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Don't link stampede deaths to Tinubu reforms – FG

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Federal Government has warned Nigerians and politicians against politicising and linking stampedes that occurred during food distributions in Oyo, Anambra and Abuja to President Bola Tinubu's economic reforms.

Making the call, the minister Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, in a statement signed by his media Senior Special Assistant, Rabiu Ibrahim on Monday, said the tragedies underscored the importance of ensuring proper crowd management during such charitable activities, especially in the festive season.

The minister, however, sympathised with the families of those who lost their lives in the tragic incidents which claimed over 70 lives, including about 40 children.

A number of Nigerians, most notably the Labour Party presidential candidate in the 2023 general elections, Peter Obi, had blamed the stampedes on the systemic failures in Nigeria amid widespread hardship in the country.

While acknowledging the



noble intentions of organisers seeking to bring relief to vulnerable members of society, the information minister admonished all individuals and organisations planning similar events to comply with the directive of the Inspector-General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun on liaising with the police formations for effective crowd control and security measures.

He emphasised that collaboration with the police and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) was crucial to safeguarding lives and ensuring that such efforts to assist those in need do not inadvertently lead to further distress.

Idris appealed to politicians and other stakeholders to refrain

from politicising the unfortunate incidents, stressing that those tragic events were in no way connected to President Tinubu's administration's economic reforms.

“It is worth noting that similar unfortunate occurrences have been recorded in the past, before the current administration, as such, making any attempt to link these tragedies to the President's reforms is unfounded and disingenuous,” he said.

Idris said the reforms, while repositioning the Nigerian economy for sustainable growth, were designed to uplift the lives of all Nigerians, particularly the vulnerable without causing distress.

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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
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2X1	8,600.00
1X1	4,400.00

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QUARTER PAGE	115,012.50

POLITICAL BLACK & WHITE

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SPECIAL POSITIONS

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4X6 FRONT PAGE	2,250,000.00
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EARPIECE INSIDE PAGE(1.5X2)	117,875.00
EARPIECE BACK PAGE	236,796.50
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ALLURE RATE

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PHOTO NEWS PAGE 2	50,000.00	3,750.00	53,750.00
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PHOTO NEWS (4X4)	53,333.30	4,250.00	57,583.30
PRESS RELEASE (4X4)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
EVENT COVERAGE	100,000.00	7,500.00	107,500.00
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Tinubu stands firm on tax reform, says 'no going back'

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has doubled down on his administration's controversial tax reform bills, declaring that there will be no reversal despite widespread opposition.

Speaking during his maiden presidential media chat on Monday night, Tinubu defended the reforms as essential for Nigeria's economic revival, asserting that the nation cannot rely on outdated systems.

"Tax reform is here to stay. We cannot continue with the practices of the past in today's economy. Revitalizing this economy requires abandoning old, broken methods," Tinubu stated.

"I believe I have the capacity to lead this change—that's why I ran for office. This is not about instant gratification, but a new dawn for Nigeria, and I am fully



committed to it."

The reforms, introduced on October 3, were submitted to the National Assembly as four separate bills. However, they have sparked heated debates, particularly in the Northern region, where resistance has been strongest.

Despite calls from the National Economic Council (NEC) for Tinubu to withdraw the bills to allow for further consultations, the president remains resolute, insisting that the legislative process must proceed

uninterrupted.

"This is about what Nigeria needs, not about short-term comfort," Tinubu emphasised during the broadcast.

The reforms mark a significant step in Tinubu's broader economic agenda, which has already drawn both praise and criticism, particularly following his controversial removal of the petrol subsidy earlier this year.

Restrictions on palliatives distribution will discourage charity, says Obi

By Friday Omosola

Former Anambra State Governor Mr Peter Obi has faulted the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kayode Egbetokun, for imposing restrictions on the distribution of palliatives to the less-privileged.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that Egbetokun directed palliative distribution organisers to involve security agencies and strictly adhere to crowd and safety management protocols.

This directive came in response to multiple stampedes during the distribution of food items in Oyo, Anambra, and Abuja, which led to several deaths and injuries.

In a statement shared on his X page today, Obi expressed concern over the directive, describing it as disturbing despite being a timely response to recent tragedies across the country.

The 2023 presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), further



noted that while the IG's reaction acknowledges the challenges posed by the prevailing economic hardship, the directive is prone to abuse.

Obi cautioned that Egbetokun's actions could discourage citizens from assisting the hungry and distressed Nigerians.

“While I understand the need for better organization and more attention to public safety, it is important to clarify that acts of goodwill should not be hindered by excessive bureaucracy.

“Rather than requiring people to seek permission to assist those in need, we should encourage them to find better, more organized ways to offer such help. The focus should be on promoting

coordination, not imposing barriers that could deter much-needed acts of kindness in a time of widespread hunger, pain, and anger”, Obi added.

Also, Obi stressed that this was not the time to suppress the spirit of compassion and generosity among Nigerians.

He stressed that the government must take more decisive action to address the root causes of this hardship, offering lasting solutions instead of hindering those who are stepping in to bridge the gaps caused by its insensitive policies.

“Instead, let us channel these efforts constructively, ensuring that help reaches the most vulnerable safely and efficiently.

Finance Minister unveils anti-poverty plans

By Friday Omosola

To drive Nigeria's economic growth and reduce poverty, the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, has introduced an ambitious economic plan for sustainable development.

In a statement issued by the Ministry's Director of Information and Public Relations, Mohammed Manga, the Minister announced a ₦50 trillion budget for 2025, focused on strategic investments and extensive reforms.

Speaking during the Citizen and Stakeholder Engagement session held at the Ministry's Auditorium in Abuja, Edun underscored President Bola Tinubu's dedication to economic reforms aimed at achieving sustained and inclusive growth.

The overarching goal, he emphasised, is to lift millions of Nigerians out of poverty.

To achieve this, the government has implemented subsidy reforms that have



stabilized the macroeconomic environment, reducing the fiscal deficit to 4.4 per cent and the debt service-to-revenue ratio from 149 per cent in 2023 to 67 per cent.

Edun also highlighted a significant boost in Nigeria's foreign reserves, which have grown to \$42 billion.

The plan focuses on key sectors such as Energy, Agriculture, Industry, and Social Protection. Investments in compressed natural gas, LPG, and renewable energy are advancing, while large-scale farming programs aim to enhance food security.

Moreover, Nigeria is

capitalising on its thriving digital economy, with local startups dominating Africa's unicorn landscape.

Looking forward, the government projects a ₦50 trillion budget for 2025, with anticipated revenue of ₦35 trillion—nearly double the 2024 figures. To drive economic growth, the government is targeting \$20 billion in investments by 2027.

This robust economic plan positions Nigeria to achieve sustainable growth, reduce poverty, and significantly improve the quality of life for its citizens.

Switch off to save, Tinubu calls for smarter energy use

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has encouraged Nigerians to adopt better energy management practices to reduce their rising electricity bills.

“It’s not a negative thing to learn to manage resources. Control your electricity bill by switching off lights when not in use. Let’s embrace a culture of prudent management,” Tinubu stated during a conversation with reporters on Monday.

The president, who is also a prominent figure in the All Progressives Congress (APC), dismissed the idea of implementing price controls to ease economic pressure.

“I don’t believe in price control. Instead, we will focus on increasing supply to meet market demands,” he added.



Since Tinubu’s inauguration in May 2023, Nigerians have faced escalating energy costs due to the removal of petrol subsidies and significant electricity tariff hikes. Petrol prices have surged from under N200 per litre

to over N1,100 in several areas, while the naira has plummeted from approximately N700/\$ to N1,600.

In April 2024, the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) raised tariffs for Band A customers from N66 to N225 per kilowatt-hour, a move that sparked widespread criticism given the economic strain on citizens.

Coupled with soaring food and commodity prices, these developments have plunged the country into what many describe as the worst cost-of-living crisis since independence.

However, Tinubu maintains that these reforms are essential to laying the foundation for long-term economic prosperity.

FG declares holidays for Christmas, new year

By Friday Omosola

The Federal Government (FG) has announced Wednesday, December 25, Thursday, December 26, 2024, and Wednesday, January 1, 2025, as public holidays to mark Christmas, Boxing Day, and New Year celebrations respectively.

This declaration was made by the Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, in a statement signed by the Ministry’s Permanent Secretary, Magdalene Ajani.

Tunji-Ojo extended warm greetings to Nigerians and urged them to use the festive season to reflect on the values of love, peace, and unity that the season represents.

He emphasised the importance of fostering harmony and strengthening familial and



communal bonds during this period.

He also called on citizens to remain committed to the peace, unity, and progress of the nation, which are vital for national development.

According to him, “The Christmas

season provides an opportunity for both spiritual reflection and national renewal. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, let us embrace kindness and extend goodwill to one another, irrespective of our differences.”

The Minister assured Nigerians of the government’s unwavering commitment to ensuring peace, security, and prosperity across the country.

While wishing citizens a merry Christmas and a prosperous 2025, Tunji-Ojo expressed confidence in President Tinubu’s Renewed Hope Agenda, stating that it would usher in a better and prosperous new year, positioning Nigeria as a nation of envy on the global stage.

Hunger epidemic sparks stampedes, LP tells Tinubu

By Friday Omosola

The Labour Party (LP) has expressed serious concern over the recent stampedes that claimed many lives in separate incidents in Oyo, Anambra, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.

Umar Farouk, LP National Secretary described the tragic events as a grim reminder of the hunger crisis ravaging the country, calling it “a silent epidemic more devastating than any natural disaster.”

“These stampedes highlight the extreme hunger and desperation gripping Nigerians. Hunger is proving to be the deadliest epidemic we face, more so than any natural calamity,” Farouk lamented.

He referenced recent data from the World Bank and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) to illustrate the dire situation.

According to him, the data stated that Nigeria’s poverty rate has risen to 40.7 per cent, with an estimated 87 million Nigerians living below the poverty line—making the country home to the second-largest poor population globally after India.

Farouk added that rising inflation, poor economic management, and recent economic reforms under the



President Bola Tinubu -led administration have exacerbated the crisis.

He further pointed out that hunger-driven tragedies extend beyond stampedes.

“Desperate Nigerians have been scooping fuel from accident sites, leading to deadly infernos, and resorting to crime, including kidnapping.

“A survey revealed over 2 million Nigerians were kidnapped in the last year, with \$1.42 billion paid in ransom—a stark indication of worsening socioeconomic conditions.”

Farouk urged the government to prioritise food production, utilize Nigeria’s vast arable land, and revive the aquatic economy.

“We implore the government to scale down its 2025 agenda and redirect resources towards addressing hunger and poverty. Over 70 per cent of Nigeria’s land remains underutilized, and our agricultural and fisheries sectors are in shambles,” Farouk stated.

He also reminded the government of its constitutional duty to protect lives and property.

“The daily survival struggle of Nigerians has become a matter of life and death. While kidnappers claim lives with impunity, others perish while scrambling for food to survive. The government must act decisively to end this crisis. Enough is enough.”

Peter Obi criticises IG's directive on palliative distribution

By Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE

Former presidential candidate Peter Obi has voiced strong concerns over the recent directive from the Inspector General of Police (IGP) that imposes restrictions on the distribution of palliatives to the less privileged. Obi described the move as “disturbing” and warned it could hinder acts of generosity and exacerbate the suffering of vulnerable Nigerians.

In a statement shared on X.com (formerly Twitter) on Monday, Obi acknowledged that the directive aimed to address safety issues following tragic incidents linked to the distribution of palliatives.

However, he raised concerns that the restrictions could unintentionally discourage citizens from assisting those in need.

Obi wrote, “The latest directive of the Inspector General of Police placing some restrictions on the distribution of palliatives to the less privileged in our midst is disturbing. Even though the directive is a timely response to the series of tragedies recorded across the country recently, and the IG's honest reaction to the challenges of the prevailing economic hardship, it's open to abuse.”

He went on to argue that the directive could stifle goodwill, stating, “It is capable of discouraging citizens



from helping the hungry and distressed among us.”

While Obi expressed understanding of the need for better organisation and attention to public safety, he cautioned against excessive bureaucracy that could impede the willingness of Nigerians to offer help.

“Rather than requiring people to seek permission to assist those in need, we should encourage them to find better, more organized ways to offer such help,” he suggested.

Obi stressed the importance of promoting coordination and collaboration rather than imposing barriers, urging the government to focus on addressing the root causes of Nigeria's economic hardship.

He added, “This is not the time to stifle the spirit of compassion and

generosity among our people. Instead, let us channel these efforts constructively, ensuring that help reaches the most vulnerable safely and efficiently.”

In his statement, Obi also called on the government to provide lasting solutions to the economic crisis, rather than creating obstacles for those attempting to alleviate the suffering caused by government policies. He urged the IGP to reconsider the directive and work with the public to alleviate the hardships Nigerians are facing.

“The government must also do more to address the root causes of this hardship, providing lasting solutions rather than creating obstacles for those stepping in to fill the gaps created by the government's insensitive policies,” Obi concluded.

Tinubu attributes stampedes to lack of organisation, discipline

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has attributed the recent deadly stampedes in Oyo, Anambra, and Abuja to poor organisation and indiscipline during palliative distributions.

During his inaugural media chat on Monday, Tinubu stressed the importance of better organisation during such events and called for greater discipline within society.

“It is truly unfortunate that events like these are poorly organized. We must adopt a more disciplined approach in our society. My condolences to those who have lost loved ones,” Tinubu said, expressing sorrow over the tragic incidents that claimed multiple lives.



While acknowledging the importance of charity, the president shared his long history of charitable acts, highlighting that he had never encountered such tragedies due to careful planning.

“It’s important to give back, and I’ve been distributing food and goods for

over 25 years. But I’ve never faced such an incident because everything was organized and disciplined. If you don’t have enough to give, it’s better not to publicize it,” Tinubu remarked.

The stampedes in Anambra and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) on Saturday resulted in several deaths and injuries, prompting the Inspector General of Police to urge organisers of similar events to collaborate with security agencies and adhere strictly to crowd and safety management guidelines.

The tragic events followed another devastating stampede in Ibadan, where 35 children lost their lives during a funfair just days earlier.

Ibadan Stampede: Obi urges release of ex-queen Naomi

By Friday Omosola

Peter Obi, the 2023 presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), has called for the release of Naomi Silekunola, the former queen of the Ooni of Ife and organiser of the funfair that led to the stampede in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Earlier, The New Daily Prime reported that Naomi, along with seven others, was arrested following the stampede at a funfair held at Basorun Islamic High School in Ibadan.

The incident resulted in the death of 35 children. Naomi was hospitalised after her arrest.

In a statement shared on his X page yesterday, Obi expressed that the ex-queen should not be vilified for her humanitarian efforts, even if the funfair unintentionally led to the unfortunate incident.

He emphasised that the event was



initiated to ease the hardships faced by the people and provide relief.

The 63-year-old further stated that accountability for such tragedies should start with the leaders and policymakers whose collective actions—or inactions—have exacerbated the suffering and hardship in society.

“It is the systemic failure of governance, not the efforts of well-meaning individuals, that should be

scrutinized”, the Anambra-born politician said.

Obi stressed that Nigerian leaders must come together to reassess the nation’s direction and prioritise policies and actions that improve citizens’ lives.

He also called for a shift in focus toward building a system where no citizen is left struggling for necessities.

“In doing so, we can begin to rebuild trust and ensure that tragedies like these are not repeated. While still in mourning mood over the precious lives lost due to tragic incidents stemming from the distribution of palliatives.

“I am deeply pained that such occurrences are a reflection of the severe hunger and poverty currently ravaging our nation. My heartfelt condolences go to the affected families, communities, and states.”

Governance costs won't shrink my cabinet, says Tinubu

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has ruled out reducing the size of his cabinet as part of efforts to lower the cost of governance.

Speaking during his inaugural Presidential Media Chat on Monday, the president defended his decision to maintain over 40 ministers along with several advisers and assistants.

"I am not ready to reduce the size of my cabinet," Tinubu stated when asked about possible measures to cut governance expenses, emphasizing the necessity of his extensive team.

Furthermore, he declared that he sees no need to investigate military operations across the country.



Tinubu acknowledged the possibility of financial leakages but expressed confidence in the military's prudent use of allocated funds.

Currently, Nigerian troops are deployed in over 30 states to tackle various security challenges.

Additionally, President Tinubu signalled his readiness to make concessions to resolve issues surrounding the contentious tax bills before the National Assembly.

Tinubu acknowledged the need for negotiations, particularly regarding concerns over the VAT component.

"Tax amendments require discussions and concessions, and I am open to that," Tinubu said, addressing the controversies that have drawn criticism, especially from northern leaders, including members of his party.

The proposed tax bills, currently under review, have sparked significant debate nationwide.

Bayelsa gov signed N689.4bn 2025 budget into law

By Friday Omosola

Bayelsa State Governor, Douye Diri, has signed the 2025 budget of N689.4 billion, titled the "Budget of ASSURED Prosperity," into law.

In October, The New Daily Prime reported that Mr Diri presented the budget to the State House of Assembly, highlighting his administration's plans for enhanced socio-economic and infrastructural development.

The governor announced the signing in a statement shared on his X (formerly Twitter) page, noting that his deputy, Lawrence Ewhrudjakpo, and other top government officials were present at the signing ceremony.

Bayelsa State Governor, Douye Diri signing into law the 2025 budget of N689.4 billion, titled the "Budget of ASSURED Prosperity."

"This afternoon, I signed into law a budget of six hundred and ninety nine billion, five hundred and seventy three



million, one hundred and sixty seven thousand, five hundred and ninety two Naira (N699, 573,167,592.00) only for 2025 as passed by the Bayelsa State House of Assembly.

"I wish to appreciate Mr. Speaker, Rt. Hon. Abraham Ingobere, the Principal Officers and other members of the State House of Assembly for their diligence in the timely passage of the Appropriation

bill", said the governor.

Diri further emphasised his administration's dedication to transparently implementing the budget to drive economic growth, create jobs, generate power, and complete ongoing legacy projects across the state.

SERAP criticises N8.7bn travel budget for Tinubu, Shettima in 2025

By Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE

The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has condemned the proposed N8.7 billion travel budget for President Bola Tinubu and Vice President Kashim Shettima for the year 2025, calling for a reduction in the budgets for both the Presidency and the National Assembly.

SERAP has urged Senate President Godswill Akpabio and House of Representatives Speaker Tajudeen Abbas to slash the allocations, which amount to N9.4 billion for the Presidency's travel, meals, and catering expenses, as well as N344.85 billion for lawmakers.

In a letter dated 21st December 2024, signed by Deputy Director Kolawole Oluwadare, SERAP requested that the National Assembly ask President Tinubu to submit a new supplementary appropriation bill that reflects lower allocations for the Presidency and the legislature, in light of Nigeria's current economic challenges.

The organisation warned that any unnecessary expenditure by both the Presidency and the National Assembly would violate the Nigerian Constitution (1999, as amended).

SERAP also stressed that it would be a serious breach of public trust for lawmakers to approve such lavish spending for themselves and the Presidency amid the country's growing budget deficit.

"Any proposed unnecessary spending by the Presidency and the National Assembly would amount to a fundamental breach of the Nigerian Constitution," the letter stated.

"It would be a grave violation of the public trust and constitutional oath of office for the members of the National Assembly to approve unnecessary spending for themselves and the Presidency."

SERAP also demanded a detailed breakdown of the National Assembly's proposed N344.85 billion budget, asking for clarity on personnel costs, salaries, and



allowances. The group further urged lawmakers to summon heads of ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) identified in the 2021 audit report by the Office of the Auditor-General for the mismanagement of public funds.

The group criticised the proposed N8.7 billion allocated for the travel expenses of President Tinubu and Vice President Shettima, with the Office of the President requesting N7 billion for travel and transport, while the Vice President's office allocated N1.73 billion.

The proposed budget also includes N546.2 million for catering materials and refreshments, N87.5 million for honoraria and sitting allowances, and N79.6 million for drugs and medical supplies.

Highlighting the increased expenditure, SERAP pointed out that the Presidency's budget for "rehabilitation and repairs of fixed assets" had increased sharply from N14 billion in 2024 to N26 billion in 2025.

The group expressed concern that many Nigerians would find such spending "odd, unfair, and unjust," particularly in the midst of a public borrowing crisis.

"Many Nigerians will find it quite odd, unfair, and unjust that the government and lawmakers are spending so much money on many of these items in the middle of a public borrowing crisis," SERAP remarked.

The organisation reiterated the need for

greater transparency in the National Assembly's proposed budget and urged lawmakers to demand accountability from MDAs linked to the mismanagement of public funds.

SERAP stressed that holding these bodies accountable for the reported mismanagement of billions of naira would help tackle corruption within the public sector.

In its letter, SERAP reminded lawmakers of their constitutional responsibility to prioritise the welfare of citizens, emphasising that the National Assembly must ensure responsible spending of public funds.

"The proposed spending figures by both the Presidency and the National Assembly highlight the lack of political will to cut the cost of governance," the group stated.

SERAP concluded by calling on Akpabio and Abbas to set an example by cutting unnecessary spending and acting in the best interest of Nigerians, arguing that reducing wasteful expenditures would help address the country's budget deficit and mounting debt issues.

"Cutting waste and apparently unnecessary spending would go a long way in addressing the budget deficit and debt problems," the organisation affirmed.

Tanker drivers decry poor road conditions, exclusion from CNG scheme

By **Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE**

The Petroleum Tanker Drivers (PTD) branch of the Nigeria Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) has called on the Federal Government to address the poor state of federal highways and its exclusion from the ongoing Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) scheme.

In a communiqué issued after their quarterly National Executive Committee meeting in Benin City, Edo State, the union expressed frustration over the continued delays in critical road repairs, despite significant budget allocations.

They also criticised their exclusion from the CNG initiative, which aims to provide affordable fuel alternatives to reduce costs for transporters.

The communiqué, signed by National Chairman Augustine Egbon and National Secretary Oluchi Chinagorom, acknowledged the government's commitment to road repairs but urged for immediate action to mobilise contractors before the peak of the rainy season.

“We commend the Federal Government for prioritising the repair of federal highways to make them safer and reduce the burden on transporters. However, we urge immediate action to ensure contractors are mobilised before the peak of the rainy season,” the statement read.

The union highlighted key budget allocations, including N42.4 billion



approved in June for road variations and N740 billion approved in October for the repair of the Berger stretch of the Abuja-Kano route.

They also referenced N621.2 billion allocated in 2021 under the Road Infrastructure Tax Credit Scheme.

“Having shown a commitment to fixing roads, unlike its predecessor, we urge the Federal Government to walk its talk. Unnecessary delays could lead to complications during the rainy season. A stitch in time saves nine,” the communiqué emphasised.

The PTD-NUPENG also listed several critical federal roads in urgent need of attention, including the Shagamu-Benin road, Makurdi-Katsina-Ala road, Kachako-Dambazua road in Kano, Yola-Hong-Mubi road in Adamawa, Okene-Auchi-Benin road, Lanai-Agai-Bida road, and the East-West road from Benin-Warri to Port Harcourt.

In addition to road issues, the union

expressed concern over its exclusion from the CNG scheme, which aims to provide affordable fuel alternatives for vehicles.

“Tanker drivers, as key players in the downstream oil and gas sector, have been excluded from the CNG scheme.

CNG kits are not just for smaller vehicles; tankers also require cheaper fuel alternatives to operate efficiently,” the communiqué stated.

The PTD-NUPENG concluded with a call for the Federal Government to fulfil its commitments to road rehabilitation and integrate tanker drivers into the CNG scheme, stressing the vital role of tanker drivers in the nation's petroleum product distribution network.

The union's demands reflect the sector's ongoing struggles with poor infrastructure and rising operational costs, which they argue could be mitigated with the right interventions.

Presidency chides Obi over stampedes comments

By Friday Omosola

In a swift reaction, the Presidency has berated former Anambra State Governor, Peter Obi, over his recent comments regarding the stampedes in Anambra, Oyo, and Abuja, which resulted in the tragic loss of several lives.

The New Daily Prime reported that scores of Nigerians, including children, died while scrambling to collect palliatives in the affected states.

Reacting to the incidents, Obi described the tragedies as a reflection of the systemic failures under the leadership of President Bola Tinubu.

He also criticised the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kayode Egbetokun, for imposing restrictions on palliative distribution, arguing that such measures discourage acts of charity.

However, in a statement by Sunday Dare, Special Adviser on Media and Public Communication to President Tinubu, the Presidency condemned Obi's remarks, describing them as lacking both in statesmanship and decency.

“When seeking someone who benefits from the misfortune of others or confusion, what the



Yoruba people describe as ‘Aríje nínú M̀d̀ar̀ú,’ look no further than Peter Obi.

“His recent remarks regarding the avoidable tragedies in Anambra and Oyo States lack statesmanship and decency, even as he wallows in the fading waters of his much-vaunted political victory. This attempt to score cheap political point falls flat”, the statement added.

Dare stated that the 2023 Labour Party presidential candidate was expected to speak thoughtfully and offer support to the grieving during a period of mourning.

He reaffirmed the Tinubu-led administration's commitment to resolving the current economic challenges promptly to improve the standard of living for the average Nigerian.

Additionally, Dare emphasised

that neither the Obi nor anyone else would distract the Tinubu administration from prioritising patience, orderliness, crowd management, and the enforcement of necessary permits for such events.

He said, “Yes, the government has a role to play, but citizens also have responsibilities. Beyond that, the ongoing reforms have started to bear fruits and soon Nigeria will feel the positive impacts.

“President Tinubu cancelled all programmes, expressed profound sadness over the loss of lives, and ordered an immediate investigation. That is the way of true leaders. These unfortunate incidents have undoubtedly highlighted many critical issues that must be examined.”

Adeboye's visit, prayers will boost Ekiti's fortunes, says Oyebanji

By Friday Omosola



Ekiti State Governor, Biodun Oyebanji, has expressed confidence that the visit and prayers of Pastor Enoch Adeboye, the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), will greatly enhance the fortunes of the state.

Governor Oyebanji shared this optimism in Ilogbo Ekiti during the RCCG programme titled "Light Up Ilogbo", today which coincided with the church's annual December event, "Let's Go A-Fishing."

Governor Oyebanji described Pastor Adeboye's visit as a divine blessing for the state, its

government, and its people, especially as the new year approaches with high expectations.

He emphasised that the prophetic declarations made by Pastor Adeboye would manifest in the lives of Ekiti residents and his administration as the year unfolds.

"During his sermon, he said he brought good news to us in Ekiti State. The programme is titled "Light Up Ilogbo Ekiti", and I firmly believe that this light will extend beyond Ilogbo to illuminate the entire Ekiti State," the governor said.

"This visit is a wonderful

Christmas gift for us as a state. His presence on Ekiti soil assures me that good news will follow all of us in Jesus' name."

Earlier in his sermon, Pastor Adeboye, who noted that it was his first visit to the town, declared that God had sent him with a message of blessings, breakthroughs, and positive transformations for individuals, families, and the state.

He further proclaimed an end to the era of stagnation and difficulties in Ekiti State, assuring the people of a brighter and more prosperous future.

'We're following Abdulqadir death probe closely' – Gov Abdulrazaq

By Friday Omosola

Kwara State Governor, Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq, has assured the public that his administration is closely monitoring the investigation into the death of Jimoh Abdulqadir, who died while in police custody.

Abdulqadir, identified as a poultry farmer, was reportedly arrested on December 20, following a complaint from a client over an unpaid debt.

According to a family source, the police claimed Abdulqadir committed suicide in his cell when his family arrived to secure his bail.

The incident sparked widespread outrage, with Nigerians demanding justice. This public outcry prompted the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kayode Egbetokun, to visit Abdulqadir's family.

During his visit, the IGP directed the Force Criminal Investigations Department (FCID) to take immediate control of the investigation into the incident.

Reacting to the tragedy, Governor Abdulrazaq, in a statement issued by his Chief Press Secretary, Rafiu Ajakaye, called for calm and reassured



citizens of the state's commitment to justice.

He praised the IGP's swift visit to Abdulqadir's family in Ilorin, describing it as a positive step toward ensuring a thorough investigation.

The governor further urged the police chief to guarantee that justice prevails in the case, commending the prompt actions taken within hours of the incident being reported.

"We are devastated by the death of Mr. Jimoh Abdulqadir. It was one tragedy too many for our community. It is unacceptable.

"While restating our commiserations to the Balogun Fulani Alhaji Abubakar Sidiq Atiku Fulani and the immediate

family of the deceased, we are upbeat that the police hierarchy will get to the roots of the incident, ensure that justice is served, and step up efforts to address other alleged violations and reservations of the citizens", the governor said.

He urged the state's residents, particularly the youth, to remain calm, abide by the law, and avoid rushing to conclusions that could hinder genuine resolutions of the issues.

"I also commend the Balogun Gambari of Ilorin and the youths of the area for the maturity with which the issue has been handled. We ask Allaah to repose the soul of Mr Jimoh Abdulqadir," the statement added.

Matawalle lauds lifting of mining ban in Zamfara

By Friday Omosola

An elated Minister of State for Defence, Bello Matawalle, has commended the Federal Government for lifting the ban on mining activities in Zamfara State.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that the Minister of Solid Minerals, Dele Alake, announced the end of the five-year mining ban in the state.

Speaking to journalists in Gusau, the state capital, Matawalle stated that the move would attract investors and significantly boost the state's socio-economic development.

He highlighted the setbacks experienced due to the imposed ban by the then President Muhammadu Buhari – led administration to curb insecurity, noting that the state had lost significant revenue in solid minerals exploration.

He further added that Zamfara was rich in mineral resources, particularly lithium, and that many foreign investors had shown interest in exploring these opportunities.

Matawalle added that President Bola Tinubu has directed that investors in the mining sector must process minerals within the state.



This initiative, he explained, aims at creating job and enhancing socio-economic growth.

The minister praised Tinubu's prioritisation of resource-rich states and expressed gratitude for his approval to lift the ban, which he said will positively impact Zamfara's residents.

He also urged the people of Zamfara to support and cooperate with the Tinubu's administration to ensure the success of this initiative.

Addressing security concerns, particularly regarding the Lakurawa terrorist group, Matawalle refuted claims of the group's presence in Zamfara.

"People have been talking

about Lakurawa in Zamfara State. It is not true. Lakurawa is not in Zamfara State. They are coming from Burkina Faso and Mali through Niger to Sokoto State," he clarified.

He detailed a recent military operation against the group, during which their equipment and armoury were destroyed, and many members were neutralized.

"Since the last two weeks, I'm very sure none of you have heard about their activities, because we dealt with them decisively, leaving no stone unturned," Matawalle said.

He assured Nigerians of the FG's commitment to ending the activities of bandits and other terrorist groups in the North-West and across the country by 2025.

Sanwo-Olu invites investors to explore Lagos waterways potential at 2024 Boat Regatta

...Govt Officials, Tourists, Others tour Lagos Waterways on boat

By New Daily Prime

Amidst a festive atmosphere of cultural brilliance and aquatic excellence, Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, alongside his wife, Dr. Claudiana Ibijoke Sanwo-Olu, Deputy Governor, Dr. Obafemi Hamzat, and his wife, Mrs. Oluremi Hamzat, led other dignitaries to witness the Lagos Boat Regatta 2024 on Saturday at Victoria Island area of the State.

The Regatta, held simultaneously across multiple locations, showcased the rich cultural and aquatic heritage of Lagos with colorful displays by the five Ibile divisions in the State, featuring intricately decorated boats that thrilled attendees at the Regatta.

Rowing competitions, live performances, and other activities added to the excitement, leaving an indelible impression on guests.

The Governor in a Yacht, accompanied by his deputy and some top government officials and guests, embarked on an exploration tour of the state's waterways, underscoring the abundant tourism potentials, recreation, and investment.

Speaking after the boat ride, Governor Sanwo-Olu described the Lagos Boat Regatta as a spectacular celebration of the state's waterways, culture, and heritage.

He emphasized the historical significance of the traditional ceremonies and tours that honor the bond between Lagosians and their waterways, urging both investors and tourists to explore the vast opportunities within Lagos' aquatic landscape.



"This extraordinary event is not just a reflection of our cultural richness but also a vibrant showcase of Lagos' unique connection to water—an essential part of our identity and livelihood," the Governor stated.

"The boat regatta embodies our essence and signifies a transformation and revival of our culture. It showcases our unwavering commitment to developing tourism in Lagos through our waterways.

"With one-third of Lagos surrounded by water, it is essential to utilize our waterways not only as a mode of transportation but also as a vital ecosystem for tourism," Governor Sanwo-Olu stated.

Highlighting the regatta's importance, the Governor noted that it aligns with his administration's T.H.E.M.E.S.Plus agenda, which promotes tourism and the creative economy as key drivers of Lagos' socio-economic growth.

Commissioner for Tourism, Arts, and Culture, Mrs. Toke Benson-Awoyinka, stated that the regatta is a testament to Lagosians' commitment to preserving

their heritage and fostering tourism.

"This year's theme, 'Our Water, Our Heritage, Our Life,' highlights the critical role our waterways play in shaping our history and identity," she said.

She commended Governor Sanwo-Olu's visionary leadership in advancing waterways infrastructure and tourism, ensuring environmental sustainability and economic development.

Mrs. Benson-Awoyinka appreciated the sponsors, organizers, and participants for their contributions just as she encouraged the attendees to immerse themselves in the creativity, dynamism, and cultural pride that define Lagos.

The Lagos Boat Regatta 2024 which ended with a Live musical performances by Musical stars that included Niniola, Atawewe, pheelz and Nice late in the night was a success, solidifying Lagos' status as a premier destination for culture, tourism, and innovation with attendees left inspired by Lagos' vibrant heritage and its transformative vision.

Troops neutralise 13 IPOB members, nab three kidnappers in Southeast

By Olamilekan Botti

In a decisive operation aimed at curbing insecurity, soldiers in Southeast Nigeria successfully neutralised 13 members of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and apprehended three suspected kidnappers during a series of tactical operations across the region.

This development marks a significant step in the ongoing efforts to restore peace and order in the troubled area.

The military operations, carried out in collaboration with local security agencies, targeted areas known for heightened activities by IPOB operatives.

According to Major General Edward Buba, the Director of Defence Media Operations, the operation was based on credible intelligence that identified hideouts used by IPOB members for coordinating attacks.

Army spokesperson confirmed the success of the mission, emphasizing that the joint task force was committed to protecting civilians and neutralizing threats posed by insurgents and criminal groups.

“Thirteen IPOB operatives were neutralized in a gunfight that ensued during the operation. Several weapons, including automatic rifles and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), were recovered from the scene,” the spokesperson revealed.

The military’s efforts also included dismantling makeshift camps used by the separatist group, ensuring that such sites could no longer serve as operational bases for their activities.

In a related development, three individuals suspected of being part of a notorious kidnapping syndicate were



apprehended in a separate operation. The arrests took place following a high-stakes raid on a hideout in a remote location within the Southeast region.

The suspects are believed to have been involved in several high-profile abductions, targeting both locals and travelers. Security officials disclosed that ransom demands running into millions of naira had been linked to the gang. During the raid, security forces recovered a cache of weapons, mobile communication devices, and documents pointing to the gang’s extensive network.

The dual success of the operations has been met with widespread commendation from both government officials and local communities.

Speaking on the development, a senior government official noted that the military’s efforts were in line with the administration’s zero-tolerance policy toward insecurity.

“We remain steadfast in our resolve to protect the lives and property of all Nigerians. The security agencies deserve commendation for their bravery and professionalism in combating these threats,” the official stated.

Meanwhile, community leaders have expressed relief, urging the government to sustain the momentum and address the root causes of insecurity in the region.

“While we commend these efforts, it is also essential to engage in dialogue and create opportunities for economic and social development,” a local chief commented.

The operations come amid a broader security strategy aimed at tackling insurgency and criminal activities across the Southeast.

Residents are being advised to remain vigilant and cooperate with security agencies by reporting suspicious activities.

As the military intensifies its campaign against IPOB and other criminal elements, stakeholders are hopeful that the renewed focus will restore lasting peace to the region.

This success underscores the importance of coordinated efforts and the resolve of Nigeria’s security forces to combat insecurity, ensuring the safety of all citizens.

Afe Babalola wins 2024 best Nigerian Patriot Award

By Dave Oludare Oso

Legal luminary, and founder of Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti (ABUAD), Aare Afe Babalola, SAN, has been honoured with the 2024 Best Nigerian Patriot Award.

ABUAD's Head of Corporate Affairs, Tunde Olofintila, announced over the weekend that the recognition, conferred by the Association of United Nations Ambassadors for Peace, was communicated in a letter dated December 11, 2024.

This prestigious award comes amid controversy surrounding alleged defamation of the esteemed nonagenarian by human rights activist and lawyer, Dele Farotimi in his book, Nigeria and its Criminal Justice System.

The letter co-signed on behalf of the association by the Ambassadors – Chairman, Selection Committee, Prof. Joseph Legend Mfon, Deputy Chair, Selection Committee, Prof. Mrs Lami Amodu, Global Director of Administration, Prof. Inah Eteng Okon H/E, Secretary General, Prof Barika Saro-Laka respectively was titled: 'Approval of Nomination For Conferment of our Pioneer Merit Award Of 2024 Best Nigerian Patriot's Award on Your Dignified Personality.'



The association stated that Babalola was qualified for the award because of salient qualities which include: "Detribalised nationalist whose impact of selfless activities is novel and thus cherished by leaders within Africa and beyond."

The association stated that it "founded Afe Babalola & Company (Emmanuel chambers), a Legal Firm, reputed for grooming sound and seasoned lawyers across Nigeria.

"Let it be known to the world that we have approved the conferment of our pioneer merit award of 2024 Best Nigerian Patriot's Award on your dignified icon, as a result of the quality and consistent points of merit you have posted in impacting the lives of humanity while improving the society in different sectors of the economy .

"You were nominated by Oba David Rotimi Adetiloye (Obanla

Yoruba1), Gosa Community), Abuja FCT, and Professor Abiodun Micheal Ajibade, FICA, Founder, Horizon International University.

"In arriving at your choice, the entries of twenty other elderstatesmen were selected and compared while yours emerged as the best.

"As a mark of celebrating your perpetual honour and spreading the impact of your iconic figure, we shall fete 300 widows verified and registered under the National Association of Nigeria Widows (NANIWO) with Christmas Raw Food Packs/Ingredients and a Token Cash for Transport."

The Association of the UN Ambassadors for Peace further indicated in the letter that the award ceremony would take place on January 9, 2025 at Labour House in Abuja by 11:00 am.

Foundation provides free cancer screening for 3,441 Nigerians

By Helen Okechukwu



No fewer than 3,441 Nigerians who recently participated at the NNPC Foundation Cancer Awareness programme, were screened at no cost over the deadly disease.

The health initiatives titled “Cancer Awareness and ZSX Screening”, focussed on combating late-stage cancer diagnoses resulting from cultural barriers, poor access to healthcare, and others.

The campaign cut across six geo-political zones, with respective centres at Kaduna,

Rivers, Ondo, Benue, Imo, and Gombe States.

During the campaign, participants underwent breast, cervical, and prostate cancer screenings, including some health teachings, among others.

Mrs. Emmanuella Arukwe, the Managing Director of NNPC Foundation, explained that “early detection significantly improves survival rates,” describing the initiative as a life-saving intervention.

It would be recalled that in

February, the Foundation extended its outreach efforts with impactful healthcare and humanitarian initiatives. Through a partnership with the Nigerian Cardiac Society, the Foundation facilitated free heart surgeries for 40 patients in Abuja.

Other activities included glaucoma screenings for 291 traders at Utako Market, comprehensive health checkups for 450 residents in Garki, and the distribution of essential food, water, and medical supplies to flood victims in Borno State.

Wizkid loses phone, offers N7m reward

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Afrobeats superstar Ayodeji Balogun, popularly known as Wizkid, has announced a ₦7 million reward for the recovery of his missing phone.

The phone was reportedly lost during his performance at the Nativeland concert, held at SoL Beach in Elegushi, Lagos State, on Saturday. This unexpected twist added drama to what was otherwise an electrifying night.

The event, organized by the media company Native, featured thrilling performances by top artistes. Fans gathered to enjoy a night of great music, with Wizkid's surprise appearance being a major highlight. However, behind the scenes, the superstar faced a personal setback. His phone, which reportedly contained important details, went missing during his energetic set, which included hits like 'Kese (Dance).'

DJ Tunez joins the effort

The announcement about the reward was made by Wizkid's official DJ, Michael Adeyinka, also known as DJ Tunez. Speaking to the crowd during the concert, DJ Tunez revealed the situation and pledged his own contribution to the reward. "My brother Wizkid misplaced his phone before performing," he said. "There are a lot of details in there, and he will be giving anyone who finds it ₦5 million." He then added his own ₦2 million to the offer, bringing the total reward to ₦7 million.

This joint effort highlights the significance of the lost phone, emphasizing the urgency of its recovery. Fans were quick to react, with many expressing surprise and concern over the incident. The buzz surrounding the reward has since taken over social media, with hashtags and memes circulating widely.

A Night to remember

Wizkid's performance at Nativeland was nothing short of spectacular. Fans



captured vibrant moments on their devices, savoring his electrifying presence. The concert also showcased performances by other top acts, including Bloody Civilian, Ayanfe, Zerrydl, ThisizLondon, and DJ Tunez himself. Despite the setback, Wizkid's energy on stage did not waver, leaving fans in awe of his professionalism.

However, the loss of his phone became a talking point. Given Wizkid's stature and rare public appearances in Nigeria, the incident sparked conversations about security and logistics at high-profile events. Many fans expressed disbelief, questioning how such a mishap could occur at a well-organized concert.

Star-studded weekend

The missing phone incident capped an eventful weekend for Wizkid. Earlier, he hosted an exclusive dinner in Lagos, bringing together some of Nigeria's biggest entertainment stars. Guests included Olamide, 2Baba, and Tems, making it a night to remember. The dinner showcased Wizkid's commitment to fostering unity within the entertainment industry, further solidifying his status as a cultural icon.

Despite the unfortunate loss, Wizkid's generosity and the swift response from his team have kept fans hopeful. The ₦7 million reward has not only drawn attention to the incident but also

underscored the value of the missing device. While fans wait eagerly for updates, the superstar's ability to turn challenges into moments of connection with his audience remains unmatched.

Social media frenzy

The announcement of the reward has sparked widespread interest online. Fans and followers have taken to social media to share their thoughts, with many offering humorous takes on the situation. Memes and jokes aside, the buzz highlights the influence of Wizkid's brand and the strong connection he has with his fans.

For some, the incident serves as a reminder of the human side of celebrities. Despite his global fame, Wizkid's candid approach to the situation has resonated with many. By openly addressing the loss and involving his fans, he has turned a personal setback into a shared experience.

Lessons for event organizers

The incident also raises questions about event management and security. How could such a high-profile artiste lose a valuable item at a major concert? While fans empathize with Wizkid, many have called for improved measures to prevent similar occurrences in the future. Enhanced backstage security and better coordination could go a long way in ensuring a seamless experience for artistes and attendees alike.

TikToker SeaKing granted bail

By Friday Omosola



Lagos State Magistrate Court sitting in Ogba today granted bail to popular TikToker, Olumide Ogunsanwo, known as SeaKing.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that the social media influencer was accused of treason, cyberstalking, conduct likely to cause a breach of peace, and provoking a breach of peace.

The charges stemmed from claims that SeaKing called on Nigerian youths to “wage war” against the police.

The Nigeria Police, through its remand application, sought to keep SeaKing in custody for 30 days pending advice from the Directorate of Public Prosecutions (DPP).

In an X post on Monday, Counsel to the defendant, Inibehe Effiong disclosed that the court ruled

against the application, citing insufficient probable cause.

The proceedings took an unexpected turn earlier in the day when SeaKing’s lawyer, Effiong, and his colleague, Jeremiah Okoro accompanied the social media influencer’s wife, and their six-month-old baby, visited the State Police Command in Ikeja.

Despite their visit, they were denied access to him.

While waiting to meet the Commissioner of Police to raise their grievances, they discovered that SeaKing had been secretly transferred to Ogba Magistrate Court for remand proceedings.

Acting swiftly, the legal team proceeded to the court, where they opposed the police’s remand application and argued for his release on bail.

They relied on Section 264 (5) of the Administration of Criminal Justice Law of Lagos State, which allows for bail under such circumstances.

The magistrate upheld the defence’s argument and admitted SeaKing to bail on liberal terms.

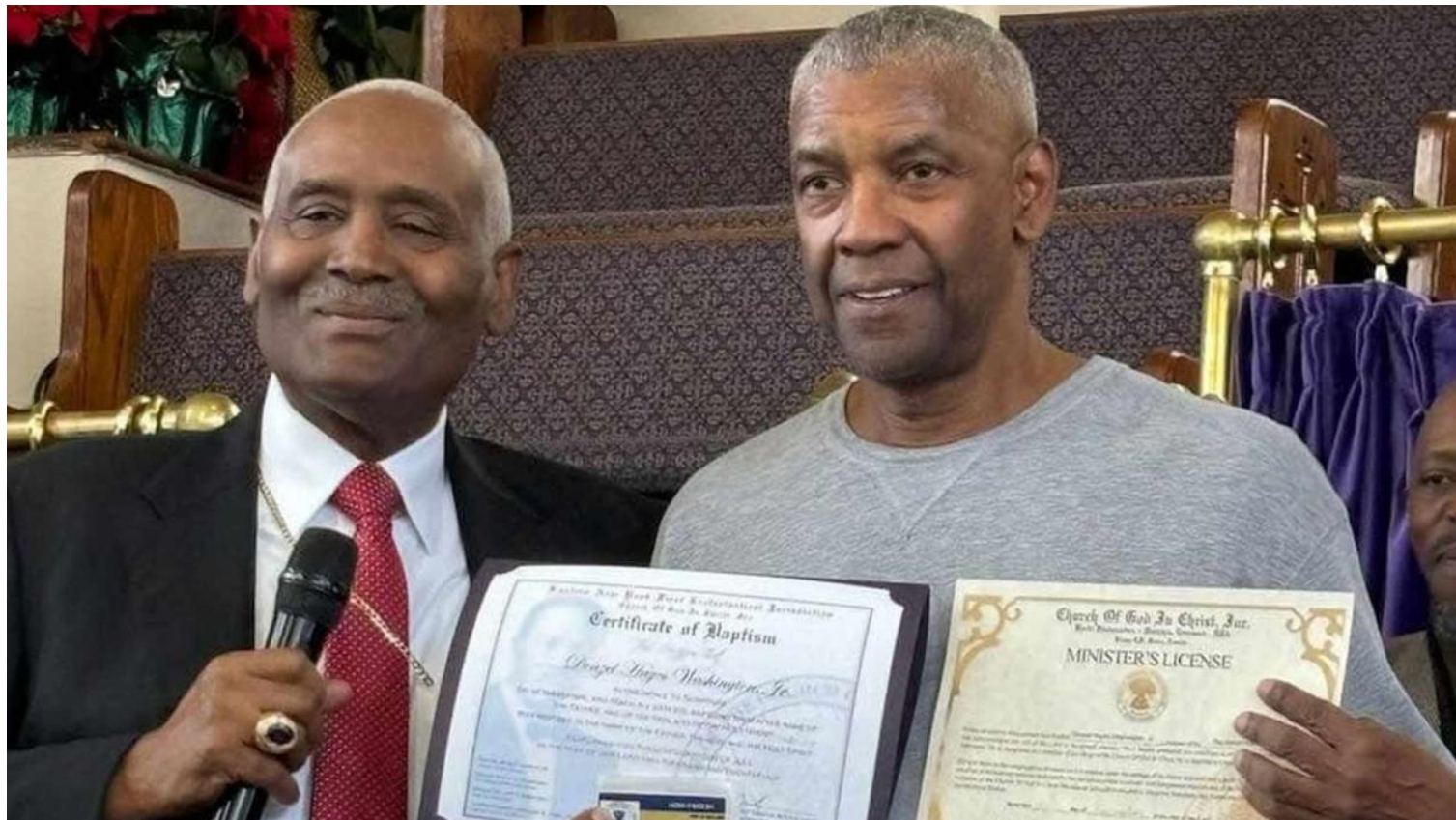
He is to provide a bond of N500,000 with two sureties of the same amount. One of the sureties must be a family member, while both must reside in Lagos State and be gainfully employed.

The case has been adjourned to January 16, 2025, for the DPP’s report.

SeaKing’s legal team has expressed confidence in proving his innocence as the matter progresses.

Legendary actor, Denzel Washington becomes gospel minister

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



One of the most respectable figures in Hollywood over the past three decades, Denzel Washington has officially obtained his ministerial license, marking a significant transition into a new role.

69-year-old Washington was recently baptized by Archbishop Christopher Bryant at the Kelly Temple in New York City, a moment that has been captured and shared on social media.

The multiple award winning actor shared that his journey to this point was a long one, but one that reaffirmed his faith.

In his reflections on his spiritual journey, Washington said, "It took a while, but I'm finally here... If (God) can do this for me, there's nothing He can't do for you. The sky literally is the limit."

His commitment to his faith comes at a time when he also acknowledged the difficulties of discussing religion

within Hollywood, where such topics are often seen as challenging to navigate.

As Washington embraces his new role as a gospel minister, he remains a testament to the transformative power of faith and the belief that change is always possible.

"We celebrate the addition of Minister Denzel Washington into the clergy, having received his minister's license in the Church of God in Christ today, in a truly uplifting moment," the post read.

Washington has acknowledged that one "can't talk" about religion within the industry.

"When you see me, you see the best I could do with what I've been given by my lord and savior," the "Gladiator II" star wrote for Esquire. "I'm unafraid."

"I don't care what anyone thinks. See, talking about the fear part of it – you

can't talk like that and win Oscars. You can't talk like that and party. You can't say that in this town," Washington added.

"I'm free now. It's not talked about in this town. It's not talked about. It's not talked about. It's not fashionable. It's not sexy. But that doesn't mean people in Hollywood don't believe.

"There's no such thing called Hollywood anyway. What does that even mean? That to me means a street called Hollywood Boulevard," he wrote.

Nevertheless, the Academy Award-winning actor remains uncertain about the number of fellow actors who share a belief in God.

"It's not like we all meet somewhere and discuss what we believe. So, I don't know how many other actors have faith. I didn't do any poll. How would I find that out? I mean, there's no Church Actor Meetings I've been to."

Pastor Tobi Adegboyega calls Davido “Gospel Artist” amid performance controversy

By **Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE**

The founder of the Salvation Proclaimers Anointed Church (SPAC Nation), Pastor Tobi Adegboyega, has caused a stir by referring to Nigerian music sensation David Adeleke, better known as Davido, as a “gospel artist.”

During a recent appearance on the Off The Record podcast, which began trending on Monday, Adegboyega explained that the term “gospel” simply means “good news,” and he believes Davido exemplifies this with his music.

The flamboyant pastor’s comments were made in response to the criticism he faced over his decision to invite secular musicians to perform at his recent birthday celebration, instead of gospel artists.

Addressing the backlash, Adegboyega defended his choice of performers, stating, “What I had then was my friends—friends who are there through thick and thin. Davido told me: ‘I just want to be there and perform for one hour.’ They’re my friends. I didn’t pay any of them. They love me, and I will give my friends platforms.”

The pastor further clarified his stance, asserting that, in his view, everyone in attendance at his events, including Davido, is a “gospel artiste.” “Gospel means



good news. Everyone there is a gospel artiste. Davido is a gospel artiste. Have you heard: ‘Because I stand strong?’” he said.

In his response to critics within the gospel music community, Adegboyega expressed frustration with those who were quick to judge his decisions. “If gospel artists aren’t my friends and are instead joining the bandwagon to criticise me by asking, ‘Is that a church?’ What should I do? Drag them with a rope?” he questioned.

The pastor went on to highlight his close relationship with several secular artists, including Nigerian musician Zlatan, whom he referred to as his “son.” “Zlatan is like a son to me; his kids are my kids, and his parents are in my house,” he said.

Adegboyega defended his relationships with these musicians, suggesting that the criticisms of his choices were misplaced.

He further emphasised that his personal friendships would always take precedence in his decisions regarding event performances. “My friends will always sing at my events, and the next one will be bigger because my circle of friends keeps growing,” he stated.

Adegboyega’s remarks have sparked significant conversation, especially given his influential position within the Nigerian church and his reputation for unconventional approaches to ministry.

Nigerians in S' Africa kick as killers of 37-yr-old national granted bail

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Nigerians living in South Africa, under the aegis of the Nigerian Citizens Association in South Africa (NICASA) have expressed disappointment over the decision of a court to grant bail to South Africans arrested in connection with the killing of a 37-year-old Nigerian man identified as Julius Chukwunta.

According to SaharaReporters, the President General of NICASA, Frank Onyekwelu, on Sunday said that despite their objection to the court's decision on the grounds that the four suspects are a flight risk and might run away, the court ignored their objection and granted three of the suspects bail, while it asked the fourth suspect to officially apply for bail.

Onyekwelu disclosed that on Saturday, December 7 while the deceased, Chukwunta was returning to his residence in Protea Estate Midrand, some men blocked the driveway.

Onyekwelu said, "He approached them requesting to be allowed access to pass through but was met with strong resistance.

"He then left the guys and started approaching the security office in the complex to assist him in addressing the situation; it was at this instance that four guys pounced on him, attacked and left him bleeding with a heavy injury on his skull."

Onyekwelu said Chukwunta's partner, who was sitting in the car hurried towards the security office only to find him bleeding on the ground.

"She called for help both from the complex residents and the security office but none could offer any



assistance to help Mr Juluis, or to call the police or ambulance.

"She ended up calling her father after an hour of struggling without getting any help. Her father and other members of her family came and took him to the nearest hospital – Tembisa General Hospital where he was placed on oxygen life support due to excess loss of blood and severe injury on his head.

"On Tuesday 10th December 2024, Mr Juluis Friday Chukwunta (37yrs) succumbed to his injuries and died at Tembisa General Hospital. He hails from Aninri, Enugu State Nigeria."

He said that following Chukwunta's death, a case of murder was opened by his partner with case no. 262/12/2024 at Midrand Police Station and the investigation team worked on the case, leading to the arrest of four male suspects aged 20, 24, 27 and 28.

He said, "Their first appearance in court was on Friday, 13th December 2024 where they were charged with murder at Alexandra Magistrate Court. The case was postponed to Wednesday, 18th December 2024.

"NICASA national executives visited the residence of late Mr Julius Chukwunta in Midrand on Sunday, 15th December 2024 where they met

with the partner, her elder sister and mother.

"A condolence message was conveyed to the family, we received from the family first-hand information on what transpired on that fateful day as narrated above.

"NICASA leadership assured them of our commitment in ensuring that the bereaved family gets justice and the culprits will face the full might of the law.

"Furthermore, NICASA leadership called the family of the deceased in Nigeria to comfort them over their loss, we spoke to the brother of the deceased.

"NICASA learnt that the mother of late Juluis is still in hospital on health challenges and that the family is going through a traumatic moment.

"The leadership of NICASA assured them of full commitment over this matter and promised to bring it to the attention of our Consulate and High Commission."

Onyekwelu said on December 18, NICASA national executives were at Alexandra Magistrate Court to observe court proceedings as the four accused persons came to apply for bail.

Honda, Nissan enter merger talks to compete with Tesla, EV rivals

By **Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE**



Japanese automotive giants Honda and Nissan have entered into talks about a potential merger, with a focus on ramping up their electric vehicle (EV) capabilities to challenge Tesla and rising Chinese competitors.

On Monday, both companies, alongside Mitsubishi Motors, announced that they had signed a memorandum of understanding to explore a business integration, which would result in the formation of a joint holding company.

his new entity aims to combine the strengths of the three firms and better compete in the rapidly evolving global EV market.

The two companies confirmed that they plan to list the newly established holding company on

the Tokyo Stock Exchange by August 2026, a move that would give them a stronger financial foothold to rival their international competitors.

The listing will be a “technical listing,” marking a significant milestone for the merger talks and the companies’ broader goals in the automotive industry.

The merger comes at a time when both Honda and Nissan are striving to increase their presence in the electric vehicle sector, where they have faced intense competition from Tesla and Chinese automakers, which have been at the forefront of EV innovation.

This joint venture is expected to pool resources, technology, and production capabilities, enabling the companies to enhance their

EV offerings and streamline operations.

The agreement signals a major shift in the Japanese auto industry’s strategy as it seeks to adapt to the global rise of electric vehicles and maintain its competitiveness against Tesla, which has solidified its dominance in the EV space, and other fast-growing competitors from China.

As of now, further details of the potential merger and the structure of the joint holding company are still under consideration, with more announcements expected in the coming months.

The developments have set the stage for a new chapter in the rivalry for dominance in the EV market.

Mikel Arteta reacts to Bukayo Saka injury

By Oluwatosin Ologun

England winger Bukayo Saka has been ruled out for "many weeks" after tearing his hamstring.

Bukayo Saka had an injury the 24th minute of Arsenal's game at Crystal Palace on Saturday and while the Gunners went on to win 5-1, the victory was marred by the injury to the England winger, who left the stadium on crutches.

"It's not looking good, he's going to be out for many weeks," Arteta said in a press conference on Monday.

"I cannot be too specific because I do not know but it's going to be many weeks.

"He was gutted. You can tell that he's not been injured because he's been really emotional and down and we have to lift him up. It's a part of his job, a big part of his job. He will be fine, but he needs a few days."

Asked about the blow of losing Saka, Arteta replied: "It's a huge one, he's a massive player for us.

"You have to see the impact he has on this team but it will be a good exercise for all of us to overcome another challenge, because we've had a lot in the season."

It is not the first hamstring injury Saka has suffered this season. He limped off while on England duty in October and was sidelined for a few weeks, missing Arsenal's 2-0 loss to Bournemouth.

Asked if Saka's season could be over, Arteta said: "No. In football,



with injuries you cannot put 10 fingers there but I am very optimistic that he will be well back before the end of the season."

Arsenal still beat Crystal Palace without Saka, with Gabriel Jesus scoring twice and Gabriel Martinelli - who moved to the right wing after Saka went off - claiming a goal and an assist.

"Gabi [Jesus] has played there [on the right], Ethan [Nwaneri] has played there, Leo [Trossard] has played there, Kai [Havertz] can play there, asking him to do different things. We will try and speak to them as well," said Arteta.

"I'm putting some ideas together, I haven't got there yet. But I have a few and then I want to speak with them to understand how we're going to generate that and take it in a positive way. That is going to mean we're going to be different."

The loss of Saka has been compounded by an injury sustained by Raheem Sterling in training.

Arteta confirmed the on-loan Chelsea winger will also be absent for a while.

"He's going to be out for weeks, I believe," added Arteta. "He needs some further testing. It's his knee, we will have to see in 24 hours but unfortunately he is going to be out for a while."

With both of his two first-choice options at right wing out injured, Arteta was then asked if Arsenal will move in the January transfer window regarding that position.

"We'll have to look internally at what we have and be creative," he said. "Do a very good exercise again, how can we mould the squad and adapt to the circumstances?"

"And be different. We cannot pretend to be the same, we have to be different and find the best way to do it, be competitive and win a lot of games.

"My intention right now is within the team and what we have, get the best out of that.

'Galatasaray made me feel at home', Osimhen reacts to permanent move

By **Oluwatosin Ologun**



Amidst a permanent move to Galatasaray, Turkish journalist Adnan Aybaba has revealed what Victor Osimhen told Galatasaray coach Okan Buruk.

The report of the Nigerian star moving permanently to the club has been a talking point for some time based on his performances.

His move to the Turkish giants was a result of his inability to secure a transfer to any of the top five leagues in Europe, particularly Chelsea and Paris Saint-Germain, who were heavily linked with him last summer.

"I think it was very important to come to this team and be a part of this big club," Osimhen said as quoted by Express UK.

"They made me feel at home. I adapted very easily with Baris, Yunus, Gabi, Dries. I learned their game quickly. I was happy to be able to help. We are undefeated in Europe. We have to go step by step. We continue on our way in the Super

Lig."

Due to his superb form for the club, there have been reports that they are considering making his move permanently, regardless of the financial considerations.

Speaking to Telegol via haber sari kirmizi, Aybaba who had a chat with Osimhen recently, revealed that the Nigerian star has ruled out a move to Beşiktaş and his response to Buruk's response to joining the club permanently.

"I spoke to Victor Osimhen himself. I chatted through his translator. I said, 'Will you come to Beşiktaş?' He said, 'I won't.' He loves Galatasaray very much.

"Okan Buruk went to Italy with Galatasaray executives at the beginning of the season to buy Osimhen.

"Now he is trying to convince him to stay at Galatasaray. He said to Osimhen, 'Stay here, let's be a family. After Mauro Icardi gets better, you

will play with him, you will achieve great success.'

Osimhen responded by saying, 'I came here on loan, but there is a great friendship. It feels like I have been in Istanbul for 10 years.'

Despite rumours of a possible exit in January, Osimhen has reinstated his commitment to Galatasaray and they are likely to enjoy the services of the 2015 Fifa U17 World Cup Golden Boot winner until the end of the season.

He came on as a substitute in Galatasaray's 4-3 win over Trabzonspor at the RAMS Park last Monday and he is likely to return to the starting line-up in today's game against Kayserispor.

Buruk's decision to start him has been made easier due to the form of Mitchy Batsuayi, who despite scoring in the last fixture, has been largely unconvincing whenever he is handed a start.