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FG launches free CNG bus service in Abuja to ease transportation costs

By **Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE**

In a bid to alleviate the financial burden on commuters in the nation's capital, the Federal Government has launched a free Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) bus service in Abuja.

The service, which began operations on December 2, 2024, is designed to ease transportation costs for residents in the city.

The announcement was made by the Presidential CNG Initiative, which shared a video on its X (formerly Twitter) page, showing the buses in operation. The CNG buses will run along major routes connecting suburban areas to key locations in Abuja, including routes from Mararaba to Eagle Square and the Berger bus stop.

As part of the initiative, the government has committed to providing the free bus service for a period of 40 days, with the programme set to end on January 6, 2025. This initiative follows a wider strategy to reduce the high cost of transportation in the capital city, which has been a source of concern for many residents.

The Ministry of Transportation had earlier this week handed over 15 CNG-powered buses to three major transport unions the National Road Transport



Workers Union, the Nigerian Association of Road Transport Owners, and the Road Transport Employers Association of Nigeria as part of efforts to reduce transportation expenses for commuters in Abuja.

In a video recorded by a correspondent, passengers expressed their appreciation for the initiative. One commuter, Fatima, shared her experience: "I just boarded a CNG bus going to Maraba, and we were asked not to pay, and I didn't pay. I hope it will continue for long. I like it very much; I know this is the beginning of good things for Nigerian people."

Another commuter, Blessing, expressed hope that the initiative would lead to more long-term solutions.

"If they keep doing this, we'll be happy. After this, they should bring down the price. I hope they will," she said.

The introduction of the free CNG bus service is part of broader efforts by the government to promote cleaner, more sustainable transportation options while also easing the financial burden on Nigerian citizens during challenging economic times.

Customs officer, wife, four children die in Osun fire incident

By Dave Oludare Oso

A midnight fire engulfed the home of Tijani Kabiru, a Customs officer attached to the Oyo/Osun Command, killing him, his wife, and their four children in the Akankan Area of Ede, Osun State, early Monday morning.

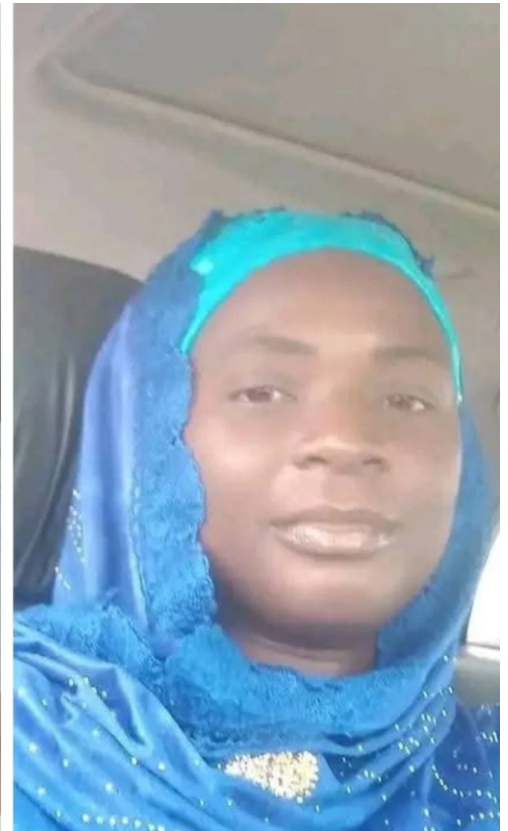
The tragic incident has plunged the community into mourning, leaving residents in shock and disbelief. The cause of the fire remains unknown, but the devastating loss has sparked concern and calls for improved safety measures in the area.

A neighbour, Kola, who witnessed the tragic event, recalled, "I can't say when the fire started, but we observed smoke there at about 3am.

"The response time of the firemen was not bad, but the house had been badly affected before the fire could be subdued. Kabiru, his wife, and four children were already burnt to death. But one of the children escaped."

According to Kola, firefighters from the Ede Fire Station were promptly contacted after smoke was detected.

However, by the time they arrived, the fire had already consumed much of the house.



Confirming the incident, the spokesperson for the Osun State Fire Service, Ibraheem Adekunle, shared a statement signed by the Director of the Service, Mr Olaniyi Alimi.

The statement read, "We were informed of the incident via a distress call to our emergency number 08030808254 at 3:21 a.m. Our team from Ede Zonal Command proceeded to the scene, with a backup team joining from the Fire Service Headquarters in Abere.

"The address of the fire incident is Customs Tijani Kabiru Road, Akankan Area, Ede North LG. The street was named after the deceased, who was a Customs officer from the Oyo/Osun Command.

"Mr. Tijani Kabiru, reported to be in his late 40s, and his wife, said to be in her early 40s, lost their lives alongside four of their children—three boys and a girl—aged between three and 10 years. The estimated loss from the inferno is around N200 million, while property worth N500 million was saved."

The lone survivor, a 13-year-old boy, miraculously escaped the blaze.

The remains of the deceased were handed over to officers from the A Division of the Nigeria Police Force.

South Africa relaxes visa rules for Nigerians

By Friday Omosola

In a significant development aimed at strengthening bilateral ties, South Africa has relaxed its visa requirements for Nigerian tourists and businesspeople.

Bayo Onanuga, Special Adviser to the President Bola Tinubu on Information and Strategy in a statement on Tuesday said President Cyril Ramaphosa made the announcement during the 11th session of the Nigeria-South Africa Bi-National Commission (BNC) held in Cape Town.

The session was attended by President Tinubu.

President Ramaphosa revealed that Nigerian business travelers who meet the criteria will now be eligible for five-year multiple-entry visas.

Bola Tinubu and President Cyril Ramaphosa [PHOTO CREDIT:

Additionally, Nigerian tourists can apply for visas without the need to submit their passports physically, signaling a simplified and more efficient process.

“Our efforts to create a favorable environment include our simplified visa process for Nigerian business people to travel to South Africa. Qualifying Nigerian businesspeople can be granted a five-year multiple-entry visa,” Ramaphosa stated.

The South African leader emphasised his country’s commitment to fostering a business-friendly environment to attract Nigerian investment.



He acknowledged the presence of numerous South African companies in Nigeria and underscored the need to address challenges impeding greater investment and collaboration.

“As we mark 30 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations, we see a bright future for our relationship. Our strong bonds of friendship provide a firm foundation for more meaningful economic cooperation,” Ramaphosa said.

He also lauded Nigeria’s ongoing reforms aimed at creating a more robust business environment for investors, including those from South Africa.

President Ramaphosa highlighted South Africa’s commitment to championing Africa’s development and addressing challenges faced by the Global South.

He confirmed that these issues will be priorities during the upcoming G20 Leaders’ Summit, the first to be hosted on African soil.

“It is our view that in shaping global discourse, programs should be tailored to ensure that in our societies, no one is left behind,” Ramaphosa said, emphasising South Africa’s support for the African Union’s Agenda 2063.

The Nigeria-South Africa Bi-National Commission was established to strengthen bilateral relations between the two African powerhouses. This year’s session not only reinforced the existing partnership but also paved the way for deeper economic and diplomatic collaboration.

Seven key facts about Tinubu's tax reform bill

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Bola Tinubu's administration recently introduced the Nigeria Tax Bill 2024 to the National Assembly.

The bill, officially titled "An Act to Repeal Certain Acts on Taxation and Consolidate the Legal Frameworks Relating to Taxation and Enact the Nigeria Tax Act to Provide for Taxation of Income, Transactions, and Instruments, and for Related Matters," has generated widespread attention and debate.

Here are seven key things to know about this proposed reform:

Comprehensive overhaul of tax laws
The bill aims to repeal outdated taxation laws and consolidate various legal frameworks into a single, unified Nigeria Tax Act.

This move seeks to simplify the country's tax system and make compliance easier for individuals and businesses.

Focus on expanding the tax base

One of the core objectives is to reduce over-dependence on oil revenue by increasing tax collection from other economic sectors. This strategy aligns with the administration's plan to diversify Nigeria's economy.

Encouragement of compliance

The reforms introduce measures to make the tax system fairer, more transparent, and less prone to evasion.



By simplifying processes, the government hopes to boost voluntary compliance among taxpayers.

Support for investments and SMEs
The bill includes provisions to create a stable fiscal environment that attracts foreign and domestic investments.

Additionally, it introduces policies aimed at reducing tax burdens on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), fostering growth in this crucial sector.

Revenue generation for national development

Tinubu's administration views the bill as a critical step toward raising funds for essential sectors like education, healthcare, and infrastructure.

It also aims to address fiscal leakages by improving revenue collection

mechanisms.

Controversies around regional impact

The bill has faced criticism, especially from northern lawmakers, who argue that it fails to address the unique challenges of their region, including insecurity and poor economic activity.

These concerns highlight fears that the reforms could disproportionately affect economically disadvantaged areas.

Aims to mitigate insecurity with improved revenue

The Presidential Committee on Fiscal Policy and Tax Reforms, led by Taiwo Oyedele, suggests that the additional revenue generated could be directed toward addressing insecurity and fostering economic stability in affected regions.

Terrorists slit throats of 9 vigilante members, abduct wives in Sokoto

By Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE

Nine persons have been reported killed by bandits in Sokoto State, Northwest, Nigeria.

According to SaharaReporters, the terrorists stormed Dantudu Lajinge village in the Sabon Birni Local Government Area and slit the throat of nine persons identified as members of the community's local security outfit, known as vigilante.

The wives of the slain persons were reportedly abducted while the remains of their spouses lay in the pool of blood.

The incident happened on Monday, according to some villagers who escaped the mayhem.

There are however conflicting reports as to how the victims were murdered.

Bello Dan-Tudu, a resident of the



village told SaharaReporters that, "they targeted members of our vigilante group and slaughtered nine of them like ordinary rams."

However, another resident who pleaded to be anonymous said the 10 persons were shot in the neck at close range, adding that the tenth person survived and is receiving medication at a hospital.

The Chairman of Sabon Birni Local Government Council, Ayuba Hamisu,

has also confirmed the attack and fatalities.

"It happened while I was attending a function in Abuja; they killed nine of our people. I've just suspended further engagements here and heading back home right away to be with my people," Hamisu said.

The spokesperson for the Sokoto State Police Command, Rufai Ahmad, was not reachable for comments.

Why we arrested Dele Farotimi – Police

By Dave Oludare Oso

The police command in Ekiti State has confirmed the arrest of Dele Farotimi, a human rights advocate.

According to TheCable, Sunday Abutu, the police spokesperson in Ekiti, said operatives arrested Farotimi over a petition about alleged defamation and cyberbullying.

Abutu said the command obtained a warrant of arrest against Farotimi regarding the case, adding that the activist is currently being transported from Lagos to Ekiti State.

But the police spokesperson declined to name the complainant, who wrote the petition against



Farotimi.

"He was arrested some hours ago based on a petition that was written to the commissioner of police (in Ekiti)," Abutu said.

"The allegation is about defamation of character and cyberbullying.

"The command did not act out of place. We even got a court order, that is a warrant of arrest."

Earlier, in a post via X, Omoyele Sowore, the presidential candidate of the African Action Congress (AAC) in the 2023 elections, said the whereabouts of Farotimi was unknown after police raided his residence in Lagos.

Sowore said the police officers seized the mobile gadgets of the family members of the activist during the operation.

On Tuesday morning, Farotimi, in a statement, alleged that officers attached to the Ekiti police command have perfected plans to abduct him from Lagos.

NNPC reaffirms commitment to local content development at 13th practical Nigerian content forum

By **Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE**

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) has reaffirmed its commitment to advancing local content development in Nigeria's energy sector, aiming to foster sustainable growth and innovation within the industry.

This commitment was expressed by the Group Chief Executive Officer (GCEO), Mele Kyari, during the 13th Practical Nigerian Content (PNC) Forum held in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

Kyari, represented by Udobong Ntia, Executive Vice President of Upstream, emphasised that the forum offers stakeholders a platform to reflect on progress, share best practices, and identify strategic growth opportunities.

He noted that the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Act of 2010 had transformed local businesses, enabling them to compete globally.

“Local content empowers domestic companies and fosters innovation,” Kyari said.

“It is essential to ensure a robust oil and gas sector that can meet both local and global demands.”



Kyari also highlighted the importance of nurturing local capabilities, embracing advanced technologies, and building partnerships for a sustainable energy future in Nigeria.

He underscored NNPCL's ongoing efforts to align with the 2024 Presidential Directive on Local Content Compliance Requirements, which reaffirms the government's focus on local content as a key national strategy.

This year's PNC Forum, themed “Defining the Next Frontier for Nigerian Content Implementation,” aims to push forward local content initiatives across the energy sector.

Kyari referenced several initiatives by NNPCL, including

restructuring NNPC Exploration and Production Ltd and transforming NNPC Engineering and Technical Company Ltd into a full-scale engineering company, as key steps in strengthening local capacity.

Kyari concluded his address by encouraging participants to actively engage in discussions and form partnerships that will accelerate Nigeria's journey toward energy sufficiency.

“Together, we can cultivate a vibrant local content ecosystem that benefits all Nigerians,” he stated.

Why we didn't identify owner of seized Abuja estate – EFCC

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, has explained why it did not mention the name of anyone linked to the 753 duplexes and other apartments on Plot 109 Cadastral Zone C09 it recovered in Lokogoma District, Abuja.

The EFCC had described the recovery of the estates as 'record-breaking' after it got the court order to take over the property.

The EFCC had described the owner of the estate as a top federal government official in a statement it released to confirm that it has gotten forfeiture order to take over the estate.

However, some Nigerians, a while commending the anti-graft agency had faulted its failure to disclose the name of the owner of the Estate.

Specifically, activist and publisher of Sahara Reporters, Omoyele Sowore had accused the anti-graft agency of cover-up.

Sowore noted that while EFCC is always eager to publish the names and other identities of suspects its operatives arrested for internet fraud, it decided to protect the identity of the owner of the estate who is involved in even a more humongous theft of national resources.

However, EFCC in a statement by Dele Oyewale, its spokesperson, described the claim by Sowore and others with similar views as unacceptable and grossly uncharitable.

The Commission said the allegation of a cover-up of the identity of the promoters of the Estate stands logic on the head in the sense that the



proceedings for the forfeiture of the Estate were in line with Section 17 of the Advance Fee Fraud Act which is a civil proceeding that allows for action-in-rem rather than action-in-persona.

“The latter allows legal actions against a property and not an individual, especially in a situation of an unclaimed property. This Act allows you to take up a forfeiture proceeding against a chattel that is not a juristic person. This is exactly what the Commission did in respect of the Estate.

“The proceedings that yielded the final forfeiture of the Estate were products of actionable intelligence available to the Commission. The company flagged by our investigations denied ownership of the Estate following publications made in leading national newspapers. On the basis of this, the Commission approached the court for an order of final forfeiture which Justice Jude Onwuegbuzie of the Federal Capital Territory, FCT, High Court granted on Monday, December 2, 2024.

“The expectation of the EFCC from citizen Sowore is a patriotic appreciation of its efforts in securing

such a landmark forfeiture. It is shocking that the activist is not concerned about the systemic lassitude and unhelpful permissiveness that allowed such a monstrous corrupt act in the first instance. Nigerians should gear up more against lapses and loopholes in our system that continue to make the nation vulnerable to corrupt tendencies. The EFCC will continue to safeguard the financial space of the nation against manipulators and organized brigandage.

“It is important to note that the substantive criminal investigation on the matter still continues. It will be unprofessional of the EFCC to go to town by mentioning names of individuals whose identities were not directly linked to any title document of the properties. The EFCC is unwavering in its no-sacred-cow approach to every matter and together we will make Nigeria greater,” the anti-graft agency said.

Minimum wage strike grounds three states, FCT

By Dave Oludare Oso

Nasarawa, Kaduna, Ebonyi, and the Federal Capital Territory were the states where the Nigeria Labour Congress' industrial action over the non-implementation of the new national minimum wage grounded the civil service.

Chairman, Nigeria Labour Congress, Ebonyi State chapter, Prof. Oguguo Egwu, had on Sunday expressed displeasure over the perceived lackadaisical attitude of the governor towards the plight of workers, saying the condition of civil servants in the state was worrisome.

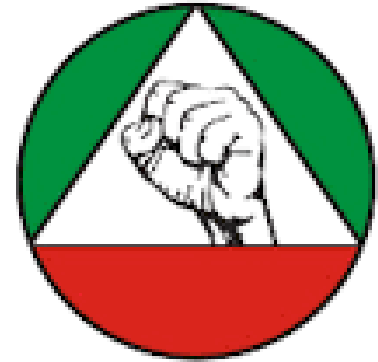
In Nasarawa, official activities were stalled across the 13 Local Government Areas of the state, on Monday, as workers complied with the one-week indefinite industrial action declared by the organized labour union in the state.

It was observed that the Nasarawa State House of Assembly, Federal University Teaching Hospital, Lafia, State Secretariat and the judiciary were completely shut down in full compliance with the strike.

The scenario was the same at the State Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, as only one security personnel was sighted at the gate, keeping watch to prevent hoodlums from taking advantage of the strike.

Offices also visited included the Nasarawa State Independent Electoral Commission, Nasarawa Geographic Information Service, and the Nasarawa State Primary Healthcare Development, among others.

Ministries such as Youths and Sports Development, the Ministry of



Trade Union Congress

Environment and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Works and Housing, and the office of the Secretary to the Nasarawa State Government were completely deserted.

Leaders of organised labour in the state monitored to ensure total compliance with the strike.

In a telephone interview with NEW DAILY PRIME, the Nasarawa State Chairman of the Nigeria Labour Congress, Ismaila Okoh, said the union declared total strike because the government verbally committed to a N70,500 minimum wage but failed to provide a written agreement specifying the payment terms.

He emphasised that all the affiliate unions had been alerted and instructed to participate in the strike if the state government did not implement the new wage by December 1, 2024.

He, however, sued for understanding from the government, appealing that it should expedite action on the implementation of the new national minimum wage in the state.

However, the Nasarawa State Committee on the new National Minimum Wage insisted that the state government had already approved the payment of N70,500 as the minimum wage for workers across the state.

Chairman of the committee, who is the

Deputy Governor of the state, Dr Emmanuel Akabe, made this disclosure during a recent meeting with members of the committee to finalise discussions on the matter at his temporary office in Lafia, the state capital.

He further assured that the state government would commence payment of the N70,500 minimum wage in December 2024.

While noting that the negotiations on salary adjustments were already in an advanced stage, Akabe promised organised labour of the state government's willingness to work out modalities that would address the concerns raised by all workers in the state.

Similarly, usual activities in ministries, departments and agencies in Kaduna State were halted as the workers' strike in the state began in full swing on Monday.

Tinubu seeks establishment of anti-illegal mining group of African nations

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Bola Tinubu, on Tuesday, in South Africa called for the potential establishment of an anti-illegal mining group among African nations.

Speaking at the 11th Session of the Nigeria-South Africa Bi-National Commission (BNC) in Cape Town, the president stressed that the continent's natural resources should be mined for the betterment of its people, not exploited illegally.

He said, "One thing I would like this edition of the BNC to explore is the possible need to establish an anti-illegal mining group of African nations. Our natural resources are supposed to be mined for the betterment of our people. However, there seems to be a concerted effort flowing in the opposite direction."

He went on to outline the detrimental effects of illegal mining, which, he said, not only deprives nations of precious income but also fosters instability across the continent.

The President added, "Throughout Africa, illegal mining is not only robbing our nations of precious income, which could foster development. Sponsored by powerful outside forces, such mining is fomenting strife, servitude, poverty, environmental degradation, and undermining the writ of legitimate government."

Tinubu stressed the urgency of addressing this issue, describing illegal mining as a form of "inland piracy" that cannot be allowed to undermine the continent's aspirations.

"We cannot allow this inland piracy to become a scourge to our good and healthy designs for our people. South Africa and Nigeria should and must



take the lead in placing this issue before the global community and in resolving it for the good of our continent and its people," he said.

The president also addressed Nigeria's growing partnership with South Africa and reiterated the importance of strengthening Africa's presence on the global stage.

As South Africa assumed the presidency of the G20, he called on both nations to leverage this leadership role for the advancement of the continent.

"Nigeria would like to join South Africa and the African Union in the G20 so as to strengthen the African voice in the group and globally. We urge that the position be leveraged for the development of our continent."

Tinubu underscored the importance of collaboration between Nigeria and South Africa, calling for a shared vision that would foster prosperity and development across Africa.

He referred to the relationship between the two nations as a model of leadership, one that could inspire a brighter and greater future for the

continent.

"This high-level strategic partnership between South Africa and Nigeria must become a model of leadership and shared vision that will inspire and take our people into a brighter and greater future of prosperity and development, an Africa That We Want."

The president's address also touched on the long-standing and historic relationship between the two nations, noting Nigeria's role in supporting South Africa during the struggle against apartheid.

Tinubu reaffirmed that both countries would continue to stand together in the pursuit of democratic values, non-discrimination, and good governance.

The session further discussed a variety of issues, including youth development, economic integration, and the role of both countries in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), with Tinubu emphasising the importance of addressing challenges to ensure the success of these initiatives.

Reps give Tinubu 72 hours to unfreeze NSIPA accounts

By Dave Oludare Oso

The House of Representatives has asked President Bola Tinubu to mandate Minister of Finance, Wale Edun to unfreeze all National Social Investment Programmes Agency (NSIPA) accounts within 72 hours.

The lower legislative chamber passed the resolution during plenary on Tuesday.

This was sequel to the adoption of a motion sponsored by Benjamin Kalu, deputy speaker, and 20 other lawmakers.

The programmes under SIP include N-Power, conditional cash transfer (CCT), government enterprise and empowerment programme, and the home-grown school feeding initiative.

The parliament said unfreezing the accounts of the NSIPA will enable the “smooth” recommencement of all the programmes.

The lower legislative chamber also asked the president to ensure the release of funds to NSIPA for the payment of outstanding stipends owed to 395,731 N-Power beneficiaries nationwide “without further delay.”

BACKGROUND

In 2023, former President Muhammadu Buhari enacted a law to establish the NSIP — an agency that has been mired in corruption since the turn of the year.

On January 2, Tinubu suspended Halima Shehu as the chief executive officer (CEO) of NSIPA, over alleged financial malfeasance.

On January 8, the president also suspended Betta Edu as minister of humanitarian affairs and poverty



alleviation.

The humanitarian affairs and poverty alleviation ministry supervises the operations of the NSIPA.

On January 12, the president suspended all programmes administered by NSIPA as part of a probe of alleged mismanagement of the agency and its programmes.

On March 13, the house of representatives asked the federal government to resume the implementation of the suspended social investment initiatives.

The senate is considering a bill seeking to place the NSIPA under the supervision of the presidency.

Tinubu has since appointed Badamasi Lawal to replace Shehu.

THE MOTION

Moving the motion, Kalu said despite the importance of the social investment programmes for poverty alleviation, youth empowerment, and economic inclusivity in Nigeria, the agency’s functionality has been hindered due to administrative bottlenecks, insufficient funding, and frozen accounts.

“The smooth operations of the

programmes and the fulfilment of the mandate of NSIPA are hindered due to the suspension/ freezing of the accounts of the agency and other administrative bottlenecks, which has remained in force even more than three months after the President reconstituted the new management of NSIPA,” he said.

The deputy speaker said the frozen accounts contradicts Tinubu’s mandate on poverty alleviation, eroding public confidence and “administrative paralysis in fighting poverty.”

“As a result of the suspension of accounts of the NSIPA, the N-Power programme has been so negatively affected that 395,731 beneficiaries are owed outstanding stipends to the tune of N81,315, 440,000 — a fund already captured under the 2023 and 2024 amended Appropriation Acts which will lapse by the year ending 31st December, 2024,” Kalu said.

He said restoring NSIPA’s accounts aligns with the president’s vision, ensuring that poverty alleviation efforts remain effective, efficient, and impactful and that it is essential to act swiftly to resolve this issue to maintain momentum toward the administration’s poverty eradication goals.

Tax Reform: PDP, other stakeholders urge consultations as Presidency defends bills

By **Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE**

Stakeholders across Nigeria have called for more extensive consultations on the controversial tax reform bills currently under consideration in the National Assembly.

This follows growing opposition from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), northern lawmakers, and various public figures who have expressed concerns about the potential economic and social impacts of the proposed legislation.

The proposed tax reforms, which include the Nigeria Tax Bill 2024, Nigeria Tax Administration Bill, Nigeria Revenue Service (Establishment) Bill, and the Joint Revenue Board (Establishment) Bill, aim to overhaul the nation's tax system. The reforms seek to consolidate existing tax laws, establish clearer frameworks for tax administration, and create new bodies, including the Tax Appeal Tribunal and the Office of the Tax Ombudsman.

The PDP, in particular, has voiced its opposition, urging the government to slow down the process to allow for more public discussion. PDP Deputy National Publicity Secretary, Ibrahim Abdullahi, questioned the urgency of the bills, saying the government must consider the potential consequences for ordinary Nigerians.

He pointed out that citizens are already grappling with inflation, fuel subsidy removal, and multiple tax burdens, and thus, these reforms should not be rushed.

“The government needs to realise the significant implications of this



process,” Abdullahi said.

“If the elite and governors are raising concerns, it’s essential to broaden the review and involve all stakeholders.”

Timothy Osadolor, the Deputy National Youth Leader of the PDP, echoed similar sentiments, advocating for a more inclusive approach to policymaking.

“Tax reform is a good idea, but it needs to be explained thoroughly to the public. We need more time and consultations to avoid unnecessary conflicts.”

Labour Party presidential candidate Peter Obi also called for transparency in the tax reform process, emphasising that robust public hearings are essential for building trust.

He stated, “Such reforms must be subject to a proper public debate. This is how we ensure that policies are inclusive and in the best interests of all Nigerians.”

Northern Lawmakers’ Opposition

In the North, opposition to the bills is growing. Some northern lawmakers in the House of Representatives have made it clear that they will not support the reforms until they are convinced

that the proposals will not harm the region’s economy.

A lawmaker from the North-East, who requested anonymity, raised concerns about the speed with which the bills are being pursued, fearing that it could lead to negative consequences for a region already struggling with the aftermath of years of insurgency.

The North’s objections to the tax reform bills are rooted in fears that they would disproportionately benefit southern states, particularly Lagos and Rivers, at the expense of northern regions.

The proposed value-added tax (VAT) sharing model has sparked particular concern, with many questioning its fairness and impact on regional economies.

However, there has been some support for the bills, including from Lagos lawmaker Babajimi Benson, who suggested that northern legislators are likely to engage in negotiations to address their concerns.

In contrast, some southern lawmakers have urged the opposition to specify the clauses they disagree with so that these can be discussed at public hearings.

FG auditors investigate NNPC's N2.7tn fuel subsidy refund claim

By Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE

The Office of the Auditor-General of the Federation (OAuGF) has now received all necessary documents to verify the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited's (NNPCL) N2.7 trillion fuel subsidy claim against the Nigerian government.

This follows the procurement department of the Ministry of Finance obtaining the terms of reference and scope of work to guide the process of engaging an external firm that will assist the OAuGF with the audit.

In April 2024, the Federal Government initiated a fresh audit of the N2.8 trillion fuel subsidy claim made by NNPC. The initial audit, conducted by KPMG, had already reduced the original claims from N6 trillion to N2.7 trillion.

The audit, which covers the period from 2015 to 2021, has become a critical point of focus as the government continues to address the financial challenges related to the subsidy regime.

In a statement on 30th May 2023, shortly after President Bola Tinubu declared that the subsidy regime had ended, Mele Kyari, the Group Chief Executive Officer of NNPC, revealed that the Federal Government still owed the company N2.8 trillion for its petrol subsidy expenses. Kyari noted that the NNPC had been covering the subsidy payments from its own cash flow, but the government had yet to reimburse the company for the sum.

Kyari emphasised, "Since the provision of the N6 trillion in 2022 and N3.7 trillion in 2023, we have not received any payment from the Federation. That means they (the Federal Government) are unable to pay and we've continued to support this subsidy from the cash flow of the NNPC. We are waiting for them to



settle up to N2.8 trillion of NNPC's cash flow from the subsidy regime and we can't continue to build this."

In September 2024, during a meeting of the Federal Allocation Accounts Committee (FAAC), Ali Mohammed, the Director of Home Finance, assured that the ongoing audit would be conducted thoroughly. Minutes from the meeting confirmed that the OAuGF had received the necessary documents to proceed with the audit.

Additionally, the procurement department had received the Terms of Reference and Scope of Work to guide the engagement of the external audit firm.

A section of the meeting minutes stated, "The Director, Home Finance, reported that the Office of the Auditor-General for the Federation was provided with the documents requested for conducting the assignment. He also reported that the Procurement Department of the Ministry had been given the Terms of Reference and the Scope of Work to guide the process of hiring the external firm that would support OAuGF in conducting the assignment."

Furthermore, experts have expressed concerns about the effectiveness of the audit, especially following the departure of NNPC's former Chief

Financial Officer, Ajiya Umar. However, NNPC spokesperson Femi Soneye reassured that the process is continuing smoothly.

Soneye said that reconciliation is currently underway with the relevant government agencies and auditors.

"Once the process is completed, the public will be informed appropriately," he added.

Meanwhile, revenue-generating agencies have made significant contributions to the Federation Account. Between January and July 2024, agencies reconciled a total sum of N1.19 trillion in arrears, following discussions to resolve unresolved revenue disbursements.

According to FAAC meeting minutes, the total amount reconciled for July 2024 was \$214.32 million (N289.01 billion).

However, there remain outstanding amounts due to the Federation Account. As of September 2024, unresolved arrears stood at \$273.7 million (N3.65 trillion), with NNPC, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), and the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) among the agencies involved in the reconciliation.

Sanwo-Olu signs Lagos Electricity Bill into Law, launches comprehensive energy reform

By Friday Omosola

Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu has signed the Lagos Electricity Bill 2024 into law.

The signing ceremony took place on Tuesday at the Conference Room of Lagos House, Alausa Ikeja, marking a critical step toward addressing longstanding challenges in the state's energy sector.

The Lagos Electricity Law 2024 is a cornerstone of the governor's commitment to fostering industrial growth, improving quality of life, and promoting energy equity, economic prosperity, and environmental sustainability in Africa's largest city.

The newly signed law is designed to create a technically sound, financially viable, and well-regulated Lagos Electricity Market.

Sanwo-Olu

Babajide Sanwo-Olu [PHOTO CREDIT: New Daily Prime Library]

Its key objectives include: ensuring access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable electricity for all citizens and promoting diverse energy sources, including renewable energy, and encouraging energy efficiency.

Other objectives are attracting investment, fostering competition, and driving innovation within the electricity sector and electrifying underserved areas to support sustainable development.

Furthermore, the Lagos Electricity Law 2024 establishes several critical institutions to manage and regulate the electricity market which includes Lagos State Electricity Regulatory Commission, an independent body to oversee regulatory compliance and licensing.



READ ALSO: Sanwo-Olu to present 2025 budget today

Others are Lagos Independent System Operator (ISO) that will ensure system reliability and operational efficiency and Lagos State Electrification Agency aimed to expand electricity access to underserved communities.

The law also provides for the creation of special funds which are Electrification Funds for financing sustainable energy projects in underserved areas, Host Community Development Fund and Licensed power-generating companies will allocate a percentage of their operating expenditure to benefit their host communities.

To enhance enforcement, a Power Enforcement Unit will address issues like electricity theft and damage to infrastructure.

Governor Sanwo-Olu emphasised that the Lagos Electricity Law 2024 is more than just a policy—it's a strategic roadmap for energy reform in Lagos State.

By fostering investment, enhancing energy access, and prioritising renewable energy solutions, the

administration aims to position Lagos as a leader in sustainable energy innovation in Nigeria and beyond.

More details on the implementation strategies and timelines for these initiatives will be unveiled in the coming weeks.

Similarly, Professor Dayo Ayoade, an energy expert at the University of Lagos, raised concerns about the lack of transparency in the relationship between the government and NNPC, describing it as historically shrouded in secrecy. He called for greater scrutiny of the financial dealings to ensure accountability.

The investigation into the N2.7 trillion subsidy refund claim remains a crucial element in the ongoing efforts to bring clarity to Nigeria's energy sector finances.

Following that, the house agreed to transmit the resolution to the senate for concurrence.

Senate confirms Oluyede's appointment as Chief of Army Staff

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Senate on Tuesday at plenary confirmed the appointment of Lt.-Gen. Olufemi Oluyede as the substantive Chief of Army Staff (COAS) by President Bola Tinubu.

The confirmation followed adoption of report of the Committee on Army on screening of Oluyede.

The report was presented by the Chairman of the Committee, Sen. Abdulaziz Yar'adua (APC-Katsina).

Yar'adua said the committee was impressed with the high level of understanding, achievements and excellence stated in the credential of the nominee.

He said the nomination of Oluyede is in line with Section 217, Subsection 2 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended.



He also said that the nomination is in accordance with the provisions of Section 18, Subsection 1 of the Armed Forces Act.

He explained that "the nominee possesses the required competence, experience and educational qualifications to be conferred with Chief of Army Staff.

Yar'adua said the nominee had been cleared by the DSS, and went through the correct process of promotion till

date, qualifying him to occupy the position of Chief of Army Staff.

He said the committee had diligently and meticulously conducted the screening of the nominee and was satisfied with his conduct, competence, experience and educational qualification and urged the Senate to confirm the nomination.

The Senate, thereafter, confirmed the appointment of Oluyede as substantive COAS.

PENCOM allows low-income pensioners to withdraw full retirement savings

By Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE

In a significant policy change aimed at addressing the financial challenges faced by low-income pensioners, the National Pension Commission (PENCOM) has announced that retirees with insufficient savings can now withdraw the entirety of their retirement savings, or continue receiving their monthly pension payments.

This decision follows the enactment of Nigeria's new National Minimum Wage, which has seen a significant rise in the minimum wage to N70,000.

The new regulation, which amends the guidelines on the administration of retirement and terminal benefits, allows pensioners whose savings cannot generate a pension equal to at



least one-third of the national minimum wage—N23,333.33—to opt for a lump sum withdrawal of their entire Retirement Savings Account (RSA). Previously, pensioners were only allowed to withdraw one-third of their total RSA balance.

This policy shift follows the signing into law of the National Minimum

Wage Bill by President Bola Tinubu on 29th July 2024, which increased the minimum wage from N30,000 to N70,000.

The implementation of the new law has highlighted the growing discrepancy between the income of active workers and the pensions received by retirees, many of whom need more funds in their RSAs to meet their basic needs.

PENCOM's memo, issued on 27th November 2024 and signed by the Head of the Surveillance Department, A.M. Salem, states that retirees who are unable to receive at least N23,333.33 in monthly pensions will now be given the option to withdraw their remaining balance as a lump sum.

35-year-old suspect plots self-kidnap, demands N50m ransom from boss

By Helen Okechukwu

Akpooh Edet, a 35-year-old suspect, has been apprehended by security operatives for staging his own abduction and demanding a ransom fee of N50 million from his boss.

The male suspect works as a security guard at Rubber Estate in Ose River, Ovia South West Local Government area of Edo State.

The Hope Newspaper reported that Edet was arrested after Edo Command of the Department of State Security (DSS) contacted the local police, Ondo State Amotekun Corps.

The local police traced the suspect to his hideout at the residence of one Libon James in Igbotako, Okitipupa Local Government area of the state.



The Commander of Ondo Amotekun, Akogun Adetunji Adeleye, averred that James might not be aware of the intention of Edet, staging his own kidnap.

Edet was paraded along with 22 other suspects at the headquarters of the local police.

However, two suspects were to be handed over to DSS for further interrogation.

Stage Game

More revelation from the Senior Security Manager of the firm, Oluwole Adesonu, discloses that he had known the suspect had worked for the firm for over 10-year.

Initially, Edet and his group had requested N50 million but reduced it to N35 million, and when their plan was not working, they reduced the

Oromoni's mother dies 7 months after dismissal of son's case

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The mother of Sylvester Oromoni, the deceased pre-teen secondary school student who was the subject of a high-profile bullying case involving Downen College in Lagos, Rosemary is dead.

According to a Cable report, family source said the bereaved mother passed away in late November after an intermittent blood pressure-related illness.

Rosemary's passing comes a little over seven months after a special court in Lagos ruled against the family on the matter back in April.

Sylvester Oromoni controversially died on November 30, 2021, while still a student at Downen College in Lekki Lagos.

His parents alleged that the boy, who was aged 12, was bullied, beaten up,



In January 2022, an initial autopsy declared that Oromoni Junior died of "acute lung injury due to chemical intoxication."

This post-mortem was discredited due to its methods and some dissatisfactions surrounding the parties who witnessed the procedure.

The Lagos department of public prosecution (DPP) conducted a second autopsy which ruled that Oromoni died "naturally."

The case was under inquiry in a coroner's court from 2022 until last April when it got a final ruling.

Among the defendants of the case are the five accused teenage schoolboys of Downen College.

and fed a chemical substance by five of his male colleagues.

Downen College had dismissed the claim, stating that the late student only sustained injuries while playing football with his friends.

The Oromoni family had countered Downen's claim, arguing that their son had no pre-existing health challenges before the incident.

Okpebholo orders 18 LG chairmen to submit account statements within 48 hours

By Helen Okechukwu

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo has directed the chairmen of the 18 local government councils in the state to submit their account statements within 48 hours.

The statements, covering the period from 4th September 2023 to the present, are to be submitted to the Assets Verification Committee via the office of the Secretary to the State Government (SSG).

The governor issued the order during a meeting with the council chairmen at the Government House in Benin City, where he was represented by his Deputy, Dennis Idahosa.

Okpebholo expressed his commitment to working closely with the local government officials to ensure the progress of the state.



“I have listened attentively to you, the ALGON Chairman. The governor is a leader for all of us. The elections have passed, and we are all one family. The governor has asked me to reassure you that we are united,” Idahosa said, speaking on behalf of the governor.

He further emphasized the governor’s

focus on transparency and accountability within the government.

“A few weeks ago, the Assets Verification Committee was established, and the Governor is committed to ensuring its work is carried out effectively. However, the committee lacks the resources to visit all 18 Local Government Areas of Edo State.”

Idahosa continued, “The Governor has instructed that the statement of accounts, from 4th September 2023 to the present, be submitted within the next 48 hours to assist the committee in performing its duties efficiently.”

“We discovered that one of my guards was missing. We began the search for him and contacted the DSS,” Adesonlu noted.

Lagos, Bulgaria partner on agriculture, others

By Dave Oludare Oso

Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State on Monday said the state is ready to partner with Bulgaria in agriculture, food security, commerce and other critical areas for the benefit of the citizens.

Governor Sanwo-Olu spoke during a courtesy visit by the Ambassador of Bulgaria to Nigeria, Mr Yanko V. Yordanov, at the Lagos House, Ikeja.

The governor said Lagos, a former capital of Nigeria, has a long history with Bulgaria, and the state government will advance conversation to improve the mutually beneficial relationship.

“We know that agriculture and food security are very critical to every country right now. We have seen a lot of global disruption; there have been a lot of logistic nightmares in Europe and other parts of the world. So, we all

need to be able to think outside of the box on how we can efficiently utilise our input and expected output from our food security initiatives.



“We have a massive logistics hub that we are building that we believe will help to safely keep Lagos on the map of regions and cities that are not just paying lip service to food security. Let us see how we can further develop the partnership between Bulgaria and

Lagos on agriculture,” he said.

Governor Sanwo-Olu, who expressed his administration’s commitment to providing an enabling business environment and ease of business for any country willing to invest in Lagos State, said the State Government is ready to advance conversation in business, trade and investment.

They include Favour Benjamin, Michael Kashamu, Edward Begue, Ansel Temile, and Kenneth Inyang.

PENCOM’s decision comes in response to concerns that many retirees are struggling to make ends meet due to the inadequacy of their pension payments, especially after the increase in the minimum wage. By permitting a full withdrawal of the RSA balance, the commission is providing a crucial option for pensioners facing financial hardship.

Pensioners React to the Change

FG, Adamawa govt convert two hospitals to federal clinics to boost health delivery

By Helen Okechukwu

To boost the healthcare system in Nigeria, the Federal Government (FG) and Adamawa government have recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the conversion and handover of two state hospitals into federal clinics.

This was made known through the document signed by Deputy Director of Information and Public Relations, Alaba Balogun, on Monday, noting that Cottage Hospital Hong and General Hospital Mubi have been handed over to FG.

The Honourable Coordinating Minister for Health & Social Welfare, Prof. Ali Pate, acknowledged the importance of the initiative, which aligned with the renewed hope agenda of President Bola Tinubu.



Prof. Pate, represented by the Permanent Secretary Daju Kachollom, said the conversion of both clinics aims to upgrade, improve, and expand healthcare services for all Nigerians.

He added that the expansion will provide quality and safe health care services for the entire people of North

East, including the neighbouring countries.

The Deputy Governor of Adamawa State, Prof. Kaletapwa Farauta, the chairman of the ceremony, hailed the FG for its strategic effort in upgrading the state's health facilities.

She noted this achievement as Governor Ahmadu Fintiri's utmost priority in the health sector.

Prof. Farauta reaffirmed Governor Fintiri's commitment to revitalising the state health sector.

The State Commissioner for Health and Human Services Chief, Felix Tangwami, also praised and described the FG initiative as impactful efforts towards enhancing health care provision in Adamawa State.

250 sex addicts treated, some in their 80s, 90s

By Helen Okechukwu

Sex addiction, also known as compulsive sexual behaviour, is a growing concern affecting individuals across all age groups, with surprising statistics showing it is not confined to the young.

NHS data reveals that one in five patients treated for this condition is over 70, with pensioners more likely to seek help for sex addiction than those in their 20s.

Over the past decade, nearly 250 individuals have been treated by NHS doctors for health problems linked to excessive sexual drive, including patients in their 80s and even one in their 90s.

Medical records highlight that more than 51 of these cases involved individuals over the age of 70s and 80s, including 1 in their 90s, while just 39 patients were in their 20s.

Last year alone, the average age of sex addiction patients was 55, with only four of them under 30.



Experts attribute this addiction to chemical imbalances in the brain involving dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine, which regulate mood and emotions.

Genetic predisposition and early exposure to sexual content, often in dysfunctional environments or abusive circumstances, further contribute to the condition.

"For most of us, sex is a healthy part of life; in some cases, it can take over a person's life in the same way that drugs do," says Lee Fernandes, lead therapist at the UKAT Group. "As the act of sex releases an addictive chemical in our brains called dopamine, which can be highly addictive.

The new policy has been welcomed by many pensioners, especially those whose savings were not enough to provide a sufficient monthly pension. For retirees living on small pension amounts, the option to withdraw the full balance offers a lifeline and more financial autonomy in retirement.

10 effective morning brain exercises for mental clarity

By Olamilekan Botti

Try these exercises in the morning hours. Starting your day with brain exercises can sharpen your mind, improve focus, and enhance your memory. Just like physical exercise strengthens the body, brain exercises stimulate your mind and boost mental agility.

Here are ten effective brain exercises to incorporate into your morning routine, along with detailed instructions on how to perform them and their benefits.

Meditation:

This practice enhances mindfulness, reduces stress, and improves concentration. It trains your brain to stay present and filter out distractions, setting the tone for a productive day.

Sit in a comfortable position in a quiet place. Close your eyes and focus on your breathing. Inhale for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts, and exhale for 6 counts. Repeat for 5–10 minutes.

Journaling:

Journaling boosts creativity, improves emotional regulation, and strengthens memory. Writing down your goals also organizes your thoughts and prepares your brain for problem-solving.

Take 10 minutes to jot down your thoughts, plans, or things you're grateful for. You can use prompts like, "What do I want to achieve today?" or "What am I thankful for?"

Sudoku:

Sudoku stimulates logical thinking and enhance problem-solving skills. They engage different parts of your brain, keeping your memory sharp and improving mental flexibility.

Dedicate 10–15 minutes to solving a crossword puzzle or Sudoku. Use an app, newspaper, or puzzle book.

Dual tasking:

enhances coordination between different brain regions, improving



multitasking ability and cognitive flexibility. Perform two tasks simultaneously, such as balancing on one foot while reciting multiplication tables or brushing your teeth with your non-dominant hand. Start with 1–2 minutes and gradually increase the difficulty.

Learning new skills:

keeps your brain adaptive and forms new neural connections, improving long-term memory and increasing mental resilience. Spend 15 minutes every morning learning something new, such as a language app or a short video tutorial on a new topic. Focus on small, consistent progress.

Brain boosting games:

Games like this challenge your reasoning, strategy, and attention span, helping your brain stay active and sharp. Play a quick online memory game, logic puzzle, or chess match in the morning. Aim for 10–15 minutes of engaging gameplay.

Mind mapping:

Mind mapping organizes thoughts, stimulates creativity, and strengthens your ability to visualize and connect complex concepts. Pick a topic or problem, and write it in

the center of a blank page. Draw branches leading to ideas, related concepts, or solutions.

Visualization practice:

Visualization activates your brain's reward centers and primes it for success, improving focus, confidence, and emotional regulation.

Close your eyes and visualize your day ahead in detail. Picture yourself completing tasks, staying calm, and achieving your goals. Spend 5–10 minutes on this practice.

Memory recall exercise:

This strengthens memory, improves attention to detail, and helps your brain organize and retain information more effectively.

Spend 5 minutes recalling the events of the previous day in chronological order. Challenge yourself by remembering details like conversations, meals, or specific actions.

Physical exercise with a cognitive twist:

Physical activity increases blood flow to the brain, boosting memory and focus. Adding a mental challenge further enhances cognitive function

10 effective morning brain exercises for mental clarity

By Helen Okechukwu

Mrs. Ugochukwu Uzoechi, a Nigerian, lived a normal life while growing up before she got married with no sign of Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) apart from having facial hair and gaining weight, which was presumed normal.

After sealing her marriage, Mrs. Uzoechi and her partner tried conceiving after months of being married in 2023, but all efforts proved abortive. Her journey of fertility fight started as she made her way to the clinic to seek medical assistance.

During the visitation to the laboratory centre, after having some chats with the laboratory scientist, she was told to run a hormonal profile test while it was her first day of seeing her period for the month.

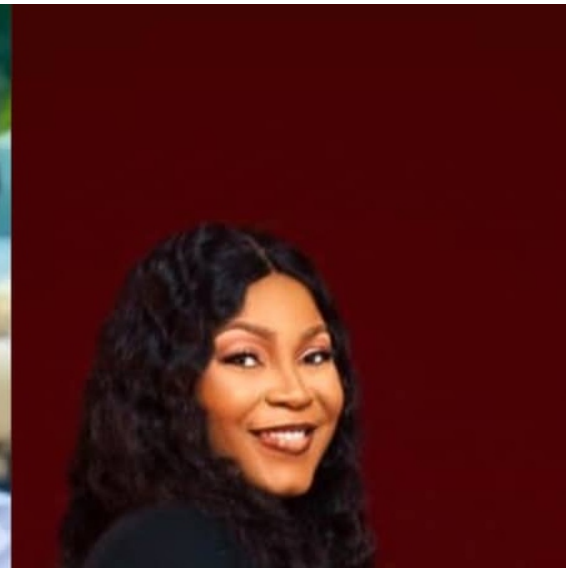
On the third day, when Mrs. Uzoechi returned for the test result, the test result revealed she was suffering from PCOS and ovary cysts; at that moment, she became emotional.

While speaking with The New Daily Prime reporter, she said words of encouragement were shared with her by her medical doctor.

“The lab scientist told me that the result showed that I have PCOS and ovary cysts, but 95% of women that have it is not really a big deal,” Mrs. Dickson recalled. “He also said that women with PCOS can actually conceive, but I should still keep trying with my husband, but if nothing happens, I should come back after a year for the HSG, but it’s painful.”

What is PCOS?

According to Hannah Alderson, a nutritionist and hormone specialist who was diagnosed with PCOS at the age of 21, PCOS is defined as an endocrine disorder that affects women during their reproductive years.



Explaining more, she acknowledged that no two women experience the same symptom of the health challenge. She said PCOS occurs when women often have an excess of follicles, small sacs that contain eggs within their ovaries, noting that women do not have cysts on their ovaries.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) disclosed that about 8–13% of representative-aged women suffer from PCOS globally, leaving 70% undiagnosed.

Recounting how she got to know about PCOS, Mrs. Uzoechi’s doctor advised her to focus on losing weight, avoid intake of alcohol, and maintain a healthy lifestyle as a way to overcome the infertility issue, especially in dietary.

Despite her new discovery about her infertility and quest to bear children, she attributed her husband to being the most supportive partner for easing off the stress.

“Although I was emotional at that moment, outside that, my husband didn’t make me feel that I was actually going through that health challenge,” her voice echoed. “We were not really thinking about the child bearing of a thing that we need the child.

She explained that the situation was handled between herself, the doctor, and her husband with no external member until she gave birth.

“It was only between myself, the doctor, and my husband; nobody got to know about it until after I gave birth to my son; that was when I started talking to people about it.”

Endangering My life with Supplements

According to Mrs. Uzoechi, she told The New Daily Prime that taking those supplements affected her life because she never knew it was causing her more harm than good at the initial stage of taking them, realising that health is wealth.

“I will say that in as much as those supplements and pills did not work for me, it is not that it won’t work for some people, but he does work for some people; I have to stop.”

Adding more effect of taking pills and supplements to her health, she explained, “It was really affecting me so bad to the point that when ever I take them, I won’t get myself until after some minutes. I just have to stop it because it is not compatible for me.”

Davido reacts to Belgium's sex workers' health insurance

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Belgium becomes first to offer health insurance for sex workers, Davido reacts

Belgium becomes the first country to legalize health insurance and key welfare benefits, including pensions and maternity leave, for sex workers, Davido celebrates.

This move marks a significant milestone in recognizing the rights and well-being of sex workers, offering them protections previously only available to individuals in more traditional employment sectors. By officially approving these measures, Belgium's government has taken a bold step toward equality and inclusivity, setting a global precedent.

Davido praises Belgium's bold decision

Popular Nigerian musician Davido shared his excitement over the news on his X (formerly Twitter) account. The artist, known for his international influence and outspoken views, retweeted the announcement and added a brief caption: "Groundbreaking move by Belgium."

Davido's reaction sparked conversations among his millions of followers, with many praising the Belgian government for its progressive stance. His endorsement of the decision highlights how artists and public figures can amplify important social issues on a global scale.

Historic leap for sex worker rights

For years, sex workers around the world have fought for recognition, legal protections, and access to basic benefits. Belgium's new law represents a major victory in this struggle, providing sex workers with access to health insurance and other essential social security benefits. These changes align with protections enjoyed by workers in other industries, effectively dismantling long-standing barriers.



In addition to health insurance, sex workers in Belgium will now qualify for pensions, enabling them to secure financial stability in their later years. The law also ensures access to maternity leave, allowing female sex workers to take time off for childbirth without fear of losing income. Furthermore, provisions for paid sick days mean workers can now prioritize their health without financial repercussions.

These reforms not only validate the rights of sex workers but also challenge societal stigmas. By integrating sex work into the formal economy, Belgium underscores the importance of protecting all workers, regardless of their profession.

Why Belgium's decision matters globally

Belgium's move has set a new benchmark for human rights and labor protections. Advocates worldwide are hailing this decision as a trailblazing moment for sex workers' rights. By offering them the same benefits as other workers, Belgium challenges the notion that certain jobs are unworthy of legal and social protections.

The decision is expected to inspire similar reforms in other countries. Activists and policymakers globally are now likely to look to Belgium as an

example of how to address the long-standing inequalities faced by sex workers. This legislation could pave the way for broader acceptance and recognition of sex work as legitimate labor.

Public reactions

Reactions to the news have been mixed. Supporters of the law argue that it represents a necessary step toward equality, offering sex workers the dignity and security they deserve. On social media platforms, many have praised Belgium for its forward-thinking approach.

However, critics have raised concerns about the implications of this decision. Some argue that it might normalize sex work in ways that clash with cultural or religious values. Despite these debates, the move has undeniably sparked important discussions about the future of labor rights and inclusivity.

Davido's role in amplifying the message

Davido's reaction to Belgium's decision adds a layer of visibility to the issue. As one of Africa's most prominent artists, his endorsement carries weight. With millions of followers on social media, his acknowledgment of Belgium's progressive step introduces the conversation to a broader audience.

Public figures like Davido have the power to drive awareness and influence opinions. By celebrating Belgium's decision, Davido has indirectly called attention to the global fight for sex workers' rights, potentially encouraging other nations to consider similar measures.

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Yemi Alade lost voice before Beyoncé collab

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Yemi Alade recalls losing voice before Beyoncé album recording

Yemi Alade revealed she lost her voice just before recording for Beyoncé's *The Lion King: The Gift* album, sharing the story on CNN African Voices.

Alade explained that she flew into Los Angeles to work on two tracks for the album. A day before her scheduled studio session, she visited the recording studio to meet the production team and prepare for her big moment. However, the next morning brought an unexpected and terrifying setback.

"I woke up, and I couldn't speak," she said, recalling the moment. "All I could hear in my head was the effort, but nothing came out. I couldn't voice a single word."

The Shock and Despair

The sudden loss of her voice left Alade both shocked and discouraged. She described the experience as deeply unsettling, given the importance of the opportunity. "It was like my body was betraying me at the worst possible time," she shared.

Despite the panic, Alade knew she couldn't give up. The clock was ticking, and the pressure was immense. She decided to turn to her trusted vocal recovery routine, a method she had used in the past to overcome minor voice issues.

The Road to Recovery

Alade quickly sprang into action. She relied on warm water, Vitamin C, ginger, and herbal teas to soothe her vocal cords. She also made sure to stay warm and rested her voice as much as possible.

"It wasn't just about physical



"I give all the glory to God," she said. "This could have gone differently, but I'm thankful it didn't. It was a reminder that challenges can't stop you if you keep pushing forward."

The collaboration on *The Lion*

King: *The Gift* marked a major milestone in Alade's career, propelling her further into the global spotlight. The album, celebrated for its fusion of African sounds and star-studded lineup, was widely praised and cemented Beyoncé's dedication to amplifying African voices.

recovery," she said. "I had to believe I could get my voice back. I kept telling myself, 'This is not the end.'"

A Remarkable Comeback

Thankfully, her determination paid off. By the time her recording session arrived, her voice had returned.

With her voice restored, Alade delivered an outstanding performance in the studio. She recorded two tracks for the album: the electrifying *Don't Jealous Me* and a verse for an early version of *My Power*. Both songs became fan favorites, showcasing her powerful vocals and unique style.

Reflecting on the experience, Alade couldn't help but inject humour into what was a nerve-wracking ordeal. She jokingly blamed her vocal troubles on her "village people," a lighthearted Nigerian expression often used to describe mysterious setbacks.

Gratitude and Growth

Despite the scare, Alade emerged from the experience stronger and more grateful than ever. She expressed her deep appreciation for the opportunity to work with Beyoncé and contribute to such a groundbreaking project.

King: *The Gift* marked a major milestone in Alade's career, propelling her further into the global spotlight. The album, celebrated for its fusion of African sounds and star-studded lineup, was widely praised and cemented Beyoncé's dedication to amplifying African voices.

A Lesson in Resilience

Alade's story is not just a tale of triumph in the face of adversity; it's a lesson in resilience and faith. Losing her voice at such a crucial time could have been a career-defining failure, but she turned it into a defining success.

Fans and fellow artists have drawn inspiration from her ability to overcome the odds. For Alade, the experience serves as a reminder to stay prepared, keep faith, and never lose sight of one's goals, no matter the obstacles.

As she continues to break barriers in the music industry, Yemi Alade's story stands as a powerful example of perseverance and determination, proving that even in moments of crisis, greatness is still within reach.

Timaya: Burna Boy ejected Omawumi, Waje

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Burna Boy's bold studio moment: Timaya recalls heated exchange

Timaya shares how Burna Boy boldly predicted his success, clashing with Omawumi and Waje in a heated exchange, showcasing his fearless confidence.

Vision of greatness

Timaya recounted that the incident occurred years ago during a studio session. At the time, Burna Boy made a bold claim: he would one day be paid to travel on private jets. Such a statement was audacious, given the era. Back then, Nigerian artists were still grappling with limited resources and opportunities. The idea of boarding a private jet, let alone being paid to do so, seemed far-fetched to many.

However, Burna Boy's declaration was not just a boast. It reflected the confidence and vision that would later define his meteoric rise in the global music industry.

Scepticism from Omawumi and Waje
Not everyone in the studio shared Burna Boy's optimism. According to Timaya, singers Omawumi and Waje openly doubted his statement. Their skepticism wasn't surprising. At the time, Burna Boy was still on his journey to stardom, and the concept of Nigerian artists receiving such recognition and perks seemed almost unattainable.

Their disbelief, however, struck a nerve with Burna Boy. Known for his fiery personality and unshakable self-confidence, Burna Boy didn't take the criticism lightly.

Burna Boy's reaction

Timaya vividly described what



happened next. Burna Boy, visibly angered by the doubts cast on his vision, took matters into his own hands. Without hesitation, he opened the studio door and asked Omawumi and Waje to leave.

This reaction wasn't merely an outburst. For Burna Boy, it was a matter of principle. He believed in his potential and was unwilling to let negativity or doubt cloud his aspirations. This moment not only showcased his determination but also hinted at the resilience and self-assurance that would propel him to global fame.

Timaya's take on Burna Boy

Reflecting on the incident, Timaya expressed admiration for Burna Boy's tenacity. "Nothing Burna Boy is doing now surprises me," he said during the interview. "The guy is fearless."

Timaya's words underscore Burna Boy's unyielding drive and ability to envision success even in the face of skepticism. His rise from a budding artist to a global superstar is a testament to his hard work, belief, and readiness to challenge the status quo.

Lesson in self-belief

This story of Burna Boy, Omawumi, and Waje is more than just an anecdote. It highlights the importance of self-belief and perseverance, especially in an industry as competitive as music. Burna Boy's ability to dream big, stay focused, and tune out negativity has been key to his success.

Today, Burna Boy is a name synonymous with excellence in Afrobeats and global music. His achievements include Grammy Awards, sold-out stadiums, and collaborations with international artists. He has indeed reached a point where private jets are not just a possibility but a regular part of his lifestyle.

Conclusion

The studio session, though tense, serves as a reminder of how doubt can sometimes fuel determination. While Omawumi and Waje's reactions were understandable given the circumstances, Burna Boy's ability to stand firm in his convictions is what set him apart.

As Timaya concluded in his interview, "Burna Boy knew where he was going, even before anyone else could see it." This story is a lesson in believing in oneself, even when others may not.

Today, Burna Boy's journey is an inspiration for countless artists and dreamers, proving that with determination and a fearless attitude, the impossible can indeed become reality.

Rotimi: Why I left 50 Cent's G-Unit

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Rotimi opens up on leaving 50 Cent's G-Unit label

Afrobeats star Rotimi has shared the reasons behind his decision to part ways with G-Unit, the record label owned by American rapper 50 Cent. In a candid interview, he revealed that creative differences, particularly over his musical style, led to his departure.

Rotimi joined G-Unit during a period when Afrobeats was still finding its footing in the Western music scene. Although the genre was gaining traction in some parts of the United States, it was far from mainstream. This disconnect, he explained, became a central issue during his time with the label.

Why Rotimi left G-Unit

Speaking to Adesope Live, Rotimi reflected on the challenges of being an Afrobeats artist in a market dominated by hip-hop and R&B. He described how, between 2017 and 2018, Afrobeats began to grow in popularity in cities like Boston and New York. Artists like Davido and Wizkid were gaining recognition, but the genre had not yet achieved widespread success across the U.S.

"In 2017/2018, Afrobeats wasn't mainstream in the United States," he explained. "Yes, it was big in some places, but not everywhere. For example, LA wasn't following it the way New York or Boston was."

This divide created tension within G-Unit. Rotimi recounted a pivotal conversation he had with 50 Cent, during which the label head struggled to grasp the essence of his sound.

"50 Cent asked me, 'What's this sound you are trying to do?'" he shared. "I told him, 'It's Afrobeats. I have a record called Love Rhythm, and it's going to be big. But if you don't



understand what this is, then I might need to go somewhere else."

Mutual decision

Ultimately, the disagreement over the direction of Rotimi's music led to a mutual decision to part ways. Despite their differences, Rotimi emphasized that the split was amicable.

"He let me out of my deal because we couldn't align creatively. We simply didn't see eye-to-eye on Afrobeats," Rotimi said.

This decision marked a turning point in his career. It allowed him to fully embrace his Afrobeats identity and find a label that supported his vision.

New ground with Empire

Following his departure from G-Unit, Rotimi made history as the first Afrobeats artist to sign with Empire, a record label known for its innovative approach and artist-friendly model. Unlike G-Unit, Empire understood Rotimi's vision and the growing global appeal of Afrobeats.

"The team at Empire saw what I wanted to do," he said. "They understood the potential of Afrobeats and supported me in bringing that vision to life."

This partnership proved fruitful. Under Empire, Rotimi released Love Rhythm, a hit single that showcased his talent and solidified his place in the Afrobeats movement.

Global rise

Rotimi's journey reflects the broader rise of Afrobeats as a global phenomenon. Once considered a niche genre, Afrobeats now commands massive audiences worldwide. Artists like Burna Boy, Wizkid, and Tems have achieved international success, winning awards and performing on global stages.

Reflecting on this evolution, he expressed pride in being part of the movement. "It's amazing to see how far Afrobeats has come," he said. "Back when I started, we were fighting for recognition. Now, it's everywhere."

Lessons

His experience offers valuable insights into the challenges of navigating the music industry as an artist with a unique sound. His story underscores the importance of staying true to one's artistic vision, even when it means making difficult decisions.

Leaving G-Unit was not an easy choice, but it was necessary for him to grow as an artist. By aligning himself with a label that believed in his potential, he paved the way for a successful career in Afrobeats.

Looking ahead

Today, he continues to blend Afrobeats with his R&B roots, creating music that resonates with audiences worldwide. His journey from G-Unit to Empire illustrates the power of perseverance and the importance of finding the right creative partners.

Tesla Deal: US judge rejects Musk's \$55.8bn

By Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE

A US judge has upheld her decision to reject Elon Musk's \$55.8 billion compensation package at Tesla, denying an attempt to restore the deal through a shareholder vote.

Chancellor Kathaleen McCormick of Delaware's Court of Chancery ruled on Monday that Tesla's attempt to ratify Musk's compensation plan through a vote in June could not overturn her earlier January decision, which deemed the package excessive and unfair to shareholders.

In her ruling, McCormick pointed out several flaws in Tesla's ratification attempt, including "material misstatements" in the documents provided to shareholders regarding the impact of their vote.

She stated, "The motion to revise is denied" and added that the defense's arguments were inconsistent with established legal principles.

Tesla has indicated its intention to appeal the decision. In a post on Musk's X (formerly Twitter) account, the company expressed its discontent, asserting that "shareholders should control company votes, not judges."

Musk, in a separate post, voiced his frustration, stating that the court's ruling should not interfere with shareholder decision-making.

The court also addressed the issue of attorney fees in the case, awarding \$345 million, significantly less than the \$5.6 billion requested by Richard Tornetta, a Tesla shareholder who filed the lawsuit.

While McCormick acknowledged the legal method used to calculate the fees, she concluded that such a large



award would be an undue windfall.

The controversial compensation plan was initially approved by Tesla shareholders in March 2018, designed to reward Musk for the company's extraordinary growth.

However, Tornetta filed a lawsuit alleging that Musk had essentially dictated the terms of the deal to directors who lacked sufficient independence. Tornetta also accused Musk of "unjustified enrichment" and called for the annulment of the package that contributed to Musk becoming the world's richest individual.

During the trial, Musk defended the deal, stating that Tesla's investors were highly sophisticated and that the company's success, particularly with the Model 3, was a result of his leadership.

He denied playing any role in crafting

the compensation package, maintaining that it was solely the work of the board, which included several close associates.

The Delaware Court of Chancery has long been a cornerstone of US corporate law and is the preferred jurisdiction for many Fortune 500 companies.

Following the ruling, Musk expressed his discontent by reposting calls for companies to move their operations out of Delaware.

This latest ruling marks another chapter in the ongoing legal and corporate saga surrounding Elon Musk's compensation package and the broader dynamics between powerful CEOs and shareholders in American corporations.

Biden visits Angola for infrastructure and geopolitical discussions

By Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE

US President Joe Biden has arrived in Angola for a pivotal two-day visit, marking his first and only trip to sub-Saharan Africa during his presidency. The visit, which began late on Monday, is primarily focused on advancing a major infrastructure initiative that is set to provide a significant counterpoint to China's growing investments in the region.

Biden's visit is centred on the Lobito Corridor project, a large-scale multinational initiative aimed at rehabilitating a vital railway line that connects mineral-rich inland countries, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zambia, to Angola's Atlantic port city of Lobito.

This project is seen as a crucial step in fostering regional economic development while reducing dependence on Chinese-backed infrastructure projects in Africa.

In preparation for Biden's visit, the Angolan government declared December 3 and 4 as public holidays and has increased security across the capital, Luanda, which is home to around 9.5 million people. Biden's trip officially begins on Tuesday with talks with Angolan President João Lourenço in Luanda, where the two leaders are expected to discuss the Lobito project and other bilateral matters. Biden is also scheduled to deliver remarks at the National Slavery Museum.

On Wednesday, Biden will travel to Lobito, situated about 500 kilometres south of Luanda, where he will visit the port at the heart of the Lobito Corridor project. The rehabilitation of this railway, which has received significant loans from the United



States, the European Union, and other global partners, is set to improve the transportation of minerals from the DRC and Zambia to the coast for export.

The project has been hailed as a "game changer" for US engagement in Africa, with White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby noting its potential to help drive "a more secure, more prosperous, more economically stable continent."

The Lobito project is part of a broader geopolitical rivalry between the United States and China in Africa. While China has invested heavily in the region, including funding a railway project in Tanzania to transport minerals via the Indian Ocean, the US and its allies aim to offer an alternative that avoids the debt burdens often associated with Chinese financing. Angola, for instance, owes China approximately \$17 billion, making up about 40% of the country's total debt.

Angola's President Lourenço, who has expressed a desire to diversify his country's international partnerships, has welcomed Biden's offer of sustainable investment alternatives.

"We're not asking countries to choose between the US and Russia and

China," Kirby remarked ahead of Biden's visit.

"We're simply looking for reliable, sustainable, verifiable investment opportunities that the people of Angola and the people of the continent can rely on."

However, human rights organisations have called on Biden to address Angola's human rights record during his visit. Amnesty International has reported that at least 17 protesters were killed by Angolan police between November 2020 and June 2023 as part of an ongoing crackdown on dissent.

The organisation has urged Biden to press Angola for the immediate release of five government critics who have been arbitrarily detained for over a year.

Angola, a country of 37 million people, has faced significant challenges since its independence from Portugal in 1975, including a brutal 27-year civil war. During the Cold War, the United States covertly supported the UNITA rebel movement, which fought against the ruling MPLA government. It was not until 1993 that the US formally recognised the MPLA-led government and began importing its oil.

Trump vows to block U.S. Steel's takeover by Japan's Nippon Steel

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

President-elect Donald Trump is pledging to block Japan's Nippon Steel from buying U.S. Steel, a \$14.9 billion deal announced a year ago that is now under review for its potential impact on U.S. national security.

"I am totally against the once great and powerful U.S. Steel being bought by a foreign company, in this case Nippon Steel of Japan," Trump wrote on Truth Social late Monday. "Through a series of Tax Incentives and Tariffs, we will make U.S. Steel Strong and Great Again, and it will happen FAST!"

He added, "As President, I will block this deal from happening. Buyer Beware!!!"

While on the campaign trail, Trump had also promised to block Nippon's takeover of U.S. Steel.

The Committee on Foreign Investments in the United States (CFIUS), an interagency government panel that assesses foreign acquisitions of U.S. companies, is currently examining Nippon Steel's deal for U.S. Steel.

Trump has vowed to pursue protectionist economic policies to help support U.S. businesses, including imposing tariffs on imports from some of America's key trading partners, including Mexico, Canada and China. The president-elect has said tariffs are a tool that can help protect domestic manufacturing, as well as convince foreign companies to open plants in the U.S.

In response to Trump's comments, Nippon Steel said it was "determined to protect and grow US Steel in a manner that reinforces American



industry, domestic supply chain resiliency and US national security."

"We will invest no less than \$2.7 billion into its unionized facilities, introduce our world-class technological innovation and secure union jobs so that American steelworkers at U.S. Steel can manufacture the most advanced steel products for American customers," the Japanese firm said in a statement.

The acquisition, announced in December 2023, has sparked scrutiny from the United Steelworkers union as well as a number of lawmakers and elected officials in the past year, with President Joe Biden reportedly also prepared to block the proposed acquisition.

CFIUS is reviewing the deal for potential national security concerns and could advise against the merger. In September, the Biden administration extended the review,

pushing a conclusion on the politically sensitive deal until after the Nov. 5 presidential election.

Under the deal, U.S. Steel, founded in 1901 by Andrew Carnegie, J.P. Morgan and Charles Schwab, would keep its iconic name and headquarters in Pittsburgh, while all collective bargaining agreements with the United Steelworkers Union would be honored, the companies have said.

However, if the deal falls through, U.S. Steel has warned it would have to close many of its blast furnace facilities, risking thousands of jobs and making it more difficult to compete globally.

South Korea's President, Yeol declares emergency martial law

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on Tuesday declared martial law in an unannounced broadcast live on YTN television, claiming he would eradicate “shameless pro-North Korean anti-state forces.”

He did not cite any specific threat from the nuclear-armed North, however, instead focusing on his domestic political opponents.

The surprise move sent shockwaves through the country, which had a series of authoritarian leaders early in its history but has been considered democratic since the 1980s. The Korean won was down sharply against the U.S. dollar.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Yoon said he had no choice but to resort to such a measure in order to

safeguard free and constitutional order, saying opposition parties have taken hostage of the parliamentary process to throw the country into a crisis.

“I declare martial law to protect the free Republic of Korea from the threat of North Korean communist forces, to eradicate the despicable pro-North Korean anti-state forces that are plundering the freedom and happiness of our people, and to protect the free constitutional order,” Yoon said.

He did not say in the address what specific measures will be taken. Yonhap news agency reported that the entrance to the parliament building was blocked.

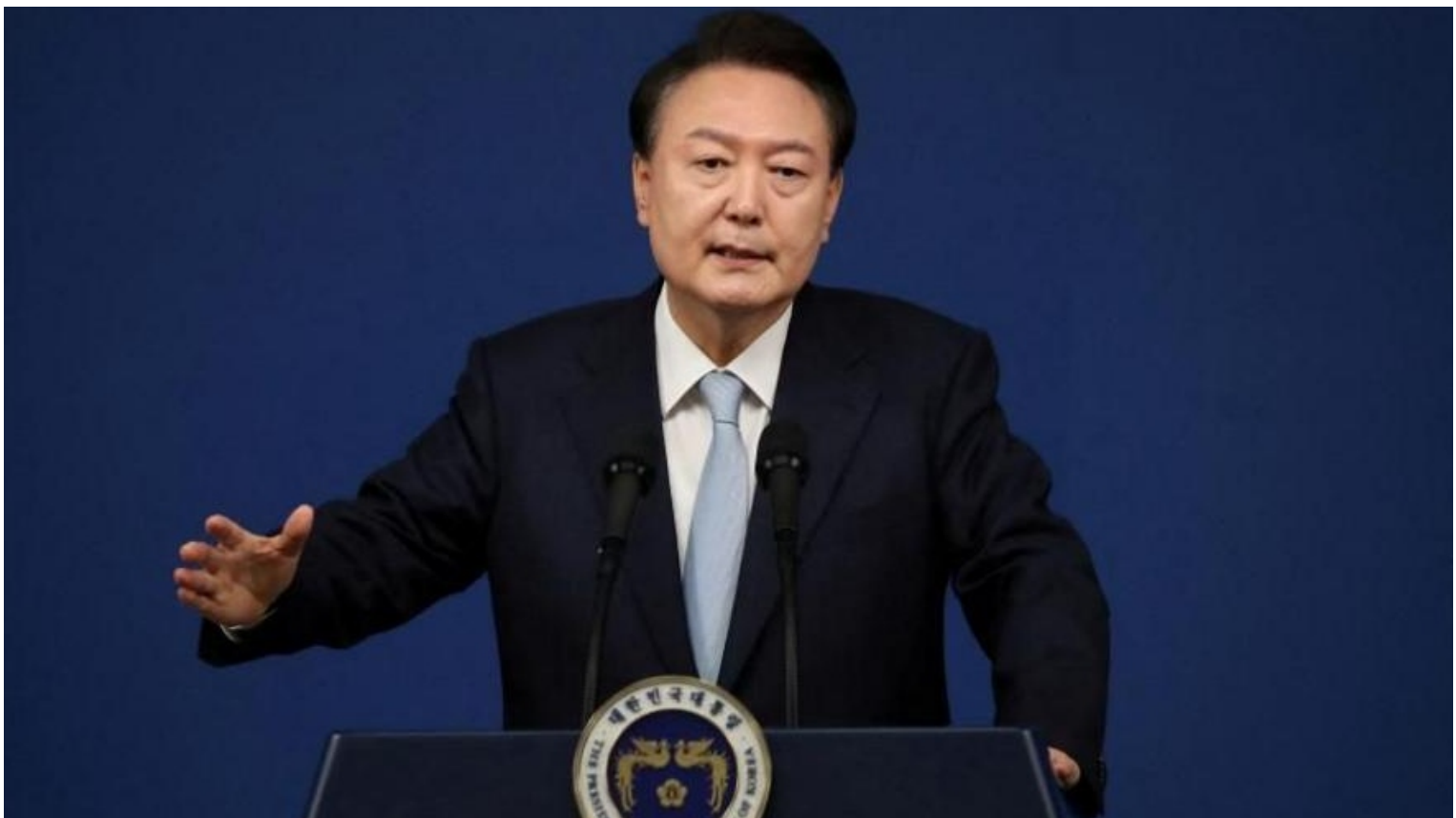
“Tanks, armored personnel carriers, and soldiers with guns and knives will rule the country,” Lee Jae-myung, leader of the opposition Democratic

Party, which has the majority in parliament, said in a livestream online. “The economy of the Republic of Korea will collapse irretrievably. My fellow citizens, please come to the National Assembly.”

Yoon cited a motion by the country's opposition Democratic Party, which has a majority in parliament, this week to impeach some of the country's top prosecutors and its rejection of a government budget proposal.

South Korea's ministers on Monday protested the move by opposition DP last week to slash more than four trillion won from the government's budget proposal.

Yoon said that action undermines the essential functioning of government administration.



Chelsea can dominate Premier League in coming years, says Maresca

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca has boldly predicted that his youthful squad will establish dominance in English football within the next five to ten years. Despite Chelsea's impressive form this season, the Italian tactician has tempered expectations for immediate success, emphasizing the club's long-term vision.

Maresca's remarks came ahead of Chelsea's Premier League clash with Southampton on Wednesday. Speaking about the club's future, the 44-year-old expressed confidence in the project spearheaded by the Todd Boehly and Clearlake Capital ownership group, which has invested over £1.5 billion in transfers since their 2022 takeover.

"The first time I met the owners and the sporting directors, I told them: because of the age and quality of this squad, Chelsea will dominate English football in the next five to ten years," Maresca said. "No matter who the manager is, the foundations are there to create something remarkable."

Chelsea currently sits third in the Premier League table, level on points and goal difference with Arsenal, but nine points behind league leaders Liverpool. A resounding 3-0 victory over Aston Villa on Sunday saw the Blues leapfrog reigning champions Manchester City, signaling their upward trajectory.

Building for the Future

Chelsea's transfer strategy has focused on acquiring young talent on long-term contracts. Standout performers such as Enzo Fernandez, Moises Caicedo, and Nicolas Jackson have begun to show their potential, while Cole Palmer continues to



impress following his breakout season.

Despite their promise, Maresca highlighted the inexperience of his squad, which has an average age of just over 23, as a key factor preventing them from being genuine title contenders this season.

"We're not in the title race this season, in my opinion," he said. "But we're building something important. The owners haven't asked for immediate success; the focus is on creating a foundation for sustained excellence."

Injury Woes Persist

Injury setbacks remain a challenge for Chelsea, with defender Wesley Fofana ruled out for several weeks due to a hamstring issue. Club captain Reece James is also sidelined with a long-term injury. "We don't have an

exact timeline for Wesley yet, but he'll be out for weeks," Maresca confirmed.

A New Era of Stability

Chelsea has shown signs of improvement after finishing 12th and sixth in their first two seasons under American ownership. Although trophies have eluded them, the team's progress under Maresca suggests brighter days ahead.

"The focus is not on this season or the next, but on building something real and lasting," Maresca said.

With a clear vision and an abundance of talent, Chelsea fans can dream of a future where their club once again dominates English football. For now, patience is the key as Maresca and his team lay the groundwork for sustained success.

Manchester City facing top-four battle after Liverpool defeat, says Carragher

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Manchester City's title hopes took a significant hit after a 2-0 defeat to Liverpool at Anfield on Sunday, leaving them 11 points adrift of the Premier League leaders. The loss marked City's fourth consecutive league defeat and extended their winless streak across all competitions to seven games.

Goals from Cody Gakpo and a Mohamed Salah penalty sealed Liverpool's dominant win. Pep Guardiola's side, now in fifth place, find themselves behind Arsenal, Chelsea, and Brighton in the race for Champions League qualification.

Speaking on Sky Sports, Jamie Carragher declared City's title race effectively over and suggested that they face a battle to secure a top-four finish.

"A Mini-Crisis for City"



"It's a mini-crisis," Carragher said. "This reminds me of Liverpool's struggles two years ago. City's midfield is their biggest issue, especially with Rodri sidelined for the season. Guardiola can't fix this squad without significant reinforcements, and they may not come until summer."

Carragher highlighted the dominance of midfield duos at Arsenal and Chelsea, which he believes leave City vulnerable. "Look at their energy and power in midfield—City can't

compete right now."

Kyle Walker came under fire for his defensive lapse leading to Gakpo's opening goal. "Walker's tendency to switch off has always been a weakness. It's now becoming a liability for City," Carragher added.

Liverpool's Dominance Under Slot Liverpool, meanwhile, extended their lead at the top to nine points. Manager Arne Slot has revitalized the squad, earning praise from pundits like Roy

'Spursy' Syndrome: Tottenham's frustrating rollercoaster of highs and lows

By Dave Oludare Oso

Tottenham Hotspur's season has been a whirlwind of highs and lows, perfectly encapsulating the term 'Spursy'—a label for the team's trademark inconsistency.

Fans like Anna Howells, content creator for Spurs XY, admit the term is frustrating but fitting. "We have been incredibly inconsistent. Somehow both really good and really bad," she says.

Under manager Ange Postecoglou, Spurs are the Premier League's top scorers, with 28 goals from 13 matches. However, their form has been erratic, with six wins and five defeats leaving them in seventh place. A perfect example of this inconsistency came last week, when Tottenham thrashed Manchester



City 4-0, only to draw 2-2 against Roma and then fail to beat Fulham, despite the latter playing with 10 men for the final 15 minutes.

For some fans, like Chris Paouros, co-chair of Proud Lilywhites, this "risk and reward" style of play is thrilling. "Angeball is irresistible,"

Paouros says. However, others, like fan writer Alison Speechly, are growing frustrated with the team's inability to turn dominant performances into consistent results.

"We keep getting glimpses of greatness," Speechly says, referencing Spurs' struggles against lower-tier teams like Ipswich and Crystal Palace, "but we need consistency."

Despite the attacking firepower, which includes Brennan Johnson, Son Heung-min, and James Maddison, Spurs have only won three consecutive games once this year.

Essien reflects on coaching journey and plans for future management

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

After a glittering 20-year playing career at clubs like Chelsea, Real Madrid, and AC Milan, Michael Essien has transitioned to coaching, a move that has given him new insights into the world of management. Despite being one of the best midfielders of his generation, it wasn't a desire to follow in the footsteps of renowned managers like Jose Mourinho or Carlo Ancelotti that prompted Essien to enter coaching. Instead, it was a simple realization: "I woke up one day and thought, 'Let me start doing something.'"

Essien's coaching career began in 2020 when he joined Danish side FC Nordsjaelland as an assistant coach. A club known for its strong ties to the Right to Dream academy in Ghana, Nordsjaelland's focus on developing young talent attracted the former Ghana international. "I love how they develop their boys here," Essien says, speaking of the academy's holistic approach to nurturing both footballing talent and academic success. "The environment is very nice and very healthy, and everyone is ready to help whenever you need."

Nordsjaelland's unique structure, where an academy drives the club's operations, appealed to Essien, especially given his longstanding relationship with academy founder Tom Vernon. The academy, founded in 1999, has produced top talents like Mohammed Kudus and Kamaldeen Sulemana, and Essien is excited to be part of this system that provides a pathway for young players to professional football.

Though Essien is far from considering a head coaching position, his current role has allowed him to learn from seasoned coaches like Mourinho and Ancelotti. "I understand a bit more why Jose would get angry," Essien



reflects, acknowledging the challenges of coaching that he never truly grasped as a player. His experiences under some of the game's best managers have influenced his own approach, and he now applies those lessons as he works with young players.

Despite Essien's success as a player, coaching has its challenges, particularly with the current generation of players. "Sometimes they think they know the world, but actually they don't know anything," Essien says, noting the importance of offering advice and guidance to young players. His mentorship helps them navigate their careers and the pressures that come with the modern game.

Essien has also been developing his managerial skills, recently completing a football management course that has broadened his understanding of club operations. While he's not actively

seeking a head coach role, Essien is clearly laying the groundwork for a future in management. "Football goes beyond the pitch," he says. "I'm collecting knowledge about the game because I want to do my best for these young boys coming up."

For now, Essien is focused on helping Nordsjaelland and its academy system continue to grow, but his journey in coaching has only just begun. As he gains more experience and refines his understanding of the game's inner workings, a future in management seems likely for the former midfield powerhouse.

As he continues to learn and grow in his new role, Essien remains passionate about football and determined to shape the next generation of players, just as his own career was shaped by the guidance of his coaches.