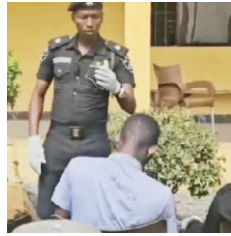


**We remain steadfast in improving Nigerians' lives - Shettima** PAGE 2



**Delta man beheads friend over N50m debt** PAGE 8



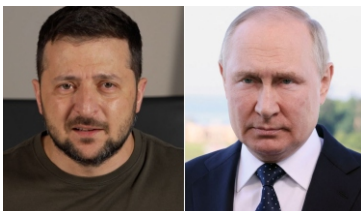
# The New Daily Prime

**33 inmates killed, 1,500 escape in Mozambique jailbreak** PAGE 4

**Boko Haram bombs Borno Army base with drones, injures many soldiers** PAGE 7

**WORLD** PAGE 25

**Christmas Day Attack: Russia fires 70 missiles, 100 drones into Ukraine**

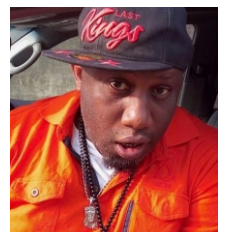


**10 dead, many injured as military jet accidentally strikes Sokoto communities** PAGE 2

**38 killed as Azerbaijan plane crashes in Kazakhstan** PAGE 26

**ENTERTAINMENT**

**Late Nollywood actor, Ernest Asuzu's brother shot dead in S' Africa** PAGE 18



**14 Nigerians declared wanted by INTERPOL for human, drug trafficking** PAGE 6



# 10 dead, many injured as military jet accidentally strikes Sokoto communities

By Dave Oludare Oso

A military airstrike targeting the Lakurawa terrorist group has reportedly claimed the lives of several villagers and left many injured in Silame Local Government Area of Sokoto State.

The incident, which occurred at approximately 7 a.m. on Wednesday, affected the communities of Gidan Sama and Rumtuwa. Residents revealed that the two villages are situated near Surame Forest, a known hideout for the Lakurawa group and other bandits.

Malam Yahya, a local resident, reported that the airstrike, intended to target terrorists, mistakenly hit civilian settlements. Another source disclosed that over 10 villagers lost their lives, while many others sustained various injuries during the incident.

Confirming the unfortunate event, the



chairman of Silame LGA, Alhaji Abubakar Muhammad Daftarana, stated that authorities are still assessing the extent of the damage caused by the strike.

“The villagers were sitting peacefully when the bombs started dropping on the communities. They were innocent and peace-loving people who had no any criminal record.

“It was early for me to confirm the number of people either killed or injured because we are still assessing the development,” he said.

When contacted the Spokesman of the Sokoto State Police Command, ASP Ahmad Rufa’i declined comment on the matter, saying it was not the police operation.

## We remain steadfast in improving Nigerians’ lives – Shettima

By Friday Omosola

Vice President Kashim Shettima has reaffirmed the federal government’s commitment to improving the welfare of Nigerians.

In his Christmas message posted on X page by his spokesperson, Stanley Nkwocha, the Vice President emphasised that national security and economic transformation as top priorities under the President Bola Tinubu-led administration.

Shettima urged citizens to embrace unity and national cohesion during the festive season.

He described Nigeria’s diversity as its



greatest strength, calling on Nigerians to “strengthen the bonds of brotherhood across all faith and region.”

Addressing the nation’s security, the Vice President reassured Nigerians of the vigilance of the security forces.

“Our brave security personnel will continue to work round the clock during this festive period to keep us safe,” he stated, adding that enhanced measures have been put in place to ensure the safety and comfort of travelers on major routes.

Shettima also expressed optimism about Nigeria’s future, citing ongoing efforts by the Tinubu-led administration to create opportunities for the youth.

“You are the backbone of our nation,” he told young Nigerians, highlighting initiatives under the Renewed Hope agenda designed to empower them to contribute to national development.

# THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

## PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

## PRODUCT COLOUR

**EFFECTIVE FROM  
DECEMBER 1, 2024**

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	372,500.00
HALF PAGE	213,000.00
QUARTER PAGE	106,500.00
14X2	118,000.00
10X6	261,585.50
10X5	255,238.00
10X4	206,890.50
10X3	179,608.00
9X6	254,977.00
9X5	225,738.00
9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
5X2	42,916.50
4X4	60,166.50
4X3	36,499.50
4X2	29,333.50
3X3	28,000.00
3X2	17,400.00
2X2	13,000.00
2X1	8,600.00
1X1	4,400.00

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	329,868.50
HALF PAGE	192,500.00
QUARTER PAGE	100,000.00
14X2	109,500.00
10X6	242,500.00
10X5	237,500.00
10X4	192,500.00
10X3	171,000.00
9X6	232,500.00
9X5	206,000.00
9X4	177,500.00
9X3	150,000.00
8X6	216,000.00
8X3	98,500.00
7X4	164,002.00
6X4	94,010.50
6X3	78,500.00
6X2	47,500.00
5X5	100,000.00
5X4	61,500.00
5X3	57,819.00
5X2	40,379.50
4X4	55,000.00
4X3	31,000.00
4X2	22,003.50
3X2	17,260.00
2X2	12,945.00
2X1	8,630.00
1X1	4,315.00

### POLITICAL COLOUR

SIZE	RATE
CENTRESPREAD	1,200,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD	885,000.00
FULL PAGE	420,000.00
HALF PAGE	213,250.00
QUARTER PAGE	115,012.50

### POLITICAL BLACK & WHITE

SIZE	RATE
CENTRESPREAD	1,050,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD	745,000.00
FULL PAGE	315,777.50
HALF PAGE	184,700.00
QUARTER PAGE	95,222.50

### CORPORATE BLACK & WHITE

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	254,533.50
HALF PAGE	142,787.50
QUARTER PAGE	80,706.50
14X2	78,222.50
10X6	217,830.00
10X5	192,305.50
10X4	142,787.50
10X3	121,355.50
9X6	192,305.50
9X3	107,757.50
8X6	170,725.00
8X3	70,390.00
7X4	58,666.50
6X4	67,048.00
6X3	53,361.50
6X2	37,694.00
5X6	83,850.00
5X4	55,900.00
5X3	43,705.00
5X2	27,938.00
4X4	44,493.00
4X3	33,524.00
4X2	22,350.00
3X2	16,763.00
2X2	10,877.00
2X1	5,588.50
1X1	2,795.50

### PUBLIC NOTICE BLACK & WHITE

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	280,690.00
HALF PAGE	164,178.00
QUARTER PAGE	84,641.50
10X6	228,000.00
10X5	201,600.00
10X4	149,440.00
10X3	127,108.00
9X6	201,600.00
9X5	169,050.00
9X4	137,875.00
9X3	112,875.00
8X6	179,368.00
8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
6X2	40,000.00
5X6	98,749.50
5X4	65,833.00
5X3	49,375.00
5X2	32,916.50
4X4	52,666.50
4X3	39,499.50
4X2	26,333.50
3X2	19,750.00
2X2	13,000.00
2X1	6,500.00
1X1	3,292.00

### PRODUCT BLACK & WHITE

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	210,795.50
HALF PAGE	124,236.00
QUARTER PAGE	70,950.00
14X2	76,128.35
10X6	194,961.00
10X5	162,222.445
10X4	103,963.00
10X3	N/A
9X6	162,222.445
9X5	168,191.50
9X4	N/A
8X6	N/A
8X3	N/A
7X4	72,676.00
6X4	65,000.00
6X3	41,124.50
6X2	29,858.00
5X6	71,378.00
5X4	42,825.00
5X3	29,858.00
5X2	22,841.00
4x4	N/A
4X3	N/A
4X2	17,737.50
3x3	23,458.00
3X2	14,923.00
2X2	10,200.00
2X1	5,439.50
1X1	2,700.00

### SPECIAL POSITIONS

2X6 FRONT PAGE	700,000.00
2X6 BACK PAGE	300,000.00
2X6 INSIDE PAGE	155,000.00
3X6 FRONT PAGE	1,200,000.00
4X6 FRONT PAGE	2,250,000.00
5X6 FRONT PAGE	3,350,000.00
10X6 FRONT PAGE	8,250,000.00
EARPIECE FRONT PAGE(1.5X2)	246,500.00
EARPIECE INSIDE PAGE(1.5X2)	117,875.00
EARPIECE BACK PAGE	236,796.50
CENTRE SPREAD COLOUR (PUBLIC NOTICE)	1,027,000.00
CENTRE SPREAD COLOUR (PRODUCT)	929,000.00
CENTRESPREAD B&W	800,000.00
CENTRE SPREAD HALF COLOUR	575,000.00
CENTRESPREAD STRIP COLOUR	191,668.50
DOUBLE SPREAD COLOUR	721,500.00
DOUBLE SPREAD HALF COLOUR	432,881.00
DOUBLE SPREAD STRIP COLOUR	144,294.00
CENTRE SPREAD B&W	835,000.00
CENTRE SPREAD HALF PAGE B & W	550,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD B & W	725,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD HALF B & W	425,000.00
FULL WRAP AROUND	15,000,000.00
HALF WRAP AROUND	8,500,000.00
HALF PAGE FRONT	5,500,000.00

### ALLURE RATE

SIZE	RATE	TOTAL
CENTRESPREAD		967,500.00
DOUBLE SPREAD		806,250.00
ALLURE COVER		750,000.00
(IBC) Inside Back Cover		376,250.00
(IFC) Inside Front Cover		430,000.00
(BC) Back Cover		483,750.00
Full Page		430,000.00
10X5		295,625.00
Half Page		225,000.00
EVENT		250,000.00

### PICTURE & CAPTION

SIZE	RATE	7.5% VAT	TOTAL
PHOTO NEWS PAGE 2	50,000.00	3,750.00	53,750.00
PHOTO NEWS (3X3)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
PHOTO NEWS (4X4)	53,333.30	4,250.00	57,583.30
PRESS RELEASE (4X4)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
EVENT COVERAGE	100,000.00	7,500.00	107,500.00
FEATURES	200,000.00	15,000.00	215,000.00

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

**SERIES DISCOUNT**  
5 PAGES 2.5%  
10 PAGES 5%  
15 PAGES & ABOVE 7.5%

**SURCHARGE**  
PAGE 3 (100%)  
PAGE 4, 5, 7 AND 8 (50%)  
PAGE 2 (75%)

**LOOSE INSERT**  
LEAFLET, POSTERS 1,000 COPIES  
SPECIAL INSERTS (8 PAGES) COPIES  
SPECIAL INSERTS (4 PAGES) 1,000 COPIES  
HANDLING CHARGES FOR LESS THAN 35,000 COPIES  
HANDLING CHARGES MORE THAN 35,000 COPIES

**CLASSIFIED ADVERT RATES**  
CHANGE OF NAME 2,000.00  
GUIDE BLACK & WHITE 3,750.00  
GUIDE COLOUR 4,250.00

25,000.00  
45,000.00  
30,000.00  
75,000.00  
100,000.00

#### CONTACT US

Correspondent Address:  
Real Group Plaza, No.1 Junaid Dosumu  
Street, CBD, Alausa, Ikeja, Lagos  
Call the Editor on: 07025014298, 09014323792

E-mail Address:  
[info@newdailyprime.news](mailto:info@newdailyprime.news)  
Terms and Conditions apply

**ALL RATES ARE VAT INCLUSIVE**



# 33 inmates killed, 1,500 escape in Mozambique jailbreak

Groups of protesters approached the penitentiary, triggering unrest inside and prompting inmates to knock down a wall and flee

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Groups of protesters approached the penitentiary, triggering unrest inside and prompting inmates to knock down a wall and flee

More than 1,500 prisoners escaped from a Maputo prison on Wednesday, taking advantage of the third day of unrest triggered by the controversial confirmation of the long-ruling Frelimo party as the winner of recent elections.

A total of 1,534 detainees escaped the high-security prison located about 15km (nine miles) from the capital, national police chief, Bernardino Rafael said at a press conference.

Among those attempting to escape, 33 were killed and 15 wounded in clashes with prison staff, he added.

A search operation, backed by the army, led to the arrest of about 150 fugitives, he said.

Around 30 of the prisoners were linked to armed groups that have been behind unrest and attacks in the northern province of Cabo Delgado for the past seven years.

“We are particularly concerned about this situation,” Rafael said.

The Portuguese-speaking African country’s highest court had confirmed on Monday that Frelimo, in power since 1975, won the October 9 presidential election that had already triggered



weeks of unrest.

Groups of protesters had approached the penitentiary on Wednesday, creating confusion and triggering unrest inside the prison, where inmates ended up knocking down a wall through which they escaped, he explained.

Barricades remained erected in several areas of the capital on Wednesday, limiting movements, as acts of vandalism continued.

In addition to stores and public buildings that were already ransacked on Monday, ambulances were set ablaze along with a pharmacy and other businesses.

Some demonstrators also set up tables in the streets to occupy the space while celebrating

Christmas with family or neighbours in several working-class districts of Maputo.

Monday’s confirmation of the election result came despite claims of irregularities from many observers.

Frelimo leader, Daniel Chapo won 65.17 per cent of the vote, about five points less than the initial results declared by the country’s electoral commission.

Chapo’s main challenger, exiled opposition leader Venancio Mondlane, has claimed the election was rigged, sparking fears of violence between rival party supporters.

The unrest has claimed the lives of at least 150 people, according to several NGO reports.

# Tinubu salutes Ganduje at 75

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Bola Tinubu on Wednesday congratulated the National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Dr Abdullahi Ganduje, as he clocked 75.

Tinubu commended Ganduje for his leadership, dedication, and contributions to the development of Kano State and Nigeria.

In a statement released in Abuja by the President's spokesman, Mr Bayo Onanuga, Tinubu acknowledged Ganduje's exemplary stewardship as the ruling party's National Chairman which had led to electoral victories.

He noted that Ganduje and his team's efforts have continued to strengthen and unify the party, driving it toward national development goals.

Expressing gratitude for Ganduje's policy suggestions, support and dedication, Tinubu encouraged him to continue his work with the same passion and commitment.

He highlighted Ganduje's commitment to promoting



constitutional democracy and his years of public service at various levels.

“President Tinubu recalls Dr Ganduje's dedication to public service, including his early role as one of the pioneer civil servants managing the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) affairs and his subsequent work as commissioner in Kano State in the 1990s.

“Dr Ganduje's distinguished career in politics and governance began in 1979 with his involvement with the defunct National Party of Nigeria (NPN).

“Following the return to democracy in 1999, he served

as deputy governor of Kano State and was later elected as governor in 2015 and 2019.

“As Governor of Kano State from 2015 to 2023, Dr Ganduje made significant contributions as both an administrator and politician, leaving a lasting positive impact on the state,” said the President.

He joined family, friends, and party stalwarts to celebrate the leadership of APC's National Chairman.

Tinubu extended his best wishes to Ganduje and prayed for his continued good health, happiness, and success in all future endeavours.



# 14 Nigerians declared wanted by INTERPOL for human, drug trafficking

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The International Police (INTERPOL) has declared 14 Nigerians wanted for offences ranging from human trafficking, drug trafficking, robbery, cheating, and forgery, among others.

Red Notices published on the INTERPOL website on Tuesday stated that the 14 Nigerians were wanted by different countries where they had allegedly committed the crime.

According to the notices, the wanted persons were identified as Felix Omoregie, Jessica Edosomwan, Uche Egbue, Jude Uzoma, Chinedu Ezeunara, Benedict Okoro, Ikechukwu Obidiozor, and Alachi Stanley.

Others are Bouhari Salif, Timloh Nkem, Austine Costa, Okromi Festus, Akachi Vitus and Mary Eze.

According to the notices, Omoregie is wanted by the Belgian authority for allegedly leading a criminal organisation that exploits minors for prostitution.

It read, "Family name: Omoregie, Forename: Felix, Gender: Male, Date of birth: 22/10/1977 (47 years old), Nationality: Nigeria.

"Charges published as provided by requesting entity: Sexual exploitation or exploitation of prostitution of minors over 16 years of age; Sexual exploitation or exploitation of prostitution of another person/Leader of a criminal organisation/Human trafficking for the purpose of prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation."

The notice on Edosomwan indicated that she is wanted by the French authority for "multiple victims trafficking in human beings, committed against several persons.



Organised gang competition in an operation of placing concealing or converting the proceeds of an offence."

It indicated that Egbue is wanted by authorities in Argentina for alleged drug trafficking, while Uzoma is wanted by the Brazilian government for alleged drug trafficking, Ezeunara is wanted by the Uruguayan government for alleged drug trafficking, and Okoro is wanted by the Nicaragua government for alleged organised crime.

Further checks on the INTERPOL website by our correspondent on Tuesday indicated that Obidiozor, Vitus and Stanley are wanted by the Angolan government for alleged "kidnapping, robbery and illegal possession of firearms."

Other notices by the INTERPOL indicated that Eze is wanted by Denmark for alleged "traffic in human beings", Salif by China for alleged "drug smuggling", and Nkem by Canada for alleged "sexual assault, and failure to comply with a condition of recognisance."

Costa, according to the published

notices, is wanted by India for alleged "criminal conspiracy; having possession of document knowing it to be forged and intending to use it as genuine; forgery of valuable security, will etc; forgery for purpose of cheating" and Okromi is also wanted by India for "criminal conspiracy and cheating."

INTERPOL, however, noted that the notices were aimed at alerting the public to possible threats and seeking help in locating an individual.

The statement read, "A Red Notice is a request to law enforcement worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition, surrender, or similar legal action. A Red Notice is not an international arrest warrant.

"The individuals are wanted by the requesting member country or international tribunal. Member countries apply their laws in deciding whether to arrest a person."

It urged members of the public to report to their local police authorities should they have information about the wanted persons.

# Boko Haram bombs Borno Army base with drones, injures many soldiers

By Dave Oludare Oso

**A** Christmas eve drone strike by suspected terrorists on a military base in Borno State has injured at least six soldiers.

According to SaharaReporters, the terrorists attacked the Forward Operating Base in Wajiroko in the Damboa Local Government Area on Tuesday afternoon.

A soldier, who witnessed the incident said they heard what sounded like a jet followed by a huge explosion.

He added that the terrorists had initially attacked the base shooting sporadically but were repelled by the troops.

A military signal obtained by SaharaReporters confirmed the incident.

The signal added that a gun truck belonging to the army was damaged after the terrorists used multiple drones to attack the base.

The signal read, "AT ABOUT 231300A DEC 24, TERRS LAUNCHED ATTK USING MOR AND OTHER FIRE ARMS ON TPS AT FOB WAJIROKO IN DAMBOA



LGA. TPS REPELLED THE ATTK, FORCING TERRS TO WDR IN DISARRAY.

"SHORTLY AFTER, AT ABOUT 231323A DEC 24, FOB WAJIROKO CAME UNDER ANOTHER ATTK USING MULTIPLE ARMED DRONES CARRYING LOCALLY FABRICATED GREN. TPS OBSN UP TO 4 DIFF ARMED DRONES. OWN CAS. 5 X SLDRS SUSTAINED INJURIES. OWN EQPT CAS. 1 X GT DAMAGED. BH/ISWAP CAS. NIL. CAS RECVD FIRST AID, AWAITING EVAC TO 25 BDE FD AMB FOR FURTHER MED ATTN.

"GEN SY SIT IS CALM BUT

HIGHLY UNPREDICTABLE. T P S M O R A L E A N D FIGHTING EFFICIENCY REMAIN SATISFACTORY. PSEACK///"

Nigeria has been battling with the insurgents in the North East region for barely two decades now.

The military has repeatedly claimed that the terrorists had been largely defeated and frequently underplays any losses.

The terror group has caused over 100,000 deaths and displaced millions of individuals mainly in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states.



# Delta man beheads friend over N50m debt

By Olamilekan Botti

In a chilling case that has shocked residents of Delta State, the Police Command has arrested Mr. Efe Onoetiye, a 30-year-old man accused of murdering his best friend, Paulinus Okon, after allegedly embezzling over N50 million he got from him.

Addressing journalists on Monday, the Commissioner of Police, Delta State Command, CP Abaniwonda Olufemi, described the incident as particularly tragic and outlined the gruesome details of the crime during a press briefing held in Asaba.

Alongside Efe Onoetiye, four other suspects connected to the heinous act were also paraded.

“This briefing involves a deeply painful case—the brutal murder of Paulinus Okon by his trusted friend, Efe Onoetiye,” CP Olufemi began.

“Paulinus was reported missing on September 8, 2024, by his brother after he left home in the company of Efe Onoetiye. Initially, Efe denied any knowledge of his friend’s whereabouts and even visited Paulinus’s family to feign concern.”

Efe reportedly tried to manipulate the family further by demanding N500,000 to “consult a herbalist” who could allegedly reveal Paulinus’ location.

According to CP Olufemi, Efe later fabricated a story about Paulinus being kidnapped and collected a ransom of N20,715,000 from the victim’s family under the pretence of negotiating with the supposed kidnappers.

When suspicions arose about Efe’s inconsistent narratives, the case was



transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department in Asaba.

However, his evasive behaviour persisted until November 28, 2024, when the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of Ekpan, acting on CP Olufemi’s directive, launched a discreet and intelligence-led investigation.

The breakthrough came with the arrest of one Okeimute Gaga, a 48-year-old man implicated in the crime. Under interrogation, Okeimute confessed to his involvement and provided a harrowing account of the events leading to Paulinus’s murder.

According to Okeimute, Efe orchestrated the killing, taking Paulinus to the Orere River in Otokutu on the night of September 8, 2024.

Okeimute revealed that Efe, along with Sunday Ikpeba and a 30-year-old herbalist named Lawrence Joseph, tied Paulinus to a stake near the river. In a horrifying turn of events, they beheaded him.

The confession marked a significant turning point in the investigation,

shedding light on the extent of the betrayal and the motives behind the crime.

CP Olufemi emphasised the role of greed and deceit in the case, noting that Efe’s actions stemmed from his desire to control the N50 million he had siphoned from his late friend.

The Commissioner assured the public that justice would be served.

“This Command remains committed to ensuring that every individual involved in this gruesome act is held accountable. Our thoughts are with the family of the deceased during this difficult time,” he stated.

The suspects, including Efe and his co-conspirators, are now in custody, and efforts are ongoing to prosecute them to the fullest extent of the law. The case serves as a stark reminder of the importance of vigilance and the devastating consequences of misplaced trust.

As the investigation continues, the people of Delta State are left grappling with the shock of such a heinous betrayal within their midst.



# Tinubu's policies deepening hunger, crisis, says Bode George

By Friday Omosola

**E**lder statesman Bode George has criticised President Bola Tinubu's recent media chat, describing it as lacking empathy and compassion.

George, who once served as Military Governor of Ondo State, said Tinubu's remarks failed to acknowledge the severe hardship Nigerians were enduring.

Speaking during his appearance on Channels Television's Politics Today, the former Chairman of the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) referenced three recent food stampedes that claimed 67 lives across Nigeria, saying, "it was as a result of the worsening hunger and frustration in the country."

He further accused Tinubu of being disconnected from reality, insisting that the President's claim that his reforms were effective is contradicted by rising



poverty, struggling businesses, and widespread despair.

The former national vice-chairman of South West zone of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), added: "Things are getting worse every day. Hunger doesn't care about rhetoric; people need real solutions."

George slammed Tinubu's media chat as an inappropriate way to close the year.

"I was shocked by the lack of humility or a somber tone in

the discussion. What's the purpose of engaging the public if there's no acknowledgment of their struggles?" he questioned.

George called for an immediate reduction in fuel prices and urged the government to provide relief measures for impoverished Nigerians.

The PDP Board of Trustees member added that the Tinubu's administration's policies had deepened the economic woes of millions of Nigerians.

# COAS orders troops to intensify fight against oil theft

By Friday Omosola

In a decisive move to combat oil theft and revitalise Nigeria's oil production, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lieutenant General Olufemi Oluyede, has directed troops of the 6 Division of the Nigerian Army to strengthen their operations against economic sabotage.

He issued the directive during a working visit to the division's headquarters in Port Harcourt yesterday.

Oluyede condemned the current crude oil production levels as insufficient to support Nigeria's economic growth.

He emphasised the critical need to safeguard the nation's oil assets.

He charged the troops to intensify their efforts in creating a secure environment for oil exploration and production, a vital sector for national



development.

The COAS stressed the importance of integrity and professionalism, warning against any involvement with criminal elements.

"Any personnel found colluding with economic saboteurs or engaging in illegal activities will face severe consequences in line with military and national laws," he stated.

To ensure the success of the operations, Oluyede reassured the troops of his commitment to their welfare and the provision of necessary resources to enhance their effectiveness.

He urged them to remain steadfast in their duties, noting their pivotal role in stabilizing the economy for the benefit of all Nigerians.

# Yuletide: Rivers' workers, pensioners get N100,000 largesse

By Dave Oludare Oso

Governor Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers State has approved the sum of ₦100,000 for civil servants, public servants, and pensioners in the state for the Christmas and New Year celebrations.

George Nwaeke, Rivers State Head of Service, announced the Yuletide largesse for the workers in a statement on Tuesday.

According to Nwaeke, the approval, which was given on Monday, is to enable the workers and senior citizens have a fulfilled Christmas celebration.

The statement noted that this the second time within the administration of Fubara that civil

servants in the state will be receiving Christmas bonus, to the tune of N100,000 an amount which is above the value of the nation's minimum wage.

But this is the first time that pensioners are included as beneficiaries of the largesse.

Also, in his Christmas message, Governor Fubara urged the people of Rivers state to embrace peace, unity, and love during the festive season and beyond.

The governor in a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Nelson Chukwudi emphasised the importance of peaceful coexistence, particularly in addressing the nation's current economic and



security challenges.

Fubara assured the people of Rivers State that the 2025 would bring new opportunities and lasting fulfillment.



# Vehicle rams into Gombe Christmas procession, many injured

By Olamilekan Botti

A tragic incident cast a shadow over the annual Christmas procession in Gombe State on Wednesday when a vehicle rammed into participants, leaving many injured.

The unfortunate event occurred near the Women's Centre, opposite Orji Estate, along the busy Gombe-Bauchi expressway.

The Christmas procession, a cherished tradition among the Christian community in Gombe, sees participants pay homage to the Emir of Gombe, Alhaji Shehu Abubakar, and Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya.

The incident disrupted what was intended to be a joyous occasion as participants from Tumfure made their way to the Emir's ground.

The Gombe State Police Command has confirmed the incident, emphasizing that it was not premeditated.

According to the Gombe State Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Buhari Abdullahi, the accident involved a Sharon vehicle that was reportedly overloaded with grains, including several bags placed precariously on the rooftop.

Addressing rumours circulating on social media, which described the incident as a massacre, DSP Abdullahi urged the public to exercise caution in their interpretations.

"I think what happened was an accident. The Sharon vehicle involved was overloaded with grains. On the rooftop, it had bags of grains. To say it's a massacre means it was a deliberate attempt," he explained, seeking to dispel misinformation



about the tragic event.

Eyewitnesses at the scene recounted moments of panic and confusion as the vehicle lost control and ploughed into the procession. Many of the injured were rushed to nearby medical facilities for treatment, though the extent of their injuries has not been disclosed at the time of this report.

The annual Christmas procession is a significant cultural and religious event in Gombe State, drawing participants and spectators from across the region. The disruption caused by the accident has sparked discussions on the need for enhanced safety measures during such gatherings, particularly along major roadways.

As investigations into the incident continue, the Gombe State Police Command has assured the public that it is committed to uncovering the exact circumstances that led to the accident.

The driver of the vehicle, whose identity remains undisclosed, is reportedly in custody, and further updates are expected as inquiries progress.

Meanwhile, community leaders and religious organizations have expressed their solidarity with the victims and their families, urging calm and unity during this challenging time.

They have also called for greater collaboration between authorities and organizers of public events to prevent such occurrences in the future.

This tragic accident serves as a sobering reminder of the importance of vigilance and preparation when planning large-scale events.

As Gombe State comes to terms with this unfortunate incident, the focus remains on providing support to the injured and ensuring the safety of future processions.

The Christmas season, a time meant for celebration and reflection, has been marred by this devastating accident. However, the resilience of the Gombe community remains evident as they navigate this difficult moment with compassion and determination.

# Christmas day crackdown: NDLEA arrests 34 suspects in Kano

By Dave Oludare Oso

Operatives of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) have arrested 34 suspects with different quantities of illicit substances in Kano State.

The Kano command's spokesman, ASN Sadiq Muhammad-Maigatari announced this in a statement he signed on Wednesday.

Muhammad-Maigatari said the suspects were arrested during a raid, as part of proactive measures to ensure a safe and drug-free Kano during the Christmas and New Year celebration.

Part of the statement read, "On December 24, the agency dislodged several notorious drug joints across the state.

These drug dens are located in Fagge Area, Sani Abacha Stadium, Danagundi, and the historically infamous Filin Idi drug den."

He said the command successfully recovered a substantial amount of illicit substances such as cannabis sativa, 'suck and die', and Exol-5, among others.



According to Muhammad-Maigatari, other recovered items include dangerous arms being used by drug peddlers to attack officers.

"The drug users will receive the necessary counseling and support to aid their recovery," he assured.

The commander noted that the seizures demonstrated the agency's commitment to dismantling drug networks and curbing the availability of harmful substances within the community during the festive seasons.

He noted that investigations were ongoing and those found culpable would be charged to court upon completion of investigation.

The agency reaffirmed the commitment of the agency to safeguarding the health and safety of all Kano citizens.

"We will continue to eradicate the menace of drug abuse from the streets of Kano and promote awareness about the dangers of substance abuse, as community cooperation is essential in this fight against drug-related issues," he said.



# Osun Assembly approves 2025 budget, adds N37bn

By **Olamilekan Botti**

**O**sun State House of Assembly has officially passed the 2025 Appropriation Bill, raising the total budget to N427.7 billion from the initial N390 billion presented by Governor Ademola Adeleke.

The increase reflects the Assembly's commitment to addressing key developmental priorities and ensuring adequate funding for critical sectors.

This milestone was announced on Monday through a statement issued by Olamide Tiamiyu, Chief Press Secretary to the Speaker.

The statement confirmed the bill's passage following the presentation of a comprehensive report by Mr. Olumide Fatunmise, Chairman of the House Committee on Finance and Appropriation.

Governor Adeleke initially presented the budget proposal of N390,028,277,740 for the 2025 fiscal year to the Assembly on Wednesday, November 13.

Breaking down the figures, the budget projected a total revenue of N390,028,277,740, comprising an opening balance of N30,001,125,120, recurrent revenue—including FAAC allocations—of N306,649,908,010, and capital receipts amounting to N53,377,244,610.

The total expenditure mirrored the proposed revenue at N390,028,277,740. Recurrent



expenditure was set at N245,797,093,940, covering personnel costs of N102,895,821,010 and other recurrent expenses totalling N142,901,272,930. Capital expenditure stood at N144,231,183,800.

During his budget presentation, Adeleke underscored his administration's progress in road infrastructure, revealing that 80% of existing gaps have been addressed, substantially reducing deficits.

Adeleke, in November 2024, presented the state's 2025 appropriation bill to the House of Assembly, commending the lawmakers for their continued support of his administration. He initially presented N390bn 2025

budget to the Assembly.

In November 2023, he presented N273,908,997,410.00 for the 2024 fiscal year.

He noted that the focus is to ensure the bill, once signed into law, delivers tangible benefits to Osun residents.

“The Osun State House of Assembly on Monday officially passed the 2025 Appropriation Bill of the state, amounting to N427,746,925,170 into law,” the statement read.

“The approval followed the presentation of a report by the House Committee on Finance and Appropriation, led by its Chairman, Hon. Olumide Fatunmise.”

# Christmas: Delayed December salaries hits FG workers

By Dave Oludare Oso

Federal Government workers are facing a low-key Christmas celebrations following the delay in payment of their December 2024 salaries.

According to The PUNCH, the workers also suffered delayed salaries in November 2024.

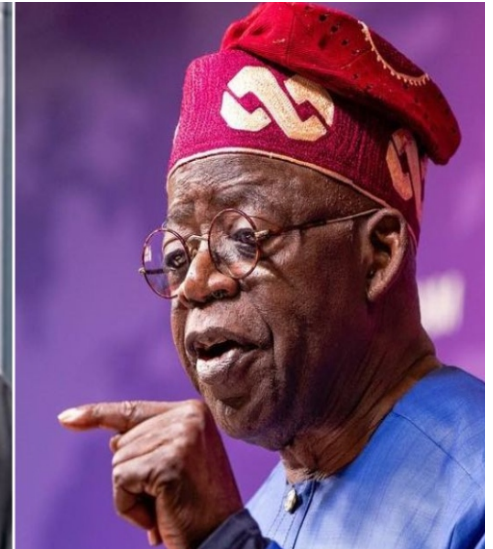
The reports said that most federal workers received their November 2024 salaries during the second week of December.

While a number of people within the civil service said the fault came from the office of the Accountant General of the Federation, others noted that the delay was as a result of migration to a new payment platform.

Speaking on the delayed salaries, some civil servants at the Federal Secretariat on Tuesday morning, expressed their grievances over the matter.

A worker, who spoke under the condition of anonymity out of regard for civil service rules, said, "To be very honest, I am not traveling for the holidays this year because I don't have the money. Our November salaries came very late and by the time we were paid, a lot of us were already in debt. We felt things would be different this December but the reverse is the case."

Another civil servant, who also spoke under the condition of anonymity, said, "There is nothing shocking about this new development because our November salaries came late. Some of us prepared ahead, even though it is not enough. The cost of food items have gone up, clothes for my children and all. Payment of the December salaries at the moment will really go a long way."



An Assistant Director in one of the MDAs outside Abuja, said, "This delay in salary payment is getting too much. It is Christmas and yet some of us can't even buy meat talk less getting chicken for our family members. The government needs to consider our welfare."

However, the Federal Government has explained the reasons behind recent delays in salary payments to civil servants, attributing the issue to shortfalls in allocations to some ministries and agencies.

Speaking with newsmen on Tuesday, the Director of Press and Public Relations at the Office of the Accountant-General, Mr Bawa Mokwa, confirmed that payments commenced on Monday and that measures had been taken to address the discrepancies.

"They have started paying since yesterday," Mokwa stated.

He further acknowledged the delays experienced last month, saying, "Last month, you will observe that some people didn't get their salaries on time. Some ministries were having shortfall. Yesterday, they paid all, and even the ones that had shortfall, they ensured that they were augmented and paid. So, it now depends on the

banks."

Explaining the root of the problem, Mokwa noted that the implementation of the new minimum wage had affected the salary allocations for some ministries.

"When they started paying the new minimum wage, the money assigned for salaries to these ministries was affected by the minimum wage. So, that led to shortfall for the ministries. That is what the government has addressed and augmented for all ministries to ensure that the salary was paid yesterday," he explained.

The Accountant-General of the Federation, Dr Oluwatoyin Madein, also confirmed during an earlier event that the salaries had been paid.

However, Mokwa added that the timing of the funds reflecting in employees' accounts would depend on individual banks.

"It varies from bank to bank on how it will drop, but they have been paid," he said.

In July 2024, President Bola Tinubu approved an increase in the minimum wage for Nigerian workers from N30,000 to N70,000.



## Fire razes goods, equipment worth over N200m in Onitsha

By Dave Oludare Oso

Goods and equipment valued at over ₦200 million were lost in a devastating fire outbreak early Wednesday morning at Ibokwu Street, near Old Market Road, Onitsha, Anambra State.

According to reports, the fire broke out around 9:15 a.m. when most shop owners were away celebrating Christmas.

Efforts of concerned individuals contained the fire and prevented it from spreading to nearby shops and residential buildings.

However, fire service officials failed to respond to emergency calls during the incident.

The affected shops were part of attachment buildings located at the now-defunct General Post Office in Onitsha. The structure, reportedly sold to a businessman from the state, had previously housed artisans, booksellers, and lawyers.

Sources disclosed that pressure from the new property owner had been mounting, urging tenants in the surrounding areas to vacate.

On Tuesday, some of these individuals were allegedly barred from conducting business within the premises.

By 9:38 a.m., some shop owners were seen salvaging partially burnt goods, while others, whose belongings were completely destroyed, were lamenting their losses.

This incident has raised concerns about the state of emergency response in the area, as many believe timely intervention could have minimized the losses.

One of the affected shop owners, Chinedu Nnamdi, who also lives close to Ibokwu Street, and the fire incident scene said he saw smoke from far and thought somebody was burning some waste because the shops were closed for Christmas celebration, not knowing that it



was smoke from fire that engulfed their shops, until he was called by his neighbours to come to rescue his things.

Some of the equipment affected are DI machines, said to cost over N2 million per one, fridges and generators, computers, printing machines, stationary, and other different work equipment artisans use there.

The cause of the fire incident is not yet known as at the time of filing this report, but some of the eye witnesses who participated in fire fighting to prevent the inferno spreading to nearby houses said it could be as a result of electrical spark.

## Salaries: LASU workers suspend indefinite

By Alade Adisa

Workers in the employ of the Lagos State University, LASU, operating under the aegis of the Joint Action Committee, JAC, have suspended their industrial following the meeting of two or three of their demands by the state government.

The workers are the Academic Staff Union of Universities, ASUU, the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities, SSANU, the National Association of Academic Technologists, NAAT, and the Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational and Allied Institutions, NASU.

In a statement by the workers, signed by Prof. Ibrahim A. Bakare, Chairman, ASUU-LASU, Comrade Oluwaseyi Lawal, Chairman, SSANU-LASU, Comrade Olujimi Adejo, Chairman, NAAT-LASU, and Comrade Obafemi Sanni, Chairman, NASU-LASU.

“The leadership of the Joint Action Committee (JAC) of all the staff unions in



Lagos State University acting on behalf of all the members of staff of the university is hereby issuing this press release to inform the general public that the indefinite action embarked upon by our members has been suspended effective from Monday 23rd December 2024 through a successful motion at the Emergency Congressional Meeting of the Joint Action Committee (JAC) held at the MBA Auditorium, Lagos State University, Ojo.

“The decision to suspend the strike action was taken to return normalcy to our institution and to allow the leadership of the JAC to continue negotiations with the university management and the state government on our remaining unresolved demands.

## Catholic priest, several clerics arrested over Abuja stampede

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

An unnamed top Catholic priest and several officials of the Holy Trinity Catholic Church, Maitama, Abuja, were on Tuesday arrested following a tragic stampede that claimed 10 lives during a charity food distribution event.

The incident, which occurred at the church's premises, has led to widespread criticism with sources confirming that those detained will remain in custody and could spend Christmas behind bars.

The arrests follow demands by the Islamic activist group, Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC), which called for similar action against organizers of the Abuja event and a separate tragedy in Okija, Anambra State, where 22 people lost their lives during a billionaire's charity event.

MURIC argued for fairness, stating



that organizers of a similar incident in Ibadan, Oyo State, which included a former Ooni of Ife queen and a popular radio broadcaster, Oriyomi Hamzat were charged and remanded.

Inspector General of Police, Dr. Kayode Egbetokun, has ordered

investigations into the Abuja and Anambra events.

Reacting to the arrests, Catholic Archbishop of Abuja Diocese, Most Rev. Ignatius Kaigama, expressed disapproval of what he termed the "verbal demonisation of the Catholic Church" by government agents.

In his Christmas message, titled "Christmas: A Season of Hope and Renewal," Kaigama criticised the arrest and detention of church officials, calling it "uninspiring, unfriendly, and a misplaced zeal."

He urged government authorities to support the church in addressing the trauma of the tragedy rather than exacerbating it through threats of prosecution.

## Kidnappers strangle 10-yr-old boy after collecting ransom

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A 10-year-old boy, Tasi'u Abdullahi, was brutally murdered by his kidnappers at the Rikkos community in the Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State.

Abdullahi was said to have been killed after his parents paid N150,000 as part of the ransom demanded.

The lifeless body of the boy was, however, discovered in a sack on Friday near his family's house.

The deceased's uncle, Aliyu Muhammad, told newsmen on Tuesday that the boy was kidnapped in front of his family house on Monday, December 16, after he was lured away by unknown individuals.

According to him, the abductors contacted the family five days later, demanding a sum of N50,000 for the



boy's feeding and a ransom of N1 million, threatening to kill the boy if the demanded money was not paid on time or if the family report to the police.

He said that the kidnappers eventually agreed to collect N300,000 after rounds of negotiations out of which they were paid N150,000 as the first instalment.

He said, "After paying N150,000 through a bank transfer, as instructed by the abductors, we were shocked to receive a call from a woman the following day, informing us that our child had been killed and abandoned near our house.

"Upon examining the body of the deceased, we observed that our son had been strangled, with blood coming out of his nose and mouth."

The man said two suspects were reportedly arrested in connection with the incident.

Efforts to speak with the spokesman of the Plateau State Police Command, DSP Alabo Alfred were unsuccessful as calls to his number did not go through and he did not respond to text messages sent to his phone.



# From Lagos to Kaduna: Nigerian kids share Christmas dreams

By Michael Damilola

**N**igerian children share Christmas wishes, from toys and gadgets to family experiences and gifts for loved ones, reflecting creativity, generosity, and the true spirit of Christmas amidst economic challenges

As the festive season unfolds globally, children in Nigeria are sharing their heartfelt Christmas wishes. Children across Nigeria are eagerly penning their letters to Santa Claus, hoping to receive their heart's desires this holiday season. The New Daily Prime conducted random interviews with children from Agege (Lagos State), Kuba (FCT Abuja), Calabar Street (Kaduna), Rumukoro, Port Harcourt, Owerri (Imo State) and Airport road (Enugu State) through telephone calls arranged with their parents. Parental consent was obtained before the children spoke with the media.

Filled with excitement and joy, many of these children were delighted to share their wishes for celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. From toys and games to clothes, gadgets, and shared experiences, their heartfelt desires offer a glimpse into the aspirations and dreams of Nigerian kids in 2024.

## Toys and Games: Nurturing Creativity and Fun

For many children, toys remain at the top of their Christmas wish lists. "I want a new Lego set," says 8-year-old Tunde from Lagos. "I love building things and creating new structures." His younger sister, Nneoma, 6, shares her wish for imaginative play, asking for a Barbie doll. "I want a doll that looks like me," she says with a smile.

Parents emphasize the importance of toys in fostering creativity. "Toys are not just playthings," says Mrs. Oladipo, a mother from Lagos. "They help children dream and grow."

## Gadgets and Electronics: Embracing the Digital Generation

With the growing influence of technology in Nigeria, many children's Christmas wishes center around gadgets. "I want a



tablet to play games and watch videos," says 10-year-old Chukwuemeka from Abuja. Amarachi, 9, dreams of owning a handheld gaming console. "I love competing with my friends," she explains.

Experts highlight that gadgets can serve as tools for both learning and entertainment. "While these devices offer great opportunities for skill development, balance is key," explains Dr. Adebayo, an educational psychologist.

## Clothes and Accessories: A Platform for Self-Expression

Fashion also plays an important role in children's wishes. Emmanuel, 12, from Port Harcourt, is hoping for a new pair of sneakers. "I want to look cool and stylish," he says confidently. His sister Chioma, 7, dreams of a dress adorned with flowers and sparkles.

These wishes reflect a growing emphasis on individuality among Nigerian youth. Chioma's mother stated that clothing can boost children's confidence and allow them to express their personalities.

## Experiences: Creating Lifelong Memories

While many children dream of material gifts, others prioritize shared experiences. "I want to go to the zoo and see the animals," says 5-year-old Ifeoma from Enugu. Her brother, Ikenna, 8, hopes to visit a theme park and ride roller coasters.

Such wishes highlight the importance of family outings in fostering joy and learning. "Memories of shared experiences often last longer than toys," notes Mr. Eze, a father from Enugu.

## The Spirit of Giving: Kindness and Generosity

Beyond their personal desires, many Nigerian children demonstrate remarkable kindness and empathy. "I want to give my mom a new phone," says Adaora, 11, from Owerri. "She's been wanting one for a long time." Chisom, 10, shares a similar sentiment, wishing for a bicycle to help his friends. "I want to ride it to school and share it with those who don't have bikes," he says.

These selfless wishes capture the true essence of Christmas, embodying generosity and compassion.

## The Broader Picture

The Christmas wishes of Nigerian children reflect a blend of traditional values and modern influences. Despite the economic challenges many families face, these desires reveal resilience, hope, and a strong sense of joy.

While Santa Claus may not deliver every gift, the dreams of Nigerian children shine brightly this festive season as they celebrate with love and cheer. Their voices remind us that the magic of Christmas transcends borders, cultures,

# Late Nollywood actor, Ernest Asuzu's brother shot dead in S' Africa

## ...South African ex-wife seizes corpse

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**C**hinedu Stanley Asuzu, a Nigerian national, has been brutally murdered by armed men in South Africa.

The brother of late Nollywood actor, Ernest Asuzu, was shot dead by the assailants at his residence in Johannesburg on December 16, 2024.

The tragic incident was confirmed by the Nigerian Union South Africa (NUSA) in a statement on Monday, December 23.

In a statement signed by its National Publicity Secretary, Akindele Olunloyo, NUSA condemned the murder of the father of four, adding that the organisation is actively supporting the family and working with authorities.

According to the statement, the NUSA President-General, Smart Nwobi and the legal team discovered that divorce proceedings and asset division were underway between the deceased and his estranged South African wife, Mrs Busisiwe Sibanyoni.

The statement read, "The NUSA President-General attempted to reach Mrs Busisiwe Sibanyoni, via telephone but was unsuccessful. A WhatsApp message was sent; however, she had not responded at the time of this report's compilation.

"A witness who was at the scene of the shooting incident was contacted and provided the investigating officer's details. NUSA's legal team followed up with the officer confirming that a murder investigation has been launched and remains active.

"NUSA's legal team is gathering information and liaising with the family.



"NUSA is providing comprehensive support to the bereaved family. We strongly condemn this act of violence and urge South African law enforcement to bring the perpetrators to justice. To our Nigerian community in South Africa: Stay safe, stay connected."

Meanwhile, a Nigerian, Mr Ade, is calling the attention of Nigerians and the Nigerian embassy to the sad situation as his body has been seized by his ex wife.

In videos sighted by LIB, Ade said Chinedu was killed shortly after his wife, Busisiwe Sibanyoni, called him that she was coming over to his house to pick the kids despite it being the day the victim was supposed to spend with the children.

According to Ade, the victim gave Busisiwe the kids and shortly after she left, the armed men stormed the victim's home and gunned him down.

He further claimed that Chinedu and his wife were getting divorced because she was allegedly misusing his money.

According to him, Busisiwe has full access to Chinedu's finances and properties because everything the deceased owned was bought in her name.

He also claimed that Chinedu's money was lodged into her account because he wasn't eligible to own an account due to him not having a residential permit at the time.

Ade called the attention of the Nigerian embassy and pleaded with the victim's ex wife to release his body to avoid incurring spiritual wrath.

He also alleged that Busisiwe's friend sent him a DM telling him that she is refusing to return the victim's body home because she is afraid his family will perform some sort of voodoo on the corpse so the victim can haunt whoever killed him.



# Muyiwa Ademola hails Funke, Toyin on box office wins

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**M**uyiwa Ademola hails Funke Akindele & Toyin Abraham's box office triumphs! He celebrates their success & encourages fans to support Nigerian cinema.

Funke Akindele's landmark achievement

Funke Akindele's latest film, *Everybody Loves Jenifa*, has grossed over 500 million Naira, solidifying her position as the fourth-highest-grossing film on the Nigerian box office rankings.

This milestone marks a significant achievement for Funke, who has become a household name in Nollywood. On social media, Muyiwa Ademola shared his pride, offering sincere prayers for her continued success.

In his congratulatory message, Ademola wrote: "Congratulations to you Lafunky. I rejoice with you on this milestone, @funkejenifaakindele. Bigger you in all spheres! What a time to be alive! May you never stumble, sis. Hey peeps! *Everybody Loves Jenifa* is still showing at cinemas worldwide—don't miss it! Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year in advance."



Toyin Abraham's groundbreaking success

Ademola also congratulated Toyin Abraham for the impressive success of her film *Alakada Bad and Boujee*. The film has made waves, breaking box office records and earning widespread acclaim. Ademola praised Toyin's efforts, calling her achievement "huge and worthy of celebration."

*Alakada Bad and Boujee* by Toyin Abraham

In his message, he wrote: "Congratulations, OluwaToyin. This is huge and worthy of celebration. Continue to break those barriers, @toyin\_abraham. Cheers to a bigger you! Guys, *Alakada Bad & Boujee* is still showing at cinemas nationwide. Don't sleep on it,

guys. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year in advance."

Encouraging support for Nigerian cinema

Muyiwa Ademola emphasized the importance of supporting Nigerian films, urging fans to watch both *Everybody Loves Jenifa* and *Alakada Bad and Boujee*. His messages reflect a deep sense of pride in Nollywood and a call to action for audiences to continue celebrating and promoting homegrown talent.

Ademola's words resonate not just as congratulations but as a testament to the growth and success of Nigerian cinema, inspiring both actors and audiences to push boundaries and support local stories.

# Kendrick Lamar: Billboard's 2024 pop star

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**K**endrick Lamar named Billboard's "Greatest Pop Star of 2024," marking a historic milestone and cementing his dominance in the music industry.

His achievements this year have been nothing short of extraordinary, largely driven by his consistent success on the Billboard Hot 100 chart.

Lamar's chart-topping year

Lamar's rise to this honour came through a combination of hit records, a high-profile rivalry, and an unmatched ability to connect with audiences.

His much-publicized hip-hop feud with Canadian superstar Drake became a cultural phenomenon, fueling conversations across social media and the music industry. The tension between the two artists sparked creativity on both sides, but Lamar's musical output stood out.

During this rivalry, Lamar released a string of successful singles. Among them was the standout track, "Not Like Us," which quickly climbed to the top of the Billboard Hot 100.

This song not only dominated the airwaves but also resonated deeply with fans, showcasing Lamar's sharp lyricism and ability to craft unforgettable hooks. His other releases further solidified his presence on the charts, making 2024 a landmark year for his career.

Breaking barriers in pop music

Billboard's recognition of Lamar as the "Greatest Pop Star" carries significant weight. He is the first rapper to earn this title since Drake achieved it in 2018. This milestone highlights Lamar's ability to transcend genres and redefine what



it means to be a pop star. While he remains firmly rooted in hip-hop, his music appeals to a global audience, breaking barriers and setting new standards for artists in the industry.

This achievement underscores a broader trend in music, where the lines between genres continue to blur. Lamar's success demonstrates that pop music is no longer confined to a specific sound or style. Instead, it reflects the cultural impact and widespread appeal of an artist, both of which Lamar has in abundance.

Historic moment on the hot 100

In another notable development on the Billboard Hot 100, Mariah Carey's holiday classic, "All I Want For Christmas Is You," has tied the record for the longest-running number-one song in chart history. The festive hit now shares this honor with Lil Nas X's genre-defying "Old Town Road" and Shaboozey's "A Bar Song (Tipsy)." Each of these songs has spent an impressive 17 weeks at the top of the chart.

This milestone is particularly significant because all three record-holding songs are by Black lead

artists. This achievement highlights the enduring influence and creativity of Black musicians in shaping the music landscape. From holiday anthems to hip-hop crossovers, their contributions continue to define the soundtracks of our lives.

A year to remember

2024 has been a remarkable year for music, with Kendrick Lamar at the forefront. His recognition as Billboard's "Greatest Pop Star" serves as a testament to his talent, hard work, and cultural impact. Meanwhile, the historic achievements on the Hot 100 chart underscore the diversity and vibrancy of today's music scene.

As the year comes to a close, fans and industry insiders alike are left reflecting on the power of music to bring people together and create lasting memories. For Kendrick Lamar, this year's success is not just a personal victory but also a moment of inspiration for artists everywhere. The music world will undoubtedly watch closely to see what he does next.



# Kiitan Bukola: Marriage fears

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**N**ollywood actress Kiitan Bukola has shared her deeply personal story, revealing how her childhood experiences shaped her views on marriage and family.

Speaking candidly in an interview with Biola Bayo, Bukola discussed her love for marriage while admitting her fears about its challenges.

Her honesty provided a glimpse into the emotional struggles she continues to face as she works toward building a stable and loving home for her future children.

### The impact of a Father's absence

Bukola attributed her apprehension about marriage to her upbringing, which was marked by the absence of her father. Growing up without the consistent presence of a father left a profound mark on her perspective. The actress disclosed that her father had several children, some of whom she has never met. Connections with a few siblings were made only through online platforms, highlighting the fragmented nature of her family ties.

Reflecting on her childhood, she shared, "The absence of paternal love and care has left a lasting impact on me. I didn't have the kind of fatherly attention I needed. That sense of a complete home, with both parents present, was something I missed."

These early experiences have greatly influenced her hopes and fears regarding family life. Bukola explained that while she desires to experience the joy of marriage, she is also determined to break the cycle of instability she witnessed as a child.

### Balancing love and fear

Despite her fears, Bukola expressed a strong belief in the institution of marriage. "I love marriage, but at the same time, I am scared of it. I don't want a situation where I will have my kids outside wedlock," she confessed.



Her concerns go beyond the personal. She is motivated by a desire to create a nurturing and stable environment for her future children, one free from the emotional challenges she endured. "It hurts me most of the time because I didn't really enjoy that parental love – father and mother together. I want my kids to have what I didn't have," she explained.

Bukola's openness highlights the complexity of her emotions. On one hand, she longs for the stability and love of a traditional family structure. On the other hand, her past experiences have made her cautious and protective of her future.

### A journey of resilience

In addition to her reflections on family life, Bukola spoke about her humble beginnings. She recounted her childhood struggles, including the years she spent hawking food to support her family.

"I used to hawk pounded yam and efo back in the days," she revealed. "I would wake up at 3:30 a.m. because we had to take it to Sabo in Ondo town."

This early experience of hardship shaped her work ethic and resilience. Despite the challenges, Bukola has

risen to become a celebrated figure in the Nigerian film industry. Her journey from those humble beginnings to her current success serves as an inspiration to many.

### Breaking the cycle

Bukola's story is one of courage and determination. She is not only navigating her fears but also striving to ensure that her future family experiences the love and stability she craved as a child. Her revelations underscore the importance of addressing generational challenges and breaking cycles of emotional pain.

As she continues to shine in Nollywood, Bukola's candid reflections resonate with fans who admire her vulnerability and strength. By sharing her story, she has opened the door for conversations about the impact of childhood experiences on adult relationships and the importance of creating a loving home.

Through her journey, Bukola embodies resilience, reminding us all that our past does not have to define our future. Her message is clear: while the scars of the past may linger, they can also fuel the determination to create a brighter tomorrow.

# Adeniyi Johnson shows support for Naomi

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**N**ollywood's Adeniyi Johnson supports Naomi Silekunola after an Ibadan stampede at her charity event tragically claimed over 30 children's lives.

The heartbreaking incident occurred during a charity event organized by Naomi to help the less privileged, turning a well-intentioned gesture into an unforeseen tragedy.

In a heartfelt message shared on his Instagram page, Adeniyi expressed deep condolences to the families of the victims and offered prayers for Naomi.

He recognized her genuine intentions and commended her for her charitable spirit. His words reflected compassion and a call for understanding, highlighting the tragedy's profound impact on all involved.

## Condolences to the families

Addressing the grieving families, Adeniyi's message was empathetic and reassuring. He wrote, "First and foremost, condolences to the family of lost ones; no family deserves this kind of pain at this time or any other. I pray the good Lord gives you the fortitude to bear the loss and comfort the family!! Amen."

His words resonated with many, emphasizing that such loss is a shared pain felt by the community. The actor's message reinforced the need for solidarity and comfort during this difficult time.

## Acknowledging Naomi's intentions

Adeniyi turned his attention to Naomi, expressing his belief in her good intentions. He stated, "My heart and prayers go to @queen\_silekunolanaomi\_ogunwusi, whose intentions were not to hurt or kill but to give and feed! This time, too, shall pass, and the God of your good deeds will speak for you, restore you, and bring you back stronger!"



Naomi's charity event, designed to feed the less privileged, was a reflection of her caring nature. Adeniyi's message reminded the public of her efforts to give back to the community, despite the unfortunate outcome.

## Praising Ondo state's generosity

The actor also highlighted the values of the Ondo State community, which he believes were embodied in Naomi's actions. He said, "We, the people of Ondo State, are known for our kind-heartedness and generosity, which is clearly your motive for putting the program together. I pray God to see you through this in time and bring you back stronger!"

His words served as a reminder of the compassionate culture that defines Ondo State and its people. Adeniyi's praise for Naomi and her charitable work aimed to shift focus to the goodwill behind the event rather than the tragedy itself.

## A plea for leniency

In addition to his condolences and support, Adeniyi appealed to authorities to show leniency in their handling of the incident. He wrote, "Lastly, I know for a fact that the law must be upheld, but we beseech the authorities in charge to temper justice with mercies and look

beyond the tragic incident! GOD BLESS NIGERIA."

Adeniyi's plea reflected his understanding of the need for accountability while also urging compassion for Naomi, whose intentions were pure. His call for mercy underscored the human side of the tragedy, reminding authorities and the public of the complexities surrounding the event.

## Community in mourning

The Ibadan stampede has left the nation in mourning. Over 30 children lost their lives during what was supposed to be a joyous occasion. As investigations into the incident continue, many are grappling with questions about safety measures and the challenges of organizing large-scale charity events.

Naomi Silekunola, known for her charitable work, has faced immense public scrutiny since the tragedy. However, Adeniyi Johnson's message offers a different perspective, focusing on her good intentions and the community's shared grief.

## The way forward

This tragic incident serves as a stark reminder of the importance of planning and safety in public events. It also



# Bruno Mars: Spotify's most listened artist

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**B**runo Mars has shattered the record for the highest number of monthly listeners on Spotify, marking a major achievement on the global music streaming platform.

His holiday-themed tracks, including "White Christmas," "24k Christmas," and "That's Why I Like Christmas," have seen a significant surge in streams, particularly during the festive season. This boost in popularity has propelled Mars' Spotify monthly listeners to an impressive 140 million, setting a new benchmark for male artists on the platform.

Mars' success is a testament to the enduring appeal of holiday music. His Christmas songs have resonated with listeners, especially during the holiday rush, helping him secure the top spot in Spotify's listener rankings. The new record highlights Mars' continued influence in the music industry, showcasing his ability to connect with audiences year after year.

**Ariana Grande breaks female artist record**

Alongside Mars, Ariana Grande has made headlines by breaking the record for the most monthly listeners for a female artist on Spotify. Grande's numbers surged to 117.319 million during the holiday season, surpassing Taylor Swift's previous record. This significant rise in streams reflects Grande's sustained popularity and dominance on the platform.

Grande's holiday-themed tracks, such as "Santa Tell Me" and "Last Christmas," have contributed to her impressive streaming numbers. Her ability to reinvent and adapt to seasonal trends has further solidified her status as a leading artist. Grande's success serves as a reminder of her talent and relevance in today's music landscape.

**Burna Boy leads as Spotify's most streamed African artist**

In addition to Mars and Grande, Burna Boy has emerged as the most streamed African artist on Spotify in 2024. His hit songs, such as "Last Last" and



"Kilometer," have resonated with global audiences, contributing to his record-breaking streaming numbers. Burna Boy's rise underscores the growing influence of African artists on the global music scene.

Burna Boy's success is part of a broader trend of African artists gaining recognition on Spotify. Other top-streamed African artists this year include South Africa's Tyla, Ayra Starr, Rema, and Tems. These artists have seen significant growth in their streaming numbers, further establishing the prominence of African music on the platform.

**African artists shine on a global scale**

The rise of artists like Tyla, Ayra Starr, Rema, and Tems reflects a broader trend of African music gaining international recognition. Tyla's hit track "Getting Late" has contributed to her increasing streams, while Ayra Starr's "Away" and Rema's "Calm Down" have become global favorites. Tems, known for her soulful voice, has also made significant gains, showcasing the diversity and talent emerging from Africa.

**American Singer and Songwriter Bruno Mars**

These artists are not just breaking records but also redefining the global music landscape. Their success on Spotify highlights the growing influence of African culture in the world of music. With streaming platforms like

Spotify providing a global stage, African artists are reaching new audiences and achieving unprecedented success.

**The holiday season boosts music streaming**

The holiday season has played a pivotal role in boosting streaming numbers for many artists. Both Bruno Mars and Ariana Grande experienced significant surges in listeners as listeners flocked to festive tunes. This trend isn't limited to just holiday music, however. Seasonal events consistently have a profound impact on music consumption.

Spotify's data shows that holiday-themed tracks often experience a rise in streams, with listeners seeking out seasonal favorites. These trends highlight how music streaming platforms respond to seasonal consumption patterns, making it essential for artists to adapt their releases to capitalize on these trends.

In conclusion, Bruno Mars, Ariana Grande, and artists from Africa like Burna Boy, Tyla, Ayra Starr, Rema, and Tems have all set remarkable records on Spotify in 2024. The holiday season has played a crucial role in driving these streaming successes, showcasing the evolving nature of the music industry in the digital age. These achievements underscore the growing influence of both established and emerging artists on a global scale.

# Wiz Khalifa: “10-year dates before marriage”

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**W**iz Khalifa believes couples should date for at least 10 years before marriage to build deep understanding and lasting relationships.

His comments come from personal experiences and observations about relationships, offering insights into why extended periods of dating can contribute to healthier and more successful marriages.

In a recent episode of the Club Shay Shay podcast, Khalifa, a father of two, emphasized that dating for a decade allows partners to fully understand each other, including their habits, family dynamics, and what life together might look like.

“People should date for 10 years before getting married because that’s enough time to know the person inside and out—how they interact with their family, and who you’ll be dealing with when you move in together,” Khalifa explained.

Khalifa’s own relationship history serves as a backdrop for his views. He was married to model Amber Rose on July 8, 2013, shortly after welcoming a son together.

However, their union ended in divorce in 2016, following irreconcilable differences. This experience, he says, has shaped his perspective on what it takes to sustain a marriage.

When asked whether couples should live together before marriage or wait, Khalifa offered a thoughtful response.

“It depends on the situation and circumstances. Some people move in right away and still take time to figure things out,” he said. “By not moving in immediately, you’ll see different versions of a person. There’s the version when you aren’t sharing everything, and then the one when you are.”

Khalifa’s insight highlights how important it is for couples to have a clear understanding of one another’s habits,



preferences, and family dynamics before making the commitment to marriage. Long-term dating, he argues, fosters a deeper connection and helps avoid unrealistic expectations once the couple begins living together.

The rapper’s divorce from Amber Rose offers a cautionary tale about the complexities of relationships and the need for compatibility.

While Khalifa doesn’t dismiss the idea of love or the potential for lasting connections, he suggests that marrying after a shorter period of dating might not allow for the depth of understanding necessary for a lifetime commitment.

“People tend to change over time,” Khalifa said. “During those 10 years, you’re bound to encounter various challenges, and you’ll learn how to navigate them together.”

Khalifa’s current relationship with Aimee Aguilar, who he has been dating for five years, further reflects his belief in the importance of long-term connections.

The couple recently welcomed a daughter, further solidifying their commitment to each other. Khalifa sees his relationship with Aguilar as a prime example of how extended dating can strengthen a partnership.

“I’m at a point now where I feel

confident in my relationship with Aimee because we’ve been through so much together,” Khalifa explained. “We’ve faced challenges, supported one another, and learned how to grow as a couple. That’s the kind of foundation I believe is essential for marriage.”

Khalifa’s approach stands in contrast to modern dating trends, where shorter relationships often lead to rushed decisions about marriage.

He suggests that this impatience can result in unrealistic expectations, especially when couples move in together or tie the knot without fully understanding each other.

In a world where the idea of long-term commitment can seem less appealing to some, Khalifa’s perspective offers a grounded approach.

His views encourage couples to build trust, communication, and mutual respect before rushing into marriage.

Khalifa’s advice has resonated with many fans and listeners who see value in taking the time to understand their partners thoroughly.

In today’s fast-paced world, where instant gratification often dominates, his thoughts offer a reminder of the importance of patience and long-term connection.



# Christmas Day Attack: Russia fires 70 missiles, 100 drones into Ukraine

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

....Zelensky calls Putin 'inhumane'

Russia launched an “inhumane” attack on Ukraine’s energy infrastructure on Christmas Day, with explosions reported across the country, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky said.

It is the thirteenth time this year Russia has carried out a major attack on Ukraine’s power grid, according to DTEK, the country’s largest energy provider, leaving it in a precarious position while the war grinds into a third winter.

At least one person died in the attacks in the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region, while six others were injured in Kharkiv – less than 20 miles from the Russian border – Ukraine’s national police said, adding that residential buildings and civilian infrastructure were damaged in the attack.

At least seven missile strikes targeted the city, regional governor, Oleh Syniehubov said.

Half a million households have been left without heating in the Kharkiv region in temperatures of 3 degrees Celsius (37 degrees Fahrenheit). Kyiv has imposed rolling blackouts to stabilize the grid, DTEK said.

Ukrainian forces meanwhile said Wednesday that they attacked a Russian command post overnight in Lgov in the Kursk region, where Kyiv launched a surprise offensive this year.

Four people were killed and five have been hospitalised, including one woman in a serious condition, according to local authorities in the Kursk region.

In Russia’s North Ossetia-Alania, the ministry of defence said an explosion and fire in a shopping center in Vladikavkaz was caused by falling debris from a drone



shot down by air defence forces Wednesday morning which killed one person.

Attack comes after Xmas day switch

Prior to 2023, most Ukrainians celebrated Christmas on January 7 under the Julian church calendar, but last year Zelensky signed a law formally changing the date as a way of further distancing the country from the traditions of the Russian Orthodox Church – and bringing it in line with much of the rest of Europe.

Ukraine created its own independent Orthodox Church of Ukraine in 2018, splitting from the Moscow-affiliated Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC). Since then, religious affiliation has increasingly been viewed as a symbol of national loyalty.

The holiday is now celebrated by Ukrainian Orthodox Christians on December 25, and Zelensky said Russia’s intentions were clear.

“Every massive Russian strike requires time for preparation. It is never a spontaneous decision. It is a deliberate choice – not only of targets but also of timing and date,” Zelensky said.

“Today, Putin deliberately chose Christmas for an attack. What could be more inhumane?”

Russia launched more than 70 missiles on Wednesday, including ballistic missiles, and more than 100 attack drones targeting Ukraine’s energy infrastructure, he said, adding more than 50 missiles were shot down along with a “significant” number of drones.

“Unfortunately, there are hits. As of now, there are blackouts in several regions,” he added.

DTEK said the attacks severely damaged equipment at its thermal power plants across the country.

# 38 killed as Azerbaijan plane crashes in Kazakhstan

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

At least 38 passengers have died as an Azerbaijan plane carrying 67 people crashed on Christmas day in Kazakhstan, local authorities have confirmed.

According to the emergency ministry, preliminary reports indicate that 25 people survived the crash, with 22 of them taken to the hospital for treatment.

The Embraer 190 aircraft, operated by Azerbaijan Airlines, reportedly caught fire upon crashing near Aktau city on Wednesday. Officials have confirmed that the fire has since been extinguished.



The transport ministry disclosed that the flight, identified as Azerbaijan Airlines J2-8243, was en route Baku, Azerbaijan to Grozny, Russia, carrying 62 passengers and five crew members.

The aircraft was allegedly diverted due to heavy fog conditions.

Investigations into the cause of the crash are underway.

# London village beautified by 'tree tunnel' that looks almost unreal

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Sussex near London City is an ideal environment for relaxation with its nature's gift of Halnaker tree tunnel which beautifies the village a great deal.

London's sprawling metropolis is said to boast of a remarkable 21% tree coverage, with renowned green havens such as Hyde Park and Richmond Park offering sanctuaries of tranquillity amidst the urban rush.

According to MyLondon, a walk under West Sussex's enchanting tree tunnel might just be the perfect antidote, sitting merely 90 minutes away from the bustle of the capital.

Halnaker Tree Tunnel in Sussex (Image: Jeff Overs/BBC News & Current Affairs via Getty Images)

The Halnaker tree tunnel, situated near Chichester in a peaceful Sussex village, epitomises nature's splendour.

Accessible from a nearby lay-by, this captivating tree-lined passage offers an otherworldly retreat from everyday life and encapsulates serenity itself.

With each step along the path, which winds upwards on a gentle incline, you delve deeper into an enchanting arboreal archway that



dazzles throughout the seasons, appearing just as breathtaking in the brisk air of autumn and winter as it does under the warm summer sun, the online magazine reports.

Commencing at Mill Lane, the journey leads ramblers to the esteemed Halnaker Windmill, a remarkable feature in the Sussex landscape.

Located a mere 3.5 miles from Chichester, the trail promises peace and quiet not too far removed from urban convenience.

Those who stroll its length can marvel at the stunning views along the pathway, capturing photographic memories of what has been affectionately termed the "magical" trail.

MyLondon reports that the walk is so popular that it's become a favourite spot for professional photographers, with one recently winning the Landscape Photographer of the Year award and a £10,000 prize for a shot taken in the area.

The path through the trees leads up to Halnaker Hill, offering more stunning views and photo opportunities, including the historic Halnaker Mill.

Despite numerous restorations over the years, the mill remains a beautiful sight after emerging from the picturesque woods below. Often hailed as one of the best walks in the South East, it's well worth the short journey time to visit.



# UN General Assembly moves to combat cybercrime globally

By Dave Oludare Oso

The United Nations General Assembly has adopted the Convention against Cybercrime, a landmark global treaty aimed at strengthening international cooperation to combat cybercrime and protecting societies from digital threats.

The agreement on the legally binding treaty marked the culmination of a five-year effort by UN Member States, with inputs from civil society, information security experts, academia and the private sector.

UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, welcomed the adoption of the Convention – the first international criminal justice treaty to have been negotiated in over 20 years.

“This treaty is a demonstration of multilateralism succeeding during difficult times and reflects the collective will of Member States to promote international cooperation to prevent and combat cybercrime,” his spokesperson said in a statement.

The statement added that the Convention “creates an unprecedented platform for collaboration” in the exchange of evidence, protection for victims, and prevention while safeguarding human rights online.

“The secretary-general trusts that the new treaty will promote a safe cyberspace and calls on all States to join the Convention and to implement it in cooperation with relevant stakeholders,” the statement added.

Philémon Yang, President of the General Assembly, highlighted the importance of the new Convention.

“We live in a digital world, one where



information and communications technologies have enormous potential for the development of societies, but also increases the potential threat of cybercrime.

“With the adoption of this Convention, Member States have at hand the tools and means to strengthen international cooperation in preventing and combating cybercrime, protecting people and their rights online,” he said.

The resolution containing the Convention was adopted without a vote by the 193-member General Assembly.

Ghada Waly, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) also described the adoption of the treaty as a “major victory” for multilateralism.

According to her, it is a crucial step forward in the global efforts to address crimes like online child sexual abuse, sophisticated online scams, and money laundering.

Waly reiterated the UN agency’s commitment to support all nations in signing, ratifying, and implementing the new treaty, as well as providing them with the tools and support they

need to protect their economies and safeguard the digital sphere from cybercrime.

The Convention against Cybercrime acknowledges the significant risks posed by the misuse of information and communications technologies (ICT), which enable criminal activities on an unprecedented scale, speed, and scope.

It highlights the adverse impacts such crimes can have on States, enterprises, and the well-being of individuals and society, and focuses on protecting them from offenses such as terrorism, human trafficking, drug smuggling and online financial crimes.

It also recognises the growing impact of cybercrime on victims and prioritises justice, especially for vulnerable groups. It further underscores the need for technical assistance, capacity-building, and collaboration among States and other stakeholders.

The Convention against Cybercrime will open for signature at a formal ceremony to be hosted in Hanoi, Vietnam, in 2025. It will enter into force 90 days after being ratified by the 40th signatory.

# Biden, Trump send different Christmas messages

**\*Biden urges unity, reflection in Christmas message**

**\*Trump shares politically focused posts on Truth Social**

**\*Polarization persists despite Biden's call for unity**

By Dave Oludare Oso

The outgoing and incoming U.S. presidents had different messages for the Christmas holiday, with Democrat Joe Biden urging Americans to reflect and unite and Republican Donald Trump offering a holiday greeting and a flurry of politically focused social media posts.

Biden narrated a video tour of the White House Christmas decorations that was published on YouTube late on Christmas Eve, in which he urges Americans to set aside “all the noise and everything that divides us.”

“We’re here on this Earth to care for one another, to love one another,” Biden says in a voiceover as a camera pans past adorned evergreen trees and bedecked fireplaces inside the White House. “Too often we see each other as enemies, not as neighbours, not as fellow Americans,” he said.

Biden urged Americans to find a moment of “quiet reflection” to remind themselves to treat each other with dignity and respect, “live in the light” and remember there was more to unite than divide Americans. “We’re truly blessed to live in this nation,” he



said.

Trump published a mid-morning “Merry Christmas” message on Truth Social on Christmas Day with a photo of himself and his wife Melania, followed by over two dozen retweets of articles or other social media posts that backed his political positions on topics including controversial Defence Secretary nominee Pete Hegseth and his pursuit of Greenland and the Panama Canal.

One was a mocking meme of Barack Obama that shows a photo of the 44th President and Trump at the 2017 inauguration with the message “When you see the guy who said ‘you’ll never be president’ at your inauguration.”

Biden took office in 2021 vowing to “end this uncivil war that pits red against blue, rural versus urban, conservative versus liberal,” and said he bowed out of the 2024 presidential race in July to unite the country.

By some measures, polarization in the country has increased instead, including during the 2024 campaign that pits Biden against Trump, again, before Democrat Kamala Harris took over.

Trump has called for the prosecution of perceived political enemies and vowed to restructure the federal government.



# Guatemalan migrant arrested for fatal NYC subway arson

By Olamilekan Botti

New York City was shaken by a gruesome attack early Tuesday morning at the Stillwell Avenue subway station in Brooklyn.

A 33-year-old Guatemalan migrant, Sebastian Zapeta, was arrested after allegedly setting a woman on fire aboard a stationary subway train.

Witnesses and officials described a chilling scene as Zapeta reportedly watched the woman burn to death.

The incident occurred on the F train shortly after 6 a.m. Commuters were stunned to see flames and smoke billowing from the train car, triggering an immediate response from Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) staff.

According to authorities, Zapeta had lit a match and thrown it at the victim, who was reportedly seated and surrounded by liquor bottles. Despite efforts by MTA employees to extinguish the fire, the woman succumbed to her injuries at the scene.

Zapeta, who had remained at the station after the attack, was later seen sitting calmly on a bench near the train car. Surveillance footage and body camera recordings captured his presence. Hours later, he was apprehended on a Manhattan-bound train at the 34th Street station, wearing the same clothes from the attack. A lighter was found in his possession during the arrest.

Authorities revealed that Zapeta entered the United States illegally through Arizona in 2018.



Investigators are working to confirm his immigration status and determine a possible motive for the heinous act. Witness accounts suggest that Zapeta may have been intoxicated and ranting before the incident.

“This is a shocking and deeply disturbing attack,” said an NYPD spokesperson during a press conference. “The victim’s identity is still being withheld as we notify her family. Our thoughts are with them during this incredibly difficult time.”

The attack has raised renewed concerns about safety in New York City’s subway system, which has seen a spike in violent incidents despite recent efforts to enhance security.

Governor Kathy Hochul had recently assured New Yorkers of improved safety measures, but this incident has left many questioning the effectiveness of those claims.

Social media erupted in outrage after

videos of the incident began circulating online. One video purportedly shows Zapeta throwing the lit match at the victim before calmly observing the flames. “How could someone do this?” commented one user. “This is pure evil.”

For many, the attack symbolizes a broader crisis of mental health, homelessness, and public safety in New York City. Transit advocates and city officials are calling for swift action to address the root causes of such violence.

Sebastian Zapeta remains in custody as the investigation continues. He faces multiple charges, including murder and arson. The NYPD has urged anyone with additional information about the incident to come forward.

The city mourns yet another life lost to senseless violence, a grim reminder of the challenges that still plague New York’s public transit system.

# Druglord, Ochoa walks free in Colombia after 20 years in US prisons

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

One of Colombia's infamous drug lords and a key operator of the Medellin cartel has been deported back to the South American country, after serving 25 years of a 30-year prison sentence in the United States.

A short while later, Fabio Ochoa was again a free man.

Ochoa arrived in Bogota's El Dorado airport on a deportation flight on Monday, wearing a gray sweatshirt and carrying his personal belongings in a plastic bag. After stepping out of the plane, the former cartel boss was met by immigration officials in bullet proof vests. There were no police on site to detain him.

Colombia's national immigration agency promptly posted a brief statement on the social media platform X, 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, 67, and his older brothers amassed a fortune when cocaine started flooding the US in the late 1970s and early 1980s, according to US authorities, to the point that in 1987 they were included in Forbes magazine's list of billionaires.

Living in Miami, Ochoa ran a distribution centre for the cocaine cartel once headed by Pablo Escobar. Escobar died in a shootout with authorities in Medellin in 1993.

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, but became an informant for the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Along with his two older brothers, Juan David and Jorge Luis, Ochoa turned himself in to Colombian authorities in the early 1990s under a deal in which they avoided being extradited to the US.

The three brothers were released from prison in 1996, but Ochoa was arrested again three years later for drug trafficking and was extradited to the US in 2001 in response to an indictment in Miami naming him and more than 40 people as part of a drug smuggling conspiracy.

He was the only suspect in that group who opted to go to trial, resulting in his conviction and a 30-year sentence. The other defendants got much lighter prison terms because most of them cooperated with the government.

Ochoa's name has faded from popular memory as Mexican drug traffickers take center stage in the global drug trade.

But the former member of the Medellin cartel was recently depicted in the Netflix series "Griselda," where he first fights the plucky businesswoman Griselda Blanco for control of Miami's cocaine market, and then makes an alliance with the drug trafficker, played by Sofia Vergara.

Ochoa is also depicted in the Netflix series "Narcos," as the youngest son of an elite Medellin family that is into ranching and horse breeding and cuts a sharp contrast with Escobar, who came from more humble roots.

Richard Gregorie, a retired assistant US attorney who was on the prosecution team that convicted Ochoa, said authorities were never able to seize all of the Ochoa family's illicit drug proceeds and he 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.



## Postecoglou calls for January reinforcements as Spurs struggle

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou has called for reinforcements in the January transfer window, admitting the squad is “short in a couple of areas” amid a challenging run of form.

Spurs have slipped to 11th in the Premier League after losing three of their last four games, including a 6-3 home defeat to Liverpool. Key injuries to goalkeeper Guglielmo Vicario and defenders Micky van de Ven and Cristian Romero have compounded their struggles.

Speaking ahead of their Boxing Day clash with fourth-placed Nottingham Forest, Postecoglou emphasized the importance of careful planning for January.

“We’ve been planning for a while,” said the Australian. “It’s fair to say we’re still short in a couple of areas and need to reinforce. January is tricky, but we need players who will make us stronger.”



Despite domestic struggles, Spurs remain competitive in cup competitions, reaching the Carabao Cup semi-finals after a dramatic 4-3 win over Manchester United and staying in the hunt for Europa League progression. They also face Tamworth in the FA Cup third round on January 12.

Postecoglou defended his players’ effort and dismissed criticism of his tactics, stating: “The players are giving maximum effort and doing what I’m asking of

them. How can I be critical of that?”

The Spurs boss also addressed his fiery exchange with a reporter after the Liverpool loss, attributing his reaction to repeated questions about defensive injuries. “I wasn’t angry, but it’s tiring to hear the same things after every defeat,” he said.

With a busy schedule ahead, Postecoglou is determined to bolster his squad and navigate the demanding second half of the season.

# Embiid ejected after heated clash with referee in 76ers win over Spurs

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Philadelphia, PA — In a dramatic turn of events, Philadelphia 76ers star Joel Embiid was ejected during his team's 111-106 victory over the San Antonio Spurs on Christmas Eve.

The reigning NBA MVP found himself at the center of controversy after a heated confrontation with referee Jenna Schroeder in the second quarter.

The incident unfolded when Embiid was called for a third personal foul following a charge on Spurs rookie sensation Victor Wembanyama, who was sent sprawling to the court with 2:59 remaining in the first half.

Embiid, visibly frustrated, confronted Schroeder, ripping off his protective face mask in protest.

The exchange escalated, leading to two technical fouls and an early dismissal for the 76ers' star center.

Referee Schroeder had already drawn attention earlier in the game when she ejected Philadelphia's Andre Drummond for a challenge on Wembanyama.

However, that decision was later overturned, further fueling tensions on the court.

"It was a wild first half," said 76ers head coach Nick Nurse,



reflecting on the emotionally charged game.

Despite the drama, the 76ers managed to rally behind guard Tyrese Maxey, who delivered an outstanding performance with 32 points, 10 rebounds, and eight assists, securing the win for Philadelphia.

On the opposing side, Wembanyama showcased his rising-star potential with an impressive stat line of 26 points, nine rebounds, and eight blocked shots.

However, his efforts were not enough to carry San Antonio past a resilient Philadelphia squad.

Celtics Stunned by Magic

In other NBA action, the reigning champions Boston Celtics suffered a surprising 108-104 defeat to the Orlando Magic.

Despite leading by 15 points at halftime, the Celtics faltered

without the presence of Jayson Tatum, who missed the game due to illness.

Tristan da Silva led Orlando with a team-high 18 points in the upset victory.

Thunder Shine Behind Gilgeous-Alexander

Meanwhile, the Oklahoma City Thunder, Western Conference leaders, continued their dominant season with a convincing 123-105 win over the Washington Wizards.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander delivered a standout performance, pouring in 41 points to guide his team to yet another victory.

As the NBA season heats up, the spotlight remains firmly on the league's brightest stars, with each game delivering excitement and surprises for fans worldwide.



# Carlos Corberan appointed Valencia head coach amid relegation battle

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

**L**a Liga strugglers Valencia have appointed Carlos Corberan as their new head coach, bringing the Spaniard back to his homeland after an impressive stint with West Bromwich Albion.

Corberan, 41, has signed a contract until the end of the 2026-27 season, taking over from Ruben Baraja, who was sacked following Valencia's poor start to the campaign, with just two wins in 17 league matches.

Valencia triggered Corberan's release clause, reportedly between £3-4 million, to secure his services. The appointment comes as the club sits second-bottom in La Liga, four points from safety, and prepares to face reigning champions Real Madrid on January 3.

## A Difficult Departure

In a heartfelt message, Corberan described leaving Albion as "the hardest decision of my life," expressing gratitude to the club and its supporters.

"There will always be a place in my heart for this special club, and I hope one day I can return to thank you all for your incredible support," he said on social media.

Corberan transformed West Brom during his tenure, taking them from relegation candidates



to consistent play-off contenders despite severe financial restrictions. This season, Albion sit seventh in the Championship, just outside the play-off places, despite a reduced budget.

## A Risky Move for Valencia

Corberan faces a daunting challenge at Valencia. The club has been plagued by financial instability and managerial turnover, with only one head coach lasting more than two years since Unai Emery's departure in 2012.

Still, Corberan brings a track record of overachievement. During his time at West Brom, he revived the careers of overlooked players and turned the team into a competitive force despite limited resources. His tactical acumen and ability to adapt will be critical as Valencia fight for survival in La Liga.

## Reaction from West Brom

West Brom will now search for a new manager as they navigate a busy festive schedule, with three games in six days. Coaches Chris Brunt, Damia Abella, and Boaz Myhill will take caretaker charge.

While some fans had grown critical of Corberan's style, his achievements during a tumultuous period at the club have been widely recognized. BBC Radio WM's Steve Hermon noted, "The job he has done in stabilizing the club on the field during a period of utter turmoil cannot be understated."

As Corberan embarks on a new chapter with Valencia, he leaves a lasting legacy at West Brom and the gratitude of supporters who witnessed his transformative impact on the team.