

Shettima knocks UK Tory leader, Badenoch for denigrating Nigeria

...Says you can even remove 'Kemi' from your name

PAGE 2



BOI disburses N22.89bn to 29 manufacturers

PAGE 3



The New Daily Prime

Tinubu placates opponents, says 'we're one'

PAGE 4



Lagos school teacher bags life sentence for defiling 8-year-old PAGE 5

WORLD PAGE 25

Israeli warplanes pound Syria as troops advance deeper into the country



FULL LIST: Governors who okay above N70,000 minimum wage

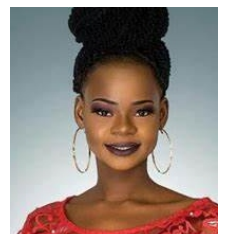
PAGES 10 & 11

SPORTS PAGE 29

Manchester United open to selling Marcus Rashford amid lifestyle concerns

ENTERTAINMENT

Olajumoke Onibread reveals Manager's alleged role in career setback PAGE 22



14 dead as car plunges into river in Jigawa

PAGE 9

Shettima knocks UK Tory leader, Badenoch for denigrating Nigeria

...Says you can even remove 'Kemi' from your name

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



The newly-elected leader of the United Kingdom Conservative Party, Kemi Badenoch, has been accused of disparaging her country of origin, Nigeria by Vice President Kashim Shettima.

The vice president spoke during the 10th Annual Migration Dialogue at the State House in Abuja on Monday.

He said, "Kemi Badenoch, the leader of the British Labour or Conservative Party, we are proud of her in spite of her efforts at denigrating her nation of origin."

Shettima added, "She is entitled to her own opinions. She even has every right to remove the Kemi

from her name but that does not underscore the fact that the greatest black nation on earth is the nation called Nigeria."

The Vice President highlighted Nigeria's significance on the world stage, stating, "One out of every three, four black men is a Nigerian and by 2050, Nigeria will support the United States, and will be the third most populous nation on earth."

In his address, Shettima also emphasised the key role of migrants in shaping society and contributing to economic growth.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to protecting migrant rights and celebrating their

contributions to national development.

In 2022, Badenoch, a UK member of parliament of Nigerian descent, accused Nigerian politicians of misappropriating public funds.

Following her election as the UK Conservative Party leader in November 2024, the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM) reached out to her office but received no response, according to NIDCOM Chairman, Abike Dabiri-Erewa.

BOI disburses N22.89bn to 29 manufacturers

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Bank of Industry (BOI) has announced that it has disbursed N22.89 billion of the N75 billion manufacturing sector intervention fund to 29 manufacturers.

Its Managing Director, Dr Olasupo Olusi, made this known on Monday at the first BOI interactive session with the Organised Private Sector (OPS) in Abuja, which was monitored virtually.

Olusi said that out of the N75 billion manufacturing sector fund, other 20 projects valued at N6.3 billion were at different stages of disbursement.

He said that the interactive session was a collaborative milestone, a reflection of shared vision to create a thriving industrial sector.

According to him, it is also a critical step in driving Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) development through strategic partnerships.

“Recently, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with your esteemed associations.

“This agreement underscores a simple truth that we cannot transform Nigeria’s industrial landscape alone.

“The journey to sustainable economic growth must be fueled by collaboration, innovation, and a shared resolve to address systemic challenges,” he said.

The BOI MD said that under the signed agreement, the bank had already begun making strides through joint efforts on the Federal Government’s loans programme.

He said that the event, with the



theme, “Driving SME Development through Strategic Partnerships” challenged everyone to reimagine how we work together.

Olusi said in practice, this meant shared responsibility as the bank’s role was not only to provide financing but also to support an enabling environment for businesses to thrive.

“This includes addressing infrastructure gaps, regulatory bottlenecks, and access to markets.

“However, your expertise and insights are essential to inform these efforts.

“On collaborative innovation, we must work together to introduce technology, sustainability, and skills development as core pillars of SME growth.

“We are concerned about your most pressing challenges, your operations, how we can further align our programmes with your needs and the innovative solutions we can pursue together to accelerate

growth,” he said.

Olusi urged the organised private sector to keep in mind the six thematic areas of impact that BOI was focused on in line with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s renewed Hope Agenda.

He listed them to include MSME development, digital transformation, youth and skills development, climate and sustainability, gender inclusion and sectoral growth.

“These are not just BOI’s priorities; they are national imperatives and they require your active participation to succeed.

“The Bank of Industry stands as your partner in progress, ready to support at every step of the way as together we have the potential to transform Nigeria’s economic landscape,” he said.

Tinubu placates opponents, says 'we're one'

By Dave Oludare Oso



President Bola Tinubu has extended the olive branch to his political opponents and everyone not on the same page with him to join in as the government strives for peace, unity, and development of the country, saying even though people may have different political inclinations, Nigerians are one.

The president spoke when he commissioned the Bola Ahmed Tinubu Technology Innovation Complex, BATTIC, at the headquarters of the Nigeria Immigration Service, NIS in Sauka, Abuja on Tuesday.

Tinubu added that Nigerians are all occupants of one building who

are only living in different rooms.

President Tinubu arrived the Nigeria Immigration Service headquarters in Abuja to unveil BATTIC at about 12:08 pm.

He was received by the Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, and the Comptroller-General of Immigration, Kemi Nandap.

BATTIC comprises the Command and Control Centre (regular migration), NIS Data Centre, ECOWAS Biometric Card Production Centre, Interior Data Centre and a 0.5KW solar power plant.

According to Nandap, BATTIC

will ascertain the risk level of persons entering the country, detect irregular migration patterns and monitor unmanned borders in remote areas across the country.

She added that BATTIC is “setting the benchmark to use technology to secure our borders and ensure the security of the nation.”

Femi Gbajabiamila, President’s Chief of Staff; Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, heads of agencies, among others, were present at the ceremony.

Gov Kefas’ sister succumbs to her injuries few days after being shot in Taraba

Lagos school teacher bags life sentence for defiling 8-year-old

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

An Ikeja Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Court on Monday, sentenced a teacher, John Osifo, to life imprisonment for defiling an eight-year-old pupil.

Delivering judgment, Justice Rahman Oshodi, held that the prosecution proved the charge of defilement against Osifo beyond every reasonable doubt.

Oshodi noted that the convict breached the trust that was entrusted into his hands by defiling the minor.

According to him, evidence of the survivor was corroborated by her mother's evidence and medical examination revealed absence of hymen.

He said the convict exploited the vulnerability of the eight year old child under his care to defile her.

The Judge said: "John Osifo, the gravity of your offence cannot be overstated.

"As a teacher, you are in a position of trust that you breached.

"You did not only exploit the vulnerability of an eight year old child under your care, you also took advantage of the COVID-19 lockdown.



"Instead of showing remorse you chose to fabricate a lie and false accusations alleging that the mother of the survivor tried to seduce you."

The court thereafter sentenced him to life imprisonment and ordered that his name be registered in the sexual offences register of Lagos State.

The prosecution, led by Mr Babajide Boye, called three witnesses; the survivor, survivor's mother and a medical doctor while the defence called eight witnesses during trial.

The prosecution had told the court that the convict committed the

offence sometime in May 2020 and June 2021 on Vissol Street, Jejelaye in Ajangbadi and Marifod Private School, Ajangbadi, Lagos.

Prosecution submitted that the convict, who also served as a home lesson teacher for the minor during COVID-19, had unlawful sexual intercourse with her.

The prosecutor said the offence contravened Section 137 of the Criminal Laws of Lagos State, 2015.

Obasanjo warns of Nigeria's growing debt burden, calls for transformative leadership

By Gbenga Oluranti OLALAYE

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo has raised alarms over Nigeria's escalating debt profile, describing it as a heavy burden that will affect both present and future generations. Speaking during a Zoom interactive program called "Boiling Point Arena" on Sunday,

Obasanjo expressed deep concern about the nation's rising debt, which has surged by N12.6 trillion in just three months, reaching a total of N134.3 trillion (\$91.3 billion) by the end of the second quarter of 2024. This marks a 10.35% increase from the N121.7 trillion recorded in the first quarter of the year.

Reflecting on his time in office, Obasanjo recalled securing debt forgiveness for Nigeria during his presidency but stressed that the current debt levels represent a serious challenge for the country's future.

"Yes, I was able to secure debt forgiveness for the nation before I left office, but our present debt profile is a problem for both this and the next generation," he said.

Despite his concerns about the debt crisis, Obasanjo remained hopeful about Nigeria's future, urging for transformative leadership to steer the nation toward better outcomes.

He emphasised the importance



of tackling corruption, citing countries like South Korea and Singapore as models of success achieved through merit-based leadership and integrity.

He highlighted South Korea's emphasis on appointing leaders based on merit, which has become a cornerstone of the country's development.

Obasanjo also referred to his experience with Lee Kuan Yew, the former Prime Minister of Singapore, who advocated for leadership grounded in trust and integrity.

"Leadership must be about service, not self-enrichment," Obasanjo said, criticising those who use leadership as a means for personal gain.

Obasanjo further warned that corruption in government can only be eradicated through consistent efforts.

"The fight against corruption must be consistent. It's not a one-regime affair. It must be a daily commitment. If one administration lets its guard down, corruption spreads like a hydra-headed monster," he cautioned.

The former president also called for constitutional reforms to address Nigeria's systemic challenges.

He emphasised that sustainable development and national integrity require transparency, accountability, and a sense of collective purpose.

"National progress is only achievable through consistency in action, leadership built on accountability, and the collective effort of leaders and citizens committed to a shared vision for the nation," he concluded.

Airlines operators face sanction for delayed tickets refund

By Dave Oludare Oso

Henceforth, any airline that delays tickets refund to passengers will face severe sanctions, the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) has warned.

NCAA conveyed this warning in a statement by its Director of Public Affairs and Consumer Protection, Mr Michael Achimugu in Abuja on Tuesday.

Achimugu said tickets refund compliance regulations remains central to the NCAA's consumer protection agenda.

He said the time had come for airlines adhere strictly to the refund timelines as failure to comply will attract immediate sanctions under Part 19 of the regulations.

The director said the Part 19 of the NCAA Regulations 2023 aimed to safeguard passenger rights.

According to him, "Cash purchases must be refunded immediately, and by cash. Refunds for electronic payments, including mobile apps and internet banking, must occur within 14 days."

Speaking on a specific case involving Air Peace, the director stated that the airline had exceeded the stipulated refund time frame, compelling the NCAA to demand swift compliance.

According to him, the incident has triggered the regulator's to take decisive action against any form of non-compliance.

"Over the past year, the NCAA has worked with airlines to enhance passenger experience and resolve operational challenges.

"The Authority has maintained a balanced approach, fostering



cooperation between operators and regulators to promote better service delivery.

"Most airlines have been responsive, and the relationship between operators and the NCAA has significantly improved, benefiting passengers across the board," he said.

Achimugu, however, said that the era of leniency had ended with stricter enforcement measures now in place.

The director said that airlines that failed to meet the refund timelines outlined in the NCAA Regulations 2023 would face sanctions.

The director, who reassured passengers that the policy shift would reflect the regulator's commitment to their rights, urged the airlines to view compliance as an opportunity to rebuild trust.

Achimugu, who acknowledged operational challenges the airlines were facing, called for improved efficiency in the areas like refunds described as "low-hanging fruits."

The director said the NCAA had facilitated full refunds and substantial

rebates for passengers in the past.

According to him, passengers may not fully understand the complexities of aviation operations, but paying refunds that are due should be prompt.

He commended the Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Mr Festus Keyamo, and the NCAA Acting Director General, Capt. Chris Najomo on their efforts toward advancing the aviation industry.

He said, "Their commitment to implementing the Minister's five-point agenda and the 2024 Action Plan, which emphasize ease of doing business and support for domestic carriers.

"These efforts have garnered praise from the Airline Operators of Nigeria (AON), to affirm Najomo as substantive NCAA DG.

"NCAA remains steadfast in ensuring accountability within the aviation sector and the Consumer Protection Department has done extensive works to sensitise passengers and support operators."

Alleged N110bn fraud: Court denies Yahaya Bello bail

By Dave Oludare Oso

A Federal Capital Territory (FCT) High Court sitting at Maitama, on Tuesday, denied bail to Yahaya Bello, the immediate past governor of Kogi State.

The former governor has been in detention since November 25.

In a ruling delivered by Justice Maryann Anenih, the court described as premature and incompetent, the application the former governor filed to be released on bail, pending the determination of the charge against him.

The court noted that Bello filed the bail application even before he surrendered himself to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC.)

Justice Anenih, who stressed that a bail application is filed to challenge the detention of a defendant, wondered why the former governor filed his motion at a time he was not in custody.

She held that the implication of Bello's action was that he attempted to invoke the jurisdiction of the court too early.

"Consequently, the instant application, having been filed prematurely, is hereby refused," the trial judge held.

However, the court admitted the 2nd defendant in the matter, Umar Oricha, to bail in the sum of N300 million with two sureties in the like sum.

Justice Anenih is yet to decide the fate of the 3rd defendant in the matter.

Bello, who piloted the affairs of Kogi state from 2016 to 2024, is facing trial over his alleged complicity in a N110



billion fraud.

He is answering to a 16-count charge the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, preferred against him and two officials of the Kogi state government- Oricha and Abdulsalami Hudu- who were cited as 2nd and 3rd defendants in the matter.

All the defendants had on November 27, pleaded not guilty to the charge, even as trial Justice Anenih remanded them in custody of the EFCC, pending the determination of their bail applications.

The EFCC had specifically urged the court to turn down ex-governor Bello's request for bail.

The agency, through its team of lawyers led by Mr. Kemi Pinheiro, SAN, told the court that Bello, who is the 1st defendant in the case, repeatedly refused to make himself available for trial.

It told the court that several efforts to secure his presence before the Abuja Division of the Federal High Court where he is facing another charge, proved abortive.

More so, the EFCC challenged the competence of the bail application it noted was filed on November 22, about five days before the arraignment took place.

Consequently, it prayed the court to dismiss the bail application that Bello filed through his legal team led by a former President of the Nigerian Bar Association, NBA, Mr. Joseph Daudu, SAN.

Bello had in his application that was predicated on six grounds, argued that he enjoys the presumption of innocence under the law.

Insisting that he was innocent of all the allegations the EFCC levelled against him, the defendant contended that he would not be able to effectively prepare his defence, if allowed to remain in detention.

The defence lawyer urged the court to ignore EFCC's claim that his client refused to submit himself for trial.

The charge against the defendants, marked: CR/7781, borders on conspiracy, criminal breach of trust and possession of unlawfully obtained property.

14 dead as car plunges into river in Jigawa

By Dave Oludare Oso

Not less than 14 people were feared killed in an auto accident along Tage Bridge in the Kafin Hausa Local Government Area of Jigawa State.

According to eyewitnesses, the accident, which occurred on Monday when a vehicle conveying passengers somersaulted and plunged into the river.

One of the sources said the accident was gruesome, with many bodies littered around the scene.

Confirming the accident on Monday through its Public Relations Officer, DSP Shi'isu Adam, the state police command revealed that the driver of the vehicle survived the accident and is currently assisting the police with investigations to ascertain the cause of



the accident.

He said, "The identities of the victims have not been released, pending notification of their families."

Adam added that the accident occurred when a Golf 3 wagon with number plate GML 842 XA, traveling from Hadejia town to Makera village, somersaulted and plunged into the river.

The police spokesperson revealed that the driver of the vehicle survived the accident and is currently assisting the police with investigations.

"When we got a distress call, our men promptly moved to the scene of the accident, carried the victims to the nearest Hadejia General Hospital where a doctor on call confirmed the deaths of eight women, two men and four young men at the scene," Adam said.

According to Adam, a thorough investigation into the cause of the accident is ongoing.

As the investigation unfolds, the police have appealed to the public to provide any information that may help in determining the cause of the accident.

Anambra Police recover bus loaded with vandalised MTN materials

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Police Operatives in Igbo-Ukwu Divisional Police Headquarters, in Aguata local government area of Anambra have recovered one white Peugeot J5 Boxer bus with Reg No: AKL 896 XB loaded with vandalized MTN electrical materials.

The State Police Public Relations Officer, SP Tochukwu Ikenga, who disclosed this in a statement in Awka on Monday, listed the vandalized items to include; Lister electricity generator, a roller, pipes, an iron bar, one big Plier, screwdriver, a big metal cutter and a pair of black canvas.

He said the incident happened on Saturday, December 7th, 2024.

The spokesman said the hoodlums were vandalizing the Lister Model Electricity Generator attached to the MTN Mast located opposite Saint



Martin's Catholic Church Umudege, Igbo-Ukwu, and on sighting the Police team, took to their heels and fled the scene.

While efforts have been activated to

arrest the fleeing criminals, the Anambra State Police Command has urged anyone, especially residents of the area to assist the Police with useful information in this regard.

Governors who okay above N70,000 minimum wage

By Friday Omosola

Six months after President Bola Tinubu approved an increase in the minimum wage for Nigerian workers from ₦30,000 to ₦70,000, the implementation has seen varying responses across states.

While some governors have adopted the new wage, others are yet to comply.

Although the implementation of new pay across states has been gradual, however, a few governors have pledged to meet the ₦70,000 minimum wage, while others have gone beyond the federal government benchmark, committing to pay amounts higher than ₦70,000.

In this analysis, the New Daily Prime lists the governors (18) who announced plans and commenced the payment of new minimum wage above ₦70,000. They are:

Lucky Aiyedatiwa (Ondo State)

In October, Ondo State Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa approved a new minimum wage of ₦73,000 for state government workers. The implementation begins in November.

The governor emphasised his administration's dedication to workers' welfare and described the increase as a crucial step towards improving the quality of life for the state's workforce.



Babajide Sanwo-Olu (Lagos State)

Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu announced on October 16 a new minimum wage of ₦85,000, with further plans to raise it to ₦100,000 by January 2025. His pronouncement was made during an interview on Channels TV

Siminalayi Fubara (Rivers State)

On October 18, Governor Siminalayi Fubara approved ₦85,000 as the new minimum wage for Rivers State civil servants. The decision was reached after a meeting with organised labour representatives, with implementation set for November.

Peter Mbah (Enugu State)

Governor Peter Mbah approved a

₦80,000 minimum wage on October 24. He linked the initiative to his administration's vision of growing the state's economy from \$4.4 billion to \$30 billion.

Umo Eno (Akwa Ibom State)

On November 10, Akwa Ibom Governor Umo Eno announced a minimum wage of ₦80,000 for the state's public servants. He said implementation will follow a verification exercise to be completed within a month.

Mohammed Bago (Niger State)

Governor Mohammed Bago approved ₦80,000 as the new minimum wage for both state and local government workers on October 27, with implementation beginning last month.

**Continue reading
on next page**

Con't from page 10

Dapo Abiodun (Ogun State)

Ogun State Governor Dapo Abiodun announced a new minimum wage of ₦77,000 on October 14. This decision followed a meeting with organised labour, with immediate effect for implementation.

Nasir Idris (Kebbi State)

On October 23, Kebbi State Governor Nasir Idris okayed ₦75,000 as the new minimum wage for state civil servants, which was implemented within 72 hours.

Usman Ododo (Kogi State)

Governor Usman Ododo approved a minimum wage of ₦72,500 for Kogi civil servants on October 7, with immediate effect.

Muhammad Yahaya (Gombe State)

In the same vein, Gombe State Governor Muhammad Yahaya approved a minimum wage of ₦71,500, effective from October, following a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC).

Douye Diri (Bayelsa State)

Governor Douye Diri approved ₦80,000 as the minimum wage for Bayelsa State workers in October, with a November 1, 2024 implementation date November 1. He also increased pension benefits and allocated ₦7 billion for gratuity payments.



Francis Nwifuru (Ebonyi State)

Ebonyi Governor Francis Nwifuru approved a minimum wage of ₦75,000 in October, citing economic realities as the basis for the increase.

Abba Yusuf (Kano State)

Governor Abba Yusuf announced ₦71,000 as the minimum wage for Kano State workers in October, with its implementation commencing in November, 2024.

Uba Sani (Kaduna State)

Kaduna State Governor Uba Sani approved ₦72,000 as the new minimum wage in October, aligning with his commitment to improving workers' welfare.

Seyi Makinde (Oyo State)

In November, Governor Seyi Makinde endorsed ₦80,000 as the minimum wage for Oyo State workers, pending completion of consequential adjustments by a government-labour committee.

Ademola Adeleke (Osun State)

Osun Governor Ademola Adeleke

announced a new minimum wage of ₦75,000 in November, set to take effect on December 1.

Abdullahi Sule (Nasarawa State)

Governor Abdullahi Sule approved ₦70,500 as the minimum wage for Nasarawa civil servants, following recommendations by a state committee.

Sheriff Oborewori (Delta State)

The Delta State Government announced the payment of ₦77,500 as the new minimum wage, starting at the end of November.

Hyacinth Alia (Benue State)

Benue Governor Hyacinth Alia approved a ₦75,000 minimum wage, effective from November, to address the economic needs of civil servants.

2024 RCCG congress: Activist Alimi criticizes Adeboye over camouflage outfit

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular rights activist Bisi Alimi has raised concerns about a recent photograph of Pastor Enoch Adeboye, the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), in which he was wearing an outfit resembling military camouflage.

The photo, which quickly went viral, has sparked heated debate, with Alimi questioning why the pastor was allowed to wear such attire while ordinary Nigerians face sanction for similar acts.

In a series of posts on his Instagram story, Alimi questioned if Pastor Adeboye had served in the military, arguing that the only legitimate reason for the clergyman to wear such an outfit would be prior military service.

Alimi's comments come at a time when the ongoing Holy Ghost Congress, a key event for RCCG, is being held, which only adds to the visibility of the pastor's attire. Alimi expressed disbelief that someone of Adeboye's status could flaunt military-style clothing without facing any legal consequences.

"Please, what is this? Did he serve in the army?" Alimi posted on his Instastory. "To think ordinary Nigerians have either been beaten mercilessly or jailed for wearing just camouflage pants, and here is a civilian in military regalia, getting away with it because he is some 'man of God'?"

The activist's criticism points to the perceived double standards in Nigerian society, where civilians, particularly those without military affiliation, are often penalized for wearing camouflage.

Alimi questioned why the same enforcement wasn't apply to Pastor Adeboye, who was seen in the outfit



during the religious event.

According to Nigerian law, wearing camouflage clothing is illegal for civilians unless they are part of the armed forces, as it is seen as impersonating the military.

Alimi continued his criticism, challenging the justification that the outfit might be related to the church's branding. He dismissed this argument, stating that camouflage clothing is a fashion choice and not part of any religious attire.

"Camouflage is also not a military outfit, it is fashion, and you get arrested for wearing it," Alimi asserted. "The rule is clear: unless you are in the military, don't wear any clothing that could be seen as impersonating the military."

He further pointed to the fact that Adeboye was also seen with medals, which Alimi argued could be interpreted as another violation. "They even have medals; what an absolute joke is this?" Alimi commented, referring to the pastor's outfit. In his posts, Alimi even quoted Nigeria's criminal code to underline his point, arguing that it was a clear case of impersonation.

The controversy has sparked a wide

range of reactions across social media. While many supported Alimi's views, others defended Pastor Adeboye, claiming that the outfit in question was part of the church's uniform and had no connection to the military.

Some commenters questioned the activist's motives, with one user, identified as ezeqwesiri, writing, "Bisi just dey fight battles wey no fight am! Must be tough." Others took a more critical stance, saying that Alimi was attacking religious leaders to gain attention.

Another commenter, laters_hq, suggested that Alimi was simply trying to remain relevant by attacking influential figures. "There is an extent where a person's life will scatter, and they'll start attacking men of God to find relevance...sad," they wrote.

In contrast, dotman.x took a more straightforward approach, stating that the outfit could simply be a chaplain uniform, and suggested that education should not be undermined despite a person's exposure.

However, some seemed to focus on the medals that Adeboye wore with the outfit. Youfounddesewa remarked, "Na the medals of honor gangan dey pain am," implying that it was the visible military honors on the outfit that triggered Alimi's reaction.

Ajasin varsity graduates 6,882, Achievers gets 71 First Class graduands

By Friday Omosola

Ondo State owned Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko (AAUA) has begun its 13th convocation ceremony and 25th anniversary with an impressive record of academic excellence and institutional achievements.

Speaking at a press briefing in Akure, AAUA Vice-Chancellor, Olugbenga Ige, announced that 6,882 students from the 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 academic sessions will be graduating during the convocation ceremony.

Meanwhile, Achievers University, Owo, will also hold its 14th convocation ceremony this week Saturday, with about 71 students earning First Class Honours in various disciplines.

Prof Ige said 62 students earned First Class Honours, while 1,941 and 3,486 graduates got Second Class Upper and Lower Divisions, respectively.

He added that eight students graduated with Pass degrees.

The convocation will also honour three prominent Nigerians— Ondo State Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa, Adegboyega Adefarati, and Hamzat Subaru—with honorary degrees for their societal contributions.

The Vice Chancellor of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko (AAUA), Olugbenga Ige and others after a press briefing in Akure, Ondo State capital [PHOTO CREDIT: The Hope Newspaper]

In celebration of its 25th anniversary, AAUA will lay the foundation for a multi-million-naira Hall of Residence project, with Governor Aiyedatiwa performing the ceremony.

Other activities include a research exhibition, inter-university debate, anniversary lecture, and the AAUA at 25 Awards ceremony.

Ige further highlighted the



university's accomplishments, including 100 per cent accreditation of its programmes by the National Universities Commission (NUC), international research grants, and the conversion of a petrol-powered motorcycle into an electric one by students and alumni.

Additionally, he noted that AAUA has been approved to host an American Corner, which will become operational in January 2025.

The Vice-Chancellor of Achievers University, Omolola Irinoye, disclosed the school's feats during a press conference, stressing, "71 students earned First Class Honours while 303 and 243 graduates attained Second Class Upper and Lower Divisions, respectively.

Irinoye added that the university will confer honorary degrees on distinguished individuals, including the Governor of Niger State, Umar Bago, and the Managing Director of Fidson Healthcare, Fidelis Ayebae.

Achievers University's convocation week includes the presentation of 143

graduate nurses to the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria, 12 engineering graduates to the Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria, and 65 medical laboratory scientists to the Medical Laboratory Science Council of Nigeria.

The university will also induct 17 public health graduates into the African Institute of Public Health Professionals.

Irinoye stressed the university's commitment to increasing access to higher education through its 12 tuition-free programmes and scholarships covering up to 80 per cent of tuition for other courses.

Achievers University, which started with 126 students in 2008, now boasts an enrollment of 3,692 students across various degree programmes.

The convocation will be rounded off with a thanksgiving service and the foundation-laying of the Yakubu Dogara Institute of Legal and Democratic Studies.

Ondo gov presents N655bn 2025 budget to House of Assembly

By Friday Omosola

Governor of Ondo State, Lucky Aiyedatiwa, has presented a budget estimate of ₦655.23 billion for the 2025 fiscal year to the State House of Assembly.

In a statement posted on his Facebook page today, Ebenezer Adeniyani, the governor's Chief Press Secretary, said the budget tagged "Budget of Recovery," aims to address key socio-economic challenges and foster development across critical sectors.

During the plenary session presided over by the Speaker, Olamide Oladiji, Governor Aiyedatiwa outlined the breakdown of the budget.

The allocation comprises ₦248.923 billion (37.99 per cent) for recurrent expenditure and ₦406.307 billion (62.01 per cent) for capital expenditure.

Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa presenting the 2025 "Budget of Recovery" to the House of Assembly

[PHOTO CREDIT: Facebook]

He said the proposed budget prioritises infrastructural development, with ₦238.572 billion (36.40 per cent) earmarked for projects aimed at revamping the state's physical and economic structures.

The governor added that education follows with ₦77.024 billion (11.80 per cent), agriculture with ₦56.102 billion (8.60 per cent), and health with ₦46.016 billion

(7.00 per cent).

Other allocations according to him include, public finance: ₦125.456 billion (19 per cent), environment and sewage management, ₦13.084 billion (2.00 per cent)—administration of justice, ₦13.163 billion (2.8 per cent), trade and industry, ₦8.839 billion (1.30 per cent) and general administration with ₦34.398 billion (5.20 per cent).

Governor Aiyedatiwa expressed gratitude to the people of the state for their support and peaceful conduct during the recent elections, highlighting the legacy of his predecessor, the late Oluwarotimi Akereḍolu,

"We have delivered on our promises and seek to consolidate our gains through the 2025 Budget. This proposal focuses on recovery and growth, addressing socio-economic challenges, and ensuring prosperity for our people," the governor said.

He praised the Assembly for its role in addressing the state's fiscal challenges, especially through the passage of the 2024 Revised Appropriation Bill.

Aiyedatiwa highlighted his administration's successes in agriculture, infrastructure, and human capital development.



Oyebanji disburses N140m to Ekiti young farmers, projects massive food production in 2025

By Friday Omosola

Ekiti State Governor, Biodun Oyebanji, has disbursed N140 million in cheques to young farmers engaged in commercial agriculture under the “Bring Back the Youth in Agriculture” initiative.

In a statement on the state government’s Facebook page today, the programme, executed in collaboration with YSJ Farms Limited, targets boosting food production and youth engagement in farming across six farm clusters in the state.

Presenting the cheques at the Osuntokun Pavilion, Government House, Ado-Ekiti yesterday, Oyebanji highlighted the critical global and national food shortages witnessed this year.

He emphasised his administration’s commitment to agriculture as a tool for economic empowerment and food security.

“Our efforts are geared towards creating financial opportunities for young people through commercial agriculture. To further enhance productivity, we are working with investors to bring tractors into the state for hire, instead of purchasing them directly,” he said.

The governor also warned against sabotage within the Ministry of Agriculture, urging staff to align with the government’s vision of repositioning agriculture and improving food security in the state.

Oyebanji disclosed that the state government had injected N300 million into Ekiti’s economy in the last two days, aligning with his administration’s wealth creation and



shared prosperity agenda.

He further encouraged the beneficiaries to use the funds judiciously, reinvesting in future planting seasons while hoping for favourable weather conditions.

Furthermore, the governor announced plans to renovate the old Awolowo farm settlement and develop six new farm settlements next year to address the farmers’ accommodation challenges, ensuring a more convenient working environment.

Commending President Bola Tinubu for financial support, the governor disclosed ongoing efforts to establish “Renewed Hope Farm Settlements” in all farm clusters across the state.

Moreover, the Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Security,

Ebenezer Boluade, praised the initiative, noting its potential to create 10,000 agricultural jobs and lift Ekiti residents out of poverty.

He also highlighted the state’s progress in broiler farming, with a projected N80 million revenue within four breeding cycles.

Meanwhile, the young farmers which include Johnson Owoye from Gede and Michael Mayowa from Iyemero, expressed gratitude for the initiative, noting the positive impact on their lives and futures.

More so, YSJ Farms Limited CEO, Yemisi Joluwe, lauded the resilience and determination of Ekiti’s youth, describing them as hardworking and focused.

Moniepoint mum as OPay denies alleged CBN's N1 billion fine

By Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE

Nigerian fintech, Moniepoint, has kept mum over an alleged N1 billion fine imposed on it and other fintechs by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) over compliance issues.

Per TechCabal, OPay was also fined N1 billion by the CBN for a similar issue in the second quarter (Q2) of 2024.

While Moniepoint, Africa's eighth unicorn, declined to comment on the claim while OPay denied it, saying it is false, according to TechCabal.

TechCabal also said the CBN on the other hand did not immediately respond to a request for comments.

OPay said, "We categorically refute the claims that OPay Digital Services was fined by the Central Bank of Nigeria to the tune of N1 billion for regulatory infractions. These claims are entirely false."

Penalties followed routine fintech audit

The penalties were imposed after CBN's routine audit of the fintech sector, which is a standard procedure for banks and financial institutions under CBN's oversight.

Among the reasons for the routine fintech audit is the increasing expansion of fintechs in recent years, which has called for greater scrutiny and stricter regulation.

Also, many fintechs, including Moniepoint and OPay, have not upgraded their licence authorisation from micro microfinance bank category, which provides support to micro, small, and medium



enterprises, under which they obtained operational licence.

With rapid expansion and a wider customer base, the current licencing framework for their category has become inadequate to effectively safeguard customers.

Another regulatory issue is that most fintechs have not complied with Know Your Customer (KYC) processes as stipulated by the CBN.

Recall that the CBN, in April 2024, imposed a two-month ban on customer onboarding for several fintechs, including OPay, Kuda Bank, and Palmpay for non-compliance with KYC standards.

The ban led to an overhaul of fintechs' onboarding procedures, appointing banks' top shots to handle compliance, as well as a

commitment to improve compliance measures, after the ban was lifted.

CBN fined banks too

Traditional Nigerian banks have also been victims of the CBN's big stick, as the apex bank has had to enforce regulatory compliance through the imposition of fines.

In 2023, the CBN fined nine banks a combined N678 million over regulatory non-compliance.

Also, in October 2024, the CBN and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) sanctioned 10 commercial banks and imposed a N15 billion fine for violating foreign exchange guidelines and other regulatory offences in the first half of the year.

Okpebholo begins remodelling of Edo schools

By Friday Omosola

Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo, has commenced a comprehensive remodelling of public schools across the state.

The announcement was made by the governor's Chief Press Secretary, Fred Itua, in a statement shared on Facebook today.

The project was unveiled yesterday during the distribution of notebooks, textbooks, and other instructional materials in Benin City, the state capital.

Speaking at the event, Governor Okpebholo directed the immediate distribution of the materials to schools in all 18 Local Government Areas of the state.

He condemned the previous hoarding of educational materials as an act of "wickedness," emphasising his administration's commitment to improving education for Edo children.

The governor, accompanied by the Executive Chairman of the Edo State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), Paddy Iyamu, former Oredo Federal Constituency lawmaker Omoregie Ogbiede-Ihama, and other government officials, also inspected facilities at New Era College, Benin City.

New Era College, established as a specialized institution for young athletes by the late Samuel Ogbemudia, a former governor of Old Bendel State, was in a state of disrepair.



Okpebholo expressed dismay over the dilapidated facilities, including classrooms where students were forced to sit on the floor.

"These books you see here were donated by the President Bola Tinubu, for the benefit of Edo children, but the former Governor, Godwin Obaseki, refused to distribute them because the President's face is affixed," Okpebholo alleged.

"This is wickedness of the highest order."

The governor pledged to restore New Era College, instructing the SUBEB chairman to begin preparations for the school's reconstruction immediately.

He further criticised his predecessor's flagship education programme, EdoBEST, claiming it

failed to deliver meaningful improvements for students.

"What we see here today is not best for our children. My administration will ensure visible transformation within weeks," he vowed.

The governor reiterated his commitment to prioritising education, promising to address the neglect and decay left behind by the previous administration.

Iyamu confirmed that the governor's directive for material distribution would be strictly implemented, ensuring the books reach every school in the state.

Police nab 3 fraudsters with N129.5bn fake currency in Kano

By Dave Oludare Oso

Police in Kano have arrested three notorious fraudsters, recovering the sum of N129,542,823,000 billion fake currencies from them.

Nura Ibrahim (26) of Sharada Quarters, Kano, Mohammed Muktar (35) of Hotoro Quarters, Kano, and Ahmad Abdullahi (30) of Kaga Local Government Area of Borno state, were arrested at different times and locations, following a tip off by a good Samaritan on the nefarious activities of the suspected criminals.

The arrest of Nura on December 1, 2024, led to the arrest of Mohammed and Ahmed.

Ahmed who hails from Borno state

is the ring leader of the gang who have been terrorizing residents of Kano metropolis for so long.

According to Kano State Police Command spokesperson, SP Abdullahi Haruna Kiyawa, following credible information received from a good Samaritan on the activities of a notorious fraudster around Gwale Local Government Area of Kano State, the Commissioner of Police, Kano State Command, CP Salman Dogo Garba directed the Divisional Police Officer (DPO), Gwale Division Kano, SP Abdurrahim Adamu to lead a team of detectives and ensure the arrest of the suspect.

Further investigation led to the arrest of another suspect, Mohammed Muktar.

Discreet investigation conducted at the Command's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) led to the arrest of the principal suspect, Ahmad Abdullahi, who relocated from Kaga in Borno state to Hotoro Quarters, Kano.

During the course of the investigation, counterfeit currencies equivalent to a total sum of N129,542,823,000:00 were recovered with descriptions as follows: \$3,366,000, CFA51,970,000, N1,443,000, all discovered to be fake currencies.

Kiyawa added that suspects will be charged to court for prosecution upon completion of the investigation.



Drama as Edo gov presents N605bn 2025 budget to state Assembly

By Friday Omosola

Governor, Monday Okpebholo of Edo State today presented a 2025 budget proposal of N605 billion to the State House of Assembly.

Tagged the 'Budget of Renewed Hope for a Rising Edo', the proposal marks a 25 per cent increase from the 2024 budget under Godwin Obaseki's administration.

Governor Okpebholo disclosed that N223 billion, representing 37 per cent of the total budget, is allocated for recurrent expenditure, while N381 billion, accounting for 63 per cent, is earmarked for capital projects.

Addressing the assembly during the presentation, Okpebholo

stated that the budget is aligned with his administration's five-point agenda, security, infrastructural development, healthcare, food sufficiency, and education.

However, Okpebholo's budget presentation was not without drama as he struggled repeatedly with the budget figures

Meanwhile, a sectoral breakdown of the budget by the governor revealed key allocations, including, N162 billion for road development across the state, N48 billion for education—N63.9 billion for health services, N1.8 billion for the state's Health Insurance Scheme, and N4.5 billion for the agricultural sector.

Okpebholo emphasised that the budget was the result of extensive consultations and pledged to uphold transparency and accountability in its implementation to ensure effective service delivery to the people of Edo State.

Also, the Speaker, Blessing Agbebaku, assured the governor of the assembly's commitment to promptly review and approve the budget.

Agbebaku also reaffirmed the legislature's dedication to collaborating with the executive for the betterment of Edo residents.



NGO donates funds for surgeries for over 50 children

By Helen Okechukwu



The chairperson of the Better Life Programme for the African Rural Woman (BLPARW), Aisha Babangida, has donated funds for life-changing surgeries for over 50 children living with poor health conditions.

BLPARW is a non-profit organisation (NGO) with the mandate to empower and enhance lives through healthcare, fostering economic empowerment, and promoting education.

The fund was provided during the 19th annual Christmas/End-of-Year party organised by Global Initiative for Peace, Love, and Care

(GIPLC) in Abuja

During the programme, a substantive cheques for scholarship grants were also presented to support 10 student recipients of the 2024 GIPLC PRIME-ED (Primary Education) for five years.

Also, at the event, the Dickens Sanomi Foundation (DSF) donated the sum of N5 million for children facing health challenges, and another N12 million was provided for a child to undergo heart surgery.

Partnering with GIPLC, Babangida, the chairperson of BLPARW, had raised funds to

renovate and improve the lives of 300 almajiri children residing at the mosque at Mpape, in Abuja.

Also, GIPLC 2024 Heart of Gold Award recognition was presented to Aisha Babangida for her outstanding work for humanity and community development.

Building a stronger Nigeria through health, transparency, and human rights **By Richard C. Mills**

Every December, we mark three international observances that are at the heart of the U.S.-Nigeria partnership: World AIDS Day, International Anti-Corruption Day, and Human Rights Day.

While distinct, these commemorations underscore a simple truth – Nigeria’s path forward requires progress on health, good governance, and human rights.

The United States remains your steadfast partner on this journey.

For two decades, the United States has stood with Nigeria in the fight against HIV/AIDS under the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). The U.S. government has invested more than \$8.3 billion in Nigeria’s health sector and provided life-saving anti-retroviral treatment to more than 1.5 million people.

These numbers represent improved life expectancy and quality of life for these Nigerians and their families. In clinics across Nigeria, I’ve met dedicated healthcare workers who deliver HIV prevention, treatment, and care, supported by the resources of the American people.

This work has done more than save lives – using HIV as an entry point, Nigeria’s health system has also benefited. As Nigeria’s health system is strengthened, this important work will be led by the government and engagement with the private sector to sustain the gains.

This commitment was reinforced during Ambassador Nkengasong’s recent visit, where his discussions with Nigerian health officials focused on how the Government of Nigeria would sustain the HIV health programs with strengthened Nigerian leadership and local ownership.

But positive health outcomes depend critically on good governance. When medical supplies are diverted, when



healthcare workers go unpaid, when facilities buy dangerous, counterfeit medications or lack resources due to mismanaged funds, it costs lives.

This is why the United States supports numerous initiatives, not only in the health sector, to enhance transparency and accountability in Nigeria. Our programs work directly with government agencies and civil society organizations to strengthen fiscal responsibility with the goal of the state ensuring resources reach their intended beneficiaries.

The success of these efforts rests on respect for human rights and civic engagement. When members of marginalized communities face discrimination in accessing healthcare, when citizens fear reporting blatant corruption like the need to pay for appointments or ‘free’ healthcare, or when vulnerable populations cannot advocate for their needs, development falters.

Through our partnership with Nigeria, we promote the rights of every person to access essential services and enjoy fundamental freedoms without fear or discrimination.

These three areas – health,

transparency, and human rights – reinforce each other. Consider the results: U.S.-supported initiatives have helped strengthen pharmaceutical supply chains, reducing theft and ensuring safe medicines reach patients.

Our human rights programming has empowered civil society organizations to advocate for marginalized communities, leading to better access to health services. Our health system investments have created platforms for transparency that benefit all sectors.

And, perhaps most importantly, according to a recent survey by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Nigerians are both more frequently refusing to pay bribes and reporting bribe seekers to investigative journalists and rule of law authorities. A shift in norms is beginning to take root and must continue.

The U.S. Embassy stands ready to support Nigerian voices pressing the fight against corruption in Nigeria. To Nigeria’s government officials, civil society leaders, healthcare workers, and citizens: your dedication to building a stronger nation inspires us.

Together, we can continue to advance the interconnected goals of better health outcomes, good governance, and human rights for all Nigerians. Challenges remain, but the work we’ve done together shows what could be possible on a larger scale across these crucial domains.

As we mark these December observances, let us use this moment not just for reflection, but for renewed commitment and action. The United States continues to stand with the Nigerian people as they carry out this essential work with their elected government.

Richard C. Mills is the United States ambassador to Nigeria

Olajumoke Onibread reveals Manager's alleged role in career setback

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Olajumoke Orisaguna, famously known as Olajumoke Onibread, has opened up about how her former manager, Victoria, allegedly contributed to her career's decline. The once-popular bread seller turned model, whose story inspired millions, shared her experience during an emotional appearance on the Honest Bunch podcast.

Rising to fame

Olajumoke became a national sensation in 2016 after photobombing a shoot featuring British rapper Tinie Tempah in Lagos. That moment transformed her from a street bread seller to a sought-after model. However, her newfound fame was short-lived, and she soon faded from the spotlight.

Allegations against former manager

On the podcast, Olajumoke claimed that Victoria, her former manager, played a key role in derailing her modelling career. According to Olajumoke, Victoria refused to return her Instagram login credentials, effectively cutting her off from her online platform and fan base. She also alleged that Victoria deleted all the modelling projects she had completed under her management when their professional relationship ended.

Experiences abroad

Olajumoke recounted her trips to South Africa, where she participated in high-profile events such as Soweto Fashion Week. She said she was paid ₦200,000 for her first trip. However, after deducting expenses for feeding, accommodation, and travel, little remained.

She recalled, "My manager said I was responsible for all my expenses. By the time I got back to Nigeria, the ₦200,000 I earned was almost gone."

For her second trip to South Africa, Olajumoke revealed that Victoria handed her only ₦50,000. The financial strain and lack of proper support left her



struggling to maintain her career momentum.

Transition to a new manager

Before working with Victoria, Olajumoke had been managed by Azuka, another figure she parted ways with. She explained that her decision to leave Azuka and join Victoria was based on promises of better opportunities. However, she now believes that the switch only worsened her situation.

Reactions

The podcast episode stirred reactions online, with fans expressing both sympathy and frustration.

@thisgeneralmusty commented, "God will send you a helper that will lead you to your dreams, amen."

@xtii3billionaire noted, "Her husband also contributed to her downfall."

@omotioluwabi demanded, "Doesn't she have any pictures of this Victoria? Let us see this person."

Others questioned the timing of her revelations.

@dee_jay_1.k asked, "Why wait all these years to speak out?"

Challenges in Personal Life

Olajumoke also addressed rumours surrounding her personal life, including her marriage. She clarified that her marriage didn't end because of fame. Instead, she revealed that her mother had often told her she was never truly married to her husband.

Her struggle to reclaim her life and career has been ongoing. Despite the setbacks, she remains determined to make a comeback and rebuild her image in the public eye.

Reflection on lost opportunities

The former model's story highlights the challenges many face when navigating sudden fame. Without a strong support system, her rise to stardom became a cautionary tale of mismanagement and exploitation.

Looking ahead

Although Olajumoke's journey has been fraught with difficulties, her resilience shines through. She continues to share her story, hoping it will inspire others and shed light on the pitfalls of the entertainment industry.

Her revelations on the Honest Bunch podcast serve as a reminder of the importance of trust, accountability, and proper guidance in managing a rising star's career.

Actress Nkechi Blessing shuts down admirer's DM over romantic overture

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian actress Nkechi Blessing has found herself at the centre of social media buzz following a heated exchange with a young admirer who slid into her direct messages.

The incident, which unfolded on Instagram, has ignited debates online, with fans sharing mixed reactions to the leaked chat.

The melodrama began when Nkechi Blessing shared a screenshot of a private message sent by the admirer. In the message, the young man confessed he had been following her since 2020 and expressed his romantic interest. He proposed a secret relationship, assuring the actress that he would remain discreet until she felt ready to reveal their affair publicly.

The actress did not mince words in her reply. She unleashed a string of curses on the admirer and issued a stern warning to others with similar intentions. She made it clear that her direct messages were off-limits for unsolicited advances. Her blunt response quickly gained traction online, becoming a trending issue across social platforms.

As the screenshots circulated, many Nigerians flocked to social media to share their opinions. The responses ranged from humorous to the critical, with some questioning the admirer's audacity and others debating how Nkechi handled the situation.

One user wrote, "She probably checked his profile first and didn't see anything impressive. Lol." Another commented, "If it was a woman asking for help, she'd get baby-girl treatment. But for a man? Nothing."

Others chimed in with sarcastic remarks. "This life is tough for broke men," one netizen said, while another



added, "Imagine if he were a billionaire. The story would be different!"

This is not the first time Nkechi Blessing has sparked conversations about her personal life. In a separate post reported earlier by New Daily Prime, the actress addressed speculation surrounding her relationships. She firmly stated that her love life was nobody's business and warned fans against leaving negative comments on her social media posts.

The uproar surrounding this incident highlights the evolving nature of celebrity-fan interactions on social media. Direct messages offer fans unprecedented access to public figures, but they also expose celebrities to unsolicited and sometimes inappropriate advances.

In Nkechi Blessing's case, her unfiltered response underscores her reputation for being unapologetically bold. However, it has also sparked debates about how public figures should handle such situations. Some believe her reaction was justified, while others think she could have responded more diplomatically.

The viral nature of this incident serves as a reminder of the challenges celebrities face in the digital age. Social media blurs the boundaries between public and private life, often putting stars under intense scrutiny. For fans, it's a platform to express admiration—or, in some cases, overstep boundaries.

However, Nkechi Blessing continues to stand her ground. Whether defending her personal life or clapping back at unwanted advances, the actress proves she's not afraid to speak her mind.

As conversations around this incident persist, it's clear that social media remains a double-edged sword for public figures. For Nkechi Blessing, the attention may be a testament to her star power, but it also comes with its fair share of challenges.

With fans and critics alike glued to their screens, one thing is certain: Nkechi Blessing knows how to keep people talking.

Ruth Kadiri faults filmmakers pressuring actors for views

By New Daily Prime

Nollywood actress and filmmaker Ruth Kadiri has faulted movie producers who set unrealistic standards for success on YouTube. She firmly stated that any producer demanding one million views on a movie's first day of upload has already failed.

Kadiri, known for her outspoken nature, urged actors to reject this unnecessary pressure. She emphasized that achieving such high view counts is not the only measure of a movie's success.

According to her, a film's quality depends on much more than the lead actor's popularity or face.

Kadiri reminded her colleagues that a well-produced movie requires more than just a famous face to sell. The Nollywood star highlighted how some producers ignore the deeper aspects of filmmaking, focusing instead on shallow metrics like views. She advised actors to prioritize the joy of their craft over meeting these unrealistic expectations.

"There's so much people don't understand about YouTube," Kadiri said, encouraging actors to remain confident in their abilities. She added that ignorance often leads to unnecessary criticism, but it should not overshadow the hard work and creativity put into a project.

Kadiri didn't hold back in addressing her peers, particularly those who have never supported or invested in anyone else's career. She argued that such individuals are often the loudest critics, spreading negativity in the industry. Her bold



stance resonated with fans and colleagues, sparking a debate online.

Kadiri's comments struck a chord with many, prompting reactions from fans and industry insiders alike. Social media users shared their frustrations with the state of Nollywood filmmaking.

One commenter, @rochelle_97_, criticized low-quality productions, saying: "Dear Nollywood actors, not everyone is meant to be a producer, and that's okay! Please stop giving us movies where the entire plot is set in one house... very boring."

Another user, @sika_gh_, highlighted the lack of originality, stating: "Too much pressure and unnecessary competition. Some are just recreating the same stories. One story gets retold by five different

actors turned producers."

Kadiri's remarks reflect broader concerns about Nollywood's evolving standards. With YouTube becoming a key platform for movie releases, some producers focus more on quick metrics than long-term storytelling quality.

This shift has sparked debates on balancing creativity with commercial success.

By addressing this issue, Kadiri not only defended her fellow actors but also called for a cultural shift in Nollywood. Her message was clear: success is not defined by numbers but by meaningful storytelling and genuine effort.

The debate also sheds light on the growing divide within Nollywood. While some filmmakers prioritize artistic integrity, others chase viral moments and trends. Kadiri's bold stance encourages stakeholders to rethink their approach, putting quality above fleeting fame.

Ruth Kadiri's statements are a wake-up call for Nollywood. Her words urge the industry to focus on growth, collaboration, and respect for the craft. By rejecting superficial metrics, she advocates for a future where actors and filmmakers can thrive without undue pressure.

In the end, Kadiri's message serves as a reminder: filmmaking is about creating art, not just chasing numbers.

Israeli warplanes pound Syria as troops advance deeper into the country

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Israel carried out a wave of heavy airstrikes across Syria as its troops advanced deeper into the country, drawing to within 25 kilometers (15 miles) of the capital, a Syrian opposition war monitor said Tuesday.

However, Israel denied its forces were advancing toward Damascus.

Associated Press reporters in Damascus heard heavy airstrikes overnight and into Tuesday on the city and its suburbs. Photographs circulating online showed destroyed missile launchers, helicopters and warplanes.

There was no immediate comment from the insurgent groups — led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS — that have taken control of Damascus.

Israel had earlier seized a roughly 400-square-kilometer (155-square-mile) buffer zone inside Syria that had been established after the 1973 Mideast war, a move it said was taken to prevent attacks in the aftermath of the overthrow of President Bashar Assad.

Israel has also said it is striking suspected chemical weapons sites and heavy weapons to prevent them from falling into the hands of extremists. Israeli officials rarely acknowledge individual strikes.

Israel has a long history of seizing territory during wars with its neighbors and occupying it indefinitely, citing security concerns. Israel captured the Golan Heights



from Syria in the 1967 Mideast war and annexed it in a move not recognized internationally, except by the United States.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which has closely tracked the conflict since the civil war erupted nearly 14 years ago, said Israel has carried out more than 300 airstrikes across the country since rebels overthrew Assad over the weekend, ending his family's half-century rule.

The Observatory, and Beirut-based Mayadeen TV, which has reporters in Syria, said Israeli troops are advancing up the Syrian side of the border with Lebanon. It was not possible to independently confirm the reports.

Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani, an Israeli military spokesperson, said “the reports circulating in the media about the alleged advancement of Israeli tanks towards Damascus are false.”

He said Israeli troops are stationed within the buffer zone in order to protect Israel.

Israel's military had previously said troops would enter the buffer zone “and several other places necessary for its defence.”

Israeli media meanwhile reported that the air force was methodically destroying Syria's military assets to ensure whoever rules the country next would have to rebuild them.

The operations “have been systematically destroying all that remains of the escaped tyrant's military,” wrote Yossi Yehoshua, the military correspondent for Israel's largest daily, Yediot Ahronot.

“Dozens upon dozens of targets, including arms depots of various kinds, have been hit in waves of attacks so as to prevent them from falling into hostile hands and from posing a threat to Israel.” The air force “currently enjoys complete freedom of action,” he added.

Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia have condemned Israel's incursion, accusing it of exploiting the disarray in Syria and violating international law.

Trump trolls Canadian PM, Trudeau as 'governor' of 'great state' of Canada

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

President-elect Donald Trump called Canadian Prime Minister "Governor Justin Trudeau of the Great State of Canada" on Tuesday, after threatening to impose massive tariffs on imports from Canada.

"It was a pleasure to have dinner the other night with Governor Justin Trudeau of the Great State of Canada," Trump wrote on Truth Social early Tuesday.

"I look forward to seeing the Governor again soon so that we may continue our in depth talks on Tariffs and Trade, the results of which will be truly spectacular for all!"

His remark came a day after the Canadian prime minister had commented on Trump's tariff threat and what it could mean to U.S. consumers.

"Trump got elected on a commitment to make life better and more affordable for Americans, and I think people south of the border are beginning to wake up to the real reality that tariffs on everything from Canada would make life a lot more expensive," Trudeau said at an event at the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, according to the Associated Press.

Trump said in an interview with NBC News that he told Trudeau Canada needs to "close" its borders to prevent migrants and drugs from "pouring in." And if he doesn't close the Canadian border,



Trump said he would impose a 25% tariff on imports from Canada. He leveled the same threats against Mexico.

Trump has complained about fentanyl coming into the U.S. from Mexico and Canada, even though there have been fewer seizures from across the Canadian border than from the Mexican border.

U.S. customs agents seized 43 pounds of fentanyl at the Canadian border last fiscal year, compared with 21,100 pounds at the Mexican border.

Canadian officials say lumping Canada in with Mexico is unfair, but they've also said they're ready to make new investments in border security.

Trump and Trudeau dined at Mar-a-Lago in late November, at the urging of Canadian officials.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau exits the Delta Hotels by Marriott West Palm Beach ahead of a meeting with President-elect Donald Trump on Nov. 29, 2024, in Palm Beach, Florida. BRANDON BELL/ Getty Images

Trudeau is no stranger to Trump's social media posts and negotiating tactics. Trudeau was prime minister during Trump's first term.

In 2019, Trump called Trudeau "two-faced" and canceled a NATO press conference, after a video emerged of Trudeau appearing to mock Trump while talking to the leaders of France, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

Trump has long threatened to impose steep tariffs on international trading partners, including allies.

77 Nobel laureates slam Trump's choice of RFK Jr for health secretary

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

An unsavoury report has revealed that since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, at least 43,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed on the battlefield.

According to the reports, updated figures also reveal that Russia has suffered over 750,000 casualties, including 198,000 killed and more than 550,000 wounded.

This comes as Volodymyr Zelensky, the Ukrainian President, in a post via his verified X account on Sunday, said that the war had also resulted in over 370,000 cases of medical assistance for wounded Ukrainian troops.

"Our people are defending their homes at the cost of their lives, and every life of our soldiers and our civilians is precious to us," Zelensky said, according to AFP.

Zelensky emphasized that the Russian army's losses have been significantly higher in recent months.

"Since September this year, Russia has been losing troops on the battlefield at a ratio of 5-to-1, or even 6-to-1, compared to us," he stated.

Despite the immense toll, Zelensky highlighted a critical difference between the two forces.

"One of the key distinctions between the Russian army and Ukraine's Defence Forces is the level of frontline medicine, which is significantly higher in our forces.



Approximately half of our soldiers wounded in action are later returning to the battlefield," he said.

Zelensky also addressed the humanitarian crisis caused by the war, noting that thousands of Ukrainians remain in Russian captivity.

"Since February 24, 2022, we have already managed to bring 3,935 of our people home—3,767 soldiers and 168 civilians. But we must bring everyone back, and much work remains to be done."

He expressed particular concern for children abducted by Russia, stating, "Russians themselves admit that these abducted children number in the hundreds of thousands, dispersed across their territory. Returning them is the most challenging task."

During meetings with global leaders, including a visit to French President Emmanuel Macron and discussions with U.S. President-

elect Donald Trump, Zelensky reiterated the need for lasting peace.

"We need a just and enduring peace—one that the Russians will not be able to destroy in a few years, as they have done repeatedly in the past."

Zelensky warned against trusting Russian intentions without guarantees.

He said, "A ceasefire without guarantees can be reignited at any moment, as Putin has already done before.

"We must guarantee the reliability of peace and not turn a blind eye to occupation."

He concluded by urging global unity to counter Russian aggression, saying "Putin can only be stopped by strength—the strength of world leaders who can become leaders of peace."

Corruption allegations: Netanyahu's trial resumes

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is set to take to the witness stand Tuesday (today) for the first time in his trial on corruption allegations, a pivotal point in the drawn-out proceedings that comes as he wages war in Gaza and faces an international arrest warrant for war crimes charges.

Netanyahu is on trial at home on accusations of fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in three separate matters. Netanyahu denies wrongdoing, but his appearance on the witness stand will be a low point in his decades-long political career, standing in contrast to the image of a sophisticated, respected leader he has tried to cultivate.

The trial will take up a chunk of Netanyahu's time at a crucial point for Israel. While he makes his case for weeks from the stand, he will still be tasked with managing the war in Gaza, maintaining a fragile ceasefire with the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and keeping tabs on threats from the wider Middle East, including Iran.

It will be the first time an Israeli prime minister has taken the stand as a criminal defendant.

Netanyahu has repeatedly sought to delay the proceedings, citing the war in Gaza and security concerns. The judges ordered the trial to resume Tuesday, moving the proceedings to an underground chamber in a Tel Aviv court as a security precaution.

Netanyahu's appearance in the courtroom will also draw attention to other legal issues in the Israeli leader's orbit.

Close advisers in his office are embroiled in a separate series of scandals surrounding leaked classified information and doctored documents.



While Netanyahu is not suspected of direct involvement in those, they could weaken his public image.

On Monday evening, Netanyahu called a press conference, his first in three months, where he gave a glowing overview of Israel's achievements in 14 months of war and said the fighting with Hamas and Hezbollah were directly responsible for the fall of Bashar Assad's government in Syria.

When questioned about the next day's testimony, Netanyahu became visibly angry. "I have been waiting eight years for this day, to present the truth," he said, railing against the "political hunt" that he asserted had "ruined the lives of dozens of people" caught up in the trial. He accused the media of pursuing fake news against him and reporting lies.

Here is a look at the trial

The trial, which began in 2020, involves three separate cases in which prosecutors say Netanyahu exchanged regulatory favours with media titans for favorable press coverage and advanced the personal interests of a billionaire Hollywood producer in

exchange for lavish gifts.

Prosecutors have called roughly 140 witnesses to the stand — fewer than the 300 initially expected to testify.

Those witnesses have included some of Netanyahu's closest former confidants who turned against him, as well as former prime minister Yair Lapid, former security chiefs and media personalities. Lawyers have submitted thousands of items of evidence including recordings, police documents and text messages.

A new documentary, "The Bibi Files," has shed new light on the cases by obtaining footage of Netanyahu being questioned by police, as well as interrogations of his wife and some key witnesses. In a glimpse of what can be expected in the courtroom, Netanyahu appears combative and anxious at times, accusing police of unfairly picking on him and denigrating other witnesses as liars.

The prosecution called to the stand its final witness over the summer, bringing to an end three years of testimony and setting the stage for the defence to lay out its case, with Netanyahu its first witness.

Manchester United open to selling Marcus Rashford amid lifestyle concerns

By Dave Oludare Oso

Marcus Rashford is fighting to save his Manchester United career after Telegraph Sport learnt the club were open to selling him last summer and remain receptive to bids being made.

United are said to be concerned about Rashford's lifestyle off the pitch and there are fears he is no longer as focused on his football as he could be.

Sources have said he is dealing with a number of off-field distractions that are affecting his performances.

Rashford was fined two weeks' wages in January after he was pictured drinking heavily on a night out in Belfast and was dropped for the team's FA Cup win over Newport County after reporting ill on the Friday before the game. Under former manager Erik ten Hag, Rashford was also left out of the starting line-up for a Boxing Day win at Wolves in 2022 for "internal disciplinary" reasons. He came off the bench to score the winner.

Rashford still has a chance to turn things around under new manager Ruben Amorim and has scored three goals in five appearances under him, but time is running out and United need to see proof of his hunger and desire to do so.

The fact United were investigating a potential market for the 27-year-old before the start of the season shows how far his star has fallen given he signed a new contract that made him one of the club's top earners, alongside Casemiro, in July 2023.

Rashford missed out on the England squad for Euro 2024, with the last of his 60 caps coming in March.

Saudi Arabia and PSG could be options

The chances of United finding a buyer



in January are remote given he earns around £325,000-a-week at Old Trafford and has not shown any consistent form for months.

There is a greater chance of him being offloaded in the summer. He has a contract at the club until 2028. Very few clubs have the resources to match his current wages.

A move to Saudi Arabia is an option while a change of country and environment in France with Paris St-Germain has also been mooted.

The sale of Rashford, even for a relatively modest fee given what he would have once commanded, is also attractive to United given their profit and sustainability concerns. As a homegrown player, any money brought in would represent pure profit under PSR, which makes him even more vulnerable.

As revealed by Telegraph Sport, Amorim is set to operate on a more modest budget than Ten Hag at Manchester United and he will be tasked with maximising the untapped potential in the squad as the club aim to end the damaging and costly cycle of mass overhauls.

The new United hierarchy, which changed this week following the shock departure of Dan Ashworth, have no plans under Amorim to rip up a squad they feel is capable of delivering far more. The club are determined to move away from a culture of persistent upheaval they believe to be financially unsustainable and destructive to coherent squad building.

With losses before tax totalling £312.9 million over the past three seasons, United are under huge pressure to reduce costs, although selling Rashford would help the club reinvest.

Amorim has been linked with Viktor Gyokeres, the prolific Sweden international he managed during his time at Sporting. Any potential move for the 26-year-old would be made easier with any proceeds from selling Rashford.

"I can't make fun of it, right now, it was hard for me to leave, if I start joking about this Gyokeres situation I'll get in trouble," Amorim has said previously. "This is my city (Lisbon), this is my country, so I'll respect it."

Soucek dedicates goal to Antonio after star's car crash

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

West Ham midfielder Tomas Soucek dedicated his goal in a vital 2-1 victory over Wolves to teammate Michail Antonio, who remains hospitalized following a car accident on Saturday.

The 34-year-old forward, West Ham's all-time Premier League top scorer, underwent surgery for a lower limb fracture on Sunday and is recovering under medical care.

Speaking after the match, Soucek revealed the team had a video call with Antonio before the game. "We played for him," Soucek said. "He's in my heart, and I wanted to score for him today."

The Hammers players warmed up wearing Antonio shirts, and Soucek celebrated his goal by holding up nine fingers to honor Antonio's shirt number. Jarrod Bowen, who scored



the winning goal, held up Antonio's jersey in tribute.

Bowen praised Antonio's resilience, calling him "a warrior and a fighter," while manager Julen Lopetegui reflected on the miracle of Antonio surviving the crash.

Fans joined in with a ninth-minute

applause during the game, while the club announced plans to auction signed shirts, with proceeds going to NHS and Air Ambulances UK.

Antonio, a West Ham icon since 2015, is expected to recover and return stronger. Soucek expressed optimism: "He's one of West Ham's best. He'll be back with us soon."

Naby Keita leaves Werder Bremen for loan move to Ferencvaros

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Guinea midfielder Naby Keita is set to join Hungarian champions Ferencvaros on loan from Werder Bremen in January, with an option for a permanent transfer.

Keita, 29, has been sidelined at Bremen since his suspension in April for refusing to travel with the team for a match against Bayer Leverkusen. Bremen's sporting director, Clemens Fritz, confirmed the decision, stating, "It was clear Naby would not play for Werder again. This loan is the best solution for everyone involved."

Keita, who joined Bremen on a free transfer in June 2023, has struggled



for form and fitness, managing just five Bundesliga appearances, including one start.

Before his Bremen stint, Keita spent five successful seasons with Liverpool, winning multiple trophies,

including the Champions League and Premier League.

Ferencvaros, who announced the deal with an option to buy, are hoping Keita can rediscover his top form and become a key asset for their squad.

Four Manchester City players named in 2024 Fifpro men's world XI

By **Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi**

Four Manchester City stars feature in the 2024 Fifpro Men's World XI, highlighting their dominance during another stellar season. The team includes Ederson, Kevin De Bruyne, Erling Haaland, and Ballon d'Or winner Rodri, all of whom were instrumental in City's fourth consecutive Premier League triumph.

Joining them is Liverpool's Virgil van Dijk, the sole representative outside Real Madrid and City. Real's players include Jude Bellingham, who topped the overall voting, Toni Kroos, Antonio Rudiger, Dani Carvajal, Vinicius Jr, and Kylian Mbappe, who switched to Madrid from PSG this summer.

Notably absent is Lionel Messi, left out for the first time since 2006. The XI, based on performances from



August 2023 to July 2024, was selected by over 28,000 professionals from 70 countries.

The midfield was led by Rodri and De Bruyne, while Haaland and Vinicius Jr spearheaded the attack alongside Mbappe. Retired Kroos was honored

for his exceptional final season, which saw him win La Liga and the Champions League with Real.

The full XI showcases football's brightest talents, with Manchester City and Real Madrid claiming most spots.

Promised change, but Juventus stumbles into familiar crisis

By **Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi**

Just months after a promising revamp, Juventus finds itself mired in familiar struggles, sparking questions about whether the club's bold overhaul has truly delivered.

Sporting director Cristiano Giuntoli promised a fresh start this season, ushering in young talent and a new coach, Thiago Motta, to reinvigorate the Old Lady. An aggressive transfer window saw nearly €200m spent on midfield talents like Teun Koopmeiners and Douglas Luiz. Early results were encouraging, with emphatic wins and a stylish, attacking identity emerging.

Yet 15 games into Serie A, Juventus sits sixth, unbeaten but winless in

recent weeks. Seven draws in nine games have eroded early optimism. Fans, once hopeful, now jeer, particularly after a laborious 2-2 comeback against Bologna last weekend.

Motta's vision has faced scrutiny, with critics pointing to inconsistent tactics and questionable decisions. Kenan Yildiz, the promising playmaker, has been deployed out wide, stifling his effectiveness. Striker Dusan Vlahovic has failed to rediscover his Fiorentina form, lamenting a lack of support and defensive burdens in post-match interviews.

Injuries have compounded Juve's woes, leaving the squad thin and disrupting momentum. With just four



outfield substitutes available for a Champions League clash against Aston Villa, Motta has struggled to balance youth development, tactical consistency, and immediate results.

Romero criticizes Spurs board over lack of investment

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Tottenham Hotspur defender Cristian Romero has publicly criticized the club's board for insufficient investment in the squad following a 4-3 defeat to Chelsea, a match in which Spurs squandered a 2-0 lead. The loss, their latest in a challenging season, leaves Tottenham in 11th place in the Premier League after 15 games.

Speaking to Telemundo Deportes, the Argentine World Cup winner did not hold back in assessing the club's shortcomings. "Manchester City competes every year, Liverpool strengthens its squad, Chelsea keeps investing—those are the models to imitate," said Romero. "Hopefully, the board realizes something is going wrong because this is a beautiful club that should be competing for titles."

The 26-year-old defender, who has played under five different managers since joining Spurs in 2021, believes the blame for the club's struggles lies with the board rather than current manager Ange Postecoglou. "It's always the same – players change, coaches change, but the same people are responsible," he added.

Frustrations Mount Amid Financial Woes

Tottenham's financial struggles have been under scrutiny, with the club reporting losses for a fourth consecutive year in April 2024. Despite record revenues of £549.6m for the 2022-23 season, they recorded an £86.8m deficit. Chairman Daniel Levy acknowledged the need for "significant equity investment" to continue developing the club.

Spurs spent £122.8m during the 2023 summer transfer window on players like Dominic Solanke (£65m) and Lucas Bergvall (£8.5m). However, Romero's comments highlight dissatisfaction with the current strategy, which focuses on younger, long-term prospects over immediate reinforcements.

Mixed Views on Levy's Leadership

Levy, who has chaired the club since 2001, has faced increasing criticism for Tottenham's lack of silverware. Pundit Jamie Carragher has called for new leadership, stating, "It's time for someone else to come in. To not win a

trophy in that period, with the managers they've had, is unacceptable."

However, some have defended Levy's approach. Former player Andros Townsend praised his "sustainable" management, which has included the construction of a £1bn stadium and investment in the club's training facilities.

Looking Forward

As Spurs navigate another turbulent season, the debate over the club's direction intensifies. While Romero's comments may resonate with fans frustrated by years of near-misses, they also shine a spotlight on broader issues within the modern game, where financial power often dictates success.

With Tottenham reportedly seeking new investors, it remains to be seen whether the club can balance sustainability with competitiveness in the Premier League's financial arms race. For now, the pressure is mounting on all fronts as Spurs attempt to salvage their season.

