

Trump fires top U.S. military officers who campaigned for diversity **Pg 24**



Pope Francis in critical condition, receives blood transfusions **Pg 23**



# The New Daily Prime

[@new\\_daily\\_prime](#) [@prime\\_dai11149](#) [@new\\_daily\\_prime](#) ...your prime source for excellence in journalism

## Osun: PDP wins all 30 chairmanship, 332 councillorship seats **PAGE 4**



Elon Musk breaks silence on St. Clair's paternity claim of 13th child **Pg 26**



Trump backtracks, now says Russia attacked Ukraine **Pg 22**



70 Christians beheaded in Congo Church **Pg 10**

### WORLD

VP Vance in line to be next American President **Pg 21**



### SPORTS

**Pg 29**

One-armed basketball player makes women's ivision III history



### ENTERTAINMENT

Beyonce, Chloe Bailey sued in \$15m copyright lawsuit **Pg 20**



# Troops eliminate 82 terrorists, arrest 198 criminals, rescue 93 hostages

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Defence Headquarters (DHQ) has announced that, in a series of internal security clearance operations and a crackdown on criminal elements across Nigeria, troops have killed 82 terrorists, arrested 198 criminals, and rescued 93 kidnap victims in the last one week.

Announcing the staggering success in a statement on Friday, the Director of Defence Media Operations, Maj-Gen Markus Kangye highlighted the military's ruthless offensive against insurgents and criminal networks.

Gen. Kangye further disclosed that troops seized 86 high-calibre weapons and a staggering 2,040 rounds of ammunition from terror groups operating across the country.

The military chief disclosed that 41 terrorists—including 10 men, 12 women, and 19 children—surrendered to troops of Operation Hadin Kai in the North East, overwhelmed by the sustained military pressure.



Relatedly, in the Niger Delta, troops launched a major operation against oil thieves, seizing illicit crude oil and refined products valued at over N500 million.

The military's crackdown uncovered and destroyed 38 illegal refining sites, 27 dugout pits, and 60 storage tanks, crippling the operations of oil criminals in the region.

The report also gave the breakdown of the massive haul to include: 366,530 litres of stolen crude oil, 117,320 litres of illegally refined diesel and 600 litres of kerosene.

Also, Security forces arrested 22

oil thieves and confiscated 152 assorted arms and ammunition, including five magazines, among which were: 46 AK-47 rifles, 18 locally fabricated guns, 19 Dane guns

Three pump-action shotguns.

Additionally, troops seized a lethal stockpile of 1,165 rounds of 7.62mm special ammunition, 128 rounds of 7.62mm NATO, 600 rounds of 12.7mm ammunition, and 51 cartridges.

The Media Director noted that the Defence Headquarters assured Nigerians that the military remains unyielding in its mission to crush terrorism, dismantle criminal networks, and restore security across the nation.

# 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
5X5	100,000.00
5X4	61,500.00
5X3	57,819.00
5X2	40,379.50
4X4	55,000.00
4X3	31,000.00
4X2	22,003.50
3X2	17,260.00
2X2	12,945.00
2X1	8,630.00
1X1	4,315.00

### POLITICAL COLOUR

SIZE	RATE
CENTRESPREAD	1,200,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD	885,000.00
FULL PAGE	420,000.00
HALF PAGE	213,250.00
QUARTER PAGE	115,012.50

### POLITICAL BLACK & WHITE

SIZE	RATE
CENTRESPREAD	1,050,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD	745,000.00
FULL PAGE	315,777.50
HALF PAGE	184,700.00
QUARTER PAGE	95,222.50

### CORPORATE BLACK & WHITE

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	254,533.50
HALF PAGE	142,787.50
QUARTER PAGE	80,706.50
14X2	78,222.50
10X6	217,830.00
10X5	192,305.50
10X4	142,787.50
10X3	121,355.50
9X6	192,305.50
9X3	107,757.50
8X6	170,725.00
8X3	70,390.00
7X4	58,666.50
6X4	67,048.00
6X3	53,361.50
6X2	37,694.00
5X6	83,850.00
5X4	55,900.00
5X3	43,705.00
5X2	27,938.00
4X4	44,493.00
4X3	33,524.00
4X2	22,350.00
3X2	16,763.00
2X2	10,877.00
2X1	5,588.50
1X1	2,795.50

### PUBLIC NOTICE BLACK & WHITE

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	280,690.00
HALF PAGE	164,178.00
QUARTER PAGE	84,641.50
10X6	228,000.00
10X5	201,600.00
10X4	149,440.00
10X3	127,108.00
9X6	201,600.00
9X5	169,050.00
9X4	137,875.00
9X3	112,875.00
8X6	179,368.00
8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
6X2	40,000.00
5X6	98,749.50
5X4	65,833.00
5X3	49,375.00
5X2	32,916.50
4X4	52,666.50
4X3	39,499.50
4X2	26,333.50
3X2	19,750.00
2X2	13,000.00
2X1	6,500.00
1X1	3,292.00

### PRODUCT BLACK & WHITE

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	210,795.50
HALF PAGE	124,236.00
QUARTER PAGE	70,950.00
14X2	76,128.35
10X6	194,961.00
10X5	162,222.445
10X4	103,963.00
10X3	N/A
9X6	162,222.445
9X5	168,191.50
9X4	N/A
8X6	N/A
8X3	N/A
7X4	72,676.00
6X4	65,000.00
6X3	41,124.50
6X2	29,858.00
5X6	71,378.00
5X4	42,825.00
5X3	29,858.00
5X2	22,841.00
4x4	N/A
4X3	N/A
4X2	17,737.50
3x3	23,458.00
3X2	14,923.00
2X2	10,200.00
2X1	5,439.50
1X1	2,700.00

### SPECIAL POSITIONS

2X6 FRONT PAGE	700,000.00
2X6 BACK PAGE	300,000.00
2X6 INSIDE PAGE	155,000.00
3X6 FRONT PAGE	1,200,000.00
4X6 FRONT PAGE	2,250,000.00
5X6 FRONT PAGE	3,350,000.00
10X6 FRONT PAGE	8,250,000.00
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
CENTRESPREAD B&W	800,000.00
CENTRE SPREAD HALF COLOUR	575,000.00
CENTRESPREAD STRIP COLOUR	191,668.50
DOUBLE SPREAD COLOUR	721,500.00
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
FULL WRAP AROUND	15,000,000.00
HALF WRAP AROUND	8,500,000.00
HALF PAGE FRONT	5,500,000.00

### ALLURE RATE

SIZE	RATE	TOTAL
CENTRESPREAD		967,500.00
DOUBLE SPREAD		806,250.00
ALLURE COVER		750,000.00
(IBC) Inside Back Cover		376,250.00
(IFC) Inside Front Cover		430,000.00
(BC) Back Cover		483,750.00
Full Page		430,000.00
10X5		295,625.00
Half Page		225,000.00
EVENT		250,000.00

### PICTURE & CAPTION

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

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

**SERIES DISCOUNT**  
5 PAGES 2.5%  
10 PAGES 5%  
15 PAGES & ABOVE 7.5%

**SURCHARGE**  
PAGE 3 (100%)  
PAGE 4, 5, 7 AND 8 (50%)  
PAGE 2 (75%)

**LOOSE INSERT**  
LEAFLET, POSTERS 1,000 COPIES  
SPECIAL INSERTS (8 PAGES) COPIES  
SPECIAL INSERTS (4 PAGES) 1,000 COPIES  
HANDLING CHARGES FOR LESS THAN 35,000 COPIES  
HANDLING CHARGES MORE THAN 35,000 COPIES

**CLASSIFIED ADVERT RATES**  
CHANGE OF NAME  
GUIDE BLACK & WHITE  
GUIDE COLOUR

25,000.00  
45,000.00  
30,000.00  
75,000.00  
100,000.00

2,000.00  
3,750.00  
4,250.00

#### CONTACT US

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

E-mail Address:  
[info@newdailyprime.news](mailto:info@newdailyprime.news)  
Terms and Conditions apply

**ALL RATES ARE VAT INCLUSIVE**

# Osun: PDP wins all 30 chairmanship, 332 councillorship seats

By Dave Oludare Oso

The candidates of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the local government election in Osun State have been declared winners of the 30 LGAs and 323 wards.

Chairman of the Osun State Independent Electoral Commission (OSIEC), Hashim Abioye announced the result after the exercise on Saturday.

He said, "It was conducted in compliance with constitutional provisions and extant laws, regulations and guidelines. The election was conducted to fill the existing vacancies in the 332 wards and 30 local government areas in Osun State.

"The election was contested by 18 political parties and results have been submitted to the commission. The available results as obtained from the field, the candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the 332 wards emerged as winners.

"For the 30 local government areas of Osun State, the candidates of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) cleared all the seats."

The commission relied on a judgement of the Osun State High Court in Ilesa which ordered the electoral agency to conduct elections for the vacant positions of chairmen and councillors in the 30 LGAs.

The exercise commenced in some local governments as early as 8 am on Saturday in all the 30 local councils in the South-West state including in the Ede North LGA where Governor Ademola Adeleke cast his vote.

The governor, after performing the civic responsibility, described the exercise as peaceful.

"The process has been very peaceful. I made a broadcast to my good people of Osun State that this election should be peaceful, there should be no violence because Osun State is a very peaceful state," he said.



The leading opposition parties, All Progressives Congress (APC) and Labour Party boycotted the exercise, after announcing their withdrawal on Friday.

## THE BACK STORY

It is mentionworthy that the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF), Lateef Fagbemi, SAN, had earlier said the election should not be held as a recent court ruling has reinstated the former council chairmen and councillors, who were sacked by the Governor Adeleke's administration.

The Minister of Justice also declared that no local government election should take place in Osun because there are no vacancies in the local councils until October 2025.

Also, the Inspector General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun late Friday night put out a warning/advisory for the elections to be put on hold, citing intelligence report of impending violence during the election.

However, the election held, though with a visible scanty voter participation, but also with no record of violence.

NEW DAILY PRIME reported that a ruling by the Osun State High Court in Osogbo on Friday afternoon, granted

approval for the election to proceed.

In an enrolment order brought before Justice A. Aderibigbe on Friday by the PDP against OSIEC and its Chairman, Hashim Abioye, Justice A. Aderibigbe ruled that vacancies exist in all 30 local government areas of the state, as affirmed by a Federal High Court ruling.

The court found that the local government election conducted on October 15, 2022, by the 1st Defendant (OSIEC) had been invalidated, nullified, and voided, rendering the purportedly elected officials illegitimate. The Federal High Court in case FHC/CS/OS/103/2022 (Action Peoples Party vs. INEC & Others) had earlier ruled on November 30, 2022, that the election was unlawful. This decision was further upheld by the Court of Appeal in Appeal No: CA/AK/226M/2024 (Allied Peoples Movement vs. Action Peoples Party & Others), delivered on January 13, 2025.

Consequently, the court upheld the PDP's prayers, affirming that vacancies indeed exist in Osun State's local councils and allowing the election to proceed.

Additionally, the court ordered security agencies, including the Nigeria Police Force, Nigerian Army, Department of State Services (DSS), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Amotekun Corps, and local vigilante groups to provide adequate security before, during, and after the election.

While the ruling PDP announced its readiness to contest the election on Friday, the APC stayed off, relying on a directive from Abuja stating that no such election should be held at this time. The Labour Party also cited lack of confidence in the OSIEC to conduct a free, fair and credible election as its reason for boycotting the polls.

# FG bows to pressure, reduces telecom tariff hike

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Federal Government has reduced the proposed hike in telecommunications tariffs from 50 percent to 35 following relentless pressure from the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC).

Sources said this decision came after a meeting between the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) officials, government representatives, and labour leaders at the National Security Adviser (NSA's) office on Friday, February 21, 2025.

According to those in the know, the meeting, which lasted for about three hours, saw NLC officials strongly opposing the tariff increase, and after persistent demands, the government and the NCC agreed to lower the proposed hike by 15%.

An official announcement confirming the



new tariff structure is expected soon.

NEW DAILY PRIME reported that the NLC had earlier criticized the tariff hike, arguing that it violated an agreement previously reached with the government and telecom regulators.

The union warned that if the new rates were not reversed by the end of February, a nationwide shutdown of telecom services

would begin on March 1, 2025.

To push back against the increase, the NLC directed workers and the public to boycott MTN, Airtel, and Glo services daily from 11:00am to 2:00pm.

The union also urged people to stop purchasing data from these companies, accusing them of exploiting Nigerian consumers.

In a statement released after a meeting in Lokoja, Kogi State, labour leaders condemned the telecom companies for implementing the increase without waiting for the outcome of a committee's review.

They described it as a breach of trust and an attack on Nigerians struggling with economic hardship.

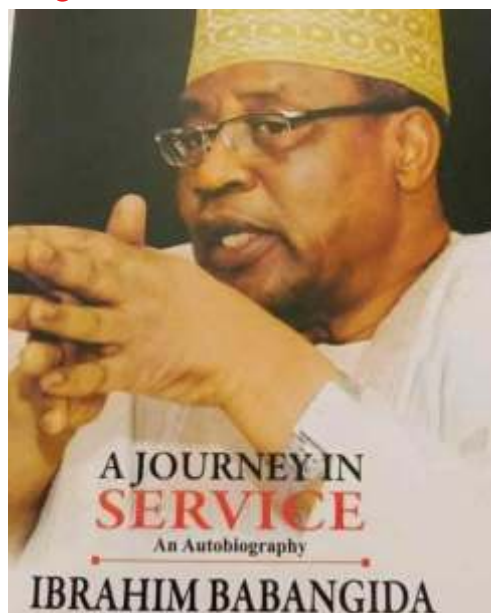
# Babangida's memoir offers insights into leadership - Fayemi

By Friday Omosola

Former Ekiti State Governor, Kayode Fayemi, has praised former military president, Ibrahim Babangida, on the release of his autobiography, 'A Journey in Service.'

The New Daily Prime reported that Babangida unveiled the book and inaugurated his presidential library on Thursday, with politicians and other prominent figures in attendance.

In a statement on his Facebook page on Saturday, Fayemi, a former Minister of Solid Minerals, described the autobiography as a valuable resource.



He said it offers insights into leadership,

governance, and Nigeria's political evolution, highlighting defining moments that shaped the nation's democratic struggles.

"Given my long-standing role as a pro-democracy activist, attending the book launch of "A Journey in Service: An Autobiography of Ibrahim Babangida" in Abuja was a moment of reflection.

"While history will continue to judge every era, documenting these experiences remains crucial for national learning and dialogue", the 60-year-old said.

# NGF pledges full support for F'G's nutrition 774 initiative

By Friday Omosola

The Chairman of the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) and Kwara State Governor, AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq, has reaffirmed the commitment of all 36 state governors to supporting the Federal Government's Nutrition 774 Initiative.

He spoke at the National Economic Council (NEC) meeting, chaired by Vice President Kashim Shettima at the Presidential Villa, Abuja.

AbdulRazaq assured that state governments would play an active role in tackling malnutrition, which he described as a major impediment to national development.

Vice President Shettima launched the Nutrition 774 Initiative during the 148th NEC meeting, emphasizing its significance in addressing the widespread impact of malnutrition.

He noted that poor nutrition has far-reaching consequences beyond the health sector, contributing to reduced productivity, impaired learning, and slowed economic growth.

)  
"This initiative is an urgent call



to action for all stakeholders—our governors, ministers, local government chairmen, development partners, and the private sector," Shettima stated.

"It is also a pledge to the Nigerian people that we will not stand by while our children suffer preventable consequences of malnutrition."

He further assured that Nutrition 774 would provide every mother and child, regardless of location, with access to lifesaving nutrition interventions tailored to their needs.

Stressing the importance of collaboration, Shettima urged governors and other

stakeholders to take ownership of the programme, stating that its success "rests on the collective investments we all make to sustain it."

In response, Governor AbdulRazaq, speaking on behalf of the 36 state governors, reiterated their full support for the initiative, acknowledging that malnutrition remains a major challenge limiting Nigeria's growth and progress.

He assured the federal government that state governments would actively participate in the programme to combat malnutrition and improve public health nationwide.

# AIT, Channels TV apologise to DSS over Lagos Assembly reports

By Dave Oludare Oso

Two leading broadcasters in Nigeria, Africa Independent Television (AIT) and Channels Television, have issued apologies to the Department of State Services (DSS) over their coverage of the recent events at the Lagos State House of Assembly.

On Monday, February 17, 2025, AIT broadcast a news item reporting the presence of DSS operatives at the Lagos State House of Assembly. However, the station has since acknowledged that aspects of the report may have been incomplete and could have misrepresented the agency's presence.

In an official statement, AIT stated, "AIT News wishes to apologise to the Department of State Services (DSS) for the news item broadcast during our bulletin on Monday, 17th February 2025, regarding the presence of DSS officers at the Lagos State House of Assembly. Our intention was not to malign or embarrass the DSS, an institution we hold in the highest regard for its critical role in safeguarding our nation.

"Our reporting was based on eyewitness accounts and information obtained from sources at the Lagos State House of Assembly. However, we recognise that the report may have been incomplete and unintentionally misrepresented the service and the presence at the State House of Assembly. We hereby regret any embarrassment this may have caused."

Similarly, during an interview on Channels Television, former DSS Director, Mohammed Ngoshe, addressed the matter, suggesting that



the press may have been too quick to label the DSS presence at the Assembly as an "invasion."

"It's maybe the work of the press," Ngoshe remarked. "I think the press jumped to a very hasty conclusion to begin to give it names such as invasion, it was this, it was that."

Seun Okinbaloye, the Channels TV host, also acknowledged the mischaracterization of the DSS's role at the Assembly. He noted that subsequent revelations confirmed that the Lagos Assembly Clerk had indeed requested DSS protection.

"If you look at the video, it was made to appear as though the lawmakers were fighting to get inside and they were shocked that DSS was there," Okinbaloye explained. "And I think it's right to apologise to the service to say, I mean, the use of invasion might not be the right word to use."

Further clarifying the legal authority of the DSS, Seun stated, "You know, clearly you're stating, and from what we even understand, that DSS has the

power under the law to move into any place as they deem fit. Is that right?"

In response, Ngoshe expressed appreciation for the clarification and the acknowledgment of the DSS's role, while also calling for official apologies to be communicated directly to the agency.

"I hope the apologies will be carried to the DSS officially. Because we need to stop some of those things," he stated.

The interview ended on a note of appreciation for the dedication of security personnel across Nigeria, with Seun commending officers for their service to the nation.

"We care, and we love, and we respect, and we salute your bravery, wherever you may be," the TV host said. "You might be in the interiors of Adamawa, or Borno State, or Benue, or in fact in Ekiti State, or Kwara, or in fact in Akwa Ibom, wherever you may be in the country, protecting the peoples of this country, we salute you tonight. Well done."

# Nigerian girl graduates SS at 12, earns 30 certifications in Software Engineering, AI at 14

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**A** child prodigy, Zainab Akintola has achieved outstanding academic success at a very young age.

In a rare accomplishment, Zainab, a Nigerian girl of Yoruba extraction graduated from secondary school at just 12 years old and earned 30 professional certifications in Software Engineering and Artificial Intelligence (AI) by age 14.

Initially, Zainab's dream was to become a doctor. Growing up, her father, who lovingly called her "Doctor Zainab", always encouraged her to pursue medicine, emphasizing the need for more Muslim female doctors in Nigeria.

Unlike most children her age, Zainab's education moved at an accelerated pace. With her exceptional intelligence and dedication, she completed secondary school at just 12 years old.

Confident in her abilities, she sat for the 2023 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) and scored an impressive 262 over 400 — a result that qualified her for a medicine programme.

However, she was soon met with disappointment when she discovered that she did not meet Nigeria's minimum age requirement of 16 for university admission.

"I was devastated to learn that I couldn't gain admission due to Nigeria's 16-year minimum age requirement for university enrollment," she said.

Rather than let the setback discourage her, Zainab's father encouraged her to explore software engineering, explaining how AI is revolutionizing



healthcare. The idea resonated with her and Zainab decided to give tech a shot.

Zainab enrolled in several world-renowned programmes to develop her tech skills, including ALX Software Engineering Programme for Front-End Development, Techvinson Academy for Back-End Software Engineering, and KemonAI for AI & Machine Learning Specialization.

She also enrolled in programmes at Udemy, RITA Africa, SheCodes, and GreatLearning where she learned courses in Web Development, AI, and Machine Learning.

Through these programmes, she mastered programming languages like C, HTML, CSS, JavaScript, Java, and Python. She also became proficient in frameworks like React and Bootstrap.

To apply her knowledge, Zainab worked on several innovative projects, including an e-commerce website, a real estate app, a Personal Portfolio

Website, AI Chatbots for schools & law firms, a Poem Generator, and a Quote Generator.

Each project sharpened her problem-solving and creative thinking skills. Despite her impressive achievements in tech, Zainab's love for medicine remains strong. She now looks forward to a future where she can merge her AI expertise with medical innovation.

Though she still has two years before her admission into the university, Zainab said she plans to dive into more research, work on advanced projects, and look for scholarship opportunities abroad while waiting.

Zainab hopes her journey will inspire other young people to stay resilient in the face of challenges.

She said, "Look for other possibilities and continue to learn. Often, the path you didn't expect can lead to the greatest rewards."

# Sanwo-Olu reaffirms commitment to housing development

By Friday Omosola

Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has reiterated his administration's dedication to housing and urban development, emphasising its crucial role in improving residents' quality of life.

Speaking at the 31st Annual John Wood Ekpenyong Memorial Lecture and the '2025 Fellows Induction Ceremony' of the Nigerian Institution of Estate Surveyors and Valuers (NIESV).

Sanwo-Olu highlighted his government's achievements in housing over the past five years and pledged to accelerate the delivery of more affordable homes before the end of his tenure.

Represented by the Secretary to the State Government, Bimbola Salu-Hundeyin, the governor commended NIESV President and Chairman of the Council, Victor Alonge, for the institution's sustained collaboration with the state government in promoting sustainable urban planning and



development.

Sanwo-Olu acknowledged NIESV's contributions to Nigeria's real estate sector and economic growth, stressing the need to reposition tenement rate administration—the central theme of this year's lecture—as a strategy for broader economic development.

In appreciation of his administration's commitment to infrastructure development, Sanwo-Olu received a prestigious Award of Excellence from NIESV.

He also extended congratulations to Senate President Godswill Akpabio, who was conferred as an Honourary Fellow of NIESV, as well as the 52 newly inducted Fellows, lauding their contributions to the profession and national development.

The event was attended by several dignitaries, including Senate Leader Senator Michael Opeyemi Bamidele, members of the National Assembly, the Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Ogunwusi, other prominent traditional rulers, and Alhaji Umaru Mutallab, who served as the Father of the Day.

# 70 Christians beheaded in Congo Church

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Seventy Christians have been found beheaded in a church in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), in what's the latest devastating attack on believers in the north east of the country.

According to field sources, at around 4am on Thursday, 13 February, suspected militants from the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) – a group with ties to Islamic State (IS) – approached homes in Mayba in the territory of Lubero, saying: "Get out, get out and don't make any noise." Twenty Christian men and women came out and were captured.

Shaken by this incident, people from the local community in Mayba later gathered to work out how to release those held captive. However, ADF militants surrounded the village and captured a further 50 believers.

All 70 of those kidnapped were taken to a Protestant church in Kasanga where they were tragically killed.

Muhindo Musunzi, director of the Kombo primary school (which belongs to the CECA20 church), says that prior to this incident, churches, schools and health centres had all shut their doors because of the chaotic security situation. "We had to move all activities towards Vunying," he said.

Field sources report that, until Tuesday 18 February, some families had not been able to bury their dead because of insecurity in the area. Many Christians have now fled the area for their safety.

We don't know what to do or how to pray anymore; we've had enough of massacres – LOCAL CHURCH LEADER

Expressing an unquantifiable sense of grief and surrender, an elder of the CECA20 church said, "We don't know what to do or how to pray; we've had enough of massacres. May God's will



alone be done."

Why has persecution increased in DRC?

Rise in violence and internal displacement: This latest awful incident is a continuation of the escalating threat posed by ADF militants in the country's north east region.

In 2014, the group intensified attacks in Beni territory in North Kivu province, and since then attacks have spread to the territories of Irumu and Mambasa in Ituri province, and now it's affecting Lubero. In the last month alone, the group have killed more than 200 people in Baswagha chiefdom, according to a local news website.

This explains why DRC rose six places to number 35 in the latest World Watch List. Last year, 355 were killed for their faith, compared with 261 the previous year, whilst an estimated 10,000 were internally displaced, which is ten times more than 2023.

Houses have been looted and burnt, schools relocated, churches and health facilities closed, and several Christian villages have been abandoned altogether. The recent activities of the M23 rebel group, reportedly supported by Rwanda, has added to the vulnerability of Christians.

A call to remain steadfast in prayer

"Open Doors strongly condemns this heinous act of violence against civilians and calls upon civil societies, governments and international organisations to prioritise civilian protection in eastern DRC where armed groups, such as the ADF, are operating," says John Samuel, Open Doors' legal expert for the work in sub-Saharan Africa.

"The violence takes place in a context of impunity, where almost no one is held accountable," he continues. "This massacre is a clear indicator of widespread human rights violations against civilians and vulnerable communities, often targeting Christians, perpetrated by ADF – (a so-called Islamic State) affiliate."

"We further call on the international Christian community to remain in prayer for Christians and vulnerable communities in eastern DRC," adds John Samuel.

"Pray for an end to violence and that government at all levels will diligently, impartially, and transparently address the violence and its effects. Pray for the church in Lumero as she seeks to bring physical and spiritual assistance to the families affected."

# Don't get married because you're lonely

## – Reno Omokri **By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

**A** former aide to ex-President Goodluck Jonathan, Reno Omokri has advised Nigerians against getting married because they are lonely.

The activist stated this on his social media page on Friday.

He said though loneliness sometimes makes humans think they need a spouse, but before deciding to go the whole hug and 'scratch that marriage itch, people should opt for making friends instead.'

Reno added that people should learn to only get married when they are ready to love, provide and compromise.

His words, "Maybe you are just lonely, and the loneliness is making you think you need a spouse.

Before scratching that marriage itch, try



to get out more and make friends. A lot of times, you don't really need a spouse. You may just need a friend.

"Don't marry because you are lonely. Marry because you are ready to love and provide and compromise.

"And when you eventually meet someone, build the ensuing relationship on something a little deeper than sex. Because a relationship built solely on intercourse is precisely like a newspaper. As soon as you finish reading it, it loses its fascination. And by tomorrow, it will be replaced with the latest edition."

Omokri, a Nigerian author and social media influencer, was the host of 'Transformation with Reno Omokri', a Christian teaching TV show broadcast on San Francisco's KTLN-TV and Detroit's Impact Network.

As a Special Assistant to former President Goodluck Jonathan, he was noted for using social media to conduct surveys and draw attention to the projects of the Nigerian Government.

# Court jails Calabar bizman over N2bn Ponzi scheme

## **By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

**T**he Federal High Court in Calabar has sentenced the Chief Executive Officer of Micheno Multi-purpose Cooperative Society, Uno Michael Eke to one year in prison for orchestrating a staggering N2 billion fraud scheme.

Delivered the judgment on Friday, Justice Rosemary Dugbo Oghoghorie found Eke guilty of conspiracy, obtaining property by false pretence, and money laundering.

The businessman's conviction followed a guilty plea to four-count amended charges brought against him by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Uyo Zonal Directorate.

Eke's elaborate scam promised



unsuspecting investors an eye-watering 80 percent return on investment within just 40 days, luring in countless victims.

Investigators revealed that he operated multiple bank accounts under his name and his company's, funneling billions into lavish properties while leaving investors in financial ruins.

His fraudulent empire came crashing down when authorities uncovered his massive assets, including: 12 luxury flats in Calabar, two vast plots of land in Cross River State, 18 self-contained flats near the University of Calabar and N10 million in cash.

Despite his guilty plea, Eke's legal team sought leniency, citing a plea bargain agreement.

However, the court ruled decisively, sentencing him to one year behind bars or an option of a N2 million fine.

Additionally, all his seized assets and funds will be forfeited to the Federal Government, with restitution to be made to his defrauded victims.

# Osun LG Poll: PDP, APC dispute voting video

By **Olamilekan Botti**

**M**r. Jamiu Olawumi, former Special Adviser on Education to the Osun State Governor, has urged the public to exercise caution regarding videos circulating on social media that depict voters participating in the recent local government elections.

His comments come amid varying accounts of the election's integrity and execution.

In an exclusive interview with New Daily Prime on Saturday, Olawumi, a prominent member of the All Progressives Congress (APC), claimed that the election was not conducted in several areas, particularly in Ife Central Local Government.

He highlighted specific incidents that he believes compromised the electoral process. "At Ilare Ward 3 in Ile-Ife, hoodlums obstructed the road, although they were ultimately dislodged by the police," he stated. "Unless voting



occurred before daybreak, which has been known to happen, there is no area in Ife Central where voting took place."

Olawumi further noted that while Ife East experienced no significant disturbances, he accused the opposition, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), of manipulating the narrative by using footage from previous elections. "The videos you see

circulating are not from this election; they are past films being misrepresented as current," he asserted, commending the police for their professionalism in handling the situation.

In contrast, Oladele Bamiji, the Director of Media for the PDP in Osun State, strongly refuted Olawumi's claims. He argued that the recent local government elections were largely successful and called on the APC to provide evidence of their allegations, questioning the authenticity of the videos they claim are misleading.

"The APC should be the ones producing old footage circulating on social media," Bamiji countered.

As the debate continues, the integrity of the electoral process in Osun State remains under scrutiny, with both parties standing firm in their respective positions.

# 12 dead in Niger road clash

By **Helen Okechukwu**

**A**bout twelve persons have reportedly lost their lives in the Niger State road accident that occurred on Saturday morning.

The tragic accident that claimed the lives of four women and eight men occurred along the Lapai-Agaie road of the state.

According to the Daily Trust report, out of the four women who lost their lives, three were said to be siblings.

The accident was a result of a frontal collision between the Wemer passenger bus, carrying 15 passengers, and a trailer at Nami village.

However, it was gathered that two



women and the Wemer driver sustained severe injuries and were receiving treatment at the Lapai General Hospital.

In an interview session with Mohammed Baba, the driver, he narrated that after he had left the Gwari Market Park in Minna, the state capital, heading to Katcha, the headquarters of Katcha Local

Government Area (LGA), the trailer driver tried to overtake them.

Speaking further from his hospital bed, he said immediately he tried to manoeuvre the situation; his bus lost control, leading to the accident.

"And immediately, the trailer drivers left the scene. We didn't see them again," he said.

Confirming the incident, the Niger State Sector Commander of the Federal Road Safety Corps, Kumar Tsukwam, revealed that his men were at the scene of the incident to obtain information about the tragic accident.

# Plateau gov suspends mining activities

By Friday Omosola

To address environmental concerns and security threats, Plateau State governor, Caleb Mutfwang, has signed Executive Order 001 of 2025, suspending all mining activities across the state.

The governor made this announcement during a stakeholders' engagement at the Twin Theater, New Government House, Jos, attended by traditional rulers, community leaders, local government chairmen, and representatives from mining communities.

Governor Mutfwang emphasised that the suspension aims to curb illegal mining, mitigate land degradation, combat child labor, and tackle rising security threats, including the influx of unregulated foreign miners linked to banditry, kidnapping, drug trafficking, and illegal firearms possession.

“As the Chief Security Officer of the State, it is my duty to ensure the safety of our people. Given the rising security concerns associated with illegal mining, we must take decisive action.

“All mining operations are hereby suspended until further notice. This measure is aimed at restoring order and ensuring that Plateau's resources are harnessed for the benefit of its people,” Governor Mutfwang declared.

He announced that to ensure a structured and sustainable approach to mining, the state government will collaborate with the federal



government, local authorities, host communities, and mineral rights holders to enforce Community Development Agreements (CDA) that guarantee socio-economic benefits for host communities.

“This suspension is a crucial step towards securing our communities from the threats posed by unregulated mining activities.

“It is not intended to target individuals or hinder economic progress but rather to ensure that mining is conducted in a responsible and sustainable manner,” the governor stated.

To oversee the implementation of mining reforms, Governor Mutfwang inaugurated a Technical Committee on Mining Reform, chaired by the Commissioner for Justice, Philemon Dafi.

The committee has been tasked with: verifying mining licenses to ensure compliance with regulations and gathering data on mining sites for

better resource management.

The committee will also regulate illegal mining operations to curb environmental and security concerns and recommend designated mining areas to prevent encroachment on residential lands.

The governor reaffirmed his administration's commitment to ensuring that mining activities contribute meaningfully to the state's economic growth while prioritizing security, environmental protection, and community development.

Meanwhile, His Majesty, Da Jacob Gyang Buba, Gbong Gwom Jos and Chairman of the Plateau State Council of Chiefs and Emirs, appreciated Governor Mutfwang's decision.

He assured the governor of unwavering support from traditional rulers in implementing the Executive Order to safeguard the people and the future of Plateau State.

# Cancer death rates rising to 60% in Uk's deprived areas

By Helen Okechukwu

A report from Cancer Research UK (CRUK) has disclosed that residents living in deprived areas in the United Kingdom (UK) recorded nearly 60% higher cancer death rates when compared to affluent regions.

In the recent study titled *Cancer in the UK 2025: Socioeconomic Deprivation*, annually, over 28,400 deaths were attributed to deprivation in the UK.

The report noted that late diagnoses and preventable risk factors such as smoking are linked to increased factors.

The report highlighted ongoing disparities in cancer care and outcomes between wealthy and deprived communities. According to Naser Turabi, CRUK's director of Evidence and Implementation, little progress has been made since the charity's last analysis in 2020.

Mortality rates are 1.6 times higher, with around 10% of cases linked to deprivation, often due to preventable causes like smoking and obesity.

Smoking rates in deprived areas are nearly four times higher, while obesity rates are almost double.

Lung cancer accounts for nearly half of the additional deaths, with mortality



rates nearly three times higher in the most deprived areas.

The gap in lung cancer outcomes has widened over time.

Patients in deprived areas are more likely to be diagnosed late and face longer treatment waits.

In England, they are up to 33% more likely to wait over 104 days for treatment after an urgent referral.

Many are also diagnosed at later stages when treatment is less effective. Cancer screening participation is significantly lower in deprived communities.

Bowel cancer screening, for example, is 25% lower in England's poorest areas. More than half of cancer

patients in these regions are diagnosed after emergency hospital visits. They are also half as likely to receive cutting-edge treatments for advanced lung cancer.

Ian Walker, CRUK's executive director of Policy and Information, emphasised the need for better NHS access through funding and innovation.

Karis Betts, CRUK's Inequalities Programme lead, called for sustained support to help people quit smoking and improved early cancer detection methods. "No one should be at a greater risk of dying from this devastating disease simply because of where they live," Walker stated. "These figures are shocking and unacceptable—but crucially, they're avoidable."

# Rivers launches Mpox app, inaugurates Infectious Institute

By Helen Okechukwu

To prevent the spread of monkeypox (Mpox) and other infectious diseases in the state, the Rivers State Ministry of Health has launched the Pox screening application (Mpox app) and inaugurated an infectious institute.

The Mpox application is a state-of-the-art digital tool.

The Institute of Infectious Disease Research and Development (IIDRD) was commissioned on Friday through the Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH).

The event also saw the unveiling of the institute's handbook.

The centre was established to improve disease surveillance and management, indicating a significant advancement in the state health sector and all of Nigeria.

At the launching ceremony, dignitaries



from the health sector, government, and private sector, including Dr. Aдаeze Oreh, the Commissioner for Health, and Chief Medical Director of RSUTH, Prof. Chizindu Alikor, were present.

This initiative highlights the commitment of the health sector to enhance the healthcare system through research, technological innovation, and digital solutions.

The CMD of RSUTH appreciated the leadership, efforts, and support of Governor Siminalayi Fubara in enhancing the state health sector.

The statement read, The inauguration of the IIDRD and the launch of the Mpox App is a testament to the state's forward-thinking approach, ensuring that Rivers State remains at the forefront of medical research and disease control in Africa.

# NAFDAC uncovers billions worth of fake drugs hidden in Onitsha plumbing shops

By Helen Okechukwu

The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) has seized massive quantities of fake, substandard, and banned drugs worth billions of naira in a major enforcement operation at the Onitsha Bridgehead Drug Market.

The agency made this known on Saturday through a post on their X page.

During the raid, officials discovered unregistered narcotics, including banned tramadol, cleverly hidden inside plumbing material shops.

This discovery was based on intelligence reports, leading NAFDAC to extend its search beyond the drug sections of the market.

Meanwhile, traders in the market accused the agency of unfairly targeting non-drug



sections, but the operation proved otherwise, revealing the scale of illegal drug trade disguised in unexpected locations

NAFDAC's operation aims to put an end to the circulation of these harmful drugs, ensuring the safety of the public and holding those responsible accountable.

Security was a major concern for NAFDAC officials, as they recalled a previous attack three years ago when officers were nearly killed during a similar enforcement exercise.

With support from the National Security Adviser (NSA), authorities took extra precautions to prevent violence during the latest raid.

So far, at least ten fully loaded 40-foot trucks carrying counterfeit and expired medications have been removed from the market. Some of these drugs falsely carried NAFDAC approval, while others had been repackaged and rebranded with fake expiry dates to deceive consumers.

The agency noted that Onitsha Bridgehead Drug Market has long been identified as a distribution center for fake and adulterated medicines.

# Trump Administration eyes cracks in China-Russia partnership

By Dave Oludare Oso

The quick pace of U.S. diplomacy around ending the war in Ukraine and steps by Washington to normalize relations with Moscow have sparked fears in Kyiv and European capitals about being sidelined and saddled with a peace deal that favours Russia.

But the prospect of a rapprochement between Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Donald Trump isn't only bringing anxiety to European governments. The quick pivot away from decades of U.S. foreign policy toward Russia is also fueling unease in China.

"The Chinese have seen this coming since Trump was elected and signaled that he wanted to quickly end the war in Ukraine," Dennis Wilder, who was a top White House China adviser to former U.S. President George W. Bush, told RFE/RL.

"While a complete rapprochement might not be in the cards, they're nervous because if Trump lifts sanctions on Russia, then Moscow's dependency on China decreases."

One of the hallmarks of Chinese leader Xi Jinping's foreign policy has been a burgeoning strategic partnership with Putin that's grown closer since Moscow's full-scale invasion in February 2022. Beijing has propped up the Russian economy through enhanced trade and energy purchases while fueling the Kremlin's war effort with the supply of key goods as both Xi and Putin have found common ground in wanting to challenge the West and unseat the United States.

And fear of all that being derailed by a new type of U.S.-Russia relationship born out of a negotiated end to the war in Ukraine — as was raised this week during talks in Saudi Arabia — is real for Beijing.

Wilder says that he's had conversations with "very senior Chinese officials" since Trump's election in November who have expressed concern about a potential U.S.-Russia reset.



He says they've used the phrase "only Trump goes to Moscow," a play on the historical reference to former U.S. President Richard Nixon's landmark visit to Beijing in 1972, when he defied precedent and courted China to exploit its split with the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War. Efforts to drive a wedge between Beijing and Moscow by warming up to Russia have been termed by some analysts as a "reverse Nixon."

"In the same way as Nixon with China policy, they see Trump as someone who is uniquely placed to run against the current nature of U.S. policy towards Russia and could even travel to Moscow," Wilder said.

"This doesn't mean the Chinese think that the Russians will break relations, but their strong alignment today could diminish."

What's Washington's Strategy?

It remains to be seen what the Trump administration's outreach will bear fruit, but following a phone call this month with Putin, recent U.S.-Russia talks in Riyadh, and a deepening rift with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy over peace talks, the White House is charting a new course on ties with Moscow and the war in Ukraine.

"We seem to be witnessing not a reset but a wholesale realignment of U.S.-Russian relations," Lucian Kim, senior Ukraine

analyst at the International Crisis Group, told RFE/RL.

"In that sense, the war in Ukraine is not a call to resist Russian aggression but a roadblock to closer cooperation between Washington and Moscow."

For Beijing, this development comes with plenty of worrisome hypotheticals, including allowing Washington to build up its military footprint in the Pacific and leaving China more geopolitically exposed in the event of a crisis with Taiwan, the self-governing island that Beijing claims as its own.

"I think China would prefer to see a weak Russia and even continuing the Ukraine war would better serve Beijing as that would have the United States' focus scattered away from the Indo-Pacific," Sari Arho Havren, an associate fellow at London's Royal United Services Institute, told RFE/RL.

The Trump administration has made clear it sees managing a long-term rivalry with China as its top foreign policy objective and may look to deprioritize regions like Europe and the Middle East in order to raise pressure on Beijing in Asia.

Senior U.S. officials have also telegraphed in recent comments that cracking the China-Russia partnership could be part of the motivation in normalizing ties with Moscow.

# Nigerian animated series, 'Iyanu' to premiere in June 2025 on Showmax

By **Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi**

The animated series *Iyanu: Child of Wonder*, adapted from Roye Okupe's graphic novel, will premiere exclusively in Africa on June 13, 2025, via Showmax.

The premiere is a collaboration between African streaming giant Showmax and Lion Forge Entertainment, marking a significant milestone in bringing African mythology to global audiences.

To build excitement, Showmax has released the official trailer, offering a thrilling first look at the vibrant world of *Iyanu*. The series is deeply rooted in Nigerian culture and mythology, bringing to life a tale of bravery, destiny, and ancient magic.

Viewers across 44 African countries will have the chance to binge-watch the entire first season, making it one of the most widely available African-animated productions to date.

A story of magic, myth, and courage. Created by Roye Okupe, who also serves as the executive producer and showrunner, *Iyanu* tells the story of a fearless young orphan living in the mystical kingdom of Yorubaland. While studying history and ancient arts, she longs for a simple, ordinary life. However, her world is turned upside down when a dark force emerges, awakening within her divine powers unseen since the fabled Age of Wonders.

Determined to uncover the truth, *Iyanu* embarks on an extraordinary journey alongside her loyal friends Biyi and Toye, as well as Ekun, a powerful and mysterious magical leopard. Together, they must face formidable foes, unravel secrets of the past, and embrace their destinies in a battle to protect Yorubaland from impending doom.

The series blends Nigerian folklore, rich



storytelling, and stunning animation, promising an unforgettable adventure for audiences of all ages.

Showmax and Lion Forge on the collaboration

Dr. Busola Tejumola, Executive Head of Content and Channels West Africa at Showmax, expressed enthusiasm about the project. She highlighted the importance of bringing Nigerian mythology to life through animation.

"*Iyanu* brings Nigerian culture and mythology to life in an exciting and authentic way. We are proud to be the home of its African premiere and can't wait for audiences across the continent to experience this epic adventure on Showmax," she said.

Lion Forge Entertainment, the studio behind the series, shares the same passion for authentic storytelling. David Steward II, CEO and Founder of Lion Forge, praised Okupe's dedication and the team's commitment to creating a high-quality animated production.

"We've seen firsthand the passion and creativity that Roye Okupe and our team have poured into this series. We're thrilled for *Iyanu* to premiere on Cartoon Network, Max, and Showmax," Steward said. "This project is a major step forward in our mission to tell culturally

rich stories that resonate with global audiences. We're confident viewers will be just as excited as we are."

A stellar all-African voice cast. Adding to its authenticity, *Iyanu* boasts an impressive all-African voice cast, featuring some of the industry's most celebrated talents. The lineup includes Serah Johnson, Okey Jude, Samuel Kugbiyi, Adesua Etomi-Wellington, Blossom Chukwujekwu, Stella Damasus, Shaffy Bello, and Ike Ononye.

Their performances bring depth and energy to the characters, ensuring that the series stays true to its Nigerian roots while appealing to a worldwide audience.

A new era for African animation. With *Iyanu*, African animation takes a bold step forward, proving that locally inspired stories can reach international platforms. The series stands alongside other groundbreaking African animations, signaling a new wave of representation in the global entertainment industry.

As anticipation builds, fans of African mythology, action-packed adventures, and breathtaking animation can mark their calendars. *Iyanu: Child of Wonder* is set to captivate audiences when it arrives on Showmax this June.

# 'I am the most bullied widow in Nigeria' – Wunmi

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**W**unmi Aloba, the widow of late Nigerian music star Mohbad, has spoken out against what she describes as relentless bullying.

She claims her father-in-law, Joseph Aloba, is turning the public against her by insisting on a DNA test for her son, Liam.

Speaking on TVC's Your View, Omowunmi expressed her frustration. She made it clear that she has no issue with a paternity test but disapproves of how Joseph Aloba is handling the situation.

"I have nothing to hide. I don't have a problem with my father-in-law asking for a DNA test. But it's the way he's going about it. Right now, I am the most bullied widow in Nigeria," she said.

## Family ties turn sour

Before Mohbad's death, Omowunmi said she shared a close relationship with her father-in-law. She described him as a supportive figure in her life. However, their bond quickly soured after the singer's passing.

She revealed that Joseph Aloba had strongly encouraged her and Mohbad to have a child, even when they weren't ready. According to her, he influenced them through religious fasting and prayers. She now finds it ironic that the same person who once pushed for Liam's birth is now questioning his paternity.

## Mohbad's death and controversy

The sudden death of Mohbad on



September 12, 2023, sent shockwaves through the Nigerian music industry. Less than 24 hours after his passing, his father arranged for his burial in Ikorodu, Lagos State.

However, the circumstances surrounding the singer's death raised suspicions. On September 21, authorities exhumed Mohbad's body for an autopsy, aiming to determine the cause of death. The results have yet to be released.

## Demands for DNA test and delayed reburial

Joseph Aloba has remained firm in his demand for a DNA test to confirm Liam's paternity. He has also stated that Mohbad will not be reburied until the autopsy results are made public and the paternity test is conducted.

Many Nigerians have taken sides in the ongoing dispute. Some support Omowunmi, arguing that she has suffered enough. Others back Joseph Aloba, insisting that the DNA test is necessary to clear any doubts.

The emotional toll on Omowunmi has described the experience as overwhelming. She said she has endured public scrutiny, cyberbullying, and emotional distress since Mohbad's passing.

Despite the pressure, she remains firm in her position. She insists she has nothing to hide and will not be intimidated by public opinion or her father-in-law's actions.

"I lost my husband, and now I have to fight to protect my son," she said.

The controversy surrounding Mohbad's death continues to grow. With the autopsy results still pending and tensions within the family rising, the case remains one of Nigeria's most talked-about celebrity tragedies.

Many Nigerians are now waiting for answers—both about Mohbad's cause of death and the paternity of his son. Until then, Omowunmi remains at the center of a painful and highly publicized battle.

# Nedu denies fraud claims, calls VDM just an acquaintance

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular media personality and host of The Honest Bunch Podcast, Nedu, has addressed recent controversies surrounding his name.

Speaking at a press briefing, he denied all allegations against him and provided clarity on the accusations making rounds online.

**Denies fraud and misconduct allegations**

Nedu, who recently interviewed comedian Dee One on his podcast, has been at the center of heated discussions. Responding to claims of financial misconduct, he firmly rejected the accusations, calling them “baseless” and “entirely false.”

He also responded to speculations regarding his relationship with social media commentator Verydarkblackman. Nedu clarified that while they are acquainted, they are not close friends. He dismissed the notion that his association with the commentator influenced his show or any related discussions.

**Defends his professionalism**

Addressing concerns about guests' statements on his podcast, Nedu insisted that he does not control or censor opinions expressed on the show. He emphasized that The Honest Bunch Podcast provides a platform for open discussions, and all views belong to the guests, not the host.

“You cannot use my relationship with you to force me to shut down whatever any guest is saying on the show. That is also not professional,” Nedu stated. He pointed out that each episode begins with a disclaimer, making it clear that all opinions expressed belong to the guests.

He further stressed that he would not engage in online disputes over the



matter. “A lot has been said, but I do not want to engage in petty exchanges because that has never been my style,” he added.

**Talking drum management clears air on financial transactions**

Sarah William Konha, Chief Operating Officer of Talking Drum Management, also weighed in, refuting allegations of fraud. She stated that Nedu never received any funds into his personal account.

Konha explained that the only time an alternative account was used was during an event when sponsors backed out at the last minute. The Moniepoint account in question, she said, was created under Nedu's scholarship foundation initiative, which operates separately from his personal finances.

“The initiative was different from Nedu as an individual,” Konha clarified. “Because of the fallout with sponsors, we had outstanding obligations, including payments to the event planner. That day, we collected donations into that account, raising ₦4.1 million.”

She provided a breakdown of the

funds, stating that ₦4 million went to the event planner, while ₦100,000 was given to performers after some major artists had to be dropped due to budget constraints.

“At no point did Mr. Nedu receive any money personally into his account,” she emphasized.

**Calls for responsible reporting**

His response comes amid growing speculation and online criticism. He urged the public to rely on facts rather than rumors. While he acknowledged the backlash, he made it clear that he would continue focusing on his work rather than engaging in social media disputes.

The controversy has sparked mixed reactions among fans and industry insiders. However, with both Nedu and Talking Drum Management providing detailed explanations, the situation may soon settle.

For now, The Honest Bunch Podcast continues airing, and Nedu remains committed to his craft, undeterred by the noise surrounding his name.

# Beyonce, Chloe Bailey sued in \$15m copyright lawsuit

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Multiple award winning singer, Beyoncé's Parkwood Entertainment has being sued for copyright infringement by artist Melvin Moore, who claims his work was used without permission in a slew of songs by Chloe Bailey, who is signed to the label.

Moore, also known as 4Rest (Forest), filed a lawsuit in New York on Friday alleging fraudulent misrepresentation, violations of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), civil conspiracy, and deceptive business practices.

The Grammy-nominee, 39, claims in the court documents that he 'contributed substantial original lyrics, melodies, and creative direction to several master recordings' in Bailey's album *Trouble in Paradise*, which was released in August.

Those recordings included *Favorite*, *Might As Well*, and *Same Lingerie* – all of which he alleges were 'commercially released by Defendants and embodied on without his knowledge or consent.'

He alleged that prior to the 26-year-old promoting songs such as *Same Lingerie* on her Instagram 'to over 260,000 people,' she 'intentionally disregarded' the DMCA Violation and Cease and Desist notice he had issued her.

Moore went on to explain that Same



*Lingerie* was inspired by a relationship with a woman. He recorded the original demos for the song which was based on her 'hesitations and emotional struggles following a previous relationship.'

He is requesting punitive damages of \$5 million per song.

He is also demanding a jury trial and seeking an award for statutory damages of up to \$150,000 per infringement, statutory damages of up to \$25,000 per DMCA violation, and compensatory and punitive damages for willful copyright infringement, fraudulent misrepresentation, and civil conspiracy.

The California-based artist has also made the allegations against Columbia Records, Music Entertainment, Sony Music Entertainment, ABC Corporation 1-10, John and Jane Does 1-10.

He claims the defendants' 'misappropriated his contributions to the Works, falsely registered the Works under their names, and exploited the Works for commercial gain across multiple revenue-generating commercially viewable platforms without authorization.'

A source told Daily Mail that Beyoncé, 43, is furious that this spiraled out of control.

'Beyoncé is incensed that it has gone this far,' they said. 'This lawsuit is a terrible look for everyone involved.'

They claimed communication between Bailey and Parkwood had been 'breaking down' in the weeks leading up to the filing and they were 'petrified of being drawn into a lawsuit about theft of intellectual property, especially after seeing how damaging the Marvin Gaye lawsuit was to Robin Thicke's career.'

# VP Vance in line to be next American President

By Dave Oludare Oso



United States Vice President JD Vance was the overwhelming choice of Grand Old Party (GOP) activists to be the 2028 Republican presidential nominee, according to the annual straw poll of the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC).

In results released Saturday afternoon, Vance was the choice of 61% of CPAC attendees. Former Trump counselor and conservative activist, Steve Bannon came in a distant second with 12%, while Florida Gov. and one-time Trump rival, Ron DeSantis came in third with 7% support.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio

and incoming UN ambassador Elise Stefanik both had the support of 3% of conference-goers.

The poll results, one of the most watched moments of the Republican confab, is followed closely by politicians, fundraisers and the press as a barometer of the mood of conservatives.

The results also showed that President Trump enjoyed an unprecedented 99% approval rating among the group.

A further 99% of participants said they agreed with the statement “The first few weeks of Donald Trump’s presidency have been the best for the modern conservative

movement in my lifetime” — with 94% saying they “strongly agreed.”

In a twist, the poll this year delved into knotty constitutional issues as well. In a question which admitted that Congress has the constitutional power to set funding levels for federal agencies, the poll asked whether Trump and the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) should be allowed to have control over these levels instead.

A full 89% of CPAC attendees said Trump and DOGE should be in charge of funding issues — with just 5% siding with Congress.

# Trump backtracks, now says Russia attacked Ukraine

By Olamilekan Botti

President Donald Trump has publicly acknowledged that Russia indeed initiated an attack on Ukraine, marking a significant departure from his earlier positions, where he characterized the situation in Ukraine as a complex geopolitical conflict without direct attribution of responsibility to Russia.

During a recent press conference, Trump stated, "It is clear that Russia has acted aggressively towards Ukraine. We cannot ignore the evidence of their military actions." His comments come at a time when the international community is grappling with the ongoing war that has resulted in thousands of casualties and a humanitarian crisis in Eastern Europe. The former president's shift in rhetoric is not only striking but also raises questions about his potential influence on the Republican Party and U.S. foreign policy.

Trump's acknowledgment of Russia's aggression aligns with the views of many political analysts and foreign policy experts who have criticized his previous approach. During his presidency, Trump often downplayed Russia's role in international conflicts, leading to concerns about his administration's commitment to upholding democratic values abroad. This latest statement appears to reflect a newfound willingness to confront the realities of Russian expansionism, a stance that may resonate with both party members and the broader American public.

Political commentators are already speculating on the implications of Trump's reversal. Some believe it could signify a shift in the Republican Party's stance on foreign policy, especially as the party prepares for future elections. Many



Republican leaders have condemned Russia's actions and supported increased military aid to Ukraine, a position that contrasts sharply with Trump's earlier assertions. This change could be a strategic move to align himself with the party's current sentiments and regain favor among voters who prioritize foreign policy issues.

Moreover, Trump's acknowledgment comes as the Biden administration continues to face scrutiny over its handling of the Ukraine crisis. Critics argue that the administration has not done enough to deter Russian aggression, while supporters claim that diplomatic efforts are essential for long-term stability. The former president's statements may place additional pressure on the current administration to reassess its strategy and engage more robustly with international allies in support of Ukraine.

In response to Trump's comments, Ukrainian officials have expressed cautious optimism. They welcome any acknowledgment of Russian aggression but remain skeptical of the motivations behind such statements. "We need decisive actions, not just words," stated a spokesperson for the Ukrainian

government. "The situation requires a united front against the ongoing threats to our sovereignty."

As the conflict in Ukraine continues to evolve, the implications of Trump's reversal are still unfolding. The former president has historically maintained a complex relationship with foreign policy, often favoring an America First approach that prioritizes domestic issues over international commitments. However, this latest development may indicate a shift in his narrative, one that could have lasting effects on his political future and the broader landscape of American foreign policy.

In conclusion, Trump's recent acknowledgment of Russia's attack on Ukraine signals a notable pivot in his approach to international relations. As the world watches closely, both supporters and critics of Trump will be keenly interested in how this change will influence the Republican Party's direction and the U.S.'s role on the global stage. The unfolding situation in Ukraine remains critical, and American leadership will be key in shaping the outcome of this ongoing crisis.

# Pope Francis in critical condition, receives blood transfusions

By Dave Oludare Oso

Pope Francis is in a critical condition after he suffered a long asthmatic respiratory crisis that required high flows of oxygen, the Vatican has said.

Francis, 88, who has been hospitalised for a week with a complex lung infection, also received blood transfusions after tests showed a condition associated with anemia, the Vatican said in an update today.

‘The Holy Father continues to be alert and spent the day in an armchair although in more pain than yesterday. At the moment the prognosis is reserved,’ the statement said.

Earlier, doctors said Francis was battling pneumonia and a complex respiratory infection that doctors explained remains touch-and-go and will keep him hospitalised for at least another week.

The Vatican carried on with its Holy Year celebrations without the pope today (Saturday).

In a brief update this afternoon, Francis is said to have slept well overnight.

But doctors warned the main threat facing Francis is the onset of sepsis, a serious infection of the blood that can occur as a complication of pneumonia.

As of Friday, there was no evidence of any sepsis, and Francis was responding to the various drugs he is taking, the pope’s medical team said in their first in-depth update on his condition.

‘He is not out of danger,’ said his



personal physician, Dr. Luigi Carbone. ‘So like all fragile patients I say they are always on the golden scale: In other words, it takes very little to become unbalanced.’

Francis, who has chronic lung disease, was admitted to Gemelli hospital on February 14 after a weeklong bout of bronchitis worsened.

Doctors first diagnosed the complex viral, bacterial and fungal respiratory tract infection and then the onset of pneumonia in both lungs. They prescribed ‘absolute rest’ and a combination of cortisone and antibiotics, along with supplemental oxygen when he needs it.

Carbone, who along with Francis’ personal nurse Massimiliano Strappetti organized care for him at the Vatican, acknowledged he had insisted on staying at the Vatican to work, even after he was sick, ‘because of institutional and private commitments’.

He was cared for by a cardiologist and infectious specialist in addition to his

personal medical team before being hospitalised.

Francis, who has been hospitalised for a week with a complex lung infection, also received blood transfusions after tests showed a condition associated with anemia

Dr Sergio Alfieri, the head of medicine and surgery at Rome’s Gemelli hospital, said the biggest threat facing Francis was that some of the germs that are currently located in his respiratory system pass into the bloodstream, causing sepsis. Sepsis can lead to organ failure and death.

‘Sepsis, with his respiratory problems and his age, would be really difficult to get out of,’ Alfieri told a news conference on Friday at Gemelli.

‘The English say “knock on wood”, we say “touch iron”. Everyone touch what they want,’ he said as he tapped the microphone. ‘But this is the real risk in these cases: that these germs pass to the bloodstream.’

‘He knows he’s in danger,’ Alfieri added. ‘And he told us to relay that.’

# Trump fires top U.S. military officers who campaigned for diversity

By New Daily Prime

President Donald Trump has fired Air Force General CQ Brown Jr., the first Black chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a sweeping shake-up of military leadership that has sparked controversy over the administration's stance on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies.

Brown, who had been widely respected for his leadership and combat experience, was abruptly removed on Friday as part of a broader effort to purge top military officials who supported diversity initiatives within the armed forces.

The move follows remarks by Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, a former Fox News host, who had openly questioned whether Brown was appointed due to his race and previously called for the removal of military leaders involved in what he described as "DEI woke policies."

"First of all, you've got to fire the chairman of the Joint Chiefs," Hegseth said in a November interview, adding that any general, admiral, or officer who supported DEI must be removed.

Brown's dismissal is seen as a major turning point in Trump's military strategy, signaling a shift towards a more hardline, combat-focused Pentagon leadership.

Shortly after Brown's firing, Trump announced on his Truth Social platform that he would replace him with Lt. Gen. Dan "Razin" Caine, a retired officer known for his special operations experience and direct involvement in the war on terror.

Caine, who is white, previously served as the associate director for military affairs at the CIA and played a critical role in the defense of Washington, D.C., during the 9/11 attacks. Trump has praised Caine for his "no-nonsense approach to warfare"



and claimed that he was "passed over for promotion" during President Biden's tenure.

"Many so-called military 'geniuses' said it would take years to defeat ISIS. General Caine, on the other hand, said it could be done quickly, and he delivered," Trump posted on Truth Social.

However, Caine's appointment has raised legal questions as he does not meet all statutory qualifications for the position under the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, which typically requires that the chairman of the Joint Chiefs have served as a combatant commander, vice-chair, or service chief. Trump, however, has the authority to waive this requirement in the national interest.

Brown's removal is just the beginning of a larger military overhaul under Trump's leadership. According to Defense Secretary Hegseth, the administration has also begun the process of removing additional high-ranking military officials, including:

1. Admiral Lisa Franchetti – Chief of Naval Operations
2. General James Slife – Air Force Vice Chief of Staff
3. Three Judge Advocate Generals

(JAGs) – The top military lawyers for the Army, Navy, and Air Force

In his statement, Hegseth justified the moves, stating that the military must refocus on its core mission of deterrence, combat readiness, and winning wars, rather than social policies.

"Under President Trump, we are putting in place new leadership that will focus our military on its core mission of deterring, fighting, and winning wars," Hegseth said.

Trump's critics argue that this mass firing could destabilize military leadership at a time when global conflicts, including rising tensions with China and Russia, require experienced strategic leadership.

## Political and Military Reactions

Brown's dismissal has been met with strong reactions from both political leaders and military experts. Supporters of Trump view the move as necessary to eliminate "woke ideology" from the military and refocus on combat preparedness. Critics, including Democratic lawmakers and retired generals, argue that the decision undermines military professionalism and diversity efforts.

# Judge gives Trump go-ahead to gut USAID's workforce

By Dave Oludare Oso

A federal judge on Friday paved the way for the Trump administration to move forward with plans to remove thousands of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) workers from their jobs.

U.S. District Judge Carl Nichols denied a request from labor groups to issue a preliminary injunction after the Trump administration said thousands of USAID employees would be placed on administrative leave and ordered agency personnel abroad to return to the U.S. within 30 days.

“Weighing plaintiffs’ assertions on these questions against the government’s is like comparing apples to oranges. Where one side claims that USAID’s operations are essential to human flourishing and the other side claims they are presently at odds with it, it simply is not possible for the Court to conclude, as a matter of law or equity, that the public interest favors or disfavors an injunction,” Nichols wrote.

“Plaintiffs have presented no irreparable harm they or their members are imminently likely to suffer from the hypothetical future dissolution of USAID,” Nichols wrote.

“And it is not clear why the speed of proceedings in the relevant agencies would be insufficient to address the only actions that have already happened and are presently ripe for review: administrative leave placements, expedited evacuations, and other changes to working conditions of the sort those bodies routinely confront.”

Earlier this month, the judge had paused the administration’s move to place 2,200 USAID staff on administrative leave. He also rescinded leave for 500 workers and paused efforts to expedite evacuations for personnel abroad. The temporary restraining order on those actions extended until the judge’s ruling



on Friday.

The lawsuit was initially filed by the American Foreign Service Association, a union representing 1,980 foreign service officers working for USAID, and the American Federation of Government Employees.

They argued that efforts to dissolve USAID have had “disastrous humanitarian consequences” by terminating the agency’s efforts to stop children’s malaria deaths, ending pharmaceutical clinical trials and threatening HIV resurgence.

They also alleged that the move to gut the agency had “already imperiled American lives,” and referenced the State Department last month advising U.S. nationals to leave the Democratic Republic of the Congo due to safety concerns tied to protests at U.S. government buildings.

“By abruptly putting staff on administrative leave, Defendants left USAID workers in perilous situations stranded, without any information or funding to escape,” the lawsuit said.

Tom Yazdgerdi, the president of the American Foreign Service Association, called the judge’s ruling “a setback in our fight to protect our members from efforts

that threaten to dismantle USAID, but it does not change the importance of their mission — advancing U.S. interests and delivering life-saving assistance worldwide.”

Skye Perryman, the president and CEO of Democracy Forward, one of the firms representing the unions in the lawsuit, said that they would “continue to pursue all legal options in this case in order to ensure the safety of Americans at home and abroad.”

“The Trump administration’s attack on USAID is part of a coordinated effort to undermine the will of Congress and isolate America on the global stage,” Perryman said in a statement.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment Friday night.

The Trump administration has indicated it hopes to cut up to 10% of the federal workforce. Tech billionaire Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency has played a central role in those efforts and in overall plans to drastically reduce government spending.

In addition to promoting false conspiracy theories about USAID, Musk recently referred to the agency as “a criminal organization” in a post on X that added, “Time for it to die.”

# Elon Musk breaks silence on St. Clair's paternity claim of 13th child

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Tesla CEO takes break from X amid controversy, citing focus on Grok development

Billionaire tech mogul, Elon Musk has broken his silence after MAGA influencer, Ashley St. Clair claimed to be the mother of his 13th child.

Musk responded on X (formerly Twitter) to a post suggesting that St. Clair had been planning to have his child for years, adding a new layer to the controversy.

Last week, St. Clair, 26, revealed she shares a child with Musk. Her representative, Brian Glicklich, confirmed the claim in a post on X, stating that the two had been privately working on a co-parenting agreement.

"It is disappointing that a tabloid reporter, who repeatedly ambushed Ashley and her family, made it impossible to complete that process confidentially," Glicklich wrote.

He added that St. Clair expects Musk to publicly acknowledge his role as the father and finalise the agreement in the best interest of the child.

## Musk's reaction

The Tesla CEO, 53, offered a simple "Whoa" on X in response to the accusation but has not confirmed or denied it.

Musk then announced he would be offline for the weekend, stating he would be "honoring the product with the team."

This came after a series of unrelated posts, including news about Grok 3, which he called "the smartest AI on Earth."

Musk's one-word response to St. Clair's claim came after another post accused the influencer of having "plotted for HALF A DECADE to ensnare Elon Musk."

However, St. Clair quickly fired back, criticizing Musk for not engaging with her directly. Her sharp reply was deleted from X within the hour.

"Elon, we have been trying to communicate for the past several days, and you have not



responded," she wrote in a now-deleted comment. "When are you going to reply to us instead of publicly responding to smears from an individual who just posted photos of me in underwear at 15 years old?"

St. Clair explained that she had kept the information private for the sake of the child's safety but decided to go public after learning tabloids were preparing to release the story.

"I have not previously disclosed this to protect our child's privacy and safety, but in recent days, it has become clear that tabloid media intends to do so, regardless of the harm it will cause," she added.

## Legal and co-parenting

Glicklich later confirmed that Musk and St. Clair had been working privately on the co-parenting arrangement.

"We are waiting for Elon to publicly acknowledge his parental role with Ashley to end unwarranted speculation," he said, "and Ashley trusts that Elon intends to finish their agreement quickly, in the best interests of the wellbeing and security of the child they share."

## Allegations and Musk's family background

In other deleted posts, St. Clair accused Musk of responding to an X user who

allegedly shared inappropriate photos of her as a minor. She shared screenshots that appeared to show X's head of safety confirming the account had been penalised for a week for violating platform rules.

St. Clair also alleged that Musk had recently suggested she have more children, but is now choosing to engage with speculation rather than directly communicating with her.

## Musk's other children

Elon Musk has 12 children from previous relationships, in addition to his 13th child with Ashley St. Clair.

### With Justine Wilson:

Musk shares six children with his first wife.

### With Grimes:

He has three children with musician Grimes.

### With Shivon Zilis:

Musk shares twins Strider and Azure with Shivon Zilis.

Musk's relationship with Justine Wilson ended in 2008, but their family grew through in vitro fertilisation (IVF).

He later had children with Grimes and Zilis, and his family continues to expand with his latest child, born in 2024.

# US congresswoman 'rooting' for Canada, Mexico against Trump's threats

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**D**emocrat Jasmine Crockett calls it 'really wild' that it is foreign leaders who are speaking truth to power

The congresswoman, Jasmine Crockett has revealed she is "rooting" for Canada and Mexico over President Donald Trump in their attempts to stand up to him, saying it is "really wild" to find herself in that position given he is the president of the US.

"They are really the ones that are speaking truth to power right now," the Democratic representative from Texas said on Friday on the popular Breakfast Club podcast, alluding to the political feuds Trump has engaged in with the US's two North American neighbours during the first month of his second presidency. "They can see what it is and they were like, 'We are not messing with this crazy regime.'"

Crockett's remarks came a day after the Canadian prime minister, Justin Trudeau, and the Mexican president, Claudia Sheinbaum, each aimed verbal rebukes at threats from Trump to challenge both countries' self-rule.

After the White House designated Mexican drug cartels – which generally arm themselves with US guns – as terrorist organizations eligible to be struck directly by the military under Trump's command, Sheinbaum responded by saying, "This cannot be an opportunity ... to invade our sovereignty," whether by air, land or sea.

"With Mexico, it is collaboration and coordination, never subordination or interventionism," Sheinbaum also said. "The Mexican people will under no circumstances accept ... intrusions or any other action from abroad that is detrimental to the integrity, independence or sovereignty of the nation."

Meanwhile, after Trump placed a



telephone call to a US hockey team on Thursday that went on to lose a tournament final to a selection of players from Canada, which he has repeatedly boasted about taking over and making his nation's 51st state, Trudeau wrote on social media: "You can't take our country – and you can't take our game."

Both Sheinbaum and Trudeau's governments have also grappled with threats of steep trade tariffs from Trump's administration.

And, among other maneuvers, Trump unilaterally ordered that the Gulf of Mexico be renamed the Gulf of America while seeking administrative retribution against the Associated Press for not changing its style to comply with that directive.

Sheinbaum, for her part, threatened the creators of Google Maps with a lawsuit after they caved to Trump and renamed the international waters in the Gulf of Mexico as the Gulf of America.

Crockett attributed her stance on Trump's feuds with Canada and Mexico to those who voted for him in November's election despite his being convicted in New York state months earlier on 34

felony charges.

Those charges involved hush-money payments to an adult film star, Stormy Daniels right before the Republican's victory in the 2016 presidential election.

He avoided substantial punishment for his conviction in that case by defeating then vice-president Kamala Harris in the fall to retake the Oval Office after losing it to Joe Biden in 2020.

"Y'all knew who he was when y'all elected him, so don't act surprised," Crockett, 43, said of Trump, 78. "You elected somebody who was actually convicted by a jury of his peers of 34 felony (counts).

"I ... got no convictions, no arrests, no nothing. And I would never be qualified for president in this country in the eyes of the vast majority of them."

Crockett then invoked other unresolved criminal prosecutions stemming from Trump's alleged improper retention of government secrets after his presidency as well as his supporters' attack on the US Capitol in early 2021 that were doomed when he won against Harris.

# Zelensky 'not ready' to sign Trump's 'problematic' minerals deal

By Olamilekan Botti

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has expressed that he is “not ready” to finalize a critical minerals agreement with the United States, as reported by a Ukrainian source. This development comes amid discussions that had previously suggested the possibility of a deal nearing completion.

In recent statements, White House officials indicated that negotiations were progressing, and a deal was imminent. However, the Ukrainian president's rejection of an initial draft last week has raised significant questions about the viability of the agreement. According to a source within the Ukrainian government, the current draft is “not yet ready to be signed” due to several “problematic issues” that need to be addressed.

The source elaborated, stating, “Today, the drafts do not reflect a partnership in the agreement and contain only unilateral commitments by Ukraine.” This sentiment underscores the concerns within the Ukrainian administration regarding the fairness and reciprocity of the proposed deal.

In a Friday evening address, President Zelensky acknowledged the ongoing negotiations with Washington, revealing that both sides are working on refining the “draft agreement.” He emphasized the importance of ensuring that the final document “adds value to our relations.” Zelensky's remarks highlight his commitment to establishing a balanced partnership that benefits both nations rather than one that places disproportionate burdens on Ukraine.

“What matters most is getting the details right to ensure it truly works,” Zelensky stated. His focus on the intricacies of the agreement reflects a cautious approach to international



negotiations, particularly given the critical nature of minerals in the context of global supply chains and economic stability.

The critical minerals deal is of significant importance, especially as countries look to secure vital resources for technology and defense industries. The U.S. has been actively seeking to strengthen its supply chains for these minerals, which are essential for various sectors, including renewable energy and electric vehicle manufacturing. As Ukraine continues to navigate its complex geopolitical landscape, securing a favorable agreement with the U.S. could provide much-needed support for its economy.

However, the current draft's lack of mutual commitments has raised alarms in Kyiv. Officials are wary of entering into an agreement that could leave Ukraine vulnerable or overly dependent on U.S. commitments without corresponding obligations from the American side. This perspective underscores the necessity for a balanced partnership that reflects the interests of both nations.

Zelensky's approach signifies a broader

strategy of cautious engagement, aiming to ensure that any agreements reflect the principles of mutual benefit and respect. The Ukrainian president is keenly aware of the implications of such a deal and is determined to safeguard his country's interests.

As discussions continue, both Ukrainian and U.S. officials will likely engage in further negotiations to address the outstanding issues within the current draft. Zelensky's commitment to achieving a “just result” indicates a willingness to work collaboratively but also reinforces the importance of a deal that does not compromise Ukraine's strategic interests.

In conclusion, while the potential for a critical minerals deal with the U.S. remains on the table, President Zelensky's hesitation to sign the current draft reflects a prudent stance aimed at ensuring that any agreement serves the long-term interests of Ukraine. As both nations work towards a resolution, the focus will undoubtedly remain on crafting a partnership that is equitable and beneficial for all parties involved.

# One-armed basketball player makes women's Division III history

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

When her high school basketball coach cut her from the team senior year, Baileigh Sinaman-Daniel refused to let that rejection, or the fact she was born with one arm, end her dream of playing the game that her childhood idol, LeBron James made her fall in love with 15 years ago.

That determination led the 22-year-old guard at Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts to become the first NCAA Division III women's basketball player with one arm to score in a collegiate game, said her coach, Martin Rather.

"I kind of just shot the ball with the anticipation that I would have to go and get it back on a rebound," Sinaman-Daniel said of the historic basket that she made from near the three-point line, which snapped the net without hitting the rim. "When the shot actually went in, I was more so surprised."

"My first thought was, 'That's history and we need to take a second to pause and celebrate it,'" Rather said. "Everybody just swarmed Baileigh, giving her high fives, celebrating her."

The Stafford, Virginia, native's path to history was sparked by a painful rejection at Mountain View High School.

"I had played for my high school for about three years and my senior year of high school when I tried out again, as I always did, I actually got cut and the coach basically told me that I wasn't needed on the team," she said.

That led to two days of misery and crying, until she made a bold decision while sitting in her car.



"I thought to myself, I could do this in college. What's stopping me from doing this in college?" Sinaman-Daniel said. "So, I started emailing hundreds of coaches and it didn't really matter what division it was. I was just trying to get a possible maybe or even better — a yes."

That persistence caught Rather's attention when Sinaman-Daniel, a 5-foot-6-inch guard, entered the transfer portal after two years at Warren Wilson College in North Carolina.

At Lesley, Sinaman-Daniel has become known for her work ethic with the Lynx.

She has completed more individual practice sessions than any other player on the team, which is having its best season in 14 years and has reached the playoffs, Rather said.

"I think any team in this country would benefit from having a player with Baileigh's heart on their team," Rather said.

The achievement is particularly notable given the scarcity of one-armed players in collegiate basketball who could have served as role models.

"It is not very common to see somebody with one arm playing basketball. I think there's probably about two or three of us in the collegiate level," Sinaman-Daniel said.

Though there are few other notable one-armed college basketball players, the most successful is likely Hansel Emmanuel at Austin Peay, whose coach describes as "the biggest inspiration in college sports." The athletic success of the 6-foot-6 men's Division I junior, whose arm was amputated at age 6 after an accident, has proved limitations don't define potential.

Since Sinaman-Daniel could not always use standard balance and ball management techniques used by two-armed players, her on-court success has required unique training methods allowing her to develop fundamental skills.

# Manchester United rise from the dead to salvage dramatic Everton draw

By Dave Oludare Oso

**M**anchester United staged a late comeback before being saved by VAR as they avoided plunging deeper into crisis with a dramatic draw at Everton.

Everton's resurgence under returning manager David Moyes – once of United – was poised to continue as the hosts exerted total domination in the first 45 minutes to establish a deserved two-goal lead at Goodison Park.

They exposed every United flaw in that opening half, Beto turning in his fifth goal under Moyes in the 19th minute after a goalmouth scramble before Abdoulaye Doucoure headed them two ahead.

The second Everton goal was a desperate moment for United defender Harry Maguire, who failed to react with any urgency after Andre Onana saved Jack Harrison's shot, allowing Doucoure to rise above him to head home.

United deserve credit for the second-half improvement – but there is no disguising the mediocrity of what head coach Amorim currently has at his disposal.

Fernandes and Ugarte were at the forefront of that United rally, but for



the first 72 minutes this was a shocking team performance, lacking in desire and creativity.

Fernandes kept probing, but Maguire had an afternoon to forget.

There was his undistinguished part in Everton's second goal, and then the England defender was holding his breath when his clumsy challenge on Young ran the risk of giving the hosts a penalty, and potentially an injury-time winner.

The agitated, animated body language of Amorim, certainly until the tide turned, was a reflection of his continued unhappiness with what he was witnessing from United.

At least now he has seen a show of defiance, a small mercy Amorim will grab at with gratitude.

Everton remained in control until Bruno Fernandes steered home a free-kick with 18 minutes left, and Manuel Ugarte then drove in powerfully eight minutes later to draw United level.

United then survived a late scare when referee Andrew Madley awarded a penalty as Ashley Young went down under Maguire's challenge, with Matthijs de Ligt also tugging the Everton veteran, but the decision was reversed after a video assistant referee check.

The second-half comeback had been an unlikely turn of events given Everton's initial superiority, with United sparing manager Ruben Amorim the indignity of what would have been the team's ninth league defeat in 13 matches.

# West Ham dash Arsenal title hope, Chelsea lose to Aston Villa

By Oluwatosin Ologun

**A**rsenal's Premier League title challenge suffered a massive blow as the 10-man Gunners were beaten 1-0 at home by lowly West Ham on Saturday.

Jarrod Bowen headed in the only goal just before half-time and an injury-hit Arsenal had no reply after Myles Lewis-Skelly was sent off on 73 minutes.

Defeat leaves second-placed Arsenal still eight points adrift of leaders Liverpool.

With leaders Liverpool not in action until Sunday's trip to Manchester City, Arsenal had a chance to close the gap in the title race with victory at the Emirates Stadium.

But Mikel Arteta's side stumbled to a first loss in 16 league games as Jarrod Bowen netted West Ham's first half winner before the Gunners had Myles Lewis-Skelly sent off after the interval.

Second-placed Arsenal, whose last top-flight defeat came at Newcastle in November, are eight points behind Liverpool, who would move a massive 11 points clear if they beat spluttering City.

After coming off the bench to score twice in the closing stages of last weekend's win at Leicester, Spain midfielder Mikel Merino started for injury-hit Arsenal as a makeshift striker.

But Arsenal's lack of cutting edge in the absence of Kai Havertz, Gabriel Jesus and Bukayo Saka was exposed when Aaron Wan-Bissaka's pin-point cross was headed in by Jarrod Bowen in the 44th minute.

There was more misery for Arsenal in the 73rd minute when Lewis-Skelly brought



down Mohammed Kudus as the West Ham forward surged away on the halfway line.

Lewis-Skelly was initially shown a yellow card but the defender's punishment was increased to a red after referee Craig Pawson consulted the pitchside monitor.

## Chelsea suffer defeat in the hands of Aston Villa

Marco Asensio's first goals for Aston Villa clinched a dramatic 2-1 win against spluttering Chelsea after a costly blunder from Blues goalkeeper Filip Jorgensen on Saturday.

Enzo Fernandez's quick-fire opener put Chelsea ahead at Villa Park in a battle between top four hopefuls chasing qualification for next season's Champions League.

But Asensio, who signed on loan from Paris Saint-Germain earlier in February, netted after the interval when his goal was

initially disallowed for offside before being given by VAR.

The former Real Madrid forward followed his equaliser with Villa's last-gasp winner as his shot squirmed past Jorgensen's woeful attempted save.

It was the latest goalkeeping calamity for Chelsea this season after Jorgensen replaced the even more error-prone Robert Sanchez.

Chelsea have been beaten four times in their last five games in all competitions, leaving them one point adrift of the top four in sixth place.

Bemoaning Jorgensen's error, coach Enzo Maresca said: "The keeper position is very difficult. When you make a mistake is clear for everyone.

Seventh-placed Villa, who held leaders Liverpool to a hard-fought 2-2 draw in midweek, are one point behind Chelsea thanks to a result that rekindled their own top four ambitions.