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# Gov Namadi loses son 24 hours after mother's death

By Dave Oludare Oso

Tragedy has once again struck the family of Jigawa State Governor, Umar Namadi, following the death of his eldest son, Abdulwahab Umar Namadi, in a fatal car accident.

The incident occurred barely 24 hours after the governor lost his mother, Hajiya Maryam Namadi.

According to eyewitness accounts, Abdulwahab was returning from Kafin Hausa to Dutse with his friends when the vehicle he was driving lost control, causing it to somersault. While his friends sustained various degrees of injuries and are currently receiving treatment at Dutse General Hospital, Abdulwahab was pronounced dead at the scene.

A close family source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, described the incident as a “double tragedy that has deeply shaken the family.”

“The governor is still mourning the loss of his mother, and now this. It is a very difficult time for the family,” the source said.

Governor Namadi, who was seen at the funeral in Kafin Hausa, expressed his grief but called for prayers and patience.



“It is Allah’s will, and we cannot question it. I urge everyone to remember us in their prayers during this challenging period,” the governor said during a brief address after the burial.

Residents of Dutse and Kafin Hausa have been trooping to the governor’s residence to offer their condolences.

A family friend, Alhaji Musa Ibrahim, described Abdulwahab as a “humble and responsible young man with a promising future.”

“He was well-loved by many and always showed respect to elders. This is a huge loss not just for the family but for the entire state,” Ibrahim added.

Meanwhile, hospital officials have

confirmed that Abdulwahab’s friends are responding to treatment and remain in stable condition.

Jigawa State Information Commissioner, Malam Sagir Musa, released a statement expressing the government’s condolences.

“We mourn with His Excellency and his family. This is indeed a painful moment for all of us in Jigawa State. May Allah grant the deceased Aljannah Firdaus,” the statement read.

Funeral prayers for the late Abdulwahab were held at the Kafin Hausa Central Mosque, attended by top government officials, traditional rulers, and community leaders.

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# FG denies collusion with France to destabilise Niger Republic

By Friday Omosola

The Federal Government (FG) has denied allegations made by General Abdourahamane Tchiani, the military leader of Niger Republic, accusing Nigeria of conspiring with France to destabilize his country.

In a statement issued on Thursday, Nigeria's Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, described the claims as baseless and existing only "in the realm of imagination."

He reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to fostering peace, harmony, and historic diplomatic ties with Niger Republic despite its current political instability.

"Nigeria has never engaged in any overt or covert alliance with France—or any other country—to sponsor terrorist attacks or destabilize Niger Republic," the statement read.

The Minister highlighted President Bola Tinubu's efforts as Chairman of ECOWAS, emphasising his leadership in keeping diplomatic channels open with Niger to encourage re-engagement and cooperation within the sub-region.

Idris also refuted claims of Nigeria colluding to arm or support terror groups, noting that Nigeria's Armed Forces, alongside the Multinational Joint Task Force, have made significant strides in curbing



terrorism in the region.

He further dismissed allegations of ceding Nigerian territory for subversive activities, stating that the government remains steadfast in safeguarding the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"Unlike some nations, Nigeria has never permitted foreign powers to establish military bases on its soil. This demonstrates our commitment to national independence and regional leadership," Idris added.

Addressing accusations of sabotaging Niger's pipelines and agriculture, Idris highlighted Nigeria's role in supporting Niger's economic growth through projects like the Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline and the Kano-Maradi Railway.

"It is illogical to suggest that Nigeria would undermine initiatives it has actively promoted," he stated.

He also dismissed claims of

establishing a so-called Lakurawa terrorist headquarters in Sokoto State, pointing to Nigeria's active military efforts, including Operation Forest Sanity III, which targets such threats.

He urged the public to disregard the allegations and called on General Tchiani to provide credible evidence to substantiate his claims.

"Any attempt to blackmail Nigeria over ECOWAS's principled stance against unconstitutional power seizures in Niger is disingenuous and doomed to fail," the Minister said.

The Minister further encouraged Niger's leadership to focus on dialogue and collaboration rather than promoting unfounded accusations.

He reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to regional stability and its role in addressing transnational challenges like terrorism.

# Atiku condemns Sokoto airstrike killings

By Friday Omosola

**F**ormer Vice President Atiku Abubakar has described as devastating, Wednesday's airstrike in Sokoto State, which claimed about 10 lives and left several others injured.

The New Daily Prime gathered that a Nigerian Air Force airstrike, aimed at neutralising Lakurawa terrorists, accidentally targeted Gidan Sama and Rumtuwa communities in the Silame Local Government Area of the state.

Reacting to the incident in a post on his X handle today, Atiku tagged the airstrike as an outrageous act that must be denounced in the strongest terms.

He noted, "But this tragedy begs the question: What have we truly learnt from the heart-wrenching losses of the past? On December 3, 2023, tens of innocent lives were lost in a brutal airstrike on a religious gathering at Tudun Biri, near Kaduna. How many more lives must be lost before we take



action?

"While targeting terrorists is a legitimate goal, these strikes must be carried out with unmatched precision and based on irrefutable intelligence. The indiscriminate killing of innocent citizens — our brothers, our sisters, our neighbours — can never be justified. It is not only a failure but a gross violation of humanity itself."

The 2023 presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) criticized the Nigerian Airforce, stating that the ongoing killing of innocent citizens is fueling division and deepening public anger.

He further stated that the families of the innocent victims and others now struggle to distinguish between the Nigerian Air Force and terrorists.

"We must stop this tragic cycle of death. The only way forward is to learn from the past, to make sure that every life is valued, and to ensure no more families have to mourn the loss of loved ones due to senseless violence.

"To the grieving families and the people of Sokoto, my heart goes out to you. May the souls of the departed rest in eternal peace", said the Adamawa-born politician.

# Adeleke pardons man sentenced to death for stealing fowl

By Dave Oludare Oso

**G**overnor Ademola Adeleke of Osun State has pardoned Segun Olowookere, who was sentenced to death for armed robbery in Osun State.

Olowookere was pardoned alongside his accomplice, Sunday Morakinyo, the governor disclosed in a statement on X on Thursday.

The claim that the duo got a death sentence for stealing a fowl went viral on social media. But the Osun State Judiciary has clarified that they were convicted for armed robbery, including robbing a poultry in 2010.

The governor said that 51 other inmates were also pardoned following recommendations of the State Advisory Council on Prerogative of Mercy.

“In line with the recommendations of the State Advisory Council on Prerogative of Mercy and in exercise of the power conferred on me by paragraph (a), (c) and (d) of subsection (i) of section 212 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (As Amended), I am pleased to extend my grace and mercy unto 53 convicts serving



various convictions within the Nigerian Correctional Service,” Adeleke said.

“In the case of inmates convicted of simple offences, I have decided in accordance with the said recommendation to remit and forgive the remainder of the said sentences of the following 30 (thirty) inmates in whole.

“I have also decided in accordance with the said recommendation to grant outright pardon to the following 12 (twelve) inmates convicted of simple offences.

“In the case of the following 6 (six) convicts sentenced to death, I have approved the commutation of their sentence from death to outright release while Ojekunle Timothy has his sentence commuted from death

sentence to 15 (Fifteen) years imprisonment having spent at least 10 (ten) years in custody.

“The following 4 (four) convicts also have their sentences commuted from death sentence to outright pardon: Sunday Morakinyo, Segun Olowookere, Tunde Olapade, Demola Odeyemi.”

Olowookere and his accomplice were arrested in 2010 for breaking into the homes of a police officer and another person.

In 2014, Justice Falola of the Osun State High Court sentenced the duo to death by hanging after they were found guilty of breaking into the officer’s house and stealing his property.



# Ibadan Stampede: Queen Naomi's mother begs Tinubu for daughter's release

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

**M**rs. Funmilayo Ogunseyi, the mother of Naomi Silekunola, the former wife of the Ooni of Ife, has called on President Bola Tinubu and well-meaning Nigerians to intervene in her daughter's legal troubles following a tragic stampede in Ibadan that claimed the lives of 35 children.

Silekunola, along with two other individuals, was arraigned before the Iyaganku Magistrate Court in Ibadan in connection with the incident, which occurred during a funfair event last week.

The court ordered that the accused be remanded in prison, facing charges of conspiracy, negligent acts causing harm, and failure to provide adequate security and medical facilities for the event.

In an emotional video that has since gone viral, Mrs. Ogunseyi made an impassioned plea for mercy, stressing that her daughter's motives were entirely humanitarian.

She explained that Naomi had organised numerous outreach programmes over the past decade, aimed at assisting vulnerable groups, including the elderly, children, and pregnant women across Nigeria.

"I ask for mercy. Mothers, please have mercy. Come to my rescue. Don't let my life be destroyed. My daughter came to Ibadan to help the needy; this wasn't her first time. We've travelled across the country helping children and the vulnerable. I sympathise with the families who lost their children; it was never our intention. Please don't let Naomi be imprisoned, she is innocent. She only came to show compassion,"



Mrs. Ogunseyi said tearfully.

She recounted the chaotic events leading up to the tragedy, revealing that crowds had gathered long before the event's scheduled start time of 10 a.m.

According to her, the stampede began around 6:30 a.m., well before Naomi arrived at the venue.

"The programme was supposed to start at 10 a.m., but people began arriving the day before. By 6:30 a.m., the crowd became uncontrollable. Naomi wasn't even there yet. I got a call about the chaos while I was still asleep. My phone number was on the event flyer, so I was contacted. Naomi, her elder brother, and I immediately went to the police station to report the incident, but she was detained and later charged with murder," she explained, breaking down in tears.

Mrs. Ogunseyi also revealed that Naomi, who was reportedly unwell at the time, fainted during police questioning and remains in custody despite her fragile health.

She appealed directly to President Tinubu, asking for intervention in what she described as a case that was being manipulated by "powerful persons."

"They have taken my child to prison. The court was full of policemen. I don't know where else to turn. They say her ordeal is an 'order from above.' Please, I beg those in power to release her. She is not a killer; she came to help. Naomi is fragile and sick. President Tinubu, I beg you, come to our aid," she implored.

While expressing her heartfelt condolences to the families who lost their children in the stampede, Mrs. Ogunseyi insisted that the tragedy was an unfortunate accident and was never intended by Naomi or the organisers.

The incident has sparked widespread public attention, with many expressing sympathy for the families of the deceased, as well as concern over the legal proceedings involving Silekunola.

# 10 interesting facts about Boxing Day you need to know

By Dave Oludare Oso

**B**oxing Day, celebrated annually on December 26th, is a holiday that holds a special place in many cultures, particularly in countries with historical ties to the United Kingdom.

While it's commonly associated with shopping sales, festive family gatherings, and sporting events, the holiday has a deeper and more fascinating history that many may not be aware of.

Originating in the UK, Boxing Day was once a time for giving, with roots in charitable acts and traditions that go back centuries.

Over time, the holiday has evolved, taking on different customs and significance in countries like Canada, Australia, and South Africa.

From its connection to Christmas gift-giving to its role in fostering community spirit through sports and charity, Boxing Day has become much more than just another day after Christmas.

In this article, we explore 10 interesting facts about Boxing Day that shed light on the holiday's rich cultural heritage and enduring appeal across the globe.

## It has nothing to do with boxing

Despite the name, Boxing Day has no connection to the sport. The term originated from the practice of giving "Christmas boxes" filled with gifts, money, or food to servants, tradespeople, and the less fortunate.

## Its origins are in the UK

Boxing Day began in the UK, where it served as a day off for servants who worked on Christmas Day.

These workers would receive boxes of gifts or leftovers from their employers



when they went home to their families.

## It's a public holiday in several countries

Boxing Day is recognized as a public holiday in many nations with British colonial ties, including Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Nigeria and South Africa, with each country adding its own cultural twist to the celebrations.

## Sports are central to the day

In the UK, Boxing Day is synonymous with sports, especially Premier League football matches and horse racing. In countries like Australia and South Africa, cricket is a popular tradition as well.

## First recorded use of the term

The term "Boxing Day" was first recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary in the 1830s, though the tradition it refers to dates back centuries.

## It goes by different names

In South Africa, Boxing Day is officially called the "Day of Goodwill," while in Ireland, it's known as St. Stephen's Day, honoring the first Christian martyr.

## Centered on charity

Historically, Boxing Day was a time for charity. Churches would open their alms boxes to distribute donations to those in need, a tradition that still continues in some communities.

## A major shopping event

In countries like Canada and the UK, Boxing Day sales rival Black Friday in popularity.

Shoppers flock to stores for deep discounts, making it one of the busiest shopping days of the year.

## Different traditions worldwide

While shopping and sports dominate in some places, other countries celebrate Boxing Day with unique traditions.

In Ireland, it's celebrated with Wren Day, while in Australia, the famous Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race is held.

## A relaxed day after christmas

For many, Boxing Day is simply an extension of Christmas. Families enjoy leftovers, spend time together, and relax, creating a more laid-back atmosphere after the holiday's festivities.



# EFCC arrests Delta Accountant General over diversion of N1.3trn by Okowa

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Accountant General of Delta State, Mrs. Joy Enwa, has been arrested by operatives of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) amid the commission's ongoing investigation of former governor of the state, Ifeanyi Okowa.

Currently, the anti-crime agency is investigating the alleged diversion of N1.3 trillion state funds by Okowa.

EFCC arrested and detained the former governor in November this year for the alleged diversion of the funds, said to be part of the 13 percent derivation fund earmarked for oil-rich states.

Dele Oyewale, the EFCC spokesman, who confirmed the arrest and detention, stated that the former Delta governor and former vice presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was taken into custody at the Port Harcourt division of the anti-graft office.

Okowa was alleged to have used his office as governor to loot and acquire assets up to N1.3 trillion. Some of the assets were shares in UTM Floating Liquefied Natural Gas Company, among other investments in the oil sector.

The National Bureau of Statistics had reported how the Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) shared funds among the oil-rich states.

Amid the ongoing investigation of the former governor, the EFCC operatives last week arrested and detained the Accountant General of Delta State, Mrs. Joy Enwa for questioning.

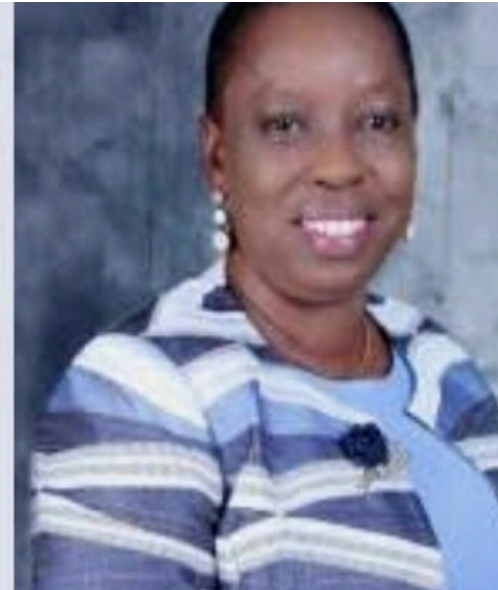


According to SaharaReporters, one Ekeruche, former director of finance and administration (DFA) and the director of administration, Government House, were also arrested and detained for several days by the commission.

They made separate statements during the time.

In 2015, the former Delta State Accountant General, Cyril Agbele, his then deputy, Mrs. Joy Enwa, now current Accountant General, former Asaba branch manager of the First City Monument Bank (FCMB), Mabel Asaije, and a staff member of the Delta State Board of Internal Revenue, simply identified as "Prosper" were enmeshed in a N369 million fraud and arrested by operatives of the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) in Asaba.

One of the officers from the Delta State Criminal Investigation Department (CID), the crack team that arrested the FCMB manager and others, said the bank manager, the AG, deputy AG and some staffers of the internal revenue board connived to defraud the state government of the money a few days before the expiration of the tenure of the



then governor Emmanuel Uduaghan.

Agbele had debunked the allegation.

In April 2020, Okowa appointed Enwa as the new Accountant General of the state, taking over from Agbele.

However, when contacted for comments on her arrest and detention at the EFCC's facilities in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Enwa declined comments and simply said, "I am not the right source to confirm such story from. Why don't you reach out to the commission to give you details of my arrest and detention if at all I was actually arrested and detained by the commission?"

When the EFCC spokesman, Dele Oyewale was contacted on Wednesday evening, he confirmed the arrest and detention of Enwa over the ongoing investigation of Okowa.

Oyewale stated, "Yes, the accountant general was arrested and detained by the commission for some days before she was released. We also arrested some officials of the state government but they have been released as well."

# Military Strike: Gov Aliyu consoles Sokoto residents, says incident unfortunate

By Dave Oludare Oso

**G**overnor Ahmad Aliyu of Sokoto State has addressed residents of the state over the Christmas Day's military air strike in the state.

NEW DAILY PRIME reported that a fighter jet, in pursuit of Lakurawa terrorists mistakenly bombed two communities in the Silame Local Government Area of Sokoto State on Wednesday morning.

The incident left at least 10 innocent villagers dead and several others injured.

The governor, who visited the affected communities, sympathised with the community and described the incident as unfortunate.

He later issued a press statement addressing residents of the state.

Read his full statement:

My dear people of Sokoto State, it is with a heavy heart that I address you following the tragic incident in the communities of Gidan Bisa and Runtuwa in the Silame Local Government Area.

This heartbreaking event, caused by an accidental misfire from the Nigerian Army, has claimed the lives of innocent citizens and left



several others injured.

As your governor, I am deeply saddened by this avoidable loss of life. On behalf of the government and the people of Sokoto State, I extend my heartfelt condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones. We also pray for the swift recovery of those injured in this unfortunate incident.

I want to assure you that I am in direct communication with the leadership of the Nigerian Army to ensure a thorough investigation into the circumstances that led to this tragedy.

The state government will do everything within its power to support the affected families and engage with the relevant authorities to prevent such occurrences in the future. This is a time for us to stand united as a

community.

I urge all residents to remain calm and pray for peace in our state and nation. May the Almighty comfort the bereaved families and grant eternal rest to the departed souls.

I visited the affected areas to assess the situation firsthand and have directed a donation of N20 million along with 100 bags of assorted food items to the families of the deceased.

This support is intended to alleviate their suffering and cover the medical bills of those hospitalized due to their injuries from the bombardment.

Together, we will overcome this difficult moment and work towards ensuring that such tragedies do not happen again.



# FG earmarks N3.6bn for Aviation College annexes

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Federal Government has outlined plans to set up annexes of the Nigerian College of Aviation Technology (NCAT) in five geopolitical zones of the country.

Towards this end, the government has made a budgetary provision of N3,680,000,000 towards the actualisation of the project.

NCAT is the foremost aviation training institution in Nigeria established in 1964 and it is a Regional Training Centre (RTC) designated by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).

Since its establishment, the college only has an annex in Lagos, the country's commercial capital and the hub of aviation in Nigeria.

Sources said the plan to decentralise the operation of NCAT has been in the offing over the years.

But the federal government in the 2025 budget presented by President Bola Tinubu on Thursday last week, is planning to spend N3.6bn to establish NCAT annexes in five geopolitical zones including Akure (South-West), Osubi (South-South), Ebonyi (South-East), Ilorin (North Central) and Yola (North East).

It was classified as a new project in the budget of the Ministry of Aviation and Aerospace Development contained in the appropriation document.

Similarly, the federal government



plans to spend N1.6bn on consultancy services/transaction advisers for some projects in the ministry.

These include N800m for consultancy/transaction advisers for the concession of five airport terminals as well as another N800m for "Consultancy/transaction advisers for PPP projects; maintenance, repair and overhaul, aerotropolis, agro-allied/cargo terminals, FAAN headquarters and others."

NEW DAILY PRIME reports that the concession of airport terminals was a major programme of the immediate past administration when Senator Hadi Sirika held sway as the Minister of Aviation.

The former minister had a running battle with the aviation unions and some stakeholders in the industry over the airport concession programmes.

Despite the opposition, the immediate past administration announced at its twilight that it has

successfully concessioned the Murtala Muhammad International Airport (MMIA), Lagos and Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja.

The then Special Assistant on Public Affairs to the Minister of Aviation, James Odaudu, stated that the concessioning was approved by the Federal Executive Council (FEC).

He disclosed that the Corporacion American Airport Consortium emerged as the preferred bidder, which comprises the Corporation American Airports, Mota Engil Africa, and Mota Engil Nigeria.

Furthermore, the Corporacion American Airport Consortium will make upfront payments of \$7 million for NAIA and \$1.5 million for MAKIA.

But the new minister, Festus Keyamo on assumption of office suspended the projects but said the plan to concession the airports is still alive.



# Obi canvasses skills empowerment for inmates

By Friday Omosola

The former Governor of Anambra State and the Labour Party's presidential candidate, Peter Obi, has called for enhanced skills and educational empowerment for inmates in Nigeria's correctional facilities.

He made the call today in a statement shared on his X page, after visiting the Nigerian Correctional Centre in Onitsha yesterday.

He said he joined Archbishop Valerian Okeke to interact with inmates undergoing rehabilitation.

Obi expressed delight at the operational status of the Centre's skill acquisition facility, which equips inmates with various productive skills.

He noted that through Archbishop Okeke's intervention, the facility has become a hub for educational and



vocational advancement.

"Inmates at the centre now have access to the National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB) examinations and a study centre established by the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)", he said.

Obi commended the efforts, highlighting education as a critical tool for national development and rehabilitation.

"I sincerely appreciate Archbishop Valerian Okeke for his constant intervention and immeasurable contributions to the correctional facility and society at large," Obi stated.

He urged the government to replicate these initiatives in other correctional centres nationwide, emphasising their potential to rehabilitate inmates, many of whom are youths, and prepare them for productive roles in society.

Obi reaffirmed his belief in the possibility of a new Nigeria, emphasising the transformative power of education and skill acquisition.

# Umuahia monarchs invoke bees, rain curses on kidnappers

By Dave Oludare Oso

Royal fathers in Umuahia North Local Government Area (LGA) of Abia State have invoked death on kidnappers operating in any part of the zone.

The traditional rulers monarch made the invocation on December 24 during a special prayer session where they poured libation, broke kola nuts and alligator peppers and made declarations against bandits operating in Umuahia North.

The monarchs, led by Eze Innocent Nwaigwe, proclaimed death upon any kidnapper terrorizing the indigenes of the council area.

The traditional rulers also declared that the local government will witness a peaceful and protected atmosphere throughout the Christmas and New Year periods, and beyond prayed for the



safety of all indigenes of Umuahia North.

The kings, who also invoked bees to sting out any kidnapper hiding in any bush in Umuahia North, said the bandits would die or be apprehended live unless they stopped their evil activities.

The Umuahia North monarchs also prayed for God's protection and

guidance upon Governor Alex Otti, saying that the present administration in Abia State has so far, performed well in security and other areas of leadership.

Speaking after the prayers, Eze Innocent Nwaigwe said the monarchs asked the gods to visit kidnappers with capital punishment unless they quit their evil ways.

# Petrol price reduced in response to market forces – Dangote

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

**A**liko Dangote, President of Dangote Industries Limited, has explained that the recent reduction in petrol prices was a direct response to the dynamics of market forces.

The price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), commonly known as petrol, was reduced to N899.50 per litre at Dangote's loading gantry, following a shift in the competitive landscape of the downstream sector.

In a candid interview featured in an Arise TV documentary, Dangote elaborated on the price reduction, noting that the move was primarily driven by the market.

He also emphasised that, as the owner of the multi-billion dollar refinery, it is his duty to protect the interests and investments of the company.

“The price reduction is a response to the market, let me just put it that way. It is a refinery where we invested over \$20bn, and I think we have to try and protect our interests and also our investments,” Dangote said.

The price reduction came into effect on 19th December 2024, when Dangote's refinery lowered its ex-depot price of petrol from N970 to N899.50 per litre.

This prompted a chain reaction, forcing the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Limited (NNPCL) to lower its ex-depot price to N899 per litre as well. In addition, the Dangote refinery formed a partnership with MRS Petrol Stations to sell petrol nationwide at N935 per litre, a move that has been welcomed by Nigerians.

Dangote further discussed the significant impact of the Dangote Refinery, which has the capacity to refine 650,000 barrels per day, on the Nigerian economy.

He explained that by reducing the country's reliance on imported



petroleum products, Nigeria would ease pressure on its foreign exchange reserves.

“40 per cent of our demand on foreign exchange is through people dealing in petroleum products, and the more we allow imports to come in, the more we keep using most of our foreign exchange out of the country,” Dangote said.

He also acknowledged the inevitability of criticism, stating that no matter the project, there would always be those who criticise. However, he expressed confidence that the Dangote Refinery will bring positive change to Nigeria's oil sector and overall economy.

“Criticism will not stop us from continuing with what we are doing. I did this project because of my love for my country and to make sure that I have a legacy project,” Dangote remarked.

“If I invested this money in Google or Apple, my investment would be more, and I wouldn't be having the headache that I'm having today.”

Dangote, who described his investments as a legacy project rather than a pursuit of personal wealth, also defended his position on the \$1bn investment by the NNPC in the refinery, calling it “a drop in the ocean” in comparison to the \$20bn refinery.

“When NNPC said, ‘Give us one more year, we want to change the agreement, we would rather pay you cash,’ we gave them one more year. So from June last year to June this year, I called NNPC, and they gave us a week,” he explained.

“But when the payment was due, NNPC decided to back out of the transaction abruptly. I said, okay, fine. We just walked away and continued. But we still went ahead, we finished our refinery, and our refinery is operating.”

In response to circulating rumours that NNPC had provided financial assistance to Dangote's refinery during a liquidity crisis, he dismissed these claims as “cheeky and nasty,” insisting that they were false.

The Dangote Refinery is currently refining 350,000 barrels per day, with plans to reach its full capacity of 650,000 barrels per day as operations ramp up.

Devakumar Edwin, Vice President of Dangote Industries, revealed that the refinery has access to more crude oil than is required for its current operations.

“The Nigerian crude production is more than double our requirements, so there is more than enough crude within Nigeria,” Edwin said.



# Akeredolu memorial lecture: Late ex-gov's widow blasts Aiyedatiwa

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

The widow of the late former governor of Ondo State, Rotimi Akeredolu, Betty, has dissociated herself from the memorial lecture being planned by the state government in the honour of her husband.

The state government had scheduled the lecture, which is part of a series of activities to commemorate the first anniversary of Akeredolu's death on December 27, 2023, for Friday in Akure, the state capital.

Renowned lawyer, Femi Falani (SAN), was to deliver the lecture, with Bashorun Seinde Arogbofa serving as the chairman of the Akeredolu Leadership Lecture Series, as announced by the state government.

However, taking to her X account on Wednesday to distance herself and her family from the event, Betty Akeredolu accused the state government of not involving the Akeredolu family in the planning and claimed they were not invited to the occasion.

In her post titled "Re: Purported Aketi lecture by Ondo Lucky can't be serious!," Betty expressed her discontent, saying, "Which legacy? Lecture my foot! This is not for Aketi because my family and I are not aware. Damn it! As the saying goes: You and your co-travellers



cannot shave Aketi's head in his absence. You cannot weep more than the bereaved. This is an insidious propaganda carried too far! Lucky, you are preoccupied with rubbishing Aketi's legacy; you can't succeed, anyway."

She further criticised the memorial event, calling it an attempt to exploit Akeredolu's legacy for financial gains.

"Anybody close to Aketi and Arabinrin becomes your enemy. Your minions are scared to get close; otherwise, they lose their appointments. Now you want to pretend by organising one yeye lecture for Aketi's memorial as an entry point to chop money on Aketi's head. You are on your own o! If this is not #Yahoo #419 lecture, tell me what it is!"

But in response, the Chief Press Secretary to Governor Aiyedatiwa, Ebenezer Adeniyani, clarified that there was no conflict between the state government and the Akeredolu

family regarding the memorial lecture.

Adeniyani stated that the family had been invited to the event and emphasised that Akeredolu, who had passed while serving as governor, was honored with a state burial attended by the state governor.

Adeniyani said, "Akeredolu was not just a family man. He was the governor of Ondo State. He died while serving the state. He was given a state burial and the state governor attended all the burial activities in Akure, Owo, and Ibadan.

"The state government is organising this lecture to mark the first anniversary of his passing, and an invitation has been extended to the family for representation. There is no dispute between the government and the family, and we are aware that there will be other events lined up to mark that anniversary."



# 'It's unfair' – celebrities condemn remand of Ooni's ex-queen, others

By Friday Omosola

**C**elebrities have weighed into the stampede in Ibadan, the Oyo State capital, which claimed the lives of 35 children and left several others injured.

The tragic incident occurred during an event at Islamic High School in the Bashorun area, organised by Naomi Silekunola, the ex-queen of the Ooni of Ife, Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi.

Originally planned for 5,000 attendees, the event attracted an overwhelming crowd after news of free entry, gifts, and scholarship opportunities spread rapidly.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that hundreds of attendees camped around the school the night before the event to secure early access.

Following the stampede, authorities arrested, arraigned, and remanded Naomi; Oriyomi Hamzat, CEO of Agidigbo FM; and Fasasi Abdullahi, the principal of the school.

Addressing the situation, actor Femi Branch in a video posted on his Instagram page criticised the detention of the organisers, calling it unfair and a violation of their human rights.

Branch argued that the parents who smuggled their children into the venue were the true culprits.

He questioned why the police have not arrested or prosecuted those who allegedly threw their children over the school fence to gain entry, emphasising their role in the tragic outcome.

"I want to say quick things about an unfortunate incident that happened in Ibadan that led to the death of 35 children. I was sad when I heard that the organisers, Prophetess Naomi and Oriyomi have been arrested and later heard they were charged to court and be remanded which means they'll be detained until the next adjournment.

"I'm very curious to hear about the charges and I'm very sure that but on negligence and others but let's do a quick analysis. I want to believe they have very good lawyers because this case is nonsense and this is not me being insensitive to the plight of the children that died, it is very tragic," he said.

The 54-year-old actor explained that the event



was scheduled for 10:00 a.m., with security personnel set to arrive by 8:00 a.m. However, he said parents began dropping off their children at the venue as early as midnight.

The Ogun-born actor revealed that when the organisers learned about parents smuggling their wards into the venue at midnight, they rushed to open the venue and began rescuing the children. He remarked, "By that time, there was already a stampede."

He asked, "Is it a crime to do good in a country like Nigeria, where people are struggling with hunger and so many other challenges?"

Branch, who also served as the producer, added: "But if the purpose is to punish those responsible for the death, how is it the organisers? Let's look at the facts on the ground. The event was supposed to start by 10am, the security personnel were supposed to arrive by 8. The venue was locked and wasn't meant to be open till the security personnel arrived by 8 for an event that was supposed to start by 10.

"From the reports we have, people came overnight, they started arriving overnight and started throwing their children over the fence and into the compound. I saw a very tragic one of the children that as the mum threw them over the fence, the child hit their head and died instantly. So how is this the fault of the organisers?"

He called for the immediate release of Naomi and Oriyomi, emphasising that such an unfortunate incident could happen to anyone.

He attributed the root cause of the issue to the hunger and hardship people are enduring under President Bola Tinubu's administration.

The actor also pointed out that most of the parents who smuggled their children in were not entirely out of food supplies.

"And now the poor organisers who are trying to be a blessing are arrested, charged to court. What is going on? Don't tell me you're just trying to make an example of them. To what end exactly? We need to be careful because we're setting a very terrible precedent.

He condemned the actions of parents who smuggled their children into the venue by scaling the fence.

"I think people need to speak up about this. Why have the police not fished out those parents who threw their children over the fence and also charged them? Because as far as I am concerned, they are the offenders, not the organisers.

"The facts are clear. It is unfair for Oriyomi Hamzat and prophetess Naomi to be remanded on his matter. These people should be set free. The government needs to do better because they want to be better to the people and be proactive, so they violate the rights of citizens and abuse the rights of people who have done no wrong."

Meanwhile, controversial crossdresser Idris 'Bobrisky' Okuneye also criticised the remand of the organisers.

Bobrisky, who recently made headlines over allegations of bribing Nigerian Correctional Service (NoS) and Economic Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) officials during his six-month jail term at the Kirikiri Correctional Centre in Lagos for naira mutilation, stated that the remand of Oriyomi and Naomi deeply saddened him.

# Troops kill notorious bandit, Al'jan in Zamfara, residents celebrate

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Troops of the Nigerian Army have neutralized a notorious bandit, "Al'jan," in the Tsafe Local Government Area of Zamfara State.

Al'jan's death has brought relief to the residents of the area.

The deceased had long been terrorizing communities in the local government area.

Originally from Niger Republic, "Al'jan," whose real name remains undisclosed, settled in Tsafe LGA after working as a motorcycle taxi operator.

Zagazola Makama, a Lake Chad Basin counterterrorism and insurgency expert, explained that working as a taxi operator connected Al'jan with Fulani herders, leading him down a path of criminality.



The publication stated: "Over time, he forged alliances with a bandit group led by Hassan Bamamu, becoming deeply entrenched in acts of banditry and terror throughout the region.

"Utilizing his extensive knowledge of Tsafe and its surroundings, Al'jan acted as a guide for criminal gangs, orchestrating numerous raids and kidnappings."

He was implicated in several high-profile killings, including those of

Anas Umar Dan Kanti, Alhaji Musa Ille, and an unnamed Navy officer. It added:

"The reign of terror that "Al'jan" inflicted on the community came to an end three weeks ago when security forces successfully neutralized him and several of his associates during a joint operation between Mada and Yandoton Daji in Tsafe LGA.

"This operation involved a coordinated effort by soldiers and local vigilantes, who ambushed the gang as they traversed the area.

"The elimination of "Al'jan" has brought new found hope to the people of Tsafe, particularly those residing along the Tsafe-Gusau road, which had suffered from frequent attacks.

"Residents of Bamamu village, his last known hideout, confirmed his death after viewing his remains."

# Edo man kills 4-yr-old son after 'falling into trance'

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Police have arrested a man, identified as Theophilus Osazuwa, who was alleged to have killed his four-year-old son while under the influence of hard drugs in Edo State.

Disclosing the baffling incident on Wednesday night, the Edo State Police Command Police Public Relations Officer, Moses Yamu said the suspect killed his son at about 12:30 pm on Tuesday at his home located at Ogbeson Quarters, off Benin-Agbor Road in Benin City.

The PPRO said Osazuwa fell into a trance and was screaming 'Holy



Ghost fire' before slamming his son against the wall, killing him in the process.

He said, "Edo Police Command has arrested one Theophilus Osazuwa of Ogbeson Quarters off Benin-Agbor Road, Benin City, for the murder of

his four-year-old son named Testimony Osazuwa.

"The suspect was said to have arrived at his home on 24/12/2024 at about 1230 hrs, went berserk screaming 'Holy Ghost fire,' then reached for the four-year-old boy and slammed him to the wall. The child was rushed to the hospital but was pronounced dead on arrival.

"Preliminary investigation revealed that the young man who is known for the consumption of illicit (colloquial, ice, etc.) substances must have acted under the influence of the same."



# UniAbuja refutes claims of bias in VC selection process

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The University of Abuja has firmly denied allegations of bias and irregularities in its ongoing selection process for a new Vice-Chancellor, following protests by senior professors who criticised the procedure as “flawed.”

Reports from PUNCH Online on Tuesday revealed that some senior academics at the university had raised concerns over the selection process, accusing the institution of favouritism. The controversy erupted following the exit of the university’s former VC, Prof. Abdulrasheed Na’Allah, on July 1, 2024, after which the search for his successor commenced.

During Na’Allah’s tenure, he had initiated the process to appoint a new VC before stepping down. Prof. Aisha Maikudi, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academics, was appointed to serve as acting Vice-Chancellor after his departure.

However, some stakeholders have contested her appointment, questioning whether she possesses enough years of professorial experience to assume the role permanently.

In a statement issued on Wednesday by the Acting Director of Information and University Relations, Habib Yakoob, the university addressed these concerns, asserting that Prof. Maikudi is fully qualified for the position and has effectively managed the responsibilities of acting VC over the past six months.

The university insisted that Maikudi, along with all other candidates, had been considered under a merit-based selection process.

“These reports, which include claims of imposing a candidate—specifically



the Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Aisha Sani Maikudi—are misleading and exaggerated,” the statement read.

“In fact, her remarkable accomplishments during this period have garnered widespread applause and commendation within and beyond the University.”

The university also emphasised its commitment to a transparent and fair selection process, conducted in line with relevant laws and regulations.

“The university remains confident in the Council’s ability to conduct a transparent, fair, and merit-based selection process, adhering strictly to the Universities (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act and other relevant statutes,” Yakoob added.

Addressing reports of protests by some professors, the university acknowledged the right of staff members to express their concerns peacefully.

However, it categorically denied any allegations of coercion or confrontation during a recent Senate meeting. “No such meeting occurred,” Yakoob clarified, while stressing that the university respects staff rights to peaceful protest.

The statement also responded to claims of harassment involving a Channels Television journalist, clarifying that the incident had been thoroughly investigated.

The findings revealed that the journalist’s vehicle had been briefly immobilised due to a misunderstanding over their identity and purpose on campus. The university denied any allegations of assault, detention, or harm, confirming that no journalist who properly identified themselves had been denied access.

The University of Abuja reiterated its commitment to maintaining positive relationships with the media and safeguarding the safety and security of all individuals on campus.

It called on all stakeholders to allow the selection process to unfold without external interference or politicisation, assuring that the process will be concluded with integrity and in the best interests of the institution.

“The process will be concluded with the utmost integrity and in the best interests of the University,” the statement concluded.



# Meet world's deadliest rat, which can kill elephant with one bite

By New Daily Prime

**P**redators beware! The world's deadliest rat carries enough toxin to kill an elephant

Did you know there's a rat poisonous enough to kill an elephant?

*Lophiomys imhausi*, also known as the crested rat, the maned rat, and the African crested rat, is a deadly rarity says Aoife Glass.

The crested rat is the only known poisonous rodent, and the only known mammal to sequester plant toxins for use as a defence mechanism. One bite is enough to kill.

What does the crested rat look like?

Adult crested rats grow to between 360mm and 530mm head to tail. The small head is covered in short, black fur, while the body and tail have a thick grey and white undercoat with longer guard hairs tipped white or black, together giving the impression of a small, fluffy skunk.

A mane of longer black and white banded hairs stretches the length of the rat from the head to the base of the tail, and this is the crest or mane from which the animal gets its name.

When it's threatened, this mane erects, exposing a band down each side of the body, bordered in white, with specially adapted hairs covering glandular skin.

This has two purposes. The first, like a skunk, is to display warning colouration. The second is to reveal those specially adapted hairs, which contain enough toxin to make any animal that decides to take a bite extremely ill, if not fatally poisoned.

Where does the crested rat live?

Sometimes called the African crested rat, this species lives in forests, savannah and shrubland, favouring rocky terrain, and nesting in hollow tree trunks, holes and hollows. Populations have been observed in Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania, Kenya, Djibouti and Eritrea.

Crested rats seem to be mostly solitary, sometimes living within a small family group of male, female and offspring. Female crested rats have small litters of between one to three offspring.

What does the crested rat eat?



Despite its fearsome reputation, the crested rat's diet of choice mostly consists of plant material such as leaves and fruit, though it has been known to eat meat, insects and root vegetables.

Unusually, it has stomach physiology that's similar to ruminants such as cattle; a four-chambered stomach with plenty of digesting bacteria which allows it to process and breakdown the food it consumes. This fact makes it unique amongst *Moroidea*, the super family to which all rodents belong.

Why is the crested rat so deadly?

The other unique element of the crested rat is its killer abilities. It's the only known rodent that uses toxins from another species as a defence mechanism, and it does this via some incredible evolutionary adaptations.

First, *Lophiomys imhausi* feeds on the bark of the African poison arrow tree, *Acokanthera schimperi*. The bark, as well as the roots, stems, leaves and seeds of this tree, contain acovenoside A and ouabaine; these are heart stimulating chemicals, called cardenolides. In small doses, these types of chemicals can be used for medicinal purposes, but at larger doses can have catastrophic effects; vomiting, convulsions, breathing difficulties and even cardiac arrest.

Next, *L. imhausi* licks the hairs along the glandular skin patches either side of its crest, depositing saliva infused with those cardiotoxic glycosides from the African poison arrow tree. At a glance, these hairs look much like those on other areas of the crested rat, but they have a very particular structure; a honey-comb outer layer, with an inner layer of long vertical fibres. This makes them particularly suited to absorbing liquid, dispersing it along its interior, and storing or 'sequestering' it.

How does the crested rat kill?

If a would-be predator ignores the warning

colouration and tries to attack, the exposed hairs will release these toxic compounds into the mouth, and very quickly into the bloodstream. With natural predators including the honey badger, caracal, serval, hyena and leopard, an effective deterrent is a definite evolutionary advantage.

Just how toxic could the crested rat be?

Arrows treated with the same cardenolide toxins have floored full-grown elephants, so potentially very deadly indeed. However, it's not in the rat's interest to kill every predator that attacks; instead, it ideally needs to make them so poorly that they learn that crested rats aren't on the menu in the future.

Casualties do happen though, and dogs that have attacked crested rats have been known to die; those lucky enough to survive display, unsurprisingly, a strong fear response at any future encounters.

The crested rat also has a particularly thick dermis or skin, making it very resistant to bites, and a very long, strong and flexible spine with four extra vertebrae.

Why isn't the crested rat poisoned by its diet?

The short answer is science doesn't exactly know the specific mechanism or adaptation that allows it to consume poison without succumbing itself.

However, it is known that rodents from the *Moroidia* super family have a slight biochemical variation that means they are more resistant to this type of chemical, so that may be why the crested rat is able to survive levels of the toxin that are fatal to its predators. Another theory is the bacteria contained in its chambered stomach may include a type that can break down cardenolides safely in the gut.

Is it endangered?

According to the IUCN Red List, the crested rat is listed as 'least concern'. However, researchers have concluded that due to low population density, low reproductive rates and a relatively long life-cycle, this might not be the full picture.

While populations exist in protected areas, the woodland and forest they live in are increasingly threatened by logging, and a loss of habitat is likely to impact the species' long-term success.

# K.O. Kanayo: 30s & single

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Veteran Nollywood actor Kanayo O. Kanayo recently sparked a debate by suggesting that the choices women make in their 20s significantly impact their marital status in their 30s.

In an interview with News Central, Kanayo asserted that many women who remain unmarried in their 30s spent their 20s pursuing relationships with older, often married men, while neglecting potential partners closer to their age.

## Prioritizing wealth and status

Kanayo described a common scenario: “A young woman, perhaps 18 or 19 years old, begins dating a significantly older, wealthier man, often already married. This relationship provides her with material comforts, such as a car or a house. As a result, she becomes accustomed to a certain lifestyle and disregards the attention of younger men who might be more compatible with her long-term goals.”

He continued, “This pattern can continue throughout her early 20s. Even if the initial relationship ends, she may gravitate towards other older, more established men. This cycle of prioritizing wealth and status over compatibility and long-term prospects can lead to a situation where she enters her late 20s and early 30s without a serious partner.”

## A shrinking dating pool

Kanayo explained that as a woman ages, her dating pool shrinks. “Men in their late 20s and early 30s are typically seeking partners who are closer to their own age and life stage. A woman in her late 20s who has primarily dated older men may find herself less appealing to this demographic.”

This shift in the dating landscape can



Nollywood Actor Kanayo O Kanayo  
Mixed reaction

Kanayo’s comments sparked a lively debate on social media. Some women agreed with his assessment, acknowledging the challenges they faced in their dating lives. Others strongly disagreed, arguing that his statements were overly simplistic and failed to account for the complex factors that contribute to singlehood.

## Societal pressures and gender roles

Many pointed to societal pressures and gender roles as significant contributors to the challenges faced by single women. They argued that societal expectations often place undue pressure on women to prioritize marriage and motherhood, while simultaneously limiting their career and personal aspirations.

## Beyond materialism

Furthermore, some critics argued that Kanayo’s comments were insensitive and potentially harmful. They pointed out that many women remain single for a variety of reasons, including personal choice, career focus, and unforeseen life circumstances.

## Call for reflection

Despite the controversy, Kanayo’s comments served as a reminder of the importance of making thoughtful and informed choices in matters of the heart.

They highlighted the potential consequences of prioritizing short-term gratification over long-term happiness and encouraged individuals to carefully consider their values and aspirations when navigating the complexities of the dating world.

create a sense of urgency. “What begins as a period of youthful exploration can quickly turn into a source of anxiety and frustration,” Kanayo observed. “A woman who was once the envy of her peers may find herself facing increasing pressure to find a husband. This pressure can intensify as she approaches her mid-30s, leading to feelings of desperation and a sense of impending doom.”

## The importance of long-term compatibility

Kanayo emphasized the importance of considering long-term compatibility when making relationship choices. “While material comforts are certainly appealing, they should not be the sole determining factor in a romantic partnership,” he advised. “Building a strong foundation based on shared values, mutual respect, and genuine affection is crucial for a successful and fulfilling long-term relationship.”

He cautioned against prioritizing short-term pleasures over long-term happiness. “Chasing fleeting moments of excitement and material gain can have unintended consequences,” Kanayo warned. “Women who prioritize these factors in their 20s may find themselves facing a difficult reality in their 30s, regretting the missed opportunities and facing a more challenging path to finding a suitable partner.”



## My daughter will conquer the world – RMD

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**N**ollywood legend, Richard Mofe Damijo has come out to celebrate his daughter's graduation from university.

He recently revealed that his daughter, Mena, has just graduated from from Towson University, Maryland, USA.

According to him, he could not be prouder to call Adufe Morayo



Efemena his daughter, and she must know that the world is now hers to conquer.

The versatile thespian posted on his X (formerly Twitter) account on Christmas Day, “My baby girl. Efemena, Adufe, Morayo, Titilayomi, my forever star, today we celebrate you! The world is yours to conquer, and I couldn’t be prouder to call you my daughter. You will rule the world and no force on earth can/will stop you. Go, girl. Congratulations, my love, you did it!”

## Nollywood actress, Biodun ‘Omoborty’ Okeowo ties the knot legally

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**D**rop-dead gorgeous Nollywood actress, Biodun Okeowo, popularly known as Omoborty, has announced that she has officially tied the knot with her partner, Adeniyi Olabiyi, in a legal wedding ceremony in the United States of America.

Taking to her Instagram page on Wednesday, the actress shared stunning photos from the memorable event, expressing her joy and gratitude.

Omoborty described the day as one of the most beautiful in her life, marking her legal union with the love of her life.

Reflecting on the journey, the actress revealed that all wedding protocols were observed, encompassing traditional, official, and legal ceremonies.



She expressed hope for a lasting marriage, emphasizing that this is her first wedding and, by God’s grace, will be her last.

“In the euphoria of my birthday, I’m thrilled to share the memories from one of the most beautiful days of my life—the day I legally said ‘yes’ to the man of my heart before God and man,” she wrote.

“All protocols duly and

completely observed—traditionally, officially, and legally. Feel free to call me Mrs. Biodun Sofuyi Olabiyi. My first wedding, and by God’s grace, the last. Amen.”

The actress was widely admired by fans for her smooth and flawless delivery of her roles and also her stunning beauty amplified by her big and shapely backside.

# Blaqbonez: “I’m not near 40”

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian rapper Emeka Akumefule, widely recognized as Blaqbonez, has finally addressed the swirling rumors and ongoing speculation surrounding his true age.

The talented artist, famous for his hit song “Like Ice Spice,” recently spoke out to clear the air during an interview with Naija FM in Lagos.

Rumors about the rapper’s age have been a hot topic on social media. Some fans and critics have claimed that Blaqbonez might be approaching 40, sparking debates and fueling discussions online.

However, the rapper firmly denied these claims, setting the record straight for his fans and followers.

In the interview, Blaqbonez directly tackled the rumours, stating, “I’m not close to 40. I’m 30 years old.” This clear statement comes as an attempt to dispel the misinformation circulating about his age.

The controversy around his age started when fans began speculating about his youthful looks and energetic persona.

While many believed he was younger than 30, others argued that his maturity and career longevity suggested he might be older.

Social media users quickly joined the conversation, with varying opinions and theories flooding platforms like Twitter and Instagram.

Despite the chatter, Blaqbonez chose to handle the situation with transparency. Speaking calmly but assertively during the radio interview, he emphasized the importance of



authenticity. His response showcased his willingness to confront rumors directly rather than letting them linger.

Blaqbonez’s clarification highlights an issue many public figures face in the digital age—persistent scrutiny and rumors.

Celebrities often find themselves under a magnifying glass, with every aspect of their lives analyzed by fans and critics alike.

For Blaqbonez, the age debate is just one example of how quickly false narratives can spread.

Fans of the rapper have taken to social media to express their reactions to his statement. While some praised his honesty and straightforward approach, others found humor in the situation, jokingly suggesting that the rapper’s “ageless” energy might have confused people.

The artist’s growing fame in Nigeria and beyond has likely contributed to the heightened interest in his personal life.

Known for his witty lyrics and unique style, Blaqbonez has built a solid reputation as one of the leading voices

in Nigeria’s music scene.

His ability to mix humor, social commentary, and catchy beats has endeared him to fans worldwide.

This incident also underscores the broader challenge of managing public perception in the entertainment industry.

As Blaqbonez continues to rise in his career, maintaining clarity and transparency about his personal life will likely remain important.

The rapper’s willingness to address rumors directly could serve as a model for other artists facing similar challenges.

Nigerian Hip-pop sensation Blaqbonez

For now, Blaqbonez has made it clear—he’s 30, not nearing 40. His candid response not only puts an end to the age-related speculation but also reinforces his image as an artist unafraid to speak his mind.

As his music continues to dominate airwaves, fans can expect Blaqbonez to keep delivering hits and staying true to himself.

In conclusion, while the controversy about his age may have sparked debates online, Blaqbonez’s straightforward clarification has set the record straight.

His transparency serves as a reminder of the importance of addressing rumours head-on. As he continues to shine in the music industry, his fans are reminded once again why they admire him—not just for his music but also for his authenticity.



# BBNaija's Ocee, fiancée welcomes baby

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Former Big Brother Naija (BBNaija) housemate Ocee Mbadiwe and his fiancée have welcomed their first child, marking a beautiful and memorable end to the year.

Ocee, who gained prominence during the "No Loose Guard" season of BBNaija, captivated audiences with his charm and authenticity.

Following his journey on the reality TV show, Ocee remained a beloved figure, known for his engaging personality and relatable moments.

Now, he is celebrating a new milestone—fatherhood—with his fiancée by his side.

Exciting announcement and pregnancy journey

Earlier this year, Ocee and his fiancée thrilled their fans with the announcement of their pregnancy.

The news came as a joyful surprise, as fans eagerly followed Ocee's journey post-BBNaija. The couple shared their joy and excitement, generating widespread buzz and anticipation among their followers.

Ocee's fans were thrilled by the news, showering the couple with love and well-wishes, hoping to witness this next stage of their life unfold.

The reality star used his social media platforms, particularly Instagram, to keep fans updated on their pregnancy journey.

His openness and sincerity about the experience allowed fans to feel more connected to his story, celebrating every milestone along the way. This transparency endeared Ocee even more to his followers, as they eagerly awaited the arrival of his little one.

Heartwarming christmas surprise

The couple made Christmas even more special by sharing the arrival of their baby girl. Ocee, known for his heartfelt posts, took to Instagram to announce the birth of their child in a heartfelt and emotional



message.

In his post, he described the newborn as "the best gift" he could have ever wished for, conveying his immense joy and gratitude.

Accompanied by several photos of himself, his fiancée, and their newborn daughter, Ocee shared a glimpse of their new life as a family.

The images showcased the joy and love that radiated from the new parents, highlighting the precious moments of their daughter's arrival. Fans were moved by the authenticity of the photos, which offered a glimpse into his life beyond the camera.

Message of gratitude and reflection

In his Instagram caption, he expressed profound gratitude for the arrival of his baby girl. He wrote, "The greatest Christmas gift, wrapped in love and joy. Couldn't have asked for a better gift. We welcomed our precious baby girl a couple of weeks ago, and we are beyond thankful. She's the miracle we prayed for and a beautiful reminder of God's greatness."

This heartfelt message resonated deeply with fans and followers, who praised Ocee's humility and reflective tone. The sentiment behind the post not only celebrated the couple's new chapter but also inspired many to embrace gratitude in their own lives. Ocee's words reflected the deep connection between his faith and his newfound role as a father.

Fans' reactions and outpouring of love  
Ocee's announcement sparked an outpouring of love and congratulations from fans, celebrities, and well-wishers alike. Social media was flooded with messages of joy and admiration, as people celebrated Ocee and his fiancée's journey into parenthood. Followers praised his authenticity, commending his ability to share such personal and joyous moments with the world.

Fans appreciated the fact that he had kept them in the loop throughout his journey, creating a sense of intimacy and connection that many celebrity figures often lack. His openness and transparency made his announcement feel even more genuine, earning him widespread admiration from his fan base.

Ocee's journey: From reality TV star to proud father

Ocee Mbadiwe's journey from a reality TV star to a proud father has been both inspiring and heartwarming. Known for his charismatic personality on Big Brother Naija, he captured the attention of many with his unique blend of confidence and relatability.

His life after the show has continued to draw public interest, as fans followed his personal growth and transitions.

The arrival of his daughter marks a significant milestone, not just for Ocee but for his fans who have been part of his journey. His story is now one of growth, reflection, and newfound responsibilities, inspiring others to find joy in their own life transitions.

A bright future for Ocee and his family

With the arrival of their baby girl, Ocee and his fiancée have embarked on a new chapter filled with love and hope. As they navigate the joys and challenges of parenthood, fans remain excited to witness more moments of their family life.

His authenticity and willingness to share his personal experiences have created a deeper connection between him and his supporters.

# Drake: "I used to look up to them"

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Canadian rapper Drake has solidified his place as a global music icon, a journey marked by unwavering dedication and a relentless pursuit of artistic excellence.

His recent social media post, a simple yet profound statement, "I used to look up to some people then I hit a growth spurt...\$\$\$," offers a glimpse into the rapper's mindset, revealing a journey of admiration and subsequent surpassing of his idols.

Drake's path to stardom wasn't always paved with gold. He first gained public recognition through his acting role in the popular Canadian teen drama "Degrassi: The Next Generation."

However, it was his foray into music that truly catapulted him to stardom. His 2006 debut mixtape, "Room for Improvement," marked the beginning of a musical odyssey that would redefine contemporary hip-hop.

Chart-topping success and unprecedented records

Over the years, Drake has consistently pushed creative boundaries, releasing critically acclaimed albums and producing an endless stream of hit singles.

His impact on the music industry is undeniable. He has solidified his position as one of the best-selling artists globally and holds the prestigious title of the best-selling rapper of all time.

Drake's influence extends beyond album sales. His 2016 single, "One Dance," featuring Wizkid and Kyla, achieved a groundbreaking feat by becoming the first song to surpass one billion streams on Spotify. This record-breaking achievement further cemented his status as a global music



phenomenon.

From aspiring artiste to global icon

Drake's success story serves as an inspiration to aspiring artists worldwide. His journey, from a young actor to a global music icon, demonstrates the power of dedication, hard work, and unwavering belief in one's own talent.

As he continues to evolve as an artist, Drake's impact on the music landscape is sure to endure for generations to come.

Lasting legacy

Drake's music transcends genres, seamlessly blending elements of hip-hop, R&B, and pop. His lyrical prowess, coupled with his introspective and often emotionally charged narratives, has resonated with audiences across the globe.

He has not only redefined the boundaries of hip-hop but has also expanded its reach, making it more accessible and relatable to a wider audience.

Role model for a new generation

Beyond his musical achievements,

Drake has also become a cultural icon, influencing fashion, social media trends, and even popular culture. His philanthropic endeavors and his commitment to giving back to the community further solidify his status as a role model for a new generation.

Continued evolution

As Drake continues to evolve as an artist, one thing remains certain: his impact on the music industry will be felt for years to come.

His ability to connect with his audience on a deeply personal level, coupled with his unwavering commitment to artistic excellence, ensures that his music will continue to resonate with fans around the world.

Conclusion

Drake's journey from a young actor to a global music icon is a testament to the power of talent, perseverance, and a relentless pursuit of one's dreams.

His music has not only entertained millions but has also inspired a generation of artists to chase their own passions. As he continues to evolve and push creati



# 'Go to hell,' Trump tells death row inmates granted clemency by Biden

By Dave Oludare Oso

Incoming US President, Donald Trump had no Christmas wishes for death row inmates whose sentences were commuted by Joe Biden.

The president-elect told the prisoners to "go to hell" in a scathing Truth Social rant on Wednesday.

In the lengthy two-post statement shared on his social media platform, he also aimed at the president, calling him "sleepy Joe" and the Democrats, dubbing them "radical left lunatics."

"To the 37 most violent criminals, who killed, raped, and plundered like virtually no one before them, but were just given, incredibly, a pardon by Sleepy Joe Biden. I refuse to wish a Merry Christmas to those lucky "souls" but, instead, will say, GO TO HELL!" Trump wrote.

The future commander-in-chief's remark comes after Biden's shock move of commuting the sentences of 37

of the 40 men on federal death row.

The criminals who were granted clemency on Monday include at least five child killers and several mass murderers, per New York Post.

While Trump wished the Democrats a "Merry

Christmas," he slammed them as "radical left lunatics who are constantly trying to obstruct our Court System and our Elections and are always going after the Great Citizens and Patriots of the United States but, in particular, their Political Opponent, ME."



# World Bank suspends loan fees for poor nations

By **Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE**

The World Bank has announced the suspension of several loan fees to alleviate the financial burden on vulnerable nations, in a move aimed at making borrowing more accessible for countries facing significant economic challenges.

The decision is part of the Bank's broader efforts to bolster financial support and tackle urgent global issues such as climate change, inequality, and economic instability.

The announcement was made via a post on the Bank's official X handle on Tuesday, providing details about the measures taken to reduce costs for developing nations.

According to the post, the World Bank has removed the prepayment premium on loans provided through the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), introduced a grace period for commitment fees on undisbursed balances, and extended its lowest loan pricing to small, vulnerable countries.

"We are working hard to make it easier for countries to borrow and repay their loans by eliminating some fees on IBRD loans," the Bank stated in its announcement.

These changes are intended to relieve financial pressure on nations most in need of development financing.

The Bank's statement further explained that the reforms are in line with its vision to create a more efficient and expansive institution capable of addressing the complex global challenges facing today's world.

The suspension of these fees is part of a larger series of reforms aimed at increasing the World Bank's lending capacity by \$150 billion over the next decade. The measures include the introduction of innovative financial instruments, greater shareholder support, and an optimisation of available capital.



Despite these changes, the Bank assured that its Triple-A credit rating would remain unaffected. The reforms also involved a reduction in the IBRD's equity-to-loans ratio from 20 per cent to 18 per cent, which is expected to unlock an additional \$70 billion in lending over the next ten years.

The World Bank has also secured a further \$10 billion through bilateral guarantees and \$1 billion through a guarantee from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

"The adjustments to our capital framework reflect our commitment to scaling up resources while maintaining financial stability," the Bank said in its statement.

The institution stressed that these measures are essential in addressing the trillions of dollars required annually to tackle climate change, support fragile states, and promote digital inclusion.

Acknowledging the enormity of the financial challenges, the World Bank highlighted that governments and multilateral institutions alone cannot meet these demands.

To bridge the gap, the Bank introduced the Framework for Financial Incentives (FFI), which aims to encourage investments in global challenges such as biodiversity, water security, energy access, and pandemic prevention.

Launched in April 2024, the FFI also introduced the Global Solutions Accelerator Platform and the Livable Planet Fund, with Japan pledging the first contribution. The Bank described the FFI as the first comprehensive framework among multilateral development banks to incentivise financing for projects with global benefits.

Additionally, the Bank is developing innovative financial tools to attract private sector investments. These include outcome bonds, catastrophe bonds, and climate-resilient debt clauses, which provide borrowers with flexible terms during natural disasters.

One notable example is the Wildlife Conservation Bond, which directed private investment toward Black Rhino conservation in South Africa. Another initiative, the plastic waste reduction-linked bond, mobilised funds for recycling projects in Ghana and Indonesia.

"We are discovering new ways to channel private investment into emerging markets and overcoming barriers to sustainable development," the Bank concluded.

Through these reforms, the World Bank continues to demonstrate its commitment to supporting vulnerable nations and fostering global financial stability amidst a rapidly changing world.



# Elon Musk was born in South Africa, can't be US President – Trump

By Dave Oludare Oso

**U**S President-elect, Donald Trump has come out to dismiss speculation that Elon Musk would take over the presidency.

He recently had his say while speaking to a crowd of supporters, at an engagement at his Mar-A-Lago Estate, amid wide speculation that the world's richest man would be the real force running the show behind the scene when Trump ascends the presidency again on January 20.

According to him, reports saying he has ceded the presidency to the billionaire entrepreneur are simply a lie spread by his political rivals, and that is never going to happen while he is in charge.

Trump then joked that Musk can't even be America's president because he was born in South Africa.

His words, "No, no. That's not happening. He's not gonna be president. You know why he can't be president? He wasn't born in this country."

Donald John Trump (born June 14, 1946) is an American politician, media personality, and



businessman who served as the 45th president of the United States from 2017 to 2021.

Trump graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a bachelor's degree in economics in 1968. He became president of his father's real-estate business in 1971 and renamed it the Trump Organization.

He expanded its operations to building and renovating skyscrapers, hotels, casinos, and golf courses and later started side ventures, mostly by licensing his name.

Elon Musk on the other hand was born on June 28, 1971 in Pretoria, South Africa. He is an actor and producer, known for Machete Kills (2013), Iron Man 2 (2010) and Why Him? (2016). He was previously married to Talulah Riley and Justine Musk.

He cofounded PayPal in 1998. He is CEO & Product Architect of Tesla Motors and CEO & CTO SpaceX.

He was inducted into the International Space Hall of Fame in 2014 and was the chairman of Solar City, which later merged into Tesla Inc. as a subsidiary.

He is the son of Maye Musk (Haldeman), a model and dietitian, and Errol Musk, an engineer. His father is South African-born and his mother is Canadian-born, from Regina, Saskatchewan, and also has American antecedents.

Elon is of mostly English descent, along with Afrikaner (largely French Huguenot, Dutch, German, and Belgian), Scottish, and German. His name comes from his maternal great-grandfather John Elon Haldeman, originally of Illinois.

# Holiday chaos as 3 shot, 1 stabbed in horror airport fight

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Three people were shot and another stabbed in a wild family fight at an Arizona airport on Christmas Day — with another man later busted for turning up with guns thinking there was an active shooting, according to cops.

The violence erupted at a pre-security restaurant in Terminal Four of Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport around 9:45 p.m. when someone pulled out a gun during a fight and opened fire, according to ABC 15.

Three people were found with gunshot injuries, including a woman left fighting for her life, police said.

Phoenix police arrest a man on Dec. 25, 2024, who police said arrived at Sky Harbor with guns after he received a text falsely reporting an active shooter at the airport.

Three people were shot at a Phoenix airport on Christmas night, cops said. Fox 10 Phoenix

Cops then detained a man with at least one stab wound and an uninjured girl in the airport parking garage, CNN reported.

“I believe this was a family dispute that escalated,” Sgt. Mayra Reeson told reporters early Thursday.

About two hours after the shooting, another man turned up



at the airport with several firearms after getting a false text alert that there was an active shooting, Reeson said, according to AZ Central.

“There was no active shooter; there never was,” Reeson said.

The alleged gunman was arrested after an altercation with Phoenix police.

Photos showed a shirtless man being wrestled to the ground and then taken into custody, with officers carrying away at least two weapons, including a handgun, the outlet noted. He was not identified.

Four people were rushed to the hospital after the earlier shooting, including the shot woman in critical condition.

Two men who were also shot and the man who was stabbed are all stable, cops said.

None of those involved have been identified, but officials emphasized that everyone involved knew each other. No one else was injured.

Police “believe it was a family dispute that escalated.”

The shooting forced the terminal’s security checkpoint and restaurants to shut down temporarily, airport officials and police told CNN.

No flights were affected and the investigation is ongoing.

Marvin Miller, who’s worked at the airport as a cleaner for three years, told AZ Central he heard three gunshots ring out from Terminal 4.

“They were different from fireworks. Gunshots are a big difference,” Miller told the outlet as he was getting off his shift.



# Azerbaijan confirms Russian missile shot down plane in Kazakhstan

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The passenger plane of Azerbaijan Airlines which crashed near the Kazakh city of Aktau on Wednesday, was attacked by Russian air defence, Euronews reports.

According to Azerbaijani government sources, the Russians hit the plane with a surface-to-air missile.

Euronews' interlocutors clarify that the missile was fired at the plane while it was flying over Grozny, where drone activity was recorded. It exploded near the plane, and its fragments hit passengers and crew members.

Also, according to journalists' sources, the damaged plane was not allowed to land at Russian airports when the pilots requested an emergency landing. The plane was ordered to fly across the Caspian Sea toward Aktau.



Euronews found out that the plane's GPS navigation system was jammed throughout the flight over the sea.

Afterward, photos were posted online showing that the plane's skin was damaged by shrapnel.

Against this background, the head of the Center for Countering

Disinformation of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, Andrii Kovalenko, emphasized that the plane was shot down by a Russian anti-aircraft missile system.

Kovalenko stressed that this happened because the Russians did not close the airspace over Grozny during the drone attack on the city.

## 347 skiers rescued by helicopter in French Alps

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Hundreds of skiers had to be rescued by helicopter on Christmas day after chairlifts at two different resorts in the French Alps broke down.

Dramatic video shows skiers at SuperDevoluy resort in Dévoluy hanging below a helicopter near a motionless chairlift.

One of the resort's chairlifts broke down around 1 p.m. local time Wednesday due to an electrical problem with one of its motors, reported Nouvelle Republique.

About 240 skiers were evacuated from the lift by around 5 p.m. local time at the resort in France's Southern Alps, where the elevation ranges from 6,000 to 8,200 feet above sea level. No one was hurt, reported Le Monde.



In Savoie, also in the French Alps, around 100 skiers were stuck on a lift Wednesday at the La Norma ski resort, reported TF1, in an unrelated incident. The resort in the Maurienne Valley rises from 4,500 to nearly 9,000 feet in elevation.

The rescues came a day after the death of a 26-year-old Olympic

snowboarder at a resort in the Swiss Alps.

Sophie Hediger, a member of Switzerland's snowboard cross team at the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, died in an avalanche at the Arosa resort, the country's ski federation announced Tuesday.

# EPL: 10-man Man Utd suffers 2-0 defeat against Wolves

By Dave Oludare Oso

**B**oxing Day turned out to be another disappointing chapter in Manchester United's tumultuous season, as they faced a 2-0 defeat against struggling Wolverhampton Wanderers.

The match was marred by the early dismissal of captain Bruno Fernandes, who received his third red card of the season shortly after the break for a second bookable offence.

The defeat highlights the ongoing challenges facing United, as they continue to grapple with inconsistencies on the pitch.

With Fernandes' dismissal, the team not only lost a key player but also faced an uphill battle against a Wolves side eager to capitalize on their home advantage.

Wolves took full advantage to make it two wins in two games under new boss Vitor Pereira.

Matheus Cunha's goal direct from a corner opened the scoring before he teed up Hwang Hee-chan with virtually the last kick of the game.

United, who slipped to 14th, have won just twice in seven Premier League games since Ruben Amorim took charge last month and were insipid in attack even before Fernandes' dismissal.

Victory was enough to lift Wolves



out of the relegation zone at the expense of Leicester, who visit leaders Liverpool later.

The optimism that greeted Amorim's early days in charge already seem a distant memory as the Portuguese has been left in no doubt over the scale of the task he faces to turn around a fallen giant.

Amorim reacted to a 3-0 humbling at home to Bournemouth on Sunday by making just two changes.

Leny Yoro came into the defence, while Rasmus Hojlund replaced Joshua Zirkzee up front.

The Dane, though, struggled to make any impact as Cunha showed the value of a forward in form.

Wolves look set to lose their top scorer to suspension over a FA charge for misconduct for a clash with an Ipswich member of staff after a 2-1 defeat earlier this month that cost Gary O'Neil his job.

Only Mohamed Salah, Erling Haaland, Cole Palmer and Alexander Isak have scored more goals in the Premier League this season than the Brazilian international.

United, by contrast, were let down by their talisman.

Fernandes was walking a tightrope from a first-half booking when he recklessly dived in on his Portuguese international team-mate Nelson Semedo two minutes into the second period.

Even the normally argumentative Fernandes had few complaints when referee Tony Harrington brandished a second yellow and a red.

The 30-year-old's first red card of the campaign against Tottenham was overturned on appeal before he was also dismissed in a 3-3 draw at Porto in the Europa League.



# Sporting Lisbon fires new manager weeks into role

By Dave Oludare Oso

Sporting Lisbon have parted ways with Joao Pereira, just over a month after he took charge following Ruben Amorim's departure to Manchester United.

Pereira's tenure has ended abruptly due to the club's unexpected decline in form.

Under Amorim, Sporting enjoyed a perfect start to the Primeira Liga season. However, Pereira's reign saw a significant downturn, with the team losing its grip on the league's top spot after a goalless draw against Gil Vicente last weekend. The club now trails rivals Benfica.

Pereira also struggled in the Champions League and domestic league, losing his



first four matches in both competitions.

As a result, Sporting have appointed Rui Borges as the new head coach in a bid to restore their form and compete for top honours.

The 43-year-old Borges was coach of sixth-placed Vitoria Guimaraes, whom he also led to a second-placed finish in the league phase of the UEFA Conference League.

# Chelsea 1 vs 2 Fulham: Late win frustrates Blues' Premier League title hopes

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Fulham grabbed a stoppage-time at Stamford Bridge to frustrate Chelsea's Premier League title aspirations.

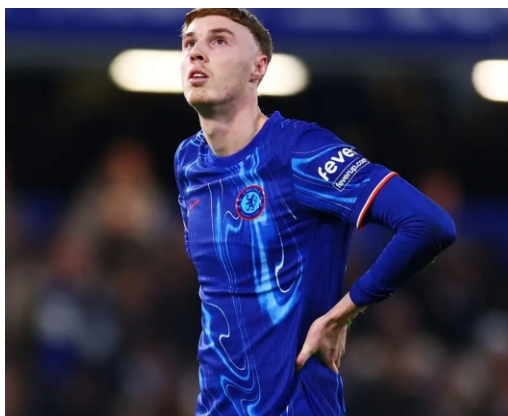
Rodrigo Muniz's last-gasp finish sealed a 2-1 win and a first victory at Stamford Bridge for the Cottagers since 1979.

Muniz was in acres of space in the box when Sasa Lukic found him with a low cross to deliver a belated Christmas gift to the elated travelling support.

The Fulham bench emptied in celebration - Chelsea's subs, coaching staff and boss Enzo Maresca slumped back into their seats.

The Blues head coach has repeatedly tempered talk of a title challenge and, after drawing with Everton at the weekend, this Boxing Day derby defeat leaves them reeling.

Chelsea finish this round of matches seven points adrift of Liverpool, who won one of their two games in hand against Leicester later in the day.



Sub Harry Wilson - who had turned another west London derby against Brentford with heroics off the bench earlier this season - cancelled out Cole Palmer's wonderful opener with a close-range header and Fulham capitalised on the counter to score a historic victory over their neighbours.

For Fulham - who have taken points off Liverpool, Arsenal and Tottenham this season - this was another landmark moment of their progression under Marco Silva. Hit by injuries to their midfield, they switched to a back five and weren't at their usual ball-playing best for much of the contest. But when they

pushed forward after the break they showed the pace and precision to take a big scalp. They finish the day level on points with defending champions Man City and on the brink of the European qualification places.

The visitors should have been level well before Wilson's 83rd-minute intervention but Antonee Robinson's usually trusty touch let him down at the crucial moment and allowed Robert Sanchez to smother the shot. Meanwhile, Fulham 'keeper Bernd Leno also caught the eye with several key stops - particularly late on when he denied Christopher Nkunku and then Jadon Sancho.