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Rivers Assembly declares Fubara's Commissioners, other appointees illegal Pg 12



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# Senate suspends Natasha for six months after resubmitting petition against Akpabio

By Damilola Olufemi



Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, on Thursday, submitted another sexual harassment petition against Senate President Godswill Akpabio, during plenary.

The Senator representing Kogi Central Senatorial District while addressing the Senate disclosed that after the newly submitted petition was filed by her constituents after her previous petition was trashed by the Senate Committee on Ethics, Code of Conduct, and Public Petitions.

The committee had described her initial petition as “dead on arrival.”

While submitting the new petition, Senate President Akpabio questioned if there were any legal impediments to accepting the petition and Natasha responded that there were none.

Natasha thereafter laid the foundation before the Senate, following Akpabio’s instruction. The petition was afterwards directed to the Ethics committee head by Neda Imasuen, who noted that the plenary will get feedback within four weeks after legislative review.

However, the Ethics Committee of the Senate has suspended the Senator for six months. The suspension, according to the Committee, Natasha’s suspension was because of her failure to submit herself to the legislative Committee for the review of her conduct.

The Senate recommends that the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Diaspora and NGOs be suspended for six months following the issue surrounding her sexual harassment allegation against

Akpabio.

The committee also urged Natasha to apologise to the Senate for “disrespecting the institution.”

Other recommendations by the Senate include immediate surrender of all Senate properties in her possession, a directive barring her from the legislative chamber throughout the suspension period.

However, Senator Neda Imasuen and Senate Minority Leader Abba Moro had pleaded that the proposed suspension of Natasha be reduced to six months.

Speaking during plenary on Thursday, Moro stated that Senator Natasha had acted against the Senate rules but urged fellow lawmakers to temper justice with mercy.

# THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

## PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

## PRODUCT COLOUR

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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
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8X6	216,000.00
8X3	98,500.00
7X4	164,002.00
6X4	94,010.50
6X3	78,500.00
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2X2	10,877.00
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8X6	N/A
8X3	N/A
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4X3	N/A
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# Tinubu okays 80% dialysis cut, session now N12,000

By Dave Oludare Oso

**A**iling Nigerians were on Thursday given a lifeline by the president, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu as he approved a subsidy on kidney dialysis, cutting the cost from N50,000 to N12,000.

The subsidy is being implemented across the six geopolitical zones at some federal medical institutions.

Participating institutions include the Federal Medical Centre (FMC) Ebute-Meta, Lagos; the Federal Medical Centre Jabi, Abuja; the University College Hospital (UCH) Ibadan; the Federal Medical Centre, Owerri, and the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital (UMTH) Maiduguri.

Others are the Federal Medical Centre, Abeokuta; Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) Lagos; the Federal Medical Centre, Azare; University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH) Benin, and University of Calabar Teaching (UCTH) Calabar.

The subsidy was launched in January at the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Teaching Hospital in Bauchi.

According to Hammatu Haruna, the manager-in-charge of the renal centre at the teaching hospital, patients are happy about the subsidy.

“They are paying only N12,000, and



our patients are very happy with this initiative, and we have seen improvement, remarkably in patients' condition,” she said.

“Patients used to find it difficult to afford it; even if you tell them the amount, they have to go back and sell something before they can afford to come for dialysis. Some even prefer to stay at home since they cannot afford it.”

She said 35 patients have benefitted from the scheme since it was launched on January 8 this year, adding that the federal ministry of health has provided adequate resources to ensure the success of the programme.

“We appreciate the federal government of Nigeria; they gave us one dialysis machine; they gave us over 900 dialysers. We have almost everything at hand.

Several cases of kidney failure have recently been reported in the news.

In February, the Yobe government said it had deployed 50 health experts to investigate the root causes of the spike in kidney failure cases in some parts of the state.

Mahmud Maina, director of the Biomedical Science Research and Training Centre at the Yobe State University, said the team comprises 50 experts, which include neurology consultants, laboratory scientists, nephrologists, geologists, chemists, echo toxicologists, and collaborators from the UK, US, and Ghana.

Maina said the team would conduct interviews with 2,000 people in Bade and Damaturu LGAs to determine whether the causes are environmental, lifestyle-related, or genetic.

# FG approves N10.3bn for HIV drugs, others

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Federal Executive Council (FEC) has approved about N10.3 billion for the procurement of anti-retroviral drugs for HIV treatment, diabetes diagnostic kits, and other essential health commodities.

Briefing State House correspondents on the approvals on Wednesday, the Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Dr Ali Pate, noted that the move is aimed at enhancing the accessibility and affordability of health commodities, and health services by Nigerians.

The minister he said, “A few weeks ago, we approved the first-line antiretroviral drugs, and now we are putting forth resources, almost N997 million worth of contract, to procure the third-line antiretroviral drugs for those who are HIV-infected.

“I believe you will understand the importance of this, given the changes in global health financing and the shift towards domestic financing to ensure Nigerians continue receiving the treatment they require.”

According to him, the second category of the approved contracts includes the procurement of locally manufactured diagnostic kits for diabetes.

He stated, “Diabetes is a major issue



in our country. It’s among the fastest-growing segments. We have lots of our population suffering from diabetes, and some are not even aware they have it,”

Pate added that a private company based in Lagos has been commissioned to manufacture diagnostic test kits.

The minister said, “So, government is procuring the diagnostic kits, the on-point blood glucose monitoring system that is manufactured here in Nigeria. This is bringing to life the effort to unlock the healthcare value chain by encouraging local manufacturers.”

Pate noted that the president had previously emphasised the need for a medical relief program to reduce the cost of medical commodities.

In line with this directive, he said

N4.5 billion would be allocated for the procurement of antibiotics, antihypertensive, and antidiabetic medications—beyond the test kits—to help lower costs.

He also highlighted that the test kits were manufactured in Nigeria as part of efforts to support local production.

Additionally, the minister disclosed that N2.1 billion had been approved for the procurement of a mobile X-ray machine and the rehabilitation and equipping of a 64-slice CT scan at Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Teaching Hospital in Bauchi.

He explained that the upgraded facility would enhance diagnostic and clinical care services, making the hospital a referral centre not only for Bauchi State but also for the broader region.

# Senate suspension: Natasha says 'this injustice will not be sustained'

By **Dave Oludare Oso**



Kogi Central Senator, Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan has reacted to the six months suspension slammed on her by the Senate after her sexual harassment allegation against the Senate President, Godswill Akpabio.

On Thursday, the Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges, and Public Petitions, had earlier recommended her suspension and also advocated that her salary and security details be withdrawn during the period of her suspension.

The recommendations were subsequently put to voice votes and the lawmakers unanimously agreed that the Senator representing Kogi Central be suspended for six months.

However, while the lawmakers

were still voting on the recommendations, Senator Natasha told her colleagues that the injustice against her would not be sustained.

“This injustice will not be sustained,” she said before her microphone was turned off.

Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan recently sparked a controversy when she refused to move to the seat allocated to her, citing Order 10 of the Senate Standing Rules, which protects the privileges of members.

Hence, the Senate referred her to the Committee on Ethics, Privileges, and Public Petitions for disciplinary review.

While the senate awaits the report of the committee, Senator Natasha accused Akpabio of sexual

harassment on a live television programme.

According to her, the Senate President is frustrating her because she refused to sleep with him.

Earlier, during the Senate’s plenary session on Thursday, March 6, 2025, Senator Natasha resubmitted her harassment petition to the Senate after the initial petition was rejected over procedural violations.

Meanwhile, the Senate President has denied the sexual harassment levied against him, saying he has never any woman.

The fair-skinned lawmaker’s suspension marks the climax of an ugly drama that has cast a dark pall on the nation’s topmost lawmaking body.

# EFCC grills ex-minister, Uju Kennedy over N138m fraud allegation

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has invited former Minister of Women Affairs, Uju Kennedy-Ohanenye for questioning over allegations of N138 million fraud.

The anti-graft agency alleges that the former minister was involved in the misappropriation, violation of the procurement process, and diversion of public funds to the tune of N138,413,253.89 in the course of disbursing the ministry's 2023 budget.

According to the TheCable, a source within the EFCC said the former minister arrived at the commission's headquarters in Abuja on Thursday at about 11 am and was still being interrogated at the time of this report.

The source said, "Investigations by the EFCC showed that funds donated for the funding of the P-Bat Cares for Women Initiative were diverted for her self-enrichment. Investigations are still ongoing. She has not been admitted to administrative bail."

Kennedy-Ohanenye was among the five ministers sacked by Tinubu in October 2024.

In December 2024, the former minister said she did not regret her



actions as a cabinet member in President Bola Tinubu's administration.

In July 2024, a House of Representatives committee invited Kennedy-Ohanenye over the "N1.5 billion" debt owed to contractors.

The committee was investigating the alleged diversion of N1.5 billion meant for the payment of contractors.

Kafilat Ogbara, chairperson of the House Committee on Women Affairs and Social Development alleged that the ministry awarded contracts not included in the 2023 budget, while the funds were diverted.

"Money for contractors has not been paid, and money has been diverted," Ogbara said.

"So, how do you pay these contractors?"

Ogbara said the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) was also probing the ministry over alleged misappropriation of funds.

In an interview on June 5, Ogbara had said there are "many petitions" against the former minister.

The former minister had denied the allegations, saying she was not under investigation over claims of fund misappropriation.

# Police confirm release of JOSTUM students

By Helen Okechukwu

After spending six days in captivity, the Benue State Police Command on Thursday announced the safe return of three students from Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University (JOSTUM), formerly known as the Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi.

The three female students were kidnapped on 25 February, 2025, while returning from a night study session on campus.

According to the police spokesperson, Anene Catherine, the school reported the incident on 26 February at about 21:34 hrs, prompting security forces to launch an investigation.

Catherine revealed that at approximately 21:34 hrs on 3 March, the three students (names withheld) were released and are currently receiving medical attention at Benue State University Teaching Hospital,



Makurdi.

As investigations continue, the Benue State Commissioner of Police (CP), Steve Yabanet, hailed the officers for their successful efforts in securing the students' release.

The CP also expressed appreciation for the dedication of the IGP Intelligence Response Team from Abuja and other security agencies in the state.

“He has pledged his commitment to arresting the perpetrators of this heinous crime,” Catherine added.

To address security concerns, reports indicate that a day after the incident, the school management declared a one-week mid-semester break.

This was contained in an internal memo signed by the Registrar, Dr. John David, titled “Security Situation on Campus.”

Earlier, before their release, the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) and the Minister of Women Affairs, Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, had called for their safe rescue.

# Impeachment fear made Fubara subvert Rivers Assembly, constitution - Supreme Court

By Dave Oludare Oso

Piling more woes on Governor Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers State, the Supreme Court has ruled that he had already undermined the state House of Assembly before the defection of Speaker Martin Amaewhule and 26 other lawmakers.

The foremost court, in the judgment delivered by Justice Emmanuel Akomaye Agim, found that the concurrent findings of the Federal High Court and the Court of Appeal proved Governor Fubara engaged in several illegal and unconstitutional activities to subvert the state Assembly, the Nigerian Constitution, and to avert his assumed impeachment plans by opposition lawmakers.

This was contained in the apex court's judgment on Cross-appeal No SC/CV/1175A/2024 by Governor Fubara, where he challenged the rulings of the Federal High Court and the Court of Appeal.

The cross-appeal was part of the appeal filed before the Supreme Court by the Rivers State House of Assembly and Amaewhule.

The appeal lists the Government of Rivers State; Rivers State Independent Electoral Commission; Hon. Justice Adolphus Enebeli (retired) (Chairman, Rivers State Independent Electoral Commission); Central Bank of Nigeria; Zenith Bank Plc.; Access Bank Plc.; Accountant General of the Federation; the Government of Rivers State (Sir Siminalayi Fubara); the Accountant General of Rivers State; and Hon. Justice S. C. Amadi (Chief Judge of Rivers State) as the 1st to 10th respondents.

Fubara requested the Supreme Court to



determine whether Sections 102 and 109(g) of the 1999 Constitution and the doctrine of necessity validate the proceedings of the Rivers State House of Assembly, which was constituted by less than one-third of its members, and the actions of the State government based on such proceedings.

Justice Agim stated, "The concurrent findings of facts in the Court of Appeal Judgment in Appeal No. CA/ABJ/CV/133/20249 (exhibit RSHA 5) indicate that some months after the 8th respondent was elected and sworn in as Governor of Rivers State in 2023, he began to fear that, instigated by his political opponents, members of the Rivers State House of Assembly were planning or initiating proceedings to impeach and remove him from office as governor of the state.

"That to pre-empt his said impeachment, 8th respondent took several steps such as attempting to get the National Assembly to take over the exercise of the legislative powers of Rivers State from the Rivers State House of Assembly, preventing the Rivers State House of Assembly from sitting with its complete members or

constitutionally prescribed quorum of one-third of the 32 members and arranged for initially 4 members and subsequently 3 members to be sitting as Rivers State House of Assembly outside the Legislative building of the Rivers State House of Assembly, withholding Rivers State House of Assembly funds, removing the Clerk and Deputy Clerk of the Rivers State House of Assembly, using caterpillars, bulldozers and other earth moving vehicles and equipment to pull down, dismantle and destroy the legislative building of the Rivers State House of Assembly..."

The apex court also knocked Fubara for preventing the lawmakers and other staff of the Rivers State House of Assembly "from having access to the House of Assembly Complex to do official work and engaging in all these actions in disobedience of interim restraining orders of Courts that were obtained by the said 27 members of the Rivers State House of Assembly in suits to restrain these actions."

**Continue reading  
On next page**

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It said, "These series of actions by the 8th respondent caused the Rivers State House of Assembly to commence Suit No. FHC/ABJ/CS/1613/2023 against the National Assembly, the 8th respondent, the Accountant General of the Federation, the Inspector General of Police and others.

"The concurrent finding of fact by the Court of Appeal in its judgment in Appeal No. CA/ABJ/CV/133/2024 is that the 8th respondent admitted engaging in all these activities.

"What is clear from the above concurrent findings is that the 8th respondent started the prevention of the sittings of the Rivers State House of Assembly constituted by the number of members as prescribed by S.96 of the 1999 Constitution long before the issue of the remaining 27 members defecting to another political party arose."

According to the judge, the said activities of Governor Fubara were adjudged by the concurrent holdings of the Court of Appeal in its judgment in Appeal No. CA/ABJ/CV/133/2024 as illegal and unconstitutional long before the allegation of defection started.

The court said, "Against the background of these concurrent findings and holdings in the Court of Appeal Judgment in Appeal No. CA/ABJ/CV/133/2024, it is reasonable to conclude that the cross appellant's reliance on Ss.102 and 109 of the Constitution and the doctrine of necessity is to continue his brazen subversion of the Rivers State House of

Assembly, the 1999 Constitution and legitimate government in Rivers State.

"Having by his own admission engaged in a series of illegal activities just to prevent the other 27 members of the Rivers State House of Assembly from participating in the proceedings of the House to carry out their legitimate legislative duties which they were elected to do, his resort to Ss.102 and 109 of the 1999 Constitution and the doctrine of necessity on the basis of his allegation that they have defected is a red herring to perpetuate his subversion of the Rivers State House of Assembly, the 1999 Constitution and democratic government in Rivers State.

"The 8th respondent had collapsed the Rivers State House of Assembly. Therefore, no question about any member having lost his seat in that House due to defection can validly arise.

"There must be a House of Assembly for any constitutional processes such as declaration of a seat vacant for defection therein to take place.

"Only the House can declare a seat vacant for defection and not the governor of a state. Not even the courts can do so."

The apex court ruled that the assertion that the 27 Assembly members are no longer part of the House due to alleged defection is a continuation of Governor Fubara's efforts to prevent their participation in House proceedings.

The judge said, "It is not shown or suggested that their names are now in the

register of members of another political party or that they have obtained membership card of that other party.

"Membership register and membership card constitute the only proof of membership of a political party.

"What is clear is that the 2nd cross respondent and the other 26 members of the Rivers State House of Assembly are still valid members of the Rivers State House of Assembly and cannot be prevented from participating in the proceedings of that House by the 8th respondent in cahoots with the 4 members of the Rivers State House of Assembly.

"A government cannot be said to exist without one of the three arms that make up the government of a state under the 1999 Constitution," the court said.

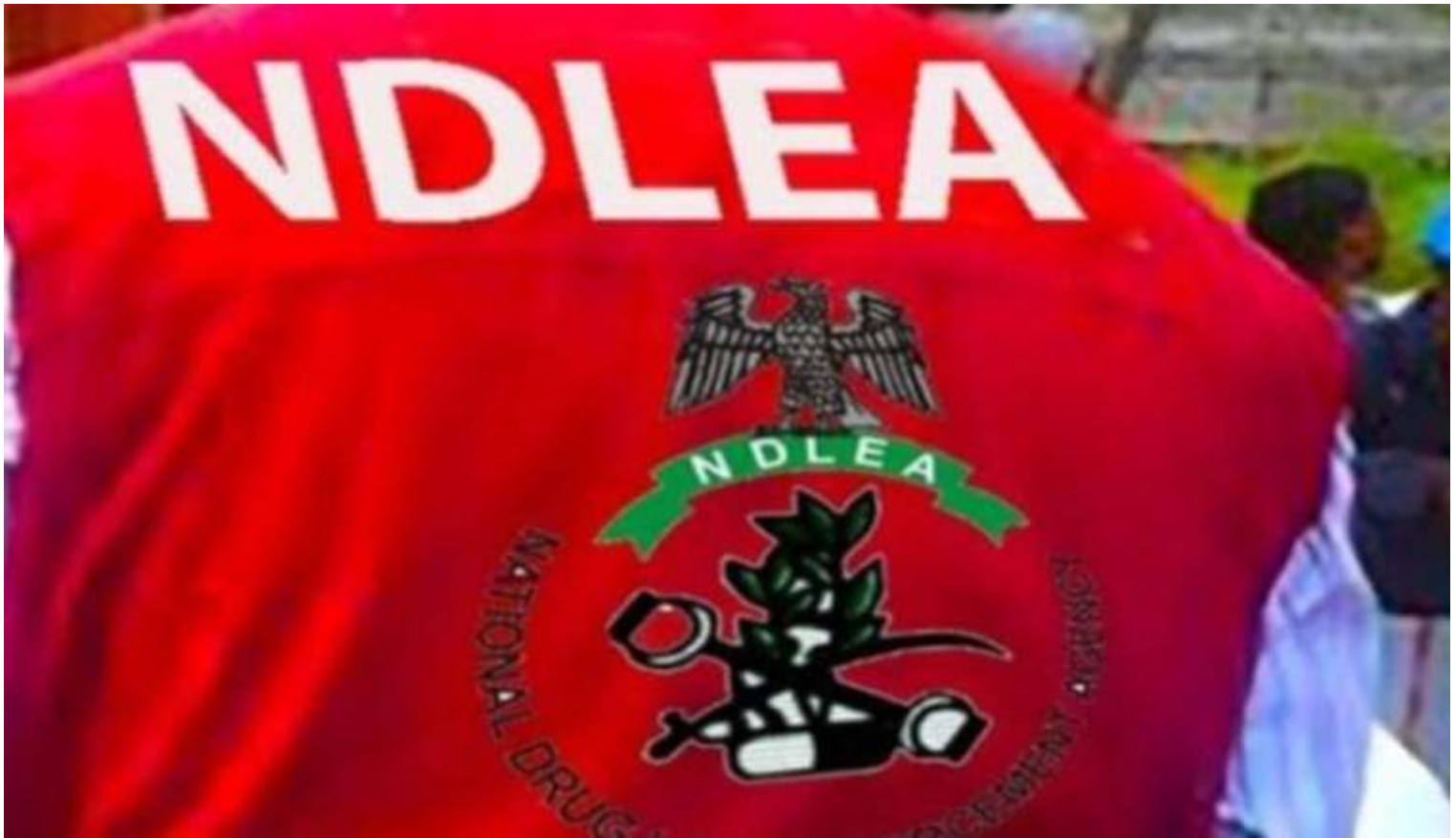
"In this case, the Head of the Executive arm of the government has chosen to collapse the Legislature to enable him govern without the Legislature as a despot. As it is there is no government in Rivers State."

The court said Fubara's "fear of impeachment by the House Assembly is no justification for his attacks on the House of Assembly, the Constitution, the government of Rivers State and rule of law.

"What the 8th respondent has done is to destroy the government because of his fear of being impeached," the court said.

# Two NDLEA operatives arrested over shooting death of Kano teenager

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



**T**wo operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) have been arrested for the shooting death of a 19-year-old woman, Patient Samuel in the Jaba Quarters area of Kano State.

The offending officers were identified as 23-year-old Nass Ridwan Usman and 26-year-old Sna Ismaila Yakubu, both attached to the NDLEA's Kano State headquarters.

It was gathered that the shooting occurred around 10:55 p.m. on Wednesday night.

A security analyst Zagazola Makama disclosed on his X handle that a police team responded to the incident, evacuating the victim to Abdullahi Wase Teaching Hospital, where she was confirmed dead.

Items recovered from the arrested officers include their operational motorcycle, one live

round of ammunition, four empty 7.62×51mm ammunition shells, and two knives.

Kano State Police spokesperson, Abdullahi Haruna Kiyawa, who confirmed the arrest to newsmen on Thursday, said two suspects had been arrested.

Kiyawa added that an investigation had commenced and that the suspects had been transferred to the Command's Criminal Investigation Department.

# Rivers Assembly declares Fubara's Commissioners, other appointees illegal

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Martin Amaewhule-led Rivers State House of Assembly has given Governor Siminalayi Fubara a 48-hour ultimatum to submit a fresh list of commissioner-nominees for screening and confirmation.

The development comes as the lawmakers accused the governor of unlawfully swearing in the 19 commissioners without their approval, thereby violating the Constitution.

The Assembly, in a letter dated March 5, accused Fubara of unlawfully swearing in 19 commissioners without legislative screening and confirmation.

Furthermore, the legislators alleged that other appointments were made without due process, describing the action as a violation of the Constitution.

The statement reads in part: "Another infraction of the law is the swearing-in of Lawrence Oko-Jaja as Chairman; Earnest Ibekwe Ekwe; Mina Ogbanga; Iseleye Amachree; and Adokiye Oyagiri as members of the Rivers State Bureau on Public Procurement on Friday, August 30, 2024, without screening and confirmation by the



Rivers State House of Assembly, as stipulated in Section 4(a) of the Rivers State Public Procurement Law No. 4 of 2008. Others include Gift Alex-Hart, Grace Osaronu, and Selinah Amonieah as members.

"Similarly, the swearing-in of Goodlife Ben as Chairman, along with Emmanuel Jaja, Betty Warmate, Jerome Chimenem, Prince Ohochukwu, Philip Okparaji, and Christian Amadi as members of the Rivers State Local Government Service Commission, without screening and confirmation, is a violation of Section 44(3) of the Rivers State Local Government Law No. 5 of 2018.

"These appointments, along with others not mentioned here due to space constraints, but which are also not in

compliance with extant laws, are not only infractions but also pose a serious threat to our nascent democracy. And they must be addressed accordingly.

"The House, therefore, requests you to submit a list of nominees for appointment as commissioners into the Rivers State Executive Council, as well as nominees to fill vacancies in all the offices mentioned above, or any other positions requiring legislative screening and confirmation, within 48 hours."

The lawmakers urged Fubara to comply with the provisions of the 1999 Constitution and other laws governing the state.

The Assembly urged the governor to submit the 2025 budget for approval.

# EFCC Chairman to students: Strong ethics key to nation's future

By Friday Omosola

The Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Ola Olukoyede, has called on students across Nigeria to cultivate strong moral values, emphasising that good character is essential for their future and the nation's development.

Olukoyede made this appeal in Abuja during a study tour by students of KDM Islamic School, Suleja, Niger State, to the EFCC's corporate headquarters.



Represented by the Head of the Public Interface Unit, Public Affairs Department, Assistant Commander of the EFCC (ACE I) Tony Orilade, he stressed the importance of making ethical choices early in life.

“The elderly will pass away and hand over the baton to you. Build a solid moral foundation so that in the future, this nation will look forward to you for greater responsibilities, quality leadership, and a corruption-free society.

“But if the foundation is not strong, no matter what your parents invest in you, it won't last,” Orilade stated.

Also speaking at the event, ACE II Aisha Muhammed, Head of the Enlightenment and Reorientation Unit, Public Affairs Department, urged the students to actively participate in the fight against corruption.

She encouraged them to uphold integrity and become whistleblowers whenever they encounter wrongdoing.

“Try to be a person of integrity. When you return to school or home, spread the knowledge you gained here today. Your voices matter a lot.

“You are important, even if you may not realize it yet. When you see something, say something. Don't be indifferent to matters of national interest,” she advised.

Muhammed also enlightened the students on the EFCC's mandate and the role of Zero Tolerance and Integrity Clubs in schools and tertiary institutions nationwide.

Meanwhile, Inspector of the EFCC (IE I) Eniola Kayode, a cybercrime investigator, cautioned the students

about the dangers of internet fraud, noting that cybercrimes have devastating effects on individuals and the country.

“The consequences of cybercrimes are severe. Some victims end up committing suicide. We've handled several cases like that.

“It tarnishes Nigeria's reputation and negatively impacts foreign relations, as many individuals and organizations hesitate to engage with the country, despite the presence of many honest Nigerians,” he warned.

The study tour provided the students with valuable insights into the EFCC's operations and reinforced the importance of integrity. The visit concluded with an interactive session, where students received EFCC manuals and prizes for answering questions correctly.

# Sexual Harassment: Senate deserves respect – Oluremi Tinubu

By Friday Omosola

Nigeria's First Lady, Oluremi Tinubu, has weighed in on the sexual harassment allegation levelled against Senate President Godswill Akpabio by Kogi Central Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan.

The New Daily Prime reported that during an interview on Arise Television, Mrs Akpoti-Uduaghan accused Akpabio of sexual harassment.

However, the allegation led to her suspension from the Senate for six months on Thursday.

Reacting to the development, Mrs Tinubu, in a statement issued by her spokesperson, Busola Kukoyi, emphasised that the Nigerian Senate remains a mature institution that must be treated with respect.

She made this remark while addressing journalists at the State House in Abuja.

Speaking ahead of International Women's Day, the First Lady dismissed concerns over how the Senate handled the matter, insisting that lawmakers were doing what was needed.

Having served in the Senate for 12 years, Mrs Tinubu stressed that the



chamber should be a place of honour, not controversy. She also encouraged Nigerian women to assert themselves in leadership roles.

“I know with what is going on in the Senate, you may say, why am I not taking a position? I believe that the Senate is doing what is needed because that's what it is. It is an inside place, and it's a mature chamber. It's a mature chamber, and it should be treated with respect. It's an honour for you to be in that place alone.

“I was there for 12 years, even in my younger days, and I'm still trying to look young, but people compliment you all the time, only that, women raise yourself, don't be in a position that men will be talking to you anyhow”.

Ahead of International Women's Day on March 8, the First Lady honoured the remarkable achievements of women worldwide, with a special focus on Nigeria.

She highlighted the significant strides women have made over the decades, from the influential matriarchs of the past to contemporary figures like Zuriel Oduwale, a dedicated advocate for peace.

Mrs Tinubu reaffirmed her belief in the potential of Nigerian youth, emphasizing that they possess the skills and resilience needed to excel.

She encouraged women to keep their heads high, persevere, and continue striving for excellence.

# Rainstorm Disruption: Akure Airport to resume flights next week – Aiyedatiwa

By Friday Omosola

Ondo State Governor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa, on Thursday visited Akure Airport to assess the devastation caused by a powerful rainstorm that struck two days ago, severely disrupting flight operations and damaging key infrastructure.

Aiyedatiwa, in a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Ebenezer Adeniyani, said the storm, recorded at wind speeds of approximately 65 knots, inflicted significant damage on airport facilities, including the terminal building and control tower.

Speaking to journalists after inspecting the affected areas, Governor Aiyedatiwa described the destruction as extensive, emphasising the impact on operations.

However, he commended the swift intervention of the Federal Government and the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) in addressing the situation.

Aiyedatiwa

“The airport manager and the contractor have been working on the new terminal, and we are here to assess the extent of the damage. The storm was devastating, with winds reaching about 65 knots, causing extensive destruction to infrastructure,” the governor stated.

He expressed appreciation to the Minister of Aviation, Festus Keyamo



for his prompt response in deploying personnel to restore the airport’s functionality.

As part of his administration’s immediate support, Governor Aiyedatiwa announced the donation of a fire truck to the airport while promising additional assistance to fast-track restoration efforts.

Following discussions with airport management, the governor confirmed that flight operations are expected to resume next week, contrary to earlier reports suggesting a three-month suspension.

“A lot of work is already ongoing at the terminal building and control tower, and we’ve been assured that flight operations will resume by Sunday,” he added.

He reiterated his administration’s

commitment to supporting repair efforts to ensure a swift reopening of the airport.

Despite initial concerns, Engr. Samuel Famuyiwa, Manager of the National Airspace Management Agency (NAMA), reassured the public that the damage was not as severe as initially feared and that restoration efforts were progressing well.

Governor Aiyedatiwa was accompanied on the visit by Deputy Governor Olayide Adelami, Special Adviser on Infrastructure, Lands, and Housing Engr. Abiola Olowoye, Kolawole Ologede (Ondo State House of Assembly – Akure North Constituency), and Chairman of Akure North Local Government, Ogunbolude Johnson, among other officials.

# Students of FUYOE protest allegations against Vice-Chancellor, call them politically motivated

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Students of the Federal University, Oye-Ekiti (FUYOE), took to the streets on Wednesday, March 5, in protest against what they termed an orchestrated attempt to destabilise the institution through unfounded allegations against the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Abayomi Fasina.

The protest, led by the Vice President of the Student Union, Olaniyi Eniola, comes in response to a demand by the National Women's Committee of the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU), which has called for Prof. Fasina's suspension over an alleged sexual harassment case involving Mrs. Folasade Adebayo, a senior staff member at the university.

The controversy unfolded during a recent SSANU Women's Committee meeting held in Otuoke, Bayelsa State, where the group accused Prof. Fasina of mishandling a sexual harassment complaint.

However, the protesting students vehemently dismissed the allegations, describing them as baseless, politically motivated, and aimed at undermining the progress of the university.

Eniola, flanked by Chief Justice of the Student Union Judicial Council, Victor Olaseni, and Senate President's representative, Idowu Odunayo, condemned the actions of SSANU's Women's Committee, which they accused of attempting to disrupt the peace and stability of FUYOE.

"We are appalled by the actions of the SSANU National Women's Committee, led by Mrs. Ijeoma Kalu, which is demanding the suspension of our highly respected VC over a completely unfounded allegation. We were shocked to read how they publicly disgraced themselves by calling for the removal of our beloved VC without any factual basis." Eniola said.



The protestors carried placards with various inscriptions, including messages accusing the SSANU Women's Committee of spreading misinformation and media blackmail.

The students asserted that there was no evidence to support the claim of sexual harassment, and that the allegations made by the committee were politically motivated.

"The VC has already clarified that Mrs. Adebayo, in her official petition to the governing council, never mentioned sexual harassment. Even in her statements before the Nigerian Police, which investigated the matter, there was no mention of sexual harassment. So, where did the SSANU Women's Committee fabricate this claim from? On what basis are they demanding his suspension? This is clearly a politically motivated smear campaign, which is doomed to fail." Eniola explained.

The student body also pointed out that Adebayo herself had never formally accused Prof. Fasina of sexual harassment, with the matter remaining focused on other issues.

In a related development, the Campaign for Justice and Fair Play (CJFP), an advocacy group, issued a statement

condemning the SSANU Women's Committee's actions. CJFP Chairman, Calistus Jemade, accused the committee of leading a well-funded campaign to destabilise FUYOE and discredit Prof. Fasina's leadership.

"The sponsors of this campaign are not seeking justice but are actively working to destabilise the university. This is a calculated political attack designed to discredit a leader who has worked tirelessly to improve FUYOE. These individuals, motivated by self-interest, are determined to take control of the university's leadership at any cost." Jemade said.

The CJFP called on the FUYOE Senate, alumni, staff, and students to stand in solidarity with the Vice-Chancellor and resist any attempts to divide the institution.

They also urged the Chairman of the FUYOE Governing Council to expedite the ongoing investigation into the matter to prevent further misinformation from spreading.

As the situation unfolds, the tension within FUYOE remains high, with both students and faculty awaiting the resolution of the controversy and the ongoing investigation.

# Come back home, PDP leaders tell Jandor

By **Dave Oludare Oso**



**T**op chieftains and leaders of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) led by National Secretary, Mr Ude Okoye, has paid a visit to the party's 2023 Lagos State governorship candidate, Abdul-Azeez Adediran, popularly known as Jandor, to appeal to him to return to the party.

Adediran's spokesman, Mr Gbenga Ogunleye disclosed this in a statement in Lagos on Wednesday.

NEW DAILY PRIME reported that Adediran announced his resignation from the PDP on Monday, citing betrayal and lack of discipline.

Two days after leaving the party, PDP leaders visited Adediran at his Abuja office, urging him to

reconsider his decision and return to the party.

Ogunleye said the PDP leaders pleaded with Adediran to revisit his decision and withdraw his resignation from the party.

"The National Secretary of the PDP, Ude Okoye, former National Publicity Secretary, Kola Ologbondiyan, and ex-House of Representatives member, Shina Peller, visited Adediran.

"They urged him to reconsider his resignation and return to the PDP," Ogunleye said.

The delegation acknowledged Adediran's reasons for leaving but encouraged him to stage a comeback.

"While appreciating their support, Adediran assured them of his willingness to collaborate with friends in his political journey, in spite of differences in political alignment," Ogunleye stated.

Adediran, the leader of the Lagos4Lagos Movement, said on Monday he left the party with his supporters across the 20 Local Government Areas and 37 Local Council Development Areas of Lagos State.

Jandor attributed his decision to betrayal by party elders and the PDP's inability to resolve its internal crisis in Lagos State.

The former governorship candidate stated that his next political move would be revealed in the coming months.

# Ogun govt shuts two companies over workplace accidents

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Ogun State Government has ordered the closure of Quantum Steel Industry in Ogijo, Sagamu Local Government Area and Xinfeng Plastics Limited along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway following industrial accidents that reportedly resulted in fatalities.

In a statement issued by the Ogun State Ministry of Environment, officials confirmed that Quantum Steel Industry was shut down due to an industrial explosion that caused multiple casualties, with some victims still receiving medical treatment.

Similarly, Xinfeng Plastics Limited was sealed off after a machine operator, Ishaku Monday, lost his life due to electrocution.

Speaking on the development, the Special Adviser to the Governor on the Ogun State Environmental Protection Agency (OGEPA), Farook Akintunde, stated that the closures were necessary to facilitate a thorough investigation into the incidents and ensure compliance with safety regulations.

“As a government, we are determined to conduct credible and diligent investigations, including inviting external safety experts to get to the root cause of these incidents in the overriding public interest and safety,” Akintunde, who doubles as the Chairman of the State Taskforce on Environmental Compliance and Enforcement said.



“What is even more painful is that despite the state government’s regular visits to these companies just like others statewide to educate them on the need to adhere strictly to safety procedures, such incidents still occurred within their production lines that resulted in fatalities, so the need to close them down”.

The Special Adviser stated that the two companies will remain closed until investigations are completed and new safety measures are fully implemented.

He emphasised that all companies operating in the state must prioritize worker safety, particularly those in production units.

He further warned that the state government would not only shut down any company found violating safety regulations but also blacklist them if necessary.

Meanwhile, the state government

also sealed off two additional companies—Wemco Nigeria Limited in Magboro along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway and Beautiful Fibre in Ogere, located along the same route.

Wemco Nigeria Limited was sanctioned for obstructing state officials from carrying out an investigation into an erosion-related dispute between the company and its host community.

On the other hand, Beautiful Fibre was penalized for exposing workers to dangerous chemicals by failing to provide them with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), despite repeated warnings from state government officials during inspections.

Both companies will remain shut until they comply with all government-mandated safety regulations.

# Ossai dumps PDP for APC

By Friday Omosola

Former House of Representatives member Ossai Ossai has announced his defection from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the All Progressives Congress (APC).

He cited his desire to support President Bola Tinubu's vision for national development.

He spoke in Abuja yesterday after being formally welcomed into the APC by the party's National Secretary, Senator Ajibola Bashiru.

Ossai stated that his move, along with other high-profile defections, would significantly weaken the PDP in Delta State.

Ossai, who once represented East, asserted that the exodus of influential PDP members—such as Senator Ned Nwoko—would reduce the party's hold in the region.

Describing President Tinubu as a long-time mentor and political strategist, he recalled their early association during the Social Democratic Party (SDP) era in Lagos.

He praised Tinubu's leadership, referring to him as a 'grand master of politics.'

He further explained that his political ideology aligns with APC's policies and reaffirmed his commitment to working with Tinubu and the ruling party to drive national progress.



"I have come to join the political grandmaster whom I have followed over the years as a role model to add to whatever he is doing to better this nation," Ossai said.

Ossai dismissed claims of division within the APC in Delta, clarifying that while different caucuses exist, his focus is on uniting them to strengthen the party ahead of the 2027 elections.

"President Tinubu is steering the country in the right direction, and I want to be part of that process.

"I have moved on from the PDP—it is in my past. My loyalty is to Nigeria, not any political party.

"I am here in the APC to contribute to nation-building in the best interest of all," he stated.

After serving three terms as a lawmaker under the PDP, Ossai noted that the party's structure had significantly weakened.

He confirmed that he joined the APC, received his membership card, and participated in senatorial meetings, formalizing his transition.

He also affirmed his commitment to upholding the party's constitution and principles.

He pledged to actively support the APC's Renewed Hope Agenda in Delta, particularly in advancing agricultural initiatives that have positively impacted Nigerians under President Tinubu's administration.

While welcoming Ossai into the party, the APC National Secretary congratulated him on his decision.

He also took a swipe at the PDP, attributing its struggles to internal conflicts and poor leadership coordination, arguing that a party unable to manage its own affairs cannot be trusted to govern the country effectively.

# Troops killed 92 terrorists, nabbed 111 in one week – DHQ

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Not less than 92 terrorists were neutralised, with 111 apprehended by troops of the Nigerian Army who also liberated 75 kidnapped hostages in the past week, the Defence Headquarters has said.

Disclosing the development during a press briefing in Abuja on Thursday, the Director of Defence Media Operations, Maj.-Gen. Markus Kangye, stated that troops also recovered a total of 117 assorted weapons and 2,939 rounds of ammunition.

He said the recovered weapons included: 58 AK47 rifles, 21 locally fabricated guns, 26 dane guns, seven pump action guns, and four PKT guns.

He said the troops also recovered two GPMGs, one QJC W85 gun, one HK 21 gun, one M60 MG, 11 RPG bombs, two RPG tubes and one fabricated 60mm mortar.

“They also recovered 2,278 rounds of assorted 7.62mm ammunition, 26 live cartridges, 64 rounds of 9mm ammo, 18 magazines, as well as other 8 assorted arms,” he said.

Kangye stated that troops also apprehended 18 individuals involved in oil theft and successfully foiled oil theft operations valued at



approximately N521.8 million in the South-South region.

According to him, troops of Operation Delta Safe recovered 452,396 litres of stolen crude oil, 224,175 litres of illegally refined Automotive Gas Oil and 1,920 litres of PMS.

He added that the troops discovered and destroyed 87 crude oil cooking ovens, 28 dugout pits, 23 boats, 33 storage tanks, 61 drums and 47 illegal refining sites.

“Other items recovered include two pumping machines, three tricycles, five motorcycles, two mobile phones and six vehicles among others.

In the North East, Kangye said the

troops of Operation Hadin Kai recorded a total surrender of 101 terrorists comprising 11 adult males, 39 adult females and 51 children who surrendered to troops within the theatre of operation during the week.

He said the troops neutralised 25 terrorists, including a terrorist Commander Abba Alai (Amirul Khalid of Alafa), apprehended 14 and rescued seven kidnapped hostages.

“The gallant men and women of the armed force will continue to carry out the constitutional responsibilities of protecting lives and properties of all Nigerians in line with our Rules of Engagement and Code of Conduct for Internal Security Operations,” he said.

# Funding cuts threaten global tuberculosis fight

By Helen Okechukwu

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has raised alarms over the potential consequences of imminent funding cuts to global Tuberculosis (TB) programmes, warning that such reductions could have devastating effects on low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) that heavily depend on international aid.

According to Voice of Nigeria (VON), it noted that WHO statement released on Thursday in Abuja, disclosed that the planned budget reductions, particularly from the United States, place 18 of the highest TB-burden countries at risk, as they relied on U.S. funding for nearly 89% of their TB care resources.

The African region stands to suffer the most from these funding disruptions, followed closely by the South-East Asian and Western Pacific regions.

Over the past two decades, international support for TB prevention, testing, and treatment services has saved an estimated 79 million lives, preventing approximately 3.65 million deaths in 2023 alone.

WHO attributed much of this success to funding from global donors, particularly the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

However, abrupt funding withdrawals now threaten to undo these hard-earned gains, endangering millions of lives, especially among vulnerable populations.

Data reported by national TB programmes to WHO and the U.S. government's reports to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicate that the U.S. government has annually contributed between \$200 million and \$250 million in bilateral funding for TB responses.

This accounts for roughly a quarter of total international donor funding for TB.

WHO's Director of Global Programme on TB and Lung Health, Dr. Tereza Kasaeva, stressed that disruptions in TB services—whether financial, political, or operational—could lead to severe and often fatal outcomes.



Drawing parallels with the COVID-19 pandemic, she noted that interruptions in healthcare services between 2020 and 2023 resulted in over 700,000 excess TB-related deaths, exacerbated by inadequate social protection measures.

“Without immediate action, hard-won progress in the fight against TB is at risk. Our collective response must be swift, strategic, and fully resourced to protect the most vulnerable and maintain momentum toward ending TB.” Kasaeva said.

She highlighted WHO's mandated leadership role in helping countries achieve the 'End TB' targets set for 2027 and 2030. However, early reports from the 30 highest TB-burden countries indicate that funding cuts are already dismantling crucial services, severely impacting global efforts to combat TB.

A ripple effect of the funding reductions includes an escalating crisis in health and community workforces. Thousands of healthcare workers in high-burden countries are facing layoffs, while technical assistance roles have been suspended, paralyzing national TB programmes.

Supply chain disruptions, caused by staff shortages and budget cuts, are jeopardizing access to life-saving TB medication and essential prevention services.

Additionally, laboratory services are experiencing severe setbacks, with delays in sample transportation, procurement failures, and shortages of diagnostic consumables.

The collapse of data and surveillance systems is further crippling routine reporting and drug resistance monitoring. Community-based efforts, including active case detection, screening, and contact tracing, are also deteriorating, increasing the risk of transmission.

Dr. Kasaeva warned that without urgent intervention, these systemic failures would reverse decades of progress in TB control and jeopardize millions of lives. She also pointed out that USAID, the world's third-largest TB research funder, has halted all its ongoing trials, thereby stalling crucial advancements in TB research and innovation.

With TB remaining one of the deadliest infectious diseases worldwide, WHO is calling for immediate international action to safeguard existing gains and prevent a global health crisis.

Without immediate intervention, these systemic failures will cripple TB prevention and treatment efforts, reverse decades of progress, and endanger millions of lives,” Kasaeva emphasized.

# ‘Money can’t buy health’ – Teni reveals struggle with illness

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nigerian musician Teniola Apata, known as Teni, has opened up about her recent battle with malaria, sharing her experience with fans.

Despite her wealth and success, she emphasized that money cannot buy good health.

On Wednesday, Teni shared a video on Instagram showing herself receiving medical care in a hospital bed. In the clip, she revealed that she had been sick for two weeks after experiencing extreme weakness and loss of appetite.

## Singer Calls for Action Against Mosquitoes

According to Teni, she was eventually diagnosed with malaria. She expressed frustration over the mosquito problem in the Ikate area of Lagos State and called on traditional ruler Oba Elegushi to take action.

“I was down with malaria,” she wrote. “Oba Elegushi, we need to do something about the mosquitoes in Ikate.”

Teni described how the illness took a toll on her body. She said she could not eat and lost a significant amount of weight. Despite her condition, she still managed to fulfill a scheduled performance in Ondo State.

## Performing Despite Illness

“Malaria held me down. I went through a lot. I was weak and down for two weeks,” she said. “I couldn’t eat, so I lost weight. Amid the illness, I went to perform in Ondo because who will feed me? I can’t make a refund.”

Her post sparked reactions from fans and



well-wishers who flooded her comment section with messages of support. Many wished her a speedy recovery, while others joined her in calling for better mosquito control in Lagos.

## Malaria: A Persistent Health Issue

Teni’s message highlights a common issue in Nigeria, where malaria remains a serious health challenge. The disease, spread by mosquitoes, affects millions each year and can be deadly if not treated. Poor drainage systems and stagnant water often create breeding grounds for mosquitoes, increasing the risk of infection.

Health experts recommend regular fumigation, use of mosquito nets, and improved sanitation to reduce malaria cases. However, many areas, including Ikate, still struggle with mosquito infestations due to inadequate public health measures.

## The Bigger Message: Health is Priceless

Teni’s case serves as a reminder that even celebrities are not immune to common health issues. Her experience also sheds light on the need for better public health interventions to protect residents from

malaria.

In response to her post, some fans urged the government and local leaders to take malaria prevention more seriously. Others shared similar experiences of battling the disease, emphasizing how it affects productivity and well-being.

Despite her illness, Teni maintained her sense of humor. She captioned her video with a powerful statement:

“Money Cannot Buy You Health O Na God!”

Her words reflect the reality that good health is priceless. No matter how wealthy or successful someone is, sickness can strike at any time. Her message also serves as an encouragement for people to prioritize their health and seek medical care when needed.

## A Call for Better Health Measures

As she continues to recover, her fans hope that authorities will take note of her call for action. Malaria remains a major concern in Nigeria, and tackling it requires collective efforts from both leaders and citizens.

# Why Kanye West subjects his women to nudity - Ex-girlfriend, Amber Rose

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

American model Amber Rose has made bold allegations about her ex-boyfriend, rapper Kanye West, claiming he controls and influences his partners' style.

She alleged that West enjoys making his female partners dress provocatively so that other men fantasize about them.

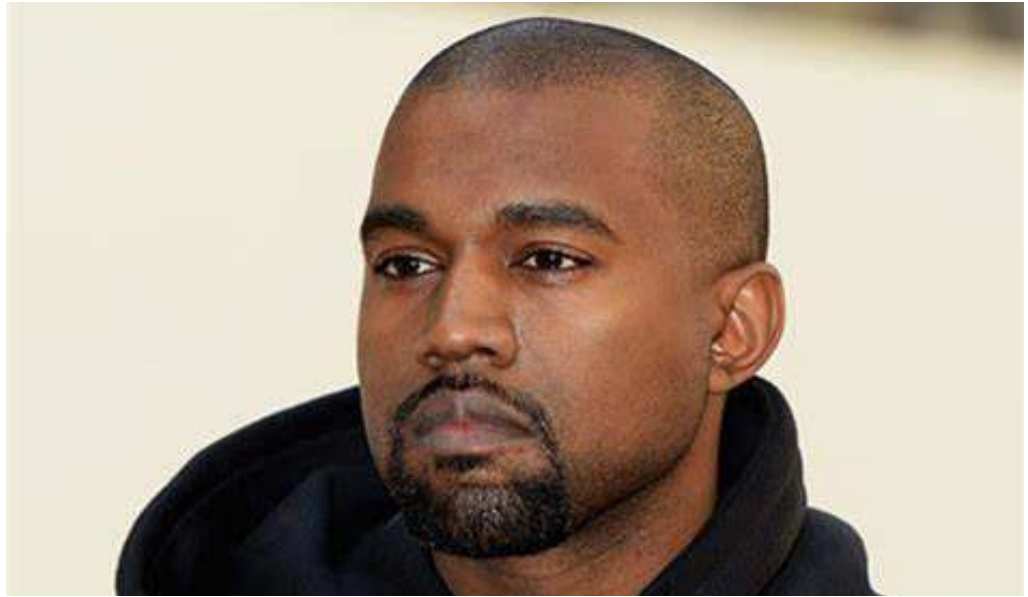
Rose shared these revelations while discussing his current wife, Bianca Censori, and her public nudity during a recent episode of the Club Shay Shay podcast. According to her, this pattern is nothing new. She claimed West did the same to her and his former wife, Kim Kardashian.

West's alleged pattern of behavior "Kanye has always been like this," Rose said. "He did it to me, he did it to Kim. He wants other men to desire his woman. That's what excites him. He likes knowing that his friends are fantasizing about sleeping with her."

Rose recalled dressing according to his preferences during their relationship. As a young woman then, she felt pressured to comply with his fashion choices. "I was young. Was I really going to tell Kanye no? He bought me things, and I went along with it," she said.

Secret rebellion against his influence She then described how she secretly resisted his influence. "If you look at old photos of me when I was dating Kanye, you'll notice something. When I was out with him, I dressed exactly how he wanted. But when I was alone, I wore his clothes—baggy jeans, oversized T-shirts, jackets. I raided his closet," she explained.

According to Rose, wearing his



clothing was her way of pushing back against the image he wanted her to portray. "I hated dressing like that," she admitted. "So when he wasn't home, I dressed in a way that made me feel comfortable."

Link to Bianca Censori's revealing outfits

Her remarks come as Kanye West's wife, Bianca Censori, continues to make headlines for her revealing outfits. Many have speculated about whether West has a hand in her fashion choices. Rose's claims have added fuel to this conversation, suggesting that his influence over his partners' style has been a long-standing pattern.

West's history of influencing his partners' style

Kanye West, a fashion icon and entrepreneur, has often been known for shaping the style of the women he dates. During his marriage to Kim Kardashian, he famously revamped her entire wardrobe, guiding her transformation into a global fashion figure. His relationship with Julia Fox also followed a similar pattern, with West influencing her style in a highly publicized manner.

However, Rose's comments suggest

that his control over his partners' fashion choices might go beyond aesthetics. If her claims are true, West's motivation may not be solely about style but also about provoking admiration—and even envy—from other men.

No response from Kanye West or Bianca Censori

So far, Kanye West has not responded to Rose's allegations. Neither has his wife, Bianca Censori. But the discussion around his treatment of women and his influence over their public image continues to grow.

Amber Rose's statements have reignited conversations about power dynamics in celebrity relationships. They also raise questions about how much control one partner should have over the other's appearance. As more people weigh in on the controversy, many will be watching to see if West or Censori addresses the claims.

For now, the debate continues, and Amber Rose's revelations add yet another layer to the ongoing discussions about Kanye West's relationships and his impact on the women in his life.

# Wizkid unveils highly anticipated 'Kese (Dance)' music video

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



World-renowned Afrobeats star, Ayodeji Balogun, better known as Wizkid has unveiled the highly anticipated music video for his smash hit single, "Kese (Dance)".

According to Live and Beats, the visuals for the much talked about song dropped at 8pm Nigerian time on Wednesday, sending fans into a frenzy.

"Kese (Dance)" has been a phenomenal success since its release, shattering records with over 1.5 million Spotify streams within 24 hours – a new benchmark for a Nigerian song.

The track also dominated various charts, including the Official Nigeria Top 100, Apple Music top charts, and U.S. Afrobeats top 100, holding the

No. 1 spot for multiple weeks.

The song is part of Wizkid's album "Morayo", a tribute to his mother.

With the release of the official video, Wizkid is currently trending on X as

the number one topic.

Fans have also taken to social media to amplify the video's reach, while the visuals have garnered over 14,000 views within just one hour of its release.



# Actress Chika Ike welcomes baby

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi



Popular Nollywood actress Chika Ike has welcomed her first child, sharing the joyful news with fans on social media.

The movie star announced the birth of her baby on Instagram on Thursday, posting heartwarming photos to mark the special occasion.

One of the images featured a background with the word “Princess,” revealing that she had given birth to a baby girl. Expressing her excitement, she captioned the post, “My baby is here. Welcome to the world, my sunshine.”

Social media buzz and speculation As fans and colleagues flooded her comments with congratulatory messages, speculation quickly

followed. A few weeks ago, rumors surfaced linking Ike’s pregnancy to Nigerian senator Ned Nwoko. The politician, who represents Delta North Senatorial District in the National Assembly, was rumored to be the father of her child. These claims spread widely after the actress posted her maternity photos on Instagram.

However, both Ike and Nwoko denied the allegations in separate statements. The actress firmly dismissed the speculation, making it clear that she is not involved with the senator. She also addressed claims that she was set to become his seventh wife, stating that she had no intention of taking on such a role.

A new chapter for Chika Ike Despite the swirling rumors, Ike remains focused on celebrating this

new chapter of her life. The actress, known for her outstanding performances in Nollywood films, has built a strong career and loyal fanbase over the years. While she has kept details about her partner private, her latest announcement shows that she is embracing motherhood with joy.

Fans and well-wishers continue to celebrate her new journey, with many expressing excitement over the arrival of her baby girl. The entertainment industry has also joined in, with fellow actors and celebrities sending their love and support.

As Chika Ike steps into motherhood, one thing is certain—she is ready to embrace this next phase of life with grace and happiness.

# We're offspring of women warriors — Kate Henshaw backs Natasha Akpoti amid spat with Akpabio

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Actress Kate Henshaw praises Senator Natasha Akpoti for standing firm amid controversy over her dispute with Senate President Godswill Akpabio.

Henshaw commended Akpoti's courage, calling her a symbol of resilience for women in politics.

The conflict between the two senators erupted on February 20, 2025, during a heated plenary session. The disagreement reportedly stemmed from seating arrangements, leading to a tense exchange between Akpoti, who represents Kogi Central, and Akpabio. The clash quickly escalated, drawing widespread attention.

Following the altercation, the Senate referred Akpoti to its Committee on Ethics, Privileges, and Public Petitions. Lawmakers accused her of disorderly conduct during the session. The committee is expected to review the case and determine if disciplinary action is necessary.

## Akpoti's shocking allegation

However, Akpoti later made a startling claim. Speaking in an interview on Arise Television, she accused Akpabio of victimizing her because she had rejected his sexual advances. She insisted that the Senate President's actions were not about parliamentary discipline but personal retaliation.

On March 5, 2025, Akpoti took a bold step. During a plenary session, she formally submitted a petition against Akpabio, accusing him of sexual harassment. Her move intensified public debate, with many calling for a thorough investigation into the allegations.

## Public reactions and divided opinions

The situation has sparked mixed reactions across the country. Some have criticized Akpoti, questioning her claims and timing. Others have rallied behind her, urging authorities to take the matter seriously. Among those showing support is actress Kate Henshaw, a vocal advocate for women's rights.



Henshaw expressed her solidarity with Akpoti in a heartfelt social media post. Sharing the senator's picture on Instagram, she declared Akpoti her "Woman Crush Wednesday" (WCW). The actress praised Akpoti for challenging outdated narratives about women's roles in society.

Kate Henshaw's powerful statement "We forget so readily how far we have come," Henshaw wrote. "We forget our lineage, history, and strength. We are told we are weak, spineless, and unable to think for ourselves. We accept the new roles forced upon us—the subtle submission imposed by religion, society, and tradition."

Henshaw criticized the belief that women should remain silent.

Kate Henshaw.

Kate Henshaw.

"They tell us we can't govern, we can't rule, we can't make our own decisions. They tell us to shut up and sit down. Women, like children, are to be seen and not heard," she added.

She ended her message with a powerful statement.

"Do you not know that in nearly all

species, the female is much more deadly than the male? We are the offspring of countless women warriors!"

## Growing support and political implications

Henshaw's post quickly gained traction, with many social media users applauding her stance. Supporters hailed both women as symbols of strength and resistance against gender-based oppression.

Meanwhile, the Senate has yet to issue an official response to Akpoti's allegations. Political analysts say the coming weeks will be crucial in determining how the matter unfolds. If the claims against Akpabio are formally investigated, it could set a significant precedent for accountability in Nigerian politics.

## What lies ahead?

For now, Akpoti remains firm in her position. Despite facing criticism and possible disciplinary action, she continues to push back against what she describes as political intimidation.

As the debate rages on, one thing is clear—her battle has ignited a broader conversation about power, gender equality, and the treatment of women in leadership.

# Trump pauses tariffs on Mexico, Canada for one month

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Donald Trump on Thursday issued exemptions on tariffs for a wide range of goods coming into the U.S. from Mexico and Canada, two days after putting in place sweeping 25% tariffs that rattled stock markets, as businesses warned the move would increase prices for consumers.

The exemption would apply to goods compliant with the North American free trade agreement reached during Trump's first term and will last until April 2, when Trump plans another round of retaliatory tariffs on goods from a range of countries.

About half of goods coming into the U.S. from Mexico would fall under the exemption and around 38% of goods from Canada would qualify, said a senior administration official. That includes potash, which is used in fertilizers.

But some Canadian energy products won't qualify and will be subjected to a 10% tariff. And all other goods, including computers from Mexico, will be subjected to the 25% tariff, the senior administration official said.

"I did this as an accommodation, and out of respect for, President Sheinbaum," Trump wrote in a post on the social media website Truth Social earlier Thursday.

"Our relationship has been a very good one, and we are working hard, together, on the Border, both in terms of stopping Illegal Aliens from entering the United States and, likewise, stopping Fentanyl. Thank you to President Sheinbaum for your hard work and cooperation!"

The U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), which Trump heralded during his first term as a negotiating victory, allows goods to move between the three countries tariff-free if they follow certain rules. Those rules require that a product be made entirely in North America or be substantially transformed in North America, if it is made of components from other countries. For products like autos, 75% of their content must be from North America.



The tariffs for non-USMCA compliant goods could address concerns raised by past and current U.S. officials about Chinese goods being shipped into Mexico and then sent to the U.S. tariff-free, without having met the USMCA requirement of being substantially transformed in North America.

On Tuesday, the Trump administration began charging U.S.-based companies importing goods from Canada and Mexico a 25% tariff for bringing those goods into the U.S. Trump also increased the tariff on goods from China to 20%, on top of tariffs already in place from his first term in office.

The move triggered a sell-off in stocks, and companies warned the added costs from the tariffs could drive prices higher on thousands of products, including alcohol, fresh produce, cars and new homes.

A day after the tariffs were put in place, the White House said it would begin exempting autos from the tariffs if the companies complied by standards in the USMCA deal, which automakers said they have been doing. The tariffs could have added \$4,000 to \$10,000 to the cost of cars made in North America, according to estimates from Anderson Economic Group.

In announcing the tariffs, Trump said he was using them as a tool to pressure Canada and Mexico into doing more to stop the flow of fentanyl into the U.S., though less than 1% of fentanyl seized at the U.S. border was coming from Canada. The United States recorded 87,000 drug overdose deaths from October 2023 to September 2024, a decrease from 114,000 the previous year, according to preliminary data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Mexico's Sheinbaum said during a press conference Thursday that, in her call with Trump, she cited a graph from U.S. Customs and Border Protection showing a drop in fentanyl seizures, which she said Trump hadn't previously seen.

"In February alone, the reduction in fentanyl seizures on the United States side of the border with Mexico was reduced by 41.5%. He didn't know about this graph until I sent it to him," Sheinbaum said.

Trump spoke Wednesday with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who said earlier in the week that there had been a 97% drop in fentanyl seizures from January compared to December, with less than half an ounce seized in January.

# Kids aged 7, 12 torture transgender man to death in NY motel

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Two young children, ages just 7 and 12, were forced to help beat and torture transgender man, Sam Nordquist to death in an upstate New York motel, prosecutors revealed in a disturbing update Wednesday.

The 24-year-old victim had been sexually assaulted with a table leg and broomstick, had bleach poured on him and was beaten with sticks dog toys, rope canes and belts in the weeks leading up to his death at the Patty's Lodge motel in the Finger Lakes region last month, court papers state.

It wasn't immediately clear exactly how the kids — who have not been identified — were involved in Nordquist's torture, but prosecutors described it as one of the "most troubling parts" of the twisted case.

Transgender man Sam Nordquist, 24, was tortured to death in an upstate New York motel last month. AP

"To have two children have to participate in the beating of another human being, it's deeply disturbing," Ontario County Assistant District Attorney Kelly Wolford told a news conference.

"It has — I can speak for myself and everyone involved in this investigation — been one of the most troubling parts of this. It's heartbreaking."

The disturbing allegations were laid bare as seven suspects were indicted on first-degree murder charges on Wednesday over Nordquist's shocking death on Feb. 2.

The suspects, who had previously been arrested for second-degree murder, were also accused of kidnapping and child endangerment in the 11-count indictment.



Nordquist, a black man who originally hailed from Minnesota, was transgender — but authorities have said they have no evidence his death was a hate crime.

He was sexually assaulted, had bleach poured on him and was beaten in the weeks leading up to his death at the Patty's Lodge motel in the Finger Lakes region.

Nordquist was sexually assaulted, had bleach poured on him and was beaten in the weeks leading up to his death at the Patty's Lodge motel in the Finger Lakes region. Tina MacIntyre-Yee/Democrat and Chronicle / USA TODAY NETWORK via Imagin Images

Authorities said at least some of the alleged assailants identify as LGBTQ+ and at least one lived with Nordquist.

Despite not being labeled a hate crime, prosecutors said Nordquist had been treated "like a dog" in the month before his death.

"Sam was beaten, assaulted, sexually abused, starved, held captive and we cannot make sense of that," Wolford said.

"We cannot put that on his gender, and we cannot put that on his race. And I know many will ask the question: Why? Well, as I stand here today as a human being, we'll never know the answer why."

Wolford revealed the top charge against the alleged perps was being increased to first-degree murder because Nordquist had been tortured.

One of the suspects, Precious Arzuaga, had been charged with forcing the two kids to take part in the alleged abuse.

The other six people slapped with murder charges include: Patrick Goodwin, Kyle Sage, Jennifer Quijano, Emily Motyka, Kimberly Sochia and Thomas Eaves.

The two children haven't been identified.

It comes after Nordquist — who had arrived in New York in September and had lost contact with loved ones this year — was reported missing on Feb. 9.

His body was found wrapped in plastic and dumped in a field several days later.

# Russia warns Macron against threats, mocks him as 'Micron'

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**R**ussia warned French President Emmanuel Macron on Thursday not to threaten it with nuclear rhetoric and, mocking his height by calling him 'Micron', ruled out European proposals to send peacekeeping forces from NATO members to Ukraine.

Macron said in an address to the nation on Wednesday that Russia was a threat to Europe, Paris could discuss extending its nuclear umbrella to allies and that he would hold a meeting of army chiefs from European countries willing to send peacekeeping troops to Ukraine after a peace deal.

The Kremlin said the speech was extremely confrontational and that Macron wanted the war in Ukraine to continue.

"This (speech) is, of course, a threat against Russia," Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

"Unlike their predecessors, who also wanted to fight against Russia, Napoleon, Hitler, Mr Macron does not act very gracefully, because at least they said it bluntly: 'We must conquer Russia, we must defeat Russia'.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led to the biggest confrontation between the West and Russia since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Kremlin and White House have said missteps could trigger World War Three.

Russia and the United States are the world's biggest nuclear powers, with over 5,000 nuclear warheads each. China has about 500, France has 290 and Britain 225, according to the Federation of American Scientists.

Russian officials and lawmakers accused Macron of rhetoric that could push the world closer to the abyss.

Russian cartoons cast him as Napoleon Bonaparte riding towards defeat in Russia in 1812.

"Micron himself poses no big threat though. He'll disappear forever no later than May 14, 2027. And he won't be



missed," former President Dmitry Medvedev wrote on X, looking ahead to the end of Macron's term.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova suggested Macron might want help measuring his true military size, and her ministry said his speech contained "notes of nuclear blackmail" and amounted to a threat directed towards Russia.

"Paris' ambitions to become the nuclear 'patron' of all of Europe have burst out into the open, by providing it with its own 'nuclear umbrella', almost to replace the American one. Needless to say, this will not lead to strengthening the security of either France itself or its allies," it said.

Russian advances in Ukraine and U.S. President Donald Trump's upending of U.S. policy on the war have caused fears among European leaders that Washington is turning its back on Europe.

Russian officials say tough rhetoric from Macron, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and other European powers is not backed up by hard military power and point to Russia's advances on the battlefield in Ukraine.

Lavrov and the Kremlin dismissed

Macron's proposal to send peacekeepers to Ukraine and said Russia would not agree to it.

"We are talking about such a confrontational deployment of an ephemeral contingent," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Lavrov said Moscow would see such a deployment as NATO presence in Ukraine.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has dismissed Western assertions that Russia could one day attack a NATO member.

He portrays the war as part of a historic struggle with the West following the collapse of the Soviet Union and NATO's encroachment on what he considers Moscow's sphere of influence.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio this week cast the conflict as a proxy war between Russia and the U.S., a position the Kremlin said was accurate.

"This is actually a conflict between Russia and the collective West. And the main country of the collective West is the United States of America," Peskov said. "We agree that it is time to stop this conflict and this war."

# EU leaders pledge defence aid for Zelensky after Trump snub

By Dave Oludare Oso

European leaders on Thursday said they would stand by Ukraine and spend more on defence in a world upended by President Donald Trump's reversal of U.S. policies.

"Europe must take up this challenge, this arms race. And it must win it," Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said as he arrived at the summit in Brussels.

"Europe as a whole is truly capable of winning any military, financial, economic confrontation with Russia – we are simply stronger," Tusk said.

Many EU leaders hailed the European Commission's proposals this week to give them fiscal flexibility on defence spending, and to jointly borrow up to 150 billion euros (\$160 billion) to lend to EU governments to spend on their militaries.

"We are here to defend Ukraine," the chairman of the meeting, Antonio Costa said as he and European Commission Chief, Ursula von der Leyen, both smiling broadly, warmly welcomed Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, in sharp contrast with the clash between Trump and Zelensky in the Oval Office last week.

But decades of reliance on U.S. protection, divergences on funding and on how France's nuclear deterrence could be used for Europe showed how difficult it would be for the EU to fill the void left by Washington after it froze military aid to Ukraine.

Washington provided more than 40% of military aid to Ukraine last year, according to NATO, some of which Europe could not easily replace.

Some leaders still held out hope, in public at least, that Washington could be coaxed back into the fold.

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Kaja Kallas speaks to the media as she attends a European Union leaders special summit to discuss Ukraine and European defence



"We must ensure, with cool and wise heads, that U.S. support is also guaranteed in the coming months and years, because Ukraine is also dependent on their support for its defence," Germany's outgoing Chancellor Olaf Scholz said.

Adding to the EU's difficulties, Hungary's nationalist leader Viktor Orban, a Trump ally, may veto a unanimous statement backing Kyiv, though he made clear he would support measures for an increase in spending on Europe's own defence.

The Brussels summit takes place against a backdrop of dramatic defence policy decisions driven by fears that Russia, emboldened by its war in Ukraine, may attack an EU country next and that Europe cannot rely on the U.S. to come to its aid.

"I want to believe that the United States will stand by us. But we have to be ready if that is not the case," French President Emmanuel Macron said in an address to the French nation on the eve of the summit.

Ukrainian activists deploy a massive banner, urging European leaders to seize frozen Russian assets to fund Ukraine in its conflict against Russia, in Brussels Belgium, March 5, 2025. REUTERS/Yves...

He stressed that Russia had become a threat for all of Europe, remarks that drew strong criticism from Moscow.

In a sign of the gravity of the moment, Macron said France was open to discussing extending the protection offered by its nuclear arsenal to its European partners.

This was met with mixed reaction. Some, like Lithuania's President Gitanas Nauseda, said such a "nuclear umbrella would serve as really very serious deterrence toward Russia." Poland said the idea was worth discussing while others, like Germany, stressed the need to keep the U.S. involved.

Trump has said Europe must take more responsibility for its security and that the U.S. would not protect a NATO ally that did not spend enough on defence.

His decision to shift from staunch U.S. support for Ukraine to a more conciliatory stance towards Moscow has deeply alarmed Europeans who see Russia as the biggest threat.

Underlining the level of concern, the parties aiming to form Germany's next government on Tuesday agreed to lift constitutional limits on borrowing to fund defence spending.

# Trump to revoke legal status for 240,000 Ukrainians

By Dave Oludare Oso

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration is planning to revoke temporary legal status for some 240,000 Ukrainians who fled the conflict with Russia, a senior Trump official and three sources familiar with the matter said, potentially putting them on a fast-track to deportation.

The move, expected as soon as April, would be a stunning reversal of the welcome Ukrainians received under President Joe Biden's administration.

The department oversees some 100,000 public and 34,000.

The planned rollback of protections for Ukrainians was underway before Trump publicly feuded with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy last week.

It is part of a broader Trump administration effort to strip legal status from more than 1.8 million migrants allowed to enter the U.S. under temporary humanitarian parole programs launched under the Biden administration, the sources said.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said the department had no announcements at this time.

The White House and Ukrainian embassy did not respond to requests for comment.

A Trump executive order issued on January 20 called for DHS to "terminate all categorical parole programmes."

The administration plans to revoke parole for about 530,000 Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans as soon as this month, the Trump official and one of the sources familiar with the matter said, requesting anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

Migrants stripped of their parole status could face fast-track deportation proceedings, according to an internal ICE email seen by Reuters.

Immigrants who cross the border illegally can be put into the fast-track deportation process known as expedited removal, for two years after they enter. But for those who entered through legal ports of entry without being officially "admitted" to the U.S. – as with those on parole – there is no time limit on their rapid removal, the email said.

The Biden programmes were part of a broader effort to create temporary legal pathways to deter illegal immigration and provide humanitarian relief.

In addition to the 240,000 Ukrainians



fleeing the Russian invasion, and the 530,000 Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans, these programmes covered more than 70,000 Afghans escaping the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.

An additional 1 million migrants scheduled a time to cross at a legal border crossing via an app known as CBP One.

Thousands more had access to smaller programmes, including family reunification parole for certain people in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Trump as a candidate pledged to end the Biden programmes, saying they went beyond the bounds of U.S. law.

The Trump administration last month paused processing immigration-related applications for people who entered the U.S. under certain Biden parole programmes – placing Ukrainian Liana Avetisian, her husband and her 14-year-old daughter, in limbo. Avetisian, who worked in real estate in Ukraine, now assembles windows while her husband works construction.

The family fled Kyiv in May 2023, eventually buying a house in the small city of DeWitt, Iowa. Their parole and work permits expire in May. They say they spent about \$4,000 in filing fees to renew their parole and to try to apply for another programme known as Temporary Protected Status.

Avetisian has started getting headaches as she worries about their situation, she said. "We don't know what to do," she said.

U.S. allies from Afghanistan who entered under Biden have also been swept up in Trump's crackdown.

Rafi, a former Afghan intelligence officer who asked to be identified only by his first name to protect family members still in Afghanistan, entered the U.S. legally in

January 2024 using the CBP One mobile app at the U.S.-Mexico border.

He was given a temporary humanitarian parole status that allowed him to live and work in the United States for two years.

On February 13, just over a year into that status, he was detained at a check-in appointment at an ICE office in Chantilly, Virginia. His status was revoked.

In Afghanistan, Rafi was trained by American officers and provided intelligence on "High Value Targets", according to an October 2022 recommendation letter.

"As a result of his active efforts against the enemy, he is currently in extreme danger, and in need of assistance in departing the country," the former CIA officer who trained him wrote.

The officer described Rafi as "truly one of the most dedicated and hardworking individuals I had the honor to serve with in Afghanistan."

In the United States, Rafi applied for asylum and was scheduled for a hearing before an immigration judge in April.

At his February ICE check in – one of the conditions for his temporary status – he was asked to remove his belt and shoelaces, he said. He knew immediately what was happening, he said, and still, he asked: "Are you arresting me? I have broken no law."

Rafi said he felt betrayed.

"When someone stands shoulder to shoulder with American troops and puts his life in danger..." he said in a phone call from detention, his voice shaking.

"I wasn't expecting this behaviour from them. I wasn't expecting it."

On February 24, his lawyer wrote to ICE asking them to release her client, noting his lack of a criminal record, that he was not a flight risk and had an active asylum case related to his work supporting the U.S. military in Afghanistan.

James Mullan, the assistant field office director at ICE's Washington field office responded that ICE was declining to release him.

"The priorities that you mentioned in your email ended on January 20, 2025," Mullan wrote, referring to the date of Trump's inauguration.

# Release all hostages now or 'you're dead', Trump threatens Hamas leaders, Gazans

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

President Donald Trump threatened Wednesday to have members of Hamas and Palestinians in Gaza killed if hostages are not immediately released.

“Shalom Hamas’ means Hello and Goodbye — You can choose. Release all of the Hostages now, not later, and immediately return all of the dead bodies of the people you murdered, or it is OVER for you,” Trump wrote on Truth Social.

“I have just met with your former hostages whose lives you have destroyed. This is your last warning!

For the leadership, now is the time to leave Gaza, while you still have a chance,” he added.

“Also, to the People of Gaza: A beautiful Future awaits, but not if you hold hostages. If you do, you are DEAD! Make a SMART decision. RELEASE THE HOSTAGES NOW, OR THERE WILL BE HELL TO PAY LATER!”

The White House said in a statement that Trump met Wednesday with eight hostages released from Gaza: Iair Horn, Omer Shem Tov, Eli Sharabi, Keith Siegel, Aviva Siegel, Naama Levy, Doron Steinbrecher and Noa Argamani.

The administration is engaging in direct talks with Hamas over the release of U.S. hostages still held in the Gaza Strip, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt confirmed Wednesday.

Trump believes the dialogue is part of a “good-faith effort to do what’s right for the American people,” Leavitt said at a White House news briefing.

“There are American lives at stake,” she added, saying Israel had been consulted.

Hamas spokesperson, Hazem Qassem responded to Trump’s comments, telling Turkish state-run news agency Anadolu Agency “These threats complicate matters regarding the ceasefire agreement and encourage the occupation not to implement its terms.”

“There is an agreement that was signed and Washington was a mediator in it, which includes the release of all prisoners in 3 stages,” Qassem added, “and Hamas has implemented what it was required to do in the first stage, while Israel is evading the second stage.”

The six-week ceasefire between Israel and Hamas ended Saturday with no extension



of peace negotiations in sight. It is the first time the United States has held direct talks with the group, which it has designated a terrorist organisation.

Asked whether the scope of the talks included Trump’s proposal to take over Gaza, Leavitt said she would not go into details and referred questions to the State Department.

Initially, the idea for a second phase of a ceasefire included Hamas’ releasing more hostages in return for Israel’s withdrawing from the Palestinian territory, with the aim of ending the war.

But with no talks continuing, Israel reinstated a halt in the flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza after the initial phase of the ceasefire ended. Hamas then accused Israel of violating their agreement by “evading the commitment to end the war and withdraw completely from Gaza.”

Israel recently approved a plan from the U.S. special envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, that would have continued the first stage of the ceasefire through Ramadan and Passover instead of proceeding to the second phase of peace talks.

President Donald Trump, pictured with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, believes talks between the U.S. and Hamas are part of a “good-faith effort to do what’s right for the American people,” the White House press secretary said

Witkoff’s plan called for the release of half of the remaining hostages, including the bodies of those who have died, on the first day and the remaining hostages once a permanent ceasefire deal is reached, according to Israeli Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu’s office.

But Hamas rejected the proposal, saying it didn’t honor the original, multiphased ceasefire agreement.

“Unfortunately, these positions by the United States strengthened the position of the Zionist right within the government and pushed for taking punitive steps, including closing the crossings in this manner and using the starvation policy against the people of the Gaza Strip,” the group’s spokesman, Hazem Qassem, said in a statement Sunday.

White House National Security Council spokesman Brian Hughes said in a statement Sunday that Israel has “negotiated in good faith since the beginning of this administration to ensure the release of hostages held captive by Hamas terrorists.”

Hughes added that the United States will support Israel’s decision on next steps “given Hamas has indicated it’s no longer interested in a negotiated ceasefire.”

On Monday, Netanyahu warned Hamas in remarks before the Knesset, Israel’s legislature, that if the group didn’t release more hostages, “there will be consequences beyond your imagination. We are preparing for the next stages of the campaign — not everything is visible, and that’s a good thing.”

The Biden administration announced initial ceasefire in January just days before Trump’s inauguration. It required a pause of Israel’s military operations in Gaza and the release of both living and dead hostages held there in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

# Obama attends LA Clippers game without Michelle as split rumours swirl

By Dave Oludare Oso



Former president Barack Obama sat courtside at a Los Angeles Clippers game Wednesday — but notably without his wife, Michelle.

Instead, Obama was spotted third-wheeling with Clippers owner Steve Ballmer and his wife, Connie Snyder, TMZ reported.

The 44th president appeared to still have a blast watching the LA squad take down the Detroit Pistons 123-115.

When his attendance was announced on the big screen at the brand new Intuit Dome, Obama jumped to his feet and waved as the crowd gave him a standing ovation.

The NBA game was the latest of

Barack's public appearances sans wife, which has brought their marriage under scrutiny.

Barack, 63, notably attended President Trump's second inauguration solo in January after Michelle, an outspoken critic of Trump, bailed on the event.

Michelle was also not with her husband at President Jimmy Carter's funeral at Washington National Cathedral in DC, with reports saying she decided to remain "in Hawaii on an extended holiday vacation" instead.

On Tuesday, the night before the Clippers game, Barack was spotted out eating a fancy dinner at Anajak Thai restaurant in Sherman Oaks with his daughters, Malia and

Sasha — but again no Michelle, according to TMZ.

Despite the unfounded rumors about their relationship, the couple was lovey-dovey on Valentine's Day last month when each posted sappy messages to each other on social media.

"Thirty-two years together and you still take my breath away," the former president wrote in a post on X along with a selfie of the two beaming together.

"If there's one person I can always count on, it's you, @BarackObama. You're my rock. Always have been. Always will be. Happy Valentine's Day, honey!" she wrote with a heart emoji and the same selfie.

# US suspends aid to South Africa after Trump order

By Dave Oludare Oso

The state department has ordered an immediate pause on most US foreign assistance to South Africa, according to a cable seen by the Guardian, officially implementing a contentious executive order by Donald Trump.

The directive, issued on Thursday, implements Executive Order 14204 targeting what the administration called “egregious actions” by South Africa. It orders all state department entities to immediately suspend aid disbursements, with minimal exceptions.

“To effectively implement EO 14204, all bureaus, offices and missions shall pause all obligations and/or dispersion of aid or assistance to South Africa,” reads the cable, signed by the secretary of state, Marco Rubio.

The cable follows the 7 February order, amid a broader reassessment of US foreign aid which paused certain foreign assistance pending review.

The order specifically cites “unjust racial discrimination” against white Afrikaners – descendants of Dutch colonizers who implemented the segregationist regime that denied basic rights to the Black majority until 1994.

The South African-born billionaire Elon Musk, a Trump super-ally who heads the administration’s government efficiency team and has condemned his homeland for “openly racist policies”, is widely seen as influencing the administration’s stance toward a country where white South Africans, just 7% of the population, still disproportionately control most wealth and land.

According to the cable, Rubio has delegated authority to Pete Marocco, a Trump loyalist who presided over the administration’s evisceration of foreign



aid programs at USAid and the state department, to determine whether specific aid programs should continue. The guidance emphasizes there is “a very high bar for such requests”.

Only PEPFAR, the US global HIV/Aids program that provides life-saving treatment to millions of South Africans, will proceed without additional review, according to the cable. All other assistance programs require special permission, even those that had received prior exceptions under the January foreign aid pause.

This is the latest sign of escalating tensions between the two generally friendly nations, starting when President Trump accused South Africa of using its new land law to discriminate against white citizens – claims South African president Cyril Ramaphosa rejected as misinformation.

The bill in question controversially permits government acquisition of private land without compensation in certain circumstances, though its supporters say such seizures would be

rare and subject to judicial review.

Trump has also criticized South Africa’s leading role in its genocide case against Israel at the international court of justice, while also offering refugee status to wealthy white Afrikaners who wanted to relocate to the United States, further incensing the country.

The aid freeze also follows South Africa’s recent announcement that it is preparing a new trade proposal for the Trump administration, as officials anticipate the possible end of the African Growth and Opportunity Act – which has allowed billions in dirty-free exports to the United States.

Earlier on Thursday, South Africa issued a statement acknowledging the US withdrawal from the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP), which has canceled previously funded climate projects following Trump’s revocation of international climate finance initiatives.

The state department did not respond to a request for comment.

# South Korean fighter jet accidentally drops bombs, injures 7

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



**A** South Korean fighter jet accidentally dropped eight bombs on a civilian area during training Thursday, reportedly injuring seven people.

The MK-82 bombs “abnormally” released by the KF-16 fighter jet fell outside a firing range, causing unspecified civilian damages, the air force said in a statement.

The air force said it would establish a committee to investigate why the accident happened and examine the scale of civilian damages.

Rescue members work at the site of the accidental bombing in Pocheon, South Korea on March 6, 2025. AP

It said the fighter jet was taking part in the Air Force’s joint live-firing drills with the Arm

It said it would actively offer compensation and other necessary steps for victims.

The air force statement didn’t say where the accident happened.

But South Korean media reported

it occurred in Pocheon, a city close to the border with North Korea.

Police tape surround glass shards lying near a damaged shop after the Mk82 bombs fell outside the shooting range. REUTERS

Yonhap news agency reported that five civilians and two soldiers were injured.

Yonhap said the conditions of two of the injured were serious but not life-threatening. It also said seven buildings were damaged.

# Cucurella: Chelsea must be confident to win Europa Conference League

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye



Chelsea left-back Marc Cucurella has urged his team to approach their UEFA Europa Conference League campaign with full confidence, stating that belief in their abilities is key to securing victory in the competition.

Ahead of Chelsea's Round of 16 first-leg clash with Copenhagen on Thursday, March 6, the Spanish international emphasised the importance of self-assurance for Enzo Maresca's side.

Cucurella believes that the team, with its impressive squad and talent, has the potential to go all the way in the tournament.

"For sure. Chelsea are a top club. We have top players with skills and ability, We need to feel we can win the competition, believe we are ready and can do it. We go with all we have to win it." Cucurella said in an interview with the media.

The Blues, who have previously lifted numerous prestigious trophies, including the UEFA Champions League, have yet to win the Europa Conference League — a fact that makes this campaign even more significant for Cucurella and his teammates.

"If we win everything, it's more easy, We have a good opportunity, we play

tomorrow against a tough team. If we win this competition, we have the opportunity to bring a trophy. It would be the first time Chelsea have won this trophy. It could be special. It's a big opportunity to show we are ready." he continued.

As Chelsea face a formidable opponent in Copenhagen, Cucurella's words highlight the determination within the squad to push forward and capture another European trophy.

With the competition still wide open, the Blues are hoping to build on their previous successes and add the Europa Conference League to their ever-growing trophy cabinet.