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# Minister lists gains of planned tax reforms, urges dialogue

By Friday Omosola

**M**inister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, has called for increased public dialogue and collaboration to drive Nigeria's ongoing tax reforms, emphasising the critical role of public relations in fostering constructive engagement.

Speaking at a National Discourse on the Tax Reform Bills organised by the Kaduna chapter of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) today, the minister highlighted taxation as an essential pillar for economic renaissance.

Addressing the theme, "Tax Reforms: The Role of Public Relations in Fostering Constructive Dialogue for National Economic Renaissance," Idris lauded the Kaduna NIPR chapter for its leadership in advancing Nigeria's public relations practice.

He commended the chapter for its efforts to align subnational engagement with national policy objectives.

He further underscored the importance of taxation as a critical revenue stream for effective governance, stating that Nigeria's tax system urgently requires reform to address design flaws and taxpayer attitudes.

He praised the Presidential Committee on Fiscal and Tax Reform for its comprehensive review of the country's tax laws, stressing that the ongoing national debate on the matter reflects the essence of democracy.

"In spite of the trust deficit that often accompanies governance issues, we have witnessed robust debates on this sensitive issue, which is heartwarming and inspiring. President Tinubu is committed to listening to and addressing concerns



raised by all stakeholders to ensure inclusivity in the reform process," Idris stated.

He emphasised that the President Bola Tinubu-led administration is focused on ambitious fiscal reforms aimed at devolving more resources to state and local governments in line with the principles of true federalism.

Idris further acknowledged the vital role of public relations in fostering transparency, mutual understanding, and public trust during this transformative period.

"As practitioners of purposeful communication, the NIPR and its members are pivotal in creating a culture of collaboration and progress.

"This dialogue underscores the importance of citizen engagement in achieving the goals of the Renewed Hope agenda," he added.

The minister reaffirmed the administration's commitment to participatory democracy, assuring Nigerians that the reform process would remain inclusive and transparent.

He called on stakeholders, including the NIPR, to support efforts to promote informed public discourse and strengthen confidence in the government's economic policies.

The event, held in Kaduna, featured a panel of experts who discussed perspectives on taxation and its role in driving national development.



# Anti-drug war: France pledges massive support for NDLEA

By Dave Oludare Oso

The French government on Saturday assured the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) of more collaboration and support in the fight against drug trafficking and abuse.

The assurance was given by the French Police Attaché in Nigeria, Mr Phillipe Crespo, when he led the trio of Messrs. Phillipe Barrau, Tony Albaladejo and Cedric Hocquette on a courtesy visit to the NDLEA in Abuja.

According to NAN, the visit followed the conclusion of a series of special operations training for officers of the Strike Force Unit in NDLEA Academy in Jos and the third of such training in the last two years.

Speaking during the visit, Mr Crespo commended Marwa for the warm reception always accorded the French team.

Crespo also lauded Marwa's willingness to collaborate with local and international partners in his determined effort to curb the scourge of substance abuse and illicit drug trafficking in Nigeria.

He said that the success of NDLEA's operations was not only helping to protect Nigerians and Nigerian cities but also communities in foreign lands.

This, he said, was through the agency's interdiction efforts that had led to huge seizures of assorted illicit drug consignments heading to Europe and other parts of the world.

"As a result, the French government through the French National Police will continue its support and collaboration with NDLEA," he maintained.

He, however, proposed that the growing partnership should be



documented in a memorandum of understanding in the new year.

In his remark, French technical expert, Phillipe Barrau praised the diligence, expertise and professionalism of NDLEA officers involved in the three weeks training exercise.

Barrau added that both sides had a lot to learn from each other while commending the support and capacity of the agency's Academy, which made the programme seamless and successful.

In his response, Marwa expressed appreciation to the French government for its support and partnership.

"I remember in 2022 when I visited the headquarters of RAID in France on the invitation and I made a request for this type of training, I never knew it was something that would come so fast and this consistent.

"Soon after that visit, a team of experts were sent to train our personnel and I am glad this is the third of such

exercises.

"The drug problem is huge worldwide, and as such, we require global partnership, collaboration and every bit of expertise we can acquire to confront the drug cartels.

"This will also help us put an end to their activities which pose a direct threat to public health and the security of countries across the globe.

"It is therefore a thing of joy that our collaboration is not just growing at the level of drug law enforcement, but we can see the growing partnership between our two leaders," Marwa said.

He welcomed the proposed MoU and expressed his preparedness to see that the relationship between the two organizations continues to grow.

# I cherish the 'Culture warrior' tag – Kemi Badenoch

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



**N**igerian-born UK Conservative leader, Kemi Badenoch has declared that she loves being labelled a “culture warrior.”

The Tory leader, in a speech in Washington DC, said being criticized for this by “the left-wing media” was meant to be an insult, “but I love the title.”

According to Badenoch, her grandfather told her she was descended from warriors, so she was “keeping up the tradition,” she quipped.

The term “culture war” is generally used in a negative way to

describe a political battle between opposing values, often focused on social issues such as gender politics.

Badenoch met Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Mike Johnson in DC as she seeks to build links with senior Republicans ahead of Donald Trump’s return to the White House next month.

In a post on X, she said they discussed building alliances in “a centre-right resurgence” across the West.

The Tory leader is not expected to meet President-elect Trump

during her visit.

Badenoch has previously resisted the “culture warrior” tag, insisting during her successful leadership campaign she did not like fighting – but was prepared to fight to defend Conservative principles.

Her “culture warrior” comments came in a speech at a dinner hosted by the International Democracy Union, a global alliance of centre-right parties.

She said she believed in tradition, adding “if we don’t defend our culture, who will?”



# Shettima reaffirms FG's support for local investors

By Dave Oludare Oso

**N**igerian investors have been reassured of Federal Government's commitment to creating a conducive environment for businesses to thrive under the current administration.

Vice President Kashim Shettima stated this during his visit to the headquarters of Mamuda Group, a leading multi-industry conglomerate in Kano during the week.

A statement by Stanley Nkwocha, Shettima's spokesman, he added that the Vice President reiterated the government's dedication to supporting investors in achieving their goals.

He emphasised that President Tinubu's efforts are gradually restoring trust and confidence in Nigeria's business climate.

"The President speaks your language – the language of commerce and business," Shettima said, promising the administration's partnership with the manufacturing sector as part of the Renewed Hope Agenda.

Highlighting Mamuda Group's impact, Shettima praised the organisation for employing 13,000 people and expressed optimism about its plans to expand its workforce to 23,000.

Vice President Kashim Shettima with others during the foundation laying of a new Mamuda Group, a leading multi-industry conglomerate factory in Kano State.

Credit: Stanley Nkwocha's X page.

He noted that the company's



contributions extend beyond employment, impacting hundreds of thousands of lives indirectly.

"Anyone who employs 13,000 people in Nigeria is impacting 130,000 lives," he added.

During the event, the Vice President also laid the foundation stone for a new factory, signalling the company's continued expansion.

He commended Mamuda Group for generating 31 megawatts of electricity to power its operations and encouraged other industries to emulate such initiatives.

Addressing concerns about infrastructure, Shettima promised the company that the government would resolve the infrastructural challenges, particularly access roads.

He urged Mamuda Group to engage

with agencies like the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) and the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) for further collaboration.

In his remarks, Mamuda Group's Chairman and CEO, Hassan Hammoud, acknowledged the administration's efforts to stabilize the economy despite past challenges.

He expressed gratitude for the government's support and called for continued favourable policies in taxation, infrastructure, and financing.

"Mamuda Group is proud to stand as a testament to what can be achieved through resilience, innovation, and public-private partnership," Hammoud said.

# NNPC holds aptitude test today for 45,689 applicants

By Friday Omosola

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC) today began its computer-based aptitude test for 45,689 candidates jostling for in the company.

The New Daily had reported that NNPC in a statement by its spokesperson, Olufemi Soneye disclosed that the recruitment process is part of efforts to fill vacancies announced on July 25, 2024.

Interested candidates had been directed to apply via the company's careers portal.

Also, providing updates regarding the recruitment on its X (formerly Twitter) page, the national oil firm assured the public that the recruitment exercise would prioritise transparency and fairness, selecting only the most qualified candidates.

During a visit to the Ansar-Ud-Deen



Society Centenary Resource Centre in Maitama, Abuja, one of the test centres, NNPC Chief Executive Officer Mele Kyari emphasised the firm's commitment to a credible recruitment process.

Kyari highlighted the inclusion of provisions to ensure that applicants with disabilities could participate seamlessly.

“As an equal opportunity employer, NNPC Ltd. has ensured that every applicant, regardless of their circumstances, can take the test without barriers,” he said in a statement posted on the company's X page.

He further reiterated that only the best-performing candidates among the thousands would be considered for employment.

# LASTMA officials rescue newlywed couple, 16 others on Third Mainland Bridge auto crash

By Dave Oludare Oso

A coordinated rescue operation by the Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) and emergency agencies saved 18 victims from a fatal road accident on the Third Mainland Bridge near Ilaje, heading toward Iyana Oworonsoki.

LASTMA Director of Public Affairs and Enlightenment, Adebayo Taofiq in a statement today, said the accident which was caused by brake failure of a speeding LT commercial bus (BFG 204 XF), involved a mini truck (AGL 22 YE).

Taofiq said among the rescued persons were a newlywed couple returning from the Ikoyi Marriage Registry.

He said 16 passengers, seated in the rear of the bus—including 11 women



and five men—sustained serious injuries and were rushed to the Lagos State Trauma and Emergency Centre for urgent treatment.

According to him, two others, trapped in the wreckage with severe limb fractures, were rescued by LASTMA personnel, emergency responders, and bystanders before being taken to Gbagada General Hospital.

He noted that the Lagos State Ambulance Service (LASABUS) and Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) Response Unit facilitated the swift evacuation, while law enforcement and Lagos Task Force operatives maintained order at the scene.

Expressing sympathy for the victims, LASTMA General Manager, Olalekan Bakare-Oki urged drivers to observe speed limits and regularly maintain their vehicles, particularly braking systems.

He emphasised LASTMA's ongoing public education campaigns on safe driving practices, especially during the festive season.



# Nigeria's trade surplus hits N5.81 trillion in Q3 2024 – NBS

By **Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE**

The National Bureau of Statistics says Nigeria recorded a trade surplus of N5.81 trillion in the third quarter (Q3) of 2024.

The surplus, which signposts increased export earnings, is less than the N6.95 trillion trade surplus recorded in the previous quarter (Q2) of 2024.

According to the NBS's foreign trade statistics released on Friday, December 6, Nigeria's merchandise trade for the Q3 2024 saw a total value of N35.16 trillion, an 81.35 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2023 and a 13.26 per cent rise from Q2 2024.

The report also stated that total exports for the quarter increased by 98.00 per cent to N20.49 trillion, compared to N10.35 trillion recorded in Q3 2023.

The amount is a 16.76 per cent increase from N17.55 trillion recorded in Q2 2024.

“Total exports in Q3 2024 were valued at N20.49 trillion, reflecting a 98.00 per cent rise compared to N10.35 trillion in the corresponding quarter of 2023 and a 16.76 per cent increase compared to N17.55 trillion in Q2 2024,” the NBS report read.

Crude oil and natural gas exports are major contributors

The boost in exports in the quarter was mainly driven by Nigeria's crude oil and natural gas exports, which are key contributors to the country's foreign exchange earnings.

According to the report, crude oil exports amounted to N13.41 trillion, representing a 57.06 per cent increase from N8.54 trillion recorded in Q3



2023.

Exports of other oil products, including liquefied natural gas and petroleum gases, surged by 303.93 per cent to total N4.58 trillion.

Agricultural exports also increased 301.87 per cent to reach N884.07 billion compared to the N219.99 billion recorded in Q3 2023.

The amount represents a 9.20 per cent decline from what was recorded in the previous quarter.

Solid minerals and manufactured goods exports also rose by 86.58 per cent and 419.93 per cent, respectively, within the period.

Import versus export bill

In Q3 2024, Nigeria exported crude oil, LNG and other petroleum exports more to Spain, followed by the United States, France, the Netherlands, and Italy.

During the quarter, Nigeria's total import bill increased by 62.30 per cent to N14.67 trillion from N9.04 trillion recorded in Q3 2023. The amount is 8.71 per cent higher than

the N13.5 trillion that was recorded in Q2 2024.

The report read, “The value of total imports stood at N14.67 trillion in the third quarter of 2024, representing a rise of 62.30 per cent from the value recorded in the corresponding quarter of 2023 (N9.04 trillion) and increased by 8.71 per cent compared with the value recorded in Q2, 2024 (N13.5 trillion).”

In Q3 2024, the importation of manufactured goods increased by 76.44 per cent to N6.98 trillion, raw materials importation increased by 66.11 per cent to N1.58 trillion, and the importation of agricultural products increased by 37.06 per cent to N882.24 billion, compared to Q3 2023.

Nigeria imported more from China, followed by India, Belgium, the United States, and Malta. The country imported such goods as motor spirit, gas oil, durum wheat, and used vehicles from these countries.

# Oluremi Tinubu asks Nigerians to embrace innovation, agriculture

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's wife, Oluremi has called on parents to encourage their children to embrace innovation and explore opportunities in agriculture as a pathway to revitalising the nation's economy and attracting foreign investment.

In a statement yesterday, Busola Kukoyi, Oluremi Tinubu's SSA on Media, said the President's wife made the remarks during her visit to Imo State, where she met with Governor Hope Uzodinma, the 27 Local Government Chairmen, and the Council of Traditional Rulers led by Eze Okeke, the Eze of Owerri.

Her visit also coincided with preparations for her conferment with an honorary doctorate degree from the Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO).

Mrs Tinubu highlighted the need for Nigerian youths to adopt creative approaches to problem-solving, particularly in a world driven by advancements in artificial intelligence and technology.

"My advice is for parents to teach their children how to be innovative. The world is changing, and change is constant. Business is no longer as usual.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, some people became millionaires because they approached challenges differently," she said.

She also emphasised the untapped potential of Nigeria's mineral resources and urged citizens to harness them for productive use.

She also advocated for a renewed focus on agriculture, calling on Nigerians to return to farming to restore the country's prosperity.

"We should bring Nigeria back to its glory so that we can all have peace and security in this nation. When things become better, our children should be there to take over all the investments we have tilled the land for," she added.

Similarly, Governor Uzodinma praised Oluremi, her husband

President Tinubu, and Vice President Kashim Shettima for their continued support of Imo State.

He acknowledged the provision of 50 trailers of rice to be sold at subsidized rates to Imo residents and highlighted other initiatives such as scholarships and food distributions facilitated by the Renewed Hope Initiative (RHI) led by Senator Tinubu.

"Today is a day of smiles in Imo because we have seen one of our own. We thank the President and the First Lady for their unwavering support," Governor Uzodinma stated.

Speaking on behalf of the traditional rulers, Eze Emmanuel Okeke, commended the Oluremi for keeping her promise to visit again and for her contributions to the state.

"We have seen the dynamic wisdom with which our President is piloting this country. We pray for





# Police arrest 15-year-old girl for putting Sniper in friend's food, water

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Ondo State Police Command has arrested a 15-year-old girl, Kemisola, for attempted murder of her friend.

The spokesperson of the command, Funmilayo Odunlami, who disclosed this in a statement on Friday, December 6, 2024, said the teenage girl was reprimanded by her friend's mother four months ago.

In order to exact revenge on the mother, she added sniper to the daughter's food and water but fortunately, the young girl didn't eat the food.

The PPRO said, "A 15 year old girl



was chastised four (4) months ago by her friend's mum. To revenge, she added Sniper to her friend's food and water. A tale of 'if I can't get the

mother, I will get the child.'

Fortunately the young girl did not eat the food. Parents monitor your kid,"

# NAN editor, Gregory Maduakolam kidnapped in Owerri

By Dave Oludare Oso

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) has said one of its editors identified as Gregory Maduakolam, has been kidnapped in Owerri, the capital of Imo State.

NAN, in a statement issued by its management on Friday evening said Maduakolam was kidnapped in Owerri on Thursday night.

However, the statement indicated that the specific location where Maduakolam was abducted in Owerri could not be ascertained.

The full statement of the agency on the incident reads:

"The unfortunate kidnap of one of our Editors, Gregory Maduakolam, has been brought to the attention of the Management of the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN).

"Maduakolam reported his kidnap



himself in a telephone call with his line to a staff of the agency at about 7.33 pm on Thursday.

"He said that he was taken away by his assailants around 9.am on Thursday.

"Maduakolam could, however, not disclose the place the incident happened as his cellphone was immediately snatched from him

during the conversation by his assailants who demanded payment of ransom.

"We are deeply concerned and saddened by the kidnap of our staff.

"Our thoughts are with him and his family during this difficult time while we are working closely with the authorities and taking all necessary steps to ensure his safe release.

"We urge anyone with information to come forward and assist in the investigation.

"The safety and well-being of our staff remain our top priority, and we will do everything possible to ensure his safe release."

# Dismay as Port Harcourt refinery halts operations

By Dave Oludare Oso

Many Nigerians were enveloped in joy and excitement when the Port Harcourt Refinery resumed operations a few months ago after over a decade of hiatus, but that feeling of hope and expectations must have evaporated as the refinery stopped all activities on Tuesday.

A visit to the refinery on Friday revealed that there was no activity on site, as some workers met by our correspondent claimed that the refinery was undergoing calibration which might last till next week.

The Port Harcourt Refinery has faced numerous delays and missed deadlines to resume operations.

However, the Group Chief Executive Officer of the Nigeria National Petroleum Company Limited, Melee Kyari, inaugurated the new plant at the Area 5 terminal of the refinery on Tuesday. It was claimed that 200 petrol trucks were loading daily from the plant.

However, the announcement was met with skepticism as reports circulated that the trucks were loaded with old products in the storage tanks.

Upon visiting the Port Harcourt Refinery Area 5, our correspondent observed no signs of activity.

An official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, revealed that the loaded trucks contained "dead stock."

He said, "Before the refinery was shut down between 2015/2016, we had dead stock left in the tank, including some Premium Motor Spirit (petrol) DPK (kerosene), and Automated Gas Oil (diesel).



"So, these products were in large quantities in stores in those tanks. During the rehabilitation of the Port Harcourt Refinery, Old Area 5, those products were evacuated from the tanks for storage."

However, he noted that the large quantity of refined petrol was "off-spec," requiring separation from water to obtain the main product in preferred colours.

"But for DPK, it is in large quantity but they have not pushed it from the tank where it was kept after refined ready for commercial purposes.

"So, the product that was loaded was dead stock, that is the old product that was in the system. So, after these dead stocks, they will have to clean the tank, remove all the debris before pumping the new project into that tank, and redye it," the source said.

The worker highlighted that refineries worldwide should operate electronically, not manually.

"But what they are trying to do at the Port Harcourt Refinery is manual,

which cannot match the new digital pumps. Most of the pumps used for the event were refurbished," he added.

He explained that during Kyari's visit on Tuesday, seven trucks were prepared for loading, but only five were filled with petrol.

The Chairman of the Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria, Taken Ikpaki, while speaking to journalists during the inauguration of the facility on Tuesday, had expressed optimism.

He stated that more trucks were expected to come into the facility to load products in the coming days.

But rather than more trucks coming into the refinery, the number of trucks has dwindled.

Around 1.30pm when our correspondent visited, he observed that most workers and drivers appeared idle as no machinery was operational.

Nine trucks were seen parked, but the loading bay, numbered from one to 18, was empty and deserted, with some workers lying down.



# Siege on palace: They want blood but we'll resist them – Emir Sanusi

By Dave Oludare Oso



The Emir of Kano, Muhammadu Sanusi II has reacted to the invasion of his palace by security forces on Friday, saying “their aim is to provoke us into violence but we know better.”

Speaking in a Friday sermon, the monarch noted that some external forces were hell bent on distrusting the peace of the state through shedding of blood.

He accordingly urged the congregants to resist the temptation of taking the laws into their hands.

In an earlier report, NEW DAILY PRIME reported how the Emir of Kano's palace in Kofar Kudu had been surrounded by armed policemen and operatives of the Department of State Services (DSS), blocking both entry and exit.

Emir Muhammadu Sanusi II was expected to escort the newly-

appointed Wamban Kano, Munir Sanusi, to his district posting in Bichi.

The seemingly unruffled monarch Emir Sanusi enjoined congregants, “What's going on has to do with some persons who want shedding of blood in Kano.

“In the recent past they've made concerted efforts, to provoke our people to resort to violence by taking the law into their hands.

“I urge you my people, don't fall for their cheap plans. Whoever comes to foment trouble in Kano, aims to destroy our heritage. Therefore, let's endure and be patient; patience is not cowardice, let's keep praying.”

On its part, the Kano State government through the Secretary to the State Government, Abdullahi Baffa Bichi, expressed dismay over the siege, describing it as

provocative. He claimed that the perpetrators were being backed by the federal government.

“There's absolutely no security issue to warrant the deployment of security forces in this numbers. Some disgruntled elements, supported by Abuja are trying to cause crisis in our state.

“We were invited by the emir to witness the installation of the district head of Bichi. But security forces told us that there was an order from above prohibiting the royal action in Bichi,” Bichi said.

He however assured that the state government would deploy its arsenal to achieve the installation of the district head of Bichi.

# FG announces pay rise for military personnel

By New Daily Prime

**A**cherry news has come for the Nigerian Armed Forces as President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has okayed a salary increment for its personnel.

Minister of State for Defence, Bello Matawalle, disclosed this yesterday in a statement by the ministry's spokesperson, Henshaw Ogubike.

The government also approved the payment of three months' salary arrears.

Also, the President has released funds to clear outstanding pensions and entitlements owed to retired military personnel.

The minister confirmed that alerts for the three-month salary increase have begun reaching military personnel, signalling a significant morale boost for the armed forces.



He commended Tinubu's untiring commitment to both serving and retired members of the military, stressing that addressing pension arrears for retirees remains paramount.

"Despite initial setbacks, be rest assured that the President will do everything within his power to uplift our military forces as they confront the challenges of insecurity,"

## EFCC arrests 24 suspected internet fraudsters in Kogi

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**O**peratives of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), have arrested 24 people suspected to be involved in internet fraud in Lokoja, the capital of Kogi State.

The spokesperson for the Commission, Dele Oyewale, Friday, said the suspected fraudsters were arrested by EFCC operatives from the Abuja Zonal Directorate of the anti-graft agency,

According to the statement, three cars, 30 exotic phones and six laptops were recovered from the suspect.

Oyewale said in the statement, "They were arrested on Friday, December 6, 2024 at Lokoja, Kogi



State following credible intelligence about their suspected involvement in internet-related offences.

"Items recovered from them include 30 phones, 6 laptops and 3

cars. "The suspects will be charged to court as soon as investigations are concluded."



# Tinubu appoints new heads of NUC, NERDC, NEPAD

By Helen Okechukwu



President Bola Tinubu has announced the appointment of chief executive officers (CEOs) for the National Universities Commission (NUC), the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) and the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD).

Special Adviser to the President (Information & Strategy), Bayo Onanuga, in a statement on Friday said the President also approved the renewal of the appointment of Fatima Umaru Shinkafi as the executive secretary of the Solid Minerals Development Fund/Presidential Artisanal Gold Mining Initiative (SMDF/PAGMI).

She was first appointed into the job by President Muhammadu Buhari and is said to be one of the driving forces of the changes in the solid mineral sector.

President Tinubu appointed Prof. Abdullahi Yusuf Ribadu, a visiting professor at the NUC, as the organisation's Executive Secretary.

Prof. Ribadu is an expert in veterinary reproduction and has served as vice chancellor of the Federal University of Technology, Yola, and the Sule Lamido University, Jigawa State.

Also, the President appointed Prof. Salisu Shehu as Executive Secretary of the NERDC.

Prof Shehu is a renowned academic in educational and human Psychology. He was instrumental in establishing the School of Continuing Education at Bayero University, Kano, and was the Vice-Chancellor of Al-Istiqamah University, Kano.

The President also announced Jabiru Salisu Abdullahi Tsauri's

appointment as the National Coordinator of NEPAD.

Jabilu Tsauri holds a Master's in International Affairs and Diplomacy from Ahmadu Bello University. He is a seasoned administrator with expertise in legislative affairs, global affairs, and democratic governance and vast experience in public service.

The earlier announcement about the appointment of Yazid Shehu Umar Danfulani as the Executive Secretary of the SMDF/PAGMI, has been cancelled as there is no vacancy in the agency.

The President believes the appointees' experience and track record will bring a new sense of commitment, progress, and positive outcomes to fulfil Nigerians' expectations of their respective organizations.

# New COVID-19 variant, XEC confirmed in 29 countries, FG alerts Nigerians

By Dave Oludare Oso

Following the discovery of the newly detected XEC COVID-19 variant rapidly spreading across the globe, the Federal Government, through the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, has urged health authorities to activate heightened alert systems.

The variant XEC is the latest in a long list of past and current COVID variants being monitored as the COVID-19 virus naturally evolves.

The government's directive comes after the strain, first identified in Australia, has now been confirmed in 29 countries.

A letter dated December 5, addressed to the Committee of Chief Medical Directors and Medical Directors, by the ministry's Permanent Secretary, Head of the Teaching Hospital Division, Dr. O.N. Anuma disclosed the development.

The letter read, "I am directed to inform you of a newly detected XEC

COVID-19 variant which has been reported in Australia and has already spread to 29 countries globally.

"You may wish to know that this variant has shown a growth advantage over other circulating strains, raising concerns about its potential impact on public health."

Dr. Anuma emphasized the need for vigilance and immediate action.

"Alert systems should be immediately activated throughout our hospitals for high index of suspicion in patients with COVID-like symptoms," he stated.

The directive also highlighted the importance of collaboration and timely information-sharing among health institutions and the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare to ensure an effective response.

Medical professionals are also urged to enhance monitoring protocols and share critical data on the XEC variant.

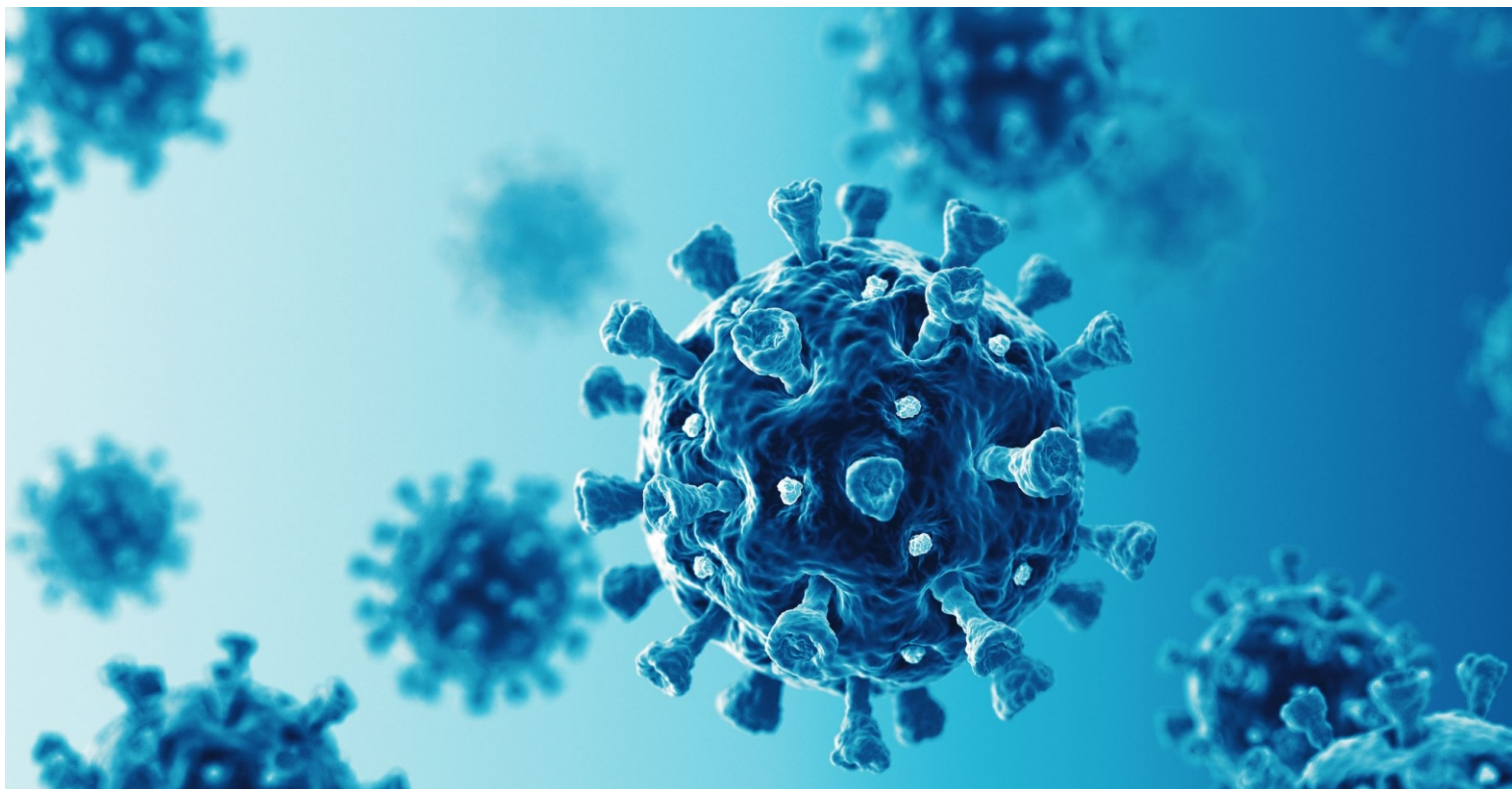
"We request your committee to collaborate with all relevant stakeholders to share critical data regarding this strain and implement enhanced monitoring protocols.

"Timely information sharing among relevant stakeholders including the Federal Ministry of Health will be vital for effective response strategies," he warned.

According to reports, XEC has spread across 27 countries, including France and the United States, infecting more than 600 people by September.

XEC was identified in Germany in June with more cases of the variant having since emerged in the UK, the US, Denmark and several other countries.

The variant XEC has some new mutations that might help it spread this autumn, although vaccines should still help prevent severe cases, according to scientists.





# Deji Adeyanju begs PDP chairman, secretary over defamatory statements

By Dave Oludare Oso



Activist cum lawyer, Deji Adeyanju has withdrawn the alleged defamatory statements made against chieftains of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Umar Damagun (acting National Chairman) and Senator Samuel Anyanwu (acting National Secretary), on Friday.

In a letter dated December 6, written from his law firm, Deji Adeyanju & Partners, and signed by Zainab Otega, Adeyanju tendered an apology for the defamation.

In the letter addressed to Johnson Usman, SAN, counsel for Damagun and Anyanwu, Otega said the “statements were not intended to defame your clients.”

She further maintained that any perception of defamation in the said statements is regretted and withdrawn with apologies.

The letter reads, “We are solicitors to Deji Adeyanju, Esq (hereinafter

referred to as our client), on whose instruction we act.

“Our client received two letters from the law firm of the revered Senior Advocate of Nigeria, J. J. Usman, alleging that some statements he made on a podcast a few weeks ago were deemed defamatory of Damagun and Anyanwu, the National Chairman and Secretary of the PDP respectively.

“Our client’s statements on the podcast were taken out of the bigger context of the conversation which is the need for the leadership of the People’s Democratic Party to provide a virile opposition to the ruling party.

“These statements were not intended to defame your clients, and any perception of defamation in the said statements is regretted and withdrawn with apologies.

“As a human rights activist, our client remains committed to the

betterment of Nigeria and will continue to urge those in leadership to prioritise the interest of Nigerians over and above personal interest.”

Adeyanju had on Wednesday, accused Damagun of serving tea and Anyanwu of serving ‘Kilishi’ in the house of President Bola Tinubu’s Chief of Staff, Femi Gbajabamila.

He made the claims while disclosing Tinubu’s plans to install a PDP presidential candidate ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Featuring on The Honest Bunch podcast, Adeyanju claimed the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, and Damagun are Tinubu’s moles in the PDP.

He said, “The current PDP is in Wike’s pocket at the national level, he installed the current PDP National chairman who goes to serve tea in Femi Gbajabamila’s House.

“While Damagun is serving tea, PDP’s National Secretary, Sam Anyanwu, goes to the kitchen to serve Kilishi, they are the people in charge of the PDP.

“These are Tinubu’s moles, just like Abure in LP who is an APC mole. There is no opposition, that’s why nobody is challenging the system. Aside from a few of us, who else is talking?”

Aftermath of the allegations, Damagun and Anyanwu threatened to drag Adeyanju to court for civil and criminal litigation over the alleged defamatory remarks.

# Police file 12 fresh charges against Dele Farotimi

By Dave Oludare Oso



The Police have filed fresh charges against human rights lawyer, Dele Farotimi, before the Federal High Court In Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, over allegations of cybercrime.

According to SaharaReporters, the state police command filed 12 fresh counts charges on Friday.

Farotimi, known for his advocacy for justice and good governance, had appeared before the court on Wednesday following charges brought against him by Afe Babalola SAN under the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, Etc.) Act, 2015.

Some of the 12 fresh counts read, “That you Dele Farotimi ‘m’ on 28th August 2024 knowingly and intentionally transmitted communication in an online interview on Mic On Podcast by Seun Okinbaloye on your YouTube

Channel (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4USuxBfZCOA) in respect of a book authored and published by you titled: “Nigeria and its Criminal Justice System” wherein you stated in the interview that: “Aare Afe Babalola corrupted the judiciary” which you know to be false information for the purpose of causing breakdown of law and order thereby committed an offence contrary to and punishable under Section 24(1) (b) of Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc) Act 2015 as amended.

“COUNT II: That you Dele Farotimi ‘m’ on 28th August 2024 knowingly and intentionally transmitted communication in an online interview on Mic On Podcast by Seun Okinbaloye on your Youtube Channel (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4USuxBfZCQA) in respect of a book authored and published by you titled: “Nigeria and its Criminal Justice System” wherein you stated in the

interview that “Aare Afe Babalola corrupted the judiciary” with the intention of bullying and harassing the named persons thereby committed an offence contrary to and punishable under Section 24 (a) of Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc) Act 2015 as amended.

“COUNT III: That you Dele Farotimi ‘m’ on 2nd December, 2024 intentionally sent a message in the course of a press conference held on Online on your YouTube Channel (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0k6HzdQXLEK) where you stated that: “It came to my knowledge that there is a charge preferred before a court in Ekiti State against me at the instance of Chief Afe Babalola.”

The Nigerian police had arraigned Farotimi, before an Ekiti State court over allegations of cybercrime.



# Between Leah Sharibu and Dele Farotimi: Exposing the Double Standards of some Nigerians

By Reno Omokri

If the people now agitating for the release of Dele Farotimi really cared for liberty and freedom, ask them what they did for Leah Sharibu, the girl who was abducted by Boko Haram, who released all of the 110 girls they abducted from Dapchi (except those who died) and refused to release Leah Sharibu because she did not give up her faith in Yeshua (Jesus Christ).

Leah was not accused of criminally defaming anybody. She was a brilliant student whose father was a policeman and her mother a schoolteacher. At the tender age of fourteen, she was a Sunday school teacher who regularly went for evangelism in her immediate community.

Leah Sharibu has been in unlawful detention for 2194 days since her abduction by Boko Haram on Monday, February 19, 2018. How many presidential candidates made a social media post about her? How many so-called human rights activists ever bothered to lend their voice for her release? Which of the big-name tithe collecting and limousine-driving pastors now enthralled with Dele Farotimi even gave a thought to Miss Sharibu?

Are Nigerians trying to say that fighting for the freedom of a man who can be released even today if only he proves the allegations he made against Aare Afe Babalola is more important than fighting for a girl who was abducted at the age of 14 and remains a prisoner of conscience at 21?

Leah did not accuse anybody, truthfully or falsely. The only accusation against her is that she is a Christian. Yet, how many Nigerians fought for her?

Omoyele Sowore has not as much as even mentioned her name. Today, he is planning a protest for Farotimi.

Because of Miss Sharibu, I sold my stocks and other investments and went around the world almost nonstop for three years.

I became an enemy of the Muhammadu Buhari-led Nigerian government as I travelled to Nepal and flew to the base camp of Mount Everest because of the #FreeLeahSharibu campaign. Through friends, it was made possible for me to meet with two incumbent British Prime Ministers, Canadian and

Finally, on the stage of the Warner Brothers studio, while receiving an award for Humanitarian of the Year 2019 in Hollywood, I begged the world to help free Leah.

Nobody gave me a dime and if anybody gave me even one kobo for the Leah Sharibu struggle, I challenge them to expose me and speak up.

So, it breaks my heart to see that it was not the case that these people now speaking up for Dele Farotimi could



Spanish Prime Ministers, and multiple other world leaders as I pled her case.

In all, I travelled to 36 countries pleading with governments and influential persons to help secure the release of Miss Sharibu.

The late musical icon Onyeka Onwenu joined me to write and produce a charity single for Leah with Panam Percy Paul. I also wrote a book about Leah, in which all the royalties went to her mother. I made designer T-shirts branded with the #FreeLeahSharibu, sold them, and gave her father all the proceeds to help him advocate for Leah's freedom.

not speak up for Leah. It was rather a situation that they just did not care.

After all, who was she? Just one Aboki girl. In their minds, it was a case of 'Gambari pa Fulani ko lejo ninu!'

In Nigeria, it is not the justice system that is criminal. The real criminality lies in our selective responses to similar issues based on who the supposed victims are and where they are from.

# Mixed reactions trail Kizz Daniel's cancelation of Lagos concert

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Mixed reactions have continued to trail Kizz Daniel's decision to cancel his planned Lagos concert which was slated for this month.

Kizz Daniel famous for his major hits like Buga and Cough, on Friday announced that he won't hold a Lagos concert this December.

Kizz Daniel, whose real name is Oluwatobiloba Daniel Anidugbe, explained that the decision was not an easy one, citing the harsh economic conditions in Nigeria for his action.

According to him, hosting a concert during these trying times could put unnecessary pressure on my fans.

In added: "I can't imagine asking my fans to spend their hard-earned money on concert tickets when they are already struggling with the high cost of living. It doesn't feel right."

Meanwhile, some fans praised him for his show of empathy, calling his decision thoughtful and considerate. A few others expressed disappointment, saying that they had been looking forward to seeing him perform live in Lagos.

A fan wrote, "This is why we love Kizz Daniel. He understands the pains of the people. This is real love for his fans."

On the other hand, another fan said, "I understand the situation, but we also need some joy in these tough times. Music and concerts help us escape."

Kizz Daniel said in X "It's been a tough year for Nigerians. They have been grappling with severe economic challenges in recent months. Rising inflation, fuel subsidy removal, and a weakening currency have left many struggling to make ends meet. These



issues have driven up the cost of basic goods, transportation, and services, putting extra strain on households."

In this context, entertainment expenses, such as concerts, have become less of a priority for many Nigerians. Kizz Daniel's decision reflects his understanding of the financial struggles faced by his fan base.

It would be recalled that recently, many artists, like Kizz Daniel are adjusting to the economic realities in the country.

Many performers have also had to scale down plans or seek alternative ways to connect with their fans. Some have opted for virtual concerts, smaller shows, or partnerships to reduce ticket prices.

Music analysts believe that this new trend will continue as long as the economic downturn persists. They argue that while music remains a powerful tool for lifting the soul, affordability is now a key factor in concert planning.

Kizz Daniel despite the cancelled concert, has assured fans that he is not stepping back from his commitment to bringing joy to them through music.

He hinted at exploring other ways to connect with fans without putting financial burden on them.

"Music is my way of giving back to the people. I'm working on something special for my fans, and I promise it will be worth the wait," he said during the session.

Kizz Daniel's thoughtful approach has earned him respect from many in the entertainment industry. His decision to prioritize empathy over profit sets a strong example for others.

Looking ahead

As the year draws to a close, many fans will miss the chance to experience Kizz Daniel's electrifying stage presence in Lagos. However, his message of understanding and solidarity resonates deeply during these challenging times.

Kizz Daniel's choice to pause and reflect is a powerful statement. It underscores the need for artists and audiences to navigate these difficulties together.

While Lagos may miss out on a December concert, fans across the world can continue to enjoy Kizz Daniel's music, which remains a beacon of hope and happiness.



# I'm one of highest-paid Yoruba-speaking actors – Ibrahim Chatta

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



**N**ollywood actor Ibrahim Chatta has addressed claims that he is an underrated actor in the industry.

Speaking during an interview on Talk to B, a podcast hosted by his colleague Biola Bayo, Chatta dismissed the notion, emphasizing his gratitude for the grace he has received from God.

Contrary to public perception, the Yoruba movie star described himself as fortunate, revealing that he enjoys one of the highest pay rates among Yoruba-speaking actors.

He attributed misconceptions

about his status to his low-key presence on social media.

“And I will say this to my fans: I love you so much. You guys are amazing people. A lot of times, people will say Ibrahim Chatta is underrated. No, I am one lucky bastard. I have enjoyed the grace of God too much. I don’t deserve the things God did to me,” he said.

Chatta explained that his charges are well-known among his colleagues in the industry.

“I am one of the highest-paid Yoruba-speaking actors. My colleagues know that my charges are high, but because

they don’t see me posting things on social media, they think otherwise,” he noted.

The actor also expressed appreciation to his fans, acknowledging their role in his success despite his lack of formal education.

He revealed that his early career earnings from music and soundtracks allowed him to demand fair compensation for his acting roles, even before his peers began requesting fees for movie appearances.

# Netflix 'exit' shakes Nollywood, producers react

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Rumours suggesting Netflix's possible withdrawal from the Nigerian market have caused a stir among Nollywood producers, who rely heavily on the platform to showcase their work.

However, Netflix quickly debunked these claims, reaffirming its commitment to investing in Nigerian stories and fostering the local film industry.

Despite Netflix's reassurances, Nollywood producers have highlighted challenges in their partnership with the streaming giant.

Renowned director and producer, Lancelot Imasuen criticized Netflix's approach of engaging through third parties instead of working directly with content creators.

Imasuen urged Netflix to establish direct relationships with filmmakers to strengthen collaborations and ensure that local creatives have greater control and access in bringing their stories to a global audience.

This development underscores the complex dynamics between streaming platforms and the African film industry, as stakeholders navigate the path to mutual growth and sustainable partnerships.

Imasuen's historical film, "Invasion 1897," was one of the first 10 films acquired by Netflix

## hello, Nigeria



in Nigeria, but he feels that the platform's format is limiting.

"Though Netflix is a blessing to the industry, I have, however, queried the firm's format of acquisition and working with Nigerians. I feel strongly that they concentrated on one end of the film industry. They should open their doors for content creators to deal with them directly. As for commissioning of works, I feel that they should continue to commission works but democratize the process so that other filmmakers can showcase their talents," Lancelot stated.

Alex Eyengho, former president of the Association of Core Nollywood Producers (ANCOP), echoed Imasuen's sentiments, urging Netflix to democratize its process and remove the current

system of middlemen, or "aggregators."

He said, "Netflix should open its doors to content creators/owners, albeit without lowering their standards. The system of aggregators who are akin to umpires also participating in the game is not working. The system is not only retrogressive but evil."

Also, Fidelis Duker, founder of the Abuja International Film Festival, believes that the potential exit of Netflix may not have significant implications for the movie industry, as many practitioners are already operating on the YouTube platform.



# Military leader dissolves Burkina Faso's government

By Dave Oludare Oso

**B**urkina Faso's military ruler, Capt Ibrahim Traoré has sacked his Prime Minister, Apollinaire Joachim Kyelem de Tambela and dissolved the entire government.

Capt Ibrahim Traoré seized power in a coup two years ago.

The dismissal of the head of government and his cabinet was announced in a decree signed by the junta leader on Friday.

The decree did not specify why the prime minister was sacked, but said members of the dissolved government will

continue to serve until a new cabinet is appointed.

Tambela, a civilian, was named prime minister in 2022, shortly after Ibrahim Traoré seized power in a coup.

His dismissal comes barely weeks after another civilian prime minister, Choguel Maïga, was sacked by coup leader Gen Assimi Goïta in neighbouring Mali.

It remains unclear if Capt Traoré will emulate his Malian counterpart by appointing a military official as prime

minister, to maintain the junta's grip on power.

Burkina Faso, like its Sahel neighbours, continues to face security threats from jihadist groups.

Despite promises by the military to improve security, the situation remains dire with frequent attacks from insurgents.

There are concerns that junta leaders in the Sahel are trying to prolong their stay in power, by delaying elections meant to return their countries to civilian rule.



# Ghanaians elect new President amid economic challenges, political tension

By Dave Oludare Oso

In the ongoing (Saturday) election, Ghanaians cast their votes in a tightly contested presidential poll, with Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia and opposition leader John Mahama emerging as the main contenders.

The election has been marked by economic struggles, as the West African nation grapples with a debt overload, soaring inflation, and a \$3 billion IMF bailout.

This election will determine the successor to President Nana Akufo-Addo, who is stepping down after completing his constitutionally mandated two terms. Additionally, voters will elect members of Ghana's new parliament.

Polls opened at 7:00 AM GMT and will close at 5:00 PM GMT, with early results expected by Sunday and final presidential results anticipated by Tuesday.

Many Ghanaians are voting with hopes of economic recovery. Retired policeman James Nsiah, speaking at a voting booth in Accra, expressed his desire for change, saying, "The economic situation is very hard. The cost of living is high."

To safeguard the electoral process, the government temporarily closed all land borders from Friday night until Sunday.

### A Historical Rivalry Between Two Major Parties

Ghana's political stability is reflected in the alternating power between its two main parties, the



ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC), since 1992. This time, the NPP aims to "Break the 8," campaigning for an unprecedented third consecutive term with Vice President Bawumia as its candidate.

Bawumia, a UK-educated economist, has pledged to continue Akufo-Addo's economic policies, emphasizing digitalization, free education, and healthcare reforms.

He highlighted the progress made under his leadership, including a reduction in inflation from over 50% to 23%, and a stabilizing economy. "Give me the chance to transform this nation," Bawumia urged supporters at his final rally in Accra.

However, his campaign has faced criticism tied to the economic challenges under Akufo-Addo's administration, including job scarcity and a weakened cedi currency.

### Opposition Promises of Economic

### Reform

Opposition candidate, John Mahama, who previously served as president from 2012 to 2017, has promised to "reset" Ghana's economy and introduce a "24-hour economy" to boost job creation and industrial productivity. He also plans to renegotiate parts of the IMF agreement.

While Mahama has gained support from those dissatisfied with the current economic situation, he faces skepticism due to his administration's past financial struggles and power outages.

### Key Issues Shaping the Election

Economic recovery remains the dominant issue, but other concerns, such as illegal gold mining and the threat of jihadist spillover from neighboring Niger and Burkina Faso, have also influenced voters. Illegal mining, in particular, has devastated rivers and cacao farmlands, which are vital to Ghana's economy.



# TikTok faces US ban after losing court case

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**T**ikTok faces a US ban after an appeals court on Friday rejected its challenge to a law requiring the video-sharing app to divest from its Chinese parent company by January 19.

The potential ban could strain US-China relations just as president-elect Donald Trump prepares to take office on January 20.

The US government alleges TikTok allows Beijing to collect data and spy on users. It also says TikTok is a conduit to spread propaganda, though China and app owner, ByteDance strongly deny these claims.

But Trump has emerged as an unlikely ally, arguing that a ban would mainly benefit Meta's platforms owned by Mark Zuckerberg.

The law, signed by President Joe Biden in April, would block TikTok from US app stores and web hosting services unless ByteDance sells the platform by January 19.

The case is now likely to go to the US Supreme Court.

In Friday's legal ruling, a three-judge panel rejected TikTok's main arguments that the US security concerns justifying the law were speculative.

They also disagreed that less drastic alternatives than a sale by ByteDance would solve the issues raised by the US government.

The judges also rejected the notion put forward by TikTok that the law



was really about censoring content rather than security.

"This conclusion is supported by ample evidence that the Act is the least restrictive means of advancing the Government's compelling national security interests," the judges said in their opinion.

Trump's stance reflects broader conservative criticism of Meta for allegedly suppressing right-wing content, including Trump's ban from Facebook after the January 6, 2021 Capitol riot.

It marks a reversal from Trump's first term, when he tried to ban TikTok over similar security concerns.

That effort got bogged down in the courts when a federal judge questioned how the move would affect free speech and blocked the initiative.

Trump's newly nominated tech policy czar David Sacks also opposes the ban as government overreach.

Trump's shift coincides with his connection to Jeff Yass, a major Republican donor with ByteDance investments.

The President-elect launched his own TikTok account in June, gaining 14.6 million followers, but hasn't posted since Election Day.

The Wall Street Journal reported that TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew has sought support from Elon Musk, who has close ties with Trump.

Despite the uncertainty, TikTok's US presence continues growing.

The platform reported \$100 million in Black Friday sales for its new shopping venture, and Emarketer projects US ad revenue will reach \$15.5 billion next year, accounting for 4.5 percent of total digital ad spending in the country.

Emarketer lead Analyst, Jasmine Enberg warned a ban would significantly disrupt the social media landscape, benefiting Meta, YouTube, and Snap while harming content creators and small businesses dependent on TikTok.

# How Elon Musk's relationship with China could shield Tesla from Trump trade war

By Dave Oludare Oso

As Donald Trump prepares to return to the White House next month, businesses worldwide are bracing for a worsening US-China trade war.

While electric vehicle (EV) makers were impacted by trade disputes during Trump's first term, Tesla — and owner Elon Musk — could potentially benefit this time.

Kyle Chan, a postdoctoral researcher in Chinese industrial policy at Princeton University, told the ABC's Asia News Week that Mr Musk was "uniquely positioned" to mediate between the two superpowers.

However, questions remain about how long the Trump-Musk bromance can last and whether the billionaire's strong links to both countries could see the kingmaker end up becoming a "pawn."

'First buddy' to Trump and Li

Following Trump's victory, Musk, who reportedly donated hundreds of millions to the Republicans, has become a key confidant of the president-elect.

He's been involved in everything from Trump's phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, to suggesting future cabinet picks.

Meanwhile, he enjoys a friendly relationship with China, particularly Premier Li Qiang.

Dr Chan says Musk "often touts his close relationship" with top officials.

What role will Elon Musk play over the next four years?

While Mr Musk jokes about being Trump's "first buddy", car industry analyst Lei Xing said the billionaire



could also be considered "pro-China".

"He's the 'first buddy' to Donald Trump, and he's also maybe the 'first buddy' to Li Qiang," he told the ABC.

"Expect Elon to straddle both sides, and both men, and get what he wants."

How China is winning the global EV war

Despite tariffs and a slowing global demand for electric vehicles in recent months, China is steaming ahead with its transition to Evs.

China is Tesla's biggest market outside the US, with sales comparable to those in America, and the car maker has enjoyed favourable treatment in the country not afforded to other foreign businesses.

In particular, Shanghai is pivotal to the company's success, with half of its global shipments coming out of the port city.

"You cannot overstate the significance of Shanghai to Tesla," Mr Xing emphasized.

"Without Shanghai, there's no Tesla today."

Trade war set to impact Evs

EVs, along with lithium batteries and solar panels, are the "New Three" that Chinese President Xi Jinping believes will be the major drivers of the country's growth.

Government subsidies worth billions have been invested in China's supply chains to boost manufacturing capacity, including for a significant export market.

Other nations have expressed concern that China's subsidies give its car makers an unfair advantage and are harming their own domestic industries.

In May, the Biden administration imposed a 100 per cent tariff — a tax paid by importers — on Chinese EVs, and the EU followed with tariffs up to 45 per cent.

Dr Chan said the EV tariffs were worth watching closely over the next few years as the industry lay at the intersection of two key issues.



# Slapping therapist, Hongchi Xiao jailed over diabetic UK woman's death

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

An alternative healer imprisoned in Australia who advocated “slapping therapy” to treat a range of illnesses was sentenced to 10 years in UK prison for the death of a 71-year-old diabetic woman who stopped taking insulin during one of his workshops.

Hongchi Xiao, 61, was convicted of manslaughter by gross negligence on Friday for failing to get medical help for Danielle Carr-Gomm, who later died in 2016.

California-based Xiao promoted paida lajin therapy, which is a practice that involves getting patients to slap themselves repeatedly to release “poisonous waste” from the body.

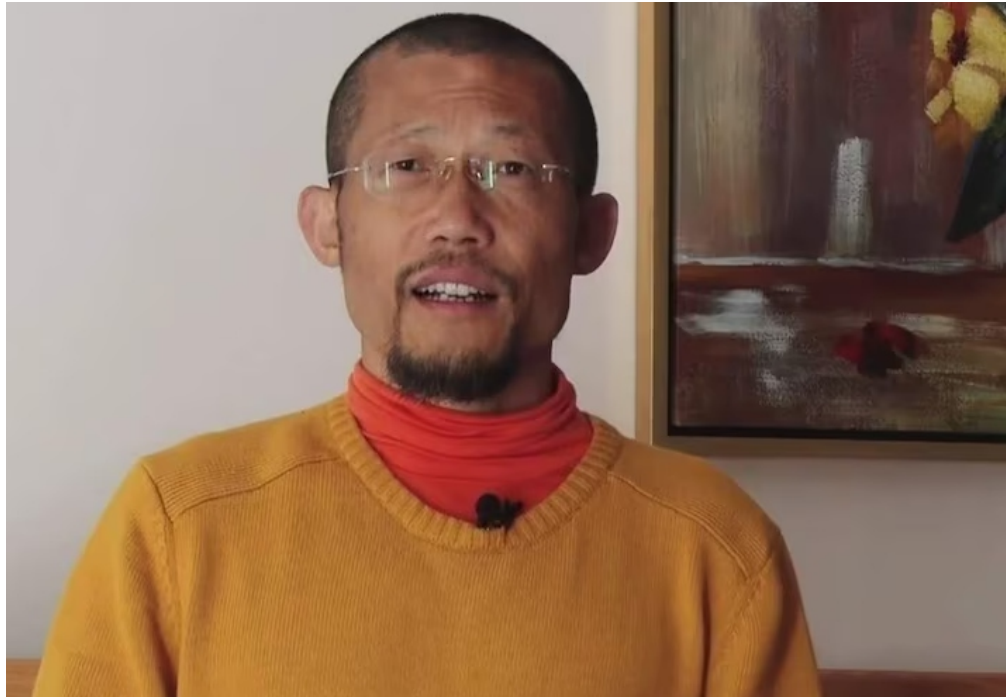
The technique has its roots in Chinese medicine, but critics say it has no scientific basis and patients often end up with bruises, bleeding—or worse.

Xiao was extradited from Australia, where he had been serving a 10 year sentence for manslaughter of a Sydney diabetic boy.

The six-year-old boy died when his parents withdrew his insulin medication after attending one of his workshops in 2015.

The court heard Ms Carr-Gomm was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes in 1999 and was desperate to find a cure that didn't involve injecting herself with needles, her son, Matthew said.

She sought out alternative treatments and had attended a previous workshop by Xiao in



Bulgaria a few months before her death in which she also became seriously ill after ceasing her medication.

Hong Chi Xiao manslaughter sentence

Despite her experience, she recorded a video testimonial, calling Xiao a “messenger sent by God” who was “starting a revolution to put the power back in the hands of the people to cure themselves and to change the whole system of healthcare.”

Xiao had congratulated Carr-Gomm when she told other participants at the English retreat that she had stopped taking her insulin.

But by day three, Carr-Gomm was “vomiting, tired and weak, and by the evening she was howling in pain and unable to respond to questions,” prosecutor Duncan Atkinson said.

“Those who had received and accepted the defendant’s teachings misinterpreted Mrs. Carr-Gomm’s condition as a healing crisis,” Atkinson said.

“I consider you dangerous even though you do not share the characteristics of most other dangerous offenders,” Justice Robert Bright said during Xiao’s sentencing at Winchester Crown Court.

“You knew from late in the afternoon of day one of the fact that Danielle Carr-Gomm had stopped taking her insulin.

“Furthermore, you made it clear to her you supported this.”

Justice Bright said Xiao only made a “token effort” to get Carr-Gomm to take her insulin once it was too late and had shown no sign of remorse as he continued to promote paida lajin in prison.

# Mikel Obi slams Arsenal's setpiece tactics, charges EPL referees

By Dave Oludare Oso

...Mikel Obi has ripped apart Arsenal's tactics, saying their new way of scoring from setpieces is illegal

...The former Chelsea star warned Premier League referees to prevent such gimmicks from happening going forward

...According to him, Arsenal players deliberately impede goalkeepers during setpieces just to gain an advantage

Former Chelsea midfielder, Mikel Obi minced no words when he said Arsenal's new goal-scoring tactics are illegal.

The Gunners scored their Premier League-leading sixth and seventh dead-ball goals of the season in their 2-0 victory over Manchester United.

Arsenal scored two goals from setpiece against Manchester United.

Three points in the Premier League fixture helped them close the gap to league leaders Liverpool to seven points.

Arsenal had more chances to score against their old rivals, but it was from corners that they found the back of the net twice.

Many players encroached inside the six-yard box, leaving the goalkeeper hapless with Arsenal players taking advantage to find the back of the net, talkSPORT reports.

Mikel laments Arsenal's tactics

The tactics seem to have infuriated Mikel, who lamented that the gimmick is illegal. The former Nigerian international said on the YouTube Channel Obione Podcast:

"Those set pieces are illegal. For me, those goals should not stand. What they are doing to the goalkeeper is illegal.



"I don't think that should stand because those players have no intention of playing the ball.

"What they're there is to pin the goalkeeper down, obstruct him from coming out; not just obstruct, they actually block him.

"If a goalkeeper is trying to come out to claim, there's no chance. I mean, Ben White does that all the time and gets away with it. It's incredible.

"Not just him, Saliba also, both of them come and impede the goalkeeper from coming out. For me that's illegal.

He urged match officials to halt such tactics, saying other teams will also emulate it.

He added, "For me, the referees

should cut that out; they need to stop it right now because if they don't, a lot of these clubs will start it, too."

Arsenal fans hail new regulation

However, Arsenal Football Club supporters are delighted with the new regulation, which could result in more corner kicks for their team.

The Emirates Stadium outfit has enjoyed a number of setpieces, which have resulted in goals.

Both goals in their victory over arch-rivals Manchester United were a result of corner kicks.



# EPL: Storm Darragh knocks off Everton vs Liverpool match

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**S**afety concerns over severe weather caused by Storm Darragh have led to the postponement of the highly anticipated Merseyside derby between Everton and Liverpool.

Originally scheduled to take off on Saturday, December 7, at 12:30 GMT, the derby has been postponed with no date announced.

Everton website revealed this in a statement titled, "Everton v Liverpool postponed because of bad weather."

The Merseyside derby was supposed to the opener game for game week 14 this weekend.

An emergency Safety Advisory Group meeting held at Goodison Park this morning, involving officials from both clubs, Merseyside Police, and Liverpool City Council, deemed the match unsafe due to strong wind gusts and an amber severe wind warning in effect until 6:00 GMT on Sunday.

In a joint decision, the fixture was called off to ensure the safety of fans, players, and staff, as high winds overnight also caused significant travel disruptions across Merseyside.

Everton expressed their regret over the postponement, stating, "We apologize for the inconvenience caused and thank supporters for their understanding.

"Whilst we appreciate this will be deeply disappointing for supporters, the safety of fans, staff, and players is of paramount importance.

"Information relating to a rearranged date for the fixture will be announced in due course. All tickets purchased for the original fixture will remain valid for the rearranged fixture."



Liverpool echoed similar sentiments, adding "We appreciate this will be deeply disappointing for supporters, but the safety of fans, staff, and players is of paramount importance.

"Severe weather and high winds have also resulted in severe travel disruption in and around Merseyside."

Storm Darragh has wreaked havoc across the region, with gale-force winds disrupting travel and causing dangerous conditions. Fans travelling to the game faced major difficulties, solidifying the decision to postpone the fixture.

For Fantasy Premier League managers, the deadline to finalise squads remains unchanged at 11:00 GMT on Saturday, despite the postponement of this fixture.

Details regarding a new date for the fixture will be announced soon. Fans

are advised to retain their tickets, which will remain valid for the rescheduled match.

This postponement underlines the unpredictable impact of extreme weather on football, as safety takes precedence over all else. Rugby union and horse racing were also affected among other matches.

Merseyside Police have advised against any non-essential travel in the region on Saturday, with an amber weather warning in place, Skysports reports.

It was set to be the final derby taking place at Goodison before Everton move to their new stadium.

# MLS: Messi named MVP after historic season with Inter Miami

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Eight-time Ballon d'Or winner, Lionel Messi has been named Major League Soccer's (MLS) Most Valuable Player (MVP) for 2024 following an exceptional debut season with Inter Miami.

The Argentine legend, 37, led Miami to a record-breaking regular season, helping the club secure its first-ever Supporters' Shield.

Despite playing only 19 games due to injuries, Messi achieved remarkable statistics, with a league-best 36 goal contributions, 20 goals and 16 assists.

His performances transformed Miami's campaign, setting a new points record for the regular season.

However, Miami's season ended in disappointment as they were eliminated in the first round of the MLS Cup playoffs. Still, Messi's impact has been celebrated, further



cementing his legacy as one of the greatest players in football history.

This accolade adds another feather to Messi's illustrious cap, following his World Cup win in 2022 and continued dominance on the global stage.

Messi is the 10th South American to win the MVP, and the fifth from Argentina after Luciano Acosta, Diego Valeri, Guillermo Barros Schelotto, and Christian Gomez.

# Saudi Prince offers Tyson \$700m for Jake Paul rematch

By Dave Oludare Oso

Mike Tyson has reportedly been offered \$700 million to fight Jake Paul in a rematch, but only if he wins by knockout within three minutes.

Their first fight in November, where Jake Paul won by unanimous decision, wasn't a thrilling spectacle, but it still garnered massive attention, even crashing Netflix.

The offer reportedly comes from Turki Alalshikh, head of Saudi Arabia's General Entertainment Authority, who called Jake Paul "a joke" and challenged Tyson to



deliver a decisive KO.

"The suspects will be charged to

court as soon as investigations are concluded."



# Palace stun Man City, prolong Guardiola's men winless away streak

By Dave Oludare Oso



**M**anchester City's away-day woes deepened at Selhurst Park as the Premier League champions clawed their way back twice to salvage a 2-2 draw against Crystal Palace.

This extends their winless streak on the road to six games across all competitions.

The drama began early, with Crystal Palace stunning the visitors just four minutes in. Colombian dynamo Daniel Muñoz broke through City's defences, coolly slotting Will Hughes's sublime through ball past Stefan Ortega to net his second goal in as many matches.

It was a lightning strike that left Pep Guardiola's men scrambling for a response. Moments later, Erling Haaland almost levelled the score, only for Palace's Dean Henderson to make a heroic point-blank save.

Man City pressed on with unrelenting intensity. İlkay Gundogan rattled the woodwork, while Savinho missed the rebound, curling it agonisingly wide.

At the other end, the Citizens faced a defensive trial by fire as Ruben Dias executed a game-saving block to deny Jefferson Lerma's fierce strike.

Just when it seemed City would enter the break trailing, Haaland rose to the occasion, heading home a perfect Matheus Nunes cross for his 13th league goal of the season, restoring parity before halftime.

The second half offered no reprieve. Palace struck again, with Maxence Lacroix leaping above Kyle Walker to head Hughes' corner into the net, earning the midfielder his second assist of the match.

But City's answer came in stunning

fashion. Rico Lewis, with poise beyond his years, unleashed an unstoppable shot into the top corner after a Bernardo Silva setup, igniting hopes of a comeback.

However, Lewis' night turned from hero to villain. In the 84th minute, a second yellow for a reckless challenge on Trevoh Chalobah saw him sent off, leaving City to fight the closing minutes with 10 men. Displaying grit, the depleted side held on for a draw, but it was far from a result to celebrate.

With this latest stumble, Manchester City remain in fourth place, a daunting eight points off the top, having played a game more than the leaders. Meanwhile, Crystal Palace edged four points clear of the relegation zone, their battling display underlining their determination to survive.

# Teenage sprint sensation breaks 56-yr-old record, threatens Usain Bolt's

By Dave Oludare Oso

**G**out Gout has quickly become a global star as the teenage sprinting sensation breaks records in Australia and comparisons to Usain Bolt grow.

The 16-year-old Australian has broken a long-standing national record at the All-Schools Championships in Brisbane, running the 200m in 20.04s on Saturday.

That is the quickest time an Australian of any age has run 200m, with the record standing for 56 years after Peter Norman ran 20.06s at the Mexico Olympics in 1968.

Clearly, the teenager is going to be a star of Australian sport but looks increasingly likely to challenge records globally.

He is now the second fastest under-18 runner over 200m, with Erriyon Knighton's world record of 19.84s set as a 17-year-old in 2021 still ahead of him.

However, he has topped Usain Bolt's effort of 20.13s as a 16-year-old in 2003. The Jamaican legend holds the adult world record of 19.19s set in 2009.

'These are adult times and me, just a kid, I'm running them,' said Gout. 'It's going to be a great future for sure.'

'I didn't expect it to be that fast but I guess I ran Australia's fastest ever time in the 200. I have been chasing that record but I didn't think it would come this year. I thought maybe next year or the year after that.'



A day earlier, Gout ran a wind-assisted time of 10.04s in the 100m, which was the fourth-fastest under-18 time over the distance in history.

The teenager, born in Queensland to parents from South Sudan, has spoken of the Bolt comparisons before.

'It's pretty cool because Usain Bolt is arguably the greatest athlete of all time, and just being compared to him is a great feeling,' he said.

'Obviously, I'm Gout Gout, so I'm trying to make a name for myself. If I can get to the level he was that would be a great achievement.'

His manager, James Templeton, said last month he has done his best to keep Gout out of the limelight but it is becoming increasingly difficult.

'I've avoided using the "UB" comparison. I think that's unfair to a young athlete,' Templeton said on the ABC Sport Daily podcast.

'For 18 months I've basically said a blanket "no" to every media outlet in Australia that has asked. We just want to allow him to be a normal kid at school. We don't want him to have any distraction.'

'It's all going to be ahead of him. We want his life to be as normal as possible for as long as possible.'

'But in the modern world with viral videos, despite saying no to media he has gone viral and everybody is starting to get to know him.'