

FG unveils emergency helplines to tackle kidnapping, terrorism Pg 2



FG begins payment of N50k monthly stipends to 10,000 youths Pg 4



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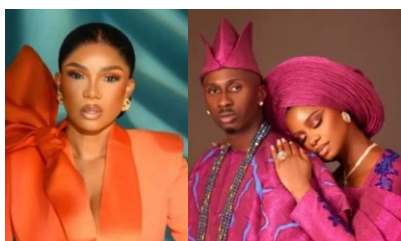
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FG unveils emergency helplines to tackle kidnapping, terrorism

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

As part of efforts to tackle the growing menace of insecurity, especially ransom-driven abductions, the Federal Government has activated the toll-free 112 emergency number for Nigerians to report kidnappings and other security threats.

Nigerians, on Thursday, woke to the sad news of the gruesome murder of a member of the Anambra State House of Assembly, Hon. Justice Azuka, who, despite paying a ransom sum of N100 million, was killed by his abductors.

Disclosing this fresh initiative during a press briefing on the activities of the Multi-Agency Anti-Kidnap Fusion Cell under the Office of the National Security Adviser in Abuja on Thursday, the National Coordinator of the National Counter Terrorism Centre, Major General Adamu Laka said, "The Nigerian Communications Commission has facilitated an emergency response number, 112.

"The NCTC calls on all Nigerians to report suspicious activities, crimes, and kidnappings by calling the toll-free number 112, including the Multi-Agency Anti-Kidnap Fusion Cell's designated numbers that will be provided to the public.

"Kidnapping for ransom remains a critical challenge requiring collective and intensified efforts by all stakeholders. While significant progress was achieved in 2024, sustained commitment and innovative approaches are imperative to mitigate the menace in 2025."

Laka stated that Nigeria recorded a 16.3% decrease in kidnapping-for-ransom incidents in 2024 compared to 2023, although the number of victims



increased slightly by 0.27%.

He noted that Kaduna, Katsina, and Zamfara states in the North-West accounted for the highest prevalence, with 13.8% of total incidents and 61.1% of victims nationwide.

He explained that bandits, terrorists, cultists, militants, and secessionist groups continued to exploit kidnapping for financial gain and to fund illicit activities.

"Trends in 2024 showed that kidnappings occurred in both rural and urban areas, targeting villages, schools, highways, and residential areas.

"Despite efforts to curb the menace, mass abductions persisted, leading to deserted agrarian communities, disruptions in food production, and rising food prices. The sustained payment of ransom continued to fuel the crime, as perpetrators exploited families' fears to demand exorbitant sums."

Laka said the government implemented both kinetic and non-kinetic measures to combat the menace, achieving significant results, including rescuing hostages, neutralising and arresting kidnapping kingpins, and destroying kidnappers' hideouts.

In 2025, he said the government would strengthen and expand counter-kidnapping initiatives across all geopolitical zones.

"The government projects that kidnapping for ransom will persist in 2025 due to its financial incentives. To counter this, authorities aim to strengthen counter-kidnapping initiatives, expand efforts to all six geopolitical regions, improve collaboration with the 36 state governments, reinforce public confidence in government protection to discourage ransom payments, and engage state governments to address unemployment and economic vulnerabilities that drive individuals to crime," Laka stated.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

PRODUCT COLOUR

**EFFECTIVE FROM
DECEMBER 1, 2024**

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	372,500.00
HALF PAGE	213,000.00
QUARTER PAGE	106,500.00
14X2	118,000.00
10X6	261,585.50
10X5	255,238.00
10X4	206,890.50
10X3	179,608.00
9X6	254,977.00
9X5	225,738.00
9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
5X2	42,916.50
4X4	60,166.50
4X3	36,499.50
4X2	29,333.50
3X3	28,000.00
3X2	17,400.00
2X2	13,000.00
2X1	8,600.00
1X1	4,400.00

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10X5	237,500.00
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POLITICAL COLOUR

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POLITICAL BLACK & WHITE

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1X1	2,700.00

SPECIAL POSITIONS

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4X6 FRONT PAGE	2,250,000.00
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ALLURE RATE

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(IFC) Inside Front Cover		430,000.00
(BC) Back Cover		483,750.00
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10X5		295,625.00
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EVENT		250,000.00

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PHOTO NEWS PAGE 2	50,000.00	3,750.00	53,750.00
PHOTO NEWS (3X3)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
PHOTO NEWS (4X4)	53,333.30	4,250.00	57,583.30
PRESS RELEASE (4X4)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
EVENT COVERAGE	100,000.00	7,500.00	107,500.00
FEATURES	200,000.00	15,000.00	215,000.00

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FG begins payment of N50k monthly stipends to 10,000 youths

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Federal Government, through Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has started the payment of N50,000 monthly stipends to 10,000 indigenous youths from the Niger Delta under its Youths Internship Scheme.

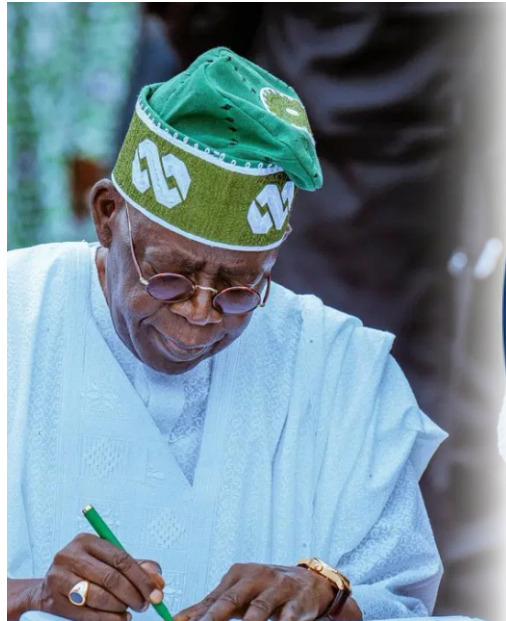
The Director of Corporate Affairs at the NDDC, Mrs Seledi-Thompson-Wakama, disclosed this to journalists in Port Harcourt, Rivers State capital on Thursday.

She explained that the beneficiaries would undergo practical, hands-on training across the various organisations for 12 months to develop critical skills.

During the inauguration of the scheme on July 31, 2024, Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, announced the Federal Government's approval of a N50,000 monthly stipend for the trainees.

According to Thompson-Wakama, the commission has successfully completed the selection process and has begun placing trainees in organisations to gain practical experience.

"Consequently, with the completion of these phases, the payment of the monthly stipends has also



commenced," she announced.

She revealed that the 10,000 beneficiaries were transparently selected from over 3.2 million youths who registered for the empowerment programme.

"This unprecedented response highlights the immense potential and aspirations of our youths to improve themselves.

"NDDC remains steadfast in ensuring this life-changing opportunity reaches the most deserving candidates, creating a lasting impact and paving the way for a brighter future," she stated.

Thompson-Wakama explained that the scheme had enabled the commission to collate essential data, including the qualifications, skills, interests, needs, and employment status of the youths in



the region.

The data, she explained, would guide the commission in designing programmes tailored to address the unique challenges faced by young people.

She disclosed that the NDDC partnered with KPMG, a global audit and consultancy firm to enhance the commission's corporate governance framework.

"KPMG has produced a Governance Advisory Report that will serve as a tool to support the commission's transition from a transaction-based to a transformation-focused policy," Thompson-Wakama added.

The director commended the youths for their patience and cooperation during the selection process for the scheme.

NIS expands contactless passport renewal system to Europe after launch in Canada

By Friday Omosola

The Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) has taken a significant step in enhancing national service delivery under the leadership of President Bola Tinubu.

Following the successful implementation of the Contactless Passport Renewal System in Canada, the NIS has now expanded the initiative to Europe.

In a statement on Friday, the Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, described the move as another pivotal milestone in the government's commitment to streamlining and improving service efficiency for Nigerians at home and abroad.

He emphasised that the initiative aligns with the Renewed Hope agenda of the Tinubu administration.

Tunji-Ojo stated that, as seen in Canada, the innovative system eliminates the traditional challenges associated with passport renewals.

He said eligible Nigerians in Europe can now renew their passports entirely online, from the comfort of their homes or offices.

He further noted that this initiative not only removes the inconvenience of travel and long waiting times but



also brings the services of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) directly to citizens' digital doorsteps.

“The introduction of this system in Europe further underscores our dedication to: Efficiency: By allowing passport renewals to be conducted without physical presence. This helps us cut down processing times significantly.

“Accessibility: Ensuring that Nigerians in the diaspora experience government services with ease, regardless of their location. Modernization: Embracing technology to meet the contemporary needs of our citizens in line with our pledge to the digital transformation of the country as we race towards achieving the 1-trillion dollar economy ambition of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (GCFR)”, he said.

Tunji-Ojo further stated that the Nigerian diaspora is an integral part of the national fabric and contributes immensely to the country's development.

He emphasised that the NIS must ensure they (Nigerians) have access to services that meet the highest standards of professionalism and efficiency.

He affirmed that the government would continue to uphold transparency without compromising security in all its operations.

“This launch is only the beginning; we are poised to expand these reforms by bringing government services closer to all Nigerians. We look forward to a future where every Nigerian, whether at home or abroad, benefits from our efforts to modernize and humanize government services.”

Obi questions 2025 budget increase, demands expenditure breakdown

By Friday Omosola

Peter Obi, the Labour Party (LP) presidential candidate in the 2023 election, has criticised the increase in the 2025 budget, stating that there is no corresponding breakdown of expenditures to justify it.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that President Bola Tinubu raised the proposed 2025 budget from N49.7 trillion to N54.2 trillion, citing additional revenues from key government agencies as the reason for the increase.

The revised figures were conveyed in separate letters to the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Reacting in a statement on his X page on Friday, the former Anambra State governor noted that Nigerians are still awaiting a detailed account of the execution and expenditures of the Renewed Hope budget, passed in December 2023.

He emphasised that citizens must be informed to ensure the funds have been properly utilized for the country's development and the well-being of its people.



“Yesterday, I read about the increase in the Budget of Restoration to ₦54 trillion due to increased revenue. While the sources of this revenue were detailed, there is no corresponding breakdown of expenditures to justify the increase.

“For transparency and accountability sake Nigerians need to know how the resources generated from them are being allocated to ensure that they are judiciously spent on the country's development and the well-being of the people”, he added.

The 63-year-old stated that such expenditures should be allocated to critical areas of development, including education, healthcare,

security, and poverty alleviation.

He urged the National Assembly to obtain and disclose the full details of the 2024 Renewed Hope budget.

Obi stressed that transparency in this matter is essential for ensuring accountability, learning from past budgets, and making informed decisions for the nation's progress.

“As we work towards passing the Budget of Restoration for 2025, let us uphold openness, accountability, and the welfare of the Nigerian people. We owe it to ourselves, our children, and the future of our great nation.”

Ortom, Anyanwu, others face PDP axe over anti-party activities

By Dave Oludare Oso

A former governor of Benue State, Samuel Ortom, and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), National Secretary, Senator Samuel Anyanwu, are among the first high-ranking members scheduled to appear before the party's Disciplinary Committee.

Disclosing this In a statement issued in Abuja on Thursday, the party's Chairman, Tom Ikimi said the party's disciplinary committee had relocated from the PDP national secretariat in Wuse and now operates from Legacy House, a party-owned facility in Maitama, Abuja.

According to Ikimi: "The National Disciplinary Committee of the Peoples Democratic party met on Wednesday, 5th February 2025 at the Legacy House, Maitama, Abuja in line with its mandate under Section 57(1) of the Constitution of the Peoples Democratic Party (as amended in 2017) relating to party discipline.

"The National Disciplinary Committee considered five (5) petitions received so far; and following a detailed review of the petitions, noted that the first set of petitions were against some key members of the National Working Committee (NWC).

"The Committee came to the conclusion that in order not to



jeopardize the ongoing reconciliatory efforts of the Governors' Forum and the Board of Trustees, took a decision to step down those three (3) of the petitions against the top NWC members.

"The second set of petitions which were set down for inquiry are those against former governor of Benue State, His Excellency Dr. Samuel Ortom and 10 others and the petition against Distinguished Senator Samuel Anyanwu.

"Accordingly, The National Disciplinary Committee resolved to invite the affected persons to appear before the Committee on Wednesday, 12th February 2025 at the Legacy House, Maitama, Abuja.

"Those expected to attend are the

petitioners and their witnesses on the one hand and the affected party members and their witnesses on the other hand; the required notices have been issued accordingly."

While emphasizing the PDP disciplinary committee derives its authority from the party's constitution, he assured that the committee is firmly committed to ensuring discipline within the PDP and restoring its integrity.

"Therefore, all those with genuine grievances against any member of the Party should take advantage of this Standing Committee and follow due process in bringing up their complaints" Ikimi said.

INEC calls for special court to handle electoral offences

By Friday Omosola

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has renewed its push for the establishment of a special tribunal dedicated to electoral offences.

INEC Chairman, Mahmood Yakubu, emphasised the need for such a tribunal due to the growing backlog of electoral offence cases.

Speaking in Abuja on Friday during the commission's first quarterly consultative meeting with the media, Yakubu highlighted the challenges posed by the current judicial process.

"A major challenge to the swift resolution of electoral offences is the lack of a time-bound framework, unlike post-election disputes handled by tribunals.

"Currently, these cases fall under the jurisdiction of Magistrate and State High Courts in the locations where the offences occurred," he noted.

He explained that electoral offence cases often receive little



priority because courts are burdened with various other matters.

As a result, unresolved cases spill over from one election cycle to another, complicating prosecution efforts.

"To address this, we must push for the creation of an Electoral Offences Tribunal with a defined jurisdiction and strict timelines for handling cases efficiently," Yakubu stated.

Citing delays in the justice system, he pointed to a case in Akwa Ibom, where it took nearly six years to secure the conviction of a returning officer for offences

committed during the 2019 general elections.

Yakubu also provided updates on INEC's ongoing legal efforts.

"Through our partnership with the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), we are prosecuting 774 suspects from the 2023 elections.

"So far, we have secured convictions in Kebbi and Kogi States, while our collaboration with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) on vote-buying has led to successful prosecutions in Lagos, Kwara, and Gombe States. However, many cases remain unresolved," he added.

Deji Adeyanju petitions Western countries for visa ban on Nigeria's police spokesperson

By **Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

Human rights activist, Deji Adeyanju, and his law firm have filed a petition requesting the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and the European Union to impose a visa ban on the Force Public Relations Officer (FPRO), Olumuyiwa Adejobi.

The petition, dated February 4, 2025, accuses Adejobi of suppressing free speech and using his position to intimidate Nigerians critical of the government.

The petition highlights multiple instances where Adejobi allegedly ordered the unlawful arrest and detention of individuals for expressing their opinions online. It accuses him of defending police brutality and weaponising the law against dissenters.

“We urgently appeal to the United States of America to impose a visa restriction on Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Olumuyiwa Adejobi, the current Force Public Relations Officer of the Nigeria Police Force,” the petition stated.

The petition claims that Adejobi has shown a blatant disregard for fundamental human rights, especially freedom of speech. One instance cited was Adejobi's statement on March 29, 2023, when he claimed that insulting police officers is a criminal offence in Nigeria.

This statement followed a viral incident involving musician Habeeb Okikiola (Portable), in which Adejobi labelled his actions as “unruly” and inciting violence against police officers.

Adejobi reiterated this stance in a Facebook post, stating that attacking or insulting police officers is disrespectful to



Nigeria itself. Human rights advocates and legal experts widely condemned this position, noting that it infringes on citizens' right to freedom of expression.

The petition also cited the arrest of nurse Olamide Thomas in December 2024. She was allegedly detained after posting a video critical of President Bola Tinubu, Inspector-General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, and Adejobi himself. The petition described this as a direct assault on freedom of expression.

Another case referenced in the petition involved TikToker Destiny Ekhurutomwem, who was reportedly arrested on Adejobi's orders for cyberbullying and cyberstalking.

The law firm said Ekhurutomwem was given an impossible bail condition and collapsed in police custody, requiring medical attention.

Further, the petition pointed to the unlawful arrest of Charles Uche Ihedioha, who was detained for making a comment on Twitter.

The law firm noted that when Ihedioha's father visited the police station to see his

son, Adejobi allegedly ordered the officers who granted him access to be locked up.

The petition also accused Adejobi of justifying police brutality.

“In a recent report, he justified excessive force used by officers and dismissed calls for accountability, further proving his complicity in the continued abuse of Nigerian citizens,” the firm stated.

Adeyanju's law firm called on the US, UK, Canada, and the European Union to take strong action against Adejobi, arguing that it would send a clear message to those who suppress freedom of speech and undermine democratic values.

The petition concluded, “We believe such action would send a strong message that individuals who suppress freedom of speech and undermine democratic principles will not be welcomed in the United States.”

The petition has sparked significant discussion on human rights, police conduct, and the protection of free speech in Nigeria.

Oyo lawmakers propose paternity leave for male workers

By Dave Oludare Oso

Members of the Oyo State House of Assembly have proposed the adoption of paternity leave for male workers in the state's public and private sectors, to enhance family bond and provision of additional care for the newborn and their spouses by men.

The lawmaker representing Oyo East/West State Constituency, Hon. Olorunpoto Rahman, who moved the motion, explained that a newborn relies on the strong bond with caregivers, especially parents who influence their emotion, social and cognitive growth.

Rahman also argued at the plenary presided over by the Deputy Speaker of the House, Hon. Abiodun Fadeyi, that introducing paternity leave in the state will enable fathers to support their partners during the recovery period after childbirth.

He added that this will, in turn, promote gender equality and shared responsibility in parenting among childbearing families.

The lawmaker noted that many countries, including some states in Nigeria, have adopted the policy as a measure to improve productivity in



their societies.

He said, "Many countries and states have adopted the paternity leave policy, and it has helped in boosting morale and improved productivity, while at the same time fostering family cohesion and stability."

He further revealed that the leave is already being implemented by the Federal Government through the Federal Civil Service as well as in Lagos and Enugu states.

The lawmaker emphasised that the absence of paternity leave for fathers in Oyo State may hinder their ability to provide necessary emotional and

practical support to their families during postnatal period.

After the adoption of the motion, the Assembly recommended a minimum of 10-day duration for paternity leave with beneficiaries entitled to such leave thrice only throughout their service year.

The House further recommended that such leave should only be taken within the first month of childbirth or adoption of a child, to ensure that fathers have adequate time to bond with their newborns and offer support for their families.

Lagos govt deploys speed monitoring system, introduces fines

By Friday Omosola

The Lagos State Government has announced the deployment of four new Intelligent Transport System (ITS) sites to monitor speed and traffic violations across the state.

Speaking at a press briefing yesterday, the Commissioner for Transportation, Oluwaseun Osiyemi, revealed that the initiative is a collaboration with Huawei Technologies.

The new installations will complement existing Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras and Traffic Management Solution devices.

“These checkpoints are strategically placed to detect overspeeding. One is located at Alapere, Ogudu Road, with an 80km/h speed limit, while another is at Nitel, Mobolaji Bank Anthony Way, with a 60km/h limit,” Osiyemi stated.

He emphasised that overspeeding remains a major cause of road accidents, making this initiative crucial for road



safety.

In addition to speed monitoring, two e-police sites have been installed at Allen Avenue Road Junction and Nurudeen Olowopopo Road to track various traffic offences, including running red lights, lane indiscipline, illegal U-turns, and reversing on highways.

Osiyemi urged motorists to comply with the regulations, noting that a red-light violation attracts a N20,000 fine, while exceeding the speed limit incurs a N50,000 penalty.

“Enforcement begins

immediately. Offenders will receive SMS notifications from the Vehicle Inspection Service, detailing the violation and the applicable fine. This initiative is not meant to punish but to promote responsible driving, reduce accidents, and ensure safer roads,” he added.

The press briefing was attended by Commissioner for Innovation, Science, and Technology Olatunbosun Alake, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Transportation Olawale Musa, representatives from Huawei Technologies, and key ministry officials.

2027: El-Rufai's N423bn indictment, battle with presidency lingers

By Damilola Olufemi

For sometime now, the former governor of Kaduna State, Nasir El-Rufai has been having a running battle both with the Kaduna State House of Assembly over his indictment by the lawmakers, and same for the presidency for his recent criticisms of the APC-led administration.

In this analysis, Damilola Olufemi examines the possible links between the ongoing imbroglio and the 2027 presidential race.

Nasir El-Rufai, the former governor of Kaduna State, has been embroiled in a controversy surrounding a N423 billion indictment by the Kaduna State House of Assembly.

The lawmakers had in 2024 accused El-Rufai's eight years- led administration of misappropriating funds, leading to significant financial liabilities for the state.

The Assembly maintained that the indictment was based on credible evidence, and that El-Rufai's filed lawsuit is an attempt to intimidate and silence them.

El-Rufai has since filed a lawsuit through his lawyer, Abdulhakeem Mustapha, challenging the allegations of the lawmakers, noting that the indictment was a nullity and against his fundamental human rights.

However, the question in the minds of many is: whether loyalists of President Bola Tinubu are fighting back, following



claims that it may be connected to El-Rufai's frosty relationship with the president.

It would be recalled that in June 2024, the ad hoc committee set up by the Kaduna State House of Assembly to probe all finances, loans and contracts awarded under the El-Rufai-led administration presented its report to the House.

While presenting the report, the House committee chairman, Henry Zacharia, disclosed that a large part of the loans collected under El-Rufai's administration were siphoned while others did not follow due process.

The issue has since taken a political image as many Nigerians are wondering what happens if the former governor's lawsuit turns out in his favour and his indictment nullified. They further ask: where will be the aftermath of the alleged involvement of the presidency in the indictment issue, and what will be the implications of the crisis as regards the 2027 presidential race.?

However, El-Rufai's supporters argue that the indictment is a politically motivated action against the former governor. They further explained that the assembly's report was based on incomplete and inaccurate information, and that El-Rufai's administration had actually made significant progress in addressing the state's financial challenges.

The road to 2027

Trouble started in 2023 after the emergence of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu as president when the National Assembly dropped El-Rufai's name as a ministerial nominee by the president.

El-Rufai possibly nursing the wounds of his disqualification, has lately become more critical of the Tinubu-led administration.

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He also recently slammed the All Progressive Congress (APC) over its excessive centralization of power and shift from the party's core values and principles.

However, not to be seen as being docile in his role as a presidential spokesman, Daniel Bwala fired back at the former governor, echoing that El-Rufai's criticism wouldn't have come if he was part of the current administration.

"My senior brother, if you were in this government and cabinet, would you have held and expressed the same position? It is a government you participated in its formation, that you now want to unseat. Haba Mallam, a Jisoron Allah mana," the media aide posted on his X handle.

Bwala's insinuation, implying that El-Rufai's snide remarks were driven by personal grievances, was also corroborated by a group in Kaduna State.

The group further alleged that the former governor plans to destabilise the current administration in the state ahead of 2027 governorship and general elections.

In his response, El-Rufai said, "I have always spoken my mind, whether inside or outside government. My track record in public service speaks for itself. I have never been one to shy away from the truth, and I will not start now."

In the same vein, a political analyst in Abuja, Mojisola Akande, while speaking to New Daily Prime, affirmed

that the ongoing crisis between El-Rufai and the presidency centres on the 2027 election.

Nasir El-rufai. Photo credit: Google

She noted that the president may not be directly involved, but was aware and could intervene as the election year draws nearer.

She added: "This is an issue known across all the states in Nigeria. So, the president surely should be aware of it. However, this can be resolved in no time when the 2027 election gets closer. Every state matters and among these states is Kaduna. Though the opposition party may lure the former governor."

Although, El-Rufai has stated that he has no plans to quit the APC.

Prior to that assurance, in July 2024, El-Rufai had filed a petition praying that the Chief Judge of the Federal High Court transfer the case handled by Justice Aikawa to another judge. Giving his reason for the request, the former governor cited in the "interest of justice and a fair hearing" in the ₦423 billion case.

More ex-officials defend El-Rufai

On Tuesday, February 4, 2025, some ex-officials of the former governor, in a statement, faulted the indictment report which claimed that the El-Rufai led administration could not account for ₦423 billion in eight years spent in office.

They added, "Only those inclined to fiction can believe that 40% of Kaduna's earnings over eight years simply vanished," adding that the

claims was politically motivated by enemies of the past administration.

Earlier in 2024, some commissioners who served under the former governor, also countered the report, noting that the committee set up could not provide how it arrived at the sum claimed to have been mismanaged.

"The Report begs the question as to where the Ad-hoc Committee obtained its figures for revenue, loans, and other "findings," separate from the published accounts of the Kaduna State Government that were duly tabled before the House of Assembly as required by the Constitution," the ex-commissioners added.

The El-Rufai saga has further called for the need for greater transparency and accountability in governance in Nigeria, as citizens deserve to know how public funds are being spent. They also deserve to have confidence in the institutions that are supposed to hold those leaders accountable.

The boiling questions remain: Will El-Rufai's lawsuit be successful? Will the Kaduna State House of Assembly's indictment stand? As the controversies continue to unfold, it's clear that the stakes are high. The outcome of El-Rufai's lawsuit and the assembly's indictment ahead of the 2027 election, will have significant implications for Nigeria's politics and governance.

However, one thing is certain: Nigerians are watching closely to see how this drama unfolds.

12 missing, 9 rescued after sea pirate attack in Rivers

By Helen Okechukwu

Twelve passengers have reportedly gone missing after a suspected sea pirate attack along Isaka in Okrika Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State.

According to reports, out of the twenty passengers that boarded the boat on Thursday, nine were rescued by security personnel and transported to the state capital.

Meanwhile, reports indicate that the boat driver passed through Kilometer 10, a prohibited channel for commercial boat operators, which has been described as an act of disobedience.

The Chief Press Officer, Boma Waribo, confirmed in a signed statement that the



boat was en route from Bonny LGA. The Bonny LGA Chairman, Hon. Anengi Claude-Wilcox, has been informed about the incident.

Read Also: Rivers boat mishap: 19 rescued, 3 dead including toddler

He further disclosed that, in collaboration with neighboring LGAs and security agencies, the rescue team has intensified their search efforts to save the missing passengers.

Residents and relatives of the victims have been urged to remain calm. Waribo affirmed that security measures are being put in place to strengthen safety in the region.

“However, it should be noted that nine persons have been found and returned to Port Harcourt through the timely intervention of government security operatives, who are currently active and have intensified efforts to rescue the remaining 12 passengers,” Waribo noted.

Internal Security: IGP appoints Shogunle to head SIS

By Friday Omosola

In a strategic move to bolster internal security and enhance swift responses to violent crimes, the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Kayode Egbetokun, has appointed Commissioner of Police Abayomi Shogunle to lead the Special Intervention Squad (SIS), Elections Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation, and the Safe School Protection Squad.

Police spokesperson Olumuyiwa Adejobi, in a statement on Friday, announced that as part of the IGP’s initiatives to improve security and combat crime along inland waterways, Chima Ogarashi has been appointed as the new Force Marine Officer (FMO).

Adejobi described Shogunle as a



highly experienced officer with expertise in operations, public relations, and various other specialized fields.

According to him, Shogunle will spearhead the SIS in addressing critical security challenges while efficiently overseeing Elections Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation, as well as the Safe School Protection Squad.

Adejobi further stated that Ogarashi, in his new role as FMO, will leverage his extensive experience in maritime security and law enforcement to manage one of the police force’s critical divisions.

He noted that these appointments come at a crucial time, as the police prepare to deploy 25 newly acquired gunboats and advance efforts to procure additional maritime safety equipment aimed at enhancing security operations on the nation’s waterways.

Adejobi emphasized that this strategic asset acquisition is a proactive measure by the police to safeguard lives and property while boosting public confidence in maritime security.

Killers of Anambra lawmaker arrested

By Dave Oludare Oso

The kidnappers responsible for the abduction and murder of Hon. Justice Azuka after collecting a ₦100 million ransom has been arrested.

This was revealed in a viral post by an X, formerly known as Twitter user, Olaudah Equiano.

NEW DAILY PRIME reported that the lawmaker representing Onitsha North state constituency was kidnapped on December 26, 2024, and later killed despite the ransom payment. He was reportedly shot twice in the head.

Reports said that it was one of the culprits that led law enforcement agents to the dump site of the corpse of the late legislator.

Further details indicate that several accomplices involved in the crime have been identified and apprehended.

The viral update reads:

“The kidnappers who killed Hon. Justice Azuka withdrew ₦100 million from his account before murdering him on December 26, 2024.

“They shot him twice in the head. A nurse residing in Asaba assisted in withdrawing the money, while a native doctor in Asaba prepared charms for them.

“The gang leader (kingpin) was living with the native doctor inside his shrine in Asaba. All six suspects have been arrested—none of them was above 30 years old. The nurse has also been apprehended, and her pharmacy sealed.

“The native doctor has been arrested



as well. All the suspects were living in Asaba, except one who resided in Oba. Over three additional bodies were found alongside Hon. Justice Azuka’s remains. The suspects confessed that they typically kill their victims after collecting ransom.”

As the post spread online, concerned individuals flooded the comment section to express their reactions.

See some reactions below:

@Ambrosevic1: “It’s so easy to commit heinous crimes in this country because almost all our institutions are corrupt. Just imagine these young folks in such a crime and they have been getting away with it. I can tell you that some of them may find their way out of this via bribe.”

@m4v3_: “Insecurity doesn’t differentiate between prince and pauper. So, we earnestly warn the princes of the city, solve insecurity before it comes for us all.”

@EastNautical: “Below 30 years!!!!All those pushing the narrative that good education is a

waste should continue.”

@DeoEtPatriaPRO: “The children they refuse to give education are now doing the things Awolowo said they would do... as for the politicians.. I have zero sympathy for them and their families.”

@C2sin4mi: “Nawao how are some people raised and brought up , to extend of committing crimes and looking at your fellow human in the face an kill him.”

@UdefiCamillus: “But why kill the victim after collecting the money? I hope justice will be quickly dispensed and the penalty carried out without delay. What emboldens these criminals is the belief that the worst they can get is jail term.”

...This is a developing story and efforts are ongoing to get a police reaction.

NCYP urges EFCC to monitor local govt funds

By Friday Omosola

The National Christian Youth Professionals (NCYP) has called on the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to intensify its oversight of funds allocated to local governments across Nigeria, following the financial autonomy recently granted to them.

The appeal was made yesterday during a courtesy visit to the EFCC headquarters in Abuja.

NCYP Chairman, Isaac Abrak, led the delegation and emphasized the urgent need for stricter financial monitoring to ensure that resources reaching local governments are effectively utilized.

“We come from the grassroots and understand the realities on the ground. We commend the President for granting local government autonomy, but proper oversight is necessary.

“If local governments can effectively use even 40 per cent of their allocated resources, we will witness significant development,” Abrak stated.

He further expressed the group’s willingness to collaborate with the EFCC in ensuring accountability at



the grassroots level.

Abrak also lauded EFCC Chairman, Ola Olukoyede, for his leadership, describing him as a model of integrity.

“We are proud of your achievements, especially your role in securing Nigeria’s victory in the P&ID case in 2023. Your tenure has set a remarkable standard,” he added.

Expressing concern over the rising involvement of youths in cybercrime in Northern Nigeria, Abrak urged the EFCC to intensify its crackdown on internet fraud in the region.

In response, Olukoyede welcomed the group’s support and emphasized the need for unity in tackling corruption.

“Doing the right thing is not about religion—it’s about integrity. Let’s work together to build a society based on honesty and accountability,” he said.

He assured the delegation that the EFCC had already begun monitoring local government allocations through its Fraud Risk Assessment and Control department, which tracks payments, contracts, and expenditures to prevent financial mismanagement.

Wike's ministerial appointment crippled PDP's opposition strength – Okonkwo

By New Daily Prime

Former Labour Party spokesperson Kenneth Okonkwo has blamed the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) for its internal crisis, accusing its leaders of becoming subservient to the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

Okonkwo argued that President Bola Tinubu's appointment of Nyesom Wike as a minister significantly weakened the PDP's position as an opposition party.

In 2023, Wike, a former Rivers State governor and prominent PDP figure, accepted a ministerial role under Tinubu after openly opposing his party's presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar.

Speaking on Sunrise Daily, a Channels Television program, on Friday, Okonkwo contended that the PDP leadership effectively surrendered to Wike, who, in his view, now operates in the interest of the APC.

“The PDP allowed some members, like the G5, to work against the party's interests openly. Instead of holding them accountable, the party made excuses for them. Now, they are attempting to take over the party, and with Wike's appointment, they have even more influence,” Okonkwo said.

He further argued that Wike's position in the APC-led



government left PDP leaders in a subordinate role.

“When the party's supposed leader is serving in the APC, it means those under him are also indirectly serving the ruling party. The PDP is no longer an independent force—it has become a servant to a servant,” he added.

Reacting to Atiku's recent claim that the APC is bribing opposition parties to weaken them ahead of the 2027 elections, he dismissed the allegation, insisting that such claims only expose the opposition's weaknesses rather than indict the ruling party.

He argued that it was the responsibility of opposition parties to resist any attempts at manipulation.

“I will never blame the ruling party for what is happening in the opposition. Excuses and success

do not go hand in hand. Atiku said the APC offered N50 million to destabilize the opposition, but that statement only proves that the opposition is corrupt. If there were no willing receivers, there would be no givers,” Okonkwo stated.

He described political sabotage as a legitimate strategy, emphasizing that opposition parties must stay united and resist external interference.

“The ruling party will naturally seek to weaken its opponents—it's in their political interest. But if the opposition allows itself to be destabilized, then it is incompetent and corrupt,” he added.

Okonkwo called on opposition parties to take responsibility for their failures, urging them to reject any inducements and focus on strengthening their structures.

Nine Chinese nationals, firm arraigned over cyber terrorism, fraud

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) on Thursday, arraigned nine Chinese nationals and a company, Genting International Co. Ltd., in connection with allegations of cyber terrorism and internet fraud.

The defendants, who appeared before Justice Chukwujekwu Aneke at the Federal High Court in Lagos, pleaded not guilty to the charges. The individuals named in the case include Su Dong Fu, Zheng Xian Tao, Wang Shi Long, Pan Cai Qi, Ting Liao, Fan Jia, Feng Li Cani, Lu Yong Yao, and Yang Chen Cheng.

According to the EFCC, the accused are part of a syndicate involved in cryptocurrency investment and romance fraud. This group was arrested on December 10, 2024, during an operation dubbed “Eagle Flush Operation” by EFCC operatives in Lagos. The crackdown led to the arrest of 792 individuals, all of whom are alleged to have been part of similar fraudulent activities.



The charges against the defendants include cybercrimes, cyber-terrorism, possession of fraudulent documents, and identity theft, among other offences. The EFCC has been actively pursuing such crimes, which have had significant financial implications on victims both within Nigeria and internationally.

During today’s court proceedings, the prosecution counsel, M.K. Bashir, requested trial dates and urged that the defendants be remanded in the correctional centre pending the hearing. Following the proceedings, Justice Aneke adjourned the case to February 21 and March 7, 2025, for trial.

In the meantime, the defendants have been remanded at the Ikoyi Correctional Centre.

This case follows closely on the heels of a similar prosecution earlier this week, in which 11 other Chinese nationals were arraigned before the same court for alleged involvement in cybercrimes aimed at destabilising Nigeria’s economy.

The EFCC’s efforts to combat cybercrime continue to intensify as they seek to hold individuals and organisations accountable for activities that threaten the financial stability of the nation.

Tears, panic as Trump's foreign aid cuts devastate HIV patients in Africa

By **Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi**

“Without access to ARVs, we will see an increase in HIV-related deaths. The situation is dire.” – Dr. Abdullahi Balog

The impact of President Donald Trump's foreign aid freeze is causing panic across Africa countries, leaving millions of lives in jeopardy. In South Africa, where the world's largest HIV epidemic continues to claim lives, the abrupt shutdown of PEPFAR-funded clinics has left thousands without medical support.

Outside a recently closed USAID-funded sexual health clinic in Johannesburg, a woman stands in shock. “It's only been two months since my last visit,” she says, her voice trembling with distress. Now, she is left scrambling to find another facility for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and routine HIV screenings, as reported by MSN. For many sex workers, these clinics were their only access to safe and reliable healthcare.



A HIV-positive patient from the same closed clinic showed her patient transfer letter, revealing that she has yet to be registered at another facility. South Africa, home to 8.5 million HIV-positive individuals—a quarter of the world's HIV cases—relied heavily on U.S. aid for treatment. Now, thousands are at risk of losing access to medication.

“In the early 2000s, we had no medication. The government told us to take beetroot and garlic,” recalls Nelly Zulu, an activist and mother living with HIV in Soweto. “We fought hard to win this battle, and now, we are being pushed back into that struggle.”

Zulu, who has been on lifesaving ARV treatment for more than two decades, fears for the most vulnerable: pregnant women and children. “I don't want them to go through what I went through. If PEPFAR disappears, millions will suffer.”

Civil society organizations across South Africa have issued a joint open letter to the government, urging an immediate response to the healthcare crisis triggered by Trump's foreign aid freeze.

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The letter warns that nearly one million HIV patients have been directly affected by the stop-work orders stemming from the funding suspension.

Nigeria Faces Uncertain Future as PEPFAR Suspension Hits Hard

Nigeria, home to the highest HIV burden in West and Central Africa, is also grappling with the effects of the PEPFAR freeze. With nearly two million Nigerians living with HIV and 1.7 million children orphaned by AIDS, the country has depended heavily on U.S. funding, which has contributed over \$6 billion to HIV/AIDS programs.

The funding suspension has set off alarms among Nigerian health officials, who fear a looming public health disaster.

“This suspension is devastating. It will put millions of lives at risk,” warns Dr. Abdullahi Balogun, a medical doctor at Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital (OAUTH).

“Without access to ARVs, we will see an increase in HIV-related deaths. The situation is dire.”

Doctors warn that hospitals may be forced to introduce user fees, making lifesaving treatment unaffordable for many patients.

In Lagos, 42-year-old Stephen Enoch, an HIV-positive patient, expressed his deep concern. “I don’t want to die,” he said, his voice shaking. “I rely on these drugs to stay alive. Without them, what happens to me?”

Another patient, speaking anonymously due to stigma, echoed his fears: “I never imagined this could happen. If nothing urgent is done, Nigeria will see a surge in new infections.”

For many Nigerians, the cost of ARV treatment is prohibitive. A recent study estimated that treatment could cost between \$100 (₦149,248) and \$1,000 (₦1,492,480) per month, putting it out of reach for most patients.

Nigeria Allocates ₦4.8 Billion for Emergency HIV Treatment

In response to the crisis, the Nigerian government has

approved ₦5 billion (over \$3 million) for the procurement of 150,000 HIV treatment packs, offering a temporary solution for the next four months.

“This allocation ensures that those on ARVs will continue to receive treatment without interruption,” said Minister of Health and Social Welfare Ali Pate after the Federal Executive Council (FEC) meeting.

The government has also formed a high-level task force, including officials from Finance, Budget, Defence, Environment, and the Nigeria Governors Forum, to develop a long-term HIV/AIDS sustainability strategy. This approach also includes: strengthening domestic HIV/AIDS budgets, expanding local pharmaceutical production of ARVs and Securing additional funding from European donors and private sector partners.



NAFDAC proposes death penalty for drug peddlers

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Director-General of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Mojisola Adeyeye, has called for the death penalty for drug peddlers, particularly those involved in selling counterfeit medicines that result in the deaths of children.

Speaking on Channels Television's The Morning Brief on Friday, February 7, Adeyeye emphasised that only strict and severe penalties could effectively deter drug peddlers. She cited a recent incident in which children's medicine, bought for about N13,000 and resold for N3,000, was found to contain no active ingredients when tested in NAFDAC's Kaduna lab.

"That raised an alarm. Guess what? When we tested the medicine, there was nothing inside. So, I want the death penalty," Adeyeye said.

She further argued that selling substandard medicine could be just as deadly as directly harming a child, stating, "You don't need to put a gun to a child's head to kill them. Just give them bad medicine."

Adeyeye also highlighted the need for stronger cooperation with the judiciary and the National



Assembly to make the proposal a reality. She explained that while NAFDAC has been doing its part to tackle the issue of substandard drugs, the lack of stringent penalties has hindered the agency's efforts.

"Someone brought in 225mg of Tramadol, which can kill a person or fry their brain, and the punishment is just five years in prison or a fine of N250,000," she said, pointing out that such a fine is often negligible compared to the severity of the crime. "Who doesn't know that a person can simply withdraw N250,000 from an ATM?"

According to Adeyeye, the lack of sufficient deterrents leads to repeat offences, as offenders face little to no consequences for their actions.

She stressed that NAFDAC's ability to combat the problem is limited without stronger legal measures and a firm judicial stance.

The NAFDAC boss reiterated her call for stricter laws and penalties, saying, "If our laws are not strong enough or the judiciary is not firm in its stance, we will continue to face this challenge. We are working with the National Assembly to make our penalties much stiffer. But if you kill a child with bad medicine, you deserve to die."

This bold proposal has sparked widespread discussion about the effectiveness of current penalties and the urgent need for stricter laws to combat the growing issue of counterfeit and substandard medicines in Nigeria.

NAFDAC destroys N4.7bn fake drugs in Rivers

By Helen Okechukwu

To protect public health in Rivers State, the National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) destroyed fake, expired, and substandard drugs worth N4.7 billion on Thursday.

The destruction took place at the Rivers State Waste Management Authority (RIWAMA) Dumpsite in Aluu, Ikwerre Local Government Area, where the harmful substances were set ablaze.

This exercise, which began yesterday, is part of ongoing efforts to combat contraband drugs across six South-South states.

Speaking on behalf of the Director-General, the South-South Director of NAFDAC, Chukwemeka Oligbu, reaffirmed the agency's commitment to tackling the menace of fake drugs.

"The products being destroyed during this exercise are made up of Substandard and falsified medical



products, unwholesome processed food products and food additives, unsafe cosmetics, counterfeits, and other expired NAFDAC regulated products seized by the agency from manufacturers, importers, and distributors.

"Also, up for destruction today are damaged and expired products voluntarily handed over by compliant companies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Association of Community Pharmacists (ACPN), and trade unions, to the agency," he added.

Oligbu urged the public to report suspicious pharmaceutical activities and unsafe products, emphasizing the need for collaboration between NAFDAC, pharmacists, law enforcement, and industry stakeholders.

The destruction exercise was carried out in partnership with other agencies and security operatives.

NAFDAC reiterated its commitment to safeguarding Nigerians from substandard and falsified medical products.

PHOTOS: Iyabo Ojo's daughter weds Tanzanian lover, Juma Jux

By Dave Oludare Oso

Former Miss Priscilla Ajoke Ojo, daughter of Nollywood actress and social media personality, Iyabo Ojo got married to Juma Jux, a singer in Tanzania.

Photos and videos from the event were shared on an Instagram page dedicated to the couple, jux.priscy, on Friday.

Social media influencer, Enioluwa Adeoluwa, Tanzanian singer, Diamond Platinumz, his wife, close friends and family members attended the ceremony.

Iyabo Ojo confirmed Priscilla's engagement to Juma Jux with photos and videos of the pair circulating online in September 2024.

The Tanzanian singer had also visited Nigeria to spend some time with the Ojo family, during which he joined Priscilla to embrace the Yoruba culture by donning matching traditional attire for a photo shoot.

The Nollywood actress left Nigeria on Wednesday for Tanzania alongside



Enioluwa, where she was welcomed by her daughter and in-laws.

This Islamic ceremony is believed by many to be the first of the planned events, with fans eagerly awaiting a celebration in Nigeria.t.

Here are some of the messages from fans and well-wishers:

chy_juli said: "Finally, see my baby.... nwunye odogwu Jux..... haters nightmare..... Iyawo Jux.....Ifenkili.....Ugosima je mba. Asanwa with brain. Make una clear road joor, the queen is here

: "This is stunning am so happy for this union. To think this long awaited event is taking place on my own anniversary is a sweet thing to watch. May your love continue to flourish."

nkemirene_official: "Finally God ooooo Why am I this happ May my own man locate me this year with plenty of love care happiness and good intentions Amin Priscy Baby I love you girl, Congratulations Mrs Jux JUMA."

isiaqbisola reacted: "This is just too beautiful to watch.....am so happy for them."



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Kanye West begs Trump to release Sean 'Diddy' Combs

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

US rapper and music producer, Kanye West has pleaded with President Donald Trump of the United States to free his 'idol' and detained music mogul, Sean 'Diddy' Combs.

54-year-old Combs is currently locked up, awaiting trial on numerous sex trafficking and racketeering charges with West now fighting for his release online.

Kanye went on a posting spree on X where he pleaded with the newly-inaugurated Trump to free Combs despite the allegations.

The first of dozens of Kanye posts simply read, "FREE PUFF." He wrote a similar message on Instagram.

In another, West tagged President Trump and begged, "PLEASE FREE MY BROTHER PUFF."

Kanye and Trump have had a close relationship in the past with the pair growing close in the run-up to the Republican's first election win in 2016.

They were pictured together in The White House in 2018 with Trump describing West as a "complicated" but "really nice guy," in 2024.

West's posts continued for hours with him saying in one that Combs has been 'rotting' in jail.

The Graduation rapper called Combs his 'idol' and 'hero' as he urged his celebrity pals to support the jailed music mogul because he 'gave his life to us.'

Combs trial for sex trafficking and racketeering is set for May 5.



He caused further controversy on Thursday when he announced plans to sell merchandise from a joint project between the pair.

West showed he is now selling a series of Sean John shirts in red, white, blue, black and grey for just £17 each.

Sean John is a fashion lifestyle company created by Combs back in 1988.

West described it as a business arrangement between the rapper duo which he alleges was agreed to prior to Combs' spell behind bars.

A social media post from West said, "YEEZY SEAN JOHN COLLAB AVAILABLE @ YEEZY.COM ME AND PUFF SPLITTING THIS 50/50 LIKE WE DISCUSSED BEFORE THEY LOCKED HIM UP."

Combs' Instagram account – believed to be run by his family – shared a screenshot of West's X post alongside the caption, "Thank you to my brother @Ye."

The post is just one of nine uploaded to Diddy's Instagram with almost all of them coming in the past six months.

The messages continued late into the night with many of them going on to reference unfounded claims about Combs' case.

He accused the criminal justice system of trying to "make an example out of Puff" and said he wanted to find out who was "after" the hip-hop icon.

One of his final messages read, "PUFF WE LOVE YOU."

Combs was first arrested on September 16 in Manhattan by Homeland Security on charges of racketeering and sex trafficking.

He has been holed up in Brooklyn's Metropolitan Detention Center ever since.

Combs has constantly pleaded not guilty to the sex trafficking charges placed against him.

Toke Makinwa praises self, says 'I'm magic'

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Nigerian television host and entrepreneur, Toke Makinwa, has lavished praises on herself, describing herself as 'magic.'

In a post via her Instagram story on Friday, the actress and vlogger, listed her unique qualities and attributes that make her an exceptional person.

She stated that she has her own products and money, she's killing it as an actor, a TV host and a podcaster.

Toke also disclosed that she loves Jesus and is a funny lady, and so is a ten minus nothing.



She wrote, "Not to brag, but I'm a pretty solid babe.

I have my own products, got my own money, killing it as a working actor, TV host, podcast.

"I'm funny AF, I love Jesus and I've got a dope soul. This girl is magic."

Toke Makinwa is known for hosting The Late Morning Show on Rhythm 93.7 FM and for her YouTube vlog series Toke Moments.

She released her book On Becoming in November 2016, and is one of the top five African female show hosts.

In 2017, Toke Makinwa launched a handbag line under her eponymous label, Toke Makinwa Luxury.

She also launched a skincare product called Glow by TM in 2018.

Why Seyi Tinubu invited me for dinner – Odumodublvck

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Popular Nigerian rapper, Tochukwu Ojogwu, popularly known as Odumodublvck, has spoken on his relationship with some celebrities.

According to Odumodublvck, the son of President Bola Tinubu, Seyi Tinubu, is his friend.

He claimed that when Tinubu invited him to his house for dinner, he did not do so because he wanted him to support his father's presidency but because of love for his music.

The rapper disclosed this in a recent episode of the Afrobeats Podcast, hosted by Adesope.



He said: "Rema is my friend. Seyi Tinubu is also my friend. Regardless of his father being the president and people throwing stones at him, he's my friend. When he invited me to his home for dinner, he didn't do it for me to support his dad. He did it because he loves my music. I'm a street boy. Seyi has nothing to gain from me. He's my

friend. Forget whatever society is saying.

"The same goes for Rema. Why I no go famz Rema? Who I wan go famz? Adele? Speed Darlington? Akpi is not my friend. Burna Boy is my spirit animal—Skeptas too. Before I met Burna Boy, I saw him in my dream, and we were eating pounded yam.

"Burna Boy told me that the day I saw him was the first time he had eaten pounded yam in two years. This thing is not a joke. They think I just cap.

"They think I talk about Jesus because I'm a fanatic. I'm a big fan of Jesus. Anything I say, I bound here on earth and in heaven, as long as it aligns with the will of God."

PHOTOS: Omotola Jalade celebrates 47th birthday

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

As movie fans favourite, Omotola Jalade Ekeinde turns 47 on Friday, the beloved actress shared a few delectable photos and a simple post.

Accompanying the pictures, the Nollywood bombshell wrote: "Happy Birthday to Me.... Grateful to God."

The mother of four, who has kept a low profile for some time now, got in the news a few weeks ago when fans and netizens asked if she returned to Nigeria from the United States because of the fire tragedy that ravaged Los Angeles, where she has been living for a few years.

Expectedly, fans and celebrities have been sending in their birthday wishes to the veteran thespian.



Police arrest Lil Smart for cyberstalking Naira Marley

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Nigeria Police have addressed viral reports about the arrest of Lil Smart, a former Marlian Records signee, following an online controversy with his ex-record label boss, Naira Marley, and Zinoleesky.

NEW DAILY PRIME gathered that Lil Smart was recently embroiled in a controversy with Naira Marley and Zinoleesky, accusing them of physical assault, abduction, and manipulation.

Recently, social media was abuzz after renowned Nollywood producer, Stanley Ontop, revealed that Lil Smart had been arrested and detained at an undisclosed location.

To clear the controversy, the Nigeria Police have issued a statement on Instagram, addressing the reports



surrounding Lil Smart's arrest.

Confirming earlier reports, the police announced that Lil Smart has been arrested for cyberstalking, cyberbullying, and spreading falsehoods against Naira Marley.

Additionally, the post stated that Lil Smart was arrested last month at his

residence in Mejamogun Estate, Ajah, Lagos, with relevant exhibits recovered.

The post reads, "Following a petition filed by a law firm, operatives of the Nigeria Police Force National Cybercrime arrested one Idowu Smart Emmanuel, for criminal defamation, cyberstalking, cyberbullying, and falsehood against Abdulazeez Adeshina Fashola (A.K.A Naira Marley)."

Investigations revealed that the suspect, using his Instagram handle @lilsmart_ falsely alleged that he was abducted, assaulted."

"On January 28, 2025, he was apprehended at his residence in Megamound Estate, Ajah, Lagos, and the exhibits involved in this crime were recovered."

Portable, band boys arraigned for assaulting govt officials

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Controversial singer, Habeeb 'Omolalomi' Okikiola, better known as Portable and his band boys who assaulted government officials have been arraigned in court.

Recall that NEW DAILY PRIME reported earlier that Portable and his boys teamed up and beat up some Ogun State government officials who came to his bar to inspect the place.

According to reports, Portable clashed with the government officials from the Ogun State Planning and Development Permit Authority (OGPDPA) in a bar, Odogwu, in Iyana Ilogbo, Ogun State late last year.

Sharing the details of what ensued between Portable and the government officials, popular influencer,



@man_of_letters, took to his X page to disclose that the officials had arrived some days before the incident to go about their work.

The defendants, who were arraigned on Friday included; Nurudeen Warris, 21; Adetola Alashe, 25; Samuel Adeleke, 28; Oluwaseun Ayenuwa, 19; and Oluwapelumi Adeosun, 20.

Others are Gospel Kanu, 20; Precious Ohiegebo, 19; Ifeoluwa Babatunde, 27; and Fatimo Muhammed, 26.

They were charged with five charges, including assault, obstruction, possession of dangerous weapons, and conduct likely to cause a breach of peace.

According to the court, Portable and his boys beat up the planning officers—Abidemi Onabanjo, Ramon Lateef, and Akinpelumi Oyero.

The singer and his boys were allegedly armed with guns and cutlasses when they clashed with the officials of government.

Portable is currently on the run while his boys have been granted a N50 million bail by the court.

Actress Lolo criticizes explicit TikTok challenge for girls

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian actress Omotunde Adebowale-David, widely known as Lolo, has voiced her deep concern over a troubling trend on TikTok.

The platform has increasingly become a space where young girls are encouraged to display their breasts.

This alarming development has caught the attention of many, including Lolo, who feels compelled to speak out.

Lolo's distress

In a heartfelt video shared on Instagram this past Wednesday, Lolo expressed her distress after witnessing a TikTok video featuring a young male user.

This boy was promoting a so-called "challenge" that urged girls to expose themselves on camera. Lolo's reaction was one of disbelief and sadness.

She noted that it was not just one or two girls participating, but many young women complying with this dangerous request.

"I am not happy today at all," Lolo stated. "I saw a video on TikTok where a young boy is asking girls to flash their breasts. And I see different girls—not just one, not two, not three—flashing their naked breasts on TikTok. People are watching, and I am wondering what is happening. They told me it is a challenge."

The broader implications

This situation raises critical questions about the influence of social media on young minds. Lolo is alarmed by the fact that many young girls are willing to compromise their modesty for a fleeting moment of fame or validation. The trend is not just shocking; it is dangerous.

Lolo further emphasized the dire implications of this trend, especially in



light of rising cases of sexual assault and violence against women and girls.

"We are already seeing girls being raped on a daily basis," she noted. "Not just raped, but also killed, assaulted, and abused. Yet, our young children do not seem to have the sense to keep their modesty."

A call for action

The actress called for urgent action. "We need to stop this. Where are our mothers, caregivers, and guardians? Our wards are going astray every day.

As a mother, I am unhappy because I saw it with my own eyes," she lamented. Her words serve as a wake-up call for parents and guardians to take a more active role in guiding their children.

Advocating for regulation

In her Instagram caption, Lolo advocated for increased regulation of social media content. She wrote, "This made me very sad, and I can't just sit down and do nothing. I will continue to advocate for some kind of control of social media because the things being seen are just beyond me!"

Lolo's concerns reflect a broader

societal issue. The internet, while a powerful tool for connection and expression, can also expose young people to harmful influences.

It is essential to strike a balance between freedom of expression and the need for safety and decency, particularly for impressionable youth.

The role of parents and guardians

Parents and guardians must engage in open conversations with their children about the content they consume online.

Encouraging critical thinking and fostering a sense of self-worth that is not reliant on social media validation is crucial.

Moreover, social media platforms have a responsibility to monitor and regulate the kind of content that is shared.

They should implement stricter guidelines to prevent the spread of harmful challenges that put young people at risk. Only through a collective effort can we hope to create a safer online environment for everyone.

Conclusion: A collective responsibility
Lolo's call to action is just one of many voices rising against this disturbing trend. It underscores the need for community awareness and proactive measures. The time has come for society to come together to protect its most vulnerable members.

In conclusion, Lolo's heartfelt message serves as a reminder of the pressing issues surrounding youth and social media.

It is imperative that we listen to her call for change. By fostering a culture of respect and awareness, we can help steer the younger generation away from harmful trends and towards a more positive future.

79 countries reject Trump administration sanctions on ICC

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Dozens of countries, including Germany, South Africa, and Mexico, said Friday that US President Donald Trump's decision to sanction the International Criminal Court (ICC) would "erode the international rule of law."

The joint statement by 79 countries came hours after Trump signed an executive order slapping financial sanctions and visa restrictions against ICC staff and their family members, alleging the court has improperly targeted the United States and Israel.

"Such measures increase the risk of impunity for the most serious crimes and threaten to erode the international rule of law, which is crucial for promoting global order and security," the 79 countries, including Canada and France, said in a statement publicly released by numerous governments.

The statement added that "sanctions could jeopardize the confidentiality of sensitive information and the safety of those involved—including victims, witnesses, and court officials, many of whom are our nationals."

The signatories said the sanctions may result in the ICC having to close its field offices.

"We regret any attempts to undermine the court's independence, integrity and impartiality," they said, crediting the "ICC's indispensable role in ending impunity, promoting the rule of law, and fostering lasting respect for international law and human rights."



The United States and Israel are among a minority of around 40 countries that never signed up to the ICC, an international court based in the Netherlands that seeks to hold to account the perpetrators of war crimes, like genocide.

But after some historic cooperation between Washington and the ICC, Trump's executive order Thursday accused the world body of "illegitimate and baseless actions targeting America and our close ally Israel."

In November, the ICC issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, as well as for Hamas leaders Yahya Sinwar, Mohammad Deif and Ismail Haniyeh.

The warrants relate to events on and since Oct. 7, 2023, when Hamas-led terrorist attacks killed 1,200 people and saw around 250 others taken hostage, according to Israeli officials. Since, then Israel has launched a military offensive that has killed more than 47,500 people in

the Gaza Strip, according to local health officials.

The court said there was reason to believe Netanyahu and Gallant used "starvation as a method of warfare" by restricting humanitarian aid and intentionally targeting civilians in Israel's campaign in Gaza. Israel, which also does not recognize the ICC, dismissed those charges as false and antisemitic.

The court's "recent actions against Israel and the United States set a dangerous precedent, directly endangering current and former United States personnel, including active service members of the Armed Forces, by exposing them to harassment, abuse, and possible arrest," the executive order said.

Its signing appeared timed to coincide with Netanyahu's visit to Washington, in which Trump made the surprise announcement that he wanted the U.S. to take control of the Gaza Strip, shocking and outraging many officials, activists and experts around the world.

Ukraine, Russia exchange 300 prisoners of war

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Ukraine carried out a prisoner swap with Russia on Wednesday that saw 150 of its fighters returning home, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on his Telegram page.

Footage posted by Zelenskyy showed jubilant prisoners, many wrapped in Ukrainian flags, getting off buses and being reunited with loved ones at a location that was not disclosed for security reasons.

“And today, for them and their loved ones, this day means more than years of waiting. It is true happiness to see them home—alive and free,” Zelenskyy wrote. Some of them had spent more than two years in captivity, he added.

Zelenskyy thanked “the partners, especially the UAE,” and everyone who works to return Ukrainians home.

The deal was brokered by the United Arab Emirates, which has been behind numerous other prisoner exchanges.

Russia’s defence ministry said



its troops were undergoing medical checks in allied Belarus before returning to Russia, while also acknowledging the UAE’s mediation efforts.

Meanwhile, hundreds of mourners gathered Wednesday in Poltava, Ukraine, to attend the funerals of some of the 14 victims of a Russian attack last Saturday.

Solemn services were held for the Zapishnyi and Yavorskyi families, who lost both adults and children in the attack.

The Zapishnyi family lost Serhii, 40, his wife Kateryna, 38,

and their children, 8-year-old Danyil and 12-year-old Diana.

The Yavorskyi family lost both parents and their 9-year-old daughter.

Seven coffins were placed near the cathedral and emotional mourners paid their respects. They also left toys to honour the children.

“Today, a whole family was buried, which was taken away by an insatiable enemy. This is a family that can rightly be called an elite family,” said Oleh Semko, a friend of the family.

Trump announces executive order to eradicate anti-Christian bias

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

President Donald Trump has announced an executive order to protect religious liberty, and ‘eradicate anti-Christian bias’

Trump announced Thursday he is creating a task force led by the Department of Justice (DOJ) to “eradicate anti-Christian bias” within the federal government.

The President made the announcement at a private event following the 73rd annual National Prayer Breakfast—his second prayer breakfast speech of the morning.

Attorney General Pam Bondi will lead the effort and immediately halt “all forms of anti-Christian targeting and discrimination within the federal government” including at DOJ, IRS, and FBI, Trump said.

He said Bondi would also work to “fully prosecute anti-Christian violence and vandalism in our society and to move heaven and earth to defend the rights of Christians and religious believers nationwide.”

Trump says he plans to launch the initiative with an executive order he intends to sign latest on Friday afternoon.

Faith groups are commending the President for creating a



commission to protect religious liberty.

Ralph Reed, president of the Faith & Freedom Coalition, said in a statement, “In the aftermath of the Biden Justice Department targeting parents attending school board meetings for possible prosecution and the FBI targeting faithful Catholics as a possible domestic threat, it has never been more important to eradicate all forms of targeting, bias, and discrimination based on faith at the federal level.

“Faith & Freedom Coalition’s three million members and supporters strongly support President Trump in his defence of religious freedom and the rights of Christian Americans,” the statement continued.

Addressing lawmakers at the 73rd National Prayer Breakfast on

Capitol Hill highlighting the importance of faith, Trump said, “From the very beginning of our Republic, America has always been a nation founded by people of faith and strengthened by the power of prayer, united by four simple but beautiful words. ‘In God We Trust’.”

Trump said he believes people “can’t be happy without religion, without that belief. Let’s bring religion back. Let’s bring God back into our lives.”

The 47th president added he is also forming a White House faith office led by Rev. Paula White, who served as a faith adviser during his first term.

Faith groups are commending the president for creating a commission to protect religious liberty.

Train carrying 350 passengers catches fire in Pennsylvania

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



About 350 passengers were safely evacuated after a Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) train caught fire.

Extraordinary images captured the moment a train carrying 350 passengers burst into flames, sparking mass evacuations en route to Delaware.

New York Post reports that the six-car SEPTA train was traveling from Philadelphia when flames tore through a carriage near Crum Lynne, Pennsylvania about 6.15pm on Thursday.

Pictures of the incident show thick, grey plumes of smoke billowing from the train, which is lit up with orange flames within.

Passenger Dnasia Buckner told Fox News that she began smelling smoke about 15 minutes into the journey.

‘We had to get up and relocate to another car and then we had to get up and relocate again and that’s when I started to see smoke coming from the side of the train,’ she said.

‘As people were walking by, they said the train’s on fire, but the conductors aren’t saying anything.’

Eventually, conductors opened the train doors and instructed all passengers to disembark, a process which Buckner said took about 15 minutes itself.

Firefighters were called to the scene to extinguish the blaze.

Service to Wilmington has been halted and Amtrak service along the Northeast Corridor is also impacted.

No injuries were reported.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation, but SEPTA spokesperson Andrew Busch credited quick-thinking staff for keeping passengers safe.

‘Very quick action by our crews that that helped allow this to be a safe outcome,’ he said.

‘We don’t know where this started, just that it was in the area underneath the train and then obviously engulfed the train in flames,’ Andrew Busch said.

Outrage as 100 Indians shackled aboard 40-hour migrant flight

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

US officials kept around 100 deported Indian migrants in shackles for their 40-hour flight home, including during bathroom breaks, in the latest incident to spark anger overseas at President Donald Trump's migration crackdown.

Indian lawmakers demonstrated outside parliament on Thursday, some wearing shackles and others mocking the much-touted friendship between Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Elsewhere in New Delhi, members of the youth wing of India's main opposition party burned an effigy of Trump.

Last month, the spectacle of Colombian deportees being shackled as they boarded a US deportation flight sparked a bitter dispute between the two countries, with Colombian president Gustavo Petro initially refusing the military plane permission to land.

The anger in India comes days ahead of an expected visit by Modi to meet Trump – whom he has called a “true friend” – at the White House.

S. Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal, a government minister in the western state of Punjab, where the deportation flight landed, urged Modi to “now use his friendship to resolve the issue.”

Dhaliwal also questioned “the usefulness of this friendship if it cannot help Indian citizens in need,” his office said in a statement.

The flight to India was the longest in distance since the Trump administration began deploying military aircraft for migrant deportations, according to a US official.

“Our hands were cuffed and ankles tied with chains before we took the flight,” said 23-year-old Akashdeep Singh, who arrived in Punjab on Wednesday with 103 other deportees.



“We requested the military officials to take it off to eat or go to the bathroom but they treated us horribly and without any regard whatsoever,” Singh added.

“The way they looked at us, I’ll never forget it... We went to the bathroom with the shackles on. Right before landing, they removed (the shackles) for the women. We saw it. For us, they were removed after we landed by the local police officials.”

US Border Patrol Chief Michael W. Banks posted a video of the Indian deportees being put onto a plane on X. In the video, shackles are seen on the wrists and ankles of several men who shuffle slowly up the ramp.

CNN has reached out to the Pentagon and US Customs and Border Protection for comment on whether the deportees were held in shackles for the duration of the flight.

Deportee Sukhpal Singh, 35, also said the shackles were kept on throughout the flight, including during a refueling stopover on the Pacific island of Guam.

“They treated us like criminals,” he said. “If we would try to stand because our legs were swelling due to the handcuffs they

would yell at us to sit down.”

Young Indians looking for work opportunities have made up a sizeable portion of undocumented migrants in the US, many after making the dangerous trek through Latin America to reach the US southern border.

Many say they see no future at home where a jobs crisis is stifling young hopes in the world's most populous country.

In just four years, the number of Indian citizens entering the US illegally has surged dramatically — from 8,027 in the 2018-19 fiscal year to 96,917 during 2022-23, government data showed.

Families have previously told CNN how they sold off land to raise the tens of thousands of dollars charged by “travel agents” to take migrants on the risky journey to the US.

“I had gone for work, for better life, for a better future,” said Sukhpal Singh, who has a son and daughter and hoped to better provide for them by getting a job in the US.

“You see it in movies and you hear from people around you that there's work there and people are successful there so that's why I also wanted to go.”

Elon Musk barred from accessing US Treasury payments data

By By Joe Miller in Washington

Elon Musk's crusade to slash US government spending suffered setbacks on Thursday after a federal judge barred the Treasury department from handing data from its payments system to outsiders and one of the billionaire's staffers was forced to resign over racist social media posts.

Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly put the temporary order in place after Musk boasted that his team at the "Department of Government Efficiency" (Doge) was "rapidly shutting down" Treasury remittances. They apparently gained access to the system that disburses trillions of dollars, including social security payments and Medicare, each year.

Hours after the judge's decision, 25-year-old coder Marko Elez, who was working for Doge at the Treasury, abruptly resigned after apparently racist comments from a dormant social media account were unearthed. The Wall Street Journal first reported on the social media posts.

Elez was one of a handful of young engineers recruited by Musk's Doge and installed in various government agencies. When asked about their roles this week, President Donald Trump called the coders "very smart" and defended their work.

Representatives of government employees and retirees earlier this week had sued to stop the sensitive data — accessed by Elez — being shared with Musk and others at Doge, arguing that such moves were "depriving them of privacy protections guaranteed to them by federal law".

Although the US government reassured the court that only two of Doge's emissaries, Cloud Software Group's chief executive Tom Krause and Elez,



had access to the sensitive system, Kollar-Kotelly issued an order preventing any information being shared outside the Treasury while she considers a more permanent injunction.

As a result, Musk himself will not be able to review data pulled from the payments system.

Anti-Musk protesters outside the US Department of Labor in Washington on Wednesday © Jose Luis Magana/AP
The legal challenge comes as Treasury officials and the White House have sought to quell fears over Musk's and Doge's purported access to the system, and his broader authority, after the entrepreneur suggested his team was unilaterally cancelling "illegal" payments.

On Monday, Trump said Musk, who has been made a special government employee, "can't do — and won't do — anything without our approval".

Press secretary Karoline Leavitt also confirmed that Musk would extricate himself from any situations where he might have a conflict. "If Elon Musk

comes across a conflict of interest with [his companies'] contracts and the funding that Doge is overseeing, then Elon will excuse himself from those contracts . . . he has abided by all applicable laws," she said.

Doge, whose emissaries have infiltrated the networks of various government agencies, including the US Agency for International Development, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Transportation, has been sued multiple times by groups claiming the body is circumventing various legal protections.

Separately on Thursday, a judge in Massachusetts ordered a deadline for federal employees to accept or reject a buyout package — part of a personnel reduction effort spearheaded by Musk — to be extended at least until Monday.

The White House also confirmed that only 40,000 workers had thus far accepted the offer, well short of the hundreds of thousands it had previously forecast.

Rubio accuses South Africa of 'anti-Americanism,' snubs G20 meeting

By Dave Oludare Oso

The US secretary of state, Marco Rubio, has accused South Africa of “anti-Americanism” and refused to attend a G20 meeting in Johannesburg later this month, as diplomatic ties sour between the two countries under Donald Trump’s administration.

Rubio made the announcement on X, where he repeated the US president’s unfounded claim that South Africa was expropriating private property.

“South Africa is doing very bad things. Expropriating private property. Using G20 to promote ‘solidarity, equality, & sustainability.’ In other words: DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) and climate change,” Rubio said in a post on X. “My job is to advance America’s national interests, not waste taxpayer money or coddle anti-Americanism.”

Elon Musk, the South African-born billionaire and Trump adviser tasked with scrutinising US government spending and staffing, including on foreign aid, replied with two American flag emojis.

South Africa’s president, Cyril Ramaphosa, appeared to rebuke Trump and Rubio in his annual State of the Nation address on Thursday: “We are witnessing the rise of nationalism, protectionism, the pursuit of narrow interests and the decline of common cause ... We will not be bullied.”

Rubio’s snub of South Africa, which this year is chairing the G20 forum of large economies, the EU and African Union, comes after Trump said on Sunday that South Africa was “confiscating land” and that he was stopping US funding pending an investigation.



South Africa’s president, Cyril Ramaphosa, last month signed a law allowing for land expropriation with no compensation in limited circumstances. Politicians have said it is similar to countries including the US, where expropriating land with “just compensation” is allowed for public projects such as road building.

More than three decades after apartheid ended, land ownership remains concentrated in South Africa’s white minority. The government has bought and redistributed 7.8m hectares (19m acres), while courts have ordered a limited number of returns of land to people displaced by apartheid.

“There is no arbitrary dispossession of land/private property,” South Africa’s foreign minister, Ronald Lamola, said on X. “Our G20 Presidency, is not confined to just climate change but also equitable treatment for nations of the Global South, ensuring equal global system for all. We remain committed to engaging the government of the USA.”

The US relationship with South Africa deteriorated under the previous US president, Joe Biden, when South Africa refused to take sides in the Russia-Ukraine war but continued to play an active part in the BRICS bloc, originally made up of Brazil, Russia, India and China.

The US also said South Africa’s international court of justice case against US ally Israel, accusing it of committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, was “meritless”. The case is yet to be decided.

Musk, who like other former PayPal executives and wealthy Trump allies Peter Thiel and David Sacks spent at least part of their childhood in apartheid-ruled South Africa, has accused South Africa of having “openly racist laws.”

While Musk’s Starlink internet provider operates or is due to launch in 16 African countries, it is not available in South Africa, where foreign investors must cede 30% of equity to Black shareholders to get a telecoms licence.

Man Utd have become worse under Ruben Amorim – Gary Neville

By Dave Oludare Oso

Club legend, Gary Neville believes Manchester United have become worse under Ruben Amorim and warned the Portuguese: “It can’t keep going on like this.”

Sunday’s 2-0 home defeat to Crystal Palace put Amorim’s United back to square one after three straight wins over Rangers, Fulham and Steaua Bucharest.

It was the 39-year-old’s fifth league defeat in seven matches at Old Trafford since taking over – the quickest any Manchester United manager has reached that number of home top-flight losses in Premier League history.

And Neville believes the pain is only going to continue for Amorim, his players and the United fans between now and the end of the season.

“I thought it would get better when Ruben Amorim came in, the enthusiasm of him and the new system, the players would buy into and we’d see a bounce,” he told the Gary Neville Podcast.

“But we’ve seen the absolute opposite and it’s got a lot worse – and that’s surprising.

“There’s going to be a lot more pain towards the end of the season and it’s going to be damaging – because they’re obviously going to stick with Amorim. But the more you lose, the more difficult it is for the manager to convince the players of his idea.

“In the very early days he said, ‘I will not change my idea’ and you need the players to buy into that. If they keep losing and they keep getting criticised and the spotlight comes on them more and the fans are leaving unhappy, you know it creates a feeling and you can’t keep losing.



“You just can’t. It will depress the thoughts of the players to a point whereby they’ll start to lose faith in the idea and it’ll damage you.

“He can’t change his approach now because he’s died in the ditch on it and rightly so. But he’s lost more games at Manchester United than he lost in the last 75 at Sporting Lisbon which is just absolutely alarming, so he will not be enjoying this.

“It can’t keep going on as it is and they somehow have to start playing better – because at this moment in time it’s a very sorry situation when you watch United play.”

United’s latest defeat came in bizarre circumstances as Amorim chose midfielder Kobbie Mainoo has his centre-forward option, leaving recognised strikers Rasmus Hojlund and Joshua Zirkzee on the bench.

Amorim’s side struggled in front of goal once again and in a further twist of irony, Palace’s recognised forward Jean-Philippe Mateta got both goals in the 2-0 victory.

Neville believes Amorim’s team selection gave Palace a lot of confidence to pick up that win and said while United’s head coach cannot change his style of play now, he must make some tweaks.

“The only thing I can think he’s doing is one of two things – experiment to the point whereby he’s just trying to find a solution that works in the system he wants to play, or he doesn’t like the strikers he’s got,” said Neville about Mainoo’s centre-forward selection.

“I thought Bruno Fernandes was going to play in that position or Alejandro Garnacho might play up front and Fernandes to the right; when I saw Mainoo as a centre-forward or dropping in to that position, I thought it’s okay, you’ll get control in the game and you can get decent football. And it can con you, it can kid you.

“It’s about putting the ball in the back of the net, it’s about getting bodies in the box, it’s about getting bodies across defenders and making sure that you’re really creating chances and that’s not going to happen that much with Mainoo up front as everything has to be perfect.

Nico Gonzalez helps Man City fill void left by Rodri's absence – Guardiola

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Manchester City's new midfield signing Nico Gonzalez will help them plug the gap caused by the absence of injured key player Rodri, manager Pep Guardiola said on Friday.

Spanish midfielder Gonzalez arrived from Porto on the final day of the transfer window earlier this week for a reported 60-million-euro fee (£50 million, \$62 million).

The 23-year-old's father Fran previously worked as a coach at City's academy and Guardiola was also aware of the player's abilities as he began his career at his former club Barcelona.

Ballon d'Or winner Rodri, who has been out since rupturing his anterior cruciate ligament in September, is included in City's squad for the Champions League's knockout stages despite being ruled out for the season by Guardiola.

"It's a position where we were weak after the absence from Rodri," Guardiola said about Gonzalez, who joined from Porto on Monday on a four-and-a-half-year deal after City paid €60 million for the 23-year-old.

"I know him from the Barcelona academy and his father was working here. I'm really pleased



from the effort of the club to bring him here for the next years."

Last season's beaten finalists City visit third-tier Leyton Orient in an FA Cup fourth round clash on Saturday, and Guardiola said he expected a tough game.

"Always we've had problems away in this competition... away to teams in the Championship or League One or even League Two," he said.

"Always we struggle. But we are ready for the challenge. Every game is a new opportunity."

City have struggled without Rodri, who suffered a serious knee injury in September.

A run of four consecutive Premier League titles is almost certain to come to an end as they sit 15 points

off runaway leaders Liverpool.

City did sneak into the Champions League group stage but now faces the might of holders Real Madrid in the play-off round later this month.

When asked about City women's team striker Khadija Shaw facing racist abuse, the manager said he stood by her.

"We would be lucky if this was just in world football. Unfortunately it's in the whole entire world," he said.

"It's really more difficult for me to understand that people can defend these stupid things. I support her, like I support all people who receive abuse in terms of racism, gender."