stabilise the parallel market, improve liquidity, and demonstrate the CBN's ongoing commitment to ensuring forex accessibility while maintaining strong regulatory oversight.

As part of the broader strategy, the CBN is reinforcing its efforts to balance forex availability with the need to maintain a transparent and regulated foreign exchange market in Nigeria.

UK Immigration: Foreign workers may face 15 year wait for citizenship

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

In a bid to tighten immigration laws, Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch has proposed significant changes to the path toward British citizenship. Under the new plan, the minimum period required to apply for a British passport after obtaining indefinite leave to remain (ILR) would increase from 12 months to five years. This adjustment means foreign workers would face a minimum 15-year wait before becoming eligible for British citizenship.

New Daily Prime previously reported that UK foreign workers must wait 10 years for settled status. Badenoch reinforced the stricter policy, stating that permanent residency should be reserved for those demonstrating long-term commitment to the UK. The proposed conditions for ILR applicants include:

A 10-year residency requirement without claiming state benefits.

A ban on applicants who have ever lived in social housing.

A requirement for a clean criminal record.

Proof of being a net contributor to the UK economy.

Under Badenoch's first major immigration policy announcement as Tory leader, migrants on work visas who claim benefits will be barred from obtaining indefinite leave to remain. She emphasized that "the right to citizenship and permanent residency should only go to those who have demonstrated a real commitment to the UK."

Currently, ILR grants individuals the right to live, work, and study in the UK. It is generally available after five years of continuous work, with some applicants qualifying in two or three years under specific visas. At present, British citizenship can be applied for



12 months after obtaining ILR. However, under the proposed changes, migrants would only be able to apply for British citizenship after holding ILR for 15 years, effectively tripling the current waiting period.

The Conservative Party is urging the government to adopt these changes retroactively from 2021, incorporating them into the Border Security, Asylum, and Immigration Bill, set to be debated in Parliament next week.

Migrants in the UK on visas, those living illegally, or asylum seekers are generally barred from accessing state-funded welfare and social housing under the "No Recourse to Public Funds" (NRPF) policy. Some migrants can apply to have this restriction lifted, and according to the Migration Observatory, approximately 2,500 individuals successfully did so in 2021 and 2022.

Shadow Home Secretary Chris Philp told the BBC that individuals seeking ILR must prove they are net

contributors to the UK economy to qualify for citizenship under the new Conservative proposals. He stated: "If someone has consistently claimed benefits and not worked over a period of time, we don't want to grant them indefinite leave to remain."

Under this plan, applicants must prove that their salary and tax contributions outweigh their costs to the state.

Labour's Response

Labour Minister Angela Eagle dismissed the proposal, stating, "After 14 years of shameful Tory failure, no one will take seriously anything they claim."

As the debate intensifies, these proposed immigration reforms could significantly impact the long-term residency prospects of thousands of foreign workers and migrants in the UK. The coming weeks will be crucial in determining whether Parliament adopts the policy changes.

Abducted Anambra lawmaker found dead on 2nd Niger Bridge

By **Friday Omosola**

The lifeless body of Justice Azuka, a member of the Anambra State House of Assembly, has been discovered in a decomposed state on the 2nd Niger Bridge, weeks after his abduction.

Azuka, who represented Onitsha North Constituency 1, was kidnapped on December 24, 2024, along Ugwunabankpa Road in Inland Town, Onitsha.

His disappearance triggered widespread concern and an extensive investigation by security agencies.

After weeks of manhunt, security operatives from Abuja arrested several suspects late Wednesday.

The suspects later led authorities to the site where they dumped the lawmaker's remains.

Although details of the murder remain



unclear, Anambra State Police Command confirmed the discovery.

The command's spokesperson, Tochukwu Ikenga, stated that police operatives had been deployed to the scene and assured that further updates would be provided as investigations progress.

Azuka's killing marks yet another

deadly attack on public officials in Anambra State.

In 2022, Okey Okoye, a lawmaker from Aguata was kidnapped and later beheaded, his body dumped around the Nnobi axis.

The South-East has witnessed a surge in violent attacks in recent years, with gunmen repeatedly targeting public officials, security forces, and government facilities.

Despite efforts by authorities to restore order, the killings have persisted, fueling tensions in a region where secessionist sentiments remain high.

So far, no group has claimed responsibility for the wave of violence gripping the state.

FRSC staff shot in Lagos during fake plate crackdown

By **Helen Okechukwu**

An official of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) has reportedly been shot by a man in a police uniform in Lagos.

The official is said to sustained injuring.

The tragic incident occurred today when a team from the Lagos Sector Command of the FRSC embarked on an enforcement and implementation exercise launched nationwide to clamp down on fake number plates.



Lagos Sector Commander, Corps Commander Kehinde Hamzat, declined to comment on the incident

but urged journalists to be patient in order to determine the cause of the incident.

Although the shooter, who was dressed in a police uniform, has yet to be identified by the police, and no official statement had been issued at the time of this report.

Following the incident, the FRSC command announced the suspension of the nationwide operation during a media briefing in Lagos.

Lagos extends 2025 Hajj fare payment deadline

By Friday Omosola

The Lagos State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board (LSMPWB) has extended the deadline for the payment of the 2025 Hajj fare from January 31 to February 10, 2025.

LSMPWB said the decision aligns with the directive of the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON).

Announcing the development in a statement yesterday, the Board Secretary, Saheed Onipede said the extension was granted following a virtual meeting between NAHCON, State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Boards, and other stakeholders.

Onipede added that the meeting considered appeals from intending pilgrims who were unable to complete their registration before the initial deadline.

He urged affected pilgrims to take advantage of the extension to pay the required sum of ₦8,784,085.59 before the new deadline.

He also noted that intending pilgrims who can afford the fare, excluding the \$500 Basic Travel Allowance (BTA), are encouraged to proceed with their payment while making separate arrangements for their BTA.



Onipede emphasised that the extension would provide more Muslim faithful with the opportunity to fulfil their religious obligation in Saudi Arabia.

He congratulated those who had completed their payment and submitted the necessary documents.

He urged others to finalize their registration by obtaining a bank draft in favour of the Lagos State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board and submitting it along with their completed forms and valid international passports before the deadline.

He reassured intending pilgrims that the Lagos State government, under Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu's administration, remains committed to their welfare and comfort, ensuring a smooth and spiritually fulfilling Hajj experience.

The 2025 Hajj fare of ₦8,784,085.59 was set in January by NAHCON in collaboration with State Pilgrims Welfare Boards, private tour operators, and other stakeholders.

The amount, approved by Nigeria's Vice President, Kashim Shettima, applies to states in the country's southern zone.

Google celebrates 20 years of Google Maps

By Dave Oludare Oso

Google on Thursday celebrated 20 years of Google Maps, a tool that has fundamentally changed how we explore and navigate the world.

“Over the past two decades, it’s become an essential tool for more than 2 billion monthly users, providing both comprehensive information and a vibrant community for sharing knowledge,” Google said in a statement.

Google Maps isn’t simply a map; it’s a dynamic platform shaping users’ understanding of the world. Its rich and up-to-date information empowers users to confidently navigate, wherever their journey takes them.

Its evolution has brought a wealth of features to enhance every journey. Need a little inspiration? Ask Maps, powered by Gemini, for curated ideas on where to go. Travelling? The “Directory” tab helps you explore what’s available in airports. Want to get your bearings quickly? Augmented reality allows you to understand an area at a glance. Even everyday tasks, like finding the cheapest petrol station nearby, are made easier with Google Maps.

In Nigeria, Google Maps has been instrumental in helping people discover new places and navigate with confidence. To mark this 20th anniversary, Google is unveiling the top reviewed places in Nigeria, showcasing the locations that have captured the hearts of Nigerian users. These lists offer fascinating insights into popular choices for restaurants, cafes, visitor attractions, parks, and



Google Maps

museums across the country.

According to Taiwo Kola-Ogunlade, Communications and Public Affairs Manager, Google West Africa, “Google Maps has evolved from a basic mapping tool to a dynamic platform that helps people explore, navigate, and discover new experiences. The top reviewed locations in Nigeria highlight the places that have captured the interest and attention of our users.”

See below the top ten list of most searched places in Nigeria:

*Most Reviewed Restaurants

Mega Chicken
Farmcity Lekki lounge
Crush Café
Hard Rock Café
Domino’s Pizza, Wuse
Jevinik Restaurant
Cactus Restaurant
The Junkyard Grills
BluCabana Restaurant & Café
Domino’s Pizza, Yaba.

*Most Reviewed Cafes

Flowershop Café
Oliver’s Café
Salamander Café

Café de vie
Wood House Café
TOPBEANS. Coffee & more
Creamslices Café
Café Flour
Ketchup
Ark City Cafe And Grill.

*Most Reviewed Visitor Attractions

Dimplediva_scent
Oniru Private Beach
The Good Beach
New Berger Roundabout Ojodu Ikeja
Emir’s Palace Kano City
Rumuokoro Flyover
Railway Compound Ebute Meta Lagos
Abia Tower Round about Umuahia
Fela’s Shrine Ikeja
Idumagbo Junction Eyo Statue.

*Most Reviewed Parks

City Park Abuja
Muri Okunola Park
Tinubu Square
Ndubuisi Kanu Park
Freedom Park Lagos
Johnson Jakande Tinubu (JJT) Park
Millennium Park
Shitta Roundabout Park
JD Leisure park
Trans-Amusement Park.

*Most Reviewed Museums

National Museum Benin City
kalakuta museum
National Museum Lagos
Open Heavens International Centre
OOP
National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Kaduna.
AREWA House
Gidan Makama Museum
Sculpture Garden
National Museum of Unity.

Over 150 women raped during Congo prison break – UN

By Dave Oludare Oso

At least 165 women were raped by male inmates after a mass breakout from a prison in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the United Nations said, citing officials in the central African nation.

After fighters from the M23 rebel group advanced towards the eastern city of Goma the U.N. said inmates at the Muzenze prison took advantage of the chaos and started to escape from the facility on Jan. 27.

In a video posted to X and verified by NBC News, hundreds of people can be seen escaping from the prison as plumes of black smoke billow nearby and what sounds like gunshots ring out.

“DRC officials report that at least 165 women were raped by male inmates during the mass prison break,” the United Nations said in a report four days later.

Vivian Van de Perre, the United Nations’ representative for the DRC, said in a briefing from Goma on Wednesday that the situation was “still highly volatile” in the city, which is home to around 2 million people.

Many residents were fleeing the city because “the conditions are really, really dire ... and we are actually afraid of health outbreaks in our camps, for the people that we are sheltering, but also for ourselves,” she said.

She added that the U.N. had been “unable to verify firsthand all the



numbers and exactly what transpired” at the prison due to the situation in Goma.

Her comments came as farther south, Rwandan-backed M23 rebels moved into mining town of Nyabibwe, in an apparent violation of a unilateral ceasefire the group announced on Monday.

The capture of Nyabibwe takes the rebels a step closer to the provincial capital, Bukavu, some 40 miles south, a city the rebels said last week they had no intention of capturing.

Congo accuses Rwanda of using the M23 to pillage valuable mineral deposits. Rwanda says it is acting in self-defence and to protect ethnic Tutsis.

M23’s capture of Goma last week displaced hundreds of thousands of people and fanned fears of a wider regional war.

On Friday, the U.N.’s Human Rights

Office (OHCHR) warned that the escalation could lead to the increased use of sexual violence as a weapon of war by rival armed groups, which has long fueled the conflict in eastern Congo.

Reports that 52 women were raped by Congolese troops in South Kivu, including alleged reports of gang rape, were verified by the OHCHR on Friday.

The DRC’s government launched an action plan to combat sexual violence by members of the military in 2014, but a report by the U.N. five years later found that perpetrators of sexual violence could still act with impunity.

Last year, Doctors Without Borders, the aid group also known as Medecins Sans Frontieres, reported that it had treated over 25,000 survivors of sexual violence across the DRC in 2023 — the highest number it had ever recorded in the country.

ASUU expresses disappointment with govt over unmet demands

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has expressed profound disappointment with the Federal Government for failing to meet any of its demands, despite months of negotiations aimed at resolving long-standing issues between the two parties.

Professor Emmanuel Osodeke, the president of ASUU, shared the union's frustration in an interview with the Nigerian Tribune.

When asked about the latest developments regarding their ongoing disputes with the government, Osodeke emphasised that, despite attempts to engage in dialogue, no substantial progress has been made.

In recent months, ASUU had consistently threatened to call for a nationwide strike if the government continued to neglect their agreements.

However, the government has been actively working to de-escalate the situation. Despite these efforts, ASUU has yet to see any concrete action on the issues at hand.

Osodeke explained that while the government recently constituted a renegotiation team to engage with ASUU, the union has already completed its part of the process, awaiting feedback from the government's representatives.

"We have presented our positions on all the issues in contention, We are now waiting for the government's team to take these positions back to their principals and return to us with



feedback so that we can understand where we both stand." Osodeke said.

However, Osodeke noted that it has been two months since ASUU submitted its proposals, and the government's team has yet to respond.

"The implication of this delay is that the political class does not care about any development for the public university system," he said.

He further criticised the current administration for its lack of meaningful progress in the education sector.

"Under previous governments, there was at least some positive movement on these issues, even if it was just one small thing. But nothing has been forthcoming from this government, No single issue has been permanently resolved since this government came into power over a year ago." Osodeke lamented.

Osodeke went on to highlight the growing disparity between the educational opportunities available to

the rich and the poor.

He said that while the wealthy continue to send their children abroad for education, leaving the children of ordinary Nigerians to suffer in a deteriorating local educational system, the government seems indifferent to the plight of public universities.

"This narrative must change if Nigeria is serious about genuine progress as a country," Osodeke asserted.

ASUU is expected to hold a meeting soon to determine the next course of action in response to the government's inaction.

The union's continued dissatisfaction with the federal government's approach raises the prospect of renewed industrial action, which would further highlight the deepening crisis in Nigeria's public university system.

Former NIMASA DG faults plan to resume oil exploration in Ogoni By Helen Okechukwu

Former House of Representatives member Dakuku Peterside has criticized the plan to restart oil exploration in Ogoni, Rivers State.

Oil exploration in the region was halted in the early 1990s due to public unrest, environmental degradation, and other controversies.

In a February 5 interview with Channels TV, the former Director General of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) emphasized that key issues must be addressed before resuming operations.

Peterside shared his concerns two



weeks after President Tinubu and FCT Minister Nyesom Wike met privately with Ogoni leaders, including Governor Siminalayi Fubara.

“If I must be sincere with you, it would be premature to resume oil

exploration in Ogoni land. What I believe—and what I think the government is also considering—is the need for further consultations, trust-building, and a genuine commitment to environmental governance,” he said.

“The longstanding issue has been the opaque nature of oil exploration, not just in Ogoni but across the Niger Delta. The way the benefits of oil production are distributed, often excluding the people of the region, remains a major concern. Until this is addressed transparently, progress will be difficult to achieve.”

Obasanjo's ex-ADC, Major-Gen Jemitola slumps, dies at IBB Golf Club By Dave Oludare Oso

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo's ex-Aide-de-Camp (ADC), Major General Christopher Jemitola on Thursday slumped at the IBB Golf Course in Abuja and died.

Sources close to his family confirmed that he was quickly rushed to the hospital but was declared dead upon arrival.



The late General was at several times, the Corp Commander Nigerian Army Signals, Nigeria's Defence Adviser to

Brazil and Director of Army Public Relations.

Jemitola who hailed from Ososo in Akoko Edo Local government area of Edo State served as Obasanjo's ADC from 2003 to 2007 while he was still a colonel.

He later became the Chief of Policy and Plans (COPP) in the Nigerian Army before his retirement.

Edo Tribunal: INEC backs out, closes case without witnesses

By Friday Omosola

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has opted not to present witnesses in its defence at the Edo State Election Petition Tribunal in Abuja.

At the tribunal's resumed hearing on Thursday, INEC, represented by its lead counsel, Kanu Agabi, announced that it would not be calling any witnesses to support its declaration of Monday Okpebholo of the All Progressives Congress (APC) as the winner of the September 21 governorship election.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that INEC declared Okpebholo the winner of the Edo governorship election with 291,667 votes, defeating his closest rival, Ighodalo, who polled 247,655 votes.

This decision came as a surprise, given that just a day earlier, INEC informed the Justice Wilfred Kpochi-led panel that it lined up five witnesses to testify in support



of the election results.

The commission even requested an adjournment to allow its witnesses to travel from Benin, Edo State, to Abuja.

However, when proceedings resumed, Agabi told the tribunal that after further consideration, INEC decided to close its defence without presenting any witnesses.

“My Lords, after we left you yesterday, we reconsidered the matter and concluded that the most reasonable course of action was to close the case of the 1st Respondent, which we hereby do”, Agabi stated.

In response, the petitioners—Asue Ighodalo of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and his legal team—said they were not surprised by INEC's decision.

“Frankly speaking, we are not surprised, and it is well within the right of the 1st Respondent to make such a decision. We have no objections,” said PDP's counsel, Adetunji Oyeyipo.

With INEC closing its case, counsel for Governor Okpebholo, Onyechi Ikpeazu and D. C. Dewigwe representing the APC requested an adjournment to prepare their defence.

Fire engulfs Islamic school, kills 17 children, injures 16

By Helen Okechukwu

Over 17 children have reportedly died in a fire outbreak at Tsangaya School (Almajiri school), injuring 16 others in Kaura-Namoda Local Government Area of Zamfara State.

In an interview with Channels Television on Wednesday, Mannir Haidara, the chairperson of Kaura-Namoda Local Government, confirmed the incident, stating that more details would be shared later.

Speaking to a TV station, a resident of the community, Abdul Bello, said the tragic incident occurred at the study



center of Mallam Ghali.

The fire, which started late Tuesday night, raged for four hours and became more severe due to corn and millet stalks

stored on the school premises.

Read Also: UCTH fires Radiographer over patient's death

He confirmed that 17 bodies were recovered and buried on Wednesday.

“There were about 100 students in the house. After they evacuated the students, they thought none were left inside. It was only after the fire was extinguished that they started seeing legs and hands. The victims were burned beyond recognition,” Mr. Bello explained.

Ondo upgrades lab centre to combat Lassa fever

By Helen Okechukwu

Ensuring and combating the emergence of the Lassa fever surge in the state has led the Ondo State Government to upgrade and equip the Public Health Laboratory (PHL) centre.

In collaboration with the Institute of Human Virology (IHVN), the completed laboratory facility will assist the testing centre located at the Federal Medical Centre (FMC) Owo.

The handover ceremony was held on Thursday at the Public Health Laboratory Centre, Reference Hospital, Igbatoro Road, Akure.

The Permanent Secretary, Dr. Adeniran Ikuomola, confirmed over 400 suspected Lassa fever cases were recorded along with 100 cases since the recent outbreak in the state.

During inspection at the health facility, Ikuomola emphasised the importance of upgrading and equipping the laboratory centre to reduce the spread of infectious diseases.

He believes this development will bring the infectious disease under control, especially in managing and detecting any cases.

He further appreciated the collaborative effort of the Ondo State Primary Health Care Development



Agency, CREST 106.1FM, AKURE, and other key partners in the development of health personnel by engaging them in training exercise.

Read Also: Nigeria records 143 confirmed cases of Lassa fever, 22 deaths in early 2025

Ikuomola added, “We have 400 suspected cases and confirmed 100. I would have loved to give you a specific number of deaths. We have recorded some deaths. These efforts are towards reducing fatality. For now we have only Federal Medical Centre, Owo, to conduct testing.

Dr. Dele Sunday, the State Coordinator for the World Health Organisation (WHO), expressed delight in the development and noted the state will witness a drastic

reduction in fatality and prevent further spread across the community.

“The lab here will help to identify cases of Lassa fever on time,” Sunday added.

On behalf of the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Dr. Yetunde Abioye, gave the assurance of the facility’s continuity with the aim of identifying infectious diseases, focusing on the current disease surge.

Mr. Saiki Musa, the epidemiologist and Surveillance Manager, IHVN, explained the need for the support was based on curtailing the spread and improving the efforts in FMC, Owo.

Health org urges for collective commitment to end FGM

By Helen Okechukwu

Eradicating female genital mutilation (FGM), which leaves millions of girls and women with lifelong physical, emotional, and psychological scars, has led to a global call for collective action from health organizations.

By 2030, an estimated 27 million more girls will be affected if the issue is ignored.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Health Organization (WHO) have reaffirmed their commitment to halting this harmful practice, describing it as a violation of human rights.

A report noted that more than 230 million girls and women are currently suffering from the consequences of this practice.

In commemoration of February 6, marking International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, themed "Stepping up the Pace: Strengthening Alliances and Building Movements to End Female Genital Mutilation," the organizations have renewed their call for an end to FGM.

FGM involves the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injuries to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

In a joint statement, the health organizations expressed optimism, highlighting a significant decline in the practice in some countries, such as Kenya and Uganda.

This progress has been credited to



collective actions and community-led initiatives driven by strengthened alliances and movement-building efforts.

Since the launch of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme and WHO's involvement in 2008, over 7 million girls and women have accessed prevention and protection services, while 48 million individuals have publicly declared the abandonment of the practice.

Recounting their achievements, the organizations reported that 220 million people have been reached through mass media campaigns.

"In the last two years, close to 12,000 grassroots organizations and 112,000 community and frontline workers galvanized to effect change at this critical juncture," the statement read.

However, progress remains fragile. Last year, the Gambian parliament attempted to revoke the ban on FGM but rejected the motion. The organizations warned that reversing progress could have severe consequences for future generations.

"Such efforts could gravely undermine the rights, health, and dignity of girls and women, jeopardizing the tireless work done over decades to change attitudes and mobilize communities," they cautioned.

According to collected data, out of 31 countries, only seven are on track to meet the Sustainable Development Goal target for eliminating FGM by 2030. Urgent action is required to end this harmful practice.

Read Also: Trump vows to 'stop transgender lunacy' on 1st day in office

To be effective, stronger alliances among leaders, grassroots organizations, and various sectors—including health, education, and social protection—are essential, alongside increased advocacy and support for survivor centers.

According to WHO, accountability at all levels is crucial to ensuring that human rights commitments are upheld and that policies and strategies are implemented to protect girls at risk while providing care and justice for survivors.

"It also requires increased investment in scaling up proven interventions. We are indebted to generous donors and partners who are supporting this life-changing work and call on others to join them.

The organizations emphasized, "We all have a role to play to ensure that every girl is protected and can live free from harm. Let's step up the pace and act with urgency. The time to end female genital mutilation is now."

How UK's crackdown on student visas is impacting University finances

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

UK universities face financial strain as student visa rules tighten, reducing international enrollments. Rising costs and tuition freezes worsen the crisis.

Since May 2023, the UK government has implemented sweeping changes to student visa policies, limiting the ability of international students to bring dependants. Effective from January 1, 2024, only students enrolled in postgraduate research programs, such as PhD courses, or those receiving government-sponsored scholarships for courses exceeding six months, are allowed to bring family members to the UK. Previously, international students across various academic programs could bring dependants, leading to a surge in dependant visas—from 16,000 in 2019 to approximately 136,000 in 2022.

Between the 2018/19 and 2021/22 academic years, international students significantly boosted the UK economy. In 2018/19, they contributed an estimated £28.8 billion, a figure that surged to £41.9 billion by 2021/22—an increase of 34% over three years. This economic impact included tuition fees, accommodation, living expenses, and other expenditures.

However, a recent Times Higher Education (THE) report reveals that UK universities are now grappling with severe financial difficulties. The study of 2023-24 financial accounts shows a substantial drop in net cash from operating activities. Of 113 universities examined, three-quarters generated less cash than the previous year, and 87% produced less than in 2021-22.

The report found that nearly a quarter of institutions ended the year with a net cash outflow from their core business—rising from 10% in the prior year and just 4% in 2021-22. Collectively, these universities generated £1.2 billion in net cash, a dramatic fall from £2.5 billion and £4.5 billion in previous years.

Bob Rabone, former chair of the British Universities Finance Directors Group (BUFDG), highlighted the severity of the situation. “Until corrected, it will mean an



institution has reduced capacity for future setbacks or to fund future investment,” he warned.

The crisis has led to widespread cost-cutting measures, including faculty layoffs, as universities struggle to cope with rising staff costs, inflation, declining international student enrollment, and changes to visa policies. The median net positive cash inflow per institution dropped to £7 million in 2023-24, compared to £16 million the year before and £27 million in 2021-22.

Some institutions have suffered repeated years of negative cash flow. The Open University reported a negative cash flow of £60.2 million for the third consecutive year, while Queen's University Belfast recorded £26.5 million and the University of Bedfordshire £18.1 million in losses. However, institutions like Oxford and Cambridge reported negative cash flows of £58.6 million and £58.3 million, respectively, due to substantial investment portfolios and variable investment performance rather than operational losses.

Erica Conway, Chair of BUFDG and Director of Finance at the University of Birmingham, attributes the decline to inflation, rising costs, and frozen tuition fees. “I would expect it to take two to three years to turn it all around in full and to see increases in surpluses for this sector—even if there was the ability for us all to grow income, which there is not,” she said.

Despite financial constraints, some

universities have managed to weather the storm. The University of Manchester led in cash generation, reporting £88.7 million, followed by Imperial College London at £81.1 million and the University of Exeter at £75.5 million. According to Conway, these institutions improved their cash flow by increasing international student enrollments or implementing cost-reduction measures.

This analysis also highlights growing financial pressure across the sector. Nearly a third (31%) of UK universities reported underlying deficits after adjustments, up from 22% in 2022-23. Cambridge University, for example, recorded a £16 million operating deficit, primarily due to rising staff costs. Similarly, Durham University posted an £8 million deficit, citing increased operational costs, frozen tuition fees for domestic students, and stricter visa rules for international applicants as major financial challenges.

Despite the economic downturn, Conway remains hopeful that universities can adapt. “It is clear all universities are seeking to address their operating models, and much is going on across the sector,” she said. “This is challenging for us all, but at the same time, it is very positive that we are responding to the market position.”

With UK universities facing increasing financial strain, the coming years will be pivotal in determining how institutions navigate economic sustainability while maintaining their academic excellence.

For how long will the mystery behind Bola Ige's death persist? Why it must be unraveled – Lawyer

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

When Chief James Ajibola Ige, SAN, was murdered on December 23, 2001, few days after resigning his position as Nigeria's Minister of Justice, some thought it would be a matter of days before the assailants would be arrested and brought to justice.

Their optimism was because Ige, a chieftain of the Alliance for Democracy, AD, was not only close to then President Olusegun Obasanjo of the People's Democratic Party, PDP, but was also regarded as Obasanjo's most trusted confidant.

However, 23 years later, the unidentified gunmen who took Ige's life at his residence, Solemilia Court, No 8, Akinlabi Sanda Close, Bodija, Ibadan, Oyo State, remain unknown, let alone being brought to justice. His murder also led to the untimely death of his wife, Atinuke, and destabilized his family.

His political life

Although a Yoruba man, he was born in Kaduna when he had his humble beginning. He later moved to the western part of the country at the age of 13 in 1943 and attended the prestigious Ibadan Grammar School and the University of Ibadan where he studied Classics.

At 23, he became the organizing secretary of the defunct Action Group in 1953. He used his charisma and natural organizational ability to increase the membership of the party far beyond the West where it was founded in 1951 as an offshoot of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa.

He later studied law at the University of London and was called to the inner temple bar in 1961. Upon his return home, he founded Bola Ige & Co, a law firm that produced many legal luminaries across the country.

He was appointed the Commissioner for Agriculture in the Western Region under



the military governorship of General Robert Adeyinka Adebayo between 1967 to 1970 and till today, many still commend his achievements in promoting mechanized farming across the region.

During his tenure as Commissioner for Agriculture, the Agbekoya Riots erupted in Ibadan and its environs. As a skilled diplomat, he tactfully managed the crisis.

In 1978, when Nigeria's Second Republic was about to commence, Ige joined the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), founded by his political mentor, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, SAN. He was subsequently elected Governor of the old Oyo State. When the military took over and the Third Republic was established, Ige became a leader of the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

The current Fourth Republic saw him aspiring to be the presidential candidate of the AD, a position he lost to Dr Olu Falae who eventually lost the general election to Obasanjo. But despite being in an opposition party, Ige was still part of the Obasanjo cabinet and first served as the Minister of Power before being moved to the Justice Ministry.

He was about to take up a new position as Africa's Representative on the United Nations International Law Commission

when he was gunned down in Ibadan, Oyo state.

Controversy over his death

Some believe that he was killed because of political reasons. When he resigned as minister, he stated that he was going home to rebuild the AD, the major opposition party then.

Renowned Nobel Laureate, Prof. Wole Soyinka, recently remarked on Ige's assassination, saying:

"We have a phenomenon of unsolved murders, and we know that some of them result from corrupt forces. A notorious example is the assassination of Bola Ige in his bedroom. This was not a case of political rivalry or contestation. He was killed by the forces of corruption."

Ige had been involved in internal party disputes within the Alliance for Democracy (AD), leading to speculation that political figures orchestrated his murder. Many pointed fingers at the then Deputy Governor of Osun State, Iyiola Omisore, due to his longstanding conflict with Osun Governor, Chief Bisi Akande.

The feud between Akande and Omisore led to chaos in the Osun State House of Assembly. The Assembly attempted to impeach Chief Bisi Akande, citing 22 allegations, including his failure to assent to bills and implement laws.

It was evident that Bola Ige, as a key leader of AD, strongly supported Akande. The strained relationship between Akande and Omisore escalated tensions at the State Assembly, ultimately resulting in the tragic death of Odunayo Olagbaju, a prominent member of the House representing Ife Central Local Government Area.

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A week after the attack on Ige at Ooni's palace, he was killed in his home in Ibadan. Omisore alongside others were arrested and arraigned before an Oyo State High Court as part of the suspected killers of the former Attorney General of the Federation but were later released for lack of evidence.

Reacting to this in his autobiography, Akande said "there was enough evidence that the government of President Obasanjo was reluctant to find the killers of Bola Ige." According to him, his summon to Abuja to meet with Obasanjo and the involvement of Omisore in the wake of the assassination was a fundamental poser that the government was bent on sweeping the murder of the attorney-general under the carpet.

"When I was about to board the aircraft on my return trip back to Ibadan, I saw Omisore. The jet had gone ahead to bring Omisore to Ibadan. What they told him I did not know. So why try to bring us together for a chat? All this created suspicion in my mind that cover-up was actively in the offing. That was why I concluded that the Federal Government was complicit in the assassination of Uncle Bola Ige."

Omisore was to later help the All Progressives Congress, APC, of which Akande was a former National Chairman, to win the September 22, 2018 governorship election in Osun State. It was a close race in which Ademola Adeleke of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) led with 254,698 votes ahead of Gboyega Oyetola of APC, who polled 254,345 votes.

Omisore was to later help the All Progressives Congress, APC, of which Akande was a former National Chairman, to win the September 22, 2018 governorship election in Osun State. It was a close race in which Ademola Adeleke of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) led with 254,698 votes ahead of Gboyega Oyetola of APC, who polled 254,345 votes.

Omisore, who contested on the platform of the SDP, came a distant third with 128,049 votes, he immediately became the beautiful bride to be courted by his two leading rivals after the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) declared the election inconclusive on the ground that the 353 votes margin between Messrs Adeleke and Oyetola was lower than the number of cancelled votes (3,498) in seven polling units.

Delegations from both the APC and PDP met with Omisore after the first ballot of the 2018 poll but he eventually threw his support behind APC, saying the ruling party had accepted the conditions he gave them. Omisore, who was facing several charges by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission EFCC, took the offer from the APC as he was allegedly promised a soft landing in his case with the anti-graft agency. The supposed offer was that; his seized travel passport would be released, his case with the anti-graft agency dismissed and his frozen bank account unfrozen. Omisore later joined the APC and even served as the National Secretary of the party.

Akande, Ladoja squabbles over Ige's death

As it has become a public matter for discussion since 2001, the controversy over Ige's death few days ago reared its head. It was Akande who started it all over against by insinuating that former Oyo State Governor, Chief Rashidi Ladoja, was instrumental to the withdrawal of the Ige case from the court.

Reacting to the issue, Ladoja said Akande must withdraw his claims and apologise or be ready to face legal actions.

"All options will be taken, including legal action against Akande except he withdraws his statement and tenders a public apology," Ladoja said.

Reflecting on the issue in an interview, Akande, who was Osun governor at the time of the murder, lamented that key figures who might have shed more light on the case, including a former Oyo State

Governor, Alhaji Lam Adesina, had died. He alleged that Ladoja discontinued a case filed by Adesina, seeking to unravel Ige's murderer.

"There are many things that die with people. I know Lam Adesina went to court over the matter, and I also know his successor, (Rashidi) Ladoja withdrew the case. Ask Ladoja, he would know more about Bola Ige's death," Akande said.

"Lam Adesina was the Chief Security Officer of Oyo State and he went to court and the governor that took over from him, Ladoja, withdrew the case from court. He might be able to tell you more. I believe he has more information on Bola Ige's death," Akande insisted.

However, Ladoja accused Akande of muddling up facts and lying against him, insinuating that Akande might be suffering from old-age memory loss.

"Chief Bola Ige was assassinated on December 23, 2001 — 18 months before I got to the office. I got the government on May 29, 2003, and Chief Ige was assassinated on December 23, 2001, which was 18 months before I got to office.

Why Ige's death must be unravelled – Lawyer

A rights activist and lawyer, Tolu Ayodele, stated that, no matter how long it takes, Bola Ige's murder must be unraveled. Explaining the significance of resolving the case, he argued that it would provide valuable lessons for Nigerians about the dynamics of political affairs in the country.

"There is no doubt that the murder of the former Justice Minister had elements of state involvement. It might not have been sponsored by the state, but it could be that some people did it and hung it on the state. You know a lot of things do happen within the political sphere. Some people can do some things, thinking they are helping those in power or doing such to protect their interests. That is how I see the issue.

I battled memory loss after childbirth – Olayinka Solomon

By Michael Damilola

Popular Nollywood actress Olayinka Solomon has opened up about her struggles with memory loss and emotional changes after childbirth.

In a candid Instagram post, she shared details of her postpartum experience, sparking discussions among women who have faced similar challenges.

On Wednesday, Solomon took to social media to ask fellow mothers about the changes they noticed after giving birth.

Her post quickly went viral, drawing reactions from fans and fellow mothers who resonated with her struggles.

“Postpartum mom. What changed after childbirth?” she wrote. “For me, I get angry over little things, and I struggle with memory loss. We could have a conversation now, and the next minute, I don’t remember what we discussed. Also, I never feel full. I eat now, and moments later, I’m hungry again.”

Her words struck a chord with many, highlighting the often-overlooked realities of postpartum life. Women flooded her comment section with personal experiences, offering support and sharing similar struggles.

The hidden challenges of motherhood Solomon’s post sheds light on the emotional and physical toll childbirth takes on women. While society often celebrates the joy of welcoming a new baby, the postpartum period brings significant changes that many mothers endure in silence.

Memory loss, mood swings, and constant hunger are just a few symptoms that some women experience after giving birth.



Experts say hormonal fluctuations, sleep deprivation, and stress contribute to these issues.

Medical professionals explain that postpartum memory loss, often called “mommy brain,” is common. It results from a combination of hormonal shifts, exhaustion, and the overwhelming responsibilities of caring for a newborn.

While temporary in most cases, it can affect daily activities and leave new mothers feeling frustrated or isolated.

Many women in Solomon’s comment section shared their own experiences. Some spoke about postpartum depression and anxiety, while others discussed the drastic changes they noticed in their emotions, body, and appetite.

Several commenters encouraged new mothers to seek medical attention if they experience prolonged or severe symptoms.

Fans and fellow celebrities react Following Solomon’s post, fans and fellow Nollywood stars flooded her page with messages of encouragement and support. Many commended her for speaking out about an issue that is rarely

discussed in the entertainment industry.

One fan wrote, “Thank you for being real about this. Many women go through it but are too scared to talk.” Another said, “I thought I was the only one who felt this way. Your words mean a lot.”

Actress and producer Toyin Abraham also showed support, commenting, “Postpartum is not easy. We need to keep talking about it.”

By sharing her journey, Solomon has helped normalize discussions around postpartum struggles, reminding mothers that they are not alone.

A new chapter for Olayinka Solomon The actress recently welcomed her fourth child with her husband, who is based in the United States. On January 9, 2025, she announced the birth of her baby, receiving warm congratulations from fans and colleagues.

Despite the challenges, Solomon remains optimistic. She continues to engage with her followers, using her platform to raise awareness about postpartum issues. Her transparency has sparked a much-needed conversation about maternal health, encouraging more women to speak openly about their experiences.

Moving to Nigeria one of my best decisions – TolaniBaj

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Tolanibaj, reality TV star and DJ, reflects on her life-changing decision to move from the U.S. to Nigeria, calling it one of her best choices.

In a candid post shared on her X (formerly Twitter) account, Tolanibaj expressed how, at the time, the idea of making such a move didn't entirely make sense to her.

However, she chose to take the leap and trust her instincts, which she now considers one of the best choices she has ever made.

A leap of faith

Reflecting on her journey, Tolanibaj shared that it has now been six years since she made the bold decision to leave the U.S. and start anew in Nigeria.

Over the years, she has embraced the country's vibrant culture, and she couldn't be more thrilled with how things have turned out.

Tolanibaj's message resonated with many of her fans as she wrote, "Honestly, one of the best choices I ever made in life was relocating to Nigeria. I'm grateful to God for the timing of my move. The thought of moving didn't make complete sense to me at the time, but it just felt right, and I took the risk. It's been six interesting years, and I couldn't be happier."

Trusting instincts and taking risks

Her post highlights the risks she took in pursuit of something greater. Despite the uncertainties surrounding her move, Tolanibaj was guided by a feeling that



nudged her forward.

She now encourages others to trust their own instincts when faced with challenging decisions, emphasizing that sometimes taking a risk can lead to immense growth and happiness.

A story of change and growth

Tolanibaj's relocation story also speaks to the theme of change and personal growth. Born in Chicago, Illinois, on October 20, 1993, she initially grew up in the United States before making the decision to move to Nigeria.

Although the move came with its own set of challenges, she has since flourished in her career and personal life, establishing herself as a prominent figure in the Nigerian entertainment industry.

Rising to fame on Big Brother Naija

She rose to national prominence in 2020 when she participated in the Big Brother Naija reality show.

Tolanibaj's time on the show allowed her to showcase her bold personality,

creativity, and resilience, qualities that have continued to define her brand.

Since her stint on the show, she has gone on to make a significant impact in both the entertainment and music industries, carving a niche for herself as a versatile and influential public figure.

Overcoming uncertainty and finding success

Looking back, Tolanibaj admits that her initial uncertainty about moving to Nigeria was a natural response to the fear of the unknown.

However, with time, she learned to embrace the challenges and opportunities that the relocation brought.

Today, she has become a source of inspiration to many, demonstrating that sometimes the hardest decisions can lead to the most rewarding outcomes.

A reminder to take risks

Her story serves as a powerful reminder that taking risks is often a necessary step toward achieving one's goals.

In the fast-paced world of entertainment and business, Tolanibaj's journey shows that success often lies on the other side of uncertainty.

The path to greater accomplishments

As she continues to make waves in the Nigerian entertainment scene, Tolanibaj's decision to move to Nigeria remains one of the most defining moments of her career.

Portable reacts as govt seals his properties

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Portable has voiced frustration after the Ogun State government sealed his uncompleted building and hotel in Sango-Ota over claims of illegal development.

The properties were sealed off over claims of illegal development, an action that has sparked an outcry from the artist.

Portable shares his allegations on social media

In a post on his Instagram account, the 'Zazu' hitmaker revealed that the Ogun State Planning and Development Authority (OSPDA) was responsible for sealing the properties.

According to Portable, the authorities not only shut down his businesses but also took severe actions against his employees and customers.

Detentions and confiscations during the operation

The singer claimed that more than 20 individuals, including both workers and customers, were detained during the operation.

He also accused the government of seizing the alcoholic beverages from his bar, Odowgu Bar and Food, located on the premises.

Portable's response: A call for fairness and support

In a now-deleted Instagram post, Portable expressed his disbelief and frustration, stating, "I believe in Eledumare. Nobody can fool me, Omo Olohun. They packed everybody, took more than 20 people, both artists and customers, and they packed cars, bikes, including people's phones and jobs.

All the people that came for help, they packed them and sealed my new



uncompleted building and hotel. Why? In my hometown, and we didn't fight back, they packed all the drinks we were selling at Odowgu Bar and Food. Why? Government should please look into this."

A venue for events and community support

Portable further explained that the establishment was meant to serve drinks and a venue where he hosted events and shows.

He highlighted that it played an important role in supporting local talent and providing an avenue for people to come together.

"I am using this place to book events and shows, not only for drinks. I am promoting people and helping people here," he continued in the post.

Portable's efforts to cooperate with the government

The singer took the opportunity to express his disappointment, claiming that he had previously tried to cooperate with the government.

According to Portable, he had made efforts to improve the area by providing lighting and even reaching out to the

authorities for road repairs before the incident.

"The government should ask, I put light everywhere, and before the government came for road repairs, I called them to help us," he said.

Why Portable questions the government's actions

He also stressed that his actions were motivated by the desire to support his community and provide for his family. "Why will they do this at my property, which I am using to feed my family?" Portable questioned.

Portable's altercation with government officials

In his post, he recounted an additional altercation with government officials. He claimed that after the sealing of the properties, he was attacked while at a separate location, an incident he attributed to the government's actions.

Despite these challenges, he remained steadfast in his faith, concluding his statement with a reminder that "God is greater than them."

Ogun state planning and development authority's silence

The controversy has yet to receive an official response from the Ogun State Planning and Development Authority, and the allegations against the government remain unaddressed at the time of writing.

Wider implications for building regulations and the entertainment industry

This incident has raised concerns about the state's enforcement of building regulations, especially when it involves influential individuals in the entertainment industry.

Ayra Starr's mom encourages Gen Z to help parents join TikTok for mental health

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Ayra Starr's mother encourages women aged 40-60 to join TikTok, highlighting its mental health benefits and creativity-boosting potential.

She also called on Gen Z to actively support their parents as they dive into the platform.

Personal transformation through TikTok

In a recent interview, she reflected on her personal journey with TikTok, sharing how joining the platform has transformed her mindset.

According to her, the experience has sparked her creativity, especially in areas such as fashion, and allowed her to view life from a fresh perspective.

TikTok helps with mental well-being

"I encourage women in their 40s, 50s, and 60s to embrace TikTok. It's truly beneficial for your mental well-being," she said. "Since I've joined, my thinking has changed. I'm constantly thinking about how to create new ideas, how to express myself through my style, and how I want to present myself. It's a great way to explore creativity."

Beyond dance: TikTok as a creative platform

Her message extends beyond just her personal experience. She believes that TikTok isn't just a place for entertainment or viral dances. It offers a unique opportunity for older generations to express their creativity while connecting with others in meaningful ways.



"There's no need to dance like I do if that's not your thing," she continued. "I enjoy dancing, but the platform is about more than that. It's about sharing experiences, teaching life lessons, and expressing creativity in whatever form feels right for you."

Bridging generations through creativity

By encouraging older women to join TikTok, she envisions a space where both young and older generations can learn from one another. The platform, she argues, has the potential to bridge the generational gap, allowing for greater understanding and mutual support between the two age groups.

Supporting parents in exploring TikTok

Her advice to younger generations is clear: support your parents and loved ones in exploring the platform. Instead of dismissing TikTok as a tool for just dancing or trends, she believes it's an invaluable outlet for self-expression, creativity, and mental wellness.

"It's essential for Gen Z to help their parents get on TikTok," she said. "It's not just about being entertained; it's about using the platform for growth and

creativity. It helps you stay mentally active and allows you to connect with the world in new and exciting ways."

TikTok as an empowering tool for mental wellness

The benefits of social media are often debated, especially when it comes to its impact on mental health. However, for this mother, TikTok has been a source of empowerment and rejuvenation. She believes it's not just for the younger crowd but also for those looking for an outlet to spark creativity and engage with a global community.

The evolution of TikTok: More than just trends

TikTok, which has skyrocketed in popularity in recent years, has evolved into a platform that offers much more than just dance challenges and lip-syncing. With its diverse range of content, it's become a space where users can explore everything from fashion and art to cooking and wellness, making it a perfect platform for women of all ages.

Conclusion: Embrace TikTok for creativity and connection

In conclusion, the message is clear: TikTok can be a powerful tool for women in their 40s, 50s, and 60s. It's an opportunity to foster creativity, connect with others, and support mental health.

By embracing the platform, these women can enrich their lives while also contributing to the vibrant global community on TikTok.

Police rearrest Tiktoker Seaking in court

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Lagos police rearrest popular TikToker Seaking at Magistrate Court despite his bail, then transfer him to Abuja, sparking legal and public outcry.

Moments after his court appearance, officers took him into custody and swiftly transported him to Abuja. Legal experts are calling the move a blatant violation of due process.

Arrest and court proceedings

Seaking was first arrested on December 20, 2024, and appeared in court for a remand hearing on December 23. The police requested a 30-day detention, but the Magistrate denied their plea. Instead, the court granted him bail and ordered the police to forward the case file to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) for legal review.

Despite the court's ruling, the prosecution failed to appear at a scheduled hearing on January 16, 2025. The absence led to an adjournment. When proceedings resumed on February 6, a police prosecutor requested more time to comply with the court's instructions. The Magistrate set a seven-day deadline and adjourned the case until March 25.

Sudden rearrest sparks outrage

Shortly after the hearing, police officers rearrested Seaking within the court premises. He was first taken to the Lagos State Police Command in Ikeja. From there, officers moved him to Murtala Muhammed Airport,



where they flew him to Abuja.

The unexpected development has sparked backlash from legal experts and human rights activists. Inibehe Effiong, a prominent lawyer representing Seaking, strongly condemned the police action.

“This is nothing short of an outrageous abuse of power. The police initiated legal proceedings in Lagos, yet they have taken the law into their own hands by rearresting a man who is out on bail,” Effiong stated.

He called on Inspector General of Police Kayode Egbetokun to intervene and order Seaking's immediate release.

Legal experts decry police actions

Many legal analysts argue that this incident highlights the Nigeria Police Force's disregard for court rulings and judicial processes. Some say that such actions erode public trust in the

legal system and raise concerns about lawlessness within law enforcement agencies.

“This is not just about one individual,” said legal analyst Gbenga Adebayo. “It sets a dangerous precedent where the police can simply ignore court rulings and act as they please. If the courts are undermined, then justice is at risk.”

Public reaction and next steps

The case has drawn widespread attention, with many Nigerians taking to social media to express their outrage. Activists have warned that if unchecked, this could encourage further abuses of power by security agencies.

All eyes are now on the Inspector General of Police and the judiciary. How they respond to this case could determine the future of judicial independence in Nigeria.

Trump defends Gaza proposal, says Israel will release territory

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Donald Trump doubled down on controversial plans for the Gaza Strip on Thursday, saying the Palestinian enclave would be “turned over to the United States by Israel” once the war there ends.

The comments in a string of posts on Truth Social followed his proposal for the U.S. to “take over” and “develop” Gaza, which were derided by rivals and even questioned by close allies earlier this week.

Israeli officials did not immediately comment on Trump’s latest comments, though in an interview on Fox News on Wednesday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised Trump’s initial proposal.

Asked to comment on Trump’s statements on Thursday, a spokesperson referred NBC News to the Fox News interview. Later, Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said Israel does not have details on Trump’s Gaza plan, according to Reuters.

In his post on Truth Social, Trump suggested that Palestinians could be “resettled in far safer and more beautiful communities, with new and modern homes, in the region,” adding fresh confusion to discrepancies in his stance on the future of Palestinians in Gaza.

Palestinians repair their temporary homes during windy weather in Deir Al Balah, central Gaza, on Thursday. Ali Jadallah / Anadolu via Getty Images

Trump also said that “no soldiers by the U.S. would be needed! Stability for the region would reign!!!”

Trump’s Truth Social post comes after contradictory comments Tuesday on whether he foresaw Palestinians being able to live in a future Gaza that he described as the “riviera of the Middle East.” He initially suggested that Palestinians could be



permanently removed, before adding they would be able to live there, alongside others, after Gaza was rebuilt.

Trump’s proposal to seize control of Gaza and potentially oust the roughly 2.2 million Palestinians who live there has sparked anger, fear and disbelief across the Middle East and around the world, with some officials, analysts and human rights groups saying the plan is tantamount to ethnic cleansing.

The proposal has been widely condemned as dismissing the Palestinian cause — the bid for internationally recognized statehood. And it has also been a painful reminder for Palestinians of the 1948 “Nakba,” when some 700,000 Palestinians fled or were forced from their homes during the creation of Israel.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas rejected Trump’s bid to take over Gaza, saying Palestinian leaders would “not allow any infringement on the rights of our people,” calling the effort a “serious violation of international law.”

White House spokesperson Karoline Leavitt on Wednesday evening said the president was “committed to rebuilding Gaza and to temporarily relocating”

Palestinians during those reconstruction efforts. Leavitt also said Trump had not committed to sending any troops to Gaza as part of his plans.

Israel, along with Egypt, has maintained a land, air and sea blockade on Gaza since 2007 when Hamas took power two years after Israel withdrew from the territory after a 38-year occupation.

The majority of United Nations member countries recognize Gaza as part of an independent state, though both Israel and the United States do not recognize Palestinian statehood.

In his Truth Social post Thursday, Trump, who gained fame as a real estate mogul and television personality, said the U.S. would work with “great development teams from all over the World” and would “slowly and carefully begin the construction of what would become one of the greatest and most spectacular developments of its kind on Earth.”

The president also mentioned Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., in his post, though it was not clear exactly what he meant by his reference to the Democrat.

Argentina plans to withdraw from WHO, echoing Trump

By Dave Oludare Oso

Argentina's president has ordered the country's withdrawal from the World Health Organization due to "profound differences" with the U.N. agency, a presidential spokesperson said Wednesday.

President Javier Milei's decision echoes that of his ally, U.S. President Donald Trump, who began the process of pulling the United States out of WHO with an executive order on his first day back in office on January 20.

The loss of another member country will further fracture cooperation in global health, though Argentina was expected to provide only about \$8 million to WHO for the agency's estimated \$6.9 billion 2024-25 budget.

Argentina's decision is based on "profound differences in health management, especially during the [Covid-19] pandemic," spokesperson Manuel Adorni told a news conference in Buenos Aires. He said WHO guidelines at the time led to the largest shutdown "in the history of mankind."

Argentina will not allow an international organization to intervene in its sovereignty "and much less in our health," he added.

WHO has no authority to compel countries to take specific health actions, and the organization's guidelines and recommendations, including in health crises like



Covid-19, are often disregarded.

WHO said it was looking into Argentina's announcement.

Adorni did not say when Milei's decision would be implemented. He also asserted that WHO lacks independence because of the political influence of some countries, without naming any.

WHO is the only organization mandated to coordinate global responses to acute health crises, particularly outbreaks of new diseases and persistent threats including Ebola, AIDS and mpox.

Milei was a sharp critic of the lockdown imposed by former President Alberto Fernandez during the pandemic, asserting that it hurt the economy and that the government used it as a mechanism of "repression."

"LONG LIVE FREEDOM," Milei said Wednesday in a post on X criticizing the U.N. agency.

Argentina does not receive WHO funding for health management, and the president's decision doesn't affect the quality of health services, Adorni said.

"On the contrary, it gives greater flexibility to implement policies adopted to the context of interests that Argentina requires," he added.

Last year, Milei's government refused to sign an agreement to manage pandemics within the WHO framework, on the grounds that doing so could affect national sovereignty.

The announcement on the WHO comes ahead of Milei's trip to the U.S. later this month that will coincide with the Conservative Political Action Conference summit of right-wing leaders in Washington.

The spokesperson has not confirmed that Milei will attend or that he might meet Trump.

India threatens mass deportation of illegal migrants

By Dave Oludare Oso

A day after a US military airplane offloaded 104 Indian migrants as part of President Donald Trump's overhaul of immigration, the foreign minister of India, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar has threatened a "strong crackdown" on illegal migration.

Jaishankar told parliament on Thursday, "It is the obligation of all countries to take back their nationals if they are found to be living illegally abroad."

Thousands of unregistered migrants have been arrested across the United States since Trump's inauguration on January 20.

Trump's flurry of executive actions aimed at overhauling immigration to the United States is estimated to impact 11 million undocumented migrants.

Chief of the US Border Patrol Michael W. Banks said the return of "illegal aliens to India" marked "the farthest deportation flight yet using military transport."

Banks included in social media post on Wednesday a video showing a shuffling line of shackled migrants boarding military aircraft.

New Delhi was "engaging the US



government to ensure that the returning deportees are not mistreated in any manner during the flight", Jaishankar said.

But he noted the "process of deportation is not a new one," and that the United States had expelled more than 15,000 Indians since 2009, almost half of them between 2019-

"Our focus should be on crackdown — strong crackdown — on the illegal migration industry, while taking steps to ease visas for the legitimate traveller," Jaishankar said.

India is the world's fifth-largest economy and enjoys world-beating GDP growth, but hundreds of thousands of its citizens still leave the country each year seeking better

opportunities abroad.

While its diaspora spans the globe, the United States remains the destination of choice.

New Delhi is pressing for a more liberal US visa regime for India's highly skilled pool of engineers, doctors, and other experts.

Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi — whom critics both accuse of authoritarian tendencies — enjoyed warm relations during his first term in the White House from 2017 to 2021.

Indian media have widely reported Modi is likely to visit Washington next week, where he is expected to meet with Trump.

Panama's president tells US to stop 'lies and falsehoods' about canal

By Dave Oludare Oso

President José Raúl Mulino's comments came after the State Department claimed U.S. government vessels would be able to pass through the Panama Canal without paying.

Panama President José Raúl Mulino said on Thursday the U.S. was spreading "lies and falsehoods" after the State Department claimed U.S. government vessels would be able to pass through the Panama Canal without paying.

The comments were likely to exacerbate tensions between the two countries after the U.S. had cited progress on military cooperation and confronting alleged Chinese influence over the canal.

Later, Mulino added on social media that he would speak to U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday afternoon.

Panama has been in the White House's crosshairs since Trump claimed the country's vital waterway had effectively been taken over by China and vowed the U.S. was "taking it back."

Speaking to journalists, Mulino expressed his "absolute rejection" that the two countries' relations be "based on lies and falsehoods."

The U.S. State Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The White House also did not immediately respond.

The Panama Canal Authority issued



a statement late on Wednesday, rejecting the State Department's claim that Panama's government had agreed to no longer charge crossing fees for U.S. government vessels, a move that would save the U.S. millions of dollars a year.

Trump has accused the Central American country of charging excessive rates to use its trade passage, one of the busiest in the world.

U.S. military vessels have priority of passage through the waterway, according to a 1977 neutrality treaty signed when the U.S. agreed to return the canal to Panama. But all ships, regardless of origin, destination or flag, must pay tolls that vary depending on size and type.

"Why are they making an important institutional statement from the entity that governs the foreign policy of the U.S., under the president of the U.S., based on a falsehood?" Mulino asked, calling the claim "simply and

plainly intolerable."

Mulino said he asked his ambassador in Washington to take "firm steps" to reject the claims made by the Trump administration.

Earlier this week, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio met with Mulino in Panama during a trip through Central America.

After the visit, Rubio welcomed in China's Belt and Road Initiative, a vast global infrastructure plan led by Beijing, calling the move "a great step forward" for bilateral ties.

On Thursday, Mulino said Panama had formally presented a document to exit the Belt and Road Initiative but denied the decision had been made at the request of the U.S., adding he was taking time to evaluate Panama's relationship with China and what was best for the country.

Trump moves to sanction International Criminal Court

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Donald Trump will on Thursday sign an executive order sanctioning the International Criminal Court, accusing the body of improperly targeting the United States and Israel, according to a copy of a fact sheet supporting the order obtained by NBC News.

The order will include both financial sanctions and visa restrictions against unspecified ICC officials and their family members found to have assisted in investigations of U.S. citizens or allies.

Last November, the ICC sparked bipartisan backlash in Washington by issuing arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, former Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant and several Hamas leaders simultaneously. The Trump administration order claims this created a “shameful moral equivalency.”

The court said there was reason to believe that Netanyahu and Gallant used “starvation as a method of warfare” by restricting humanitarian aid and intentionally targeting civilians in Israel’s campaign in Gaza — charges Israeli



officials dismissed as false and antisemitic.

The expected signing of this order this afternoon appears timed to the Netanyahu’s visit to Washington, which included an Oval Office meeting Tuesday.

In his first term, Trump argued that the ICC has “no jurisdiction, no legitimacy and no authority” in the U.S., and neither the U.S. nor Israel are parties to the so-called Rome Statute, which established the court.

“The ICC was designed to be a court of last resort,” the fact sheet on the executive order reads. “Both the United States and Israel maintain robust judiciary systems and should never be subject to the jurisdiction

of the ICC.”

Earlier this year, the House passed a bill to sanction the ICC that was later blocked by Democrats the Senate.

Neither Israel nor the U.S. recognizes the jurisdiction of the ICC, which is based in The Hague, Netherlands, and has no police to enforce its warrants.

Under the Rome statute that created it, signatories are obliged to carry out arrest warrants, no matter the rank of the accused. But most governments also abide by the international legal principle that heads of state have legal immunity from other courts.

Why I snubbed Lyon, Aston Villa – Nigerian wonderkid

By Dave Oludare Oso

Nigeria's U-20 teenage prodigy, Kpaboro Arierhri, has revealed why he snubbed Aston Villa and Olympique Lyonnais to sign for Norwegian side, Lillestrøm SK.

The 18-year-old striker was a part of the Beyond Limits Football Academy team that won the 2024 Viareggio Cup in Italy. Arierhri scored against C.N Brazzaville in the tournament's final to gift his side the trophy, as they made history, becoming the first African team to win the prestigious trophy.

Arierhri's rise at Beyond Limits saw him linked with several local and European clubs, but he already had a pre-contract in place with Lillestrøm last year, and the finer details of the deal were completed this year.

Despite several offers from top European sides, Arierhri revealed why he chose to sign



for Lillestrom, highlighting his development is paramount to him at this stage of his career.

"I wanted to have the opportunity to play as a first team, which is why I chose to sign with Lillestrom Sportsklubb, despite the interest of Aston Villa and Olympique Lyonnais.

"Signing my first professional contract with Lillestrom Sportsklubb is an incredible sensation, I'm making my dream come true. My goal is to win in the first team, to score a lot of goals and to help the team win matches," the Nigeria U-20 striker said in quotes revealed by Africa Foot.

During the Viareggio Cup, he scored five goals in five games and scored another four times in five games as Beyond Limits Football Academy lost the final of the Gothia Cup to the Sporting Lagos Academy in Sweden.

His decision to join Lillestrom's first team is a bold one, but he'll get to play professional football with the first team, than risk being loaned out if he joined the bigger guns. He's a gem of a talent, and with consistency, a move to the top-five leagues will come knocking.

Liverpool defeat Tottenham 4-0 to reach Carabao Cup final for a 15th time

By Oluwatosin Ologun

The reigning champions of the Carabao Cup, Liverpool will take their to Wembley after defeating Ange Postecoglou's men at Anfield.

Tottenham Hotspur had a 1-0 lead from the first leg, but the competition holders have won 4-1 on aggregate after a comfortable 4-0 win on the night.

Cody Gakpo opened the scoring with a sweet volley first-half volley and the floodgates opened in the second half. Mohamed Salah doubled the lead from the penalty spot before a smart finish from Dominik Szoboszlai and Virgil van Dijk's header completed the rout.

Liverpool will face Newcastle United — who beat Arsenal 4-0 over two legs — at Wembley Stadium on Sunday, March 16.

Slot looking forward to first Wembley visit

A first visit to Wembley Stadium for Arne Slot as a manager and one he is really looking forward to, especially so early in his first season.

"In Holland, we only have one cup competition and the final is played at the end of the season. So it's a new experience, but it's a nice one," he told Sky Sports. "It's a special stadium for English people but also for Dutch people. We know the history of that stadium.

"I'm very pleased to go there but we know we are going to face a very, very tough opponent. I saw them yesterday and I've seen them this season. They're a very good team but they're going to face a very good team."



Arne Slot, who is having a magnificent debut season at Liverpool, had a wide grin on his face as he spoke to Sky Sports — he was asked if tonight was his most special night in the job so far.

"Because it results in a final? Maybe," he said. "But we've had some big nights here already with (Bayer) Leverkusen, with (Manchester) City, with (Real) Madrid and I'm probably forgetting a few.

"But to reach a final should always be special and that's what it is."

Postecoglou: We had a great opportunity and didn't grab it

Ange Postecoglou was then asked if he felt lonely in his technical area this evening.

"It's not an emotion I feel," he told Sky Sports. "I'm disappointed we weren't able to give a better account of ourselves today and give ourselves a chance to get to a final.

"(The players are) very disappointed.

We had a great opportunity and, unfortunately, we didn't grab it."

Asked about the rest of the season, Postecoglou said: "There's still plenty to play for this year for us. We've got a big (FA Cup) game at (Aston) Villa on Sunday and that's where our focus goes."

Ange Postecoglou looked very deflated when he spoke to Sky Sports at full time.

"Ultimately, Liverpool fully deserved the victory tonight," he said.

"They were far the better team, we just weren't able to get a grip in any part of the game defensively or with the ball. (They were) too good for us. We allowed them to get into the game, we weren't as aggressive as we needed to be.

"We didn't start the game on the right foot and allowed them to get comfortable. Once they got comfortable, it was very difficult for us to wrestle that control back."

Torres hat-trick leads five-star Barca to 5-0 cup demolition of Valencia

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Ferran Torres fired a 30-minute hat-trick as Barcelona booked their place in the Copa del Rey semifinals with a 5-0 win at Valencia.

The Barca forward opened the scoring in the third minute at Estadio de Mestalla on Thursday, as he burst through the home side's offside trap to slot home a first-time finish. His second was a tap-in after Lamine Yamal struck the post.

By the time the hat-trick was sealed, with a flick from Raphinha on the edge of the box and a drilled effort into the bottom corner, Barca had already put themselves out of sight with another breach of the Valencia backline by Fermin Lopez.

Yamal, who had a quiet first half, was far livelier in the second and sealed the win in the 59th minute with a deflected effort, which wrong-footed the keeper. The Spanish international had already struck the post with a trademark curling effort after cutting inside onto his left foot.

Barca, who opened their league season with a 2-1 win on the same ground, thumped Valencia 7-1 at home in the reverse fixture on January 26. Hansi Flick's side, who are third in LaLiga, also hit seven at Valladolid in August.

Another mauling was on the cards for Carlos Corberan's beleaguered side, who sit second bottom of the Spanish league – four points from safety with only four wins in 22 matches.



Torres's second strike had initially been disallowed for offside, only for VAR to intervene and overrule the referee's assistant.

The pause for the decision was about as much respite as the home side were to enjoy in a half of ruthless and relentless running from Barca.

The ease with which they either sliced through the Valencia defence, as for the second and fourth goals, or broke clean through, as with the first and third, will be as great a concern for Corberan as it is a delight for Flick.

To the relief of the home support, who were making their way to the exits as early as Barca's third goal, the second half was a more sedate affair as the away side took their foot off the gas.

Lopez's hat-trick is the fastest for Barcelona since Samuel Eto'o

registered three goals in the opening 28 minutes of a LaLiga match against Almeria in 2008.

The record 31-time winners of the competition have not reached the semifinals since being eliminated by Real Madrid in 2022-2023, while they last won the competition in 2020-21, having been defeated by Valencia in the final two seasons before.

Real Sociedad earlier booked their place in the last four with a 2-0 home win against Osasuna thanks to first-half strikes from Barrenetxea and Brais Mendez.

Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid, who meet in a first versus second league derby at Santiago Bernabeu on Saturday, booked their places in the semifinals with victories over Lagunes and Getafe, respectively, earlier in the week.