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Gunmen abduct 25 people, mostly women in Katsina

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Gunmen suspected to be terrorists attacked Batsari Local Government Area of Katsina State and abducted at least 25 people consisting mostly of women and children.

Several homes were ransacked by the hoodlums in the incident that occurred late Sunday night.

According to a resident of the community who asked not to be named, the gunmen stormed the community in their numbers, shooting sporadically to announce their presence.

He said the hoodlums did not kill anyone but abducted the said number of people and moved them into the forest.

He said the gunmen operated without restraints as security operatives did not come to the area till hours after the hoodlums had left the community.

He lamented that the cold weather caused by harmattan winds would adversely affect the victims in the forest as some of them were little



children and babies.

The source, however, said that the gunmen were yet to contact the community on the abducted persons, as such was their mode of operation in past incidents.

He called on the government to boost security presence in the area, as communities within the axis had been victims of such attacks in recent times.

He cited the example of an attack some four days ago, on a village neighbouring Ajasa where an attack by gunmen left one person dead while

another victim sustained injuries.

He lamented that the attack occurred in broad daylight when some farmers were reaping harvests from their farmland.

When contacted, a spokesperson for the police command in the state, ASP Abubakar Aliyu, said he would make inquiries on the matter and revert with details.

Aliyu has not provided additional details on the incident as of the time of this report.

Ghana's President-elect, Mahama, visits Tinubu

By Friday Omosola

Ghana's President-Elect, John Mahama yesterday paid a courtesy visit to President Bola Tinubu at the Presidential Villa, Abuja.

President Tinubu's Special Assistant on Social Media, Dada Olusegun, stated this on his X page today.

He wrote, "The President-Elect of Ghana, H.E John Dramani Mahama paid a courtesy visit to President Tinubu at his residence, Presidential Villa, State House yesterday."



Mahama's visit is said to be in connection with Tinubu's interest in the December 7, 2024 Ghana's election, and his goodwill message to the President - Elect.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that Tinubu had congratulated Mahama in a telephone call after his opponent conceded defeat, ahead of the official declaration of the results.

The former Lagos State Governor expressed his eagerness to collaborate with Mahama's administration to strengthen bilateral relations across various sectors and foster a brighter future for the West African region.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	372,500.00
HALF PAGE	213,000.00
QUARTER PAGE	106,500.00
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10X6	261,585.50
10X5	255,238.00
10X4	206,890.50
10X3	179,608.00
9X6	254,977.00
9X5	225,738.00
9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.5
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
5X2	42,916.50
4X4	60,166.50
4X3	36,499.50
4X2	29,333.50
3X3	28,000.00
3X2	17,400.00
2X2	13,000.00
2X1	8,600.00
1X1	4,400.00

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	329,868.50
HALF PAGE	192,500.00
QUARTER PAGE	100,000.00
14X2	109,500.00
10X6	242,500.00
10X5	237,500.00
10X4	192,500.00
10X3	171,000.00
9X6	232,500.00
9X5	206,000.00
9X4	177,500.00
9X3	150,000.00
8X6	216,000.00
8X3	98,500.00
7X4	164,002.00
6X4	94,010.50
6X3	78,500.00
6X2	47,500.00
5X5	100,000.00
5X4	61,500.00
5X3	57,819.00
5X2	40,379.50
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2X1	8,630.00
1X1	4,315.00

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

POLITICAL BLACK & WHITE

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

CORPORATE BLACK & WHITE

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	254,533.50
HALF PAGE	142,787.50
QUARTER PAGE	80,706.50
14X2	78,222.50
10X6	217,830.00
10X5	192,305.50
10X4	142,787.50
10X3	121,355.50
9X6	192,305.50
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PUBLIC NOTICE BLACK & WHITE

PRODUCT BLACK & WHITE

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9X4	N/A
8X6	N/A
8X3	N/A
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4X3	N/A
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3X2	14,923.00
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2X1	5,439.50
1X1	2,700.00

SPECIAL POSITIONS

2X6 FRONT PAGE	700,000.00
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4X6 FRONT PAGE	2,250,000.00
5X6 FRONT PAGE	3,350,000.00
10X6 FRONT PAGE	8,250,000.00
EARPIECE FRONT PAGE(1.5X2)	246,500.00
EARPIECE INSIDE PAGE(1.5X2)	117,875.00
EARPIECE BACK PAGE	236,796.50
CENTRE SPREAD COLOUR (PUBLIC NOTICE)	1,027,000.00
CENTRE SPREAD COLOUR (PRODUCT)	929,000.00
CENTRESPREAD B&W	800,000.00
CENTRE SPREAD HALF COLOUR	575,000.00
CENTRESPREAD STRIP COLOUR	191,668.50
DOUBLE SPREAD COLOUR	721,500.00
DOUBLE SPREAD HALF COLOUR	432,881.00
DOUBLE SPREAD STRIP COLOUR	144,294.00
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CENTRE SPREAD HALF PAGE B & W	550,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD B & W	725,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD HALF B & W	425,000.00
FULL WRAP AROUND	15,000,000.00
HALF WRAP AROUND	8,500,000.00
HALF PAGE FRONT	5,500,000.00

ALLURE RATE

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SIZE	RATE	TOTAL
CENTRESPREAD		967,500.00
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(IFC) Inside Front Cover		430,000.00
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EVENT		250,000.00

SIZE	RATE	7.5% VAT	TOTAL
PHOTO NEWS PAGE 2	50,000.00	3,750.00	53,750.00
PHOTO NEWS (3X3)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
PHOTO NEWS (4X4)	53,333.30	4,250.00	57,583.30
PRESS RELEASE (4X4)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
EVENT COVERAGE	100,000.00	7,500.00	107,500.00
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Tinubu extols Buhari's virtues at 82

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has congratulated his predecessor, Muhammadu Buhari, on his 82nd birthday.

In a signed statement today, Tinubu praised the former president's steadfast commitment to Nigeria's progress and unity, noting that it continues to inspire many across the country.

He further emphasised that Buhari's enduring legacy remains a guiding force in Nigeria's journey toward prosperity and stability.

Tinubu highlighted Buhari's unwavering determination and resilience, citing his persistent efforts in contesting the presidential elections of 2003, 2007, and 2011 before achieving victory in 2015 and 2019.

According to Tinubu, this tenacity serves as a source of inspiration for Nigerians to never give up on their goals.



“On behalf of the government and people of Nigeria, I extend my warmest congratulations and best wishes to you on your 82nd Birthday.

“As you celebrate this remarkable milestone in Daura, we reflect on your years of dedicated service and leadership, which have significantly shaped the course of our nation”, he noted.

Furthermore, the President reaffirmed his commitment to

advancing the infrastructure legacy inherited from Buhari, the leader of the first All Progressives Congress (APC) administration.

“On this special day, may you be surrounded by the love of your family and friends and continue to enjoy good health, happiness, and fulfilment in all your endeavours, now and in the future. Happy Birthday, and thank you for your services to Nigeria. With respect and admiration.”

Tinubu appoints Aisha Garba UBEC Executive Secretary

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Bola Tinubu has appointed Aisha Garba, an international development specialist, as the Executive Secretary of Universal Basic Education (UBEC).

The President's spokesman, Bayo Onanuga, said in a statement, “Aisha Garba, a Senior Education Specialist with the World Bank, brings more than 24 years of experience driving impactful programmes in education for human and economic development, working in Nigeria, Ghana, Somalia, Kenya, the USA, and the United Kingdom.

“With over 15 years of hands-on experience at the World Bank, Garba has consistently led end-to-end design and



management of education programmes and reforms, from conceptualisation to completion and impact assessment.

“The development specialist will share her rich network with governments, development partners and communities to deliver sustainable solutions in basic

education.”

Garba had previously worked on the team that met the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targets in Nigeria and consulted for the World Bank, Department for International Development, BOND-UK, Regent Foundation, and Muslim Aid Organisation.

Aisha Garba is an alumna of Petra American University in Jordan, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts combined degree in English and Computer Studies in 2000.

She later got a Master's in International Development at the University of Birmingham in the UK in 2007.

Nigeria to benefit from \$1.65bn W'Bank loan in 2025

By Dave Oludare Oso

Nigeria is set to benefit from three major loan projects totalling \$1.65 billion in 2025, courtesy of the global financial institution, the World Bank.

According to information obtained from the World Bank's website, it (World Bank) is set to decide on three major loan projects for Nigeria in 2025, as part of efforts to address critical developmental challenges in the country.

The loans, currently in the pipeline, will focus on internally displaced persons, education, and nutrition enhancement.

According to reports, the loans are designed to support Nigeria's social and economic recovery, particularly in vulnerable sectors requiring urgent intervention.

The first project, titled Solutions for the Internally Displaced and Host Communities Project, has a commitment amount of \$300m and is scheduled for approval on April 8, 2025.

The project, which remains at the concept review stage, seeks to provide sustainable solutions for internally displaced persons and their host communities, addressing their social and economic challenges.

The second project, HOPE for Quality Basic Education for All, is expected to receive \$553.8m in financing.

Its approval is slated for March 20, 2025, and it also remains in the concept review phase.



The third project, Accelerating Nutrition Results in Nigeria 2.0, involves the largest share of the proposed loans, with a commitment of \$800m.

The Bretton Woods Institution is expected to hold a decision meeting on the project by February 20, 2025.

The \$1.65bn financing package reflects the World Bank's continued commitment to supporting Nigeria's ongoing reforms.

The World Bank's schedule indicates that decisions on these loans will be made in early 2025, with Nigeria's ability to meet project prerequisites and demonstrate accountability in implementation likely to play a key role in getting the funds.

It was further observed that the Federal Government, under the leadership of President Bola Tinubu, has secured loans worth \$6.95bn from the World Bank in about 18 months. The amount increased to the new figure following the latest approval of a new \$500m loan from the World Bank for a project in Nigeria.

The Board of the World Bank Group approved a \$500m loan to Nigeria last

week Friday (December 13, 2024) to boost rural access and agricultural marketing in the country.

According to information obtained from the Washington-based institution, the loan is for the Rural Access and Agricultural Marketing Project—Scale Up.

It is designed to bridge the gap between rural communities and the broader marketplace, facilitating smoother access to agricultural markets, schools, and hospitals and promoting social cohesion among rural populations.

This was the 10th loan project from the World Bank under the administration of President Bola Tinubu.

The first project approved under Tinubu's administration was the \$750m Power Sector Recovery Performance-Based Operation.

This loan is designated as additional financing for the power sector recovery performance-based operation, a crucial component of Nigeria's broader strategy to stabilize and enhance its power sector.

Nigeria's First Lady disburses N1.9bn to senior citizens nationwide

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Nigeria's First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu on Tuesday disbursed the sum of N1.9billion to the elderly across 36 states and Federal Capital Territory through her Renewed Hope Initiative programme.

Beneficiaries of the donation aged 65 and above got N200,000 each tagged, Renewed Hope Initiative Elderly Support Scheme (RHIESS).

Mrs Tinubu, who was represented by the First Lady of Lagos, Dr Ibijoke Sanwo-Olu at the State House, Alausa, gave N50 million to 250 beneficiaries in Lagos.

The donation was increased to N200,000 this year from N100,000 that was provided last year for the elderly citizens during this festive season.

At the short ceremony, there were three leaders from each Senatorial Districts which included, Lagos West, Alhaja Mojisola Alabi, Lagos West, Mr Adebayo Adeoye and Lagos East, Mrs Esther Mamora.

The First Lady said, "I am delighted to join you all today at the 2nd edition of the Renewed Hope Initiative Elderly Support Scheme (RHIESS) with the theme: TOTAL WELLNESS: Happy, Healthy and Prosperous Lifestyle.

"This programme is designed to support the welfare of our elderly citizens annually. Two Hundred and Fifty (250) elderly citizens, aged 65 and above in all 36 States of the federation, the Federal Capital Territory and veterans from the Defence and Police Officers' Wives



Association (DEPOWA) will be benefiting from this scheme.

"The Governing Board of the Renewed Hope Initiative has decided to increase the grant from N100,000 to N200,000 this year to provide further support to our elderly citizens during this festive season.

"A total of One Billion, Nine Hundred Million Naira (N1,900,000,000) will be disbursed across the nation. The RHI Coordinators in the 36 States of the federation, the FCT and DEPOWA have received Fifty Million Naira (N50,000,000) each, out of which N200,000 will be distributed today to each beneficiary.

"In addition to this, free medical check-ups and other sundry items will be provided. I commend all our State First Ladies/RHI State Coordinators and partners for their efforts in making this day a reality.

"I congratulate all our senior citizens who have been selected as beneficiaries. I urge you to remember to prioritise your health even as we all enjoy and celebrate in the festive season. Eat well, stay hydrated, do little exercise – like walking and getting adequate rest. Spend quality time with loved ones, and do what you enjoy and makes you happy."

Speaking on behalf of the beneficiaries, Alhaja Alabi said the money was coming at the right time. "We give thanks to Allah and Her Excellency, Oluremi Tinubu for the gift. I confirm that I got the N50,000. This will be used to purchase foodstuffs and take care of my children. May God bless Oluremi and her husband," she prayed.

NYSC member slumps, dies at Kebbi orientation camp

By Dave Oludare Oso

A National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) member deployed to Kebbi State, Tayachibiyacha Ebal, has tragically passed away after collapsing at the Dakin Gari Orientation Camp.

Reports indicate that Ebal suddenly slumped and was immediately rushed to the camp clinic for urgent medical attention. She was later transferred to the Federal Medical Centre in Birnin-Kebbi for advanced treatment. Despite efforts by medical professionals to revive her, she was pronounced dead.



The Kebbi State Commissioner for Youth and Sports, Alhaji Muhammad

Fingila, confirmed the incident to journalists in Birnin-Kebbi.

He described the event as unfortunate and expressed condolences to the deceased's family on behalf of the state government. He also revealed that her remains had been sent to her home state, Adamawa, for burial.

Efforts to obtain a statement from the Kebbi State NYSC office were unsuccessful, as their spokesperson, Mrs. Hadiza, did not respond to calls or messages.

Reckless driver kills traffic officer in Ibadan

By Olamilekan Botti

The Oyo State Government has pledged to prosecute a reckless driver responsible for the death of Kehinde Fabunmi, an officer of the Oyo State Road Traffic Management Authority (OYRTMA). Fabunmi was fatally struck on Saturday in the Agbowo area of Ibadan North Local Government while on duty.

The incident occurred when a Black Mercedes-Benz 4MATIC with registration number LSD862JS reportedly ignored a traffic light and was subsequently stopped by OYRTMA officers. In a desperate attempt to escape, the driver reversed the vehicle and, while trying to speed away, fatally hit Fabunmi, who had approached the car from the front.

The officer sustained severe head injuries and was rushed to a nearby hospital in Orogun. He was later transferred to another facility within Ibadan, where he was pronounced dead.

Speaking on the matter on Monday, the OYRTMA Chairman, Adekoya Adesagba, condemned the tragic



incident, emphasizing that Fabunmi was performing his lawful duty of ensuring road safety when he was killed.

"OYRTMA officers are dedicated to safeguarding lives and property on our roads. Anyone who assaults or disrespects these officers will face the full wrath of the law," Adesagba said.

He praised the swift action of the police and OYRTMA officers, who apprehended the suspect near the University of Ibadan area shortly after the incident. Adesagba also expressed his condolences to the family of the

deceased officer.

"The suspect has been arraigned at the Magistrate Court, Iyaganku, today (Monday). However, due to the court's weekday break, the case has been adjourned until Thursday. The suspect will remain in police custody," he stated.

Adesagba described the incident as a stark reminder of the dangers faced by traffic management officers daily and reiterated the need for drivers to exercise caution and obey traffic laws.

"The killing of our officer is a serious offence, and justice will be served. No one who disrespects or endangers our officers will go unpunished," he added.

The government has assured the public that the prosecution of the suspect will be pursued vigorously to serve as a deterrent to others.

Aba market, fake drinks, beverages production hub – NAFDAC

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) has declared Eziukwu Market, also known as Cemetery Market in Aba, Abia State as the centre for the production and distribution of fake and substandard drinks and beverages.

NAFDAC Director, South-East Zone, Martins Iliyomade made the declaration during an operation at the market on Tuesday.

Iliyomade described the market as a centre for mass production and distribution of fake and substandard products, likening the situation to weapons of mass destruction.

The director said in spite of previous crackdowns, including a major operation in December 2023, illegal activities persisted in the market.

He said it was baffling that individuals



remained recalcitrant and determined to make money at the expense of the lives of their fellow citizens.

“During the last operation the leadership of the market signed an undertaking with NAFDAC to identify and expose those involved in the production and sale of fake goods,” he said.

According to him, the agency will revisit the agreement as market leaders now have serious questions to answer.

Iliyomade said the volume of expired products being re-validated was deeply troubling.

He advised consumers to remain vigilant about the products they purchase to avoid endangering their health.

Meanwhile, the raid uncovered an alarming range of fake and adulterated products, including wines, whiskey, yogurt, carbonated drinks, chips, dry gin and other beverages.

The items were found either being produced in unsanitary conditions within the market or stored in sections where expired products were re-labelled with new dates.

Army releases detained Okuama leader, Okungbaye to Sen Dafinone

By Dave Oludare Oso

Pa Dennis Okugbaye, one of the detained Okuama leaders, has been released to Senator Ede Dafinone, contrary to earlier reports that he had died in Nigerian Army detention.

Okugbaye was released on bail following Senator Dafinone’s intervention and is expected to be produced on demand.

Currently, Pa Okugbaye is receiving medical attention at the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital, where he is being cared for by family members.



His release comes after Senator Dafinone called for the unconditional release of Okugbaye and other detained Okuama leaders

or for them to be charged to a civil court.

ICPC recovers N52bn, \$966,900.83, intercepts N5.9bn diverted funds

By Dave Oludare Oso

The chairman of Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) Dr. Musa Aliyu said the Commission has recovered over N52 billion and 966,900.83 U.S. dollars since he assumed office a year ago.

Aliyu (SAN), disclosed this, on Tuesday at an event to mark his one year anniversary as the Chairman of ICPC in Abuja.

The ICPC boss added that the commission also intercepted and stopped the diversion of N5.882 billion in 323 Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) within the same period.

He attributed the significant milestone achievement to the steadfast commitment to the rule of law, adaptation to evolving trends and equipping its workforce with ICT capacity in the fight against corruption.

“The current administration’s anti-corruption agenda and my own policy thrust encapsulated in the acronym “CARE” for impact, have further motivated the Commission to enhance its tools, approaches, and engagements.

“I am therefore bold and proud to reflect on the modest progress we have made and the challenges we have overcome so far.

“These accomplishments include notable asset recoveries, enforcement actions, and initiatives promoting transparency and good governance.

“For instance, through its Constituency and Executive Projects Tracking Initiative (CEPTI), the Commission continues to ensure accountability in government funds and delivery of tangible benefits of



democracy to citizens across Nigeria,” he said.

Aliyu said that in the area of asset recovery, ₦29.70 billion in cash was recovered and presently domiciled in ICPC recovery accounts.

He said that in the same vein ₦10.98 billion in VAT was recovered and remitted to FIRS, while N10 billion COVID-19 vaccine fund meant for production of vaccine was remitted to the treasury.

The ICPC chairman further stated that the commission also recovered value of assets to the tune of N2.5 billion through various courts’ order of final forfeiture.

Aliyu added that \$966,900.83, was also retrieved and kept secured in the ICPC-CBN account balance brought forward.

He explained that the commission intercepted over N5 billion while conducting Systems Study and Review (SSR) of the MDAs through its Ethics and Integrity Compliance Scorecard (EICS).

“As part of its commitment to institutional accountability, the

Commission assessed 323 Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) through its Ethics and Integrity Compliance Scorecard (EICS).

“It also established 80 Anti-Corruption and Transparency Units (ACTUs) across MDAs to reinforce its anti-corruption efforts.

“While doing these, the Commission stopped the diversion of public funds to the tune of ₦5.882 billion,” he said.

Aliyu disclosed that the report of the EICS exercise conducted in the middle of this year was ready and would also be released to the public through the media.

Aliyu said the commission had just completed the tracking of 1,500 projects nationwide, valued at N610 billion, under CEPTI Phase 7.

“Upon completion of tracking field work last week, follow-up activities are ongoing and the report is being collated.

“However, the report of the Phase 6 exercise conducted about this same time last year is ready and will be released to the public today,” he added.

Google, Facebook, other foreign firms pay N3.85tn in taxes to Nigerian government – Report

By Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE

In a significant development for Nigeria's tax revenue, foreign companies operating in the country, including tech giants such as Google, Netflix, and Facebook, have remitted a total of N3.85 trillion in taxes to the Federal Government in the first nine months of 2024.

This represents an impressive 68.12 per cent increase from the N2.29 trillion collected in the same period in 2023.

The revenue, which includes Company Income Tax (CIT) and Value Added Tax (VAT), was revealed in a report issued by the National Bureau of Statistics on Tuesday.

According to the data, tax collections surged steadily throughout the year. In the first quarter of 2024, Nigeria earned N1.03 trillion, which rose to N1.52 trillion in the second quarter, and further increased to N1.30 trillion in the third quarter.

A significant portion of this revenue came from CIT, which accounted for N2.57 trillion—up by 43.65 per cent compared to the N1.79 trillion collected in the same period of 2023.

VAT collections also saw substantial growth, reaching N1.28 trillion, an increase of 157.03 per cent from the N498.34 billion collected in 2023. This jump reflects the success of Nigeria's improved tax collection efforts.

The Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) explained that CIT is a 30 per cent tax on companies' profits, while VAT is a 7.5 per cent consumption tax paid by the final consumer when goods are purchased or services are rendered.

On a quarterly basis, CIT earnings showed a marked improvement, climbing 42.49 per cent from N598.13 billion in Q1 to N1.12 trillion in Q2,



before slightly dipping to N852.29 billion in Q3. VAT collection was more stable, earning N435.73 billion in Q1, N395.74 billion in Q2, and N448.85 billion in Q3, a 3.01 per cent increase.

The report highlights the growing importance of tax revenue in Nigeria's economy. Since 2020, the Federal Government has been focusing on collecting taxes from foreign digital service providers operating in the country. These companies, such as Netflix, Facebook, and Twitter, have benefited from Nigeria's large and growing digital market but had previously avoided tax obligations due to their lack of physical offices in the country.

As part of the tax collection drive, the government began imposing a digital tax on companies offering video streaming, social media platforms, and digital content services. This tax is expected to increase further once more foreign firms comply with the regulatory framework.

Despite some platforms, like TikTok and X (formerly Twitter), failing to meet tax filing requirements, others, including Google, LinkedIn, and Meta, have fully complied with the tax obligations as per Nigeria's Code of Practice for Interactive Computer Service Platforms and Internet Intermediaries.

This growth in tax collections is particularly significant in light of earlier statements from former Accountant-General of the Federation, Oluwatoyin Madein, who revealed that tax revenues have now become the nation's highest source of income.

As a result, members of the Federation Account Allocation Committee eagerly anticipate the monthly revenue reports from the FIRS, as these funds are essential for distribution among the federal, state, and local governments.

In line with its ambitious revenue goals, the government set a tax collection target of N19.4 trillion for 2024, with the FIRS already having exceeded N18.5 trillion in remittances for the year.

The substantial growth in tax revenue underscores Nigeria's efforts to improve its fiscal health through increased tax compliance, especially from foreign digital service providers.

This is expected to provide further stability and growth for the country's economy in the years to come.

MTN contributes over N200bn monthly in VAT – Tax committee

By **Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE**

Taiwo Oyedele, Chairman of the Presidential Fiscal Policy and Tax Reforms Committee, has revealed that MTN Nigeria is the largest contributor to the nation's Value Added Tax (VAT) pool, paying over N200 billion every month.

This makes the telecommunications giant the single biggest contributor to the country's VAT revenue, with a significant gap between it and the second-largest contributor.

Oyedele shared this information during a recent appearance as a panellist on Channels Television's Town Hall on Tax Reforms.

He also took the opportunity to highlight disparities in the current VAT distribution system and discussed ongoing reforms designed to address these issues.

The current VAT distribution system attributes all of MTN's VAT payments to Lagos State, where the company's headquarters is located. However, Oyedele pointed out that the services generating this VAT revenue are consumed nationwide, not just in Lagos.

"MTN is the largest contributor to VAT in Nigeria. They pay over N200 billion every month, and the gap between them and the second-highest contributor is huge," Oyedele explained.

"Today, all the VAT paid by MTN is credited and attributed to Lagos State, even though calls are made in Kano, the FCT, Ekiti, Edo, or Kebbi."



One of the key proposals in the tax reform bill is a change in the VAT allocation process. The aim is to ensure a more equitable distribution of VAT revenues based on actual consumption, rather than the location of a company's headquarters.

To illustrate the potential impact of the reforms, Oyedele presented a hypothetical model for redistributing MTN's VAT contributions. Under this model, Lagos State would receive approximately 20 per cent of the VAT paid by MTN, with the remainder shared more fairly among other states across Nigeria.

"This adjustment ensures that states where the VAT is generated get their fair share," Oyedele said.

"When you analyse the data, you see Lagos State's share reduces slightly, but every other state gains."

The tax reform bill, which has been under discussion recently, aims to

address longstanding challenges in Nigeria's fiscal policies. It includes provisions for more balanced revenue redistribution, addressing inefficiencies in the system, and promoting fairness in how VAT is allocated across the country.

The proposal has sparked some debate, with critics arguing that it could have negative consequences for certain parties.

However, Oyedele defended the proposed reforms, stressing that the current system is flawed and unfair. "If you're doing the wrong thing, how can Lagos State disagree with us when we propose to fix it?" he said.

The proposed changes to Nigeria's VAT distribution system are expected to have significant implications for the country's fiscal landscape, ensuring a fairer allocation of tax revenues across states.

Nigerians paid over N2tn in ransom amid growing kidnapping crisis – NBS report

By Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has revealed that Nigerians paid a staggering N2.23 trillion as ransom over a 12-month period between May 2023 and April 2024.

This amount was paid by households affected by kidnapping incidents, underscoring the increasing threat posed by criminal activities across the country.

The NBS's latest Crime Experience and Security Perception Survey report shows that a total of 51.89 million crime incidents were recorded across Nigerian households during the reference period.

The North-West region reported the highest number of crimes, with 14.4 million cases, followed by the North-Central region with 8.8 million incidents. In contrast, the South-East had the lowest crime rate, with 6.18 million incidents.

The findings also indicated that rural areas were more affected by crime than urban centres, with rural households experiencing 26.53 million incidents, compared to 25.36 million in urban areas.

Kidnapping was identified as a particularly severe issue, with 4.14 million households reporting home robberies.

Of the households affected by kidnapping, 65% were forced to pay ransom to secure the release of victims. The average ransom paid amounted to N2.67 million, which contributed to the total N2.23 trillion paid by Nigerians to criminals over the 12 months.



Despite the high number of crimes, only 36.3% of households that experienced home robberies reported the incidents to the police, and the reporting rate for kidnappings was similarly low. Many victims cited a lack of confidence in law enforcement, believing that police intervention would not result in meaningful action.

The survey also found that 21.4% of Nigerians were victims of crime at the individual level, with phone theft being the most common offence, affecting 13.8% of the population. While 90% of phone theft victims reported the crime to the police, only half were satisfied with the police's response.

In terms of sexual offences, an estimated 1.4 million Nigerians were victims, with most incidents occurring in either the victim's residence or someone else's home. Only 22.7% of victims reported the crime to the police.

Public perception of safety remains concerning, with 9.6% of Nigerians

believing they are at risk of becoming crime victims in the next 12 months. The fear of crime was higher in rural areas, where 13% of the population felt vulnerable, compared to just 7% in urban areas.

The survey also raised concerns about the effectiveness of Nigeria's security agencies, particularly the police, in responding to emergencies. Only 33.1% of Nigerians reported that security agencies responded to emergency calls within 30 minutes.

Satisfaction with police responses was notably low, especially in cases involving livestock and crop theft, where less than half of victims expressed satisfaction. In many rural areas, local vigilante groups were seen as more reliable sources of security.

The findings paint a troubling picture of the state of crime and security in Nigeria, highlighting the need for greater accountability and efficiency in law enforcement.

Oyo state to implement N80,000 minimum wage from January 2025

By **Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE**

Government workers in Oyo State will begin receiving the newly agreed N80,000 minimum wage from January 2025.

The announcement was made on Tuesday, December 17, by the Commissioner for Information and Orientation, Prince Dotun Oyelade, following the successful conclusion of discussions between the state government and organised labour.

According to the statement, the Oyo State government and labour unions reached a consensus on the new wage structure, which includes consequential adjustments.

The agreement was signed by the Secretary to the State Government, Prof. Olanike Adeyemo, and the Head of Service, Mrs. Olubunmi Oni, representing the government.

Kayode Martins of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and Bosun Olabiyi of the Trade Union Congress (TUC), along with other labour leaders, signed on behalf of the unions.

Although the new minimum wage structure was initially agreed to take effect from July 1, 2024, the financial implementation will begin on



January 1, 2025.

The commissioner also noted that workers who retire between July 1 and December 31, 2024, will have their retirement benefits calculated based on the new wage structure.

The statement further called on all ministries and extra-ministerial departments in the state to intensify efforts in boosting the state's Internally Generated Revenue (IGR), in order to improve the state's fiscal standing.

Oyo State currently spends over N6 billion monthly on salaries and wages, which adds up to more than N77 billion annually, making it one of the top three employers of labour in Nigeria.

With the new minimum wage, government workers can look forward to starting 2025 with a significant increase in their pay.

In addition, workers can expect to receive the traditional 13th-month salary at the end of 2024, a benefit they have enjoyed under Governor Seyi Makinde's administration since 2019.

This wage adjustment highlights the state government's commitment to improving the welfare of its workers and strengthening its economy through increased revenue generation.

Ademola Lookman showed Davido and Kemi Badenoch that wisdom is not by age

By **Reno Omokri**

Recently, the singer David Adeleke was given a global stage to do whatever he wanted and deliver any message.

Sadly, Mr. Adeleke used the opportunity to speak in an American accent. Not only that, he used that American accent to talk down on Nigeria and tell the world not to invest in Nigeria because, as he put it, Nigeria's "economy is in shambles".

Coincidentally, a month after his faux pas, Kemi Badenoch, probably inspired by Davido, used her British accent to talk down Nigeria, calling us "a very poor country" where the police rob citizens.

But the interesting thing about her own case is that the next day, the BBC featured a panel of Conservative Party big shots, and one of them, Albie Amankona, a party chieftain from Chiswick, who is also a celebrity broadcaster, said, and this is a direct quote:

"If you are a Brexiteer, and you are saying we need to be expanding our global trade beyond the European Union, we want to be looking at emerging markets for growth, don't slag off one of the fastest growing economies in Africa."

Is it not strange that it took the BBC and a British politician to promote Nigeria as one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa?

And just when we thought it was all bad news, God gave us a breath of fresh air in the youthful Ademola Lookman, who used the global podium granted to him by his winning the 2024 African Footballer of the Year award to promote and project Nigeria and the Lukumi Yoruba language to the world.

Wisdom is not by age. If not, Ademola Lookman, who is just twenty-seven,



will not have displayed greater wisdom than David Adeleke, who is thirty-two, and Kemi Badenoch, at forty-four.

Mr. Lookman proved that the age of Methuselah has nothing to do with the wisdom of Solomon.

And it is not as though other ethnicities with global icons do not also project Nigeria. They do.

Dr. Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala spoke Igbo on the podium of the WTO in Geneva. In terms of prestige, she is FAR above Lookman.

My campaign is not for the Lukumi Yoruba alone. It is for all sub-Saharan Black Africans to learn to speak their language and not use ability to speak English or another colonial language as a measure of intelligence.

Besides Lukumi Yoruba and Hausa, every other Nigerian language, including Fulfulde, is gradually dying out.

General Buhari is half Fulani and half Kanuri. Yet, he cannot speak either Fulfulde or Kanuri. But he speaks Hausa and English.

Fact-check me: In 2012, UNESCO declared Igbo an endangered language.

However, the Lukumi Yoruba are to be commended for their affirmative

actions to advance their language and culture.

Let me give you an example. All six Governors of the Southwest bear full Lukumi names: Jide Sanwa-Olu, Seyi Makinde, Dapo Abiodun, Ademola Adeleke, Abiodun Oyebanji, and Orighomisan Aiyedatiwa.

No other zone in Nigeria has all its governors bearing ethnic Nigerian names as first and second names. They either bear Arabic or European names as first names or even first and second names.

If we truly want to be the Giant of Africa, we must take affirmative steps to preserve our language and culture so we can have children like Ademola Lookman.

Teach your language to your children before you teach them English. They will learn English at school. Being multilingual is scientifically proven to boost intelligence.

Fact-check me: In the U.S., Latino kids do not speak English until they start school. They learn Spanish as a first language.

Even if you relocate to the UK, the best you can be is British. You can never be English. And if your choice of Japa is the U.S., the highest you can be is an American citizen. You will never become a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant WASP.

Your power lies in balancing ancient and modern, Western and African, English (or other colonial languages) and your native tongue.

That is the way to reverse language erosion, like the Lukumi Yoruba.

Niyi Osundare: The Poet As A Masquerade

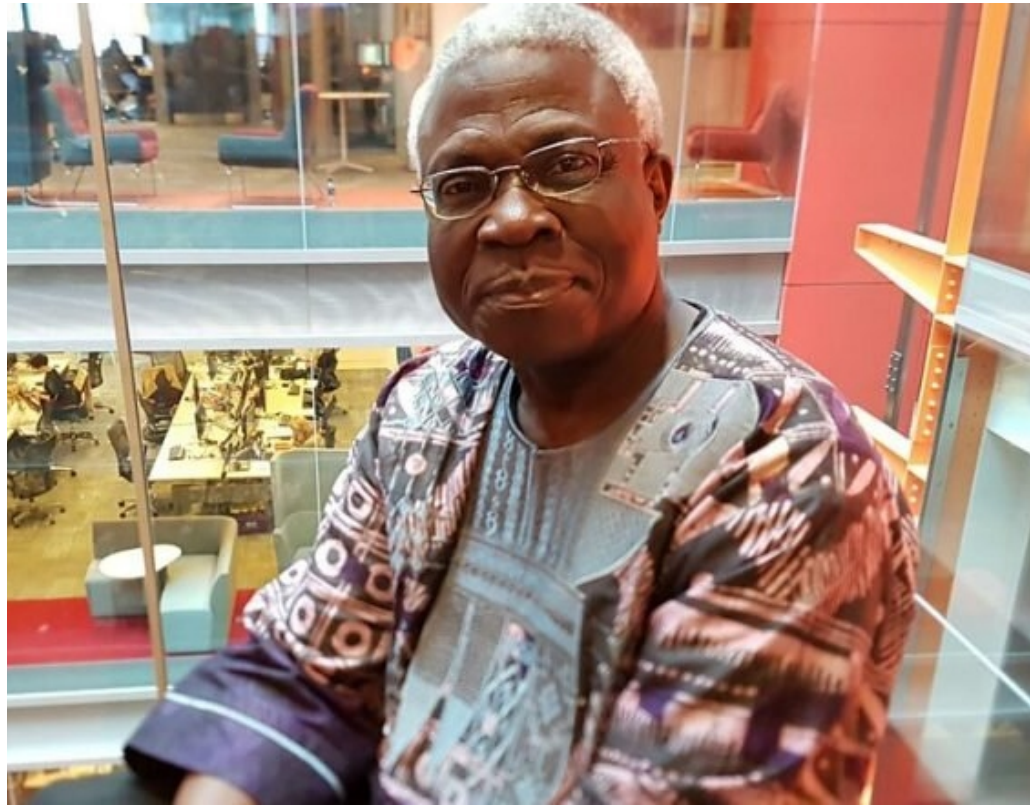
By Babafemi Ojuda

If you have ever witnessed the Ede masquerade, the Aladoko, or the Alamudu perform, you will instantly appreciate the poetry of Niyi Osundare, the world-renowned poet. Osundare hails from Ekiti, as do these mesmerizing masquerades. Had education not found him, Osundare might well have been a bearer of one of these magnificent masks — adorned with multicolored feathers and mirrors cascading from the nape to the feet—chanting profound verses with the captivating grace of tradition.

The Ede masquerades are revered for their boundless knowledge, weaving chants on any subject with a voice as sonorous as a nightingale's. Their repertoire spans reflections on nature, the environment, the economy, the essence of power, and the tribulations of life. These living archives of wisdom mirror the poetic genius of Osundare, who embodies the spirit of his Ekiti heritage.

Yet, education found Osundare. Had it not, he might today be a celebrated Aladoko or Alamudu, thrilling audiences with the eloquence of the masquerades.

I first encountered Osundare in 1982. That year, word spread one evening that emerging poets and performers would gather in one of our lecture theatres. Joining the crowd of eager students, I witnessed a creative spectacle featuring Wole Soyinka, Oyin Ogunba, Niyi Osundare, Kole Omotosho, Odia



Ofeimun, Funso Aiyejina, and our American professor, Bob Fox, performing their works. Literary critics like Biodun Jeyifo, Ropo Sekoni, Bayo Williams, and Wole Ogundele were in attendance, while a young East African lecturer, Mr. Mutambuka, served as MC.

Osundare etched himself in my memory that evening with the refrain of one of his poems: “Jenje kiti, kiti jenje.” It immediately struck me that this poet must be Ekiti. My curiosity piqued, I became one of the first to purchase his debut poetry collection, *Songs of the Marketplace*, published in 1983. This book will later win the 1986 Association of Nigeria Authors prize and joint winner of the Commonwealth Prize.

The release was a sensation—not in the way of pop culture, but among us, young students of literature, who were grappling with the frustrations

of a repressive regime. In that collection was a poem that became an anthem of our restlessness: “I Sing of Change.” Interestingly, this poem was reportedly the original title for the collection before it was changed to *Songs of the Marketplace*.

Change, as we yearned for, would come eventually, but Osundare has never ceased to long for a deeper transformation in our land. With awards upon awards and prizes upon prizes, he has dazzled the world with his creativity and prolificacy. And while we marvel at his accomplishments, we await the ultimate recognition. I promise you, it shall come—In Our Own Very Eyes. It shall be part 2 for our glorious land if you know what I mean.

Kogi upgrades Okene health facility to teaching hospital

By Helen Okechukwu



Following the passing of the bill into law, Governor Ahmed Ododo has endorsed the upgrade of Okene Reference Hospital to Confluence University of Science and Technology (CUSTECH) Teaching Hospital.

The State Commissioner for Information and Communications, Mr. Kingsley Fanwo, in Lokoja today told journalists about the development.

According to Fanwo, this development aligns with the National Universities Commission's (NUC) approval of full-time medical courses to ensure sustainability.

The degrees to be obtained include the Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) programme, among others.

Fanwo added that the rigorous teamwork between key parties in the state to achieve this initiative.

The significant stakeholders include the university, the State Ministry of Health, and the State Ministry of Education.

“We commend the State House of Assembly for passing the bill, which has now been signed into law by Governor Ododo,” Fanwo noted.

Prioritising the healthcare sector, he noted that CUSTECH is

equipped with world-class medical facilities.

He further emphasised that health workers will be trained for better services and sustainability.

While expressing gratitude to the State House Assembly for their efforts, he described the institution as a significant milestone while reaffirming the government's commitment to healthcare and education.

“With the bill now law, CUSTECH is poised to effectively commence its MBBS program, the document revealed.

Police ban fireworks in Rivers

By Helen Okechukwu



Apparently to avoid casualties during and after the festive period, the Rivers State Police Command has banned the use of fireworks, crackers, and knockouts across the state.

The State Police Commissioner (CP) Mustapha Bala gave the directive today, adding that the use of fireworks poses grave danger to lives and properties in the state.

This order was conveyed in a statement made available to journalists yesterday through the force spokesperson, Grace Iringekoko.

The CP advised residents in the state to maintain a friendly and conducive environment during and after the celebration period, assuring them of security.

“The Rivers State Police

Command wishes the good people of Rivers State Merry Christmas and a prosperous new year ahead, also we are ensuring to serve you better in this celebration season,” the statement added.

He stressed the health implications on the use of fireworks on the prevailing public peace, adding that an act could lead to panic and tension in the state.

“Consequently, the Command hereby appeals to the general public, parents, and guardians, to warn their children and wards to desist from using such harmful ‘devices.’

He also warned sellers of such products to refrain from doing so, adding that violators of the ban will be arrested and prosecuted.

“The Commissioner of Police, CP Mustapha Mohammed Bala, again

wishes to assure the people of the State that the Command will leave no stone unturned to ensure that there will not be any form of security breach.

While also seeking public support and co-operation, the command called on every resident to be vigilant and report any suspicious activities to the state police command.

The CP also urged the state’s residents to contact the command on the following phone numbers: 08032003514, 08028915460, and 08161355218, in case of any suspected criminal activities in their areas.

Bukunmi Oluwasina on envy, rivalry among actresses

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Actress Bukunmi Oluwashina condemns rivalry among women in film, urging unity and mutual respect, contrasting it with male actors' camaraderie.

Bukunmi began by praising the solidarity she had observed among male colleagues. She marvelled at how they support, celebrate collective successes, and genuinely root for each other. In stark contrast, she lamented the rivalry and negativity that sometimes plague interactions among women in the same field.

In her post, Bukunmi openly expressed her desire to see a shift in the industry. She reflected on how male actors handle competition gracefully, saying, "I envy these men. Just look at them—the way they contain each other, support each other, and grow together."

She highlighted how they celebrate one another's achievements, even when they share the same aspirations. She gave an example of stumbling upon one actor praising a director in their absence, despite being a director.

Bukunmi voiced her longing to witness a similar spirit of collaboration among women in the industry. "I pray I witness this someday with my gender in this field," she wrote, emphasizing the need for love and mutual respect.

She questioned why women often feel pressured to choose sides or avoid supporting others, saying, "Are we on a battlefield? If we are, what are we fighting for? A crown? Money? Fame? None of these will matter when we leave this world."

Bukunmi also addressed the role of fans in fueling division. She criticized followers who instigate conflicts, describing them as "fans from the pit



of hell" who demand loyalty to one side while encouraging animosity toward others. She argued that such attitudes only deepen divisions, spreading bitterness and hate.

The actress emphasized her commitment to peace, declaring that her heart has "no limitation in love." She refused to engage in battles or rivalries unless given a personal reason. "Joy is no joy to me if its purpose is to make others sad," she stated. For her, love must be inclusive, extending even to those who may not reciprocate it.

Bukunmi's message extended beyond industry colleagues. She addressed the concept of love as a universal value, noting that it should not be conditional or selective. "Love is not something you have and keep. It's meant to be shared," she wrote. She urged people to break the cycle of hate by showing kindness and support, even to those who may not deserve it.

Nollywood Actress Bukunmi Oluwashina

She added, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world go blind. You can be the one to break that chain. Showing

love to someone who doesn't acknowledge you makes you the bigger person. It shows you have something they don't—an abundance of love."

Bukunmi's post resonated deeply, shedding light on an issue that many in the entertainment industry and beyond can relate to. Her candid observations reveal a desire not just for personal peace but for a collective shift toward unity and mutual support.

By choosing to lead with love, she hopes to inspire others to do the same. Her message underscores the importance of collaboration over competition and reminds everyone that love, when shared widely, can be a powerful force for good.

Through her words, Bukunmi challenges her peers—and fans—to reflect on their actions and choose positivity over pettiness. As she concluded, "The love we receive from the world is nothing if we don't have enough in ourselves to give out collectively."

Her powerful statement is a critique and a call to action, urging all to embrace love, foster unity, and create a more harmonious world.

In sharing his experiences, Ice Prince hopes to motivate others to overcome their own obstacles. His life is a shining example of how persistence, faith, and hard work can lead to success—even when the odds seem insurmountable.

Ice Prince's journey from orphanhood to global stardom is a powerful reminder that one's circumstances do not have to define their destiny.

Why I built dream home for dad, own mansion at 33 – Nancy Isime

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Nollywood actress and media personality, Nancy Isime, has shared an inspiring story of achieving two of her lifelong dreams, building her father's dream home and purchasing a mansion for herself at the age of 33.

Taking to social media, Nancy reflected on her humble beginnings and the unwavering determination that led her to this monumental moment.

She expressed gratitude for the journey, highlighting her resilience and hard work as key drivers of her success.

The actress, well-known for her outstanding contributions to Nollywood and the entertainment industry, used her story to encourage fans and followers, proving that dreams can indeed become reality with dedication and perseverance.

Nancy Isime's achievements are a testament to her commitment to both her family and personal aspirations, inspiring many with her remarkable journey from modest beginnings to attaining such milestones.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

"I remember so clearly, I was about 13, sitting in what was going to be our new home – an uncompleted building, the only windows and doors were those protecting the rooms we would sleep in. Everywhere else was pure carcass!" she wrote.

She recounted the struggles her family faced while living in that uncompleted house.

"No flooring, no ceilings, no doors, no windows, no running water – just our beloved well which provided us water to do everything, including drink,"



Nancy shared.

Determined to rewrite her family's story, Nancy made a personal vow. "I remember sitting there and one day I said... I'm going to own a good home! But before I buy even a tiny piece of land, I'm going to help Daddy achieve his lifelong dream of owning a fully completed furnished house."

Nancy Isime revealed that her journey began at the age of 17, when she took her first job as an event usher.

"After every earning, I'd set aside some money towards 'Vision Daddy's house.' This continued throughout all of my career transitions," she said.

MISSION HALF ACCOMPLISHED

Her hard work paid off, and on December 18, 2022, Nancy finally handed over the keys to her father's fully completed and furnished home.

"Quietly, while everyone was celebrating this new feat, in passing, I said, 'God, I don't do wetin you say make I do oh, abeg help me run my own, but no rush, at your own time.'"

In what she described as divine timing, exactly a year later on December 15, 2023, Nancy received the keys and papers to her dream home.

"I received the keys and papers to my dream home after making my first initial payment just a few days prior," she disclosed.

For Nancy, the achievement was more than she expected, especially given her earlier doubts.

"Months prior to this day, I didn't even think that was going to ever be a possibility in my life, na husband house I be dey use style eye," she added with humour.

GRATEFUL

Grateful for her journey and God's grace, Nancy reflected on the alignment of her blessings.

"God is good! Because I am obedient to God's word, Deuteronomy 28:1-13 has manifested so greatly in my life!"

She credited her success to God's guidance and favour.

"God has not only blessed me with the grace, wisdom, direction, favour, and peace required to live a successful life, He has also opened doors man cannot shut, aligned me with the right opportunities, and caused me to find uncommon favour."

Nancy concluded with heartfelt gratitude, emphasizing the importance of faith and hard work. "Which of the Lord's blessings can I deny? None!"

Nigerian model emerges Mr International, celebrated for feat

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



Nigerian model, Samuel Nwajagu, has received an outpouring of tributes from fans over his historic feat as the first African to win the prestigious Mister International title.

The 16th Mister International pageant took place during the weekend at the Island Hall, Fashion Island in Bangkok, Thailand.

The 23-year-old software engineer competed against 47 contestants from around the world to win the highly coveted title.

He was crowned by Kim Goodburn of Thailand, the outgoing titleholder.

In his appreciation speech, Nwajagu said: "I feel very great and I am very happy for the support each and every one of you gave me

throughout this journey.

"My message is a message of hope and resilience, and I want to encourage everyone that you are capable of making a difference regardless of where you come from no matter where you are.

"All great things start from small beginnings.

"Don't be afraid to take that bold step because where dreams meet determination is where greatness follows."

The organisers of the pageant, thereafter congratulated him on their Instagram page: [new@officialmisterinternational](#): "Here he is, your new Mister International 2024, Nwajagu Chinemerem Samuel from Nigeria! "A well-deserved victory for a truly

remarkable gentleman. "Congratulations!"

NEW DAILY PRIME reports that the historic victory has continued to receive accolades from Nigeria's across the globe, with many taking to their social media page to congratulate Nwajagu.

A bike Dabiri-Erewa, Chairman/CEO of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission, celebrated him with a post on her X page.

Dabiri-Erewa wrote: "Hearty congratulations to Nwajagu Samuel Chinemerem who has become the first African to win the Mister International title.

"The 23-year-old software engineer competed against over 40 contestants from around the world to win the crown."

Bovi: Child beating wrong

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian comedian Bovi Ugboma emphasizes empathy, understanding over corporal punishment in his parenting approach, advocating for a more thoughtful approach.

During a recent interview on The Honest Bunch podcast, aired on Monday, Bovi shared personal experiences as a father, explaining his approach to handling difficult situations with his children.

Bovi recalled instances when his child would become upset and resort to throwing objects, including breaking family items like the television.

“I don’t advocate for beating children. You should let children be. My son would break the television just for fun. If he got upset, he would throw things and break them,” Bovi said.

He went on to explain that it wasn’t until his child reached a certain age that he began to show remorse for his actions. “Thank God for my capacity to replace the TV. If I couldn’t afford another one, my approach would have been different,” Bovi added.

“That’s why I tell people—when we hit our children, ask yourself: are you trying to correct them, or are you frustrated?”

Bovi also revealed that the incident he posted about in 2021 marked the third television his child had broken.

However, instead of resorting to punishment, Bovi focused on understanding his child’s behavior, believing that punishment rooted in frustration doesn’t lead to meaningful correction.

In the interview, Bovi also addressed the issue of bullying in schools. He criticized the hierarchical system where older students, often just 16 years old, are given authority over their younger peers.



“No child should be given authority over another in the name of being a senior student. They are children,” Bovi argued. He expressed concern that such authority can foster abuse and unhealthy power dynamics.

“When you follow our educational system, a 16-year-old is often in SS3. What does a 16-year-old truly understand about authority? It’s wrong,” he said. “This creates a culture of abuse and hierarchy. It has to stop.”

He questioned the practice of enforcing respect through fear, asking whether anyone would accept a 16-year-old punishing their child. “Would you let a 16-year-old flog your child because they believe they’re the senior?” he asked.

He further criticized the broader culture that prioritizes respect through fear, arguing that it begins in secondary school. “The white man left us and created a system for us to colonize ourselves. Now, everyone is waiting to climb to the top to assert their authority,” he explained.

Nigerian Comedian Bovi

“That’s why you hear people say, ‘Do

you know who I am?’ It starts with a glorified form of torture where older students punish younger ones.”

On the topic of parenting, He emphasized the importance of recognizing that each child is unique.

He argued against the idea of applying a one-size-fits-all approach to raising children. “You can’t raise four children the same way,” he said.

“That’s why you’ll find some children saying, ‘I love my dad,’ while others may say, ‘I hate my dad.’ It’s because the father used the same approach for all of them.”

Bovi’s insights reflect a commitment to understanding his children’s individual needs and fostering a nurturing environment that goes beyond traditional disciplinary methods.

His emphasis on empathy, understanding, and age-appropriate parenting continues to resonate, advocating for a more thoughtful approach to child-rearing in Nigerian society.

Tiwa Savage: God timed success for greatness

By **Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi**

Afrobeats singer Tiwa Savage reflects on her career journey, sharing her belief that God intentionally delayed her success for a greater, divine purpose.

In a recent episode of *The Receipts* podcast, the 44-year-old music star reflected on her experiences, emphasizing that the timing of her success was part of a divine plan.

Savage explained that achieving success in her thirties rather than her twenties wasn't a setback but rather a blessing in disguise.

Tiwa Savage believes the delay in her rise to fame was intentional, offering a deeper meaning to her journey.

She explained that God's purpose in this delay was to inspire and uplift women who might be struggling with self-doubt or uncertainty about their future.

"I feel like God has done this on purpose," Savage said. "God delayed my success for a purpose. I used to wonder, why wasn't I successful in my twenties? I started succeeding in my thirties. It's to bless other people. It's to bless that 25-year-old girl who's scared about what the future holds."

Savage hopes her story will serve as a source of hope for young women, reminding them that there is still time to pursue their dreams and achieve their goals. She continued, "If she opens my page and sees that I started in my thirties, she would be like, 'I still have time.'"

The singer's reflections highlight how delayed success can offer a sense of reassurance and encouragement to others.

Tiwa's journey from facing setbacks to achieving success later in life demonstrates that timing doesn't necessarily dictate one's potential.

Savage's belief that God's plan led to her success at a later stage has allowed her to inspire many who may feel lost or



uncertain about their own paths.

In the podcast, Savage also emphasized the importance of resilience. "It's not about when you start, it's about when you finish," she said. "God's purpose is always bigger than what we can see at the moment." Her message is clear: setbacks aren't the end, and delayed success often holds the key to deeper meaning and greater impact.

Savage's journey wasn't always easy. Early in her career, she faced numerous challenges, including doubts from others about whether she would achieve mainstream success.

"People used to doubt me," Savage recalled. "They'd ask, 'Tiwa, are you sure you can do this?' But I always believed there was more to my journey than the setbacks I was experiencing. I never gave up."

Her belief that God intentionally delayed her success stems from the lessons she's learned along the way. She explained, "If I had been successful in my twenties, I wouldn't have the depth of understanding I have now. I wouldn't have the same maturity or clarity."

For Savage, the delay allowed her to grow as both an artist and an individual, sharpening her sense of purpose and passion for what she does.

Moreover, Savage's reflections highlight the significance of divine timing in achieving goals. She sees her journey as a reminder that success doesn't always arrive when we expect it.

"It's not about rushing to achieve your dreams at a specific age," she explained. "Sometimes, life takes its own course, and when the time is right, everything will fall into place."

Tiwa Savage's story has resonated with countless women who have faced self-doubt and uncertainty about their futures.

Many of them, like Savage once was, are in their twenties or thirties, feeling anxious about whether they have enough time to pursue their goals. Savage's journey serves as a testament that it's never too late to follow your dreams, and the setbacks one faces can often lead to profound blessings.

Music Star Tiwa Savage

Music Star Tiwa Savage

"I hope my story gives other women the courage to keep going," Savage said. "I want them to know that even if they feel they are running out of time, there is still so much life ahead. Your best years could be ahead of you, not behind."

Tiwa Savage's belief that God's timing is intentional has allowed her to embrace the delays in her career as part of a greater purpose.

By inspiring others to hold onto hope and resilience, she has created a message of encouragement that transcends boundaries.

Through her music and personal story, Savage has become a voice of reassurance for women everywhere who may feel uncertain about their paths.

DJ Cuppy: “True self won’t bend for love”

By **Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi**



Disc jockey Florence Otedola, widely recognized as DJ Cuppy, has made a bold and empowering declaration, embracing her true identity without compromise.

In a recent post shared on her X handle, Cuppy emphasized that she will no longer conform to any personal or professional expectations that require her to abandon her authentic self.

Cuppy’s statement reads, “I’m not staying in a room, a conversation, a relationship, a platform, or anywhere that demands I abandon my true self. I’m done with that!” This declaration highlights her firm commitment to staying true to her values, no matter the context.

Cuppy is no stranger to navigating her identity in a world that often encourages conformity, and with this statement, she strengthens her resolve to live without compromise.

DJ Cuppy has been open about her desire to find love again and her preferences when it comes to relationships.

However, her latest declaration goes beyond matters of the heart, signalling a broader commitment to authenticity in all aspects of life.

For Cuppy, the need to fit into social or professional spaces that demand conformity no longer serves her purpose. Instead, she has chosen to prioritize self-acceptance and unapologetically embrace who she truly is.

Cuppy’s journey toward self-empowerment is not new. Over the years, she has been candid about her struggles with identity and the pressures that come with navigating life in the public eye.

As a successful DJ and media personality, she has often been in the spotlight, which, at times, has made maintaining authenticity challenging. However, this recent statement reinforces her commitment to rejecting those pressures.

Through her music and public persona, DJ Cuppy has consistently used her platform to advocate for self-expression and personal growth.

Her message has resonated with many, especially in an age where social media often promotes curated images of perfection.

With her latest declaration, she takes it a step further, emphasizing that authenticity is not just a personal value,

but a necessity.

In a world that tends to prioritize fitting in over standing out, DJ Cuppy’s bold move serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of self-acceptance. By refusing to compromise her identity, she encourages others to do the same.

In a time when the lines between personal and professional life are often blurred, her message is particularly resonant—staying true to oneself is not just an option, but a crucial act of empowerment.

Cuppy’s decision to embrace her true self, no matter the circumstances, sends a strong signal that authenticity is key to personal fulfillment.

As she continues to grow both personally and professionally, her followers will likely find inspiration in her unwavering commitment to remaining genuine.

DJ Cuppy’s journey serves as a reminder that embracing one’s true self can lead to greater confidence and, ultimately, a more fulfilling life.

Abdulrazaq applauds Dele Odule, others as Kwara hosts premieres of “Apaji”, “The Seat”

By Friday Omosola



The Kwara Sugar Factory Film Studio in Ilorin was once again a hub of excitement and cultural celebration as Nollywood stars, movie enthusiasts, and government representatives gathered for the premiere of “Apaji” and “The Seat.”

The films were produced by Muka Ray Eyiwumi, the Senior Special Assistant to Governor Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq on Culture and Tourism.

The event, described as a celebration of Kwara State’s rich cultural heritage and growing entertainment industry, drew wide acclaim.

Governor Abdulrazaq, who is also the Chairman of the Nigeria Governors’ Forum (NGF), expressed his gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of the premieres.

Represented by Deputy Governor Kayode Alabi, the governor acknowledged the presence of Nollywood legends, including Dele Odule, Peju Ogunmola, Olaiya Igwe, and Pa Ajirebi, whose participation added glamour to the event.

Ray also appreciated Ambassador Olufolake Abdulrazaq, represented by the Kwara State Commissioner for Communication, Bola Olukoju.

He further recognised key government officials, including Sa’adudeen Salaudeen, Senior Adviser and Counselor to the governor, and Abdulrazaq Jiddah, Special Adviser on Special Duties, alongside commissioners and other dignitaries who graced the occasion.

Governor Abdulrazaq reiterated his administration’s unwavering

commitment to promoting the arts and entertainment industry in Kwara State.

He emphasised his intention to continue partnering with stakeholders to develop the sector, positioning Kwara as a creative hub in Nigeria.

Similarly, veteran actors Dele Odule, Olaiya Igwe, Peju Ogunmola, and Pa Ajirebi commended Governor Abdulrazaq for his substantial investment in the creative industry.

They expressed confidence that such support would yield significant progress and opportunities for local talents soon.

Nigel Farage's Reform Party poised to become UK's largest

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

In a significant development, Elon Musk, a prominent ally of United States President-elect Donald Trump, has expressed his support for Reform UK.

This comes after Musk met with Farage and Reform Party treasurer Nick Candy at Trump's residence in Florida. Speculation is mounting that Musk could donate up to \$100 million to support the party's growth.

On Tuesday, Mr. Farage shared a photo on social media platform X (formerly Twitter), showing himself and Nick Candy alongside Elon Musk. The post was captioned: "Britain needs Reform." Musk replied with a resounding: "Absolutely."

This endorsement marks a significant boost for Reform UK, which has

currently overtaken the Labour Party in the national polls for the first time. The party has seen a sharp rise in support since the general election, positioning itself as a growing alternative to the UK's traditional political establishment.

In a joint statement, Farage and Candy said: "We had a productive meeting with Elon Musk that lasted an hour. We gained valuable insights into the Trump campaign's strategies and will continue discussions in other areas. This is a crucial moment to save the West, and we believe we can achieve great things together."

Elon Musk's influence in politics has grown substantially. As the largest donor in the 2024 US election cycle, he reportedly contributed at least \$277 million to the Republican Party. Following Trump's victory, Musk is

set to co-lead the newly established Department of Government Efficiency, aimed at streamlining state operations and reducing government size.

The potential financial backing from Musk has added further momentum to Reform UK. Earlier this month, Musk engaged with Farage on X, inquiring about the party's next "electoral opportunity." Farage responded with details of the upcoming local elections in May 2025.

With growing public interest and high-profile endorsements, the Reform Party's influence appears to be on the rise, sparking discussions about its potential to reshape the UK's political landscape.



Primary pupils able to view porn on school computer

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

School children in Edinburgh have accessed violent and pornographic images on iPads provided by the city council, raising significant concerns about inadequate security systems. Devices distributed by the Labour-led Edinburgh City Council to thousands of 10- and 11-year-old pupils were intended to enhance learning, but reports have emerged that children bypassed security controls using simple methods.

The primary school pupils discovered ways to manipulate internet search engines by deliberately misspelling explicit terms or inserting spaces into blocked words. By clicking on the images tab, children were able to bypass safeguards, triggering warnings of adult content that included prompts to disable “safe search” filters. A concerned parent, who documented the loopholes in a video, revealed that explicit content such as erotic hanging, strangulation, drowning, and graphic executions was accessible on their 10-year-old’s device.

In response, Edinburgh City Council issued a statement acknowledging the problem and confirming it had taken “immediate steps” to prevent further incidents. The council also suspended access to Wikipedia, citing concerns that some of its content might not be suitable for all age groups. An “urgent review” has been launched to address the security flaws.

However, parents remain alarmed. One parent expressed frustration that such critical flaws existed, while others highlighted the ease with which children had bypassed the controls. The council’s statement, which contained no formal apology, argued that “no technical solution can ever guarantee full safety” for children using digital devices.

Miles Briggs, a Conservative MSP for Lothian, condemned the council’s failure, stating, “It’s deeply concerning. The council has failed to put in place the safety systems needed to control what children can access – and that’s

something they need to answer questions on.” Mr. Briggs also confirmed plans to seek assurances from Jenny Gilruth, Scotland’s Education Secretary, that similar security vulnerabilities are not present on digital devices distributed across the country.

Alex Cole-Hamilton, leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats and an Edinburgh MSP, added: “The online battle to keep our kids safe is never-ending. As the father of a Primary 6 daughter who enjoys her iPad very much, this concerns me deeply.”

The controversy underscores a broader challenge in managing digital safety for children while balancing access to educational resources. The Edinburgh City Council now faces mounting pressure to reassure parents and strengthen its digital safeguarding measures to prevent further incidents.



NY Judge upholds Trump's hush money conviction, rejects immunity claim

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



A New York judge has ruled Donald Trump's hush money conviction is valid, rejecting the president-elect's argument that it should be dismissed in the wake of a landmark immunity ruling from the US Supreme Court.

In July, the country's top court ruled that presidents have broad immunity from criminal prosecution for "official actions" they take while in office.

But on Monday, Manhattan Judge Juan Merchan who presided over Trump's trial this past spring sided with prosecutors, saying the convictions on 34 felony counts centred on "unofficial conduct."

The decision preserves Trump's historic conviction which, if upheld, would make Trump the first felon to serve in the White House.

In his 41-page ruling, Justice Merchan pushed back on Trump's argument that the government's case relied on evidence related to his official work as president, which would be covered by immunity.

The evidence shown at trial pertained "entirely to unofficial conduct," he wrote. The judge noted that in its own ruling the Supreme Court had found that "not everything the president does is official," even if done from the Oval Office.

In a statement to US media, Trump spokesman Steven Cheung criticised the ruling, calling it "a direct violation of the Supreme Court's decision on immunity."

"This lawless case should have never been brought, and the Constitution demands that it be immediately dismissed," Mr Cheung said.

In May, a New York jury found Trump guilty of falsifying business records.

The conviction stemmed from Trump's attempt to cover up reimbursements to his ex-lawyer, Michael Cohen, who in 2016 paid off an adult film star to remain silent about an alleged sexual encounter with Trump.

Trump has denied all wrongdoing.

Justice Merchan had been scheduled to rule on the conviction on 12 November, but he postponed the decision, saying he wanted to hear from prosecutors on how to move forward with the case following Trump's re-election.

In the days since, Trump filed another motion to dismiss the case, arguing that his forthcoming return to the White House required the case to be tossed.

Now, following Justice Merchan's ruling, Trump's team is almost certain to seek further delays and appeals. The judge is still yet to decide whether to issue a sentence before Trump assumes office in January, after his term ends in 2029 or not at all.

Assad breaks silence, claims he was forced to flee Syria

By Dave Oludare Oso



Former Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad has broken his silence since the fall of his regime, claiming he never intentionally fled to Russia — and blaming his troops for the stunning collapse.

A post Monday on Assad's former Telegram channel claims he merely left the capital on Dec. 8 to meet with Russian forces in the Latakia province "to oversee combat operations" as Syrian rebels stormed Damascus.

Amid the assault, Assad said, he was forced to evacuate among the Russian troops, who took him to Moscow, from where he allegedly still planned to lead.

Assad was allegedly forced to evacuate from a Russian base in Latakia, where he claimed to be assessing the military situation. AP

"At no point during these events did I consider stepping down or seeking refuge, nor was such a proposal made

by any individual or party," Assad wrote.

"When the state falls into the hands of terrorism and the ability to make a meaningful contribution is lost, any position becomes void of purpose," he said of his fallen regime.

It remains unclear if the post on Telegram was made by Assad himself or if someone else is in control of it.

The message appears to be a response to reports over the weekend that the former president was well aware of his crumbling empire and kept hidden the fact that Russian troops were not coming to his aid.

The night before his departure, Assad allegedly met with about 30 of his military chiefs to report that Moscow was sending troops to support his regime, asking that his generals hold out until then, sources who were in that meeting told Reuters.

Hours later, Assad was in a plane with

his wife and kids bound for Moscow, abandoning his generals, including his own brother, Maher al-Assad, who fled via helicopter to Iraq.

Reports also claimed that before leaving for Moscow, Assad allegedly reached out to the United Arab Emirates for help, with the UAE allegedly refusing out of fear over the potential international backlash.

With Assad gone, the Syrian rebel group is forming a transitional government led by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham terrorist group.

Group leader and former al Qaeda member Abu Mohammed al-Jolani has disavowed his extremist past and has called for a new era of tolerance in Syria, in what experts say is a means to distance himself from Assad and appeal to the West.

DR Congo files criminal case against Apple over Illegal mineral exploitation

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has initiated criminal proceedings against European subsidiaries of Apple, accusing the tech giant of incorporating illegally mined “blood minerals” into its global supply chain.

The complaints, filed in Paris and Brussels, allege that Apple procured minerals sourced from conflict-stricken eastern DRC and Rwanda, where materials are reportedly mined illicitly and subsequently integrated into tech devices.

The filings further claim Apple’s French and Belgian units misled consumers regarding the integrity of its supply chains.

Lawyers representing the DRC stated the case encompasses war crimes, money laundering, forgery, and consumer deception.

Paris-based lawyer, William Bourdon described the legal action as “a first step towards holding one of the largest global tech players accountable for profiting at the expense of grave crimes tainting African mineral supply chains.”

Robert Amsterdam, the DRC’s Washington-based lawyer, described the lawsuit as a “first salvo” in broader legal efforts. “Apple cannot continue to hide behind its narrative of supply chain transparency. It is time for accountability,” he said.

Apple has denied the allegations, asserting it has “no reasonable basis for concluding” that its products contain minerals illegally sourced from conflict zones.

The company maintains its supply chain is rigorously verified to exclude minerals linked to violence and exploitation.



The DRC’s mineral-rich east has been plagued by militia violence for decades, exacerbated by illicit mining activities that fuel armed conflicts and severe human rights abuses, including child labor and environmental devastation.

The legal team cited findings from the United Nations, the U.S. State Department, and NGOs such as Global Witness to substantiate claims of widespread harm.

The lawyers have also written to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, urging the EU to engage in dialogue to strengthen accountability and halt armed violence linked to mineral supply chains.

What to know

The tensions are rooted in decades of conflict in the DRC’s east, exacerbated by the resurgence of M23 rebels—widely believed to be backed by Rwanda—since late 2021.

The DRC’s lawyers have also reached out to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, urging dialogue on improving accountability in supply chains and ending violence tied to resource extraction in Africa.

As scrutiny of corporate supply chains

intensifies among European regulators and consumers, Apple’s operations—and its role as one of the world’s largest corporations—face mounting questions about ethical responsibility in a globalized economy.

The litigation highlights growing tensions surrounding resource extraction in sub-Saharan Africa, where minerals essential for consumer electronics remain entangled with conflict, displacement, and economic exploitation.

Apple’s compliance practices and its reported \$3 trillion valuation are expected to face heightened scrutiny amid calls for ethical sourcing and global corporate responsibility.

Congress passed the bipartisan CARES Act in March 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic, which, among other things, paved the way for the federal government to move about 12,000 inmates from federal prisons into home confinement. Many of these people have since completed their sentences, though plenty remain on house arrest.

“Many people who were sent home were convicted of white-collar or nonviolent offenses and were considered safe bets to behave in the community,” Love said, adding that she believed the decision-making was tainted by racial discrimination.

With grumblings among some Republicans about sending these convicts back to prison, Love said Biden “simply cleaned out this population” and took that option off the table.

And to those upset that Biden let these criminals out of house arrest early, “you should have complained four years ago when they were released from prison,” Love said.

Father, stepmother jailed for daughter's murder life over UK

By Olamilekan Botti

UK court sentenced Urfan Sharif, 43, and Beinash Batool, 30, to life imprisonment for the brutal murder of 10-year-old British Pakistani Sara Sharif, who died after enduring a prolonged campaign of “torture” and “despicable abuse.”

The pair will serve minimum terms of 40 and 33 years respectively, as ruled by Judge John Cavanagh at London's Old Bailey.

The court heard harrowing details of Sara's suffering, with her body found covered in bruises, bite marks, burns from an electric iron, and multiple broken bones.

Describing the acts as “extreme cruelty,” the judge condemned the lack of remorse shown by Sharif and Batool.

“The pain and trauma Sara endured during this campaign of violence are unimaginable,” he said. “This poor child was battered with great force repeatedly.”

Sara's final moments were marked by unimaginable brutality. The judge recounted how she had been beaten with a metal pole and cricket bat, and bound with parcel tape, rope, and a plastic bag over her head. A post-mortem revealed 71 fresh injuries and at least 25 broken bones.

In August 2023, Sara was found dead in her bed at the family's empty Woking home. On the day of her death, Sharif struck her twice in the stomach with the metal leg of a high chair as she lay unconscious, accusing her of pretending.

The trio fled to Pakistan the day after Sara's death, taking five other children with them. Sharif later called UK police from Pakistan to report Sara's death, leaving behind a note claiming he did not intend to kill her. After a month on the run, they returned to the UK and were arrested upon landing.

The court also sentenced Faisal Malik, 29, Sara's uncle, to 16 years in prison for



causing or allowing her death. The five surviving children remain in Pakistan.

Sara's murder has sparked outrage over the failure of UK social services to protect her. Her father had withdrawn her from school four months before her death, despite prior allegations of abuse.

A teacher testified that Sara had worn a hijab to conceal injuries and refused to explain the marks on her body.

Russian soldiers killed in friendly fire attack by North Koreans

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

North Korean troops accidentally killed eight Russian paramilitary soldiers in a “friendly fire” attack as they tried to take back Kursk from Ukraine, Kyiv officials said.

A Monday skirmish along the frontlines in the Kursk Oblast saw a group of North Korean troops target and fire at the Chechen Akhmat unit, killing eight of their allies, according to Ukraine's military intelligence agency (GUR).

The friendly fire incident allegedly occurred due to the “language barrier” between Moscow and Pyongyang's troops, as the more than 11,000 North Korean soldiers in Russia struggle to adapt to their new environment.

“When using the DPRK troops on the battlefield, the language barrier remains problematic to control and coordinate actions,” the GUR said in a statement.

“Because of this problem, North Korean soldiers opened ‘friendly fire’ on the vehicles of the so-called Akhmat battalion,” the agency added. “As a result, they killed eight Kadyrovite soldiers.”

The GUR's assessment could not be immediately verified by independent reports.

The incident comes as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky reported a “significant number” of North Korean casualties in Kursk, where Kyiv has managed to hold onto a vast stretch of land following their surprise incursion over the summer.

At least 30 North Korean soldiers were killed and wounded in the weekend battles, forcing Moscow to deploy additional Pyongyang's fighters in Kursk, according to the GUR.

The Defense Intelligence of Ukraine (DIU) detailed how Democratic People's



Republic of Korea (DPRK) soldiers have recently assisted Russian troops in the Kursk Oblast, which is currently occupied by Ukrainian forces.

“The North Korean troops suffer sanitary and irreversible losses as a result of a successful fire attack by the Ukrainian Security and Defense Forces,” the GUR said of the battles.

South Africa still 'divided' years after independence — Ramaphosa

By Agency Reporter

Despite achievements made by South Africa in the past 30 years, it continues to face significant challenges on its journey toward reconciliation, President Cyril Ramaphosa said on Monday.

"Our country is still divided by poverty and unemployment," Ramaphosa said at an event marking National Reconciliation Day.

The day is celebrated to foster reconciliation and national unity following the end of apartheid in 1994.

"Reconciliation is not a symbolic act," Ramaphosa said, adding it requires a fundamental transformation of society to create a fair and just nation.

'DEEP SCARS'

"The past may be behind us but we are left with its wounds. We have deep scars as a reminder of our painful experiences," he added.

He said his government is taking action to build an inclusive economy and create jobs, and also investing in social and

economic infrastructure.

"As part of the work to reduce poverty, we continue to support poor households through free basic services, fee-free schools, subsidised housing opportunities and financial aid to tertiary students from poor and working-class families," he said. Ramaphosa announced that the country will hold a national dialogue next year to enable a conversation among citizens on shaping the country's future developmental path.

PRESS CHALLENGES

He said the national dialogue will seek to build on the achievements of 30 years of democracy and address the challenges the country has been facing for the past 15 years which include, low growth, unemployment, poverty and hunger, poor governance, slow land reform and corruption among others.

"We will also want the national dialogue to address pressing challenges such as gender-based violence and femicide, social fragmentation, racism, and sexism,



violence and instability," Ramaphosa said. In March 2023, the school reported visible injuries on Sara's face to social services, but no action was taken. A month later, Sharif informed the school she would be homeschooled.

Children's Commissioner Dame Rachel de Souza condemned the failure, stating: "Sara was failed in the starkest terms by the safety net of services around her."

The tragedy has reignited concerns over

Bomb kills head of Russia's nuclear defence forces, assistant in Moscow

By Dave Oludare Oso

An explosive device planted close to a residential apartment block in Moscow killed the head of Russia's Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Defence Forces, Lt. General Igor Kirillov, early Tuesday, Russia's Investigative Committee said.

Kirillov's assistant also died in the blast, triggered by the device which was placed in a scooter, officials said.

The bomb was triggered remotely, Russian state news agency Tass reported, citing unnamed sources in the emergency services.

Russian investigators have opened a case into the two deaths, according to the committee's spokesperson Svetlana Petrenko.

"Investigators, forensic experts and operational services are working at the scene," she said in a statement.

"Investigative and search activities are being carried out to establish all the circumstances around this crime."

Ukraine's Security Services on Dec. 16 charged Kirillov with the use of banned chemical weapons during Russia's military operation in Ukraine that started in Feb. 2022.

A body is seen at the blast scene, which killed the commander of Russian armed forces' chemical, biological and radiation defence troops, Igor Kirillov, and his deputy. AFP via Getty Images

Ukraine's Security Service, the SBU, said that they had recorded more than 4,800 uses of chemical weapons on the battlefield since February 2022, particularly K-1 combat grenades.

In May, the US State Department also said in a statement that it had recorded the use of chloropicrin, a chemical weapon first used in World War I, against Ukrainian

troops.



Kirillov, who was named the head of Russia's nuclear defense forces in April 2017, was under sanctions from several countries including the UK and Canada for his role in Ukraine.

During the almost 3-year operation,

Ukraine claims it killed senior Russian general in Moscow scooter blast

By Agency Reporter

Russian Lieutenant General Igor Kirillov was killed this morning after a device hidden in a scooter was detonated, according to the Russian TASS news agency, citing Moscow's investigative committee.

The e-scooter, which Data and Forensics team has geolocated to the scene outside a residential building in Moscow, is from KugooKirin.

The brand was founded in China but has multiple overseas warehouses across Europe including in Russia. Russia is also one of its main exporting countries, according to the company's website.

UKRAINE CLAIMS IT KILLED KIRILLOV
—REPORTS

Ukraine's security services (SBU) were responsible for the killing of Igor Kirillov, a source at the agency has told Reuters.

The source said Kyiv regarded Kirillov as a war criminal and an "absolutely legitimate target". The source accused him of ordering the use of banned chemical weapons against Ukrainian forces in the war.

Yesterday, the SBU charged Igor Kirillov in absentia for the use of banned chemical weapons during Russia's invasion of the country.

Igor Kirillov had been the head of Russia's nuclear, biological and chemical defence forces since 2017.

Here's a look at what else we know about him:

The 54-year-old was born on 13 July 1970 in Kostroma, a riverside city in western Russia. He went on to attend Kostroma Higher Military Command School of Chemical Defence, graduating in 2007.

During his time there, between 1991 and 1995, he served as a platoon commander in the Western Group of Forces in Germany and the Moscow Military District.

After graduating, he occupied various posts in Russia's nuclear, biological and chemical defence forces, eventually becoming the chief there in 2017.



Throughout his military career, he was known for helping to develop the TOS-2 Tosochka heavy flamethrower system.

He has been accused of using banned chemical weapons during the war in Ukraine as well as the toxic choking agent chloropicrin.

The UK government had sanctioned him for "helping deploy these barbaric weapons" and for being a "significant mouthpiece for Kremlin disinformation".

The death of Igor Kirillov in Moscow will result in a "major retaliation" from Russia, says the former Tory MP and security analyst Tobias Ellwood.

China says spying claims involving UK's Prince Andrew 'preposterous'

By Agency Reporter

China said Tuesday that claims that a businessman had used his links with Britain's Prince Andrew to spy for Beijing were "preposterous", after the UK government voiced mounting concerns over the allegations.

Details emerged last week about Andrew's relationship with Yang Tengbo, a businessman and alleged spy, who had been banned from Britain.

Asked about the case while on a visit to Norway, Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Britain was "concerned about the challenge that China poses" but defended his approach of "engagement" with Beijing.

A spokesman for Beijing's foreign ministry said on Tuesday that the "accusations of so-called Chinese espionage are preposterous".

"The development of China-UK relations is in the common interests of both countries and is also conducive to promoting world economic growth and responding to global challenges," Lin Jian said.

"It is hoped that the United Kingdom will work with China to accumulate more positive factors and demonstrate the two countries' innate character of cooperation, mutual benefits and common wins," he added.

Yang, who was reportedly once invited to Andrew's birthday party, said in a statement on Monday that he had "done nothing wrong or unlawful", and had "fallen victim" to a changing "political climate".

Starmer said at a news conference in Bergen, Norway, that Britain's approach towards China involved "cooperating where we need to cooperate, particularly, for example, on issues like climate change, to challenge where we must and where we should."

Along with the dead and injured, at least three North Korean troops have gone missing around the village of Kurilovka, Ukraine officials added.



Footage shows North Korean troops on the frontline fighting for Vladimir Putin in Russia's Kursk region, partially occupied by Ukraine. Khome group/e2w news

Despite the losses, Zelensky warns that Russia will increase the number of North Korean soldiers deployed in Kursk, with intelligence suggesting the foreign troops could be sent to other locations along the frontlines.

How Lookman went from 'failure' to Africa's best

By Agency Reporter

“To the youth of Africa I say: Never give up. Turn pain to power.”

Ademola Lookman's journey to being voted the men's African footballer of the year has been full of ups and downs, yet the Nigeria international knows his recent success provides inspiration.

After failing to impose himself following a big-money move to the Premier League as a teenager, the forward had several loan spells before his rebirth in Italy since joining Atalanta in August 2022.

“Four years ago my career felt down but now I'm here as the best player in Africa,” Lookman, 27, said on stage when collecting his award in Marrakesh on Monday.

“Don't let your failures stop your dreams.”

Wearing a traditional Nigerian robe, he even had a special message in Yoruba for fans back in West Africa.

BBC Sport Africa examines Lookman's unconventional route to becoming the sixth Nigerian man to be named the continent's top player, joining stellar names Rashidi Yekini, Victor Ikpeba, Emmanuel Amunike, Nwankwo Kanu and Victor Osimhen.

Early breakthroughs

Born in south London to Nigerian parents, Lookman's passion for the game was evident at an early age.

“My first memory is rolling up my socks in the house and kicking them around,” he told BBC Sport.

He signed for Charlton Athletic, then playing in England's second tier, in 2014 – but rates passing his school exams aged 16 as a bigger achievement.

“My mum has always been big on education, but being Nigerian it is a bit more intense,” he explained. “The pressure is definitely different.”

Lookman made his senior debut for Charlton in November 2015, scored his



first senior goal on his fifth appearance and eventually caught the eye of top-flight clubs with his performances for a struggling side.

When Everton snapped up a 19-year-old Lookman for a fee of £11m (\$14m) in January 2017, he was hailed by then-Toffees boss Ronald Koeman as “a player for the future”.

“We expect a lot from the boy,” the Dutchman added. “I think he is one who can reach a high level if he develops well and improves.”

Lookman scored on his debut as a late substitute in a 4-0 win over Manchester City but rarely hit those heights again during his time at Goodison Park.

Some of that could be down to churn in the managerial dugout, given he appeared under six different managers (including caretakers) over the course of two and a half years at the club.

New beginnings

Away from Merseyside, Lookman played a major role in England's Under-20 World Cup triumph in June 2017, scoring three times at the tournament in South Korea.

He enjoyed a successful loan spell with RB Leipzig in the first half of 2018 and moved permanently to Germany in July 2019 for a fee of £22.5m (\$28.6m).

“I had an opportunity to stay in England but at the time I was like ‘why not?’” Lookman said.

“You have got to make decisions as to what you are really looking for. It always comes

down to playing football.”

However, his first full season with Leipzig was a disappointment as he made just one Bundesliga start during a campaign disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic.

He spent two seasons back on loan in the Premier League, first with Fulham and then Leicester City.

Brendan Rodgers, who was Foxes coach at the time, said Lookman's dedication showed in training, even if he again struggled to hold down a starting place.

“He would be out with a bag of balls, doing shooting exercises long after other ones had gone in, working on his right foot, left foot,” Rodgers said.

“He's so balanced. Everything is geared towards being the best he could.”

A player transformed Nigeria had been keen on Lookman since his early days at Everton, but it was not until late 2021 that he switched international allegiance.

He experienced deep disappointment on just his second outing when the West Africans were beaten on away goals in a play-off for the 2022 World Cup by fierce rivals Ghana.

Then came Atalanta, and a move to what Lookman describes as the “chilled” city of Bergamo.

“When I first signed I had food in a restaurant. It was a nice summer's night,” he said.

Vinícius Jr, Bonmatí win 'FIFA The Best' awards

By Dave Oludare Oso

Real Madrid's Vinícius Júnior won FIFA's The Best men's player of the year award on Tuesday, while Barcelona's Aitana Bonmatí was named The Best women's player of the year for the second time.

Vinícius lost out to Manchester City's Rodri for the Ballon d'Or award in October, but clinched The Best title in Qatar.

The Madrid star won the award by five votes with 48 ahead of Rodri who collected 43. Jude Bellingham was third with 37 votes.

Manchester United forward Alejandro Garnacho won the Puskas award for



goal of the year for his sensational overhead kick against Everton last

November.

Former Chelsea manager and now United States women's national team boss, Emma Hayes was named women's coach of the year after clinching the Women's Super League before going on to win Olympic gold in Paris with the U.S.

Hayes also won Ballon d'Or coach of year honours last month.

Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti was named coach of the year after his side won the Champions League as well as LaLiga last season.

Man Utd renew interest in Osimhen deal

By Dave Oludare Oso

English Premier League giants Manchester United have reportedly reignited their pursuit of Super Eagles striker Victor Osimhen as they seek to address their attacking woes.

News360 Nigeria reports that the Nigerian international has emerged as a top target for United's new manager, Ruben Amorim, following the struggles of Marcus Rashford and Joshua Zirkzee.

Osimhen, currently on loan at Galatasaray from Napoli, has been in exceptional form in Turkey, scoring 10 goals and providing five assists in just 13 appearances across all competitions.

Amorim's decision to exclude Rashford and Alejandro Garnacho from the squad for Sunday's Manchester derby highlights his determination to reshape United's attacking options.

Despite United's interest, Juventus are reportedly leading the race to sign Osimhen as they look to replace Dusan Vlahovic. The Serie A giants could be Osimhen's preferred destination, given his previous success in Italy.

Osimhen's impressive performances have made him a hot commodity in the transfer market, with several top European clubs



competing for his signature. United's ability to secure the forward may depend on their ability to fend off stiff competition from Juventus.

United face more competition from Premier League rivals Arsenal, with former Gunners midfielder Emmanuel Petit backing his old club to make a January move for the Nigerian.

The striker's situation is further complicated by his €75m release clause, with Napoli director Giovanni Manna recently dismissing speculation about a January move.

"I already said many times that nobody has talked to us. Victor is owned by Napoli and currently playing for Galatasaray. I think a lot has been said about this; nothing is happening," Manna told DAZN.

Paris Saint-Germain are also monitoring the situation and could move for the Nigerian if Rashford, who has emerged as a target for the French champions, joins them from United.

Chelsea have also entered the race for Osimhen, with sources suggesting the London club could be a more attractive destination than United given their current trajectory.

The striker's loan deal with Turkish league leaders Galatasaray includes a January break clause that could facilitate a mid-season move, though his next destination remains uncertain amid interest from several European giants.

This marks the third instance of Nigerian players winning the CAF Player of the Year award back-to-back. Rashidi Yekini became the first Nigerian to win in 1993, followed by Emmanuel Amunke in 1994. Nwankwo Kanu won in 1996 and was succeeded by Victor Ikpeba in 1997. Kanu went on to win the award again in 1999, making him the only Nigerian to claim the honour twice.

Mykhailo Mudryk provisionally suspended over adverse drug test

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Chelsea forward Mykhailo Mudryk has been provisionally suspended by the Football Association (FA) following an “adverse finding” in a routine urine test. The Premier League club and the player insist the 23-year-old has never knowingly used banned substances, and an investigation is underway.

The FA’s notification of the adverse finding came as a shock to both Chelsea and Mudryk. The Ukrainian international, who has not featured in Chelsea’s squad for the past four games, last appeared as an unused substitute against Aston Villa on December 1.

Chelsea and Mudryk Respond

Chelsea released a statement affirming their support for the FA’s anti-doping programme and backing Mudryk as they work to understand the cause of the test result. “Mykhailo has categorically confirmed he has never knowingly used any banned substances,” the statement said.



Mudryk also took to social media to express his disbelief, stating, “This has come as a complete shock. I have never knowingly used any banned substances or broken any rules. I am working closely with my team to investigate how this could have happened.”

A High-Profile Signing

Mudryk joined Chelsea in January 2023 from Ukrainian side Shakhtar Donetsk for a significant £88.5m fee. While his tenure

at Stamford Bridge has been marked by flashes of brilliance, this suspension adds an unexpected challenge to his career.

Investigation Underway

Both the player and the club have committed to cooperating fully with the FA and relevant authorities. While the exact substance in question remains confidential, Chelsea and Mudryk have refrained from further comment, respecting the integrity of the ongoing process.

Looking Ahead

Mudryk’s suspension leaves questions about his immediate future at Chelsea, though the player has expressed hope of returning to the pitch soon. The outcome of the investigation will determine the next steps, as both Mudryk and Chelsea await clarity on the matter.

For now, the footballing world watches closely as the young Ukrainian forward works to clear his name.

Tinubu hails Lookman, Nnadozie, Super Falcons for CAF Awards triumph

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has congratulated Nigerian football stars Ademola Lookman, Chiamaka Nnadozie, and the Super Falcons for their exceptional victories at the 2024 CAF Awards in a statement by a presidential spokesman, Bayo Onanuga

Super Eagles forward Ademola Lookman clinched the prestigious CAF Men’s African Footballer of the Year award, while Super Falcons goalkeeper Chiamaka Nnadozie was named Women’s Goalkeeper of the Year. The Super Falcons themselves earned the accolade for Women’s National Team of the Year.

The awards ceremony, held on Monday at the Palais des Congrès in Marrakech, showcased the continent’s finest talents in football.

In a heartfelt message, President Tinubu lauded the athletes as “worthy ambassadors” for their contributions to Nigerian football and their ability to inspire millions. “These athletes embody the essential Nigerian Spirit. They signpost the best in us as a nation,” Tinubu stated.



The President emphasized that their achievements reflect determination, discipline, and confidence, aligning with his administration’s vision of a prosperous Nigeria where individuals can thrive.

Tinubu’s message also expressed hope that these wins would inspire young athletes to remain steadfast in pursuing their dreams, noting, “Let no one ever write us off. I am incredibly proud of them.”

The President extended his gratitude to the athletes for “keeping Nigeria’s flag flying” and promised more success for them in the future.

Celebrating Nigerian Excellence

The awards signify Nigeria’s strong presence on the continental football stage. Ademola Lookman’s rise to stardom, Nnadozie’s impeccable goalkeeping skills, and the Super Falcons’ dominance continue to shine as beacons of hope and pride for the nation.

Ronaldo announces bid for Brazilian football federation presidency **By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi**

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil – Football legend Ronaldo Nazário has declared his intention to run for the presidency of the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF), vowing to restore the national team's prestige and reconnect it with the country's fans.

The 48-year-old, a two-time World Cup winner with Brazil, seeks to replace current CBF president Ednaldo Rodrigues. Ronaldo's announcement comes as Brazil continues to grapple with underwhelming performances in major tournaments, having last won the World Cup in 2002 and failed to progress beyond the quarter-finals since.

Ronaldo's Vision for Change

Speaking to Globo Esporte, Ronaldo highlighted the dwindling public interest in the national team, stating, "Brazilian football was once a source of hope and pride for the people. Today, we see a lack of connection between the population and the national team. My goal is to recover the respect and prestige that Brazilian

football deserves."

He emphasized the abundance of talent in Brazil, mentioning stars like Neymar, Vinícius Jr, and Rodrygo, and expressed frustration with the team's recent underperformance. "Brazil must be a protagonist in global football. It's unacceptable for a country with our talent to underachieve," Ronaldo added.

A Storied Career

Ronaldo, capped 98 times for Brazil, is second on the all-time World Cup scorers' list, netting 15 goals in 19 matches. His illustrious international career includes two Copa America titles and an Olympic bronze medal.

His commitment to his candidacy includes plans to sell his stake in the Spanish club Real Valladolid to focus fully on Brazilian football.



A Path to Leadership

Rodrigues' term ends in March 2026, with the CBF presidential elections scheduled to take place within the 12 months leading up to that date. Ronaldo's campaign promises to bring a fresh perspective, aiming to reestablish Brazil as a dominant force in world football.

Brazil's Footballing Future

As Brazil looks to reclaim its former glory,

Osimhen and Lookman shine in Caf Fifpro Men's Best XI for 2024 **By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi**

Nigerian football stars Victor Osimhen and Ademola Lookman have been named in the CAF FIFPro Men's Best XI for 2024, a prestigious recognition of their stellar performances over the year.

Osimhen, the 2023 African Player of the Year, retained his spot in the elite lineup, cementing his reputation as one of Africa's top strikers. The 25-year-old forward is joined in attack by his compatriot Ademola Lookman, who succeeded him as the 2024 CAF African Player of the Year, and Egypt's iconic captain Mohamed Salah.

Celebrating Nigerian Excellence

This marks a moment of pride for Nigerian football as two of its brightest stars continue to dominate the continent's footballing scene. Osimhen's remarkable consistency in both club and international football, alongside Lookman's rise to prominence, has positioned Nigeria as a key force in African football.

The Star-Studded XI

The Best XI features a mix of Africa's finest talents across different positions:

Goalkeeper: André Onana (Cameroon)

Defenders: Achraf Hakimi (Morocco), Kalidou Koulibaly (Senegal), Chancel Mbemba (DR Congo)



Midfielders: Sofyan Amrabat (Morocco), Franck Kessié (Ivory Coast), Yves Bissouma (Mali)

Forwards: Mohamed Salah (Egypt), Ademola Lookman (Nigeria), Victor Osimhen (Nigeria), Mohammed Kudus (Ghana)

The selection underscores the impact these players have made both in African and international football, with their performances driving successes for their clubs and national teams.

A New Generation of Excellence

Lookman's rise as Africa's best player and his inclusion in this illustrious XI highlight a promising future for Nigerian football. Paired with Osimhen's continued dominance, the duo exemplifies the talent, skill, and determination that the country consistently brings to the sport.

This recognition by CAF FIFPro not only celebrates individual achievements but also sets the stage for what is expected to be another exciting year for African football.

Ex-Nigerian coach, Peseiro congratulates Lookman on CAF award

By Dave Oludare Oso

Former Super Eagles manager José Peseiro has congratulated Ademola Lookman on being selected as the 2024 African Footballer of the Year by the Confederation of African Football (CAF).

Sharing his thoughts on X (formerly Twitter) on Tuesday, Peseiro also praised the Super Eagles for their collective efforts, which contributed to Lookman's achievement and ensured another Super Eagle succeeded the previous winner.

The Portuguese, who led the Super Eagles to the final of the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) in Côte d'Ivoire, described the award as well-deserved, reflecting Lookman's importance to Nigerian and African football.

Peseiro's tweet read: "Congratulations @molalookman on winning the CAF Player of the Year 2024 award! A well-deserved recognition of your incredible talent and your significance to Nigerian and African football."

Stressing the collective role of Lookman's teammates in the Super Eagles, whose character and performance at the 2023 AFCON contributed to this individual honour, Peseiro added: "It is also important to highlight the role of the Nigerian national team, whose collective efforts contributed to this individual award, as well as the remarkable achievement of a Super Eagle winning the award for the second consecutive year, following @victoriosimhen9's victory last year. Many congratulations!"

Peseiro's tenure with the Super Eagles ended after their silver medal performance at the 2023 AFCON due to disagreements with the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) over salary demands.



This marks the third instance of Nigerian players winning the CAF Player of the Year award back-to-back. Rashidi Yekini became the first Nigerian to win in 1993, followed by Emmanuel Amunike in 1994. Nwankwo Kanu won in 1996 and was succeeded by Victor Ikpeba in 1997. Kanu went on to win the award again in 1999, making him the only Nigerian to claim the honour twice.

CAF Awards: Obi calls for increased investment in Nigeria's sports sector

By Friday Omosola

Peter Obi, the 2023 presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), has urged the Nigerian government to prioritise greater investment in the sports sector.

In a statement posted on his X page, the 63-year-old emphasised that sports serve not only as a powerful unifying force in Nigeria but also as a significant avenue for youth employment and economic growth.

Obi made this call while congratulating Super Eagles forward Ademola Lookman, who was crowned African Footballer of the Year 2024, and Super Falcons goalkeeper Chiamaka Nnadozie, honoured as the Women's Goalkeeper of the Year 2024 at the prestigious Confederation of African Football (CAF) Awards.

The former governor of Anambra State also highlighted Nigeria's remarkable presence on the continental stage, as the women's



national team, the Super Falcons, clinched the Women's National Team of the Year award at the same event.

"I sincerely congratulate our very dear sportsmen and women who, through these awards, have written their names in gold and brought honor to our nation. Thank you for your hard

work, efforts, skills, and excellence which brought you thus far.

"For a youthful population like ours, sports remains a very important sector and we must give it the adequate attention it deserves. A New Nigeria remains POSSible", Obi said.