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Yahaya Bello meets bail condition, released from prison

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The New Daily Prime

Several dead, about 60 injured as car plows into German Christmas market

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100 North Korean soldiers killed in Ukraine

...As Russians burn their faces to hide IDs



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Farotimi granted N30m bail, barred from granting media interview

By Dave Oludare Oso

Embattled human rights lawyer, Dele Farotimi, who is facing allegations of cybercrime has finally been granted bail by the Ekiti State Magistrate Court in Ado-Ekiti.

The Ekiti magistrate granted Farotimi's bail application on Friday morning.

This comes days after the same court denied the human rights lawyer constitutional freedom.

The court granted Farotimi N30 million bail with two sureties, one of who must be a house owner.

The defendant must submit his passport to the court registrar and shall not grant any media interview.

Farotimi was arrested following a petition by senior lawyer, Chief Afe Babalola (SAN).

The charge suit no: MAD/1,476.C/2024, pits the Ekiti State Commissioner of Police as the complainant against Farotimi as the defendant.

Some of the charges read, "That you Dele Farotimi 'm' sometimes in 2024 authored, published and circulated your book titled: "Nigeria and its Criminal Justice System" which was received and read all over the world including Ado-Ekiti within the Ado-Ekiti Magisterial



District wherein you stated at page IX of the book: "That Aare Afe Babalola corrupted the Supreme Court to procure a fraudulent judgment in the service of his clients" which is likely to cause fear and alarm to the public or disturb the public peace knowing or having reason to believe that the Statements is false and thereby committed an offence contrary to and punishable under Section 59(1) of Criminal Code Act.

"That you Dele Farotimi 'm' sometimes in 2024 authored, published and circulated your book titled: "Nigeria and its Criminal Justice System" which was received and read all over the world including Ado-Ekiti

within the Ado-Ekiti Magisterial District wherein you stated at page X: "That Aare Afe Babalola, Olu Daramola, Olu Faro and the law offices of Afe Babalola & Co, (Emmanuel Chambers) compromised the Supreme Court and the remaining semblance of integrity it might have had when they went back to the Supreme Court and got that Court to swim in the sewer of corruption and shameful self-abnegation which is likely to cause fear and alarm to the public or disturb the public peace knowing or having reason to believe that the statements is false and thereby committed an offence."

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

**EFFECTIVE FROM
DECEMBER 1, 2024**

PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR		SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	=		372,500.00
HALF PAGE	=		213,000.00
QUARTER PAGE	=		106,500.00
14X2	=		118,000.00
10X6	=		261,585.50
10X5	=		255,238.00
10X4	=		206,890.50
10X3	=		179,608.00
9X6	=		254,977.00
9X5	=		225,738.00
9X4	=		193,500.00
9X3	=		166,223.50
8X6	=		225,368.50
8X3	=		106,934.50
7X4	=		180,173.50
6X4	=		100,434.50
6X3	=		82,750.00
6X2	=		52,499.50
5X6	=		123,749.50
5X5	=		110,000.00
5X4	=		76,833.00
5X3	=		66,875.00
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2X2	=		13,000.00
2X1	=		8,600.00
1X1	=		4,400.00

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9X3	=		112,875.00
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8X5	=		143,500.00
8X4	=		93,500.00
8X3	=		82,434.50
7X4	=		111,173.50
6X4	=		82,434.50
6X3	=		59,250.00
6X2	=		40,000.00
5X6	=		98,749.50
5X4	=		65,833.00
5X3	=		49,375.00
5X2	=		32,916.50
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SPECIAL POSITIONS		SIZE	RATE
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2X6 INSIDE PAGE	=		155,000.00
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4X6 FRONT PAGE	=		2,250,000.00
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EARPIECE INSIDE PAGE(1.5X2)	=		117,875.00
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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		SIZE	RATE	TOTAL
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DOUBLE SPREAD	=			806,250.00
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(IBC) Inside Back Cover	=			376,250.00
(IFC) Inside Front Cover	=			430,000.00
(BC) Back Cover	=			483,750.00
Full Page	=			430,000.00
10X5	=			295,625.00
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EVENT	=			250,000.00

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PRESS RELEASE (4X4)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
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C-of-O: Wike issues fresh ultimatum to Abuja landowners

By Friday Omosola

A day after revoking the lands of former President Muhammadu Buhari and others concerning Certificates of Occupancy (C-of-O), the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, has set a new deadline for owners of 762 plots in Maitama II District, Cadastral Zone A10, Abuja.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that Wike revoked lands that belong to Buhari, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tajudeen Abbas; the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, George Akume and 759 other prominent figures and organisations in Maitama II, Abuja.

However, Buhari in a statement by his aide, Garba Shehu denied that his principal land was among the revoked lands.

In a statement released today by his Senior Special Assistant on Public Communications and New Media, Lere Olayinka, Wike announced a two-week ultimatum for the landowners to pay for their C-of-O.

He warned that failure to do so would result in the final



revocation of their land allocations.

The Minister emphasised that the primary goal was not to dispossess individuals of their land but to ensure that they fulfil the necessary payment obligations to the government.

The statement read: "It should be recalled that on October 5, 2024, a list of 3,273 allottees/title holders that were yet to pay for their C-of-O was published. They were offered two weeks to pay their bills or lose their Right of Occupancy (R-of-O) titles. Out of the 3,273, a total of 2,511 complied, leaving 762.

"Yesterday, a notice of withdrawal of the R-of-O titles of the 762 defaulters was published. Since then, many

of the affected allottees have offered to pay, and since the primary aim of the government is to ensure payment, a two-week grace has been given.

"Consequently, the 762 allottees and the 614 others with outstanding payment on C-of-O will have till January 3, 2025, to pay, or have their R-of-O titles withdrawn, pursuant to the provisions of Section 28 of the Land Use Act of 1978.

"After January 3, 2025, no further extension and withdrawal of the R-of-O titles of defaulters will be final."

Yahaya Bello meets bail condition, released from prison

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The immediate past governor of Kogi State, Yahaya Bello have been released from the Kuje Custodial Centre after he met the bail conditions imposed on him by the Federal Capital Territory High Court, Maitama, Abuja.

Confirming the former governor's release, the spokesperson for the Nigerian Correctional Service, FCT Command, Adamu Duza, on Friday evening said, Yahaya Bello has been released after meeting the bail conditions. He was released this evening (Friday).

"The Controller of NCoS FCT, Ajibogun Olatubosun, was on the



ground to ensure his smooth release and that all protocols were observed." Former Kogi State Governor Yahaya Bello has been released from Kuje

Custodial Centre after meeting the bail conditions set by the Federal Capital Territory High Court in Maitama, Abuja.

Bello was granted bail on Thursday in the sum of N500 million by Justice MaryAnne Anenih before whom he is being prosecuted for an alleged N110 billion fraud.

Justice Anenih had earlier on December 10 refused to grant the bail application filed by Bello as she ruled that it was premature and incompetent as he filed it when he had not yet surrendered himself to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC.)

FG partners Bloomberg to attract foreign investments

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Plans are underway by the Nigerian Government and Bloomberg to rebrand the country's global image and attract foreign investments into the country.

The Ministry of Finance Incorporated (MOFI), according to a statement released on its X handle on Friday, is expected to sign a two-year tenure initiative aimed at rebranding the nation's global image and attracting foreign investment.

The statement reads, "The Federal Government of Nigeria, through the Ministry of Finance Incorporated (MOFI), is set to partner with Bloomberg in a two-year initiative aimed at rebranding the nation's global image and attracting foreign investment."

Bloomberg's Global Director, Nicole Keefe, speaking at a meeting with



Minister of Finance, Wale Edun, reiterated the company's commitment to reshaping Nigeria's narrative and showcasing its economic potential to the global audience.

She said, "Bloomberg plans to leverage its vast media network to highlight Nigeria's achievements and opportunities, addressing investor

hesitations tied to outdated or negative perceptions."

On his part, Armstrong Takang, CEO of MOFI, noted that the partnership would spotlight key government projects such as the Real Estate Investment Fund and gas pipeline initiatives, further promoting Nigeria's progress in critical sectors.

FG reverses Ogunjimi's appointment as AGF; Madein to complete tenure

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Federal Government has asked Mrs. Oluwatoyin Madein, who was earlier directed to proceed on retirement to continue as the Accountant General of the Federation (AGF) till March 2025, through the Office of the Head of Service of the Federation

The Director of Press at the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation, Mr. Bawa Mokwa, who confirmed the development to journalists on Friday, said the AGF is in receipt of a letter from the Office of the Head of Service of the Federation asking Madein to continue as AGF.

When asked on the fate of Mr Shelmudeen Ogunjimi, who was appointed as acting Accountant General, the Director press stated that the letter "Did not say anything about his appointment."

Recall that President Bola Tinubu on December 10 appointed Ogunjimi as the Acting Accountant General of the Federation.

A statement by the Special Adviser to the President on Information and Strategy, Mr. Bayo Onanuga said: "His (Ogunjimi) appointment is effective immediately following the pre-retirement leave of the incumbent AG-F, Dr. Oluwatoyin Sakirat Madein."

The confusion about succession started at the Office of the Account General of the Federation with the announcement of Mr Ogunjimi as acting accountant general by President Tinubu barely a week ago.

Nigerian politician and activist, Hajiya Naja'atu Mohammed raised allegations that Ogunjimi was not even the most qualified director in line to take over as the Accountant General of the Federation.

She said: "In what has remained very curious, the Presidency in collaboration



with the Minister of Finance, Wale Edun, illegally appointed Ogunjimi Shamulsedeen, a Director in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Acting Accountant General, after forcing Oluwatoyin Sakirat Madein to go on retirement and bypassing two Northerners who were by law next in line to take over in acting capacity if the AGF is not available.

"A circular dated 3 September, 2024, had posted Shamuseldein, a director in the OAGF, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. No circular had reposted him back to the OAGF and he is not the most senior to take over in the event the AGF is retiring or leaving. Danladi Comfort Zakowi, who is the current Director of Finance or Luka Joshua, Director of CAD Department, would have taken over in Acting Capacity. This didn't happen.

"Another curious twist is that while Mrs Madein is only due to proceed on retirement leave in March 2025, Shamulsedeen has already resumed and has been using policemen to prevent Mrs. Madein from entering the office, confirming insinuation that someone in the Presidency is pushing Shamulsedeen to take over the OAGF."

Reacting to the allegation, Mokwa told Daily Trust that the controversy on the appointment was needless as any of the directors were qualified for stated executive positions and that it is at the

discretion of the President to make a choice and pick whoever he preferred.

Findings revealed that the bone of contention is the application of section 120243 of the Federal Government Public Service Rules.

According to some sources at the OAGF, Section 120243 of the Public Service Rules, Madein ought to have left office from December 7, 2024 and proceeded on retirement leave.

Section 120243 of Public Service Rule states: "Officers are required to give three months' notice to retire from service before the effective date of retirement.

"At the commencement of three months, officers should proceed immediately on the mandatory one-month pre-retirement workshop/seminar."

A senior management source said the entire OAGF office was tense as staff were confused as to who is in charge.

He added that "The president was completely misled to remove the acting accountant general as the Public Service Rules was misinterpreted.

"The man is eminently qualified and has received his letter of appointment but he has been prevented from entering his office as Mrs. Madein is bent on occupying the office until March.

"Unfortunately, the Office of the HoCSF has sent an advisory to the president to stay action on Ogunjimi's appointment," the source said.

Another senior officer, who is familiar with the matter told newsmen that "Going by the Federal Government Service Rules, Mrs Madein is supposed to be out of office and should have long handed over and proceeded on pre-retirement leave.

CBN introduces N100,000 daily cash-out limit for POS transactions

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has introduced a new policy to strengthen its drive towards a cashless economy, setting a daily maximum transaction cash-out limit of N100,000 per customer for agency banking operators, also known as Point of Sale (PoS) operators.

This directive, outlined in a circular issued on Thursday by the CBN's Payments System Management Department and signed by Oladimeji Yisa Taiwo, aims to enhance the use of electronic payment channels, address operational challenges, combat fraud, and establish uniform standards across the industry.

According to the circular, the CBN has mandated that issuers must limit cash withdrawals to a maximum of N500,000 per customer per week across all channels.

The circular further stated, "Additionally, PoS terminals are to enforce a daily transaction cash-out limit of N100,000 per customer, with the total daily cash-out transactions by any agent not exceeding N1,200,000.

"These measures are designed to streamline cash handling and encourage the adoption of digital payment systems.

"To ensure transparency and proper oversight, the CBN has directed that all agency banking activities be conducted exclusively through designated float accounts maintained by the agents' principals.



"Furthermore, the operations of agency banking must be clearly separated from merchant activities, with agents required to use the approved Agent Code 6010 for transactions. Principals are also tasked with monitoring accounts associated with agents' Bank Verification Numbers (BVNs) to detect and address activities conducted outside the designated float accounts.

"All agent banking terminals must be connected to the Payment Terminal Service Aggregator (PTSA) to allow effective monitoring. Daily transaction details, including withdrawals and float account balances, are to be electronically submitted to the Nigeria Inter-Bank Settlement System (NIBSS) as part of the reporting process.

"The CBN will provide a standard reporting template to ensure consistency in the data submitted by agency banking operators."

Additionally, the circular stressed that principals of PoS operators would

bear full responsibility and liability for the actions and omissions of their agents in relation to agency banking services.

"This is in accordance with the Guidelines for the Regulation of Agent Banking and Agent Banking Relationships in Nigeria. The CBN reiterated its commitment to enforcing these measures through impromptu back-end configuration checks and other oversight mechanisms.

"Failure to comply with these directives will result in penalties, which may include monetary fines and administrative sanctions," the circular stated.

The CBN also stated that these policies are essential for promoting trust in electronic payment systems, tackling fraud, and addressing inefficiencies in the agency banking sector.

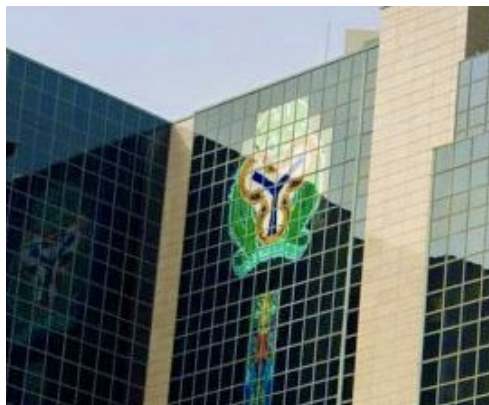
CBN allows BDCs to purchase \$25,000 weekly on NFEM

By **Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE**

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has authorised Bureau de Change (BDC) operators to purchase up to \$25,000 weekly from the Nigerian Foreign Exchange Market (NFEM) to meet seasonal demand for foreign exchange during the holiday period.

This temporary arrangement, which was announced in a circular dated December 19, 2024, will be in effect from December 19, 2024, to January 30, 2025. The move is aimed at addressing the increased forex demand typically seen during the festive season.

According to the circular, BDCs may purchase foreign exchange from one authorised dealer of their choice, provided they fully fund their accounts before accessing the market. The transactions will be conducted at the prevailing NFEM rate, and BDCs are required to maintain a maximum 1%



spread when pricing forex for retail end-users.

All transactions carried out under this scheme will be reported to the CBN's Trade and Exchange Department.

The CBN assured the public that Personal Travel Allowance (PTA) and Business Travel Allowance (BTA) remain accessible through banks for legitimate travel and business purposes. Transactions for PTA and BTA will be executed at market-determined exchange rates within the NFEM framework.

The CBN also emphasised its commitment to ensuring a liquid and functional foreign exchange market while reducing price volatility. The naira has maintained relative stability since the launch of the NFEM, with the exchange rate at N1,540/\$ on Thursday, reflecting a slight improvement from the previous day's rate of N1,545/\$.

In November, the CBN revised its guidelines for the NFEM, allowing licensed BDCs to purchase forex directly from authorised dealers for the first time in years. However, the circular did not specify the monthly cap on purchases under this new scheme.

The naira's exchange rate remained relatively stable at N1,660/\$ in the black market, despite fluctuations in the formal market.

Court reinstates suspended Edo LG chairmen

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

An Edo State High Court in Benin has ordered the reinstatement of the suspended 18 local government chairmen and vice chairmen in the state.

The presiding judge, Justice Efe Ikponmwonba, on Friday granted the order following a suit instituted by the affected chairmen and vice chairmen.

The court, however, restrained Governor Monday Okpebholo and Edo State Government, Attorney General of the State and Commissioner for Justice, Accountant General of the State, among others from acting on the resolution of the state House of Assembly suspending the claimants.

Justice Ikponmwonba also ordered that



the status quo, as at December 12 be maintained pending the hearing and determination of the motion on notice filed on December 12, 2024.

“The Court orders a mandatory

injunction compelling the defendant by themselves, their privies, servants, agents, howsoever named or described, to restore the chairmen and vice chairmen of the of their respective Local government councils,” the judge said.

The judge adjourned to February 17, for hearing and ordered that a hearing notice be issued and served on the defendants.

NEW DAILY PRIME reported that the Edo State House of Assembly had suspended the 18 LG chairmen and their deputies over alleged misconduct and insubordination.

The lawmakers took the decision following a petition filed against the LG chairmen by Governor Monday Okpebholo.

Bandits abduct over 40 in Zamfara communities

By Dave Oludare Oso

Bandits have reportedly abducted more than 40 individuals from various communities in Maru Local Government Area of over the past two weeks, sparking fear and anxiety among residents.

A resident of Maru town, Alhaji Umar Abdullahi, who spoke to newsmen on Thursday, expressed grave concern over the escalating insecurity in the area.

He revealed that the bandits have been conducting a series of raids on the local government headquarters and nearby communities, forcibly taking residents from their homes.

He said the persistent attacks have left many in the affected areas in a state of despair, with calls growing louder for urgent intervention to restore peace and security.

He said, “Just last week, the bandits stormed our town and conducted house-to-house searches, starting from the Emir’s palace area, and kidnapped seven persons.”

Abdullahi attributed the frequent attacks on Maru communities to the activities of informants collaborating with the bandits in the area.

He lamented, “Our major challenge is the bandits’ informants, as most of the kidnapped victims are prominent persons in the area.



“As I am talking to you now, there are over 40 kidnapped victims in bandit camps following simultaneous attacks on Maru communities over the past two weeks.”

Speaking further, he noted that the bandits terrorizing the area are operating from camps behind Bakalori Dam (Bayan Ruwa) in Maradun Local Government Area of the state.

He said, “We are in serious trouble because many bandits are relocating to the Maradun camp. There is an urgent need for authorities to dislodge them for peace to thrive.”

He appealed to the federal and Zamfara State governments to urgently deploy more troops to the Maradun area to tackle the Bayan Ruwa bandit camps.

Another resident of the area,

Usman Abubakar, described the local government as a “colony of banditry,” stating that the bandits unleash terror at will.

“When the banditry began more than a decade ago, Dansadau, a district of Maru Local Government, was the epicenter. But now, the bandits have spread to all parts of the state, especially Maru Local Government Area,” he said.

Recall that a few months ago, bandits killed several police officers, including a Divisional Police Officer (DPO), in Maru town.

All efforts to obtain a reaction from the State Police Command on the issue proved abortive at the time of filing this report.

Bomb blast rocks Niger State, one dead, many injured

By Dave Oludare Oso

A bomb explosion has shaken the Bassa Community in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State, leaving one person dead and four others injured.

The unfortunate incident occurred early yesterday morning as the victims were on their way to their farms.

Among the injured, three individuals suffered severe injuries, including shattered legs, and are currently receiving medical care at a government hospital.

Ahmed Almustapha, a resident of the area, confirmed the event and voiced the growing sense of insecurity and fear among the community members.

Local authorities are yet to provide further details on the explosion, as residents call for enhanced security measures to ensure their safety.

“Residents are now living in fear due to this ugly incident. Some are contemplating staying, while others have already fled to avoid potential future attacks.

“Tragically, three of the injured victims are siblings, and they are my sister’s children. This incident is even more worrisome



because it is the second explosion in Bassa this month. Two weeks ago, a similar explosion claimed another life,” Almustapha explained.

He appealed to the federal and state governments to strengthen security in the area to allow residents to safely return to their farms and harvest their produce.

When contacted, the spokesman for the Niger State Police Command, DSP Wasiu Abiodun, stated that he would confirm the incident but had not responded as of the time of publication.

However, the Niger State Commissioner for Homeland Security, Mohammed Bello Abdullahi, confirmed the explosion. He suggested it might be linked to the activities of bandits previously operating in the area before being dislodged

by the military.

“The explosion could be an aftereffect of the activities of bandits who previously terrorized the area. We urge residents to remain calm as the ministry and security agencies are on top of the situation. Detailed findings from the investigation will be made public once concluded,” Abdullahi stated.

The situation has left the community in distress, with calls for immediate intervention to ensure the safety and security of residents.

Tinubu approves redeployment of 11 Perm Secs

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

In a significant administrative reshuffle, President Bola Tinubu approved the redeployment of 11 Federal Permanent Secretaries to new roles across various ministries on Thursday.

Director of Information and Public Relations in the Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs. Eno Olotu made the announcement late on Thursday.

Find below the redeployments:

Gabriel Aduda: Moved from the Ministry of Women Affairs to the Ministry of Defence.

Olumuyiwa Enitan Abel: Reassigned from Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction to the Ministry of Education as an understudy to the Permanent Secretary.

Temitope Peter Fashedemi: Transferred from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security to the State House.



Dr. Shuaib Mohammed Lamido Belgore: Shifted from Regional Development to Housing and Urban Development.

Dr. Marcus Olaniyi Ogunbiyi: Moved from Housing and Urban Development to Agriculture and Food Security.

Adebiyi Olusesan Olufunso: Reassigned from the State House to the Ministry of Works.

Dr. Ibrahim Abubakar Kana: Transferred from the Ministry of

Defence to Aviation and Aerospace Development.

Dr. Yakubu Adam Kofarmata: Shifted from the Ministry of Works to Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction.

Raymond Omenka Omachi: Moved from the Common Services Office to the Ministry of Finance (Special Duties).

Mrs. Tinuke Watti: Reassigned from the former Ministry of Sports Development to the Ministry of Regional Development.

Dr. Maryam Ismaila Keshinro: Moved from the Ministry of Special Duties and Inter-Governmental Affairs to the Ministry of Women Affairs.

The Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack, has directed that the handing-over and taking-over processes must be finalized by December 31, 2024.

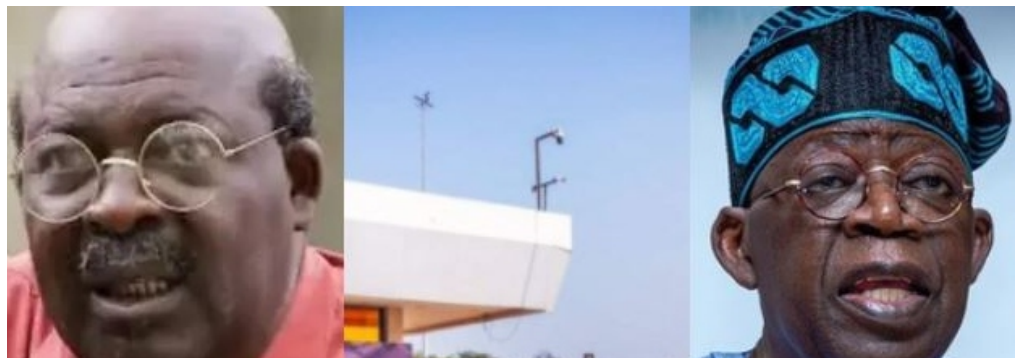
Why Tinubu always greets Papa Ajasco at Lagos airport — Presidency

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

Olusegun Dada, the Special Assistant to President Bola Tinubu on Social Media, has responded to Nigerians asking about the consistent meeting of his principal and comic actor, Abiodun Ayoyinka, popularly known as Papa Ajasco, at Lagos airport.

Tinubu received a grand reception at the Lagos airport on Wednesday when he arrived ahead of Christmas and New Year celebrations.

Dada shared a video of Tinubu greeting Papa Ajasco at the airport.



Reacting to the video, an X user wrote, “I’m curious, do they meet every time he’s at Lagos airport? Cos this scene happened months ago too.”

Tinubu’s aide responded, “I’ve seen this question pop up in my comments a lot. For context, Papa Ajasco is in charge of the cultural troop that welcomes Mr president whenever he is in Lagos. Hope this helps.”

People cursed me, my family over tax reform bills – Oyedele

By Dave Oludare Oso

Chairman of the Presidential Fiscal Policy and Tax Reforms Committee, Taiwo Oyedele, has stated that some Nigerians abused him and rained curses on him and his family over the tax reform bills.

Spoke during an event for the presentation of the report of a technical committee set up by the League of Northern Democrats (LND) to review the controversial tax reform bills on Thursday in Abuja, Oyedele, however said he was not deterred by the vitriol as his assignment was a public service to bring economic change to the country.

NEW DAILY PRIME reports that the tax reform bills have generated heated debates across the country, with the majority of the push backs coming from the North.

Many governors and some leaders from the region contested that the tax reform bills, which also led to open confrontations in both chambers of the National Assembly, were meant to favour Lagos State and other narrow interests, as well as to shortchange the North.

Oyedele stated that the recommendations made by his committee on tax reform were not influenced by anyone as it came through robust discussions and engagements to revolutionise the tax system in the country.

“Even on social media, you need to see the number of people cursing me and my family. I don’t take it personally. I just go through and say is there any useful comment that we can work on? We pick it and we work on it. It’s public service. You’re not meant to be appreciated and praised



every time. It doesn’t happen anywhere in the world.

“Public service is public service. You are accountable to the people and you must take that very seriously. So our approach to this is that some Nigerians were asked to do this for our country and I had the privilege of leading that team and we did our best but we’re not in any way suggesting that our best is the best for Nigeria.

“You cannot have more than 200 million people and you then assume that about 100 people are the smartest. You know that that would be arrogance at a different level. So this engagement helped us to even improve the quality of what we have done.

“I’ve said this in a number of fora and I’ll say it again. There’s not a single person in the world, not World Bank, not IMF, not United Nations, not Mr President, not any governor, not any minister, past or present, not president, past or present, no one dictated anything to us. Every single thing you see in all those bills were the outcome of debates by the committee that is representative

nationally.

“We have people from all the geopolitical zones. We have more than 20 government institutions. We have all manner of engagement, including with people with disability. But we know that engagements will never end. In fact, if the bills are passed, it doesn’t mean that we should stop engaging. We should continue.”

While reiterating that there are no perfect laws even when they have been enacted, he said engagements would give feedback on how it’s been implemented and the areas needed to further improve on.

“So, I’m eagerly looking forward to the outcome of this event today and I can give you one assurance. Every single point you send to us will be carefully considered and we’ll get back to you with our own explanations. So once we have superior reasoning and superior arguments, we bow to it very quickly because we have no agenda other than the agenda for Nigeria,” he added.

Court seizes warehouse, 54 containers linked to Emefiele

By Dave Oludare Oso

Justice Deinde Dipeolu of Federal High Court sitting in Lagos has granted request of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for final forfeiture of a warehouse occupying 1.925 hectares of land along the Lagos/Ibadan expressway in Magboro, Obafemi Owode Local Government Area of Ogun State and 54 general purpose steel containers to the Federal Government.

Justice Dipeolu granted the request after EFCC lawyer moved an application for the forfeiture of the assets.

The lawyer to EFCC, Rotimi Oyedepo (SAN), had on 28 November approached the court via a motion ex parte to seek the forfeiture of the assets.

According to documents put before the court, EFCC said the properties were reasonably suspected to be proceeds of unlawful activity of former governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Godwin Emefiele.

Based on the documents, Justice Dipeolu had ordered the interim forfeiture of the assets.

The Judge also directed the EFCC to publish the order in the national newspaper, for any interested person to come before the court and show cause why it should not be finally



forfeited.

However, at the resumed hearing on Thursday, Oyedepo told the court that no one had come forward to lay claims to the assets.

He, therefore, submitted urged the court to make a final forfeiture order of the assets pursuant to Section 44(2)(B) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (As Amended); and Section 17 of the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Fraud Related Offences Act 2006 and under the court's inherent jurisdiction.

Oyedepo urged the court to make, "a final forfeiture order to the Federal Government of Nigeria, properties contained in Schedule A; a warehouse built on a landed property measuring 1.925 hectares, lying, being and situate at Km 8, along Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, Magboro

and 54 General purpose steel containers, which are reasonably suspected to have been acquired with proceeds of unlawful activities."

Justice Dipeolu, granted the relief sought and ordered the final forfeiture of all the assets after listening to the lawyer.

Justice Dipeolu held: "The application succeeds and same is accordingly granted.

"A final forfeiture order is hereby granted forfeiting to the Federal Government of Nigeria, properties contained in Schedule A herein which are reasonably suspected to have been acquired with proceeds of unlawful activities."

'Prove raining curses on someone online is criminal offence' – Lawyer dares FPRO

By Friday Omosola

Human rights lawyer, Inibehe Effiong, has challenged the Nigeria Police Force spokesperson, Muyiwa Adejobi, to cite any law that criminalises online insults.

Earlier, The New Daily Prime reported Adejobi's tweet, where he claimed that cursing someone online constitutes cyberbullying, a criminal offence punishable by law.

His tweet read: "Raining direct curses on someone online is cyberbullying, not expression of freedom or criticism. And cyberbullying, which is even different from defamation, is a criminal offence and punishable. Be guided."

Reacting to Adejobi's statement, Effiong retweeted the police spokesperson's tweet, adding, "This is ignorance of the law raised to the power of 1,000."

He labelled Adejobi's remark as absurd and devoid of any legal basis.

"The fact that this very ridiculous opinion is from the spokesperson of the primary law enforcement agency in Nigeria says a lot about the decadence of our institutions.

"To be clear, raining curses on someone is not a criminal



offence, and I challenge the Force PRO to cite any law that supports his statement. By virtue of Section 36 (12) of the Nigerian Constitution, for an act or omission to be termed a crime, it must be expressly and specifically defined as such under a written law", said the lawyer.

According to him, Adejobi has a pattern of fabricating imaginary offences, noting that curses do not pose any threat to the life of the person being cursed.

He further stated that curses hold no legal weight or significance because they are rooted in superstition or, at best, attributed to supernatural forces.

He said, "For example, telling someone "it shall not be well with you" is a prayer; prayer can be positive or negative.

Wishing someone evil is also not a matter for legal redress. The law does not concern itself with trifling things or spiritual matters.

"What is more appalling is the fact that the supposed image maker of the Police does not know that the Cybercrimes Act had since been amended, and that the notorious wordings of the provisions of the old Section 24 which the police has been using to witch-hunt critics has been repealed."

Effiong urged Nigerians to dismiss Adejobi's "misleading statement", describing it as baseless adding, "What a shame."

Customs generates N15trn in 2024 – Finance Minister

By Friday Omosola

The Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, has announced that the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) generated approximately N15 trillion in revenue by September 2024.

In a statement posted today on the ministry's X page, Edun made this disclosure while presiding over the 61st meeting of the NCS Board.

He commended the agency for its outstanding performance, highlighting how this milestone underscores Nigeria's fiscal recovery and enhances the government's ability to fund critical social and infrastructural initiatives.

To further improve the agency's operational capacity, Edun approved the recruitment of 3,927 personnel for the 2024/2025 period, addressing staffing gaps identified through a comprehensive needs assessment.

The Minister attributed this revenue achievement to President Bola



Tinubu's bold economic reforms, which he said are driving the country toward stability and sustainable growth.

He emphasised the pivotal role of the NCS in the government's fiscal consolidation strategy, which aims to align revenues and expenditures to foster macroeconomic stability.

Edun also outlined the government's expectations as part of the N48 trillion "Budget of Restoration" for 2025.

Of this amount, N35 trillion is projected to come from revenues, with

the balance to be sourced through concessionary loans, international grants, and domestic borrowing.

He described the budget as a blueprint for economic revival, prioritising security, job creation, and poverty reduction.

The Minister lauded Comptroller General Adewale Adeniyi and the NCS team for their dedication and urged them to sustain their efforts in driving economic growth and achieving the administration's economic objectives.

Three policemen, female suspect die in Ondo road crash

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A tragic road accident that occurred in Ore, Odigbo Local Government Area of Ondo State on Friday, has consumed the lives of three police officers and a female suspect.

According to reports, the police officers had been deployed from the Ondo Police Headquarters to arrest the female suspect in Ore.

While en route to Akure, their police van was struck by a trailer coming from the Ijebu-Ode axis, which lost control and collided with the vehicle.



All victims died at the scene, while one police officer who sustained serious injuries was rushed to the hospital.

Ondo police spokesperson, SP Funmilayo Odunlami-Omisanya, confirmed the incident, and the Ondo Sector Commander of the Federal



Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Samuel Ibitoye, attributed the crash to overspeeding.

The bodies of the deceased have been deposited at the state hospital morgue in Ore.

Christmas: Ododo distributes 100 trucks of rice to Kogi residents

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Governor Ahmed Ododo of Kogi State has distributed 100 truckloads of rice to residents of the state as part of his efforts to ensure a joyous Christmas and New Year celebrations for families.

This is contained in a statement issued by the Commissioner for Information and Communications, Mr Kingsley Fanwo, on Friday in Lokoja.

He said the gesture is aimed at alleviating the burden of rising food costs in festive period.

Fanwo noted that the initiative underscored the governor's commitment to the welfare of the people.

"In addition to this gesture, the governor ordered the payment of salaries to civil servants on Dec 14.

"The governor has once again demonstrated his unbending commitment to the welfare of the people, in line with his oath to defend and promote the interests of Kogi citizens.

"His actions continue to reflect his determination to prioritize the needs of the masses," Fanwo stated.

He explained that to ensure equitable distribution, the governor has directed



the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation to oversee the process and prevent political interference.

Measures, he said, have been put in place to prevent the distribution from being hijacked by politicians or other interest groups.

He said, "This administration is committed to fairness and transparency in every initiative."

The rice distribution is part of a broader strategy by Ododo's administration to cushion the effects of economic hardship on Kogi residents, particularly during the festive season.

"This initiative has further solidified his reputation as a leader who is deeply attuned to the needs of his people," he said.

The residents praised the governor for his leadership and compassion.

A resident of Ajaka in Igalamela/Odolu Local Government Area, Mr. Andrew Abah, lauded the governor's efforts, describing him as a leader with an unwavering commitment to his people.

"This governor has shown remarkable capacity and genuine love for his people.

"He is a detribalized and inclusive governor, ensuring that the welfare of civil servants and ordinary citizens is prioritized.

"He is making it difficult for anyone to dislike him," Abah said.



Army promotes 35 Brigadier Generals, 73 Colonels

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Army High Command on Friday approved the promotion of senior officers to the next ranks of Major General and Brigadier General, respectively.

Announcing this on Friday, a press statement by Army spokesman, Maj.-Gen. Onyema Nwachukwu, said the council promoted 35 Brigadier Generals to the rank of Major General, while 73 Colonels were also elevated to the rank of Brigadier General.

According to the statement, those promoted to the rank of Major General are: Brig Gen A Garba, Acting Provost Marshal Nigerian Army; Brig Gen UM Alkali Deputy Chief of Administration, Directorate of Veteran Affairs (Army); Brig Gen AGL Haruna, Acting General Officer Commanding 7 Division and Commander Sector 1 North East Operation HADIN KAI; Brig Gen I.A. Ajose, Acting General Officer Commanding 8 Division and Commander, Sector 2 North West Operation, FANSAN YAMA; Brig General NB Ebulue, Headquarters, Nigerian Army Heritage and Future Centre; Brig Gen LG Lepdung, Commander Operation WHIRL STROKE; Brig Gen OA Awolo, Director Military Training Nigerian Defence Academy; Brig Gen UG Ogeleka, Commander Nigerian Army Space Command; Brig Gen OA Fadairo, Commander 12 Brigade, Brig Gen OD Williams



Commander 22 Brigade; Brig Gen JR Lar, Commander 32 Brigade, Brig Gen AG Mahmuda, Commandant, Warrant Officer Academy; Brig Gen VD Beryo, Commander Nigerian Army Special Forces School; Brig Gen AOD Okoro, Director, Army Headquarters Department of Special Services and Programmes; Brig Gen SO Adejimi Director Movement of Army Logistics, Brig Gen TT Sidick Director of Finance Nigerian Defence Academy, Brig Gen MCE Ejike, Commander Sector 2 Joint Task Force North East Operation HADIN KAI; Brig Gen MF Babayo, Commander, Sector 3 North East Joint Task Force Operation HADIN KAI; Brig Gen H Yanet, Commander, 51 Signal Brigade and Brig Gen MK Gara, Army Headquarters Department of Training.

Others promoted to the rank of Major General are Brig Gen BP

Koughna, Deputy Chief of Military Affairs, Army Headquarters Department of Civil Military Affairs; Brig Gen I Otu, Nigerian Army Heritage and Future Centre; Brig Gen AO Adegbite, Headquarters Nigerian Army Corps of Supply and Transport; Brig Gen IE Ekpeyong, Headquarters, Nigerian Army Corps of Engineers; Brig Gen AA Idris, Army Headquarters Department of Army Standards and Evaluation; Brig Gen SA Gumel, Nigerian Army Resource Centre Strategic Management and Policy Studies; Brig Gen MT Jinadu, Commander, 82 Division Ordnance Services; Brig Gen SA Jimoh, Deputy Director, Tender Board Department of Procurement, and Brig Gen UT Opuene, Deputy Director Policy and Plans Defence Intelligence Agency, among others.

Ibadan funfair tragedy: Police confirm investigations ongoing

By Friday Omosola

Yesterday, President Bola Tinubu ordered an investigation into the tragic stampede at a children's funfair in Ibadan, Oyo State.

In response, the police confirmed that "investigations are ongoing."

Earlier The New Daily Prime reported that police confirmed that the stampede, which occurred at Islamic High School in Orita Bashorun, Ibadan, led to the deaths of 35 minors.

The police also confirmed the arrest of Naomi Silekunola, the former queen of the Ooni of Ife, the event organiser, the principal of the school, and six others.

He added that initial findings suggest poor crowd control may have contributed to the disaster.

Adewale Osefiso, the Oyo State police spokesperson, spoke on Channels Television's "The Morning Brief" on



Friday, stating that investigations are in progress to determine the cause of the tragic event.

His words, "Investigations are in progress, but from the preliminary findings, it was discovered that at some point the fair, they were supposed to go in with a token, at some point the prices were slashed and later, some had the opportunity of going in free. So, at some point, something must have gone wrong as regards some sort of agitation.

"In this case, when it comes to crowd

control anything could have triggered it; it could be excitement, it could be fear, it could be panic and judging by the space, which at the end of the day we discovered that the crowd that got into that place which was not the originally planned number, could have also contributed to the stampede because those going in actually did most of the damage to those already in."

He mentioned that the number of children who attended the funfair surpassed the expected turnout.

"The projected capacity of the crowd that they expected exceeded, and a stampede ensued. As a matter of fact, the programmed had not even started properly when the when the process started.

"Sadly, we recorded as a Command 35 minors dying and of course 6 being critically injured and presently responding to various medical interventions," Osefiso said.

Fresh Ibadan tragedy: Man, wife, grandson die in fire disaster

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Residents of Ibadan, who are still reeling from a recent funfair disaster that claimed lives of 35 children, were hit with another tragedy on Friday as a man, his wife and their grandson were consumed in a fire that gutted their residence at Ori-Eru, Idikan area of the Oyo State capital.

The fire incident occurred in the early hours of Friday, Yemi Akinyinka, General Manager Oyo State Fire Services Agency said in a statement.

Akinyinka said the personnel of the agency received a distress call about

the incident through a call made by one Hassan at exactly 3:46 a.m on Friday and immediately deployed personnel to the scene.

"On arrival we met an upper floor of a residential storey building of six rooms well alight and we swiftly swung into action and the fire was completely extinguished," he said.

The general manager said three persons made up of a husband, his wife and their grandson lost their lives in the fire incident while five persons were rescued alive from the building.



According to him, the ground floor of the building and other nearby properties were saved from the inferno.

"From our investigation we discovered that in their attempt to keep their house warm because of the cold weather they resulted to use naked fire which result to fire disaster after they had slept off," he said.

Kunle Afolayan trains new generation of filmmakers, gifts cash awards

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Multiple award-winning filmmaker, Kunle Afolayan has not only been showcasing Nigerian culture on the global stage via film, he has over the years been nurturing and producing a new generation of filmmakers that would take the world by storm.

It was in this vein that his brain child, The KAP Film and Television Academy in collaboration with the French Embassy in Nigeria recently trained a new crop of filmmakers via the Advanced Filmmaking Masterclass.

The programme, which held from November 25 to December 19, 2024, brought together 40 intermediate-level filmmakers to enhance their skills across various aspects of filmmaking.

The programme ended with a memorable graduation ceremony on December 19, featuring the screening of the short films, the presentation of certificates, and a cocktail reception to celebrate the participants' achievements.

The four films that were shown that day were: Christmas Eve, Silent Hunger, Culprit and Photoshoot.

Still, a very interesting feature of the graduation ceremony is that Afolayan did not only select Culprit as the best film, he also rewarded the winners with the sum of one million naira.

This kind gesture, according to Afolayan was geared towards making the students produce another film with equipment that would be provided by the academy.

Afolayan also rewarded the team that produced Photoshoot, which he adjudged as the second best, with the sum of five hundred thousand naira.

Afolayan said, "For me we are committed to training and empowering and building capacity. And that is what we stand for. I am very proud of these students because from here they are starting their own journey, their own career. And I am really proud of that.

"Film and television is something we are



very passionate about here. And TK, as we all call him, is a living witness to one of the reasons why we are here today.

"This is really borne out of passion and the quest to want to groom new generation of filmmakers who will continue to tell the stories even while we are still here. And what is so special about this particular programme, really is the dedication of the students,"

Afolayan, who commended the French Embassy in Nigeria for the collaboration, said he was not surprised at the kind of assistance they got from the Embassy as France has always supported the promotion of culture.

"But again out of all the organizations or institutes or institutions that we have partnered with I think the French Embassy in Nigeria has been very generous to you guys. This would have cost you millions.

"It has really helped because there there is no way we would have been able to fund. We have built the structure. Interventions like this from all these organizations help sort the students school fees. And a continuation of something like this would really help to build a very strong trust and empowerment in the youths.

Christopher Pecot, Audiovisual attache at the French Embassy in Nigeria thanked Afolayan and his team, saying it was a big honour to be at the event.

"I think it has been a great partnership and a kind of opportunity we could not miss.

Indeed, the French Embassy has already been supporting collaborations between our two countries in various sectors. Each year we sponsor filmmakers and directors to film festivals, markets and any other events taking place in France. Each year we also invite some French producers to attend the African International Film Festival in Lagos," Pecot said.

Pecot was also impressed with the quality of short films that the students produced.

"First, I would like to congratulate all of you because you did a great job. I would also like to thank your teachers because they also did a great job. You know it's a long trip to be a filmmaker. You have the good tracks. The key success of your project is the script. Be careful with the scripts. Scriptwriting is very important. I have confidence in all of you," Pecot maintained.

Ace filmmaker Tunde Kelani congratulated the students for being able to achieve so much with the little resources and equipment they had, adding that they were on their way to becoming good filmmakers.

"I am here to congratulate you, the young film makers who took this practical course. And as you can see, with limited equipment and resources, you have achieved this. You have to work as a team. You have been able to discover your weaknesses and your strength.

"But I am happy from what I have seen that You are on your way to becoming good film makers. And of course, you are

I once dressed dead bodies – Patience Ozokwor

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Legendary Nollywood actress, Patience Ozokwor, popularly known as Mama G, has opened up about her life struggles and the resilience that shaped her rise to fame.

Speaking during the pre-premiere dinner for Funke Akindele's film, 'Everybody Loves Jenifa', Mama G shared stories of her challenging past, revealing the odd jobs she took on to support her family.

"I went through thick and thin to become who I am today," she said, emphasizing the importance of perseverance.

The actress recounted some of her experiences, including dressing dead bodies to make ends meet.

Her journey reflects the power of determination in overcoming obstacles.

Mama G also praised Funke Akindele, calling her a "strong woman" and expressing her admiration for women



who show resilience in the face of challenges.

Her story continues to inspire fans, highlighting the strength and dedication required to achieve success in the entertainment industry.

"I used to go to the morgue to dress dead bodies so my children could go to school and eat. I did a lot of things to

make my family what they are today.

"You know they say prophets are not respected in his town but in my own place, they appreciate me a lot because they saw me through all these things.

"That's the way I see Funke. When I see her, I look at myself. She's a replica of who I am."

Yinka Quadri: death rumors troubled family

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

In a recent revelation, celebrated Nollywood actor Yinka Quadri has addressed the emotional toll a death hoax had on him and his family.

The rumor, which spread like wildfire in June, caused alarm among his fans and loved ones, sparking unnecessary stress and anxiety.

The 65-year-old actor, who is well-known for his iconic roles in Nigerian cinema, shared his thoughts during an interview on "Oyinmomo TV."

He expressed deep disappointment over the actions of those who originated and shared the false news.

False report sparks public concern



The false report of Quadri's death first surfaced online, gaining traction among fans and followers. It quickly became a trending topic, prompting widespread concern.

Family members, especially those living abroad, were deeply affected by the news, leading to a flurry of frantic calls and messages.

Reacting to the situation at the time, Quadri took to his Instagram page to clear the air. In his post, he reassured fans and well-wishers, stating, "I am alive and well." Despite this clarification, the impact of the rumor lingered, affecting his family's peace of mind.

"Content creators should Be responsible"

During his interview, Quadri did not mince words when addressing the issue. He criticized the actions of those behind the false report, labelling them as irresponsible content creators. "When I saw the news, I said, 'Well done, you content creators,'" he remarked sarcastically.

Woli Arole: appreciate helpers before success

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Comedian Woli Arole shared an inspiring Instagram post, urging gratitude and appreciation for those who support us, a message often overlooked today.

In a heartfelt post, the comedian reminded his followers of the crucial need to recognize and honor those who have played significant roles in shaping their journey toward success.

Arole began by addressing a pervasive issue he described as “selective amnesia,” a term he used to refer to the tendency of some individuals to forget the people who supported them during their climb to success.

This behaviour, he explained, is all too common in society, where achievements can sometimes overshadow the contributions of those who helped make them possible.

Condemning ingratitude and forgetfulness

The comedian didn't hold back in condemning this form of ingratitude. He emphasized that no one achieves success alone and that everyone, at some point, has benefitted from the support and kindness of others.

Arole strongly urged his audience to resist the temptation of forgetting those who stood by them during tough times.

He highlighted the moral responsibility to acknowledge and appreciate the individuals God has used as vessels of support and guidance.

In his post, Arole stated, “A lot of people suddenly get amnesia when they become successful. It is wrong. Do not forget those whom God has used for you before you became successful; no man is made alone. God has used people for you. Appreciate them and be loud about it. Do not be an ingrate.”

Arole's personal gratitude



Leading by example, Arole expressed his own gratitude in the post. He began by thanking Jesus for using certain individuals to uplift him during his career and personal journey.

His acknowledgment wasn't limited to divine intervention; he also took the time to appreciate his fans, friends, and everyone who has supported him over the years.

His heartfelt note, which ended with “modupe gan” (a Yoruba phrase meaning “thank you very much”), resonated deeply with his followers, many of whom took to the comments section to echo similar sentiments.

This act of public acknowledgment served as a powerful reminder of the humility that should accompany success.

By openly crediting others for their role in his journey, Arole not only demonstrated his gratitude but also inspired his audience to reflect on their own lives and relationships.

Timely reminder for all

Arole's message transcends personal experience; it's a universal call to action. Gratitude, as he suggests, is not just about saying “thank you” but about fostering an attitude of

appreciation that permeates all aspects of life.

By cultivating a habit of gratitude, we nurture deeper, more meaningful relationships. Whether it's acknowledging a mentor who guided us, a friend who offered encouragement, or a family member who provided unwavering support, these acts of appreciation help build stronger connections.

Furthermore, gratitude fosters humility, reminding us that success is rarely a solo endeavor.

Role of gratitude in personal growth
Psychologists and social scientists often emphasize the importance of gratitude in achieving personal well-being. Gratitude has been linked to increased happiness, improved mental health, and stronger interpersonal relationships.

Arole's message aligns with these findings, offering a practical example of how expressing appreciation can enrich one's life.

When we acknowledge those who have contributed to our success, we not only validate their efforts but also inspire others to adopt a similar mindset.

Several dead, about 60 injured as car plows into German Christmas market

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A car plowed into people visiting a Christmas market in Magdeburg, Germany, on Friday, killing several and injuring about 60 others, according to U.S. law enforcement sources.

A suspect has been arrested in the attack that sent shoppers fleeing in panic, the U.S. sources said.

Extensive police operations are underway at the Magdeburg Christmas market, which is now closed, local police said.

Emergency services attend an incident at the Christmas market in Magdeburg, Germany, Dec. 20, 2024. Dorthe Hein/DPA via AP

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said, “My thoughts are with the victims and their families.

“We stand by their side and by the side of the people of Magdeburg.



My thanks go to the dedicated rescue workers in these anxious hours.”

Magdeburg is about a two-hour drive west of Berlin.

This incident comes nearly eight years to the day after a terror attack at a different German Christmas market. On Dec. 19, 2016, a man

drove a truck into a crowd at a market in Berlin, killing 13 and injuring dozens.

The potential for vehicle-ramming attacks is an ongoing concern for U.S. law enforcement officials, especially ahead of New Year’s Eve. A joint threat assessment about New Year’s Eve in New York City’s Times Square noted the use of vehicle-ramming alone or in conjunction with other tactics “has become a recurring tactic employed by threat actors in the West.”

This is a developing story. Please check back for updates.



100 North Korean soldiers killed in Ukraine

....As Russians burn their faces to hide Ids

By Dave Oludare Oso

At least 100 North Korean soldiers have been killed fighting in Ukraine — and video appears to show Russian allies burning the dead's faces in fires to hide their identity.

Another 1,000 North Koreans have been wounded — but dictator Kim Jong Un could be gearing up to send additional troops to the battlefield.

The heavy losses — which may include North Korean generals — were reported by South Korea's National Intelligence Service to the nation's lawmakers behind closed doors on Thursday, the Telegraph reported.

The North Korean troops have become "burdens" to their Russian allies because they know nothing about drones, South Korean politician Lee Seong-kweun told reporters after the intelligence briefing.

As reports emerged of significant North Korean losses, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky published videos this week showing soldiers from the Hermit Kingdom fighting — and dying — in Kursk.

North Korean troops could be seen in one video posted online sheltering behind trees after an advance on Ukrainian positions.

Another clip showed Russian troops attempting to hide the identity of the North Koreans — even burning the faces of the dead in a campfire, according to the Telegraph.

"Russia is not only involving North Korean soldiers in assaults against Ukrainian positions, but also trying to



hide the losses of these people," Zelensky said.

"The Russians are also trying to literally burn the faces of the killed North Korean soldiers," he added.

North Korean troops accidentally killed eight Russian paramilitary soldiers over the weekend in a "friendly fire" attack as they tried to retake Kursk from Ukraine, Kyiv officials said.

Some 10,000-plus North Korean soldiers have been deployed to Ukraine.

Along the front lines Saturday, a group of North Korean troops targeted and fired at the Chechen Akhmat unit, killing eight of their allies, according to Ukraine's military intelligence agency.

The friendly-fire incident resulted from the "language barrier" between Moscow's and Pyongyang's forces.

North Korea deployed more than 10,000 soldiers and military equipment to Russia as President

Vladimir Putin desperately looks to turn the tide in his drawn-out invasion of Ukraine, now approaching its fourth year.

However, neither North Korea nor Russia has officially acknowledged the troop deployment or the weapons supply.

Kim is reportedly planning an inspection of his country's special operations force, which could be dispatched to Ukraine, according to the Telegraph.

Ukraine's military intelligence agency also revealed Thursday that North Korean troops have erected additional observational posts to "detect drones of the security and defence forces of Ukraine."

The agency said Russia will continue sending North Korean soldiers to Kursk to not "lose the pace of offensive actions."

North Korea said Thursday its military alliance with Russia is proving "very effective" in deterring the United States and its "vassal forces."

How Trump, Elon Musk caused Congress' nightmare before Christmas

By Dave Oludare Oso

Still a month away from the White House, Trump and his billionaire backer threw Congress' plans to get home for the holidays into chaos over a government funding bill.

It was government shutdown season in Washington, and all through the House, many creatures were stirring — most notably Elon Musk.

Lawmakers in Congress were expecting a glide path to the holidays. They had a bipartisan deal that would keep the government funded and send them all on their merry way back to their districts.

But then they got a taste of what the next four years might be like with Donald Trump back in the White House and Musk, the world's richest man, wielding enormous power over the political process.

On Wednesday, Trump — with help from Musk — effectively killed the funding legislation put together by House Speaker Mike Johnson, (R-La.), a 1,500-page bill packed with the byproduct of the traditional horse-trading that generally defines congressional dealmaking.

Conservative Republicans and right-wing talkers blasted the plan as the sort of status quo Washington politics that Trump campaigned to end during the election. But as negotiations continued, the president-elect remained on the sidelines.

That ended late Wednesday, when Trump torched the plan as “ridiculous and extraordinarily expensive” and doomed it.



Less than a day later, House Republicans released a 116-page plan to keep the government open through March 14. The plan had the support of both Trump and Musk, the billionaire who was Republicans' biggest 2024 political donor and a frequent presence in Trump's orbit.

But even after a significant arm-twisting and primary threats from Trump and his allies, the new plan went down in flames on the House floor Thursday night with significant Republican opposition.

It left less than a day before a potential government shutdown.

The failure was a defeat for Trump, who — despite his election win — still cannot single-handedly control everything that happens in Washington.

“To say this is alarming and a setback is an absolute understatement,” a veteran Republican operative said.

But even in the measure's failure, the negotiations over the budget deal have solidified a handful of new political truths: With President Joe Biden staying completely silent on the

negotiations, he has left a void allowing Trump to position himself as a second president, while Johnson's status as speaker is contingent on keeping Trump happy, and Musk's role as the nascent administration's muscle and money is now not just hypothetical but rather something he can use to try to move votes and potentially end political careers.

‘A new sheriff in town’

Musk has his money, but he also has his megaphone. He has the most followers on the social media platform X — more than 208 million — which is not entirely surprising since he owns the site.

Musk, who spent more than \$250 million getting Trump elected, posted about his opposition to the original spending deal well over 100 times over the past two days, with threats to fund primary challenges to anyone who voted for the plan, which was six weeks in the making.

“Any member of the House or Senate who votes for this outrageous spending bill deserves to be voted out in 2 years!” Musk posted Wednesday afternoon on X.

Biden announces \$4.28bn in student loan relief for 55,000 borrowers

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

President Joe Biden's administration announced on Friday another \$4.28 billion dollars in student loan relief for nearly 55,000 public service workers.

The announcement brings the total loan forgiveness by the Biden administration to "approximately \$180 billion for nearly 5 million Americans," according to a fact sheet from the Department of Education.

The forgiveness will be delivered to individuals enrolled in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program (PSLF), which allows for debt forgiveness for people in jobs like firefighting, nursing and teaching after 10 years of continuous payment.

The Biden administration has made fixes to this program that had failed to deliver student loan relief to many due to poor implementations and errors in the programme, officials said.

"The public servants approved for



debt cancellation today include teachers, nurses, service members, law enforcement officials, and other public service workers who have dedicated their lives to giving back to their communities and who are finally earning the relief they are entitled to under the law," Biden said in a statement.

Of the nearly 5 million borrowers who have had more than \$180 billion in debt relieved by the administration, more than 1 million were through the PSLF. The relief for those PSLF

borrowers totals about \$78 billion, the administration said.

"From Day One of my Administration, I promised to make sure that higher education is a ticket to the middle class, not a barrier to opportunity," Biden said in a statement.

He added, "Because of our actions, millions of people across the country now have the breathing room to start businesses, save for retirement, and pursue life plans they had to put on hold because of the burden of student loan debt."

Russia jails Ukrainian 16 years for treason

By Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE

A military court in Rostov-on-Don, Russia, sentenced an unnamed resident of Ukraine's Lugansk region to 16 years in prison for "high treason" on Friday. The sentence was handed down after prosecutors accused the man of providing information about Russian armed forces to Ukraine's security services.

The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) reported that the individual was found guilty of state treason, aiding terrorist activities, and illegally handling explosives. As part of the sentence, the accused will serve his time in a high-security penal colony.

The sentencing comes amid heightened tensions, as President Vladimir Putin has urged Russian security services to adopt "tough" anti-terror measures. In particular, Putin has called for intensified efforts to identify spies and traitors, especially as Russia's offensive in Ukraine enters its third year.

The FSB released a video of the man's arrest, showing officers detaining him, throwing him to the ground, and taking him into custody. The video, which blurred the man's face, showed him confessing to being recruited by Ukraine's SBU security service in 2016.



Russia has frequently used confession videos as evidence after arresting individuals accused of espionage or treason.

National Sports Festival postponed to May 2025

By Dave Oludare Oso

The 22nd National Sports Festival, tagged 'Gateway Games, Ogun 2024,' has been rescheduled once again.

The highly anticipated festival initially slated for January 12 – 28, 2025, will now take place from May 16 – 30, 2025.

Announcing the change during the 1st Joint Technical Meeting held in Abeokuta, Ogun State, on Thursday night, the Director-General of the National Sports Commission (NSC), Bukola Olopade, said the change was necessary to allow the newly established NSC to settle and develop a sustainable sports economy, aligning with President Bola Tinubu's directive for economic sustainability in sports.

The meeting included key stakeholders, such as 37 directors of sports, technical directors, secretaries of sports federations, and members of both the Main Organizing Committee (MOC) and Local Organizing Committee (LOC).

The Director-General, alongside Ogun State's Commissioner for Sports Development, Wasiu Isiaka, and other officials, emphasized that the postponement was strategically planned for the betterment of the festival.

Olopade noted that while the Ogun State government and LOC were prepared to host the event in January, the MOC, after consulting with technical directors, decided to push the date to ensure a proper realignment of the NSC and the festival's goals.



In an additional move to enhance participation, the festival will invite outstanding junior athletes from the recently concluded National Youth Games in Asaba, Delta State, to compete, forming part of the 38 participating teams next year.

“In the wisdom of the technical people and the MOC, we just felt there were so many elements that needed to come together for us to give to Nigerians, in the spirit of the new definition of sports organization, and creating an ecosystem of economic sustainability by the President.

He said, “And there was the need to push it forward, to capture all of those elements together. Of course, and also to get the commission to settle down properly.

“All of these were done in agreement and with the approval of Mallam Shehu Dikko, the Chairman of the Sports Commission. So we're excited that we have a new date.

“We're excited that it gives us five months to properly put everything together and show the whole country what capacity is all about. It was strategically done to settle a new commission to recognize the idea of creating a sports economy

that is sustainable.”

In his welcome address, the Commissioner for Sports Development in Ogun State, Wasiu Isiaka expressed satisfaction with the decision of the Technical Committee.

Isiaka maintained that the shift in date would allow the state government to further expand the ecosystem of organising the best National Sports Festival that will be a reference point in the near future.

Meanwhile, the communique issued at the end of the meeting jointly signed by the Chairman, Main Organizing Committee, who doubles at the NSC DG, Olopade, and Commissioner for Sports Development in Ogun State, Isiaka urged the Ogun State government to use the report of the inspection of the venues and facilities as checklist to guide the state.

The communique, therefore, called on all delegates to appoint Chief Medical Officer for easy interface before and during the Games.

It, however, announced February 23 – 28, 2025 as the commencement of zonal eliminations for team sports.

English footballer, Raheem Sterling's ex dies after BBL surgery complications

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

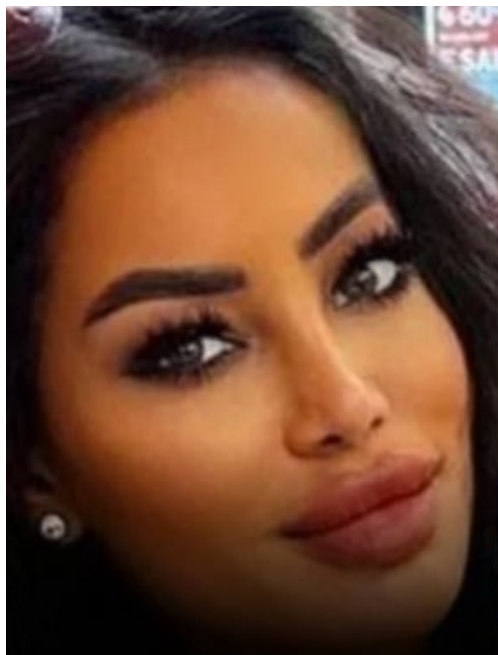
Tabby Brown, a Playboy model and former lover of English footballer, Raheem Sterling has died.

She died shortly after undergoing a Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL) procedure in the Dominican Republic.

An inquest revealed that she had secretly traveled for the procedure, which included liposuction, in October 2023, misleading her family into thinking she was on a sightseeing trip.

Just three days after returning to the UK, the 38-year-old suffered a fatal 'fat embolism' at her south London home on December 13. Her mother found her collapsed, and despite emergency services being called, she was pronounced dead shortly after on December 19.

The South London Coroners Court reported that Brown had 'puncture wounds' in her pelvis and 'numerous small globules of fat' in her lungs,



leading to her death. Following the surgery, she reportedly felt unwell but did not seek medical help, choosing instead to take painkillers.

Her mother, Mahasin, initially thought Tabby had contracted a viral infection during her travels and cared for her until the tragic discovery.

In a heartfelt tribute, Tabby's brother

and sister shared that she had not informed their mother about the surgery, which came as a shock.

They described her as a fitness enthusiast and a passionate foodie, highlighting her generally healthy lifestyle. The family is left mourning the loss of a vibrant and spirited individual.

Dubois questions Joshua's readiness, prepares for Parker in Saudi Arabia

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

IBF heavyweight world champion Daniel Dubois has cast doubt on Anthony Joshua's readiness for their anticipated rematch, stating, "Where is AJ? I can't find him." Despite extensive talks, the fight scheduled for 22 February has been scrapped, with Dubois now set to face top contender Joseph Parker in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Dubois, 27, defeated Joshua in September, solidifying his claim as one of boxing's elite. However, Joshua's camp has cited an injury as the reason for withdrawing from the rematch.

Speaking to BBC Sport, Dubois expressed confidence ahead of the Parker bout, saying, "Parker's experienced and

on a good run, but I'll do a job on him. I just have to be faster and better in every department."

Dubois is in Riyadh to witness the WBC, WBO, and WBA (Super) heavyweight title clash between Oleksandr Usyk and Tyson Fury. The 27-year-old champion has his sights set on fighting the winner, with a preference for Usyk, whom he faced in a controversial loss in 2023.

Reflecting on that bout, Dubois said, "I'd love to fight Usyk again. Money talks in boxing, and it would be huge to right that wrong and unify the belts."

Usyk has hinted at a potential return to



cruiserweight if victorious against Fury, but Dubois doubts that move, stating, "I'm the world champion, and he's got the other belts. It's undisputed or nothing."

Dubois, refusing to predict a winner between Usyk and Fury, noted, "They're both top guys. Fury showed his chin last time. Either man could win."

Scandal in European football: Fake identity of Youssoufa Moukoko

By Dave Oludare Oso

After standing out in the lower ranks of German football, Youssoufa Moukoko burst onto the scene in 2020 as the youngest debutant in the Champions League's history, a remarkable milestone that is now under question.

Deception about his age and his real father

Known by many as the 'African Messi' – owned by Borussia Dortmund, although currently on loan at Nice – Moukoko's career has been embroiled in a huge controversy that has shocked Germany after recent information revealed his true age and his true father.

The "big German lie"

The German newspaper, Bild has controversially labeled the German footballer (born in Cameroon) as the "big German lie," following claims from his alleged father that the striker is 24 years old, not 20.

Not his father?

"Youssoufa Moukoko is not the biological son of me and my wife Marie Moukoko. Nor was he born on November 20, 2004 in Yaounde, Cameroon," Joseph Moukoko declared.

He falsified his papers in Cameroon

Joseph Moukoko further confessed on 'ProSieben' that he falsified documents of the young footballer in Cameroon for visa purposes

Scramble for dates

He further added what he claims to be Youssoufa Moukoko's true date of birth, stating: "In reality, he was born on July 19, 2000. Now he is listed as



being born on November 20, 2004," he revealed on 'ProSieben'.

Off to Germany... With a fake visa

"I got him a fake birth certificate in Yaoundé. After that, I went to the embassy, got him a passport and then took him to Germany as my son. We made him four years younger," added the man, who until now, was considered to be his biological father. There was already evidence that he was not born in 2004.

'Bild' has already published a series of investigations carried out in Cameroon through which they were unable to find any evidence that the young German footballer had been born in 2004 in the African country, but there was more information that would corroborate Joseph Moukoko's confession.

His father was a Cameroonian taxi driver

The German tabloid discovered that the birth of a child named Youssoufa Mohamadou was registered there in 2000, the son of Ousman Mohamadou, a local taxi driver, information that was confirmed by several witnesses who reportedly pointed out that his real father lived in a nearby villa.

The case of Silas Katompa Mvumpa

There have been other similar cases like Moukoko's. A good example of this is Silas Katompa Mvumpa, a Congolese footballer whose passport was falsified by his agent in 2019 with a false identity, so that he would be considered a minor, in order to control him and blackmail him. These facts were denounced by his club at the time, VfB Stuttgart, who gave him their full support.

Mo Farah, a career under a false identity

Outside Germany, another well-remembered case in similar circumstances is that of the British athlete of Somali origin and Olympic champion Mo Farah who, after finishing his career in 2022, confessed in an interview for the BBC that he always competed under a false identity as a result of his tragic childhood, when he arrived in the United Kingdom through a human trafficking network.

He would lose all his records

In the case of Youssoufa Moukoko, the revelation that he could be four years older than previously thought could have its consequences. He would lose all the records for precocity that he currently holds.