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# Amnesty International demands probe into Natasha's allegations against Akpabio

By Friday Omosola



**A**mnesty International has urged Nigerian authorities to launch an independent and impartial investigation into allegations of sexual harassment levelled by Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan against Senate President Godswill Akpabio.

In a statement issued by Amnesty International Nigeria's Director, Isa Sanusi, the organization emphasised the urgency of addressing the allegations rather than allowing them to be dismissed or ignored.

He warned that failing to act on the allegations could set a dangerous precedent, making it harder for victims of sexual harassment to seek justice

while emboldening perpetrators.

"The National Assembly must not continue to look away while the allegations remain and are being bizarrely trivialized, unaddressed, and ignored," he added.

Sanusi stressed that dismissing the case would have wider consequences, including reinforcing a culture where survivors of sexual harassment are discouraged from speaking out.

"This is one case that the Nigerian authorities can use to show that there is zero tolerance for sexual harassment—no matter who is involved," he stated.

Amnesty International also expressed concern that many women already fear speaking up due to scepticism and victim-blaming, which has created a culture of silence.

"The fear of not being believed, or even being blamed, is already creating a dangerous culture of silence that prevents women who have faced sexual harassment from seeking justice," the statement read.

The human rights organisation called on the Nigerian government to take decisive action, ensuring that justice is served and that impunity for sexual misconduct is not tolerated at any level.

# THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

## PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

## PRODUCT COLOUR

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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	372,500.00
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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
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9X5	206,000.00
9X4	177,500.00
9X3	150,000.00
8X6	216,000.00
8X3	98,500.00
7X4	164,002.00
6X4	94,010.50
6X3	78,500.00
6X2	47,500.00
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10X4	103,963.00
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9X5	168,191.50
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8X3	N/A
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#### 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)  
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# FG flags off Benin–Asaba expressway

By Friday Omosola



The Federal Government (FG), in partnership with Africa Plus Partners, has launched the 125km Benin–Asaba Expressway Project in Edo State.

The project, a dual-carriage, solar-lit superhighway, is fully financed by private investors under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.

Speaking at the flag-off ceremony, the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, described the initiative as a major breakthrough in infrastructure financing.

He emphasised that the project is backed by private capital and does not depend on direct federal

funding.

“What you see on the front page of the pamphlet will be delivered—because the cash is there,” Edun assured.

“This is not reliant on direct federal funding. Africa Plus Consortium, backed by credible investors, has put forward the full capital commitment under the enabling policies of President Bola Tinubu.”

The Minister of Works, David Umahi, highlighted the project’s cashless financing model, underscoring its importance in the government’s Renewed Hope Agenda.

Edo State Governor, Monday

Okpebholo, praised the financing structure, calling the project a legacy investment.

“For private investors to risk their capital, it shows belief in the president’s vision and the future of our economy,” Okpebholo stated.

Reaffirming the administration’s commitment to infrastructure development, Edun noted that this model will be replicated nationwide.

“This is just one of many projects that will be delivered week after week, month after month, through sustainable financial frameworks that ensure transparency, efficiency, and speed,” he said.

# SERAP sues Tinubu over Fubara, Rivers lawmakers suspension

By Friday Omosola

The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has taken President Bola Tinubu to court over the suspension of Rivers State Governor Siminalayi Fubara, his deputy, and the state's House of Assembly members.

The New Daily Prime reported that Tinubu suspended them for six months while declaring a state of emergency in Rivers State, citing his constitutional powers.

The lawsuit was filed by Yirabari Israel Nulog, Nengim Ikpoemugh Royal, and Gracious Eyoh-Sifumbukho, who are members of the SERAP Volunteers' Lawyers Network (SVLN) in Rivers State.

The plaintiffs are registered voters who participated in the 2023 general elections.

The Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Lateef Fagbemi, and Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ibas (Rtd), the appointed sole administrator of Rivers State, were also named as defendants in the case.

The case, numbered FHC/ABJ/CS/558/2025, was filed last Friday at the Federal High Court, Abuja.

The plaintiffs are asking the court to cancel Tinubu's suspension of the democratically elected officials in Rivers State, nullify the appointment of Ibas and declare that, under Section 1(2) of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution (as amended), no one can govern Nigeria or any part of it outside the provisions of the Constitution.

The plaintiffs argue that suspending elected officials violates the rule of law and the people's right to governance.



The lawsuit, filed on their behalf by lawyer Ebun-Olu Adegboruwa (SAN), states in part: "The rule of law would be meaningless if the people's right to participate in governance can be suspended or ignored at will.

"The rule of law would be meaningless if the people's right to participate in governance can be suspended or ignored at will. Democracy is an inherent element of the rule of law. Nigeria's democracy ought to have as its foundation respect for human rights and the rule of law."

"The suspension is entirely inconsistent and incompatible with the letter and spirit of the Nigerian Constitution 1999 [as amended] and the country's obligations under article 13 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and articles 2, 3 and 4 of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance."

"The combined provisions of sections 1(2), 14(1)(c), 176(1)(2) and 305(1) of the Nigerian 1999 Constitution create a delicate balance of rights and

responsibilities, balancing the exercise of the President's power against the people's right to participation in their own government, and the notion of respect for the rule of law."

"Together, these Constitutional provisions presume that Presidential Powers under section 305 are to be exercised fairly and the duty of fairness requires that the people's right to participation and democracy should be upheld even in the context of a declaration of state of emergency in Rivers State."

"The combined effect of the provisions of sections 1(2), 14(1)(c), 176(1)(2) and 305(1) of the 1999 Constitution is that the suspension of democratically elected officials in Rivers state is unlawful and unconstitutional."

"Democracy works best when everyone participates. The right to participation is the bedrock of any democratic society."

Continue on  
next page

## Cont from page 5

“The suspension of the democratically elected officials in Rivers state has seriously undermined the ability of the Plaintiffs to participate more effectively in their own government, and the credibility and integrity of the country’s electoral process, as well as the notion of the rule of law.”

“The rule of law ought to be protected to ensure that persons and institutions operate within the defined ambit of constitutional and statutory limitations.”

“Where agencies of government are allowed to operate at large and at their whims and caprices in the guise of performing their statutory or constitutional duties, the end result will be anarchy and authoritarianism, leading to the loss of constitutionally guaranteed freedom and liberty.”

“Section 305 of the 1999 Constitution is neither absolute nor superior to other provisions of the Constitution. Rather, it is expressly made subject to other constitutional provisions.”

“The phrase ‘Subject to’ as a legislative device is used in a Constitutional provision or statutory enactment to make the provision of the section inferior, dependent on, or limited and restricted in application to the Section to which they are made subject.”

The plaintiffs are also seeking the following reliefs: “A declaration that there is no provision in the Nigerian Constitution 1999 (as amended) that empowers the 1st Defendant to

suspend the democratically elected Governor, Deputy Governor, and Members of the House of Assembly of Rivers State while exercising his powers to proclaim the State of Emergency in the State under section 305 of the Constitution.

“A declaration that under section 1(2) of the Nigerian Constitution 1999 (as amended), the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall not be governed, nor shall any person or group of persons take control of the Government of Nigeria or any part thereof, except under the provisions of the Constitution.

“A declaration that by a purposeful construction and interpretation of the combined provisions of sections 1(2) 180, 176(1)(2), and 305 of the Nigerian Constitution 1999 as (amended), the 1st Defendant cannot lawfully suspend the democratically elected Governor, Deputy Governor, and Members of the House of Assembly of Rivers State while exercising his powers to proclaim a State of Emergency in Rivers State.

“A declaration that the suspension of the democratically elected Governor, Deputy Governor, and Members of the House of Assembly of Rivers State by the 1st Defendant on 18th March 2025 while proclaiming a state of emergency in the State is unlawful, unconstitutional, null and void.

“A declaration that the appointment by the 1st Defendant of the 3rd Defendant as the Sole Administrator of Rivers State consequent upon the suspension

of the democratically elected Governor, Deputy Governor, and Members of the House of Assembly of Rivers State by the 1st Defendant on 18th March 2025 derogates from the provision of section 1(2) of the Nigerian Constitution 1999 (as amended) and therefore is unlawful unconstitutional, null, and void.

“AN order of Honourable court setting aside the suspension of the democratically elected Governor, Deputy Governor, and Members of the House of Assembly of Rivers State by the 1st Defendant on 18th March 2025 while proclaiming a state of emergency in the State.

“An order setting aside the appointment of the 3rd Defendant by the 1st Defendant as the Sole Administrator of Rivers State. An order of injunction restraining the 3rd Defendant from acting or continuing to act as the Sole Administrator of Rivers State in pursuance of his appointment as such by the 1st Defendant on 18th March 2025.

“AN order of injunction restraining the Defendants, including their agents, representatives or such other persons acting on their behalf from treating or continuing to treat the Governor, Deputy Governor, and Members of the House of Assembly of Rivers as having been suspended. And for such further orders that the Honorable Court may deem fit to make in the circumstance of this suit.”

As of press time, no date has been fixed for the hearing of the suit.

# Oluwo accuses Ooni of plotting his removal

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Oluwo of Iwo, Abdulrasheed Akanbi, has accused the Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Ogunwusi of scheming to remove him from his stool.

The Oluwo, in a now viral video, said he influenced Oba Ogunwusi's emergence as the Ooni when he was contesting the stool in 2015, expressing regrets that the Ooni had been orchestrating his removal for no known reason

Oba Akanbi also alleged that Oba Adeyeye was behind his suspension from the Osun State Council of Obas a few years back.

However, the Ife monarch has dismissed Oluwo's allegation, adding that he would not react to it as "it was not the first time Oba Akanbi would be making such a statement."

Speaking in the video, which his Press Secretary, Ibrahim Alli, confirmed to have emerged from a Ramadan lecture in Iwo on Wednesday, Oluwo claimed that he helped Oba Ogunwusi settled a (court) case that would have impeded his appointment and installation as the Ooni.

He said Oba Ogunwusi's ally, Akin Daodu, connected the two of them, disclosing that he would have supported the Ooni's elder brother, Tunji Ogunwusi, but he didn't because the latter underrated him.

"In 2015, I got a call from Akin Daodu, a close ally of the then Prince Adeyeye Ogunwusi, now Ooni Adeyeye Ogunwusi. He told me Prince Adeyeye was on the phone, that he needed to talk and seek my help regarding his aspiration to the throne of Ooni of Ife. I knew him then, but I was closer to his brother, Tunji Ogunwusi, who was my peer. Tunji Ogunwusi, popularly called Dodo, and I were about eight years older than the Ooni.



"As a friend and peer, I had earlier called Tunji Ogunwusi to help him ascend the throne, but he underrated me and refused to take me seriously.

"We discussed, and he (Prince Adeyeye Ogunwusi at the time) disclosed that almost all the stakeholders, including Governor Aregbesola, had agreed to his appointment, but there was a court case instituted by a few aggrieved individuals against him. He said his primary concern was the litigation. I asked him if that was all, and he said yes. I told him he was already a king.

"In his presence, I called the person in charge and told them what I wanted. The case was decided on Friday, and Adeyeye became Ooni on Saturday. This was before my own enthronement. I was not selfish. I secured his own before mine. And a few months later, God used the same link for me to become the Oluwo of Iwoland."

Lamenting the alleged plot against him by Oba Adeyeye, Oluwo said, "To my surprise, the same person I helped ascend the throne has been planning evil against me. He orchestrated my suspension from the Osun State Council of Obas meeting.

"He is using a few kings in Iwoland to destabilise my territory. He attacked me last month in the presence of the governor, saying that I am discouraging idol worship. He was part of those who used my former wife against me.

"He wants me to be removed as Oluwo by all means. Such a dream can never come true. No one can remove me as Oluwo. No one can kill me, and no one can bring me down, except if I didn't help him become the Ooni."

However, the Director of Media at the Ooni's palace, Chief Moses Olafare, said Oluwo's statement didn't deserve any reaction.

Olafare said, "This is not the first time Baba Oluwo will make comments like that. We never reacted, and we won't react. Let him say whatever he wants. That is what he is busy doing. Everybody has something they are busy with.

"That is what Baba Oluwo is busy doing. Ooni is busy with developmental projects, so he is occupied and doesn't have time to respond to someone looking for attention. We don't have time for that. Whatever Baba Oluwo likes, let him say. We are not interested."

# PHOTOS: Suspended Fubara makes first public appearance

By Friday Omosola

For the first time since his suspension, Rivers State Governor Siminalayi Fubara has appeared in public.

He attended a church service at Salvation Ministries headquarters in GRA, Port Harcourt.

Governor Fubara, who was accompanied by his Chief of Staff, Edison Ehie, made no public statements during his church visit.

His next move remains uncertain as political tensions in the state continue to escalate.

Fubara's appearance followed President Bola Tinubu's declaration of a state of emergency in Rivers State last Tuesday.

Tinubu cited rising political tensions and security threats, as the reasons for suspending Fubara, his deputy, Ngozi



Odu, and the state House of Assembly members.

He, however, appointed retired Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ibas as the Sole Administrator to oversee the state's affairs for six months.

The suspension sparked widespread debate, with political analysts, legal experts, and civil society organisations questioning its legality.

Meanwhile, the newly installed Sole Administrator has moved quickly to establish control. He has convened

emergency security meetings with law enforcement agencies, traditional rulers, and local government officials.

He also confirmed the release of withheld state allocations and directed the immediate payment of local government workers' salaries.

Additionally, Ibas has inspected the reconstruction of the State House of Assembly Complex, vowing to complete the project promptly to ensure smooth governance.



# Pastor Olukoya warns men to marry women they deflower

By **Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi**

Dr. Daniel Olukoya, General Overseer of the Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries (MFM), has warned about the spiritual consequences of premarital sex.

He emphasized that men who take a woman's virginity unknowingly enter into a deep spiritual covenant, which can result in long-term negative effects on their lives.

Speaking to his congregation, Dr. Olukoya explained that this bond is not just physical but also spiritual. He stressed that such covenants can bring spiritual bondage, affecting not just the individuals involved but also their future relationships.

**Spiritual bondage through premarital sex**  
Dr. Olukoya cautioned men that engaging in premarital sex, especially when it involves taking a woman's virginity, creates a lasting spiritual tie. He stated that these bonds can transfer negative spiritual influences, leading to struggles, misfortunes, and even demonic oppression.

"If you are a man and you have taken a woman's virginity, do not be surprised if your life is filled with challenges," he warned. "When you do this, you mix your body with her blood, creating a spiritual covenant. Even if you do not marry her, the bond remains, affecting your life and future relationships."

**Consequences across generations**

Dr. Olukoya further explained that this covenant is not easily broken. If left unresolved, it can impact not just the individuals directly involved but also future generations. He warned that the



spiritual consequences could extend beyond the initial act, affecting families and descendants.

"This problem does not end with you," he said. "It can continue for generations unless the covenant is broken through spiritual means. Many people do not realize how deep these ties go. A simple act of intimacy can lead to years of suffering and misfortune."

**Transfer of spiritual influence**

Another major concern, according to Dr. Olukoya, is the transfer of negative spiritual influences. He explained that if a man engages in premarital sex with a woman who has spiritual issues or demonic connections, he unknowingly takes on those burdens.

"If the woman has a demonic influence, that bond means you have connected yourself to not just her but also to any negative forces attached to her," he said. "And when you move on to another woman, you unknowingly transfer that influence. Even if the next woman has no spiritual issues, she too will now carry that extra burden."

**The need for spiritual cleansing**

Dr. Olukoya urged individuals who have engaged in such acts to seek spiritual

cleansing and break these covenants. He emphasized the importance of prayer, deliverance, and seeking divine intervention to free themselves from the consequences of these bonds.

"This is not something to take lightly," he said. "If you have formed such a covenant, you must seek deliverance. Without breaking it, you may continue to face challenges that seem unexplainable."

**Final warning**

Dr. Olukoya concluded by urging young people to remain pure and avoid premarital sex. He stressed that beyond the physical and emotional consequences, there are serious spiritual risks that many fail to recognize.

"Many people think these are just ordinary relationships, but they do not understand the spiritual side," he said. "I advise everyone to stay away from premarital sex. The consequences are far greater than you can imagine."

His message serves as a strong warning to those who may not fully understand the spiritual implications of their actions. Dr. Olukoya's teachings continue to emphasize purity, spiritual awareness, and the importance of seeking deliverance from past mistakes.

# Seven Iraq-bound trafficking victims rescued by NAPTIP

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



Seven suspected victims to be trafficked to Baghdad, Iraq have been rescued by operatives of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) during a raid at a popular hotel in Zamaru, near Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in Abuja.

The operatives also arrested the hotel manager.

The raid was prompted by credible intelligence from stakeholders who had observed unusual activity, including the movement of young girls and suspicious individuals within the hotel, raising concerns about potential human trafficking.

Saddened by the growing trend, Director General of NAPTIP, Binta Bello,

lamented the role of certain service providers in facilitating the recruitment and trafficking of Nigerians, warning that the agency would invoke legal provisions to prosecute those involved in such activities.

Represented by the Director of Research and Programme Development of the agency, Josiah Emerole, Bello noted, “It is sad the way some service providers aid and abet the trafficking of Nigerians.”

She described the hotel as a hub for victims being trafficked to notorious destinations and stated that the agency is intensifying efforts to locate additional members of the trafficking network.

She stressed that harbouring suspected trafficking victims constitutes a violation of trafficking laws and assured that

NAPTIP would take necessary legal actions against offenders.

NAPTIP has recently intercepted around 60 suspected victims of trafficking at the airport, en route to conflict-ridden countries in the Middle East.

Profiling of the rescued victims revealed that six were recruited under false pretences from Lagos, while one was from Delta State. They were promised caregiving jobs in Iraq, only to be exploited once they arrived.

One victim told NAPTIP, “They told me that I will do house help in Baghdad and I will receive a good salary every month.

“I believed them because I thought Baghdad was in another country.”

# Mentally-unstable officer who allegedly opened fire on citizens in police custody

By Helen Okechukwu

**E**ffiong Bassey, a police officer serving at the Divisional Police Headquarters in Atakpa, Calabar, Cross River State has been arrested for allegedly shooting sporadically and killing a citizen.

The horrific event was said to have occurred on Sunday at approximately 05:55 hrs after Bassey returned from his night duty at Ekondo Microfinance Bank, displaying unusual behavior.

Ugbo Irene, spokesperson of the Cross River State Police Command, shared that Bassey refused to hand over the AK-47 rifle assigned to him and restricted access to the entrance and exit routes of the police premises.

Irene also revealed that peaceful dialogue to resolve the situation proved abortive as the officer's behavior escalated.

"Subsequently, Tactical Units/Patrol teams were deployed to the scene, where Inspector Bassey, suspected to be mentally deranged, opened fire on bystanders who had been instructed to leave the area," Irene said.

Among the three individuals who were hit by bullets from Bassey's gun, Ijeoma Obot, a 41-year-old female victim, died from the injuries she sustained.

Additionally, two male victims,



Charles Mkpang and another victim (name withheld), are receiving treatment at an undisclosed hospital.

The spokesperson confirmed that both men are in good condition.

Irene added, "The officer was eventually subdued, disarmed, and is now in police custody. He is undergoing further investigation into the incident."

"The Assistant Inspector General of Police, Zone 6 Headquarters, Calabar, and the Cross River State Command Management Team visited the hospital where the victims are receiving care.

"The AIG also made a donation to support the immediate treatment of the injured. Efforts to engage with key stakeholders are ongoing to ensure that the tension in the community is de-escalated.

"The Police Command urges the families of the victims and the public to remain calm as the investigation into this unfortunate incident continues.

"The Cross River State Police Command is committed to ensuring that justice, fairness, and equity prevail, and the outcome of the investigation will be made public in due course.

"We extend our deepest condolences to the family of the deceased and wish the injured a speedy recovery."

The recent attack has raised concerns about the mental health of security officers, urging authorities to assess their mental health status to prevent further fatalities.

# Indian lady intercepted at Kano airport with 72 parcels of heroin

By Helen Okechukwu



**N**igerian authorities have arrested a 42-year-old Indian lady, Ms. Neetu Neetu, with 72 parcels of heroin weighing 11 kilograms at Mallam Aminu Kano International Airport (MAKIA), Kano State.

The illicit drugs, concealed inside factory-sealed wafer wraps and packaged as chocolates, were discovered in her luggage following a thorough search and credible intelligence.

On 14 March, operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) apprehended Neetu in the arrival hall during inward clearance of Qatar Airways flight QR1431 from Bangkok, Thailand, via Vietnam and Doha.

In another effort to crackdown drug peddlers, Femi Babafemi, the Director of Media & Advocacy, revealed how Michael Ogundele, 45, was intercepted

on 20 March with 50,000 pills of tramadol 225mg concealed inside a 50-litre steel gas cylinder at Gadar Tamburawa, along Zaria-Kano Road.

On 19 March, Sunday Ogar, 40, was arrested with 27kg of skunk, a strain of cannabis, at Gunduwawa area of Kano.

In a separate search, Khadijah Abdullahi, a 40-year-old female suspect, was nabbed on 18 March with 424 bottles of codeine-based syrup at Lungun Bulala Yalwa area, Kano State.

Babafemi said, “In Lagos, the duo of Olumuyiwa Kolawole and Samod Adisa were nabbed with 67.5kg skunk in Mushin just as 100.8kg of same psychoactive substance was recovered from the store of two fleeing suspects in Anifowoshe area of Mushin while Isah Idris was arrested in Apapa with 4.5kg skunk; 600grams of tramadol 225mg and 30litres of codeine syrup on Tuesday 18th March.

“Another suspect, Yahaya Mohamed, was arrested same day in Ikotun area of the state with different quantities of cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine.”

The agency has intensified its War Against Drug Abuse (WADA), highlighting its social advocacy sensitization engagements in schools, markets, motor parks, workplaces, and worship centres over the past week.

The Chief Executive Officer of NDLEA, Brig Gen Mohamed Marwa (Rtd), highlighted the alarming rate at which white ladies and foreign nationals are being hired by drug trafficking organizations to perpetrate their illegal business through Nigerian borders.

Marwa praised the officers of the MAKIA, Lagos, and Kano Commands for their successful efforts in clamping down on illegal drug supply across the country while urging them to continue the fight.

# Oyebanji reaffirms commitment to education policies that address societal needs

By Friday Omosola

**E**kiti State Governor, Biodun Oyebanji, has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to implementing education policies that equip students with practical skills and prepare them for real-world challenges.

He made this known over the weekend while receiving a delegation from South Korea, led by KOICA Deputy Country Director, Baik Ki-Hyyn, at his office in Ado-Ekiti.

The delegation was in the state to conduct an in-depth survey of the Smart School Project.

According to a statement by the governor's Special Adviser on Media, Yinka Oyebode, Oyebanji emphasised that his government is leveraging smart technology in education to enhance critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills among students.

He noted that this approach ensures that graduates are well-prepared to contribute to the state's and the country's overall development.

Governor Oyebanji expressed gratitude to the South Korean government for its partnership, highlighting his administration's significant investments in education.

He stressed that education in Ekiti is not just about literacy and numeracy but also about human capital



development, making the state's citizens globally competitive.

"We appreciate KOICA for partnering with UBEC to establish smart schools in Ekiti. Education is our main industry, and we take pride in being one of the most educated states in Nigeria. It is our responsibility to sustain this status," Oyebanji stated.

He reiterated that education is a key pillar of his administration and that policies must go beyond basic literacy to address societal needs.

In his remarks, KOICA Deputy Country Director Baik Ki-Hyyn commended the governor for his dedication to advancing education through innovative policies.

He noted that Ekiti had distinguished itself among the six states selected for

the Smart School Project, which was launched in 2021.

Baik Ki-Hyyn also expressed South Korea's willingness to collaborate on a second phase of the intervention under the Universal Basic Education Board (UBEC).

He said the goal is to expand the capacity of existing smart schools and improve access to quality education in underserved rural areas.

The meeting was attended by top government officials, including Chief of Staff Niyi Adebayo, Commissioner for Education Olabimpe Aderiye, SUBEB Chairman Prof. Femi Akiwunmi, and other senior officials from the State Universal Basic Education Board.

# Adedimeji Lateef, Uzor Arukwe, Chioma Chukwuka, others nominated for AMVCA 2025 [Full-List]

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

The 2025 AMVCA nominees are out, celebrating top talent in African film and TV with a star-studded lineup of actors, filmmakers, and creators.

This year's selection highlights the exceptional work of actors, filmmakers, and content creators who have made a significant impact on the industry.

Nollywood's biggest stars lead the nominations, with Adedimeji Lateef, Uzor Arukwe, and Chioma Chukwuka securing spots in key categories. Their performances captivated audiences and earned them well-deserved recognition.

Adedimeji Lateef is in the running for Best Lead Actor for his compelling performance in *Lisabi: The Uprising*. His portrayal in the historical drama impressed both fans and critics alike. Uzor Arukwe earns a nomination in the Best Supporting Actor category for his role in *Suspicion*, where his strong screen presence brought depth to the film. Meanwhile, Chioma Chukwuka competes for Best Lead Actress, earning praise for her standout performance in *Seven Doors*.

This year's AMVCA nominations reflect the diversity and growth of African cinema. The awards not only honor established names but also spotlight rising talents shaping the



industry's future. With each category filled with fierce competition, audiences eagerly await the winners.

The awards ceremony promises to be a grand affair, bringing together top stars, filmmakers, and fans to celebrate the best of African entertainment. As the countdown begins, excitement builds over who will take home the prestigious awards.

**Full List: Nominations Across AMVCA 2025 Categories**

The AMVCA 2025 features a diverse range of categories celebrating both scripted and unscripted productions, digital content, and indigenous films from different regions of Africa.

**Best Digital Content Creator**

The category for Best Digital Content Creator highlights some of Africa's most influential digital storytellers,

including:

Iyo Prosper Adokiye  
Taaoma  
Elozonam Ogbolu, Hoviare Freedom,  
Chiamaka Uzokwe  
Jide Pounds Ibitoye  
Ariyiikedimples, Brainjotter

**Best MultiChoice Talent Factory**

This category celebrates emerging filmmakers from the MultiChoice Talent Factory program, with nominations including:

Gone  
Everything Light Touches  
The Immersive Alarm  
Deadbeat  
Nwananga  
Rivals in Time

Continue on  
next page

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### Best Scripted M-Net Original

Recognizing outstanding scripted series, nominees in this category include:

Uriri  
All Mine  
My Fairytale Wedding  
Italo  
The Caller  
Kam U Stay

### Recognition for Indigenous Language Films

The AMVCA continues to celebrate African storytelling in indigenous languages, with nominations across West, East, and Southern Africa.

### Best Indigenous Language (West Africa)

Seven Doors  
Lisabi: The Uprising  
Kaka  
Anikulapo: The Rise of the Spectre  
Mai Martaba

### Best Indigenous Language (East Africa)

The Caller  
Empty Grave  
Makosa ni Yangu  
Sabotage  
Wa Milele (Forever?)

### Best Indigenous Language (South Africa)

Walvis Tale  
The Vow  
Mwizukanji  
Man of Gold

### Best Supporting Actress

Lukas  
Key Acting Categories  
The acting categories feature some of the biggest names in African cinema:

### Best Supporting Actor

Meg Otanwa (Inside Life)  
Tina Mba (Suspicion)  
Ireti Doyle (All's Fair in Love)  
Ini Dima-Okojie (Skeleton Coast)  
Mercy Aigbe (Farmer's Bride)  
Omoni Oboli (Wives on Strike 3)  
Darasimi Nadi (Aburo)

### Best Supporting Actor

Gabriel Afolayan (Inside Life)  
Adedayo Adebowale (Lisabi)  
Aliu Gafar (Seven Doors)  
Femi Jacobs (Freedom Way)  
RMD (Christmas in Lagos)  
Uzor Arukwe (Suspicion)  
Mike Afolarin (House of Gaa)  
Efa Iwara (Princess on a Hill)

### Best Lead Actress

Chioma Chukwuka (Seven Doors)

Gbubemi Ejeje (Farmer's Bride)  
Uzoamaka Onuoha (Agemo)  
Uche Montana (Thin Line)  
Uzoamaka Aniunoh (Phoenix Fury)  
Hilda Dokubo (Wives on Strike 3)  
Bimbo Ademoye (Anikulapo: Rise of the Spectre)

### Best Lead Actor

Gideon Okeke (Tokunbo)  
Bucci Franklin (The Weekend)  
Femi Branch (House of Gaa)  
Thapelo Makoena (Skeleton Coast)  
Bimbo Manuel (Princess on a Hill)  
Stan Nze (Suspicion)  
Femi Adebayo (Seven Doors)  
Adedimeji Lateef (Lisabi: The Uprising)

### Excellence in Film Editing

Recognizing outstanding technical contributions, the nominees for Best Editing include:

Inkabi (Tongai Furusa)  
Christmas in Lagos (Martini Akande)  
Skeleton Coast (Jordan Koen)  
Soft Love (Holmes Awa, Paballo Modingoane)  
Lisabi: The Uprising (Anthill Studios)  
Princess on a Hill (Laughter Ephraim, Peter Ugbede)

# I know popular actresses who sleep with people for movie roles – Jide Kosoko

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Veteran Nollywood actor Jide Kosoko sheds light on a controversial issue in Nigeria's film industry, revealing how some actresses use sex to gain fame.

Speaking on the Honest Bunch podcast, he claimed that some actresses deliberately enter Nollywood with the intent of using sexual relationships to advance their careers.

Kosoko addressed the long-standing debate about sex-for-roles in the industry. While many believe that directors and producers pressure actresses into compromising situations, he argued that no one is forced into such exchanges. According to him, some women willingly adopt this strategy to gain fame and success.

Some actresses seek fame through sex

The seasoned actor emphasized that not all cases of sex-for-roles involve coercion. Instead, he suggested that certain actresses knowingly use relationships with influential figures to fast-track their rise in Nollywood.

"If I ask you to sleep with me for a role and you say no, I cannot force you," Kosoko explained. "But if you insist on getting that role at all costs, then it means you are willing to play along."

He clarified that he does not support such behavior but believes it should not be treated as a widespread scandal. "I'm not saying it's right for anyone to make such demands, but if someone agrees to it, that's their personal decision," he added.

Industry pressure or personal choice?

Kosoko dismissed the notion that only



men in power create the problem. He insisted that some aspiring actresses enter the industry already determined to use sex as a tool for career advancement.

"I know some women who came into Nollywood with the mindset that, 'If I sleep with this person and that person, I will become a star,'" he revealed. "And these are not just random people. I know of some popular actresses who did this. I even know of a magistrate who followed the same path."

His statement challenges the common belief that actresses in Nollywood are always victims. Instead, he suggested that personal choices play a role in these situations.

A divisive issue in Nollywood

Sex-for-roles scandals have long tainted the Nigerian movie industry. Many actresses have spoken out about harassment from directors and producers. However, Kosoko's perspective shifts part of the blame to those who willingly

engage in such arrangements.

His comments have sparked debate among industry insiders and fans. Some agree with him, arguing that personal responsibility is crucial. Others believe that powerful figures in Nollywood should be held accountable for creating an environment where such exchanges take place.

Moving forward

Kosoko's remarks highlight a complex issue within the entertainment industry. While sex-for-roles remains a controversial topic, his perspective suggests that both parties in these arrangements share responsibility.

As Nollywood continues to evolve, discussions about ethical practices in casting and career progression will likely continue. Whether his comments lead to change or further debate remains to be seen.

# Blame me, not my religion if I make mistake – Naira Marley

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**N**aira Marley urges fans to blame him, not his religion, for his actions, stating that Islam is perfect but its followers, including himself, are not.

The artist took to social media to share his thoughts on faith and personal responsibility. In a post on X (formerly Twitter), he emphasized that while Islam is flawless, its followers, including himself, are not. He wrote, “Islam is perfect, Muslims are not. If I make a mistake, blame me, but not my religion.”

His statement quickly sparked reactions across social media, drawing both support and criticism from followers.

Mixed reactions from fans

Many social media users praised his message, agreeing that religious beliefs should not be judged based on an individual’s behavior. Others, however, questioned whether his lifestyle reflects the values he claims to uphold.

A user, @Mr\_Lasdon, supported Naira Marley’s stance, saying, “This is why Muslims are encouraged to act according to the teachings of Islam. We should always reflect and be good ambassadors for our religion.”

Similarly, @Olumachoo commented, “Well said! Islam, like any faith, is pure. It’s people who fall short. Judge individuals, not the religion.”

However, not all responses were in agreement. @MD\_Jatta took a critical tone, writing, “Oh no, you’re the perfect representation of your religion—flaws



and all. By the way, if you can read actual Arabic (which I can), I’ll pick a song from your terrible playlist and torture my ears with it all day long.”

Another user, @ObinnaCEO, broadened the discussion, stating, “No religion is perfect, just as no human is. Faith is meant to guide, not to claim superiority. What matters is how we live, treat others, and strive for truth.”

Naira Marley’s public image

Naira Marley, known for his controversial persona and outspoken nature, has often been at the center of public debates. His music, lifestyle, and past legal troubles have made him a polarizing figure in Nigeria’s entertainment industry. While some admire his raw and unfiltered approach to life, others believe he promotes a lifestyle that contradicts moral and religious values.

This is not the first time the singer has been scrutinized for his behavior. Over the years, his lyrics, social media posts, and public statements have repeatedly drawn criticism, especially from conservative groups and religious leaders.

Religion and personal accountability

The debate surrounding Naira Marley’s statement highlights a larger conversation about the separation of personal actions from religious identity. Many believe that faith should be a private matter and that individuals should take responsibility for their own choices rather than attributing them to religious teachings.

On the other hand, critics argue that public figures, especially those with significant influence, have a duty to uphold certain moral standards. They believe that since celebrities shape public opinion, their actions inevitably reflect on the communities they represent.

Final thoughts

Naira Marley’s latest statement has once again placed him at the center of a heated discussion on faith, accountability, and public perception. Whether his message will shift public opinion or invite further criticism remains to be seen.

As debates continue, one thing is clear—faith and personal responsibility will always be complex topics, especially in a society where religion plays a significant role in shaping values and identity.

# Dupe Jayesimi opens up on pain of childlessness at 60

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**V**eteran Nollywood actress Dupe Jayesimi has shared her emotional struggle with childlessness at 60, opening up about her pain, loneliness, and heartbreak.

In a heartfelt interview on the “Talk to B” podcast, she spoke openly about her pain, loneliness, and shattered dreams of motherhood.

During the interview, Jayesimi reflected on her marital journey and the heartbreaking loss of her first pregnancy. She revealed that she married in 1988 but suffered a miscarriage shortly after.

## A lonely 60th birthday

The actress described how painful it felt to mark her milestone 60th birthday without children to celebrate her. She recalled watching how other parents were honored by their children on special occasions, something she never experienced.

“Nobody celebrated me on my 60th birthday,” she said. “I know how children rejoice over their parents. But I have none to celebrate me or throw a party for me.”

Instead, she took matters into her own



hands. She gave money to someone to prepare food and share it in her name. Then, overwhelmed by emotions, she checked into a hotel and spent days crying alone.

## The painful journey to motherhood

Jayesimi revealed that before her marriage, she was already pregnant. However, she lost the baby just weeks after her wedding. Doctors later told her that a medical procedure could improve her chances of conceiving.

She informed her husband about the procedure, and he agreed. But after the operation, he disappeared for three months. When he finally returned, he dropped a devastating bombshell.

“He told me to pack my things and

leave,” she recalled. “He had already started distancing himself and even divided our bed with pillows.”

## Betrayal and heartbreak

Just two weeks after their separation, Jayesimi discovered that her husband had married another woman. Even more shocking, his new wife was already pregnant.

Reflecting on her past, Jayesimi spoke of the deep emotional scars left by her failed marriage and the dream of motherhood that never came true. Despite her struggles, she continues to find strength in her career and faith.

Her story sheds light on the silent battles many women face when dealing with infertility and societal expectations.

# Drama as Jaywon, Dammy Krane clash over Davido

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

A heated social media feud has erupted between Nigerian musicians Dammy Krane and Jaywon Juwonlo over their stance on singer Davido.

The disagreement started when Jaywon referenced an old interview where Davido criticized Nigeria's economic situation.

The start of the conflict

Jaywon took to X (formerly Twitter) to remind fans of Davido's statement about Nigeria's struggling economy. He questioned those who had criticized Davido at the time.

"A few months ago, when Davido spoke about the country's condition, some people quickly came together to attack him as if he was lying. Where are those people now? The reality is clear—Nigerians are their own biggest problem," Jaywon posted.

His comment reignited debates among fans, but things took a different turn when fellow artist Dammy Krane responded.

Dammy Krane's harsh reply

Dammy Krane took a jab at Davido and his family, suggesting they were part of Nigeria's problems.

"FLOPIDO and his family are part of Nigeria's problem. They are in power, and they control the system," he wrote in the comments.

This remark sparked backlash, with many accusing Dammy Krane of stirring unnecessary controversy. However, the argument didn't end



there.

Jaywon attacks Wizkid's fans

Jaywon then shifted his focus to Wizkid's fanbase, known as "FC." He called them "empty heads" and accused them of interfering in matters that did not concern them.

"Just because you're suffering doesn't mean everyone else is. Ninety-seven percent of FCs are empty heads. They always jump into conversations that don't involve them," he posted.

His statement triggered reactions from Wizkid's supporters, leading to even more online drama.

Dammy Krane fires back

Dammy Krane wasted no time in responding to Jaywon. He mocked him, claiming Jaywon could not stop talking about Davido.

"Jay-lost, you can't take FLOPIDO's name out of your mouth. I own you, Jay Jay," he wrote.

Jaywon did not hold back. He fired back at Dammy Krane, questioning why he kept bringing up his music career in

their arguments.

"You're cursing me as if I owe your father money. Every little thing, you bring up my career. Meanwhile, your father had none," Jaywon replied.

Fans react to the drama

As the feud continued, many social media users criticized Dammy Krane for inserting himself into the argument. Some accused him of seeking attention, while others felt the exchange was unnecessary.

"Dammy Krane always looks for ways to stay relevant," one user commented.

"Why is he even involved in this? Jaywon was just talking about Davido's critics," another added.

Despite the backlash, neither artist has backed down. Fans are now waiting to see if Davido or Wizkid will respond to the ongoing social media war.

The clash highlights the intense rivalries in Nigeria's music industry, where even casual comments can spark full-blown controversies.

# Denzel explains why he doesn't consider himself a 'Hollywood actor'

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

**H**ollywood legend, Denzel Washington said that he doesn't consider himself a "Hollywood actor" during his March 23 appearance on "CBS Sunday Morning."

"What's the definition of a Hollywood actor?" Washington asked during the interview. "Myself, I'm from Mt. Vernon, so I'm a 'Mt. Vernon actor.' I don't know what 'Hollywood' means."

"Somebody who's famous on film? A film actor, great success on film?" the New York native continued.

Washington described himself as "a stage actor who does film; it's not the other way around."

"I did stage first. I learned how to act on stage, not on film," he explained. "Movies are a filmmaker's medium. You shoot it, and then you're gone and they cut together and add music and do all of that. Theater is an actor's medium. The curtain goes up, nobody can help you."

Washington began his career acting in off-Broadway productions, before making his feature film debut in the 1981 comedy drama "Carbon Copy."

Since then, Washington has starred in dozens of popular movies, winning Oscars for his roles in "Glory" in 1990 and "Training Day" in 2002.



He was also nominated by the Academy for "Cry Freedom," "Malcolm X," "The Hurricane," "Flight," "Fences," "Roman J. Israel, Esq." and "The Tragedy of Macbeth."

Now, Washington is back on Broadway in the new "Othello" revival at Ethel Barrymore Theatre. He stars in the production alongside Jake Gyllenhaal.

Speaking about reimagining William Shakespeare's classic tragedy to CBS, Washington said, "People, you know, they ordinarily think, 'Oh yeah, it's about jealousy. And he betrays him.' No, it's about two soldiers who trust each other with their lives."

Washington previously rejected being called "a big Hollywood star" in an interview with The Talks in 2012.

"I'm an actor. I'm called a star. That's not what I am," he said. "First of all I'm a human being; my profession is acting."

The "Remember the Titans" actor continued, "People give you titles. They say you're an up and coming star, then they say you're a star, then they say you're a washed-up star. So I don't get caught up in what I'm called. My job, my profession, is acting."

When asked if he resents the title "movie star," Washington responded, "I'm a trained actor. What I'm called is whatever someone says and that's fine."

He added, "But I don't walk around like, 'Hey! I'm a movie star. Excuse me, can you get my car for me?' I'm just an entertainer."

# Britain's longest-running pop group announces final concert after 70 years

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

**T**he Searchers will make their first and last appearance at Glastonbury in June after forming nearly 70 years ago

For nearly 70 years, The Searchers have toured the country's clubs, pubs and music festivals, making them the longest-running band in British pop history.

But now, the Merseybeat band have announced their retirement, culminating with a final gig at Glastonbury – their first appearance at the festival – in June.

The Liverpool group, formed by Mike Pender and John McNally in 1957, has been playing with line-up changes continuously for 68 years since becoming established as contemporaries of The Beatles.

Known as the “longest-running band in pop history”, The Searchers had the first of three UK No 1 hits in 1963 with their version of The Drifters' hit, Sweets For My Sweet.

Ahead of their final shows, McNally said: “A Glastonbury debut at 83, can anyone top that? I don't think life gets any better, does it?”

“There will be a few nerves, but in a good way, and we'll be nicely warmed up from our shows in June. We can't wait to see our fans again for this incredible final farewell.”



‘One final blast’

Frank Allen, the bassist and singer who joined the group in 1964, said: “I have played shows across the world with The Searchers for over 60 years; Glastonbury has always been an ambition that has eluded us – until now.

“The Searchers are finally performing at the greatest music festival of them all.

“What a way to round off a tour and a career. I can't wait to get up on stage and give our fans one final blast.”

The Searchers also topped the UK charts twice in 1964 with Needles And Pins and Don't Throw Your Love Away. Other hits have included When You Walk In The Room, Goodbye My Love and Sugar And Spice.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, the band was signed to Sire Records, which represented Talking Heads, The Cure, Madonna and the Ramones.

The group has sold more than 50 million records and performed around the world while drawing praise from artists such as The Byrds, Tom Petty and Bruce Springsteen.

Their website says: “You might recall that last year, after having done three ‘final’ tours we stated that we were at last retiring – unless something that we simply could not say no to was offered.

“And of course we certainly could not say no to this one. The Searchers end their career at Glastonbury. What a great way to go out. And I really do think this will be the last hurrah.”

But it adds that they would consider re-forming if the King “asks us to do another Royal Variety Show”.

The Final Farewell Tour runs from June 14 and will end with the band playing the Acoustic Stage at Glastonbury on June 27.

# Over 50,000 killed in Gaza since Israel's offensive began

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



The Hamas-run health ministry has announced that more than 50,000 Palestinians have been killed during Israel's military campaign in Gaza.

That number – 50,021 – equates to about 2.1% of the 2.3 million pre-war population of the territory, or around 1 in 46 people.

A total of 113,274 others had been injured in the same period, the health ministry said.

Figures from the Gaza Ministry of Health (MoH) have been widely used throughout the war and are seen as reliable by the United Nations (UN) and international institutions. But Israel has consistently disputed data

published by Gaza's authorities.

International journalists, including the BBC, are blocked by Israel from entering Gaza independently, so are unable to verify figures from either side.

The figures released by the MoH for the number of people killed do not differentiate between civilians and fighters.

In November, the UN's Human Rights Office said its analysis showed close to 70% of verified victims over a six-month period were women and children.

In January, The Lancet medical journal published a study which suggested the death toll could in fact be substantially higher than

official figures reported by MoH – by up to 41%.

The war was triggered by Hamas's attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, in which about 1,200 people, mainly civilians, were killed and 251 other taken hostage.

Israel responded to the 7 October attack with a massive military offensive, which has caused vast destruction to homes and infrastructure, in addition to those killed or injured.

The MoH also reported on Sunday at least 39 deaths in the last 24 hours, bringing the total number of people killed to 673 since Israel resumed its military operations in the territory on Tuesday.

# Canada denies asylum applications for 13,000 Nigerians

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Canadian government has turned down 13,171 Nigerians who applied for refugee protection from January 2013 to December 2024.

According to official data from the Refugee Protection Division of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, this number includes 811 Nigerians rejected in 2024, placing Nigeria among the top five countries with the most rejected claims. It ranked 5th.

The report named others as; Mexico with 2,954 rejections, India (1,688), Haiti (982) and Colombia (723).

The IMRB grants refugee protection in Canada if the RPD satisfactorily confirms that an applicant or claimant meets the United Nations definition of a Convention refugee, “which has been incorporated into Canadian law, or that the applicant is a person in need of protection.”

The 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees defines refugees as persons who have a substantiated fear of persecution because of their race, nationality, religion, political ideology or membership in a particular social group.

Such social groups can include sexual orientation, gender identity, being a woman and persons living with HIV/AIDS.

However, persons asking for protection in Canada must show evidence portending danger of torture, risk to their life or risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment should they return to their country of nationality.

Typically, such protection claims are made when immigrants notify the Border Services Agency at any port of entry upon arriving in Canada or report to an immigration officer.

“The officer decides whether the claim is eligible to be referred to the IRB.

“If the claim is eligible, it is sent (“referred”)



to the RPD to start the claim for refugee protection process,” an application guideline by the Refugee Board reads.

Within the timeframe reviewed, 94 claims from Nigerian passport holders were abandoned. The RPD says a claim may be abandoned if “the completed Basis of Claim Form was not provided on time, the claimant’s current and correct contact information was not provided, or the claimant did not attend their refugee protection claim hearing or the special hearing on the abandonment of the claim (if required).”

Seventy-eight claims were withdrawn, representing cases where “the claimant does not continue with their claim,” the RPD said, while 19,889 claims were still pending.

The breakdown of the rejections since 2013 showed that 127, 241 and 248 Nigerians were denied protection in 2013, 2014 and 2015, respectively, under the new system for determining refugee protection claims made in Canada—which took effect on December 15, 2012.

476, 917 and 1,777 claims were rejected in 2016, 2017 and 2018 respectively.

2019 saw the highest number of rejected claims, with 3,951 Nigerian applicants turned down. Meanwhile, 1,770, 1,686, 728, 439 and 811 persons were denied protection in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024, respectively.

Nevertheless, 10,580 Nigerians were granted refugee status within the decade under review, with at least 2,230 from January to December 2024.

Official data placed Nigeria among the top 10 countries with the most claims accepted. It ranked 8th on the list.

Others are Turkiye with 4,866, Mexico with 4,363, Colombia with 3,340, Iran with 3,200, Pakistan with 2,556, Haiti with 2,211, Afghanistan with 1,921 and Kenya with 1,653 claims accepted.

They include less than 20 in 2013, 308, 394 and 389 in 2014 and 2015, respectively. 389, 764, 755 and 1,733 Nigerian protection seekers were accepted in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, respectively. In 2020, 2021 and 2022, 1,534, 2,302, and 1,315 persons were granted protection, respectively.

Imaobong Ladipo-Sanusi is the Executive Director of the Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation.

She told our correspondent that irregular migration motivated by economic hardship is often the leading cause of rejections.

However, she said those who genuinely need protection should be accepted whether or not they migrate outside the regulatory norms of their receiving country.

# Citizenship for sale: Trump's 'Gold Card' visa to generate \$5bn within 24 hours

By New Daily Prime

In a bold economic move, President Donald Trump has unveiled a new "Gold Card" visa program aimed at wealthy immigrants, allowing them to secure permanent U.S. residency and a path to citizenship for a fee of \$5 million (£3.9 million) per applicant.

According to U.S. Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick, during an appearance on the 'All-In Podcast', the initiative has already proven highly lucrative. According to Financial Express, If 1,000 cards are sold within the first 24 hours, it could generate an unprecedented \$5 billion for the federal budget. Trump has touted the program as a strategic measure to reduce the U.S. national debt, which currently stands at over \$36 trillion.

Trump's administration projects that if 1 million "Gold Cards" are sold, the program could generate a staggering \$5 trillion, making it one of the most ambitious immigration and financial strategies in U.S. history. Reports suggest that 37 million high-net-worth individuals worldwide could potentially afford and be interested in purchasing the visa.

In his announcement, President Trump emphasized that the funds raised from the program would be directed towards paying down U.S. national debt and strengthening the economy.

"We are introducing the Gold Card as a way for the wealthiest and most talented individuals in the world to invest in America and become part of our great nation. This will help fix our budget, grow our economy, and keep America great," Trump stated.

The Gold Card visa is set to replace the long-standing EB-5 investor visa program, which was originally designed



to stimulate the U.S. economy through job creation and capital investment by foreign investors. The EB-5 program, established in 1990, has been widely criticized for corruption, fraud, and misuse.

According to Howard Lutnick, the new Gold Card visa offers a higher price and greater accountability compared to the EB-5 visa.

"The EB-5 program was full of nonsense, make-believe, and fraud. It was a way to get a green card at a low price. The Gold Card program is different—it's transparent, and it will genuinely benefit the U.S. economy," Lutnick said.

## Who Are the Potential Buyers?

The Gold Card is expected to appeal to wealthy business figures, high-net-worth entrepreneurs, and global investors looking for easier U.S. residency pathways. Given its hefty price tag, the program will likely exclude middle-class investors, making it a more elite and exclusive residency route.

Experts believe that the Chinese, Middle

Eastern, and European ultra-rich will be among the top applicants, given their history of investing in U.S. real estate and business ventures.

## Economic and Political Reactions

While the Trump administration has championed the move as an innovative financial strategy, critics argue that it commodifies U.S. citizenship, creating a two-tier immigration system that favors the wealthy.

Opponents, including immigration advocacy groups and Democratic lawmakers, have expressed concerns that the program prioritizes the ultra-rich over hardworking skilled immigrants, who currently face lengthy and bureaucratic pathways to citizenship.

Despite the criticism, the massive revenue potential of the Gold Card visa may make it one of the most impactful immigration programs in U.S. history. If the projections hold, the U.S. could sell off citizenship at an unprecedented scale, setting a new standard for investment-based immigration.

# Canadian PM Carney calls for snap election amid U.S. trade war

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has called for a snap election amid a festering trade war and annexation threats from U.S. President Donald Trump.

Carney, who was elected by the Liberal Party earlier this month to replace Justin Trudeau following his resignation, called the election for April 28, saying he needs a strong mandate to deal with tariffs issued by the Trump administration and the threat they pose to Canada's economy.

The election was originally set for Oct. 20.

"We are facing the most significant crisis of our lifetimes because of President Trump's unjustified trade actions and his threats to our sovereignty," Carney said during a news briefing Sunday.

Carney requested that Governor General of Canada Mary Simon, the representative of the country's head of state, King Charles, dissolve Parliament and call for an election, adding that she agreed.

"There is so much more to do to secure Canada," Carney said. "To invest in Canada, to build Canada, to unite Canada. That's why I'm asking for a strong positive mandate from my fellow Canadians."

Canada's major parties will now begin campaigning as Carney will go head-to-head with the Conservative Party's Pierre Poilievre, Bloc Québécois' Yves-François Blanchet



and the New Democratic Party's Jagmeet Singh.

Since becoming president, Trump has threatened sweeping tariffs against Canada, including on dairy and lumber.

Trump's administration imposed 25% tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, rocking financial markets and eliciting \$21 billion in retaliatory tariffs from Canada earlier this month.

The European Union also issued retaliatory tariffs worth \$28 billion on a wide range of U.S. goods, such as boats, motorbikes and alcohol.

Trump has claimed that a primary reason for issuing tariffs against the United States' three largest trading partners — Canada, China and Mexico — is to curb fentanyl.

But the fentanyl epidemic has been showing glimmers of improvement, and only about 10 pounds of the drug have been recovered at the Canadian border in the current fiscal year to date, according to CBP data.

Trump has also made multiple comments suggesting that Canada should become America's 51st state, saying the country "only works as a state."

"As a state, it would be one of the great states anywhere," Trump said to reporters in the Oval Office this month.

"This would be the most incredible country, visually. If you look at a map, they drew an artificial line right through it, between Canada and the U.S. Just a straight, artificial line. Somebody did it a long time ago, many many decades ago. Makes no sense. It's so perfect as a great and cherished state."

Carney has rejected the comments, calling them "crazy."

"We will never, ever, in any way, shape or form be part of the United States," Carney said earlier this month when he was sworn in as prime minister.

# Trump pushes for Ukraine ceasefire by Easter

By Dave Oludare Oso

The US is working towards an Easter ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine despite another night of intense drone strikes that have killed civilians in Kyiv.

The White House wants to secure a truce by Easter Sunday, which falls on April 20 in both the Western and Orthodox churches, officials told Bloomberg.

US officials will meet separately with Russian and Ukrainian representatives in Saudi Arabia this week for talks on a partial truce.

Ukrainian officials will meet US mediators on Monday in what is thought to be the first set of parallel negotiations since the early weeks of the war in 2022.

But the Kremlin on Sunday warned that progress on a deal would be unlikely as it was “only the beginning” of what were expected to be “difficult” negotiations.

The Saudi talks will discuss how to implement and monitor a 30-day truce on strikes against energy sites that was agreed upon by the Russian and Ukrainian presidents with Trump last week.

Dmitry Peskov, the spokesman for the Kremlin, said Moscow’s “main” focus would be on a possible resumption of a deal to ensure safe navigation for commercial vessels in the Black Sea.

Donald Trump pledged a quick resolution to the three-year-old war before he took office and last week said he expected to see a full ceasefire “pretty soon”.

He said at the weekend efforts to stop further escalation of the war were “somewhat under control”.

A further night of violence

But the president’s assurances were undermined on Saturday night after



Moscow launched drone strikes killing civilians across Ukraine.

Seven people, including a five-year-old child, were killed and 10 others injured in Kyiv. In Donetsk, four people were killed, including three who died in a strike on the town of Dobropillya.

Zelensky urged allies to put fresh pressure on Russia to end the war.

“New decisions and new pressure on Moscow are needed to bring an end to these strikes and this war,” he said.

Ukraine’s air force said Russia had launched 147 drones across the country overnight, with attacks striking Kharkiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, Odesa and Donetsk regions, as well as the capital.

European diplomats warned that Putin appeared in no hurry to reach a deal or end his offensive, after he demanded aggressive concessions from Kyiv for any truce.

Kristine Berzina, a managing director at the German Marshall Fund in Washington, said: “I don’t see any reason to think that Russia is in a hurry to get to a ceasefire.

“If it seals the deal with the US, it’s going to be harder for Russia to maintain the relationships it has with China, with Iran and with North Korea and that’s not a step

that Russia is going to take lightly.”

Grigory Karasin, leading the Russian negotiating team, said they would bring a “combative and constructive” approach.

He said: “We hope to achieve at least some progress.”

This weekend, Trump’s special envoy dismissed Sir Keir Starmer’s plan for an international force to support a ceasefire as “a posture and a pose”.

Steve Witkoff said the idea was based on a “simplistic” notion of the Prime Minister and other European leaders thinking “we have all got to be like Winston Churchill”.

While American officials may be aiming for Easter, they admit that timeline may slip given the large gaps between the two sides’ positions.

Keith Kellogg, Mr Trump’s special envoy to Ukraine, has described the Riyadh effort as “shuttle diplomacy” between hotel rooms.

Gitanas Nauseda, the Lithuanian president, said on Friday that Russia was “imitating negotiations, talking about a possible peace and possible ceasefire, but they are not even ready to keep the ceasefire as promised not to attack, not to strike critical infrastructure”.

# No nuclear deal until US changes policy – Iran

By Dave Oludare Oso

Iran has said talks with the US are impossible unless Washington changes its pressure policy.

The Iranian Foreign Minister, Abbas Araqchi, spoke on Sunday, as the country prepares to respond to President Donald Trump's letter proposing negotiations on a new nuclear deal.

NEW DAILY PRIME reported that Trump said earlier this month that he had sent a letter to Iran's top authority, Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, warning that there are two ways Iran can be handled: militarily, or make a deal.

Responding, Khamenei rejected the



US offer for talks as a deception, stating that negotiating with the Trump's administration would tighten the knot of sanctions and increase pressure on Iran.

Araqchi said on Thursday that Tehran would soon reply to both the letter's threats and opportunities.

Trump, while leaving the door open for a nuclear pact with Tehran, has reinstated the maximum pressure campaign he applied in his first term as president, including efforts to drive down the country's oil exports to zero.

The US has issued four rounds of sanctions on Iran's oil sales since Trump's return to the White House.

Araqchi said, "Under these conditions, it is no longer possible to enter into talks with America. Unless certain approaches change.

"When we say no to negotiations with the US, it stems from a history and experience."

# Russian forces take down 59 Ukrainian drones

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Russian authorities said on Sunday that its air defence units destroyed 59 Ukrainian drones that targeted Russia's southwestern regions and killed one person in Rostov.

In a message on Telegram, the Russian defence ministry said that 21 of the drones were downed overnight over the Rostov region in Russia's south, adding that another 20 were downed over the Astrakhan region on the Caspian Sea.

The ministry said the rest of the drones were downed over the Voronezh, Volgograd, Kursk and Saratov regions, as well as over Crimea.



The acting governor of the Rostov region that borders Ukraine, Yuri Slyusar, said the attack killed one person.

"A car caught fire due to a drone

attack. A person in the car was killed," he said.

In the same vein, the governor of the Astrakhan region, Igor Babushkin, said debris from a destroyed drone fell on a house and damaged a car but that there were no injuries.

There was no immediate comment from Ukraine at the time of filing this report.

However, both sides have reportedly denied targeting civilians in the three-year-old war that Russia started with its full-scale invasion on Ukraine.

# Pope Francis leaves Rome hospital after 5 weeks admission

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



**P**ope Francis appeared at the window of the Gemelli Hospital in Rome on Sunday, offering a blessing for the first time since being admitted on February 14.

The 88-year-old pontiff was discharged shortly afterwards, and doctors advised that he would need at least two months of rest at the Vatican, BBC reports.

Dr. Sergio Alfieri, one of the doctors treating the Pope, revealed that during the past five weeks, Pope Francis experienced “two very critical episodes” where his “life was in danger.”

Dr. Alfieri clarified that the Pope was never intubated and remained alert and oriented throughout his hospital stay. Although he is not yet fully healed, the Pope no longer has

pneumonia and could return to work soon if his recovery continues as expected, according to the doctors.

A crowd gathered outside the hospital on Sunday, eagerly awaiting the Pope’s appearance.

“When I saw him I felt, to be honest, a little relieved,” said Bishop Larry Kulick from the Diocese of Greensburg in Pennsylvania, US. “I felt just overjoyed to see him.”

“I cried all the time because the love we breathe in this little square of this hospital was like heaven,” said Ilaria Della Bidia, a singer from Rome.

Ana Matos from Brazil said she “just arrived from Brazil today” and reached the hospital “30 seconds before he appeared.” She described the moment as “an amazing feeling,

like when I had my son. I was so happy to see him healthy and I could see him smile.”

Before Sunday, the Pope had been seen publicly only once since his hospitalisation, in a photograph released by the Vatican last week showing him praying in a hospital chapel.

Earlier this month, an audio recording of Pope Francis was played in St. Peter’s Square in Vatican City. His voice was breathless as he thanked the Catholic faithful for their prayers.

Pope Francis, who has led the Roman Catholic Church for 12 years, has faced several health challenges throughout his life. At age 21, he had part of one lung removed, making him more susceptible to respiratory infections.

# 7 Ukrainians killed, including 5-yr-old girl in Russian drone attack

By Dave Oludare Oso

**A**t least seven people are dead, including a 5-year-old girl, after Russia launched nearly 150 drones across Ukraine overnight — just a day before cease-fire talks are set to resume, officials said.

The Kremlin fired 147 explosive drones early Sunday across the Kharkiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, Odesa and Donetsk regions, with the Ukrainian military able to shoot down or deflect 122 of the UAVs.

One of the drones that made it through Ukraine's defences hit the capital city of Kyiv, killing three people; including the little girl, her father and an 80-year-old woman, according to Mayor Vitali Klitschko.

Another 10 people were injured in the blast, according to the city's military administration.

The attack saw sirens blaring in the capital for more than five hours as Russian drones were blown out of the sky, with the debris falling onto residential buildings.

Four other people were killed in the attack on the Donetsk region, including three who were blown up in a single strike in the frontline town of Dobropillya, regional Gov. Vadym Filashkin said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said the daily mass drone attacks have become the norm for his country and even Kyiv, which is one of the most fortified cities in Ukraine.

"This week alone, more than 1,580 guided aerial bombs, almost 1,100 strike drones and 15 missiles of



various types were used against our people," he said. "New solutions are needed, with new pressure on Moscow to stop both these strikes and this war."

Andrii Yermak, Zelensky's chief of staff, said Sunday's attack is yet further evidence that Russian President Vladimir Putin is not interested in a cease-fire.

"Russia is not stopping the fire, Putin wants to keep killing civilians, it must be stopped," Yermak said in a statement.

Kyiv's counterattack saw Russia shooting down 59 drones, including two that allegedly killed two people inside their cars in the Rostov and Belgorod regions, according to the Kremlin.

The strikes came just a day ahead of the cease-fire meeting between Ukrainian and Russian negotiations in Saudi Arabia.

The two are expected to hold indirect talks with US mediators to implement a pause in long-range attacks targeting energy facilities and civilian infrastructure.

Both sides have targeted each other's energy facilities throughout the war, with the Kremlin causing repeated blackouts across Ukraine and Kyiv bombarding Russia's profitable oil plants.

Kyiv negotiators are expected to meet with American mediators earlier to discuss details for the partial cease-fire, Zelensky said.

A key topic is said to be the establishment of safe trade routes in the tumultuous Black Sea, which Russia has tried to repeatedly take since mid-2022.

Along with a partial cease-fire deal, the US is aiming to push for a broader truce to take form by April 20, with hopes of ending the war, sources familiar with the talks said.

# Ex-US Attorney, Jessica Aber found dead in Virginia at 43

By Dave Oludare Oso

**F**ormer U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, Jessica Aber was found dead Saturday morning in Alexandria, Virginia, according to police.

She was 43.

Police in Alexandria, Virginia, were called to a home on Beverly Drive in the suburb of Washington, D.C., at around 9:18 a.m. Saturday for the report of an unresponsive woman, according to a police statement. They found Aber dead inside.

Former U.S. Attorney Jessica Aber held the position from October 2021 to January 2025. ((Justice Department)

Police said an investigation is underway surrounding the circumstances of her death. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will determine the cause and manner of death, police said.

Aber, who served as U.S. attorney in Virginia for most of the Biden administration, took office in October 2021 after being unanimously confirmed by the Senate and stepped down in January, shortly after President Donald Trump's inauguration.

As U.S. attorney, Aber oversaw a staff of some 300 prosecutors and other staff and handled federal prosecutions in the state.

She started working in the office in 2009 as an assistant U.S. attorney, prosecuting financial fraud, public corruption, violent crime and child exploitation cases,



according to an online biography.

this world.”

She received her law degree from William and Mary Law School in 2006.

U.S. Attorney General, Pam Bondi shared a statement on X on Saturday night, writing: “The loss of Jessica Aber, former U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, is deeply tragic. Our hearts and prayers go out to her family and friends during this profoundly difficult time.”

“We are heartbroken beyond words to learn of the passing of our friend and former colleague, U.S. Attorney Jessica Aber,” current U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia Erik Siebert said in a statement.

“She was unmatched as a leader, mentor, and prosecutor, and she is simply irreplaceable as a human being. We remain in awe of how much she accomplished in her all too brief time in

Calling her a “proud Virginian from high school through college and throughout her career,” Siebert’s statement went on to say: “Her professionalism, grace, and legal acumen set the standard.

”Though we are devastated by this loss, each of us in the Eastern District of Virginia (EDVA) will look to her example and endeavor to live up to that standard.”

In a statement, Virginia Attorney General Jason Miyares said he was saddened to learn of her death, saying her “career of public service included US Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia and whose work with Ceasefire Virginia saved more lives than we may ever realize.”

He added, “Our thoughts and our prayers are with her family this week.”

# WCQ: Ekong tells Zimbabwe: 'Forget about picking any points on Tuesday'

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi



**F**ired-up Super Eagles captain, William Troost-Ekong has said Zimbabwe should forget about picking any point in Tuesday's 2026 World Cup Qualifier match in Uyo.

Sources have it that, while Troost-Ekong insinuated that The Warriors of Zimbabwe need not turn up for Tuesday's game at The Nest of Champions, Eagles' top scorer, Victor Osimhen, who got both goals in Friday's 2-0 spanking of hosts Rwanda, tagged the upcoming match as another part of unfolding 'war' for the World Cup ticket.

A media statement from the communications department of

Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) further disclosed the mood among the Eagles' players on arrival at Uyo's Victor Attah Airport.

While Osimhen vowed full scale efforts from all the stars in their remaining matches, Troost-Ekong emphasised the need to make history by the current set of players.

The Eagles' skipper said, "We read somewhere that Zimbabwe are being motivated to come to Uyo and get a result. They should forget it. We are hugely motivated by the ambition to play at the FIFA World Cup.

"Apart from myself and Alex

(Iwobi) and perhaps a couple of others, who were part of the 2018 FIFA World Cup, this generation is hungry to play at the highest level. We want to make Nigeria proud and, at the same time, do ourselves proud."

Osimhen then added that winning Tuesday's match is imperative to consolidate the Eagles' revival in the qualification race and to further strengthen their surge up the group's table, even as he acknowledged that the Nigerians must win all their remaining games at home and away, in order to grab the lone ticket available to next year's world showpiece.