

NNPCL reduces petrol price to N899/litre **PAGE 4**



NGO pays N10m fine to free 27 Kogi inmates **PAGE 5**



The New Daily Prime

Three Nigerians make top 50 Richest Black People in US **PAGE 23**



Anambra, FCT tragedies: Tinubu cancels Lagos events, consoles victims **PAGE 2**



WORLD **PAGE 24**

US man jailed 130 years for slitting two girls' throats



ENTERTAINMENT **PAGE 16**

Doris Ogah emerges 45th Miss Nigeria



Tinubu's reforms painful but necessary - BUA Group chairman **PAGE 4**

Troops arrest four Ambazonian rebels in Taraba **PAGE 10**

Anambra, FCT tragedies: Tinubu cancels Lagos events, consoles victims

By Dave Oludare Oso

In reaction to the barrage of tragedies that has befallen the country recently, especially the stampede deaths in Anambra and Abuja, President Bola Tinubu has cancelled all his official events in Lagos for Saturday, including his attendance at the 2024 Lagos Boat Regatta, in honour of the victims.

Special Adviser to the President (Information & Strategy), Bayo Onanuga, in a statement noted that the two tragedies claimed many lives and left many others injured.

Onanuga stated that the president was scheduled to watch the boat parade and other activities of the Boat Regatta from the waterfront of his Queen's Drive residence in Ikoyi.

The statement informed that dignitaries, including top officials of the Lagos State government and white cap chiefs from the State, were already seated when the president cancelled his appearance following briefings on the tragedies.

President Tinubu, commiserating with the victims of the unfortunate incidents in Anambra and the Federal Capital Territory, urged states and relevant authorities to enforce



strict crowd control measures immediately," the statement read.

The president noted that it was very disturbing that the events at the Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Maitama, Abuja, and a community Centre in Okija, Anambra State, bore a distressing resemblance to the recent incident in Ibadan, Oyo State.

He said local and state authorities should no longer tolerate operational lapses by organisations and corporate bodies involved in charitable and humanitarian activities.

While praying for the peaceful repose of innocent Nigerians who died in the stampede, President Tinubu wished a quick

recovery to the injured.

He reiterated that these mishaps are avoidable if event planners adhere to necessary safeguards and protocols to ensure pre- and post-event safety.

"In a season of joy and celebration, we grieve with fellow citizens mourning the painful losses of their loved ones. Our prayers of divine comfort and healing are with them," the statement quoted President Tinubu as saying.

The President wished the Lagos State government, organisers of the Boat Regatta, themed "Our Water, Our Heritage, Our Life," a successful and hitch-free festival.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

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DECEMBER 1, 2024

PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	372,500.00
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10X5	255,238.00
10X4	206,890.50
10X3	179,608.00
9X6	254,977.00
9X5	225,738.00
9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
5X2	42,916.50
4X4	60,166.50
4X3	36,499.50
4X2	29,333.50
3X3	28,000.00
3X2	17,400.00
2X2	13,000.00
2X1	8,600.00
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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	329,868.50
HALF PAGE	192,500.00
QUARTER PAGE	100,000.00
14X2	109,500.00
10X6	242,500.00
10X5	237,500.00
10X4	192,500.00
10X3	171,000.00
9X6	232,500.00
9X5	206,000.00
9X4	177,500.00
9X3	150,000.00
8X6	216,000.00
8X3	98,500.00
7X4	164,002.00
6X4	94,010.50
6X3	78,500.00
6X2	47,500.00
5X5	100,000.00
5X4	61,500.00
5X3	57,819.00
5X2	40,379.50
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4X3	31,000.00
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SIZE	RATE
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QUARTER PAGE	115,012.50

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SIZE	RATE
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CORPORATE BLACK & WHITE

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HALF PAGE	142,787.50
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10X5	192,305.50
10X4	142,787.50
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9X6	192,305.50
9X3	107,757.50
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PUBLIC NOTICE BLACK & WHITE

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10X4	103,963.00
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9X5	168,191.50
9X4	N/A
8X6	N/A
8X3	N/A
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5X4	42,825.00
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5X2	22,841.00
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4X3	N/A
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1X1	2,700.00

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5X6 FRONT PAGE	3,350,000.00
10X6 FRONT PAGE	8,250,000.00
EARPIECE FRONT PAGE(1.5X2)	246,500.00
EARPIECE INSIDE PAGE(1.5X2)	117,875.00
EARPIECE BACK PAGE	236,796.50
CENTRE SPREAD COLOUR (PUBLIC NOTICE)	1,027,000.00
CENTRE SPREAD COLOUR (PRODUCT)	929,000.00
CENTRESPREAD B&W	800,000.00
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DOUBLE SPREAD B & W	725,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD HALF B & W	425,000.00
FULL WRAP AROUND	15,000,000.00
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HALF PAGE FRONT	5,500,000.00

ALLURE RATE

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CENTRESPREAD		967,500.00
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(BC) Back Cover		483,750.00
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10X5		295,625.00
Half Page		225,000.00
EVENT		250,000.00

PICTURE & CAPTION

SIZE	RATE	7.5% VAT	TOTAL
PHOTO NEWS PAGE 2	50,000.00	3,750.00	53,750.00
PHOTO NEWS (3X3)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
PHOTO NEWS (4X4)	53,333.30	4,250.00	57,583.30
PRESS RELEASE (4X4)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
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ALL RATES ARE VAT INCLUSIVE

NNPCL reduces petrol price to N899/litre

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) has reduced its ex-depot price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), also known as petrol, to N899 per litre, from the previous N1,020 for oil marketers.

Spokesperson for the Petroleum Products Retail Outlets Owners Association of Nigeria (PETROAN), Joseph Obele, confirmed the new price cut in a statement on Saturday.

According to a document released by the NNPC's commercial department and sighted by journalists, the price reduction follows a regional pricing scheme, with the new prices set as follows:

Lagos, N899.0; Warri, N970.0; Oghara, N970.0; Port Harcourt, N970.0; and Calabar, N970.0.

This adjustment follows recent price changes announced by the 650,000 barrels per day Dangote Refinery.

National President of PETROAN,



Billy Gillis Hary, reacting to the reduction by the nation's oil company, stated that the new pricing would offer relief to motorists and Nigerians during the holiday season.

He commended the move as a demonstration of NNPCL's commitment to making petroleum products more affordable.

Hary said, "The reduction in PMS price by NNPCL is a demonstration of the company's commitment to making petroleum products more affordable for Nigerians. We commend NNPCL for responding to our call for affordable PMS prices."

Meanwhile, PETROAN had earlier urged the NNPCL to follow the lead of Dangote Refinery, which had reduced its ex-depot price.

On Thursday, the Dangote Refinery lowered its price to N899.50 per litre from N970. With the new development from the NNPCL, there's a slight margin of N0.50 between the prices of NNPC and Dangote Petrol for oil marketers.

Currently, Nigerians are purchasing petrol at filling stations for prices ranging from N1,015 to N1150 per litre.

Tinubu's reforms painful but necessary – BUA Group chairman

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Chairman of BUA Group, Alhaji Abdulsamad Rabi'u, has acknowledged that although some of the reforms introduced by the President Bola Tinubu's administration have been challenging, but they were necessary for the long-term stability of the economy.

"It's true that some of them are quite painful, but we needed these reforms, especially the foreign exchange unification," Rabi'u said while also expressing confidence that the Nigerian economy is on the road to recovery.

The BUA Group chairman said this while speaking with State House Correspondents after the Juma'at prayer with President Bola Tinubu in Lagos.

"As you'll remember, the exchange rate was

N500, and then outside it was N800, which was unacceptable. Now, the exchange rate has been unified, and although it was initially difficult, with rates reaching nearly N2,000 at one point, it is now stabilising at about N1,500 to N1,550. I'm confident that we'll see the rate come down even further," he said.

Rabi'u also highlighted the efforts of President Tinubu to ensure stability across all sectors of the economy.

"We can see the improvements in infrastructure, with a lot of road works underway. Given some time, I believe things will definitely improve," he added.

The business mogul urged Nigerians to exercise patience, noting that the reforms take time, especially considering that the current



administration had been in power for only 18 months, with another 24 months to go.

"I think we need to give them time, and I am sure things will get better," Rabi'u said.

NGO pays N10m fine to free 27 Kogi inmates

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Victory Idewele Foundation, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) has paid a N10 million fine to free 27 inmates in Kogi State.

The Chief Judge of Kogi, Justice Josiah Majebi, announced the gesture on Saturday during a visit to the state's correctional centres.

The foundation also plans to train the freed inmates for three months in Abuja to help them acquire skills and become self-reliant.

The initiative benefited inmates from various centres, including Koton-Karfe, Kabba, and Ankpa. The Chief Judge praised the foundation's efforts to help reintegrate the inmates into society.

Justice Majebi said, "Aside from the payment of fines and compensations made by the foundation, the NGO has also decided to train the freed inmates for three months in Abuja to enable them to acquire skills and become self-reliant in society."

According to him, at the Koton-Karfe Maximum Security Correctional Centre, two inmates, Mustapha Idris, who was fined N50,000, regained his freedom, while Kehinde Amaka, sentenced to one-year imprisonment with a fine of N300,000, benefited from the gesture of the foundation but has to remain in custody until January 15, 2025, to complete his jail term.

Also, at the Medium Security Custodial Centre in Kabba, the Chief Judge released 20 inmates, while 5 inmates were released in Ankpa.



The Chief Judge, who stated that the essence of the visit was to ensure that no inmate was being detained unjustly, cautioned the magistrates against being used as agents of oppression.

He lamented the way and manner in which some prosecutors delay cases unnecessarily, causing awaiting trial inmates to stay long periods in custody.

Majebi, who was full of praises to the founder and chairman of the foundation, Mr Innocent Idewele, for choosing Kogi state for the gesture said the support would go a long way to change the freed inmates positively.

"This visit is special and unique because, in the history of the state, this type of additional event during correctional centre visits has never happened before.

"Prior to our preparation for this visit, the chairman of the House Committee on Judiciary, Hon. Halidu Adejo, introduced Mr. Innocent Idewele to

me, stating that he wanted to pay the fines and compensations of inmates so they could regain their freedom.

"I discussed with officers in charge of the correctional centres in Ankpa, Dekina, Idah, Koton-Karfe, Kabba, and Okene, and the inmates in the category amounted to ten million naira, which the foundation paid to the Kogi State government," he said.

The Chief Judge commended the efforts of the chairman of Idah Local Government for the concern shown toward the custodial centre in the town and urged other local government chairmen to do the same in the interest of the state.

In his remarks, the founder of the foundation, Innocent Idewele, said the NGO is focused on changing human lives, especially those of the less privileged in society, noting that every need of the citizens should not be left for the government to tackle.

Again, scores feared dead in Abuja, Anambra stampede

By Friday Omosola

Tragedy struck this morning as a stampede at the Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Maitama claimed the lives of 10 individuals, including four children, and left several others injured.

In same vein, many were feared dead this morning at Okija community in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State following a stampede at a palliative distribution venue.

It was gathered that the incident occurred during the distribution of palliatives by the church to vulnerable and elderly residents in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

The FCT Police Command, in a statement issued by its spokesperson, SP Josephine Akeh, confirmed the fatalities and revealed that eight other individuals sustained injuries.

Josephine noted that four of the injured victims have since been treated and discharged, while the remaining are receiving medical attention.

It was learnt that the stampede broke out as thousands of residents scrambled to access the food items, leading to chaos and the unfortunate loss of lives.

However, the FCT Police expressed their condolences to the families of the deceased and wished the injured a speedy recovery.

The statement read, "This tragic event, which happened at about 6:30 am, led to a stampede that claimed the lives of ten (10) individuals, including four (4) children, and left eight (8) others with varying degrees of injuries. Four (4) of the injured have been treated and discharged,



while the remaining victims are receiving medical care.

"To prevent such unfortunate incidents in the future, the Command hereby directs that all organisations, religious bodies, groups, or individuals planning any public event, charitable activity, or large gathering in the FCT must notify the Police Command in advance.

"This will allow the deployment of adequate security measures to ensure public safety and prevent avoidable tragedies.

"Failure to comply with this directive will result in the organisers being held liable for any incident or loss of life resulting from their negligence," she added

Eyewitness accounts reveal that the Ihiala stampede occurred when people gathered to partake in the distribution of bags of rice donated by a prominent entrepreneur, Ernest Obiejesi, popularly known as Obijackson.

A viral video obtained by The New Daily Prime showed several lifeless

bodies, predominantly women, sprawled on the ground.

Residents had begun assembling at Mr Obiejesi's residence as early as Friday, in anticipation of the rice distribution slated for 8 a.m. today.

However, the situation spiraled out of control when more residents arrived, leading to a chaotic scene at the gate, with people pushing and shoving to gain access to the compound.

Confirming the incident, Tochukwu Ikenga, the police spokesperson in Anambra State, disclosed that while fatalities were recorded, the exact number of casualties remains unverified.

Ikenga, a superintendent of police, assured that officers have been deployed to the area to investigate the incident thoroughly.

A similar incident had occurred a few days ago in Ibadan, Oyo State, where a stampede at a children's Funfair resulted in the deaths of at least 35 children and left six others critically injured

Nigeria not plotting to destabilise Nigerien govt – FG

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Federal Government of Nigeria has strongly refuted allegations by Nigerien authorities that the Lakurawa terrorist group, allegedly aided by foreign security forces, including Nigerian security personnel, was responsible for the attack on the Niger-Benin oil pipeline on December 13, 2024, in Gaya, Dosso Region of the Niger Republic.

In a statement issued by the Acting Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kimiebi Imomotimi Ebienua, the Government of Nigeria expressed condolences to the Government of Niger over the unfortunate pipeline attack. However, it emphasized that the perpetrators were neither supported nor assisted by Nigerian authorities.



The statement read, “The Government of Nigeria is firmly committed to the fight against terrorism and will neither condone nor support the activities of such groups.”

Additionally, the Federal Government dismissed claims of

French military troops being present in northern Nigeria with the intent to destabilize the Government of Niger.

The statement declared, “These allegations are baseless and should be disregarded entirely.”

The government also reaffirmed the longstanding cordial relationship between Nigeria and France, highlighting that it is based on mutual respect, dignity, and non-interference in each other’s internal affairs.

The statement concluded, “Nigeria will continue to pursue peaceful means to maintain its cordial relationship with the Republic of Niger for the benefit of the people of both countries.”

Shettima returns, says we prayed for Nigeria in Saudi

By Friday Omosola

Vice President Kashim Shettima has returned to Abuja following his spiritual trip to Saudi Arabia, where he performed the lesser hajj (Umrah) at the revered Masjid al-Haram (Holy Mosque of Makkah).

In a statement released yesterday, Shettima’s spokesperson, Stanley Nkwocha, said the Vice President prayed for Nigeria’s peace and stability during his visit to the holy site.

“Our prayer is for peace to prevail in our land. May Allah grant our nation enduring peace and social harmony,” Shettima said..

The Vice President’s supplications



also included prayers for the success of Nigeria’s leadership at all levels, from federal to local government.

Before embarking on his spiritual duties, Shettima represented

President Bola Tinubu at the inauguration of a \$315 million oil production and storage facility owned by Oriental Energy Limited (OERL) in Dubai, (UAE.)

Three Ogun varsity students killed in road accident

By Dave Oludare Oso

Three students of the Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State could not survive a road accident that occurred along the Ilisan-Ago-Iwoye Road on Friday afternoon.

A statement released on Saturday by the spokesperson for the Ogun State Police Command, Omolola Odutola, said the students who were passengers in a commercial vehicle lost their lives in the accident caused by the driver who was driving at a speed.

She said, “A fatal motor accident occurred on December 20, 2024, at about 3:30 pm along the Ilisan-Ago Iwoye Road.

“The incident involved a commercial Opel Safira with the licence plate Lagos AAA-126HE, which was driven by one Adekunkle Adebisi, residing at 5 Sunmibare Street, Awa Ijebu.



“The Opel was travelling at high speed towards Ilisan from the Ago Iwoye direction when the driver lost control, causing the vehicle to flip into the bushes.

“A male passenger whose identity has not yet been confirmed but is believed

to be a student from OOU died at the scene. His body has been taken to the General Hospital Ijebu Ode mortuary.

“Additionally, two female students from Olabisi Onabanjo University, Dada Oluwanifesimi, 18, a sophomore in Mass Communication, and Miracle Ogo Oluwa Daniel, 19, a junior, were rushed to Love and Care Hospital but unfortunately succumbed to their injuries while receiving treatment.

“Two other OOU students are currently receiving medical care at the OOU Medical Centre on the Mini Campus.

“The vehicle has been recovered and is being stored safely at the station. This information is provided for your awareness, and further updates will be communicated as they become available.”

NDLEA arrests 4 suspects, destroys hemp farm in Ogun

By Helen Okechukwu

As the battle to check drug trafficking continues, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has arrested four suspects for cultivating an Indian hemp farm in Alaka village, Ogun State.

A six-hectare hemp farm was destroyed as NDLEA operatives stormed the farm.

According to NDLEA State Command, investigations are ongoing over the clampdown

The agency’s state commandant, Tijani Rabe yesterday disclosed this to journalists at a press conference in Abeokuta.

Based on their performance this year, Rabe further disclosed that about 675 drug offenders were apprehended in



2024.

Moreover, he added that 9.7 tonnes of solid drugs and 537.81 litres of liquid-based illegal substances were impounded.

Explaining their efforts in sensitising the public, he said about 128 schools, including communities and workplaces,

were visited for awareness creation.

Rabe stressed, “The agency estimates that approximately 27,648 people benefitted from these initiatives aimed at educating the public on the dangers of drug abuse, and 221 convictions against drug offenders were secured.”

NEMA urges effective crowd control to prevent tragic stampedes

By Olamilekan Botti

The Director-General of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Zubaida Umar, has called for enhanced crowd management strategies during the distribution of palliatives to avert stampedes and the resulting tragic loss of lives.

Umar's plea follows a series of heartbreaking incidents that unfolded within four days in Ibadan (Oyo State), Okija (Anambra State), and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. These events left several people dead and many others injured, casting a shadow over well-meaning initiatives meant to support vulnerable populations.

In a statement issued on Saturday, Umar expressed her deep concern about how poor planning and inadequate crowd control measures can transform acts of goodwill into sources of sorrow. She noted that these preventable tragedies undermine the very essence of charitable efforts, which aim to alleviate suffering and uplift communities.

"While we sympathize with the families of the deceased and those who sustained injuries in these unfortunate incidents, it is imperative that organizers of similar events take proactive measures to ensure public safety," Umar stated. She emphasized the need for employing professionals and collaborating with security agencies to effectively manage large crowds during palliative distribution and other high-turnout activities.

The recent incidents underscore the urgent need for preventive measures. In Ibadan, Oyo State, a stampede during a Christmas funfair resulted in multiple deaths and injuries, sending shockwaves across the nation. Similar tragedies were recorded in Okija, where the chaotic distribution of relief



items led to casualties, and in Abuja, where poorly controlled crowds at a charity event caused injuries and loss of life.

Umar stressed that these tragic outcomes were avoidable and urged organizers of charitable events to prioritize safety planning. "Proper crowd management is not an optional consideration; it is a critical component of any event involving large gatherings, especially those aimed at distributing resources to vulnerable populations," she said.

She further called on stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private entities involved in humanitarian efforts, to adopt a more structured approach. This includes the deployment of crowd control experts, strategic venue selection, clear communication of guidelines, and the presence of security personnel to manage and direct attendees.

The NEMA Director-General also emphasized the importance of educating the public about the risks of overcrowding and the need for orderly conduct during such events. "Community leaders and organizers must work together to raise awareness

about safety protocols, ensuring that people understand the importance of maintaining order to protect themselves and others," she added.

The call for better crowd control aligns with broader efforts to improve disaster management and public safety in Nigeria. As the nation continues to grapple with economic challenges and rising demands for social support, ensuring the safety of citizens during palliative distributions and similar gatherings is paramount.

Umar concluded by reiterating NEMA's commitment to providing technical support and guidance to organizers of large-scale events. "Our goal is to prevent future occurrences of such tragedies and uphold the integrity of humanitarian efforts," she said, urging all stakeholders to prioritize the safety and dignity of those they aim to serve.

The recent spate of stampedes serves as a sobering reminder that acts of kindness must be paired with meticulous planning and robust safety measures to truly benefit those in need.

Troops arrest four Ambazonian rebels in Taraba

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Troops of the 6 Brigade Nigerian Army/Sector 3 of the Operation Whirl Stroke (OPWS), have arrested four suspected members of Ambazonian rebels in Taraba.

Ambazonia is a rebel group operating in neighbouring Cameroon Republic.

Per NAN, Acting Assistant Director Army Public Relations, Capt. Olubodunde Oni in a statement on Saturday in Jalingo said the suspects were arrested at a hotel in Takum town.

Capt. Olubodunde Oni in the statement said that acting on credible intelligence, the suspects were tracked and apprehended.

He said during initial interrogation, the suspects confessed to being part of the rebel group involved in arms proliferation in exchange for cocoa with their Nigerian collaborators.

The statement said that four mobile



handsets were recovered from the suspects now in detention undergoing further investigation.

The statement added that in another operation following actionable intelligence, troops deployed at Natilde community in Bantaji District of Wukari Local Government Area intercepted a truck with registration number WKR 66 BB, transporting 19 pieces of stolen pipelines belonging to the Nigerian National Petroleum

Corporation Limited (NNPCL).

It said that further collaborative efforts with the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) in Wukari Division led to the recovery of an additional 11 pipes, bringing the total to 30.

The statement concluded, "The recovered items have been handed over to the NSCDC Wukari Division for further investigation and necessary action.

"The 6 Brigade Nigerian Army will remain resolute in its commitment to safeguarding lives and property while ensuring the security of critical national infrastructure.

"We urge members of the public to continue providing timely and credible information to security agencies to enhance our collective efforts in maintaining peace and security."

NNPC refutes report of Port-Harcourt Refinery shut down

By Emmanuel Nwagboniwe

Citing mischief and misinformation, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd.) has refuted a report in some newspapers that the old Port Harcourt Refinery which was recently re-streamed, has been shut down.

In a statement signed today by Olufemi Soneye, NNPC's Chief Corporate Communications Officer, he said that the report was false, and that loading of petroleum products was still going on today.

He urged the public to disregard the claim which is intended to cause panic.

Soneye added: "Our attention has been drawn to reports in a section of



the media alleging that the Old Port-Harcourt Refinery re-streamed about two months, has been shut down.

We wish to clarify that such reports are totally false as the refinery is fully operational as verified a few days ago by former Group Managing Directors of NNPC.

Preparation for the day's loading operation is currently ongoing."

"Members of the public are advised to discountenance such reports as they are the figments of the imagination of those who want to create artificial scarcity and rip-off Nigerians," he added

Millions lost as fire razes Ibadan auto parts market

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A devastating fire in the early hours of Saturday, engulfed the renowned spare parts market at Gate in Ibadan, Oyo State, and causing losses estimated in billions of naira.

The fire, which began around midnight, continued to spread as firefighters and local residents worked relentlessly to contain it, adding to the series of tragedies which has befallen the ancient city.

This follows the recent stampede at Islamic High School that claimed over 30 lives.

The General Manager of the Oyo State Fire Services, Mr. Akinyemi Akinyinka, confirmed the incident to journalists and described it as a massive tragedy.



He appealed to private water tanker owners to assist in extinguishing the fire, as the firefighting team continues to battle the flames.

The firefighter said as at this time, the cause of the fire remains unknown, and

authorities are expected to commence investigations once the situation is brought under control.

He said, "The cause of the fire remains unknown, with investigations currently underway to determine its source."

Navy intercepts 19 stowaways bound for Europe

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Nigerian Navy Ship (NNS) BEECROFT has intercepted 19 suspected stowaways attempting to illegally migrate to Europe.

The ship's Information Officer, Lt. Hussaini Ibrahim, in a statement on Saturday in Lagos, said that 15 stowaways were intercepted on December 19 onboard Europe-bound vessel Moto Tanker (MT) KRITIRUBY.

Ibrahim said that an additional four were intercepted on December 21 onboard MT MCCYANBU.

"Preliminary investigation revealed that the stowaways boarded the vessels at night and concealed themselves in the rudder compartment while attempting to illegally migrate to Europe.

"The Base, through its Quick Response Team (QRT) deployed at ATLAS COVE using the Nigerian Navy Maritime Domain Awareness Facility, Falcon Eye Alignment intercepted the suspected stowaways.



"This comes as a result of ongoing effort to sanitise the maritime environment of all forms of criminalities in support of the Presidential initiative to upscale the Blue Economy," he said.

Ibrahim said that the Falcon Eye Alignment successfully vectored NNS BEECROFT QRT which led to the interception of the 15 suspected stowaways at Lagos fairway buoy.

"On the other hand, the interception of the

additional four suspects was sequel to credible intelligence availed by NNS BEECROFT personnel deployed for escort duties onboard the vessel.

"The prompt response of the QRT saved the stowaways from exposure to life threatening situations during the long voyage," the officer said.

Ibrahim said that the first 15 suspected stowaways were handed over on Friday to the Nigeria Immigration Service, Lagos State Port/Marine Command, Apapa for further investigation and necessary action.

He added that the remaining four suspected stowaways would be handed over as soon as possible.

"The effect of stowaways on maritime operations posed security threats to vessels and aided smuggling, piracy as well as drug and human trafficking amongst other maritime threats," the officer said.

Autonomy: FG yet to remit councils allocations directly, says Makinde

By Friday Omosola



Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State, has disclosed that the federal government (FG) was yet to comply with the Supreme Court's order on local government autonomy.

During a media chat programme monitored by The New Daily Prime today, Makinde expressed concern that the FG was yet to comply with the court order mandating direct payment of allocations to local governments.

“The implementation of this order was bound to face challenges, and we are seeing that play out. It still hasn't been done,” Makinde stated.

He further explained that local government allocations are determined by various factors

such as population and landmass.

However, he noted that some local governments might struggle to meet basic obligations like salary payments under the current allocation structure.

“The people creating a dichotomy are those who will benefit from it. Our federation has three federating units instead of two. Our people are mainly interested in government working not this dichotomy.

“As of now, nothing has changed. The FG has not paid directly to the LGs. We are waiting for that to happen and then we can look at how they fare for three months and then we know what next. The LG issue is not as straightforward as

mischief makers want to make it”, the governor said.

On July 11, the Supreme Court, in a unanimous judgment by its seven-member panel, reaffirmed the financial autonomy of Nigeria's 774 local governments.

The court upheld a suit filed by the federal government seeking to enhance the independence of local governments.

The judgment annulled the longstanding practice where state governments received federal allocations on behalf of local government areas and withheld the funds.

It also barred the release of federal allocations to local governments without elected executives in place.

Ibadan Funfair: Detained Ooni's ex-wife hospitalised

IGP takes over probe

By Friday Omosola



Prophetess Naomi Silekunola, the ex-queen of the Ooni of Ife—the organiser of the Ibadan funfair that claimed the lives of 35 children, has been hospitalised.

Meanwhile, there are fresh indications that the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kayode Egbetokun, has taken over the investigation into the tragic incident

Earlier, The New Daily Prime reported that the stampede occurred at an Islamic High School in Orita Bashorun, Ibadan.

The event, originally planned for 5,000 children, reportedly exceeded the expectations, with a crowd far surpassing the planned number of invitees

An Ibadan-based journalist, Seun Aribikola, disclosed via Facebook that Naomi, who had been detained alongside seven others by the police, collapsed yesterday.

Aribikola added that she was rushed to the Police Hospital in Eleyele for treatment.

He wrote: “Just In: Tragic Ibadan children’s funfair organizer, Ex-Queen Naomi Silekunola Ogunwusi reportedly collapsed at the State Criminal Investigative Department (SCID) of the Nigerian Police Force in Iyaganku, Oyo State. She has been rushed to the Police Hospital in Eleyele for medical treatment.”

Meanwhile, a newspaper report said a senior staff member at confirmed the hospitalisation of Naomi.

The newspaper reported that the Oyo State Police Command’s spokesperson, Adewale Osifeso, confirmed the IGP’s take over of the probe, during an interview on Channels TV.

Moreover, the report stated that a high-ranking police source said the IGP was now overseeing the case.

“The IG is now in charge of the case. Anything you want, I think you should call Abuja” the report quoted the source saying.

However, according to the report, the Force Public Relations Officer, Muyiwa Adejobi, declined comment on the matter.

FG earmarks N27bn for Buhari, Obasanjo, others in 2025

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Federal Government has allocated ₦27 billion for the entitlements of former presidents, vice presidents, heads of state, chiefs of staff, retired heads of service, and professors in the 2025 fiscal year.

The beneficiaries of this allocation include former Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo, Goodluck Jonathan, and Muhammadu Buhari, alongside ex-vice-presidents Atiku Abubakar, Namadi Sambo, and Prof. Yemi Osinbajo.

Other notable individuals expected to benefit from this allocation are ex-military Heads of State, Gen. Yakubu Gowon (retd.) and Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar (retd.), as well as former military President, Ibrahim Babangida, and retired Chief of General Staff, Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe.

Recall that President Bola Tinubu on Wednesday presented the 2025 budget, titled 'Budget of Restoration: Securing Peace, Rebuilding Prosperity,' to a joint session of the National Assembly.

The ₦49.70 trillion spending plan prioritizes defence, infrastructure, and human capital development, with a projected ₦13.39 trillion deficit to be financed through



borrowing.

The Federal Government has allocated ₦1.4 trillion for pensions, gratuities, and retirees' benefits. This allocation includes ₦2.3 billion for former presidents, heads of state, and vice presidents. Retired heads of service and permanent secretaries will receive ₦10.5 billion, while retired professors in universities will get ₦13.5 billion.

Additionally, ₦1 billion has been allocated for retired heads of government agencies and parastatals. The total allocation for these groups amounts to ₦27 billion.

Also, the budget allocates ₦46 billion for civilian pensions under the Office of the Head of Civil Service, while ₦383.9

billion is earmarked for military pensions and gratuities. An additional ₦66.8 billion is budgeted for expected retirees, with ₦434 million allocated for administrative charges, ₦596 million for pension running costs, and ₦870 million for medical retirees.

The Federal Government has also set aside funds for various social investment programs, including the student loan scheme, National Poverty Reduction with Growth Strategy programs, National Home Grown School Feeding Programme, and the Consumer Credit Fund initiatives. A total of ₦500 billion has been allocated for these programmes, with ₦50 billion specifically earmarked for the student loan scheme.

Cultural norms, support poses as barriers to low state immunisation—Gov Wife

By Helen Okechukwu

The Katsina State First Lady, Zulaihat Radda, has revealed that cultural norms and lack of support pose barriers to low state immunisation.

Mrs. Radda made this disclosure at the health exercise initiated by her in collaboration with UNICEF to ensure immunisation coverage in the state.

UNICEF revealed their expected target for immunisation of children in the state should exceed above 45 per cent coverage in 2024, acknowledging the aid of Majalisan Rigakafi men groups.

The UNICEF's Kano Field Office Chief, Mr. Rahama Farah, noted this on Wednesday at the programme launch, titled 'Male Involvement in Polio and Routine Immunisation,' at the Banquet Hall, Government House, Katsina.

Highlighting the programme aims, representing Mr. Farah, the agency's Health Specialist, Dr. Saudat Basheer explained the need for gender inclusion for improvement of immunisation coverage and global polio eradication in



Katsina."Our children should not be dying of diseases that are easily preventable with vaccines, and today, fathers and men have come together to help us achieve the goal of zero dose and polio-free Katsina.

Mrs. Radda explained that this development is a transformative strategy that enhances immunisation and builds healthier communities as it plays a critical role among the primary

healthcare services within the state.

While emphasising gender inclusiveness and recognition, she said, "Over the years, we have made remarkable progress in improving access to healthcare. However, some of our challenges remain low immunisation, misconceptions about the vaccines, and limited access to primary healthcare services, which continue to threaten the health and well-being of our people, especially women and children.

Mrs. Radda stressed the need to overcome cultural norms and lack of male support hindering immunisation efforts, urging for the adoption of a community-driven approach to address these barriers and ensure immunisation success.

As a gender mainstreaming platform, she noted that women, responsible for their families' health, face challenges due to limited decision-making power.

UNFPA, agency donates family planning kits to Rivers

By Helen Okechukwu

To reduce maternal and infant mortality, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and a health organisation, DKT International, have donated family planning kits to the Rivers State Ministry of Health

The State Ministry of Health disclosed yesterday through the X Page, and noted that the handover of kits took place yesterday.

Commissioner for Health, Dr. Adaeze Oreh, said this initiative aligns with Governor Siminalayi Fubara's vision



and commitment to delivering a quality healthcare system that ensures equity, resilience, and accessibility for all.

Oreh commended the health bodies for their efforts in sustaining and reproductive health, She further noted, "It underscores our determination to ensure that every individual in Rivers State has access to the resources and services needed to lead healthier, more fulfilling lives."

She also highlighted the importance and function of the family health kits on users, stressing that it aims to strengthen and support healthier pregnancies among other health benefits.

Doris Ogah emerges 45th Miss Nigeria

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



Doris Esiokhayamhe Ogah has emerged as the winner of the 45th Miss Nigeria beauty pageant, which was held on Thursday, December 19, 2024, at Victoria Island, Lagos.

positively during her reign.

Mo Abudu, a well-known figure in entertainment, chaired the panel of judges, which also included designer Mai Atafo, actress Kate Henshaw,

photographer Kelechi Amadi-Obi, actress Ini Edo, TV host Michelle Dede, and former Miss Nigeria, Ezinne Akudo Anyaoha.

Ogah, a lawyer and model representing the South-South region, stood out among 45 contestants, with 20 advancing to the semi-finals and 10 making it to the finals.

The event, themed “Beyond Beauty: Reigning Together as Queens,” celebrated elegance, intelligence, and purpose-driven leadership.

Outgoing Miss Nigeria, Shatu Garko, congratulated Ogah and encouraged her to use her platform to impact humanity



Court orders Adele song removal from streaming platforms

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

A Brazilian court has ruled that Adele's song "Million Years Ago" must be taken down from all radio stations and streaming platforms worldwide.

This decision comes after accusations of copyright infringement by Brazilian composer Toninho Geraes.

The legal battle started when Geraes alleged that Adele's 2015 hit closely resembled his 1996 song, "Mulheres," famously performed by Martinho da Vila, a celebrated Brazilian artist.

According to Geraes, Adele's song borrowed key elements of his original composition, leading him to file a lawsuit seeking justice.

Court's verdict

Judge Victor Torres presided over the case and ruled in favor of Geraes. The court ordered the removal of Adele's song from all platforms until the matter is fully resolved.

The ruling marks a significant development in the ongoing fight against intellectual property violations in the global music industry.

Geraes is not just seeking recognition for his work but also financial compensation. He has demanded \$160,000 for moral damages, a sum he believes reflects the emotional and professional toll of the alleged plagiarism.

Furthermore, he is pushing for a songwriting credit on "Million Years Ago," which would acknowledge his creative contribution and ensure future royalties.

Key details of the case

In his complaint, Geraes detailed the similarities between the two songs.



He pointed out that both pieces share a similar melody and chord progression. These overlapping elements, he argued, are not coincidental but instead a direct copy of his earlier work.

Adele, one of the world's most successful artists, has not publicly responded to the accusations. Her representatives, including those from Sony Music and Universal Music, have also remained silent on the matter.

Financial penalties

The court's ruling did not stop at ordering the song's removal. Judge Torres issued a stern warning to Sony and Universal's Brazilian subsidiaries.

He imposed a fine of \$8,000 for every instance of non-compliance with the court order. This penalty serves as a strong message about the consequences of disregarding copyright laws.

Geraes and his legal team expressed satisfaction with the decision, seeing it as a step toward protecting the rights of composers and musicians.

They emphasized that the case is not just about financial compensation but also about preserving artistic integrity.

A Broader impact

This case sheds light on a growing issue in the music industry—allegations of copyright infringement involving global superstars and lesser-known artists. Geraes, a respected figure in Brazilian music, hopes his actions will inspire others to defend their creative works.

The music industry has seen a rise in similar disputes in recent years. In some cases, courts have sided with smaller artists, while in others, they have ruled in favor of the more prominent names. These lawsuits highlight the challenges of drawing a clear line between inspiration and infringement.

Adele

Global repercussions

The decision to remove Adele's song globally underscores the far-reaching impact of copyright disputes. If the ruling is enforced, it could affect millions of listeners and disrupt Adele's extensive fan base. The case may also serve as a precedent for future legal battles in the music world.

Looking ahead

While the ruling is a victory for Geraes, the legal journey is far from over. Adele's representatives may choose to appeal the decision, potentially prolonging the dispute.

If they do, the case could escalate to higher courts, bringing even more attention to the issue.

For now, the spotlight remains on the importance of respecting intellectual property rights.

Artists and composers, regardless of their fame, deserve recognition and credit for their creations. This case serves as a reminder that even the most celebrated musicians are not above the law.

Biggest artists of 2024

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

The Nigerian music scene has been buzzing with creativity and energy this year, with numerous artistes making waves and setting new standards.

Asake

Ahmed Ololade, widely known as Asake, has solidified his place as one of the most exciting figures in Nigerian music. His album, "Lungu Boy", has resonated with fans across genres, showcasing his infectious blend of Afrobeat and contemporary sounds.

Asake's rise to prominence has been swift, earning him widespread acclaim and numerous accolades. His dedication to pushing boundaries was evident when he clinched the prestigious 'Best African Act of the Year' at the 2024 MOBO Awards held in Sheffield, United Kingdom.

Additionally, his nomination for the Best African Music Performance at the 2025 Grammy Awards further solidifies his international appeal.

Wizkid

Ayodeji Balogun, popularly known as Wizkid, has continued to dominate the music scene with an impressive array of hits. His latest album, a heartfelt tribute titled "Morayo", pays homage to his late mother, showcasing his growth as



an artiste.

With songs like 'Kese' and 'Piece of My Heart', Wizkid has solidified his status as a musical icon. At the 10th Anniversary of the African Entertainment Awards USA 2024, he was celebrated with the 'Best Male Artist' award, highlighting his enduring influence in African music.

Davido

David Adeleke, known as Davido, remains a powerhouse in the music industry, consistently delivering captivating hits that resonate globally. His collaborations with international icons like Angelique Kidjo, YG Marley, and Nicki Minaj have expanded his reach beyond African borders.

With a string of chart-topping songs, Davido continues to push the boundaries of Afrobeats. His efforts have not gone unnoticed, as he joins a select group of Nigerian

artistes nominated for the 2025 Grammy Awards, further cementing his position as a global star.

Seyi Vibes

Oluwaloseyi Balogun, better known as Seyi Vibes, has carved a niche with his unique blend of sounds and energetic performances. His singles have captivated audiences, earning him a loyal following.

Vibes' ability to connect with fans through his engaging stage presence has helped him stand out in a competitive industry. Songs like 'Doha', 'Casablanca', and 'Instagram' have become viral hits, solidifying his place among Nigeria's emerging talents.

**Continue on
next page**

Cont from page 18

Tems

Temilade Opaniyi, popularly known as Tems has continued to shine as one of Afrobeats' most distinctive voices. This year, she released her latest album, "Born in the Wild", blending Afrobeats, RnB, and soul in a way that resonates deeply with fans.

Tracks like 'Me & U', 'Love Me JeJe', and 'Burning' quickly went viral, with 'Me & U' earning her the Dr. Bobby Jones Best Gospel/Inspirational Award, triumphing over industry stalwarts.

Tems leads Nigerian nominees for the 2025 Grammys with three nominations, showcasing her immense talent and global reach.

Burna Boy

Damini Ogulu, better known as Burna Boy, continues to cement his status as a musical powerhouse.

Despite releasing only a handful of tracks this year, Burna Boy remains one of the most-streamed Nigerian artists on Spotify, boasting over 6.2 billion streams across Sub-Saharan Africa.

His electrifying performances

at major events, including the Grammy Awards, have kept fans eagerly anticipating his next moves. As 2025 approaches, the excitement surrounding his Grammy nominations continues to grow.

Kizz Daniel

Daniel Anidugbe, widely recognized as Kizz Daniel, enjoyed a successful year with chart-topping singles like 'Double' and 'Marhaba'. His relatable lyrics and catchy melodies have kept him relevant in the competitive Afrobeats scene.

Kizz Daniel's mastery of social media marketing has also played a crucial role in expanding his reach, ensuring his place as a fan-favourite.

Rema

Divine Ikubor, known as Rema, has continued to dominate the Afrobeats scene with his undeniable talent. His second studio album, "Heis", blends electronic dance music with Afrobeats, setting him apart from his peers.

The album's standout hit, 'Calm Down', earned him numerous awards, including Song of the Year and Top Streaming Song at the 2024

ASCAP London Music Awards.

Ayra Starr

Oyinkansola Aderigbigbe, popularly known as Ayra Starr, has emerged as one of Afrobeats' brightest stars.

Her captivating stage presence and chart-topping singles like 'Rhythm & Blues' and 'Commas' have resonated with fans both locally and internationally.

Ayra Starr's ability to connect deeply with her audience has earned her a growing number of accolades and nominations, establishing her as a force to watch in the coming years.

Young John

John Udomboso, better known as Young John, made significant strides in 2024 with his widely acclaimed album and collaborations with top artistes. His unique sound and ability to push the limits of Afrobeats have firmly established him as one of the standout figures in the genre.

Top afrobeats rising stars of 2024

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

The Nigerian music scene continues to thrive and evolve, with new rising stars emerging and capturing the attention of fans and critics alike.

This year, several artists have taken significant strides, leaving a lasting impact with their unique sounds and chart-topping hits.

Below, is the highlight of some of these rising stars:

Ayo Maff

Ayorinde Ayodele, widely recognized as Ayo Maff, burst into the spotlight with a string of viral singles that quickly resonated with audiences. His hit track, “Are You There”, gained widespread acclaim, earning praise from both fans and critics. Ayo Maff, best known for his breakout hit “Dealer”, has collaborated with top Nigerian artists such as Fireboy, Blaqbonez, and Bella Shmurda. “Dealer” went on to become one of the most streamed songs on Spotify Nigeria in 2024, further establishing Ayo Maff as a rising star in the industry.

Darkoo

Oluwadisayo Isa, better known as Darkoo, cemented her position on the Nigerian music scene this year. Known for her unconventional sound and distinctive voice, Darkoo made waves with her hit single “Favourite Girl”. The remix of the track, featuring Rema, amplified her reach and popularity even further. The song became an Internet sensation, with many fans searching for the lyrics online, showcasing Darkoo’s ability to capture the attention of a wide audience.



Mannywellz

Although Mannywellz has been on the scene for some time, 2024 saw him gaining renewed attention, particularly among fans of “women of color.” His infectious tracks like “Ouu Wee (Brown)” and “Masterpiece” quickly went viral, making Mannywellz a favorite among many. His music continues to resonate on social media platforms, cementing his status as a rising star.

Khaid

Sulaimon Solomon, also known as Khaid, is no stranger to the list of emerging Nigerian artists. Despite facing health challenges earlier this year, he made a remarkable comeback with his Extended Play (EP) “444” and the hit single “Orobo”. His efforts earned him a spot on Google’s list of most searched Nigerian personalities in 2024, demonstrating his lasting influence on fans.

Boy Spyce

Mavin Records artist Ugbekile Osemeke, better known as Boy Spyce, made waves with his romantic anthem “I Don’t Care”. The track dominated streaming platforms and

became a favorite among celebrity couples and social media influencers. According to Google Trends, “I Don’t Care” is the most searched song by Nigerians in 2024, solidifying Boy Spyce’s position as one of the leading artists of the year.

Nasboi

Social media comedian Lawal Nasir, widely recognized as Nasboi, first gained fame as a singer before transitioning into comedy. However, he returned to his musical roots last year with the viral hit “Umbrella”. In 2024, Nasboi continued to build on that success with singles like “Small Money” and “Short Skirt”. His Extended Play album, “In Nasboi I Trust”, featured collaborations with renowned artists such as 2baba, Falz, Joeboy, Chike, and MI, further expanding his reach and popularity.

These rising stars have not only made significant contributions to Nigeria’s vibrant music scene but have also captured the hearts of fans across the country. With unique sounds and talents, they are sure to continue making waves and leaving their mark in the years to come.

Asake, Rema on Obama's 2024 playlist

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Barack Obama unveils his 2024 playlist on X, featuring diverse global talents, including Nigerian stars Rema and Asake, who shine with standout tracks.

Rema's chart-topping hit "Yayo" earned a prominent place on Obama's playlist. The song, which blends Afrobeats rhythms with a global appeal, reflects the genre's surging popularity on the international stage.

Its inclusion is another feather in Rema's cap, showcasing his rise as a global music icon. Asake, another powerhouse from Nigeria, also gained recognition.

His collaboration with American rapper Travis Scott on the track "Active" secured a spot, emphasizing the growing synergy between African and American music.

Obama's playlist goes beyond Afrobeats, offering a window into his broad musical taste. The former president highlighted several standout tracks from international superstars, including Billie Eilish's "Lunch," Beyoncé's "Texas Hold 'Em," and Kendrick Lamar's "Squabble Up."

These choices underline Obama's knack for blending contemporary chart-toppers with deep, reflective tracks.

The playlist also includes artists who bridge the gap between mainstream success and niche appeal. Fontaines D.C., an Irish post-punk band, brings raw energy to the list.

Meanwhile, Moses Sumney, known for his ethereal soundscapes, and Leon Bridges, celebrated for his soulful melodies, add layers of emotional depth.

This annual tradition, which Obama started in 2015, has become a much-anticipated cultural event. It offers fans



a unique glimpse into the former president's personal music library while simultaneously celebrating a wide array of global talent.

The playlist is more than just a collection of songs; it's a cultural statement that reflects the diversity and creativity of today's music scene.

Afrobeats takes center stage
Rema and Asake's inclusion underscores the unstoppable rise of Afrobeats, a genre that has grown from its African roots into a worldwide phenomenon.

Over the past decade, artists like Burna Boy, Wizkid, and now Rema and Asake have brought this vibrant sound to global audiences. Obama's nod to "Yayo" and "Active" reinforces how Afrobeats has captured not only listeners but also influential figures across the globe.

For Rema, "Yayo" represents another milestone in a year filled with achievements. The Nigerian artist has consistently pushed boundaries, blending traditional African rhythms with contemporary global sounds.

Similarly, Asake's collaboration with Travis Scott highlights the genre's ability to adapt and thrive in the global mainstream.

Blend of old and new
Obama's playlists have always showcased a balance of established icons and rising stars, and this year's selection is no exception.

Beyoncé, a longtime favorite of Obama, continues to inspire with her track "Texas Hold 'Em," a song that exudes power and charisma. Kendrick Lamar's "Squabble Up" provides a lyrical deep dive, showcasing the rapper's unmatched ability to weave storytelling with social commentary.

Billie Eilish, representing the voice of a younger generation, delivers an introspective vibe with "Lunch."

On the other hand, the inclusion of artists like Fontaines D.C. and Moses Sumney shows Obama's appreciation for innovative sounds and emerging talents.

These artists, while not household names for everyone, represent the cutting edge of today's music landscape.

Global celebration
The 2024 playlist isn't just a personal selection; it's a celebration of cultural diversity and musical innovation.

Obama's ability to seamlessly integrate sounds from different parts of the world reflects his broader worldview.

Spotify celebrates Nigerian music

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Lagos came alive with excitement as Spotify, the global music streaming giant, hosted an electrifying party at the Space Hub in Lekki.

The event served as the grand finale of Spotify's annual Wrapped celebrations, capping off a remarkable year for Nigerian music.

Earlier, the celebrations had thrilled audiences in Johannesburg, South Africa, and Nairobi, Kenya, before landing in Nigeria's entertainment capital.

The exclusive gathering brought together media personalities, social media influencers, and passionate music lovers.

Their shared goal was simple: to celebrate the achievements of Nigerian music and its undeniable influence on the global stage. The atmosphere buzzed with energy, as the audience anticipated a night of unforgettable performances and powerful moments of cultural pride.

Spotify's commitment to Nigerian music

Phiona Okumu, Spotify's Head of Music for Sub-Saharan Africa, reflected on the occasion with pride and optimism.

Speaking in a statement, she emphasized the importance of recognizing Nigerian artists and their contributions to the global music industry.

"The Wrapped party is a testament to the growth of Nigerian music on Spotify this year," Okumu remarked. "Witnessing the energy and the sheer talent on display was truly inspiring. We're incredibly proud to support the next wave of stars and celebrate the global impact of this vibrant music scene."



Her words highlighted Spotify's commitment to nurturing talent and promoting diversity. The platform has consistently championed African artists, providing them with tools to reach millions of listeners worldwide.

Star-studded performances

The highlight of the evening was an impressive lineup of performers who took the stage and left the audience in awe.

Artists such as Brazy, Ayo Maff, Morravey, Zerrydl, and Kaestyle delivered captivating performances that showcased their unique styles. Joshua Baraka, an emerging talent from Uganda, also brought his A-game, adding an international flavor to the event.

Veteran performer M.I.A., known for her boundary-pushing artistry, graced the stage with a set that blended her global hits and vibrant energy. Her performance was a clear reminder of why she remains an enduring force in the music industry.

The evening also featured electrifying DJ sets from some of the best in the business. DJs Wearethechemicals, Aniko, 4kerty, Tunez, and YK Mule kept the crowd dancing with their masterful mixes. Their energy and rhythm were infectious, ensuring that

the celebration maintained its momentum until the very end.

Spotify Party

A year of growth for Nigerian music
This year, Nigerian music continued its meteoric rise on the global scene. Artists like Burna Boy, Tems, and Rema gained international acclaim, breaking records and topping charts.

Platforms like Spotify played a crucial role in this success, offering these artists a stage to amplify their voices and connect with fans across borders.

The Wrapped celebrations served as a reflection of this growth. By spotlighting the artists who made waves in 2023, Spotify acknowledged the hard work and creativity that fueled their success. The event in Lagos was more than a party—it was a moment of recognition for the music community and its far-reaching influence.

Creating opportunities for emerging artists

While the event celebrated established stars, it also provided a platform for rising talents to shine. Performers like Mr. Dealer and Deela, along with others, demonstrated their potential to shape the future of Nigerian music. By giving these artists a stage, Spotify reinforced its role as a catalyst for creativity and innovation in the industry.

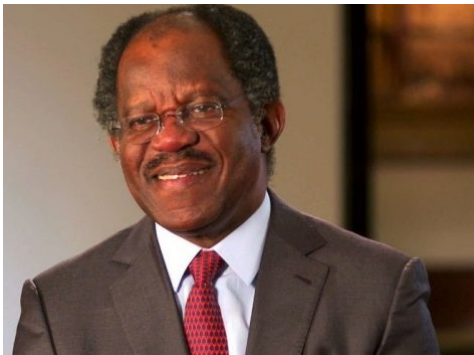
Three Nigerians make top 50 Richest Black People in US

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Forbes has released the list of top 50 richest black people in the United States.

These are the three Nigerians on The list of the most powerful, impactful and wealthiest Black Americans for 2024.

Adebayo Ogunlesi



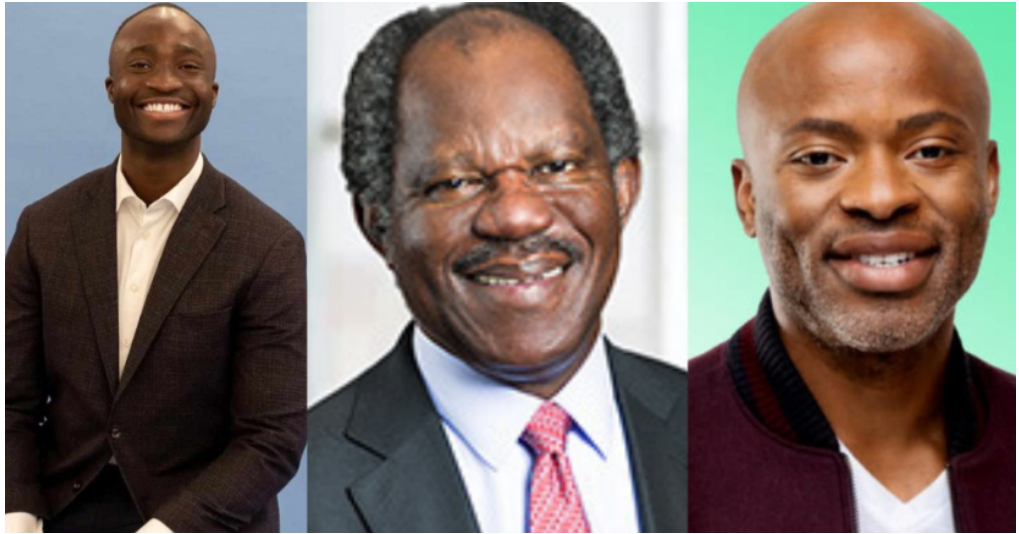
A native of Nigeria and now a U.S. citizen, Ogunlesi is a cofounder of New York-based private equity firm Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP).

In October, GIP was acquired by BlackRock for \$12.5 billion in cash and shares, with Ogunlesi remaining chairman and CEO of GIP. Today, Forbes estimates Ogunlesi, who earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Oxford, a Juris Doctor from Harvard Law School, and an MBA from Harvard Business School, has a net worth of \$1.7 billion.

After clerking for Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall in the early 1980s, Ogunlesi worked as an attorney at the New York law firm Cravath, Swaine & Moore. Prior to cofounding GIP in 2006, Ogunlesi spent more than 20 years as an investment banker at Credit Suisse.

Tope Awotona

Awotona is the founder and CEO of



the scheduling software startup Calendly, which private investors valued at \$3 billion in 2021.

Born in Lagos, Nigeria, Awotona moved to Atlanta when he was 15, and



studied computer science at the University of Georgia before switching majors to business and management information.

After working as a salesman for several tech firms and launching a few failed startups, Awotona cashed in his 401(k) in 2013 to found Calendly because he was frustrated with the number of emails it required to schedule meetings.

After bootstrapping the company for several years, in 2021 Awotona raised \$350 million to further scale Calendly. Today, he is worth an estimated \$1.4 billion.

Wemimo Abbey

Abbey is cofounder and co-CEO of Esusu, a New York fintech startup that helps renters build their credit



histories and scores by reporting rent payments to credit bureaus.

More than 20,000 properties currently offer Esusu's service and some 1.8 million Americans have used Esusu to record a rent payment.

The startup also recently launched a direct-to-consumer product, MyEsusu, through which consumers can build credit and monitor their credit scores. In early 2022, Esusu raised \$130 million in funding at a \$1 billion valuation.

Before founding Esusu, Abbey, who grew up in Lagos, Nigeria, worked as a mergers and acquisitions consultant at PWC and cofounded a non-profit and a data analytics startup.

US man jailed 130 years for slitting two girls' throats

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Richard Allen, a US man convicted last month of killing two teenagers in the state of Indiana, has been sentenced to 130 years behind bars for their deaths.

The bodies of teenagers Liberty German, who was 14, and Abigail Williams, 13, were found near their hometown of Delphi in 2017. The case that went cold for years and became a focal point for true-crime enthusiasts.

It gained national attention as one of the victims recorded possible evidence on her phone, including audio and a Snapchat video of a possible suspect.

Allen, 52, was given 65 years for each victim, according to media reports.

Libby's grandfather, Mike Patty, thanked the jurors on Friday, saying he would forever be grateful for their work, as well as prosecutors and investigators.

He also expressed gratitude for the community he said had embraced the families of the young victims "from day one and continues to lift us up."

"It's been almost eight years coming," he said a press conference after the sentencing hearing.

"If I live to make it 80, almost 10% of my life has been spent working on this."

The two girls were found with cuts to their throat in February 2017, near an abandoned railway bridge and close to the location where they had been dropped off for a hike.

Libby's phone had recorded audio of a man telling the two girls to go "down the hill" and had taken a photo of a



man walking near the trail.

Their deaths affected the local community, said Carroll County Sheriff Tony Liggett, adding that he hoped the conviction and sentencing would reassure residents about security.

"A form of justice was served, but it does not bring Abby or Libby back," he said.

"These families will live every day



without two of the most important people in their lives."

He also apologised to the families "that it took eight years for us to get to this point."

Allen, a local pharmacist, was interviewed as a possible witness soon after the crime. He was questioned again five years later when police linked his gun to an unspent bullet found at the scene.

But despite receiving thousands of leads, police only focused on Allen in 2022 after reviewing former suspects. He was arrested that same year.

During his trial, prosecutors said he had confessed multiple times to the murders while in prison and played a recording for the jury of him apparently telling his wife he had committed the crimes.

Defence attorneys contended Allen was mentally unwell when he told people he was guilty.

Two journalists killed in northern Syria

By Dave Oludare Oso

A journalists' association says two journalists working for Kurdish media outlets were killed in northern Syria while covering fighting between Turkish-backed fighters and Syrian Kurdish militia.

The Turkey-based Dicle-Firat Journalists Association said Friday that Nazim Dastan and Cihan Bilgin were killed Thursday when their vehicle was reportedly targeted by a Turkish drone on a road near the Tishrin Dam.

Tishrin Dam, located some 56 miles east of Aleppo, has been the scene of clashes between the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, SDF, and the Turkey-backed opposition forces.

There was no immediate comment from Turkish officials.



Bianet, a news website dedicated to human rights issues, said Bilgin was a reporter for the Kurdish Hawar News Agency, while Dastan worked as a freelance journalist for the Firat News Agency, which is associated with the militant group, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Turkey considers the SDF a terrorist

organization because its main component is a group aligned to the PKK.

The group has been engaged in an armed struggle against the Turkish state since the 1980s in pursuit of its objective of securing autonomy for Kurds in the country.

US okays sales of over \$5bn arms to Egypt

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The United States government has authorized the sale of more than \$5 billion in military equipment to Egypt, which has become an increasingly close partner in mediating the Gaza crisis despite serious human rights concerns.

The State Department informed Congress on Friday that it had approved the sale of \$4.69 billion in equipment for 555 US-made M1A1 Abrams tanks operated by Egypt, \$630 million in 2,183 Hellfire air-to-surface missiles and \$30 million in precision-guided munitions.

The sale "will support the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to improve the security of a Major Non-NATO Ally country that continues to be an important strategic partner in the Middle East," according to a statement.

US President Joe Biden took office in 2021 vowing a harder line on Egypt over human rights concerns under President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, but his administration has repeatedly gone ahead with arms deals with Egypt.

Cairo is one of the largest recipients of US security aid since its peace treaty with Israel in 1979.

Egypt and the United States have worked increasingly closely since the outbreak of the war in Gaza in 2023, with Cairo playing a mediating role.

In addition to the sales to Egypt, the State Department also authorized \$295 million in equipment for Taiwan, \$170 million in bombs and missiles for Morocco, and \$130 million in uncrewed aircraft systems and armored vehicles to Greece.

The Taiwan authorizations were



announced shortly after US President Joe Biden announced \$571.3 million in new military aid to the self-ruled island, which China claims as part of its territory and has vowed to retake — by force, if necessary.

The US Congress can still block the sales, but such attempts are usually unsuccessful.

Biden signs funding bill, avoids government shutdown

By Olamilekan Botti

President Joe Biden signed a critical funding bill on Saturday, narrowly averting a government shutdown that threatened to disrupt operations during the holiday season. The deal was finalized after tense, last-minute negotiations in Congress, which extended into the early hours of Saturday morning.

The eleventh-hour legislative efforts were sparked by unexpected political maneuvering. Former President Donald Trump, along with influential billionaire Elon Musk, had pressured Republican lawmakers to abandon an earlier bipartisan compromise on government funding. Their intervention led to days of impasse, with federal services and workers caught in the crossfire.

Facing a Friday midnight deadline, lawmakers scrambled to find common ground. As the clock struck midnight, the Senate expedited procedural rules to push the revised funding package to a vote, ultimately securing funding for the government until mid-March.

In a statement issued after signing the bill, President Biden highlighted the necessity of compromise. "This agreement represents a middle ground—neither side got everything it wanted. However, it firmly rejects the accelerated pathway to a tax cut for billionaires that some Republicans pursued," he said.

The funding package had already cleared the House of Representatives earlier on Friday, with Democratic support proving crucial in helping the Republican majority overcome internal divisions. With the Senate under Democratic control, there was little doubt that the measure would



pass, though the legislative process faced delays due to lingering disagreements.

The prolonged debate raised concerns about a potential shutdown spilling into the following week. The specter of halting government services during the Christmas period added pressure on both parties to reach an agreement. Essential programs, federal worker salaries, and broader economic stability hung in the balance.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer praised the eventual resolution, calling it a win for bipartisanship and responsible governance. "Americans deserve a government that works for them, especially during the holidays. This funding ensures continuity of services and reflects our commitment to the people," Schumer said.

While the funding bill averts immediate crisis, it sets the stage for renewed debates in mid-March when the temporary measure expires. Key points of contention, such as tax cuts and spending priorities, are likely to

resurface, with both parties gearing up for broader fiscal battles in the months ahead.

The unusual political intervention by Trump and Musk raised eyebrows in Washington. Critics accused the duo of using their influence to derail necessary governance for personal or ideological gain. "This was a stark reminder of how external forces can disrupt the legislative process," a senior Democratic aide remarked.

For now, however, federal workers and agencies can breathe a sigh of relief as the holiday season proceeds without interruption. Biden's signature ensures that essential services remain operational, providing stability for millions of Americans during a critical time of year.

As the nation moves forward, the events surrounding the funding bill underscore the challenges of governing in a deeply divided political landscape. The deal serves as a reminder that, despite ideological differences, compromise remains a cornerstone of effective leadership.

Ukraine drone hits Russian highrise 1,000km from frontline

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Kyiv on Saturday staged a major drone attack on the Russian city of Kazan, 1,000 kilometres (620 miles) from the frontier, the latest in a series of escalating aerial attacks in the nearly three-year conflict.

A drone smashed into a high-rise apartment building in the city of more than 1.3 million, damaging a skyscraper but leaving no victims, local officials said.

Though attacks so far into Russian territory are rare, Kazan and the surrounding oil-rich region of Tatarstan have previously been targeted by Ukrainian drones.

Such strikes are seen as embarrassing for Russia, almost three years into its military offensive on Ukraine.

“Today Kazan suffered a massive drone attack,” Rustam Minnikhanov, the head of Tatarstan, said in a post on Telegram.

“While before industrial enterprises were attacked, now the enemy attacks civilians in the morning,” he added.

Videos on Russian social media networks showed drones hitting a high-rise building and setting off fireballs.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said two drones hit a 37-storey apartment block.

She said Ukraine had been targeting an unspecified industrial facility, but that it suffered no damage.

Strikes will ‘continue’



Ukraine has escalated its attacks on targets inside Russia over the last few months — particularly after Washington last month gave Kyiv permission to use missiles to strike military targets in Russian areas close to the two countries’ shared border.

While not specifically mentioning the strike on Kazan, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Saturday: “We will definitely continue to strike at Russian military targets with drones and missiles.”

Russian civil aviation authority Rosaviatsia temporarily closed Kazan international airport, one of the country’s busiest, amid the threat posed by Ukrainian drones.

Some residents were evacuated, but authorities did not provide figures, and all major public events in the area were cancelled as a precaution.

Alongside the drones that hit the apartment block, three drones were shot down and three were suppressed by air defence systems, Zakharova said.

In a post on Telegram, she said Kyiv was taking out its “anger for tangible military defeats on the peaceful population of Russia.”

Russia’s defence ministry said Saturday that the army had captured a new village near the key city of Kurakhove in eastern Ukraine where Russian forces have made major advances in recent months.

The attack on Kazan comes a day after Russian strikes on the Ukrainian capital Kyiv killed one and wounded 13, and after five were killed by a Ukrainian attack on the Russian border region of Kursk, where its troops have been staging an offensive since August.

A Russian strike on the southern Kherson region hit an oncology hospital on Saturday, Zelensky said. There were no casualties as staff and patients were sheltering.

Moscow claimed in 2022 to have annexed the Kherson region, part of which is under the control of the Russian army.

Legendary masked wrestler, Rey Mysterio Snr dies at 66

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Rey Mysterio Snr has passed away, his family have said.

The tragic news was announced on social media by Mexican wrestling company, Lucha Libre AAA Worldwide, on Saturday.

Mysterio Snr, whose real name was Miguel Ángel López Díaz, was the uncle of WWE hall of fame entrant, Rey Mysterio.

The wrestling company posted: 'We regret the sensitive death of Miguel Angel Lopez Dias, known as Rey Mysterio Sr.'

'We send our most sincere condolences to his loved ones and raise our prayers to heaven for his eternal rest.'

Mysterio, who was 66, began wrestling in 1976 and officially retired in 2009. His son, Rey, and grandson, Dominik, are still with WWE and Rey was introduced into the Hall of Fame in 2023.

The tragedy comes just a week after Mysterio Jnr's father, Roberto Gutierrez, died at the age of 76.

Mysterio Snr was the uncle of current WWE star and Hall of Famer Rey Mysterio Jnr

Mysterio first began training as a boxer, but found out about wrestling through his trainers.

He debuted in January 1976, and, throughout his career, wrestled for the likes of Pro Wrestling



Revolution, Tijuana Wrestling and World Wrestling Association.

To distinguish the star from his nephew, he was often referred to as Rey Mysterio Snr, with Dominik his grand nephew. His grand niece, Aalyah, has also appeared in WWE on a number of occasions.

Upon the passing of his father, Rey Jnr wrote on Instagram: 'You did more than set the example of how to love & maintain a strong marriage and father 4 boys, you were the example and passed every single time until your death with flying colors. Excellent husband, loving father, beautiful grandfather, incredible son & brother, and amazing father in law.'

'You checked every list on the box and can honestly say my majority [traits] I picked up from you. You fought until the very last minute and know that you biggest fear was leaving Moms behind, but I can assure you that she will not be alone and we will always look out for her.'

'You are with God now and smiling

from the heavens while we continue with the real struggle of life until we see again. You will never be forgotten and will always be loved, RIP Pops.'

'Prayers for the Mysterio family,' one fan posted on social media.

Another wrote: 'Man, Rey is having a heartbreaking past few weeks. First he lost his father and now his uncle. Stay strong Mysterio family.'

Dominik, meanwhile, shared a video honouring his uncle to his Instagram account, captioned: 'Q.E.P.D. Tio,' accompanied by a crown emoji. He also shared images of his uncle with a black love heart.



Usyk beats Fury, retains heavyweight titles in rematch

By Dave Oludare Oso

Tyson Fury fell to Oleksandr Usyk yet again, losing his heavyweight boxing rematch Saturday by unanimous decision after suffering a split-decision defeat in their first fight seven months ago.

Usyk again demonstrated his superior technical skill and responded each time Fury went on the attack in their 12-round heavyweight fight at the Kingdom.

All three judges scored it 116-112 for Usyk, who retained his WBC, WBA and WBO world heavyweight titles.

Usyk had no interest in discussing the judges' scorecards.

"I win," he said. "Is good."

Usyk, a 37-year-old Ukrainian, improved his record to 23-0.

Fury, a 36-year-old Brit, dropped to 34-2-1, with his only professional losses coming to Usyk.



Usyk likely will face IBF heavyweight championship Daniel Dubois if Dubois beats Joseph Parker in their heavyweight match set for Feb. 22.

It's unclear what's next for Fury, who has previously contemplated retirement.

Days before the rematch, Fury was profane and hostile in the presence of Usyk.

"You ugly, bug-eyed rat bastard," Fury shouted at Usyk this week.

Fury also roared, "You got a gift decision. I'm the man. I'm the (expletive) champion."

But it was the 6-3 Usyk who prevailed despite the 6-9 Fury's six-inch height advantage. Fury also outweighed Usyk by 55 pounds.

At the weigh-in, Fury was 281 pounds and Usyk was 226 pounds.

Crystal Palace 1 - 5 Arsenal: Gabriel Jesus nets brace in big win

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Arsenal forward, Gabriel Jesus scored twice as Arsenal put five past Crystal Palace at Selhurst Park to move to within three points of the top of the Premier League.

Mikel Arteta declared the Premier League title race on after Arsenal crushed Crystal Palace 5-1 on Saturday, closing the gap to leaders Liverpool to just three points.

Gabriel Jesus, fresh off a midweek hat-trick in the League Cup, scored twice at Selhurst Park, coming within a post of a third. Kai Havertz capitalised on the rebound from one of Jesus' efforts, as Arsenal delivered a commanding performance.

Palace had briefly equalised through

Ismaila Sarr, but missed several chances early in the second half. Instead, Arsenal took full control, adding two more goals, moving up to third in the table, above Nottingham Forest.

Arsenal Storm Past Crystal Palace 5-1, Closing Gap to Liverpool

The only concern for Arteta, celebrating five years in charge at Arsenal, was Bukayo Saka's first-half injury, as he limped off the pitch.

The Gunners are now just three points behind Liverpool, who have two games in hand. Chelsea remain second, a point clear of Arsenal.

"We're not even halfway through, so it's on," Arteta said confidently. "We've done the job, and we're in a really good run,



even though we drew two games we should've won. It's about enjoying the moment and focusing on the next one."

Jesus' early goal in the sixth minute, assisted by Saka, was followed by an equaliser from Sarr, before Jesus' pinpoint header off a corner put Arsenal ahead. Havertz's tap-in extended the lead after a Jesus strike hit the post.