



Dele Farotimi released after meeting bail conditions PAGE 24

Oyo residents face bleak Christmas as food prices soar

PAGE 8 & 9



The New Daily Prime

Tinubu bent on tackling corrupt practices – EFCC boss PAGE 4



Former US president Clinton discharged from hospital PAGES 33

WORLD PAGE 32

Biden commutes sentences of 37 death row inmates



Alleged Defamation: We can't debar Farotimi, LPDC tells Afe Babalola PAGE 2



ENTERTAINMENT

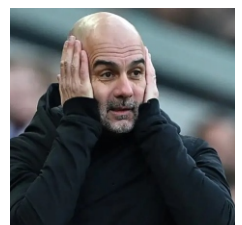
Celebrities who died in 2024

PAGE 26 & 27



SPORTS PAGE 35

Sacked in the morning?! Guardiola's flops sink to new low



Ibadan Stampede: Court remands Ooni's ex-queen, others PAGE 12

Alleged Defamation: We can't debar Farotimi, LPDC tells Afe Babalola

By Dave Oludare Oso

The body responsible for sanctioning errant lawyers and maintain sanity and discipline among lawyers, the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee, (LPDC), has adduced reasons why it cannot revoke the licence that allows the embattled, controversial author and activist, Dele Farotimi, to practice law in Nigeria.

The legal body held that it lacked the requisite jurisdiction to delve into issues relating to the allegation of criminal defamation and professional misconduct, which were brought against Farotimi by the law firm of Chief Afe Babalola, Emmanuel Chambers.

The law firm had, in its petition, urged the LPDC to debar Farotimi by removing his name from the roll of legal practitioners in the country.

In the 90-page petition dated December 6 and signed by a partner in the firm, Mr. Ola Faro, it was alleged that Farotimi violated certain provisions of the rules of professional conduct for lawyers in his contentious book titled "Nigeria And Its Criminal Justice System."

Specifically, Farotimi was accused of acting in breach of Rules 1, 15(1), 15(2b), 15(3a), 15(3g), 15(3i), 15(3j), 26(1), 27(1), 30, 31(1), (2) and (4) of the Rules of Professional Conduct 2023 "by bringing the entire judiciary in Nigeria into disrepute with his unfounded allegations of corruption against eminent justices of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, judges of the High Court of Lagos State, Aare Afe Babalola, SAN, Olu Deramola, SAN, and Ola Faro, Esq., and the entire chambers of Afe Babalola & Co. in his book."

Insisting that Farotimi engaged in conduct that was unbecoming of a legal practitioner by making false accusations against the Supreme Court and the legal profession, the petitioners further alleged that he participated in unlawful conduct by bribing judicial officers and gaining unlawful access to a judicial officer.

"He joined his clients in committing misconduct and breach of law with



reference to judicial officers by having unlawful access to a judicial officer. He gave service to his client, which he knows is capable of causing a breach of law and disrespect and corrupting a judicial officer. He knowingly made a false statement of law and facts with respect to a case already decided by the Supreme Court.

"He assisted his clients in a conduct that he knows to be illegal and fraudulent. Knowingly engaged in illegal conduct in the course of his practice as a legal practitioner. Treated his fellow lawyers without respect, fairness, consideration, and dignity, allowing ill feelings between opposing clients to influence his conduct and demeanour by distorting the facts of a case in the cause of his practice as a legal practitioner.

"Failed to observe good faith and fairness in dealing with other lawyers in respect to a case already decided by the Supreme Court. Conducted himself in a manner that obstructed, delayed, and adversely affected the administration of justice by taking steps to frustrate a decision of the Supreme Court for his personal benefit and the benefit of his client, who lost at the Supreme Court.

"Treated the court, particularly the Supreme Court, without respect, dignity, and honour by using uncouth, unprofessional, undignified, and offensive language against the Supreme Court and the justices of the Supreme Court. Made defamatory statements

against judicial officers rather than making a complaint to appropriate authorities."

It was the contention of the petitioners that the author "indicated that he discussed a pending case with a judge trying the case in the absence of an opposing lawyer. The contravention of these rules by the Respondent (Farotimi) prompted this petition to protect the dignity of the legal profession and the dignity of the court as the temple of justice and to uphold the standards of the legal profession."

They further noted that some statements in the book had the potential to inflame the legal profession and society, maintaining that the corruption allegations were made to discredit the Nigerian judiciary and to subject the law firm to ridicule so as to damage its hard-earned reputation and financial standing.

However, the LPDC, in its report marked B8B/LPDC/1571/2024, said it was satisfied that all the offences that were listed by the petitioners occurred in Farotimi's capacity as an author and not during his practice as a legal professional.

The LPDC said it was bereft of the jurisdiction to address complaints about publications, even as it enjoined the aggrieved parties to seek redress in regular courts.

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Tinubu bent on tackling corrupt practices – EFCC boss

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Mr. Ola Olukoyede has expressed appreciation to President Bola Tinubu for demonstrating stronger political will in favour of anti-graft efforts of the Commission.

Olukoyede stated this in Abuja on Tuesday, while congratulating Christians as they mark the birth of Jesus Christ in a statement issued on his behalf by Dele Oyewale, the spokesperson for the anti-graft agency.

The EFCC boss pointed out in the statement that the achievements of the EFCC in the last one and half years were direct outcomes of Tinubu's courageous and inspirational leadership.

“Nigerians can see clearly that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is bent on tackling corrupt practices in our midst. The strides of the EFCC could not have been possible without his active support and courage. We appreciate this at all times,” Olukoyede said while expressing hopes of a greater and better Nigeria shorn of economic and financial crimes and other acts of corruption.



He stressed that the light, joy, hope, truth and liberty that Christ brought to the world are significant drives towards zero tolerance for corruption and reform-minded pursuits.

“I deeply believe in the prospects of our nation for growth and development.

The Christmas season is an opportunity to activate these possibilities. The values of light, joy, hope, truth and liberty that Christ brought to the whole world are significant pathways to integrity and zero tolerance for corruption. We can make Nigeria greater if we embrace these values”, he said.

Continuing, Olukoyede extended his appreciation to

the Judiciary, stressing that the “professionalism, commitment, integrity and courage of our Justices and Judges are greatly building strength for the EFCC in its anti-corruption works. He charged the judiciary to continue on its path of redemption and equity.

Additionally, he applauded the media, civil society groups and other critical stakeholders for their fervency and robust engagement with the Commission. He assured that, with their collaboration, greater strides would be made in the coming year

The anti-graft czar also wished Nigerians merry Christmas and fruitful 2025.

Christmas: Tinubu urges Christians to pray for Nigeria's leaders

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has called on Christians to offer prayers and support for Nigeria's leaders as they celebrate Christmas.

In a statement personally signed by him, Tinubu emphasised that Christians supporting the nation's leaders can contribute to the country's progress.

He stated that Nigeria is on a promising path of restoration and advancement, urging citizens to renew their hope and belief in the nation's bright future.

The President also encouraged Christians to show compassion to those facing challenges, noting, "They are not far from us—our neighbours, family members, and the people we encounter daily, whether in places of worship, markets, offices, or boardrooms."

Additionally, Tinubu urged Christians to honour the nation's courageous troops who risk their lives to protect the country, stressing that they deserve continuous prayers and unwavering support.

He noted: "On this joyous Christmas Day, I extend my heartfelt greetings to Christians across Nigeria and worldwide as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, as narrated in the Holy Scriptures.

"Christmas embodies the fulfilment of divine prophecy and symbolises



the triumph of love, peace, and unity. It is a poignant reminder that light can emerge even in the darkest times, bringing solace and hope. This belief resonates with people of all faiths. Indeed, God is with us.

"Recent tragic events in Ibadan, Okija, and Abuja deeply sadden us, and our thoughts are with those who continue to suffer from these heartbreaking incidents. We earnestly pray that such misfortunes do not revisit our families and communities and that the lives of innocents are never again cut short.

"I offer my deepest sympathies to the families enduring pain and loss this year, whether from floods, fires, or accidents. May we all find comfort and solace in our faith, the support of loved ones, and the abiding presence of Jesus Christ.

Our compassionate and merciful God stands with the weak, the brokenhearted, and the sick.

He stressed the importance of kindness that transcends financial status, highlighting that both those of modest means and those with abundance could benefit from a smile or a word of encouragement.

He wished safe travels to everyone journeying during this festive period, assuring that the government is taking all necessary measures to make transportation routes secure and convenient.

"We also provide free train services and subsidized road transport costs on 144 routes nationwide to ease your travels. Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a joyous and prosperous New Year."

FG distributes foods to less-privileged, women families in Abuja

By Friday Omosola

The Federal Government has officially lifted the ban on mining exploration in Zamfara State, signaling a significant shift in its approach to economic development and security in the region.

This decision follows a comprehensive review of the security situation across the state, which has long grappled with issues of banditry and instability.

In a statement issued on Sunday by Segun Tomori, the Special Assistant on Media to the Minister of Solid Minerals, Dele Alake, the government announced that the prohibition on mining activities, which had been in place since 2019, has been rescinded.

This comes after an assessment by President Bola Tinubu and the National Security Adviser, who determined that the security environment in Zamfara has improved sufficiently to allow for the resumption of mining operations.

The ban on mining in Zamfara was first imposed in 2019 under former President Muhammadu Buhari's administration.

The measure was aimed at curbing the escalating insecurity in the state, as mining activities were believed to be fueling banditry and violent crime. Two years later, in 2021, the government declared Zamfara a "no-fly zone," further restricting movement and economic activities in an effort to combat the crisis.

However, the latest evaluation by security agencies has led to the conclusion that conditions in the state have improved, prompting the Federal Government to reverse its earlier stance.

Dele Alake emphasized the economic



potential of Zamfara, describing the state as a treasure trove of mineral resources, including gold, lithium, and copper. The resumption of mining activities is expected to not only boost the local economy but also contribute significantly to Nigeria's overall revenue generation.

The statement read, "The Federal Government has lifted the ban on mining exploration activities in Zamfara State, citing significant improvements in the security situation across the state.

"This decision underscores the government's commitment to revitalizing economic activities in a state endowed with vast mineral wealth. The proper harnessing of these resources will provide jobs, stimulate local businesses, and increase the country's foreign exchange earnings."

Industry stakeholders and experts have welcomed the decision, describing it as a long-overdue step that could unlock the state's economic potential.

Many believe that Zamfara, with its abundant gold and other valuable minerals, could emerge as a key player in Nigeria's mining sector if the industry is properly regulated and

security challenges remain under control.

Nevertheless, concerns linger about the security implications of resuming mining in the state. Critics argue that unless strict monitoring and regulatory measures are implemented, mining activities could once again attract criminal elements, undermining the progress made.

In response, Alake assured that the Federal Government has devised a robust framework to ensure that mining in Zamfara is conducted safely and transparently. He stated that collaboration with local communities, security agencies, and stakeholders in the mining sector would be a cornerstone of the new approach.

The lifting of the ban represents a crucial test of Nigeria's ability to balance economic development with security concerns, especially in resource-rich regions like Zamfara. As the state prepares to welcome mining companies back, the hope is that this move will not only rejuvenate its economy but also sustain the hard-won stability that made it possible.

Christmas Message: Tinubu calls for unity, hope, compassion

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Bola Tinubu has extended warm Christmas greetings to Nigerians, urging them to embrace the spirit of love, peace, and unity embodied in the celebration of Jesus Christ's birth.

In his heartfelt message, the president called on citizens to find solace in faith and renew their commitment to building a prosperous Nigeria.

Tinubu reflected on the profound meaning of Christmas, describing it as a reminder of divine prophecy fulfilled and the triumph of light over darkness.

"Christmas symbolises hope, love, and unity, resonating deeply with people of all faiths," he said, emphasising the significance of the season in inspiring collective strength and resilience.

However, the president acknowledged the challenges Nigerians faced in 2024, citing recent tragic events in Ibadan, Okija, and Abuja, as well as natural disasters like floods and fires.

Expressing deep sympathy for those affected, he prayed for healing and comfort for grieving



families, affirming that God's compassion and mercy remain steadfast.

Tinubu urged Nigerians to show kindness and support to those in need, irrespective of social or financial status.

"A smile, a word of encouragement, or a simple act of kindness can brighten someone's day," he noted, encouraging citizens to extend a helping hand to their neighbours and community members during the festive season.

The president also paid tribute to Nigeria's military personnel, commending their bravery in defending the nation.

He called on Nigerians to offer prayers and unwavering support for the troops, as well as for the

nation's leaders, to foster progress and unity.

Highlighting the government's efforts to ease festive travels, Tinubu announced measures such as free train services and subsidised transportation costs on 144 routes nationwide.

He assured Nigerians of improved transportation security and convenience during the holiday season.

Looking ahead, the President expressed optimism about Nigeria's future, describing the country's current trajectory as promising.

He urged Nigerians to renew their hope in the nation's potential and work collectively towards its restoration and growth.

Oyo residents face bleak Christmas as food prices soar

By Friday Omosola

Ahead of tomorrow's Christmas celebration, many residents of Oyo State are groaning under the weighty burden of escalating food prices in the state, as many of them may end up having a bleak ceremony.

When The New Daily Prime visited some of the popular markets in the state today, it was discovered that prices of various products, including grains and staple food items have hit the rooftop.

Many residents also lamented their inability to afford basic food items needed to celebrate Christmas with their families.

The prices of food items such as rice, beans, yams, garri, and noodles had actually quadrupled in the last few days.

At key markets like Oja Oba, Molete and Oje, a 50kg bag of foreign rice which previously sold for about N80,000, now costs between N90,000 and N100,000.

Similarly, a local measure of eight cups of beans now goes for N1,000 to N2,500, while a measure of garri, which was N1,200, has increased to about N1,400.

The price of chickens has also skyrocketed, with those previously sold for N4,000 to N5,000 now selling as much as N12,000, N15,000, or even N35,000.



The high inflationary trend has created palpable tension across many markets in the State.

When the New Daily Prime visited some of markets, the general mood was far from being festive and celebratory, as many stall owners were idling away for lack of consumers. Even those who had buyers, had a tough time convincing them to purchase their needed products.

Some residents who spoke with the New Daily Prime attributed the price hike to rising costs at storage depots, high transport fare, and other economic factors.

Sekinat Olajire, a chicken vendor, described this year's Christmas as the worst she had ever experienced. She lamented the poor patronage experienced, blaming it on the high cost of poultry products, which has deterred many families from purchasing the chicken for the festive season.

"Christmas is a pleasant

celebration, but the market is dull. At this time, people should be trooping in to buy chickens, but that's not happening because many now rear chickens in their homes.

"We implore people to buy from us. We've even reduced the price from ₦25,000 to ₦15,000, yet people still complain that they are expensive. Our chickens are big. Last year, we sold one for ₦4,000, but now it's ₦8,000, ₦15,000, or more," Sekinat said.

She therefore urged the President Bola Tinubu – led Federal Government overnment to address the issue of rising cost of commodities, emphasising that Nigerians were dying of hunger.

"The government should help us. People want to buy and eat chicken, but they don't have money. If you want to cook a good pot of soup now, you need nothing less than ₦50,000. Fish is not cheap just like other ingredients", she added.

**Continue on
next page**

Cont from page 8

Fagbolade Jibola, the Secretary of the Park Management Service (PMS) under the Oyo state government, lamented that insecurity and the surge in petrol prices have significantly impacted negatively on the cost of foodstuffs and other essential items.

He stated that people can barely afford food, let alone the cost of boarding tricycles, leaving many to abandon such means of transport.

“People aren’t moving, drivers are crying, and the cost of fuel is high. Right now, I can’t send as much as I did last year, because I don’t want a situation where chicken sellers and dealers in other products will be calling for their money.

Nothing is working. The government should reduce fuel price to ₦500 or ₦400,” he added.

A cart pusher, Akilapa Moshood, also expressed frustration over the high cost of living, saying: “Bringing Tinubu on board is very unfortunate, and Nigerians are suffering, because the country is in grave problem. Those who traded their votes for money or rice are the ones responsible for this mess,” he added.

“I bought a small chicken, but I can’t afford rice or other foodstuffs. My wife insists I must return home with the remaining Christmas items, but I don’t have the money.”

A hustler in the same market, Ismaila Ayoade, remarked that the harsh economic condition in the country has forced many people to opt for fish, as the price of chicken has become exorbitantly high.

He also expressed concerns over the rising costs of rice, beans, and other foodstuffs, saying, “The country is in a terrible state. If it were in the past, the markets will be bustling with many people buying and selling chickens. Now, you can barely spot two or three buyers.”

Ayoade echoed the urgent need for government’s intervention, pointing out that many Nigerians struggle to afford basic foodstuff during the festive season, despite their hard work.

“People have nothing to eat as Christmas approaches,” he lamented. Farooq Olalekan, a drink seller, revealed that his family has been unable to buy fish or anything else needed to celebrate Christmas tomorrow.

He explained that his family’s inability to afford Christmas provisions forced him, his mother, and his brother to sell drinks.

“I’m preparing for Christmas and trying my best to get something to eat. I have no job other than selling drinks, which my mother and siblings also depend on. I’m tired we’re all tired. I’m here today to try and make money to buy Christmas food.”

Olayemi Oladosun, a fish seller, explained that despite the rise in chicken prices, people still avoid buying fish from her due to the economic hardship.

She also lamented the scarcity of naira, which she attributed as a major factor behind the decline in patronage.

“Christmas is not going well at all. There’s no market. Even the fish I’m

selling is not being demanded, because people don’t have money to buy chickens.

Michael Alade, a rice vendor and other foodstuffs, lamented, saying “People still come, but not like before. They keep complaining about the high cost of rice, beans, and the other goods I sell. It’s not my fault; everything has become more expensive.

“We even travel to Cotonou to purchase food items, but Customs officials demand money from us without any explanation. We borrow money to stock up, only for customs to seize the goods. We are exhausted. Prices keep rising, and now people can no longer afford food for Christmas.”

Additionally, Victoria Adejimi, a vegetable seller, spoke about her experience, adding: “I haven’t been able to buy any foodstuffs yet. There seems to be no way out for me unless God sends a helper to my family. I came to the market hoping to sell some vegetables, and buy food for Christmas, but the market is not moving.

“Although I have nothing now, I’ll make do with whatever I have. Last year, I had enough and even gave food to those in need. But this year is a different situation.”



FG issues final six-month deadline for banks, telcos to settle N250bn USSD debt

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Federal Government, through the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), has issued a final ultimatum to Deposit Money Banks (DMBs) and Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) to resolve the long-standing N250 billion Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) debt dispute.

In a joint circular released on December 20, 2024, the regulatory bodies outlined a structured payment plan to clear the debt, alongside new operational guidelines for USSD services.

The circular was signed by Oladimeji Taiwo, the Acting Director of Payments System Management at the CBN, and Chizua Whyte, the Head of Legal and Regulatory Services at the NCC.

The directive mandates that 60 per cent of the debt accumulated prior to the implementation of Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) in February 2022 must be paid as full and final settlement.

A payment plan, either as a lump sum or in instalments, is to be agreed upon by January 2, 2025, with full settlement required by July 2, 2025.

For debts incurred after February 2022, banks are required to settle 85 per cent of outstanding invoices by December 31, 2024.

Moving forward, 85 per cent of future invoices must be settled within one month of issuance.

The CBN and NCC further directed that all ongoing litigation regarding the USSD debt be discontinued.



The circular explicitly warned that failure to comply with the payment terms would result in stringent sanctions.

“In view of the foregoing, the CBN and NCC hereby direct that all DMBs and MNOs adhere strictly to the outlined payment terms to ensure final resolution of this matter. Failure to comply will result in sanctions,” the joint circular stated.

The deadline follows growing pressure from telecom operators, who have repeatedly called for a clear and definitive payment framework to address the mounting debt, which has created significant tension between the banking and telecommunications sectors.

The regulators also emphasised the importance of transitioning to end-user billing (EUB) for USSD services. However, this will only apply to banks and telcos that meet the stipulated payment obligations.

Until this transition takes place, operators have been instructed to implement a “10-seconds rule,” ensuring that sessions lasting less than

10 seconds are not billed.

Additionally, the circular allows banks using prepaid billing systems to transition to EUB, contingent upon regulatory approval.

In their joint statement, the CBN and NCC reiterated their commitment to resolving the debt impasse, stating that the new measures are aimed at stabilising both the financial and telecommunications sectors while safeguarding the continued availability of USSD services to Nigerians.

USSD remains an essential service for financial inclusion, particularly in rural areas of Nigeria, where smartphone penetration and internet access are limited.

The service is heavily relied upon by banks for mobile banking, as well as for other telecom services such as airtime top-ups and bill payments.

The USSD debt crisis has persisted for several years, with telecom operators previously threatening to suspend USSD services unless outstanding payments were made.

“I’ve never lied against anyone” – Dele Farotimi speaks out after regaining freedom

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Dele Farotimi, a prominent human rights advocate, has regained his freedom after meeting the stringent bail conditions set by an Ado-Ekiti magistrate court. Farotimi was released from the Ekiti State correctional facility on Tuesday morning, following his arrest on December 3 for alleged defamation against renowned legal luminary Afe Babalola.

The controversy surrounding Farotimi’s arrest stems from his book, “Nigeria and Its Criminal Justice System,” which was released on July 2. In the book, Farotimi accused Babalola and other Senior Advocates of Nigeria (SANs) of corrupting Justices of the Supreme Court. Babalola’s team subsequently filed a petition against Farotimi, leading to his arrest and arraignment in court on charges of defamation and cyberbullying.

Farotimi’s bail conditions included a N30 million bond, two sureties (one of whom must be a property owner), the submission of his passport, and a prohibition on granting media interviews once released. However, in a surprising move, Farotimi addressed the media after his release, asserting his integrity and stating that he had never lied against anyone in his life.



“It is not ever an easy journey when you are fighting evil, but some years back, before I started this work, God told me that the truth is enough. It is the only weapon with which you can slay the monster called Nigeria, which is the truth,” Farotimi said.

Farotimi’s release has been met with relief from his supporters, who have been advocating for his freedom. However, the case against him is far from over, as he still faces multiple charges in both the magistrate court and the federal high court.

The Inspector General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, had filed 12 additional charges against

Farotimi at the Ekiti Federal High Court on December 6. These charges are separate from the defamation charges initially brought against him by Babalola’s team.

As the case against Farotimi continues to unfold, his supporters remain steadfast in their commitment to his cause. Omoyele Sowore, a prominent social activist, confirmed Farotimi’s release on his X handle, stating, “I am pleased to report that Dele Farotimi is no longer being held at the prison yards in Ekiti State and is now returning home to Lagos. The struggle continues!”.

Ibadan Stampede: Court remands Ooni's ex-queen, others

By Friday Omosola

A Chief Magistrate Court in Iyaganku, Ibadan, Oyo State has remanded three prominent individuals in connection to the tragic stampede at Bashorun Islamic High School, Ibadan.

The remanded individuals are Abdullahi Fasasi, the school's principal; Oriyomi Hamzat, owner of Agidigbo FM; and Naomi Silekunola, the former wife of Oba Enitan Adeyeye Ogunwusi, the Ooni of Ife.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that the police confirmed 35 children dead as well as the arrest of Naomi, the funfair organiser and seven others.



Chief Magistrate Olabisi Ogunkanmi presided over the case on Tuesday, as

the trio was arraigned by the Oyo State Police Command.

The hearing, held amidst tight security, drew a large crowd of relatives and onlookers.

The defendants face a four-count charge, including allegations of violating Section 324 of the Criminal Code, Cap. 38, Vol. II, Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

Following the proceedings, the court ordered their remand at the Agodi Correctional Centre, pending further directives from the state prosecutor.

NCAA sanctions five airlines for cancelled flights, others

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) has initiated enforcement action against five airlines (two international and three domestic operators) for various violations of Part 19 of the NCAA regulations.

The violations include the non-payment of refunds within the stipulated time frame, non-responsiveness to the NCAA's directives, missing luggage, manhandled luggage, short-landed baggage, delayed and cancelled flights, amongst others.

A spokesman for NCAA, Michael Achimugu, disclosed this to journalists at the corporate headquarters of the Authority in Abuja on Tuesday.

He said that although airlines are not always responsible for flight disruptions, NCAA regulations stipulate actions that airlines must take during disruptions. Failure to comply attracts various levels of

sanctions.

Recall that the Authority recently warned that it will initiate sanctions if airlines fail to pay refunds within the stipulated time frame of 14 days for online ticket purchases and immediate cash refunds for tickets purchased by cash.

The incessant disruptions this yuletide has caused a surge in passengers' complaints about delays and cancellations. Achimugu defended the airlines for most of the cancellations.

"We all know that this is harmattan season, so there is poor visibility. Flights must get cancelled. This is force majeure, and the airlines do not owe passengers anything in those instances. The enforcement we are initiating today is on cases where the airline is deemed to have been at fault. More will come," the spokesman explained.

He also assured that the Authority will be summoning the chief executives of



all airlines this week to a meeting over flight disruptions and regulatory breaches.

While Achimugu did not disclose the airlines whose sanctions he signed Tuesday, sources close to the Authority disclosed that they are Ethiopian Airways, Royal Maroc Airways, Arik Air, Aero Contractors and Air Peace.

Legal practitioner calls for prosecution of parents involved in stampede

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A legal practitioner, Oluwatobi Fatoki, has urged authorities to prosecute parents who threw their children over a fence to collect palliatives during a recent funfair tragedy in Ibadan, which resulted in the deaths of 35 children. Fatoki emphasized that such parents are culpable in the death of their children and should be held accountable.

The incident, which occurred at Islamic High School, Bashorun, Ibadan, has sparked widespread outrage and calls for greater accountability and safety measures at public events. According to eyewitnesses, parents threw their children over the fence in a desperate bid to collect palliatives, leading to a stampede that resulted in the tragic loss of life.

Fatoki, a former spokesperson of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Ibadan Branch, condemned the act of throwing or aiding children over the fence to collect palliatives, describing it as “outrightly illegal and injurious.” He stressed that parents and guardians have a responsibility to protect their wards and that the government should ensure that things are done in the right way.

“The paramount interest of a child should be the major concern of any parent,” Fatoki said in an interview. “Such a parent should be held culpable



for the death of any child who dies in the process. We have lost national ethics according to the constitution.”

Fatoki also called on governments at all levels to establish strict policies and protocols for organizers of mass gatherings, including the provision of adequate security, first aid, and medical emergency personnel. He emphasized the need for community orientation on how to behave during massive distribution or empowerment programs.

“Government should ensure that things are done in the right way,” Fatoki said. “We have regulatory bodies and protocols that should be followed. Issues of charity should be regulated in all ways

to have a positive outcome.”

The legal practitioner’s comments come as the police investigate the circumstances surrounding the funfair stampede. The incident has raised questions about the safety and security measures in place at public events, particularly those involving large crowds and vulnerable populations such as children.

As the investigation continues, Fatoki’s call for accountability and prosecution of parents involved in the incident has sparked a heated debate about parental responsibility and the need for greater safety measures at public events.

Train collides with rice-laden car in Lagos, Dec 24

By Olamilekan Botti

A shocking incident was captured on Tuesday, showing a dramatic collision between a train and a car in the Iju-Fagba area of Lagos State.

The vehicle involved in the collision, a Toyota Sienna, was reportedly loaded with bags of rice at the time of the crash.

The video, which quickly gained attention on social media, shows the exact moment the train slammed into the car, causing panic among onlookers.

Fortunately, as of the latest update, no casualties have been confirmed in connection with the incident. The collision, while significant, appears to have been without fatal outcomes, though further details are still pending.

This accident comes nearly a year after another deadly collision between a Lagos State staff bus and a commercial train along Agege Motor Road.

The previous incident, which occurred in December 2023, tragically resulted in the deaths of at least three individuals, with many others sustaining various degrees of



injuries. Investigations into that crash revealed that the driver of the BRT bus had acted recklessly, attempting to beat a train traffic signal, which led to the moving train plowing into the bus.

The Lagos State government has since increased efforts to improve safety measures at railway crossings and has called for greater awareness and caution among drivers.

This recent incident in the Iju-Fagba area underscores the ongoing risks associated with railway crossings in the state, particularly as vehicles attempt to navigate busy roads and active train routes.

Authorities are currently investigating the circumstances surrounding Tuesday's collision to

determine whether human error or technical failure contributed to the crash.

While no injuries have been reported so far, the potential for harm remains high in such situations, as the force of a train colliding with a vehicle can be devastating.

As the investigation continues, both the public and authorities are reminded of the importance of adhering to traffic signals and exercising caution at railway crossings.

The recent spate of accidents involving trains highlights the need for improved safety measures and stricter enforcement of traffic regulations to prevent further tragedies.

Makinde signs N684bn 2025 budget into law

By Friday Omosola



Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State has signed the ₦684 billion 2025 Appropriation Act, dubbed the “Budget of Economic Stabilisation,” into law.

Speaking at the Governor’s Office in Agodi, Ibadan, yesterday, Makinde highlighted his administration’s strides in boosting annual budget performance from 30-35 per cent to over 70 per cent and set a new target of 80 per cent implementation for 2025.

Makinde reaffirmed his commitment to reforms, people-focused policies, and economic stability aimed at improving the lives of Oyo State residents.

He described the 2025 budget as pivotal in driving economic progress across the state.

“This process began in September 2024 with budget stakeholders’ meetings across all zones. After gathering input from the people, we drafted the budget and held Treasury Board meetings. For us, the budget is not just an annual exercise; it serves as the operational guide for running this administration,” Makinde stated.

The governor emphasised that the budget includes provisions for the new minimum wage, which will be implemented from January 1, 2025.

He praised labour unions and the state workforce for their cooperation and announced that the government would pay the 13th-month salary to all workers and retirees on December 31,

2024.

“Starting the minimum wage adjustments earlier than planned would mean going against our own laws. However, the 2024 budget already covered regular salaries, wage awards, and the 13th-month payment. Salaries have been paid, wage awards will be disbursed this week, and the 13th-month salary will follow on December 31,” he explained.

Makinde thanked all stakeholders for their support, reiterating his administration’s dedication to fiscal discipline and ensuring that budgetary allocations translate into tangible benefits for the people of the state.

Mutfwang: Plateau poised to lead Nigeria's livestock development

By Friday Omosola

Plateau State Governor, Caleb Mutfwang, has reaffirmed his administration's determination to position the state as a leader in Nigeria's livestock development efforts.

The Governor made this declaration while hosting the Presidential Livestock Reforms Implementation Committee, led by Attahiru Jega, at a courtesy visit and stakeholders' engagement forum held at the New Government House, Rayfield, Jos.

During the meeting, Governor Mutfwang commended President Bola Tinubu for initiating practical measures to revitalize the livestock sector, a move he described as critical for addressing security challenges tied to farmer-herder conflicts and boosting Nigeria's economic growth.

"I must congratulate Mr President for taking the bull by the horns. If there is anyone more challenged to make this a reality, it is us in Northern Nigeria," the Governor said.

"This initiative presents opportunities to de-escalate conflicts, create employment, grow our GDP, and advance technological progress."

Governor Mutfwang emphasised Plateau State's unique advantages, including its skilled workforce, technical expertise, and conducive climate, as key assets in leading livestock reforms in the country.

He revealed plans to establish a Ministry of Livestock Development by January 2025 to



facilitate the transformation.

"We will domesticate this national initiative, taking into account our local peculiarities, and we must move forward together. A secure environment isn't the presence of soldiers; it's the absence of soldiers.

"Our focus should be on policies and strategies that de-escalate conflicts while building a progressive, productive, and profitable livestock ecosystem," he added.

Jega, Co-Chairman of the Presidential Livestock Reforms Implementation Committee, praised Governor Mutfwang's commitment and assured him of the committee's full support in making Plateau a model for livestock development.

"We have assessed Plateau and believe it can lead to the

development of livestock in this country. The President established this committee in July 2024 to harness opportunities within the livestock sector. When fully developed, this sector will not only provide employment and boost productivity but also enhance economic growth nationwide", Jega said.

The committee is currently engaging stakeholders across the country to promote the initiative and identify opportunities for economic and social development within the livestock sector.

Ishaku Bugama, Plateau State Commissioner of Agriculture, also welcomed the committee and reiterated the state's readiness to drive livestock reforms for the benefit of the nation.

NAPTIP successfully reunites 1,200 trafficked victims with families

By Olamilekan Botti

The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) has reported a remarkable achievement in reuniting approximately 1,200 victims of human trafficking with their families over the past year. This milestone was highlighted in a comprehensive three-year performance review spanning from September 2021 to September 2024.

The report, released in November 2024, provides an in-depth look at the tenure of NAPTIP's immediate past Director-General, Prof. Fatima Waziri-Azi. According to the agency, a total of 1,198 trafficked victims were successfully reunited with their families across its nationwide offices between September 2023 and September 2024. Notably, the majority of these reunifications occurred in 2024, reflecting the agency's intensified efforts during the period.

Data from the report revealed monthly variations in the number of victims rescued. In September 2023, NAPTIP rescued 101 victims, a figure that slightly increased to 105 in October and 112 in November. However, December 2023 witnessed a significant drop, with only 81 victims rescued. The trend continued into the new year, with 88 victims rescued in January 2024.

This number climbed to 109 in February but saw a slight decline to 95 in March. April 2024 recorded the lowest monthly rescue figure during this period, with only 67 victims rescued. The numbers rebounded in May, with a significant increase to 160 victims rescued, followed by 116 in June. The peak was recorded in July 2024, with 164 victims rescued, marking the highest monthly figure within the reporting period.

Victims rescued by NAPTIP received comprehensive support, including shelter, legal assistance, mental health counseling, and reintegration services, before being reunited with their families. These services were critical in ensuring the victims' smooth transition back into society and their overall well-



being.

In addition to its rescue and reunification efforts, NAPTIP has made substantial strides in securing justice for victims of trafficking (VoTs) and survivors of gender-based violence. Between January 2022 and August 2024, the agency secured 190 convictions for human trafficking, representing 27.94% of all convictions achieved by the agency since its inception 21 years ago. Additionally, NAPTIP recorded 20 convictions for rape and domestic violence during the same period, accounting for 74.07% of all such convictions secured by the agency since 2015.

Among the high-profile cases highlighted in the report were life imprisonment sentences handed down to three offenders convicted of rape. Seven offenders received prison terms of 10 years or more, including the notable case of Felicia Osaigbovo, who was sentenced to 12 years in prison and fined N24 million for trafficking Nigerian girls to Belgium for sexual exploitation. Another case involved Patricia Igbinovia, who, in January 2024, was convicted of facilitating the trafficking of five victims to Spain and sentenced to seven years in prison along with a N1 million fine.

For less severe offences, 12 offenders

received sentences ranging from one to four years, often accompanied by fines or compensation payments. In some instances, fines alone were imposed, ranging from N250,000 to N24 million.

The report credited these achievements to enhanced collaboration with local and international partners. Prof. Waziri-Azi emphasized the importance of these partnerships, stating, "These convictions are a testament to the agency's unwavering commitment to justice and the resilience of survivors who courageously participated in the prosecution process."

The report also shed light on the nature of exploitation faced by VoTs. Forced labour and sexual exploitation emerged as the predominant forms of abuse. Additional insights from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) revealed that 1,114 victims, primarily females (82%), were subjected to forced labour and sex trade exploitation.

NAPTIP's achievements underscore its dedication to combating human trafficking, securing justice for victims, and fostering partnerships to enhance its effectiveness. The agency's continued efforts highlight the importance of collective action in addressing this global challenge.

15-Year-Old dies in Niger gang clash, arrests made

By Olamilekan Botti

15-year-old suspected gang member, identified as Saidu Udu, was killed during a violent confrontation between rival groups in Minna, the capital of Niger State. The deadly clash, which took place in the Gurgudu area of Maitumbi, has left the community in shock, with the local police confirming the death and the arrest of several suspects.

According to a statement from the Niger State Police Command, the altercation broke out around 11:30 a.m. when hoodlums from two rival factions, one from Gurgudu and the other from Kwari-Berger, clashed in a bloody confrontation. The clash reportedly involved more than 50 individuals, escalating into violence that resulted in the fatal stabbing of Saidu Udu, a 15-year-old resident of Gurgudu.

The police were swift to respond to the scene, dispatching a patrol team from the Maitumbi Division. However, by the time law enforcement arrived, the attackers had already dispersed, leaving behind only the victim's lifeless body. The injured young man was rushed to a nearby hospital, where he was later confirmed dead. His death has sparked outrage in the community, with many demanding justice for the senseless loss of a young life.

The police spokesperson, Wasiu Abiodun, provided further details in a WhatsApp message to NEW DAILY PRIME, confirming that the altercation was the result of a dispute between the rival groups. "On December 21, 2024, at approximately 11:30 a.m., miscreants from the Gurgudu area of Maitumbi and Kwari-Berger engaged in a violent confrontation



that led to the death of Saidu Udu, 15, from Gurgudu. A police patrol team was dispatched to the scene, but the hoodlums had already fled. The victim was taken to the hospital, where he was confirmed dead."

Following the tragic event, the police conducted a thorough follow-up operation in the area, which led to the arrest of five individuals who were attempting to flee the scene of the crime. These suspects are currently undergoing investigation, and the police are actively working to apprehend the other individuals involved in the violent clash. Authorities have assured the public that all necessary steps are being taken to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The violent confrontation is believed to have been sparked by a disagreement over the distribution of money, allegedly given to the gang members by an unidentified benefactor. Sources suggest that the gangs were fighting over their share of the Christmas funds, which may have triggered the deadly

altercation. As the investigation continues, authorities are focusing on identifying the individuals behind the funding of the gangs, as well as tracking down any remaining suspects.

This tragic incident highlights the growing concerns over gang-related violence in parts of Niger State, where clashes between rival groups have become more frequent in recent months. The death of Saidu Udu has raised alarm in the local community, with residents calling for stronger action to curb gang violence and protect the safety of young people.

As the investigation unfolds, the Niger State Police Command is urging members of the public to remain vigilant and report any information that could help in the apprehension of the remaining suspects. The authorities have also emphasized the need for greater community involvement in addressing the root causes of gang violence, particularly among the youth, who are often lured into criminal activities.

Ogun Assembly approves N1.054trn budget, adjusts key agency allocations

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Ogun State House of Assembly has approved the 2025 Appropriation Bill, amounting to N1,054,542,020,147, which had been presented by the state governor, Dapo Abiodun 20 days prior.

The approval included minor adjustments to recurrent expenditures across 21 agencies, as well as slight modifications to the capital expenditures of five agencies and the revenue targets for two agencies.

The passage followed the presentation of the report by the House Committee on Finance and Appropriation, chaired by Hon. Musefiu Lamidi, who moved the motion for its adoption.

His motion was seconded by Hon. Wahab Haruna and supported unanimously by the House during the plenary session presided over by Speaker Oludaisi Elemide at the Assembly Complex in Oke-Mosan, Abeokuta.

The bill was meticulously reviewed and adopted clause by clause in the Committee of the Whole House.

The motion for its third reading was moved by Majority Leader Yusuf Sheriff, seconded by Minority Leader Lukman Adeleye, and endorsed by all lawmakers through a unanimous voice vote.



Subsequently, the Clerk and Head of Legislative Service, Mr. Sakiru Adebakin, read the bill for the third time before the lawmakers.

The Speaker directed that a clean copy of the bill be forwarded to Governor Dapo Abiodun for his assent.

Several agencies saw adjustments to their budgetary proposals. The Ministry of Budget and Planning's estimate rose from N1.475 billion to N1.902 billion, an increase of N427 million. The Ministry of Community Development and Cooperatives experienced a rise from N1.780 billion to N2.499 billion, representing an increment of N719 million.

Similarly, the Ministry of Health's budget increased from N3.806

billion to N4.116 billion. The State Teaching Service Commission's proposal rose from N34.412 billion to N35.912 billion. The budget for the State Traffic Compliance and Enforcement Corps (TRACE) moved from N1.347 billion to N1.372 billion, while the State Hospital, Sokenu, Abeokuta, received an adjustment from N3.208 billion to N3.348 billion.

Additionally, the Ogun State Security Network (Amotekun) had its budget proposal raised from N765 million to N1.575 billion. The State Environmental Protection Agency's allocation increased from N252 million to N262 million. The State Library Board's 2025 budget also rose from N147 million to N177 million.

75-yr-old cleric arrested in Zamfara for fortifying bandits

By Dave Oludare Oso

Alhaji Lambo Ilea, a 75-year-old cleric has been arrested by a local community watch group in Zamfara State for allegedly providing spiritual backing to bandits operating in Zamfara and Katsina states.

The cleric reportedly confessed to offering spiritual services to bandits for nearly six years during interrogation.

He disclosed that his clientele initially consisted of nine gang leaders, including a notorious bandit leader, Sani Gurugu, who commands multiple gangs terrorising communities in Safana.

Ilea further admitted to receiving a payment of N1.3 million from Gurugu in exchange for his spiritual services, which he claimed were meant to enhance the bandits' operations.

The arrest comes as local vigilantes intensify efforts to curb the activities of criminal groups and their collaborators in Zamfara State, a region plagued by banditry and insecurity.

Meanwhile, the Safana Local Government Area in Katsina State has been a hideout for bandits.

Reports noted that Safana and Faskari have become hubs for bandits, who use the routes to launch attacks because Faskari lies on the boundary between Katsina and Zamfara states.



In a video shared on X by security analyst and counter-insurgency expert Zagazola Makama on Tuesday, it was observed that the vigilante group handed the suspect over to security forces for further investigation.

Confessing to the crime, the cleric said, "I am Alhaji Lambo Ilea, and I will tell the Zamfara Local Community Watch group what I am involved in. I was arrested for offering spiritual support to the bandits.

"I am a spiritual guide for the bandits who operate in the bush. I have vowed to confess all my offences to the local vigilante group, and no one forced me to reveal my involvement with the bandits.

"I have been offering spiritual support to the bandits for almost six years. The first group I supported consisted of nine gang leaders. Among them is Sani Gurugu, who leads several gangs that operate in Safana.

"He came to me and gave me N500,000, telling me that they would return after their mission. I fortified them before they went to attack Dan-Sadau in Zamfara State."

He continued, "When they returned from their operation, Sani Gurugu gave me N800,000. The spiritual fortification I provided was successful. During the operation, they did not kidnap anyone, but they rustled cows and other animals. There were confrontations during the operation, but no one lost their life.

"For the second operation, Sani Gurugu did not give me anything, but he came to me and told me that they wanted to go to Faskari. After the attack in Faskari, some of his gang members were killed by security operatives.

"After he came back, he did not give me anything. He complained that their operation was not successful because I did not fortify them well.

"Meanwhile, after the failed operation, Sani Gurugu came back and told me that they wanted to launch an attack in Dubura, Zamfara State. I also offered them further spiritual support, but their operation was unsuccessful again. On their way, after rustling cattle, they had a confrontation with security forces and eleven of his members were killed."

Controversy erupts over planned Sharia Court in Oyo State

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A heated debate has emerged in Oyo State, Nigeria, as an Islamic group, the Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria, Oyo State chapter, prepares to launch a Sharia court in the state. The group has scheduled the inauguration ceremony for January 11, 2025, at the Muslim Community Islamic Centre in Oyo.

The planned launch has sparked widespread criticism, with many arguing that the South West, populated by Yoruba people, is not a suitable location for a Sharia court, given its dominance by Muslims in the North. Netizens have taken to social media to express their disapproval, with many warning that the implementation of Sharia law could lead to arbitrary arrests, oppression, and human rights violations, even for non-Muslims.

A flyer highlighting the event

One social media user, #OurFavOnlineDoc, cautioned, "If sharia law gets implemented in your state, let me tell you ahead what will happen. You can be randomly arrested and imprisoned for 'indecent dressing'. EVEN IF you are not a Muslim, EVEN if you are a Christian, EVEN IF you are a traditionalist, EVEN IF you don't subscribe to Sharia, and EVEN IF you are an atheist."

Another user, #BabaAjisefa, emphasized, "If you're silent on this sharia law saga in the southwest, then you're enabling it. Even if we can't see the implications of the laws in other

SUPREME COUNCIL FOR SHARI'AH IN NIGERIA
OYO CHAPTER
 Afijio, Atiba, Oyo East and Oyo West local Governments
 Cordially Invites

TO THE
INAUGURATION CEREMONY
 OF SHARIA COURT IN OYO TOWN AND ITS ENVIRONS

Date: 11th January, 2025 (11/7/1446AH) | Time: 10:00am prompt Insh Allah
 Venue: Muslim Community Islamic Centre, Obu Adeyemi High School Road, Mobolaje Area, Agbogangan, Oyo.

Royal Father of the day
 HIGH CHIEF YUSUF AKINADE OLAYINKA 1
 Basorun of Oyo land

Spiritual Fathers of the day
 ALH. ABDUL LATEEF ABDULAZEEZ ELEYELE
 Mufasiru of Oyo Land

Chief Host
 ALH. CHIEF TAJUDEEN ABDUL-HAMMED KAMORISE
 Aare Muslimi of Oyo Land

ALH. YAQUB MAINAZARA
 Amir Li-Mumeen of Oyo Land

HOSTS

DR. RAFIU ADISA BELLO
 Chairman, Sharia Committee of Oyo Land (08145539810)

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 Chairman, Muslim Community of Oyo Land

SHEIKH ABDUL RASHEED ADIYATULLAHI
 National Chairman, Shari'a Committee

Guest Lecturer
Sheikh Dr. Abdul Azeez

nations, we can see it in the north. The question is 'what progress does it bring?' And those that claim it will be for Muslims only don't forget that was how they started in the north, and Hisbah can arrest anyone now. We reject Sharia law in its entirety. No to sharia law in Yorubaland."

The controversy has also sparked concerns about the potential consequences of implementing Sharia law in Oyo State. Some have cited examples from other countries, such as Afghanistan, where the Taliban's strict interpretation of Sharia law has led to widespread human rights abuses.

Despite the backlash, the Islamic group has not publicly responded to the criticisms. Attempts by journalists to reach the Chairman and Secretary of the Sharia Committee in Oyo, Dr. Rafiu Bello and Sulaimon Abuqoodi, were unsuccessful.

The controversy highlights the complex and sensitive nature of religious and legal issues in Nigeria, a country with a diverse population and a complex system of laws. As the debate continues, it remains to be seen how the situation will unfold.

The planned launch of the Sharia court has also raised questions about the role of religion in the governance of Oyo State. While some argue that the Sharia court will provide an alternative dispute resolution mechanism for Muslims in the state, others fear that it could lead to the erosion of secular values and the marginalization of non-Muslims.

The controversy highlights the complex and sensitive nature of religious and legal issues in Nigeria, a country with a diverse population and a complex system of laws. As the debate continues, it remains to be seen how the situation will unfold.

IBEDC issues strong warning against energy theft risks

By Olamilekan Botti

The Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IBEDC) has issued a stern warning against energy theft, urging customers to desist from illegal activities that compromise service quality and the safety of the community. This call to action underscores the company's unwavering commitment to ensuring a stable and reliable power supply, especially during the festive season.

In a statement released on Tuesday and made available to NEW DAILY PRIME, the Managing Director of IBEDC, Francis Agoha, stressed the importance of combating energy theft to safeguard the progress of the community and enhance the quality of service delivery. "Energy theft, including meter tampering and illegal connections, is a serious offence that not only impacts our ability to provide quality service but also undermines the development of our society," Agoha stated.

The company revealed that it has implemented robust measures to bolster network stability and swiftly address faults in preparation for the increased demand for electricity during the holidays. "We understand the heightened need for electricity at this time of year, and we are fully prepared to respond promptly to any service disruptions to ensure our customers enjoy an uninterrupted power supply," the statement added.

To foster a collaborative approach in combating energy theft, IBEDC urged customers to report any suspicious activities in their communities. "We appeal to our customers to join hands with us by reporting cases of energy theft immediately. Your cooperation is vital in curbing this menace and



ensuring equitable access to power for all," Agoha said.

Beyond addressing energy theft, the company highlighted the critical importance of customer safety. "We urge our customers to prioritise safety by avoiding hazardous practices such as tampering with electrical installations or engaging in unsafe activities like cooking under power lines," Agoha cautioned, noting that such practices pose significant risks of injury or fatalities.

To make bill payments and electricity purchases more convenient and secure, IBEDC encouraged customers to leverage its digital platforms, including the IBEDCPAY app, Quickteller, and Pay arena. "These platforms provide a seamless and efficient way to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply, even during the busy holiday period," the Managing Director explained.

As part of its customer-centric approach, IBEDC assured customers that its offices will remain open throughout the holiday season to

handle inquiries, process bill payments, and provide vending services. This initiative is aimed at ensuring that customers have access to the support they need during this festive period.

In his concluding remarks, Agoha expressed gratitude to the company's customers for their continued support and patronage throughout the year. "We deeply appreciate our customers for their loyalty and understanding. As we celebrate this season of joy, we wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year filled with peace, happiness, and progress," he said.

The IBEDC's proactive measures and customer-focused initiatives reflect its dedication to delivering reliable electricity services while fostering safety and community development. By addressing critical issues such as energy theft and prioritising customer well-being, the company is positioning itself as a responsible and responsive partner in the development of the regions it serves.

Police restrict commercial motorcyclists, ban fireworks in Kwara

By Olamilekan Botti

The Kwara State Police Command has announced a ban on the use of fireworks and imposed strict restrictions on commercial motorcyclists. The new directives, which aim to minimize security risks and maintain public order, are set to be enforced immediately.

The announcement was made on Tuesday by the Kwara State Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Okasanmi Ajayi, who emphasized that the measures are part of the police's ongoing efforts to address potential threats during the holiday season. The ban on fireworks follows concerns over the disruptive noise and potential hazards they pose, while the restrictions on commercial motorcyclists are aimed at preventing criminal activities, such as robberies and accidents.

According to DSP Okasanmi Ajayi, the use of fireworks has become a source of worry for both law enforcement and local communities. "The use of fireworks during celebrations can be both dangerous and disruptive. It poses significant safety risks, especially in densely populated areas. We have received numerous complaints about fireworks causing panic, especially among the elderly and children, and even pets," he stated in a press release.

Fireworks, while traditionally used during celebrations like Christmas and New Year, have been linked to incidents of fire outbreaks, accidents, and in some cases, injuries. The police have urged residents to adhere to the directive and avoid using fireworks during the holiday season.

In addition to the ban on fireworks, the Kwara State Police Command has



also announced that commercial motorcyclists, commonly referred to as "Okada riders," will face restrictions in certain parts of the state. The police have expressed concerns about the role of commercial motorcycles in facilitating criminal activities, particularly armed robberies, and the rising number of accidents involving motorcycles.

"The restriction on commercial motorcyclists is a proactive measure to prevent crimes and reduce the rate of motorcycle-related accidents," DSP Ajayi explained. "Motorcycles have unfortunately been used as tools by criminals, especially in cases of armed robbery, where they are often used for quick getaways. This restriction will help curb such incidents and improve public safety."

The police have indicated that the restrictions will be implemented in key areas, particularly in high-crime zones and busy commercial districts. Commercial motorcyclists will be required to adhere to specific routes and will be closely monitored to ensure they do not engage in illegal activities. In addition, riders will be required to wear helmets and display

identification tags, which will help authorities identify those operating legally.

The Kwara State Police Command has assured residents that these measures will be enforced fairly and that the police will continue to provide a visible presence in the community to ensure compliance. The police have also urged citizens to report any violations of the new regulations, promising swift action against offenders.

While the restrictions and ban have been met with mixed reactions from the public, law enforcement officials maintain that these steps are necessary for the safety and well-being of all residents. As the holiday season progresses, the Kwara State Police Command remains committed to ensuring a secure environment for all, urging citizens to cooperate with the authorities to maintain peace and order.

With the festive season underway, the Kwara Police continue to encourage vigilance and responsibility, urging residents to celebrate in a safe and law-abiding manner.

Dele Farotimi released after meeting bail conditions

By Friday Omosola

Human rights lawyer and activist, Dele Farotimi, has been released from the Ekiti State correctional facility after fulfilling his bail conditions.

Farotimi regained his freedom on Tuesday morning, following his arraignment at a magistrate court in Ado-Ekiti.

The court had granted him bail set at ₦30 million, with additional stipulations, including the provision of two sureties.

Magistrate Abayomi Adeosun specified that the sureties must be “responsible citizens,” with at least one owning property within the court’s jurisdiction.

Farotimi was also required to surrender his international passport and refrain from granting media interviews while the case is ongoing.

The activist is facing a 14-count charge of alleged defamation, stemming from claims made in his book “Nigeria and its Criminal Justice System”, where he allegedly “criminally defamed” senior advocate Afe Babalola.



Farotimi pleaded not guilty to the charges and is concurrently facing trial in another court over related allegations.

On December 9, the Federal High Court in Ekiti had also granted him bail in a separate case, involving a 12-count cybercrime charge filed by the Inspector-General of Police.

This bail was set at ₦50 million with one

surety.

Speaking to supporters after his release, Farotimi reiterated his commitment to truth and integrity.

“In my public advocacy, I have never lied against anyone. If I don’t know something, I will say I don’t know. Truth remains the only weapon that can transform this country,” he said.

Mass burial held for victims of Plateau gunmen attack

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A devastating attack by gunmen in Gidan Ado community, Riyom Local Government Area of Plateau State, has left 15 people dead, several houses burnt, and many injured and displaced. The victims were laid to rest in a mass burial on Monday, a somber reminder of the ongoing violence in the region.

The attack, which occurred late Sunday night, was condemned by the Plateau State Commissioner for Information, Musa Ashoms, who described the act as “barbaric”

“This actually happened in Gidan Ado, in Ganawuri community, Riyom Local Government, where the assailants came and took away the precious lives of our people like that. It is barbaric,”



Ashoms said.

He urged security agencies to apprehend the perpetrators.

A youth leader in the community, Song Muru, confirmed the attack and detailed the devastation, including the loss of at least six lives initially reported, with others still missing.

The Plateau State Government has expressed sadness over the incident and condoled with the families of the deceased. Commissioner Ashoms emphasized the need for security agencies to redouble their efforts to arrest the perpetrators and prevent further violence.

The government has also called on the assailants to desist from their barbaric acts, reiterating that the people of Plateau State are known for their peaceful disposition.

NAFDAC raids warehouse, seizes fake products worth N3.8b By Helen Okechukwu

In a major clamp down,, the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) has raided a warehouse in Lagos and seized fake products valued at N3.8 billion.

Following a tip off about the fake food products, a team from NAFDAC's Investigation & Enforcement Directorate raided the storehouse located at Apongbon Oke Arin Market and recovered various food items.

This raid and seizure was disclosed today, on NAFDAC's social media page ,which stated that the warehouse was sealed pending further investigation.

Also, the agency revealed that the management of the sealed warehouse have been summoned.

It added that once after investigation was



concluded ,that appropriate sanctions will be meted out to those found guilty.

Acknowledging its commitment, NAFDAC stated, "We reaffirm our commitment to protecting public health and ensuring compliance with regulatory

standards."

"We also urge the public to remain vigilant during the festive season and report suspicious activities to the nearest NAFDAC office.

Lagos agency set up task force to check noise pollution

By Helen Okechukwu

A devastating attack by gunmen in Gidan Ado community, Riyom Local Government Area of Plateau State, has left 15 people dead, several houses burnt, and many injured and displaced. The victims were laid to rest in a mass burial on Monday, a somber reminder of the ongoing violence in the region.

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emphasized the need for security agencies to redouble their efforts to arrest the perpetrators and prevent further violence.

The government has also called on the assailants to desist from their barbaric acts, reiterating that the people of Plateau State are known for their peaceful disposition.

This incident is reminiscent of last year's Christmas Eve violence in Plateau State, which resulted in multiple deaths and destruction of homes. In response, the Plateau State Police Command has implemented measures to ensure a peaceful atmosphere during and after the Christmas festive season, including banning night grazing and farming activities, deploying personnel across all 17 LGAs, and restricting late-night activities.

Celebrities who died in 2024

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

The Nigerian entertainment industry suffered a profound loss in 2024, as several beloved celebrities who made lasting impacts passed away.

Here are some of the shining stars we mourn who left us far too soon:

OLOFAINA

Veteran actor Olofa Ina, born Deji Aderemi, passed away on January 4, 2024, at the age of 73. Renowned for his iconic movie roles and masterful delivery of scripts, he graced the screen in films such as Odetedo, Lakaaye, Kogun Maja, and Ade Oba.

Olofa Ina's legacy will be profoundly missed.

SISQUADRI

Tolani 'Sisi Quadri' Oyebamiji, a beloved Yoruba actor, passed away on March 1, 2024, at Ladoke Akintola University Teaching Hospital in Ogbomosho. Known for his comedic roles and quick-witted insults, Sisi Quadri endeared himself to fans with his unique charm.

He was laid to rest in his hometown of Iwo, Osun State.

JOHN 'MR IBU' OKAFOR

Veteran comic actor John Okafor, popularly known as Mr. Ibu, passed away in March 2024 at the age of 62 due to cardiac arrest. Prior to his death, Mr. Ibu had bravely battled a life-threatening illness that resulted in the amputation of his leg.

He was laid to rest on June 28 in Amurri, Nkanu, his hometown in Enugu.



AMAECHE MUONAGOR

Actor Amaechi Muonagor passed away in April 2024 after a prolonged struggle with kidney disease, diabetes, and a stroke. At 61, and hailing from Idemili town in Anambra State, Muonagor had called for financial assistance to cover his medical expenses before his passing. His invaluable contributions to the Nigerian film industry will be deeply remembered.

ADEJUMOKE ADEROUNMU

Adejumoke Aderounmu tragically passed away on April 6. Rising to fame through Funke Akindele's TV series Jenifa's Diary, the young actress left a lasting impact.

Her death ignited controversy, with accusations from her brother claiming neglect by Akindele during her illness. Despite the controversy, Aderounmu's talent and potential will be cherished and remembered.

SARATU GIGADO

Kannywood actress Saratu Gidado, popularly known as Daso, passed away on April 9, 2024. With over two decades of experience in the Hausa film industry, Gidado starred in more than 100 movies.

Her legacy will continue to inspire future actors in the Kannywood industry.

JUNIOR POPE

Actor Junior Pope Odonwodo tragically lost his life in a boat accident on the River Niger in Asaba, Delta State, on April 10, 2024. He, along with four crew members, was en route to a movie location.

Continue on
next page

Cont from page 26

The news of his passing sparked widespread controversy and profound grief throughout the entertainment industry and among his fans.

ONYEKA ONWENU

Legendary singer and actress Onyeka Onwenu collapsed and passed away at Stella Okoli's 80th birthday party, founder of Emzor Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Company, on July 30, 2024.

The 72-year-old award-winning songstress was laid to rest at the Ebony Vaults in Ikoyi, Lagos, on August 30.

Onwenu's illustrious career in music and acting, spanning over four decades, will continue to inspire future generations of artists.

SULE SUEBE BE

Dayo Adewunmi, the acclaimed actor known as Sule Suebebe, passed away on June 12. Renowned for his comedic brilliance, Suebebe died at an undisclosed hospital in Ibadan, Oyo State, at the age of 68.

Before his passing, the Ekiti-based thespian had called for financial assistance to cover his medical expenses. Suebebe's unmatched talent

for bringing laughter will be profoundly missed.

STELLA IKWUEGBU

Stella Ikwuegbu, the acclaimed actress, passed away in July after a courageous battle with leg cancer. Ikwuegbu began her acting career in 1990 and made notable contributions to Nollywood, appearing in numerous films. Her lasting impact on the Nigerian film industry will not be forgotten.

SHARON OKPAMEN

Actress and producer Sharon Okpamen passed away in August 2024, just a month after welcoming her second child. She began her acting career in the mid-2000s, gaining recognition for her role in *Touch Not My Crown*.

Okpamen appeared in several notable films, including *The Great Servant*, *Take A Fall*, *Eshikito*, *Enibokun Nollose*, *Ovbieze Odehionwan*, *Olighi*, *Efosa*, and *The Housewife*.

Her talent, dedication, and contributions to the industry will be remembered, and her legacy will continue to inspire future actors.

CHARLES 'AGBAKO' OLUMO

Abdulsalam Sanyaolu, the legendary Nigerian actor widely known as Charles Olumo and Baba Agbako Abdulsalam Sanyaolu, the legendary Nigerian actor widely known as Charles Olumo and Baba Agbako, passed away on October 31, 2024, at the remarkable age of 101.

Born on February 19, 1923, in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Baba Agbako's acting career spanned over seven decades, leaving a lasting impact on the Nigerian film industry.

His enduring legacy will continue to inspire future generations of actors.

BABA GBENRO

Baba Gbenro Gospel actor and producer Baba Gbenro passed away, leaving a lasting legacy in the gospel film industry. His impactful contributions to the industry will always be remembered.

ETHELEKPE

Ethel Ekpe, best known for her role as Segi in the iconic sitcom *Basi and Company*, passed away after a battle with cancer.

Funke Akindele's 'Everybody Loves Jenifa' is highest-grossing Nollywood film of 2024

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

The Nigerian Box Office took to X to announce a remarkable achievement that has sent waves of excitement throughout Nollywood with "Jenifa" by Funke Akindele.

The platform revealed that the movie, released in cinemas on December 13, had achieved a record-breaking feat by earning N156 million in its second weekend.

This brings its total box office earnings to an impressive N511 million. The post read: "Another N156M for Everybody Loves Jenifa in its second weekend, pushing its cumulative total to N511M, with over 101,000 admissions."

Film One, the entertainment company behind the film, also declared that Everybody Loves Jenifa is now 2024's highest-grossing Nollywood title and the fastest to hit ₦500 million, accomplishing this milestone in just 12 days.

The success of Everybody Loves Jenifa was celebrated by Funke Akindele, the film's lead actress and director, who took to Instagram to express her heartfelt gratitude. "Thank you, Lord! Thank you, everyone!!! I couldn't have done this without your love and support! God bless you all," she wrote.

This achievement isn't surprising given that Everybody Loves Jenifa set a new standard for Nollywood with its record-breaking opening day.

The film raked in N45.2 million with 9,409 admissions, establishing itself as the highest-grossing Nollywood film on its first day. The movie is the latest installment in the beloved Jenifa franchise, which has entertained audiences since its debut in 2008.

Featuring a star-studded cast, including Layi Wasabi, Nancy Isime,



Jackie Appiah, Falz, Omowunmi Dada, Chimezie Imo, Patience Ozokwor, and Stan Nze, Everybody Loves Jenifa continues to captivate moviegoers. The ensemble cast brings an impressive mix of talent, each contributing to the film's overall appeal and success.

Akindele, who also directed the film, recently issued a strong warning against piracy. In a stern message, she emphasized that anyone caught pirating the movie would face arrest.

"Pirating this movie will lead to arrest. Let's support our industry!" she declared, underscoring the importance of protecting Nigerian cinema and ensuring that its success is not undermined by illegal activities.

Jenifa" reigns: N511M Nollywood hit
The overwhelming response to Everybody Loves Jenifa highlights the growing popularity of Nollywood and its ability to produce high-quality films that resonate with both local and international audiences.

Its box office success reflects the

increasing global appeal of Nigerian cinema, further positioning Nollywood as a key player in the entertainment industry.

The film's triumph also underscores the strength of the Jenifa franchise, which has consistently delivered relatable and entertaining stories. The franchise has played a significant role in shaping Nollywood's landscape, helping to elevate the industry's status both domestically and internationally.

With its impressive box office numbers and strong fan base, Everybody Loves Jenifa has firmly established itself as a force to be reckoned with in Nollywood.

The film's success is a testament to the evolving nature of Nigerian cinema, proving that there is a growing demand for authentic, high-quality content that resonates with audiences.

As Nollywood continues to thrive, industry insiders and fans alike eagerly anticipate more records being broken and further achievements in Nigerian cinema.

I make more money from car washing business than music – Jason Derulo

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

In a recent interview with Hits Radio, famous American singer Jason Derulo made a surprising revelation that has left many scratching their heads.

The platinum-selling artist shared that he now earns more money from his car washing business than from his music career—a statement that has sparked considerable curiosity.

Surprising revelation

Derulo, who has enjoyed global fame and multiple hit records, admitted, “It’s true that I make more money from my car washing business than my music. It’s pretty crazy. I never thought something like this could be life-changing.”

The artist confessed he never expected his side venture to become such a significant source of income.

Initially, Derulo pursued the car washing business simply as an opportunity. “I got into it, I thought that it would be good but I didn’t think that was going to be a life-changing event,” he explained. Despite his disbelief, the venture has grown far beyond his expectations.

The unique business model

One of the most surprising aspects of Derulo’s car washing business is its unconventional setup. “You know what’s crazy? I’ve never even advertised my car washing business. It’s pretty incredible. It’s a super car wash—nothing like the typical car washes you’re used to,” he said.

The car wash Derulo operates stands out from the usual. It features large glass panels, offering customers a clear view of their vehicles being washed. “It’s all glass so when your car is being washed, everybody can see the action. It’s like a show,” he added.

This transparent, visually engaging



approach has created a unique customer experience that Derulo believes has contributed significantly to its success.

Different kind of show

What makes Derulo’s car washing business particularly intriguing is its interactive nature. Unlike traditional car washes, which rely on conveyor belts and closed-door washing areas, Derulo’s setup allows customers to witness the entire process from start to finish.

This open, public-facing model has turned the experience into a form of entertainment.

“It’s not like the ones you’re probably used to. It’s all glass so when your car is being washed, everybody can see the action. It’s like a show,” Derulo explained.

The concept has not only drawn attention but also created a unique branding opportunity that sets his business apart from competitors.

Diversification and innovation

Derulo’s journey highlights the importance of diversification and innovation in today’s rapidly changing economy.

Despite his fame and success in music, Derulo was willing to explore new ventures outside his primary career.

His car washing business is a testament to how creative thinking and a fresh approach can open doors to unexpected financial opportunities.

“I’ve never seen anything like it,” Derulo said. “I thought it would be good, but I didn’t think it would become this big.”

His willingness to step outside his comfort zone and try something different has paid off in ways he didn’t anticipate.

Lessons from Derulo’s experience

Jason Derulo’s story serves as a valuable lesson about the unpredictable nature of career paths and the potential for side ventures to surpass traditional expectations.

It reminds us that success often comes from embracing creativity, exploring new opportunities, and remaining open to possibilities beyond our primary career pursuits.

Derulo’s experience encourages others to think outside the box and not dismiss unconventional business ideas.

AY Makun laments lack of men's support

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Ay o Makun (AY) frustrated by lack of support from fellow men despite hard work. Claims men prefer supporting women over their male counterparts.

“I am still the only male Nigerian filmmaker who hasn't quit due to lack of support,” he wrote. His statement reflects a deep concern about the unequal backing from his peers in the industry.

AY highlighted the discrepancy in support by questioning why men often seem hesitant to back other men. “One day, men will tell each other, ‘What has man done for man?’” he wrote. His comment suggests a frustration over the perceived lack of solidarity among men in the creative and entertainment industries.

The comedian and filmmaker emphasized the challenges he has faced, stressing that his efforts to stay relevant and maintain his responsibilities have not been adequately recognized by his fellow men. “We work hard to stay relevant and take care of our responsibilities,” he added.

Nigerian Comedian AY Makun

He call for greater support from men aligns with his long-standing commitment to the Nigerian film industry. Despite his notable achievements,



including producing several successful films, he believes he has yet to receive the level of backing he feels is deserved.

His post reflects a growing conversation about the disparities in support within Nigeria's creative industries, particularly concerning gender dynamics. Many have praised female artists and creators for their resilience and the support they've received, while men like him continue to feel marginalized.

This sentiment is not new to the entertainment world, where collaborations and collective efforts often favour women, leaving many male creatives isolated. His lament highlights the need for a more balanced approach, one that encourages

mutual support across all genders.

In recent years, efforts have been made to address these imbalances through various initiatives to empower male creatives. However, his concerns point to the slow progress in fostering equal support networks.

As a prominent figure in Nigerian comedy and film, his voice adds weight to the ongoing dialogue about fairness and representation. His call for solidarity reminds us that collective success requires mutual encouragement, regardless of gender.

Burna Boy reacts to Speed Darlington's release

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Famous Nigerian singer Burna Boy has finally responded to the release of Speed Darlington from police custody, sparking renewed controversy.

The news follows a series of back-and-forths between the two artists, escalating tensions within Nigeria's entertainment industry.

The Initial Arrest and Backlash

On November 27, Speed Darlington was rearrested, just two months after his first arrest.

According to New Daily Prime, Darlington had taunted Burna Boy over his affiliation with embattled American rapper Sean 'Diddy' Combs, who is currently facing multiple sexual exploitation and human trafficking charges.

This incident further fueled the growing feud between Burna Boy and Darlington.

Darlington's comments appeared to be an attempt to provoke Burna Boy, drawing attention to his connection with Diddy amid the rapper's legal troubles. For many Nigerians, these remarks crossed a line, intensifying the public scrutiny of Burna Boy's personal and professional life.

Burna Boy's Instagram Response

On Tuesday, Burna Boy took to his Instagram story to respond to Darlington's release and the ongoing controversy. His statement reflected both frustration and defiance, signaling his unwillingness to back down from the criticism.

He wrote, "When they talk, nobody cares. But it's a nuclear disaster when I react. You all don't know how lucky you are that I have too much to lose now. Walahi, a lot of you wouldn't be here no more. Anyway, let me go buy something and relax."

This response left many wondering about the depth of Burna Boy's anger and the impact his words might have.

His claim that those criticizing him are fortunate he has "a lot to lose" suggests a level of restraint that he might otherwise



lack. Burna Boy seems to believe that his current position in the public eye and his career have kept him from fully confronting his detractors.

A Clash of Personalities and Public Scrutiny

The exchange between Burna Boy and Darlington has highlighted deeper tensions within Nigeria's entertainment scene.

Burna Boy's rising fame and public profile make him a target for criticism, particularly from figures like Darlington, who seem to relish stirring controversy.

In contrast, his response, filled with bravado and defiance, indicates that he sees his critics as largely irrelevant in the face of his current success.

However, the comments also reflect the precarious nature of celebrity in Nigeria. His stature as a global artist exposes him to the harsh realities of public scrutiny and the possibility of backlash.

His reference to his critics' "luck" in sparing him from more severe actions suggests frustration at the limitations he feels in dealing with his enemies.

The Impact on Burna Boy's Reputation

The Grammy-Award winner remarks have sparked further debate about his

behaviour and the nature of celebrity accountability in Nigeria.

While some fans have supported his defiant stance, others have criticized him for what they perceive as arrogance and a lack of self-awareness.

His approach to dealing with public criticism has, at times, been viewed as confrontational, which could have long-term implications for his reputation.

This incident is not isolated but part of a broader trend of Nigerian celebrities grappling with public perception.

Many artists have faced similar challenges in maintaining their public personas while dealing with controversies both inside and outside their professional lives.

Burna Boy's defiant response may have been his attempt to assert dominance over his critics, but it also risks further alienating sections of his fanbase who might view his behaviour as increasingly contentious.

The Broader Context of Celebrity Culture in Nigeria

The Afropop star's situation reflects a larger conversation about the relationship between celebrities and the public in Nigeria.

Biden commutes sentences of 37 death row inmates

By Dave Oludare Oso

United States President, Joe Biden has granted clemency to 37 of the 40 federal inmates facing death sentences, commuting their sentences to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

The three inmates who didn't receive clemency are the convicted murderer in the Tree of Life Synagogue shooting, the gunman at Mother Emanuel Church in Charleston, and the surviving Boston Marathon bomber.

The announcement is sure to spark partisan debate, even though presidential commutation and pardon power are broad, constitutionally enshrined and irreversible.

The Justice Department instituted a moratorium on executions in 2021 so it could review policies and procedures.

Trump communications director, Steven Cheung said in a statement that those whose sentences were commuted "are among the worst killers in the world," adding, "this abhorrent decision by Joe Biden is a slap in the face to the victims, their families, and their loved ones."

President-elect, Donald Trump has said he would resume executions and perhaps attempt to expand the crimes that qualify for capital punishment.

On Truth Social Tuesday, Trump said that as soon as he is in office, he will "direct the Justice Department to vigorously pursue the death penalty to protect American families and



children from violent rapists, murderers, and monsters."

Biden appeared to allude to Trump's stated intention in a statement announcing the commutations when he said, "In good conscience, I cannot stand back and let a new administration resume executions that I halted."

He also said, "These commutations are consistent with the moratorium my Administration has imposed on federal executions, in cases other than terrorism and hate-motivated mass murder.

"Make no mistake: I condemn these murderers, grieve for the victims of their despicable acts, and ache for all the families who have suffered unimaginable and irreparable loss.

"But guided by my conscience and my experience as a public defender,

chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Vice President, and now President, I am more convinced than ever that we must stop the use of the death penalty at the federal level."

American Civil Liberties Union Executive Director, Anthony D. Romero lauded Biden's move, saying in a statement that he "took a historic and courageous step in addressing the failed death penalty in the United States — bringing us much closer to outlawing the barbaric practice once again."

"President Biden has taken the most consequential step of any president in our history to address the immoral and unconstitutional harms of capital punishment," Romero said, adding, "This will undoubtedly be one of the seminal achievements of the Biden presidency."

Former US president Clinton discharged from hospital

By Dave Oludare Oso

78-year-old former president of the United States, Bill Clinton was discharged from the hospital early Tuesday, his office said, a day after he was admitted with a fever in the latest in a series of health scares for the veteran Democrat.

His deputy chief of staff, Angel Urena said on social media platform X, "President Clinton was discharged earlier today after being treated for the flu.

"He and his family are deeply grateful for the exceptional care provided by the team at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital and are touched by the kind messages and well wishes he received."



Clinton was previously hospitalized for five nights in October 2021 due to a blood infection.

In 2004, he underwent a quadruple bypass operation after doctors found

heart disease — motivating him to make lifestyle changes, including adopting a vegetarian diet, and he has since spoken publicly about his efforts.

Bill Clinton, who led the United States from 1993 to 2001, is the second-youngest living US president, after 63-year-old Barack Obama. Clinton's health last made headlines in November 2022 when he tested positive for Covid-19.

Though his prosperous time in office was marred by scandals, he has enjoyed a second life in the two decades after his presidency, which has seen him venture into numerous diplomatic and humanitarian causes.

Biden vetoes 66 new federal judgeships

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Biden on Monday vetoed a once-bipartisan effort to add 66 federal district judgeships, saying "hurried action" by the House left important questions unanswered about the life-tenured positions.

The legislation would have spread the establishment of the new trial court judgeships over more than a decade to give three presidential administrations and six Congresses the chance to appoint the new judges. The bipartisan effort was carefully designed so that lawmakers wouldn't knowingly give an advantage to either political party in shaping the federal judiciary.

The Democratic-controlled Senate passed the measure unanimously in August. But the Republican-led House brought it to the floor only after Republican Donald Trump was reelected to a second term as president



in November, adding the veneer of political gamesmanship to the process.

The White House had said at the time that Biden would veto the bill.

"The House of Representative's hurried action fails to resolve key questions in the legislation, especially regarding

how the new judgeships are allocated, and neither the House of Representatives nor the Senate explored fully how the work of senior status judges and magistrate judges affects the need for new judgeships," the president said in a statement.

"The efficient and effective administration of justice requires that these questions about need and allocation be further studied and answered before we create permanent judgeships for life-tenured judges," Biden said.

He said the bill would also have created new judgeships in states where senators haven't filled existing judicial vacancies and that those efforts "suggest that concerns about judicial economy and caseload are not the true motivating force behind passage of this bill now.

Fabio Ochoa deported to Colombia after serving 25 years in US prison

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Fabio Ochoa, a notorious Colombian drug lord and key operator of the Medellin cartel, has been deported back to his home country after serving 25 years of a 30-year prison sentence in the United States.

Ochoa, 67, arrived at Bogota's El Dorado airport on a deportation flight on Monday, wearing a grey sweatshirt and carrying his personal belongings in a plastic bag. He was met by immigration officials in bulletproof vests, but there were no police on site to detain him.

Colombia's national immigration agency promptly released a statement on social media, saying Ochoa was "freed so that he could join his family" after immigration officials took his fingerprints and confirmed through a database that he is not wanted by Colombian authorities.

Ochoa's deportation marks the end of a long and tumultuous chapter in his life. Along with his older brothers, Juan David and Jorge Luis, Ochoa amassed a fortune in the late 1970s and early 1980s as cocaine flooded the US market. The brothers were included in Forbes Magazine's list of billionaires in 1987.

Ochoa was first indicted in the US for his alleged role in the 1986



killing of Barry Seal, an American pilot who flew cocaine flights for the Medellin cartel. He turned himself in to Colombian authorities in the early 1990s under a deal that allowed him to avoid extradition to the US.

However, Ochoa was arrested again in 1999 for drug trafficking and was extradited to the US in 2001. He was convicted and sentenced to 30 years in prison, with the option to reduce his sentence for good behavior.

Ochoa's name has faded from popular memory in recent years, but he was recently depicted in the Netflix series *Griselda* and *Narcos*. Richard Gregorie, a retired assistant US attorney who

was on the prosecution team that convicted Ochoa, expects that the former mafia boss will have a welcome return home.

"He won't be retiring a poor man, that's for sure," Gregorie told The Associated Press earlier this month.

Ochoa's deportation has sparked mixed reactions in Colombia, with some welcoming his return and others expressing concern about his potential influence on the country's narcotics trade. As Ochoa begins his new life in Colombia, it remains to be seen how he will be received by the public and whether he will attempt to revive his former life as a major player in the Medellin cartel.

Sacked in the morning?! Guardiola's flops sink to new low

By Dave Oludare Oso

Manchester City's freefalling continued with a limp 2-1 loss at Aston Villa, signalling a third consecutive defeat in all competitions and a ninth reverse in their last 12 matches.

Villa, who beat City at home last season in just one of three league defeats for Pep Guardiola's side, were utterly dominant from the off and could have scored within the first minute when Jhon Duran was thwarted by Stefan Ortega. The German goalkeeper then clawed a Pau Torres header from the line which was an inch from creeping over.

The hosts eventually got the goal they deserved when Duran accepted a gift from former City academy player Morgan Rogers, who had been released by a sublime pass from the wonderful Yuri Tielemans. City had plenty



of possession but were short on ideas, creating just two chances in the first half.

The net would bulge again early in the second half, when Duran struck again, only for City to be saved by an offside flag. Villa bided their time, however, and eventually struck again through Rogers after the England

international had waltzed his way through an all-too generous City midfield.

Erling Haaland was anonymous in attack and Ilkay Gundogan was tortured in midfield in a third defeat in a row for the flailing champions.



I'm focused on improving Rashford

– Amorim

By Dave Oludare Oso

Manchester United manager Ruben Amorim has questioned the “choices” of people close to forward Marcus Rashford.

Rashford, 27, said he was “ready for a new challenge” in an interview after being dropped for the 2-1 win at Manchester City on 15 December.

The England international subsequently missed the 4-3 Carabao Cup quarter-final defeat by Tottenham and was also left out as United lost 3-0 to Bournemouth on Sunday, adding to speculation he could leave Old Trafford in January.

“It is a hard situation,” Amorim told Sky Sports.

“I understand these players have a lot of people around them, making choices that are not the first idea from the player.

“They chose to do the interview as it is not just Marcus.”

Rashford has scored 138 goals in 426 appearances for the club since making his debut in 2016, having come through the United youth ranks.

However, while he managed 30 goals in all competitions in 2022-23, he has struggled for form in three of the previous four seasons and attracted criticism from pundits and fans for a number of laboured displays during that time.

Amorim said he can “separate” the decisions of those advising Rashford from his relationship



with the player.

“At the moment I’m focused on improving Marcus,” he added. “We need a talented guy like Marcus. I forget the interview now and see what I see on the pitch.”

Regarding Rashford’s future, the Portuguese boss said it is for him and the club “to deal with that when the time comes.”

Speaking to the wider media before United face Wolverhampton Wanderers on Thursday, Amorim denied the talk around Rashford was a distraction, adding: “Some guys have a big responsibility here because they have been here for a long time.

“If you have big talents, we need big performances, big responsibility, big engagement to push everybody forward in this moment. Like any other player, we want him to be the best he can be.

“This is maybe one of the lowest moments in our club. We have to face it and be strong.”

United’s humbling defeat by the Cherries means they head into Christmas in 13th place in the Premier League, after Wolves they host Newcastle on 30 December.

It will be their lowest position in the table at this stage since they were 15th in 1986, just over two months into Sir Alex Ferguson’s reign as manager.

Amorim had to halt his post-match news conference on Sunday because of a leak in the ceiling of the press room.

Asked later how he intended to reverse fortunes at Old Trafford, the former Sporting coach pointed to the ceiling and said: “If I knew, I would solve all the problems of this club, even this.

“I know what I am going to do. That is so clear for me. I will not say I feel relaxed because I’m really frustrated. It’s a very difficult moment but we will solve problems step by step and find answers for everything.”