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Tinubu greets El-Rufai at 65, hails his contributions to democracy

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has congratulated former Kaduna State Governor Nasir El-Rufai on his 65th birthday.

In a statement issued by his Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, Tinubu praised El-Rufai's contributions to democracy, his dedicated service to the nation, and his role in mentoring the younger generation.

The President acknowledged El-Rufai's key involvement in the discussions that led to the formation of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and his contributions to the party's victories in the 2015, 2019, and 2023 elections.

After winning the election and being inaugurated into office, Mr Tinubu nominated El-Rufai as a minister. But in what was believed to be with the tacit support of the presidency, the Senate refused to clear him for appointment, citing security concerns.

Since then, the relationship between Mr El-Rufai and the Tinubu has progressively soured.



Mr El-Rufai has been increasingly critical of the government, and recently said he has been marked for arrest by the government.

Wishing him good health and continued strength, Tinubu commended El-Rufai's leadership and achievements.

El-Rufai, an administrator, scholar, and politician, is widely recognized for his resourcefulness and intellect.

As a founding member of the APC, he served as Kaduna State governor for eight years. Before holding elective office, he was the Director-General of the Bureau of Public Enterprises and the Minister of the

Federal Capital Territory (FCT) from 2003 to 2007.

Similarly, Governor Uba Sani of Kaduna State congratulated Mr El-Rufai on his birthday on Sunday.

Mr Sani, another political ally-turned-adversary, shared his good wishes for his predecessor on social media.

"I wish to extend my heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to my dear brother, friend and predecessor, His Excellency, Malam Nasir El-Rufai CON on the occasion of his 65th birthday. I pray the Almighty Allah to continue to guide, protect and strengthen His Excellency," Mr Sani wrote.

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

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	329,868.50
HALF PAGE	192,500.00
QUARTER PAGE	100,000.00
14X2	109,500.00
10X6	242,500.00
10X5	237,500.00
10X4	192,500.00
10X3	171,000.00
9X6	232,500.00
9X5	206,000.00
9X4	177,500.00
9X3	150,000.00
8X6	216,000.00
8X3	98,500.00
7X4	164,002.00
6X4	94,010.50
6X3	78,500.00
6X2	47,500.00
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5X4	61,500.00
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POLITICAL COLOUR

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QUARTER PAGE	115,012.50

POLITICAL BLACK & WHITE

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HALF PAGE	184,700.00
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10X6	217,830.00
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10X4	142,787.50
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PUBLIC NOTICE BLACK & WHITE

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2X1	5,439.50
1X1	2,700.00

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4X6 FRONT PAGE	2,250,000.00
5X6 FRONT PAGE	3,350,000.00
10X6 FRONT PAGE	8,250,000.00
EARPIECE FRONT PAGE(1.5X2)	246,500.00
EARPIECE INSIDE PAGE(1.5X2)	117,875.00
EARPIECE BACK PAGE	236,796.50
CENTRE SPREAD COLOUR (PUBLIC NOTICE)	1,027,000.00
CENTRE SPREAD COLOUR (PRODUCT)	929,000.00
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CENTRE SPREAD HALF COLOUR	575,000.00
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DOUBLE SPREAD HALF COLOUR	432,881.00
DOUBLE SPREAD STRIP COLOUR	144,294.00
CENTRE SPREAD B&W	835,000.00
CENTRE SPREAD HALF PAGE B & W	550,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD B & W	725,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD HALF B & W	425,000.00
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(IFC) Inside Front Cover		430,000.00
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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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SERAP gives CBN 48 hours to reverse ATM fee hike

By Friday Omosola

The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has given the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) a 48-hour ultimatum to withdraw the recent increase in Automated Teller Machine (ATM) transaction fees, describing it as unlawful and unfair.

In an open letter dated February 15, 2025, and signed by its Deputy Director, Kolawole Oluwadare, SERAP warned that the policy would worsen financial hardship for Nigerians.

The CBN recently announced that ATM withdrawals outside bank premises would now attract a N100 charge per N20,000, with an additional surcharge of up to N500 at certain locations.

SERAP argued that the policy favors banks while imposing unnecessary burdens on the public, particularly low-income earners. It urged the CBN to reconsider its decision in line with consumer protection laws and human rights obligations.

“We urge the CBN to reverse this decision within 48 hours,” SERAP stated, adding that failure to do so would lead to legal action.

The move has sparked widespread criticism, with many Nigerians questioning the fairness of the new charges and calling for urgent policy reforms.



The letter, read in part: “The increase in ATM transaction fees is also entirely inconsistent with the oft-expressed commitment by the government of President Bola Tinubu to address the growing poverty across the country.

“We would be grateful if the recommended measures are taken within 48 hours of the receipt and/or publication of this letter. If we have not heard from you by then, SERAP shall take all appropriate legal actions to compel you and the CBN to comply with our request in the public interest.

“The exorbitant and unlawful increase in ATM transaction fees at a time the country is facing economic and financial crises would contribute further to the impoverishment of the population. Imposing exorbitant ATM transaction fees on socially and economically vulnerable Nigerians at a time several Nigerian banks are declaring trillions of naira in profits

yearly is manifestly unfair, unreasonable and unjust.”

“The increase cannot be justified under the Nigerian Constitution 1999 [as amended], the CBN Act, Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Act, and the country’s international human rights obligations.

“The patently unlawful, unfair, unreasonable and unjust increase in ATM transaction fees also inherently contributes to violations of the human rights of socially and economically vulnerable Nigerians. The increase creates a two-tiered financial system that discriminates against poor Nigerians who may not be able to afford or pay the increased fees.

Continue reading
on next page

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“While the government of President Tinubu has primary responsibility for protecting the rights of Nigerians, the CBN also has the responsibilities to ensure that its practices and guidelines do not cause or contribute to human rights abuses.

“The CBN could play an important role in promoting economic opportunities for Nigerians where the majority of the people live in poverty. The CBN is failing to comply with the Nigerian Constitution, the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Act and the country’s international human rights obligations in the exercise of its statutory powers and functions.

“The CBN is also compromising its stated mission to advance the management of the country’s economy, and ultimately, sustainable development.

“According to our information, the CBN through a Circular to all banks and other financial institutions dated February 10 2025 stated that it has reviewed and increased the ATM transaction fees prescribed in section 10(7) of the CBN Guide to Charges by Bank, Other Financial and Non-Bank Financial Institutions 2020.

“Section 42(1)(a) of the CBN Act 2007 provides that ‘The Bank shall wherever necessary seek the co-operation of and co-operate with other banks in Nigeria to – (a) promote and maintain adequate and

reasonable financial service for the public.’ It also provides that any policy of the CBN ‘shall be in the national interest.’

“Section 1(c)(d) of the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Act, 2018 provides that the objectives of the Act are to ‘protect and promote the interests and welfare of consumers’ and ‘prohibit restrictive or unfair business practices’ such as the exorbitant and unreasonable increase in ATM transaction fees by the CBN.

“Significantly, the provisions of the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Act are directly binding on the CBN, as the provisions constrain the exercise of the statutory powers and functions of the institution.

“Specifically, section 2(1) the Act provides that its provisions ‘apply to all undertakings [such as the CBN] and scope of application to all commercial activities within, or having effect within, Nigeria.

“Section 2(2) provides that, ‘This Act also applies to and is binding upon- (a) a body corporate or agency of the Government of the Federation; (b) a body corporate; (c) all commercial activities aimed at making profit and geared towards the satisfaction of demand from the public.’

“According to section 70(1) of the Act, ‘For the purpose of this Act, an undertaking [such as the CBN] is

considered to be in a dominant position if it is able to act without taking account of the reaction of its customers or consumers.

“The Act prohibits abuse of dominant position by the CBN including charging excessive ATM transaction fees to the detriment of consumers. Section 104 of the of the Act asserts the supremacy of the Act over ‘the provisions of any other law’, such as the CBN Act. The only exception to the provision is the Nigerian Constitution 1999 [as amended].

“Section 127(1) of the Act also prohibits the CBN from making any policy or providing “any services at a price that is manifestly unfair, unreasonable or unjust.

“The CBN has clear responsibilities under the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) to undertake human rights due diligence to identify and mitigate contributions to human rights violations of not only its own activities but also activities to which it is directly linked by its business relationships.

“The CBN has responsibilities under the UNGPs to take effective steps to avoid or mitigate potential human rights harm and to consider ending any charges or transaction fees where severe negative human rights consequences cannot be avoided or mitigated.”

Okpebholo to probe alleged N96bn diversion linked to Obaseki administration

By **Friday Omosola**

A report from the Edo State Administrative Panel of Enquiry has exposed alleged financial mismanagement amounting to N96 billion, linking former Governor Godwin Obaseki and the recently impeached 18 Local Government Chairmen to questionable transactions.

The panel, inaugurated on December 18, 2024, was tasked with scrutinizing the financial records of the affected local councils between September 4, 2023, and November 2024.

Governor Monday Okpebholo, who received the findings over the weekend vowed to escalate the matter to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for further investigation.

According to a statement by the governor's Chief Press Secretary, Fred Itua, the panel, chaired by Solomon Imohiosen, uncovered evidence of large-scale financial mismanagement, with funds allegedly diverted into private accounts.

“Our forensic audit revealed substantial irregularities in the financial operations of the 18 Local Government Councils. This report



presents critical recommendations to enhance transparency and accountability in the administration of public funds,” Imohiosen stated.

Findings from the panel indicate that the councils collectively received N95 billion from the Joint Allocation Account Committee (JAAC) during the review period.

However, the report noted that the funds were not properly utilized, as there were no significant projects to justify the expenditures.

The panel further alleged that over N10 billion was siphoned through an illicit scheme disguised under budgetary headings such as ‘Security, Environment, and Training.’

It claimed that the impeached council chairmen funneled money into a collective account, which was then used to transfer funds to private entities and individuals.

Beyond the former LG chairmen, the report also implicated prominent political figures, including Obaseki and key leaders of the factional Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), in the alleged financial misconduct.

With the panel's report now in his possession, Governor Okpebholo has signaled his administration's determination to hold those responsible accountable, reinforcing his stance on financial transparency and governance reform in the state.

Boko Haram: F'G must investigate Perry's claim on terrorism funding - Ali Ndume

By Oluwatosin Ologun

The lawmaker representing Borno South Senatorial District, Ali Ndume, has asked the Federal Government to probe a claim by US Congressman Scott Perry that aborted United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded terrorist organisations, including Boko Haram.

“You can't say it's just an allegation; it's more than that,” the former Chairman of the Senate Committee on Army said on Channels Television's Sunday Politics programme.

“That's why the Nigerian government and the National Assembly, especially, need to look into it to investigate and verify the veracity of such a very weighty allegation.”

The lawmaker, who has been in the National Assembly for more than 20 unbroken years, said the Nigerian government should be interested in the US congressman's revelation, considering that there had been suspicions that foreign humanitarian agencies operating in Nigeria's insurgent-riddled North-East zone sponsored terrorist activities.

Ndume said, “This development is very worrisome, especially because one of the terrorist organisations mentioned by Scott Perry is Boko Haram, and Boko Haram has ravaged



not only the North-East but even (other parts of) Nigeria.

“You can remember Boko Haram bombed the police headquarters and the UN office in Abuja, and the casualties were enormous. So, the Nigerian government must be interested.

“I'm worried, but the Nigerian security agencies have raised this indirectly several times. Even the Borno State government was wary of the operations of the NGOs.

“I remember during the period of (Lieutenant General Tukur) Buratai, the Nigerian Army got intelligence and even raided the office of USAID or United Nations in Maiduguri. There was also a time when the governor got intelligence and security agencies raided one NGO

that was providing training to some of their staff on how to use guns.

“We have been wondering for all these years where these people are getting money.”

Ndume further said Nigeria should be giving out humanitarian assistance to other countries and not receiving them.

“This issue of relying on aid from other countries is not even good for us because Nigeria, by now, is supposed to be the one that is giving out aid and not receiving aid,” he said.

“This is like a wake-up for all of us in government. We have everything; the only problem is the leadership. We need to fix that so that we'll tap into what we have and be content.”

Lagos govt launches waste valorisation initiative to drive circular economy

By Friday Omosola

The Lagos State Government has launched the Charity Begins at Home Waste Valorisation Initiative, a strategic waste management project designed to transform waste into economic value while promoting environmental sustainability.

The initiative, unveiled during the week at the Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget (MEPB) Quadrant in Alausa, was spearheaded by the Office of the Special Adviser on Climate Change and Circular Economy.

The event brought together government officials, civil servants, private sector stakeholders, and environmental advocates to witness the launch of infrastructure aimed at redefining waste as an asset.

Speaking at the event, the Special Adviser on Climate Change and Circular Economy, Titi Oshodi, highlighted the urgency of adopting a circular economy approach in Lagos, a city generating approximately 13,000 metric tons of waste daily.

“This initiative is a bold step in ensuring that waste is no longer seen as a burden but as an economic opportunity.

“By introducing Collection Hubs across key ministries and agencies, we are enabling civil servants to actively participate in waste recycling while benefiting from incentives such as communication data, cash rewards, and discounted Cowry Cards for intermodal transportation,” she stated.

The Commissioner for Economic Planning and Budget emphasised the government’s commitment to embedding circular economy principles into



governance. He noted that the civil service, with over 5,000 staff members, plays a critical role in setting the standard for responsible waste management and climate action.

“Integrating sustainable waste-to-value models is not just an environmental necessity; it is an economic imperative that ensures financial resilience, resource optimization, and institutional efficiency.

“By leveraging community savings structures such as Esusu, Ajo, and Cooperatives, we are creating economic empowerment opportunities for civil servants while significantly reducing landfill dependency,” he said.

Building on the success of the Leave No One Behind programme, which promoted climate literacy and sustainability through potted plant distribution, the waste valorisation initiative expands Lagos State’s efforts in circular economy governance.

Collection Hubs have now been established at MEPB, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation (WAPA), the Ministry of Youth and Social Development (MYSD), the Lagos

State Water Regulatory Commission (LASWARCO), and the Safety Commission, setting a national precedent for sustainable waste management.

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget, Olayinka Ojo, praised the collaborative efforts that brought the initiative to life.

She emphasized that beyond recycling, the project is designed to stimulate green entrepreneurship, innovation, and financial inclusion.

In his goodwill message, the Head of Service, Bode Agoro, acknowledged the initiative’s role in reshaping the culture of waste management within the civil service.

He urged civil servants to take ownership of the programme through active participation in waste segregation, cooperative savings, and advocacy for sustainable policies.

The event also featured testimonials from participants in previous waste valorisation programmes held in Badagry, Lekki, and Ajah.

African Union warns against territorial break-up of DR Congo

By Oluwatosin Ologun

The African Union (AU) warned on Sunday against the break-up of the Democratic Republic of Congo, two days after the Rwandan-backed M23 armed group entered a second city in the country's east.

"We don't want a balkanisation of eastern DRC," the AU's Peace and Security Commissioner Bankole Adeoye told reporters.

Without mentioning Rwanda, he added: "We are calling for the immediate removal of M23 and their supporters from all towns and cities including Goma airport."

Meanwhile, Columns of M23 fighters allied with Rwandan troops on Sunday entered the centre of another key city in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo as the AU highlighted growing fears that the strife-torn country could break up.

The fighters reached outlying districts of Bukavu, capital of South Kivu province, on Friday.

The fall of the city of one million people, which was barely defended by the Congolese armed forces (FARDC), gives the M23 total control of Lake Kivu, following its capture of Goma, capital of neighbouring North Kivu province, at the end of January.

Growing international calls have been made for Rwanda to end its military backing for M23. It denies that its troops are in the DRC.



As they entered Bukavu, M23 fighters were applauded by some residents on the streets or huddled on balconies, AFP journalists noted.

Near the border post linking the town with neighbouring Rwanda, some chanted: "You're the ones we've been waiting for, we need change in this country, we want work."

"We have welcomed our liberators, it's an immense joy that floods my heart," said Kigohwa Kalimbasha, a Bukavu resident.

Some called on the troops to march on Kinshasa, the country's capital.

The Congolese armed forces who abandoned Bukavu on Friday left behind weapons that were collected by civilians and bandits.

There was extensive looting across the weekend and most residents took refuge in their homes for safety.

Men, women and children, some of

whom picked up weapons left by the retreating army, stormed several parts of the city.

In a statement, the DRC government said it was following developments in Bukavu "hour-by-hour" and accused Rwanda of "plans of occupation, of pillages" in the east.

With fears that the offensive could ignite a regional war, the international community has multiplied calls for a de-escalation and ceasefire, so far in vain.

UN chief Antonio Guterres, speaking on Saturday at the opening of the AU summit, demanded that the DRC's "territorial integrity" be respected and a regional war avoided.

The French foreign ministry called for an immediate withdrawal of Rwandan troops, while Britain on Sunday warned that the Rwandan-backed offensive risked sparking "a wider regional conflict".

Gov Okpebholo approves promotion of 8,476 teachers

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Monday Okpebholo, the governor of Edo State has approved the promotion of 8,476 primary and junior secondary school teachers across the state's 18 Local government areas.

In a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Fred Itua, the governor said the promotion was part of his administration's first 100 days in office.

The Chairman of the Edo State Universal Basic Education Board (Edo-SUBEB), Onomen Goodness Briggs, described the move as a testament to the governor's commitment to recognizing the dedication and hard work of teachers.

"Governor Okpebholo is ensuring that every teacher receives the recognition they deserve. By directing the release of these promotion letters, he is not only acknowledging their efforts but also taking a firm step towards enhancing the overall quality of education in Edo State," Briggs said.

The promotion, covering the period from 2022 to January



2024, is expected to boost morale among teachers who have faced career stagnation due to administrative delays.

Stakeholders have welcomed the decision, noting that improved job satisfaction among educators will translate into better classroom performance and a more dynamic learning environment.

Briggs further emphasised that the governor's proactive leadership is driving much-needed reforms in the state's education sector.

"This bold action underscores Governor Okpebholo's dedication to transforming education in Edo State. His resolve to address systemic challenges and deliver tangible results within his first 100 days in office is evident in this directive," she added.

With additional reforms reportedly in the pipeline, the state government reaffirmed its commitment to prioritizing educators' welfare and ensuring that timely recognition and career growth remain key focus areas in the state's education agenda.

NDLEA cracks down on drug syndicate, arrests four suspects

By Helen Okechukwu

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has dismantled a trans-border drug network, arresting four individuals and seizing large quantities of illegal substances in multiple operations.

On 27 January, NDLEA intercepted a Sienna bus on Nasarawa-Toto road in Keffi, arresting Zahradeen Adamu, 27 and Abubakar Usman, 44 for smuggling 190,960 tramadol pills from Onitsha to Yola.

Another Sienna, driven by Abba Usman, 48, was also stopped. Supplier Kingsley Mbaeri was arrested in Onitsha, and two vehicles were seized.

On 4 February, NDLEA officers stopped a bus from Onitsha at Abaji checkpoint, arresting Chimezie Henry Ojingwa aged 32 with methamphetamine, Loud, and a meth precursor hidden in spare parts.



On 13 February, officers in Cross River intercepted a truck carrying 170,000 tramadol pills, arresting driver Paul Chukwudi, 31. At Apapa seaport in Lagos, 85,400 bottles of codeine syrup from India were seized on 11 February.

Other arrests included Halilu Isa and Gambo Umaru in Borno with 72kg of cannabis, three suspects in Ekiti with 83kg, and Samiat Olabisi Yussuf in Lagos with 169.5 liters of nitrous oxide and 111 grams of Loud.

In Taraba, Ibrahim Usman and Solomon James were caught with 132.84 kg of cannabis.

NDLEA continued its War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) campaign nationwide, educating students, workers, and communities. Awareness events were held in schools across Akwa Ibom, Oyo, Ekiti, and Kano.

NDLEA Chairman, Brig. Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa (Rtd), commended the officers for their efforts in tackling drug trafficking and promoting awareness.

10 months after, Chimamanda Adichie reveals birth of twin boys

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the multi award-winning Nigerian author has revealed that she birth to twin boys in April 2024.

10 months after delivery, she made the good news known during her interview with The Guardian where she also spoke about her new book, Dream Count, cancel culture and other topics.

The 47-year-old author revealed that she welcomed her twins months ago but kept the news private because she wants to protect her children.

Chimamanda disclosed that many didn't know she got married in 2009, noting further that Nigerians are nosy people, which has made her a bit hesitant to talk about her family.

Addressing the interviewer, Charlotte Edwardes, Chimamanda said, "You've met my babies. I want to protect my children. I'm OK with having them mentioned, but I don't want the piece to become about them.

"I want to protect my children. I'm okay with having them mentioned, but I don't want the piece to become about them," she said.

"So, here is the thing, Nigerians are soso. They want to know about your personal life. Because of that, I am resistant. I very rarely talk about it,"



she said.

The mother of three, also spoke about cancel culture as she reflected on the massive backlash she received for her remarks about trans women in 2017. For the remarks, her career took a huge blow.

She had been asked during the 2017 interview whether a transgender woman was "any less of a real woman". Her response was, "a trans woman is a trans woman".

However, speaking about cancel culture in her latest interview, Chimamanda described it as bad, saying it should be stopped.

"What do I want to say about cancel culture? Cancel culture is bad. We should stop it. End of story".

Chimamanda is married to Ivara Esege, a Nigerian doctor. The lovebirds tied the knot in 2009 and welcomed their first daughter in 2016.

Ruger reacts to Headies nomination

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Afrobeats star Ruger has taken a jab at the Headies Awards after the announcement of this year's nominees sparked controversy over notable omissions.

In a post on his X account, the singer used sarcasm to express his frustration over the selection process.

His comments came after the release of the 17th Headies Award nominations, which stirred debate among fans and industry insiders.

Many criticized the list for leaving out deserving artists and projects. Ruger, known for his bold personality, joined the conversation with a post that appeared to mock the credibility of the awards.

Ruger: A sarcastic response

He sarcastically referred to the Headies as the "most credible award event in the whole world." He went on to thank the organizers for recognizing the hard work of "ALL ARTISTS and ALL PROJECTS," a statement many believe was meant to highlight the perceived unfairness in the selection process.

To drive his point further, Ruger predicted that the Headies would soon surpass every other music award globally. His post ended with an exaggerated blessing:

"Shoutout to the most credible award event in the whole world, THE HEADIES. Thank you for recognizing the hard work of ALL ARTISTS and ALL PROJECTS. Very soon, you will be bigger than all the awards in the whole world. Amen."



Mixed reactions from fans and industry insiders

The post quickly gained attention, with fans and fellow artists weighing in. Some supported Ruger's stance, agreeing that the awards often fail to give proper recognition. Others defended the Headies, arguing that no award show can satisfy everyone.

This is not the first time the Headies has faced criticism. Over the years, artists have spoken out about snubs and alleged bias in the nomination and selection process. While the awards remain one of the biggest music events in Nigeria, they continue to attract controversy.

A longstanding debate in the music industry

Ruger's post reflects a broader conversation in the industry. Many artists believe local awards should do more to fairly celebrate talent. As discussions around the Headies continue, fans will be watching to see if the organizers respond to the backlash.

For now, Ruger's sarcastic remarks have added more fuel to an already heated debate. Whether his words were purely a critique or just playful banter, they have once again highlighted the ongoing conversation about fairness in award recognition.

I once begged my unfaithful girlfriend to stay – L.A.X

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian singer L.A.X has shared a heartbreaking experience from his past relationship, revealing how he struggled with betrayal and emotional conflict.

He shared how he pleaded with his girlfriend to stay, even after discovering she had been unfaithful.

Speaking in an interview with media personality Chude Jideonwo, L.A.X recalled the night he found out about the betrayal. His girlfriend came home drunk, and he helped her to bed. But what he saw on her phone left him heartbroken.

While checking her messages, he discovered a text that confirmed she had spent the night with someone else. The message read, “I enjoyed this night. I think we should do this again.” The shocking revelation left him in disbelief.

Instead of reacting with anger, L.A.X found himself doing something unexpected. He begged her to stay.

A Shocking Discovery

L.A.X described the moment in detail. He explained that his girlfriend arrived home intoxicated, barely able to stand. Out of concern, he helped her to bed. Soon after, she threw up, which made the night even more chaotic.

Curious and suspicious, he checked her phone. What he found confirmed his worst fears. The message clearly suggested she had been with another man.

When he confronted her, she dismissed his concerns. Without hesitation, she told him, “He’s just my friend. We just spent the night.”



Her response was casual, as if nothing serious had happened. But instead of walking away, L.A.X reacted differently.

An Unexpected Reaction

Many people might have expected him to break up with her immediately. But L.A.X admitted he reacted in a way that surprised even himself. Instead of demanding answers or expressing anger, he started pleading with her to make things work.

“I was the one begging,” he confessed. “I told her we could work things out.”

His girlfriend agreed, assuring him not to worry. But in hindsight, the situation exposed the emotional complexity of relationships.

Why Did He Stay?

L.A.X did not explain why he chose to beg rather than walk away. However, his story sheds light on the emotional struggles people face when dealing with betrayal.

For some, love and attachment can

overshadow logic. The fear of losing someone can be so overwhelming that they choose to hold on, even when trust is broken.

L.A.X’s revelation sparked reactions from fans. Many were surprised by his response, while others related to his experience. His honesty about the situation made the conversation even more powerful.

Lessons from His Story

L.A.X’s experience raises important questions about love, trust, and self-respect. When faced with infidelity, people react in different ways. Some choose to fight for the relationship, while others walk away immediately.

His story highlights the emotional conflicts that come with relationships. It also shows that even strong individuals can struggle when their feelings are deeply involved.

L.A.X’s openness about his past serves as a reminder that love can sometimes cloud judgment. However, it also encourages honest conversations about self-worth and the importance of trust in any relationship.

Elon Musk's DOGE recovers \$1.8bn misplaced from Biden administration

By Dave Oludare 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.

Keir Starmer ready to send UK troops to Ukraine to protect peace

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Britain's Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer pledged to send British peacekeeping troops to Ukraine to help guarantee its security as part of a peace deal.

Starmer wrote in an opinion piece for Monday's Telegraph newspaper that "the UK is ready to play a leading role in accelerating work on security guarantees for Ukraine."

In the opinion letter, the UK Prime Minister urged fellow European leaders to respond to demands from US President Donald Trump to shoulder more of the burden for the continent's defense.

That means providing Ukraine's military with ongoing kit and financial assistance, and also "being ready and willing to contribute to security guarantees to Ukraine by putting our own troops on the ground if necessary," Starmer wrote, confirming an earlier report by Bloomberg. "We have got to show we are truly serious about our own defense and bearing our own burden."

The UK is seeking to play a bridging role between Europe and the US after Trump on Wednesday stunned European leaders by announcing that he had agreed with Russian President Vladimir Putin to begin negotiations to end the war in Ukraine.

"Europe and America must continue to work closely together – and I believe the UK can play a unique role in helping to make this happen," Starmer wrote. "We are facing a once in a generation moment for the collective security of our continent. This is not only a question about the future of Ukraine. It is existential for Europe as a whole."

Starmer is expected to join Germany's Olaf Scholz, Italy's Giorgia Meloni and



other European leaders in Paris on Monday after French President Emmanuel Macron convened urgent talks on Ukraine and the continent's wider security.

The meeting in the French capital will include conversations on possible European troop deployments to Ukraine during a ceasefire, the ongoing supply of weapons to Kyiv, what sort of security guarantees Europe can give Ukraine and how they can persuade Trump to agree to US support for those guarantees, according to people familiar with the matter who requested anonymity discussing internal deliberations. They cautioned that the talks are at an early stage and no final decisions have been made.

"While European nations must step up in this moment – and we will – US support will remain critical and a US security guarantee is essential for a lasting peace, because only the US can deter Putin from attacking again," Starmer wrote. He said he would meet Trump in "coming days" to help secure a "strong deal" on Ukraine.

The flurry of activity comes after

European powers — and Ukraine itself — faced the prospect of being sidelined in peace talks. With US and Russian officials set to meet in Saudi Arabia in the coming days, Trump's special envoy, Keith Kellogg suggested "that's not going to happen" when asked if Europe would be at the negotiating table.

Starmer said that if Ukraine were excluded from the discussions, it "would accept Putin's position that Ukraine is not a real nation."

Still, Secretary of State Marco Rubio left the door open for European involvement in the wider discussions, telling CBS's Face the Nation on Sunday: "Ukraine will have to be involved because they're the one that were invaded. And the Europeans will have to be involved because they have sanctions on Putin and Russia as well and they've contributed to this effort."

Starmer said European nations must increase defense spending and take on a greater role in NATO. "Peace comes through strength; but the reverse is also true, he wrote. "Weakness leads to war. This is the moment for us all to step up – and the UK will do so."

Netanyahu praises Trump's 'bold' plan for Gaza

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister has promised to make US President Donald Trump's plan to remove and resettle Gaza's population "a reality".

Netanyahu said he was cooperating with the US on a "common strategy" for Gaza after a meeting with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Jerusalem on Sunday.

He said he and Rubio had discussed ways to implement Trump's vision, which would also see the US take control of Gaza.

Rubio said the plan may have "shocked and surprised" people, but that it took courage for Trump to propose an alternative to "tired ideas" of the past.

Rubio is visiting Israel on his first tour of the Middle East as the US's top diplomat. He is also due to meet Russian officials in Saudi Arabia in coming days for potential peace talks on the war in Ukraine - a meeting that neither Ukraine nor other European countries have been invited to.

Speaking at a joint news conference on Sunday, Rubio and Netanyahu outlined areas of agreement, including a desire to eradicate Hamas's governing capacity, prevent Iran from gaining a nuclear weapon, and to monitor developments in a post-Assad Syria.

Netanyahu also condemned what he called "lawfare" from the International Criminal Court (ICC), which he said "outrageously libelled" Israel.

He thanked the US administration for issuing sanctions against the ICC, which last year issued an arrest warrant for Netanyahu and his former defence minister over alleged war crimes in Gaza - which Israel denies - as well as a top Hamas commander.



The US and Israel had a common position on Gaza, Netanyahu said, as he warned that the "gates of hell" would be opened if all Israeli hostages were not released.

"Hamas can not continue as a military or government force," Rubio added. "And as long as it stands as a force that can govern or administer or a force that can threaten by use of violence, peace becomes impossible."

Rubio's visit comes after a shipment of American-made heavy bombs arrived in Israel overnight.

Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz said his country had received a delivery of MK-84 bombs from the US late on Saturday, after Trump overturned a block on exporting the munitions placed by his predecessor, Joe Biden.

Biden initially shipped thousands of MK-84s to Israel after Hamas's 7 October 2023 attack, but later declined to clear the bombs for export out of concern for their impact on Gaza. The powerful 2,000-pound bombs have a wide blast radius and can rip through concrete and metal, destroying entire

buildings.

Katz said the shipment represented a "significant asset" for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and served as evidence of the "strong alliance between Israel and the United States".

Meanwhile, Hamas said an Israeli air strike had killed three police officers near Rafah in southern Gaza on Sunday, which it called a "serious violation" of the ceasefire.

The ceasefire came into force on 19 January and requires a complete pause in fighting for the first 42-day phase.

Israel said it had struck "several armed individuals" in southern Gaza.

Fears had been high this week that the fragile ceasefire agreement could collapse after a dispute over a planned hostage release, which was nearly aborted but ultimately went ahead on Saturday.

Netanyahu's office confirmed on Sunday that an Israeli negotiating team would travel to Cairo on Monday to discuss the second phase of the ceasefire.

Mali gold mine accident kills at least 48, officials say

By Oluwatosin Ologun

More than 40 people, mostly women, were killed after an illegal gold mine collapsed in Mali on Saturday, authorities and local sources.

The collapse took place near Kéniéba, in Mali's western, gold-rich Kayes region.

The victims had climbed into open-pit areas left by industrial miners to look for scraps of gold when the earth around them caved in, a gold miner's union leader told Reuters.

This is Mali's second deadly mining accident in three weeks, after at least 10 people were killed when a mining tunnel flooded late in January.

There are conflicting reports on the number people who died in Saturday's accident.

A local police source told the AFP news agency that 48 people were killed in the collapse, while the head of an industry union told Reuters there were 43 victims.

"Some of the victims fell into the water. Among them was a woman with her baby on her back," the local police source told AFP.

Rescue workers have been able to retrieve the bodies, local sources told the BBC.

Mali is one of the biggest gold producers in the world.

Accidents are common in the country as much mining activity is unregulated, with miners using unsafe



methods to dig for gold.

Just over a year ago, at least 40 people were killed after a tunnel collapsed in a mine.

It is also common for illegal miners - mostly women - to try to recover gold from abandoned sites due to poverty.

A spokesperson from the country's mines ministry confirmed to Reuters that the accident had taken place between the towns of Kéniéba and Dabia, but declined to give further details.

Ministry teams are drawing up a report at the scene, Reuters reports.

The collapse on Saturday occurred at an abandoned site formerly operated by a Chinese company, according to AFP.

Beijing is heavily invested in developing Mali's mining industries, with the approval of its government.

Since Mali is rich in natural resources,

including gold, iron ore, manganese, lithium, and uranium, it is an attractive destination for Chinese investors.

While such investment has improved Mali's infrastructure, especially in the transportation sector, the government has accumulated significant debt obligations to China, raising concerns about its ability to repay the loans.

Chinese mining activities have also been criticised for contributing to environmental pollution in the country.

Mali is currently engaged in a dispute over revenue sharing with one of the largest mining companies in the country, the Canadian firm Barrick.

Last month, the Malian government seized gold bars worth \$245m (£194m) from Barrick and issued an arrest warrant for its CEO, Mark Bristow.

Mr Bristow said he had "no doubt" the conflict would be resolved in an interview with Bloomberg this week.

Salah scores against Wolves to extend Liverpool's lead in title race

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Liverpool restored their seven-point lead at the top of the Premier League by beating Wolverhampton Wanderers 2-1 on Sunday.

Luis Diaz ended his goal drought after he bundled in a 15th-minute opener for the Reds.

The Colombian forward was later brought down by Josa Sa for a 37th-minute penalty, which Mohamed Salah converted to give Liverpool two goals lead.

However, Wolves threatened on the counter throughout and halved the deficit through Matheus Cunha's second-half stunner, though they were unable to find a late equaliser.

While the Reds extend their advantage over title rivals Arsenal, Wolves stay 17th, two points clear of Ipswich Town and Leicester City.

How the match unfolded

Liverpool made the breakthrough from their first real attack, Diaz bundling a bouncing ball past Sa after Toti Gomes made a mess of his clearance.

After Diogo Jota spurned two decent chances, Liverpool got their second goal. Diaz broke in behind and was tripped by Sa, allowing Salah to score down the middle 12 yards.

The second half started with chances for both teams, with Marshall Munetsi drawing a one-v-one save from Alisson after being introduced for his Premier League debut, before the offside flag denied Salah a second at the other end.

Salah thought he had another chance when referee Simon Hooper awarded Liverpool a second penalty just before the hour, but a VAR review led to that decision being overturned, as it was deemed that Emmanuel Agbadou did not make sufficient contact with Jota as he slid in.

Wolves got themselves back in the match in the 67th minute, Cunha



turning Ryan Gravenberch to curl a sumptuous strike beyond Alisson from range.

That goal made for a nervy finish, but Wolves were unable to create one last big chance, with substitute Jarell Quansah making a heroic block to deny Munetsi at the death.

Salah gets nervy Liverpool over the line

The pressure was on at the end of a difficult week for Liverpool, after Arsenal's 2-0 win at Leicester City on Saturday narrowed their lead at the summit to four points. They showed signs of nerves again here, even after surging into a 2-0 first-half lead.

Arne Slot was forced to hook Ibrahima Konate for Quansah at half-time to ensure he kept his full complement on the pitch. The Frenchman had clumsily flattened Cunha from behind when already on a yellow card and appeared in danger of losing his cool.

Liverpool then needed Alisson to make a trademark one-v-one save early in the second period, but the Brazilian was given no chance by Cunha's curler, which ensured a nail-biting finale.

In the end, the hosts clung on as Salah's penalty proved to be the winner. The Egyptian's spot-kick was his 32nd successful penalty for Liverpool in the

Premier League, matching Steven Gerrard for the most scored by any Reds player.

It was also Salah's 101st goal at Anfield, the joint-third most at a single stadium in Premier League history, with only Sergio Aguero (106 at the Etihad Stadium) and Thierry Henry (116 at Highbury) netting more at one ground.

The goal also moved him to 260 goal contributions overall in the competition (178 goals, 82 assists), inching ahead of Harry Kane to go third outright in the all-time charts, behind Wayne Rooney (276) and Ryan Giggs (271).

Salah has gotten Liverpool out of jail on several occasions already this season, but Slot will hope for a better team performance on Wednesday's rescheduled trip to Aston Villa, which presents them with a chance to go 10 points clear.

Liverpool manager, Arne Slot after the match said: "You can never breathe in this competition. I saw Arsenal's 15-game unbeaten run and the gap has always been the same so that shows that we do. If you want to compete for something special then you have to win a lot of games in this league."

Maddison scores as Tottenham beat fellow Premier League strugglers

By Oluwatosin Ologun

In a dramatic return from injury, James Maddison scored the winner as Tottenham beat fellow Premier League strugglers Manchester United.

Maddison, who has missed nearly four weeks with a calf injury, was the only player following in after United keeper Andre Onana parried Lucas Bergvall's shot and completed an easy tap-in in the 13th minute.

United did have chances to level, with Alejandro Garnacho lofting an effort over the bar when through on goal in the first half - but this was ultimately another uninspired display.

Spurs earned their first win in three games - after cup losses to Liverpool and Aston Villa - and victory will ease some of the pressure on manager Ange Postecoglou. They are now 12th in the table, moving above United.

Ruben Amorim's injury-hit Red Devils, meanwhile, have lost three of their past four league games and drop to 15th - 12 points clear of the relegation zone.

Before the match more than 1,000 Tottenham supporters attended a protest against the club's ownership and chairman Daniel Levy.

Tottenham have been on a poor run, but a large part of their form can be attributed to a string of first-team injuries.

Postecoglou will be thankful he was able to start playmaker Maddison as well as goalkeeper Guglielmo Vicario, who impressed on his first game back since breaking his ankle in November.

Long-term absentees Brennan Johnson, Destiny Udogie and Wilson Odobert were also fit enough to make the bench.

Maddison was the only player on his toes after Onana's early save and tapped in to



score his first Premier League goal since September.

The England midfielder was brought off in the 63rd minute as a precaution.

Spurs looked good going forward, with new signing Mathys Tel lively on his first league start since joining on loan from Bayern Munich. The 19-year-old Frenchman forced Onana into a low save after Son Heung-min's first-half cutback.

Dejan Kulusevski also went close with a similar effort midway through the second period.

Despite taking the lead, Spurs struggled to assert control over the game at times - particularly in midfield - and United created opportunities to equalise which they could not take.

While Tottenham look to be recovering from their injury crisis, United's continues to get worse.

This week, Amad Diallo, their top scorer in the league, was ruled out for a long spell with an ankle injury, while Kobbie Mainoo, Manuel Ugarte and Toby Collyer also picked up knocks on the training ground.

With Christian Eriksen and Leny Yoro both missing the match through illness, Amorim was forced to hand veteran midfielder Casemiro his first start since 30 December, and the 32-year-old was often exposed against Maddison, Son and Tel.

Meanwhile, all the players on United's bench, except 30-year-old Victor Lindelof, were teenagers who had not made a first-team appearance for the club.

Amorim did not make a substitution until the 90th minute when 17-year-old striker Chido Obi replaced Casemiro for his United debut.

Still, United had plenty of talent on the pitch and should have equalised when Bruno Fernandes played in Garnacho before the break only for the Argentine to blast well over the bar.

Garnacho had a one-on-one saved by Vicario in the second half, while Joshua Zirkzee headed Noussair Mazraoui's cross narrowly wide from a good position in the closing stages.

Defeat was United's 13th of the season in all competitions and their ninth since Amorim took charge in November.