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Why we broke Nigeria into 12 states

— Gowon

By Dave Oludare Oso

Former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon (retd.) has shed light on the rationale behind the creation of states during his tenure, emphasizing that the move was intended to ease regional tensions and address fears of northern domination. Gowon, who served as Nigeria's leader from 1966 to 1975 made this known during a visit by the Senator Ibrahim Shekarau-led League of Northern Democrats (LND) at the Yakubu Gowon Centre in Abuja. He highlighted the importance of unity and urged Northern elites to build consensus around issues that promote national interest and cohesion.

According to him, "May I thank you sincerely, as a former governor and now the chairman – am I correct? – of the League of Northern Democrats. I hope you're not suggesting that Baba Tafawa Balewa was not both a northern and a national democrat.

"I firmly believe, as I have always said, that the responsibility of maintaining Nigeria's true democracy rests on the north, and Baba Tafawa Balewa embodied this ideal.

"Let me also say that I hope your visit is not just about returning to the old thinking where the north prioritizes the north, the west prioritizes the west, and the east prioritizes the east-until, of course, the Mid-West emerged to think for itself.

"My position has always been that whatever the north does must serve the greater interest of Nigeria.

"From your speech, I understand that this is your intention – to ensure the north, in its current state, focuses on national unity.

"It was for this reason that I supported the creation of multiple states, to prevent any one region from becoming too powerful and threatening the country's unity.

"This perspective was born out of extensive discussions with political leaders, chiefs, and various groups.

"The north had to make sacrifices to address fears of domination by one

region, especially given the size and population of the north.

"At that time, there was considerable anxiety from the South about the North's dominance, which nearly led to calls for secession from all regions – the West, the East, and even the north.

"This deeply worried me. I was born in Nigeria, raised in Nigeria, and served a profession that represented the country's collective interest.

"My decision to advocate for states creation stemmed from a desire to prevent the fragmentation of our nation.

"Even now, I recall that at one point, people believed the north wanted to secede, just as similar claims were made about the east and the west. This fear of disintegration weighed heavily on me. If we had allowed it, what would we call ourselves today? We might have ended up with separate nations.

"Whether Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, or otherwise. I hesitate to say more, as I might risk offending someone here."

Why I opted out of partisan politics

"You know I'm not affiliated with any political party. My only allegiance is to Nigeria. My profession shaped my belief in serving the country above all else, and I've avoided partisan politics.

"I encourage others to think beyond regional interests and focus on Nigeria as a whole. Differences in opinion are natural, but they should never prevent us from working together to resolve issues for the good of the country.

"Nigeria's population and diversity are strengths. If we can unite despite our differences, we can build the Nigeria we all envision. You have shared your paper with me, and I'll review it carefully. As you mentioned, you can return at any time for further discussions or my thoughts on your proposals.

"I joked earlier that your League of



Northern Democrats isn't yet a party. It appears to be a northern group, but it's made up of individuals from all parts of the country.

"The north is incredibly diverse, encompassing various tribes, such as the Igbo-speaking communities in Benue and the Yoruba presence there as well. These differences enrich our region and should encourage unity rather than division.

"The northern identity, however, is often associated with the Hausa-Fulani. Even within that label, there is significant diversity. For instance, among the Angas people, we have distinct names like "Ngas," and they call us "Ngali." The cultural nuances are fascinating and a testament to our rich heritage."

On current security challenges

"Unfortunately, I feel saddened by the challenges currently facing the north, such as the emergence of groups like the Lakurawa from Mali. Their activities have only created more problems for us.

"Nonetheless, I'm honoured and delighted by your visit. Your introductions touched me deeply. Many of you are descendants of respected leaders such as Tafawa Balewa and Shagari. I see this gathering as a continuation of their legacy.

"I must commend your group's efforts to bring over 700 members together. It's a remarkable achievement. However, I urge you to remember that the north's division into states was meant to preserve national unity.

Gov Abdulrazaq joins Tinubu in France to strengthen Nigeria-France ties

By Friday Omosola

Kwara State Governor and Chairman of the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF), Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq, has joined President Bola Tinubu and First Lady, Oluremi Tinubu, on a three-day state visit to France aimed at deepening bilateral relations.

The visit, which commenced on Wednesday, saw President Tinubu welcomed in Paris with full military honours by the French Republican Guard.

The delegation includes state governors, top government officials, and key stakeholders. The agenda focuses on fostering collaboration in agriculture, security, education, health, youth engagement, innovation, and energy transition.

Governor AbdulRazaq's participation underscores his commitment to enhancing Kwara State's ties with France, which have been growing in recent years.

Under his leadership, the state has forged significant partnerships with the French government, including a May 2023 visit by the French Minister of State for Development, Francophonie, and International Partnerships, Chrysoula Zacharopoulou, to Ilorin.

During that visit, the Kwara State Government signed two landmark agreements with France.

The first focused on leveraging the Ilorin Innovation Hub for knowledge transfer, while the second aimed at developing the Lata Grazing Reserve for large-scale livestock production.

These agreements reflect Governor AbdulRazaq's vision for sustainable development and economic growth.

In 2021, France's Cultural Attaché in Nigeria, Emmanuelle Harang,



commended Governor AbdulRazaq's leadership during a visit to various developmental projects in Kwara State.

She praised his prudent resource management and efforts to secure a prosperous future for the state.

Governor AbdulRazaq's involvement in the France visit is expected to further solidify both national and state-level relationships with the French government, bolstering economic, cultural, and political collaborations.

Some people want me to die – Obasanjo

By Dave Oludare Oso

Nigeria's former President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, yesterday, said that some people want him to die.

The former president spoke during the commissioning of Old-Garage-Oke-Fia-Lameco Road by Osun State Governor, Ademola Adeleke.

Obasanjo, who dispelled the death speculation, wondered why anyone would want him dead, saying that anyone who thinks ill of him would not escape tragedy.

Obasanjo, however, commended Adeleke for his extraordinary performance in Osun State, saying his second term is sure.

He urged the governor to continue to prioritise the welfare of the people.

Meanwhile, residents of Ido-Osun community have expressed dissatisfaction with the state government's decision to relocate the



Ido-Osun Airport to Ede.

The community described the planned move as unjust and discriminatory.

In a statement signed by Oyewale Basiru Oyeleke (Eesa of Ido-Osun), T.A. Adeleye (Ido-Osu Development Union President), Gbadebo Ajao, and Abiodun Awolola, the community called on the government to reverse its

decision.

Also, a chieftain of All Progressives Congress (APC) in Osun State, Kabiru Adisa, has condemned the decision to relocate the project to Ede.

In a statement, Adisa said it was uncharitable of Adeleke to relocate the project to Ede.

Unveiling Bunmi Oshonaike, Seyi Tinubu's biological mother

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Seyi Tinubu, the son of Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu, is often inaccurately portrayed in online search results as the biological son of Senator Oluremi Tinubu.

However, reliable sources and historical records clarify that Seyi Tinubu's biological mother is Bunmi Oshonaike, a former air hostess.

Bunmi Oshonaike was married to Bola Tinubu before his current wife, Senator Oluremi Tinubu. The marriage produced Seyi Tinubu before the union dissolved. Subsequently, Bola Tinubu married Senator Oluremi Tinubu, who became Seyi's stepmother.

While Oluremi Tinubu plays a prominent role in Seyi's life, particularly given her public profile, she is not his biological mother.

Google's algorithm appears to misrepresent this fact by linking Seyi Tinubu to Senator Oluremi Tinubu, likely due to her high visibility as the First Lady and long-standing senator.

This highlights the need for better contextual accuracy in automated search results to prevent the spread of misinformation.



Who is Bunmi Oshonaike? Bunmi Oshonaike, a former air hostess with the defunct Nigeria Airways, is the biological mother of Seyi Tinubu, the son of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

This fact clarifies the common misconception that Senator Oluremi Tinubu is Seyi Tinubu's mother. Nigerians are widely aware of this distinction.

Seyi Tinubu has celebrated his biological mother's birthday publicly, including publishing tributes in national newspapers since 2022, further affirming her role as his mother.

Her ethnicity is Yoruba, originating from the southwestern region of Nigeria. Although unconfirmed sources suggest that she hails from Lagos State, there are no detailed accounts of her biography available online.

Bunmi is 65 years old as of 2024. This calculation is based on her 60th birthday, which was celebrated and published by THISDAY Newspaper on November 11, 2019. This publication confirms her birth year, making her age 65 in 2024.

Controversial Tax Reform Bills pass second reading at Senate

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Nigerian Senate, on Thursday, passed for a second reading four contentious tax reform bills submitted by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

The development followed a lead debate led by Senate Leader Opeyemi Bamidele (APC, Ekiti Central) and contributions from senators during plenary.

The proposed bills, which aim to overhaul Nigeria's tax framework, have

sparked significant backlash. Prominent northern stakeholders, including governors, traditional rulers, and the Northern Elders Forum, have voiced strong objections, arguing that the reforms are not in the nation's best interest.

Despite the opposition, some top officials from Tinubu's administration made



comprehensive presentations to the Senate on Wednesday to advocate for the bills.

Details later..

Tinubu arrives France for 3-day state visit

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

President Bola Tinubu and his wife, Oluremi, have arrived in Paris, the French capital for a three-day state visit aimed at bolstering Nigeria-France ties.

The president arrived France on Wednesday evening.

A presidential spokesman, Bayo Onanuga in a statement said President Tinubu landed at Orly Airport around 5:10 p.m., where he received a ceremonial welcome, complete with full military honours from the French Republican Guard.

The visit, which underscores the importance of diplomatic and economic cooperation between both nations, will feature high-level discussions with French President Emmanuel Macron and engagements with business leaders to foster bilateral partnerships in various sectors.

Onanuga, in the statement said, "The official engagements will begin on Thursday at the historic Les Invalides, where French President Emmanuel

Macron and First Lady Brigitte Macron will warmly receive President Tinubu.

The visit will continue with a distinguished reception at the Palais de l'Élysée, honouring the Nigerian leader.

"The visit aims to enhance bilateral ties, focusing on key areas such as agriculture, security, education, health, youth engagement, innovation, and energy transition. It promises substantial benefits for Nigeria.

"In collaboration with President Macron, President Tinubu will address initiatives to boost youth exchange programs and enhance skills in automation, entrepreneurship, and leadership.

"The visit includes strategic political and diplomatic discussions on shared values concerning finance, solid minerals, trade and investment, and communication.

"Additionally, both leaders will



attend a session hosted by the France-Nigeria Business Council, coordinating private sector involvement in economic development."

The statement further added: "Brigitte Macron and Nigeria's First Lady will discuss empowering women, children, and vulnerable populations through Nigeria's First Lady's Renewed Hope Initiative.

"President Tinubu and his wife will attend a state dinner hosted by the French President before their departure."

NNPC advocates for stronger corporate governance

By **Friday Omosola**

Udobong Ntia, the newly appointed Executive Vice President (EVP) Upstream of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC), has urged stakeholders in the nation's oil and gas upstream sector to prioritise corporate governance, transparency, and operational efficiency.

Olufemi Soneye, Chief Corporate Communications Officer of NNPC in a statement on Thursday said Ntia spoke at the "Enhancing Governance, Risk, and Compliance in Nigeria's Upstream Sector" workshop held in Lagos.

Ntia emphasised that governance, risk management, and compliance are integral to NNPC's core values of Integrity, Excellence, and Sustainability.

Ntia commended the leadership within the upstream industry and regulators for their commitment to fostering collaboration.

He noted that such initiatives are pivotal to achieving Nigeria's goal of sustainably increasing crude oil

production.

"I am committed to facilitating initiatives within my purview that enhance governance, risk management, and compliance in the upstream sector," Ntia assured participants.

The event brought together key players, including NNPC's Chief Compliance Officer, Nasir Usman, and Chief Upstream Investment Officer, Bala Wunti.

Also in attendance were representatives from the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), and over 20 upstream operators from international oil companies operating in Nigeria.

The workshop underscored the shared responsibility of all stakeholders in ensuring the industry's sustainability and highlighted the importance of



transparent practices in addressing sectoral

Finnish court begins Simon Ekpa's trial

May 2025 By Dave Oludare Oso

The trial of self-proclaimed Prime Minister of the Biafra Republic Government-in-Exile, Simon Ekpa, who was arrested in Finland for alleged terrorism-related activities, is scheduled to begin in May 2025, according to Finnish authorities.

Confirming this, a Senior Detective Superintendent at Finland's National Bureau of Investigation, Mikko Laaksonen, said the district court had set May 2025 as the deadline for prosecutors to present possible charges against Ekpa.

The Finnish government had last week announced the arrest of Ekpa alongside four others on suspicion of terror-related activities, including incitement to violence and terrorism financing.

Finnish police confirmed that Ekpa, allegedly used social media to promote violence in the South-East region, targeting civilians and authorities.

According to local publication Yle, Ekpa was remanded in custody by the Päijät-Häme District Court on charges of public incitement to commit a crime with terrorist intent.

The publication reported that the Finnish Central Criminal Police confirmed the arrests in a statement last Thursday, noting that the other suspects were apprehended for allegedly financing terrorist activities.

Giving an update on the case in response to The PUNCH enquiries, detective Laaksonen noted that the investigation was ongoing, and no further details could be disclosed.

Asked when Ekpa's case would come up in court, he replied, "Due to the ongoing investigation, no further details can be disclosed."

"The date for bringing up possible charges by the prosecution was set by the district court to May 2025."

He noted that Ekpa and the Finnish authorities may request a re-evaluation after two weeks.

"In a basic situation regarding the remand, the next possible hearing can

be held no earlier than two weeks from the previous hearing, should the parties in question seek for the matter to be re-evaluated by the district court," Laaksonen explained.

The case has drawn significant international attention, with Finnish authorities confirming that cross-border cooperation is integral to the investigation.

However, officials have refrained from providing further information about the nature or extent of the international collaboration.

"International cooperation is part of the investigation due to the nature of the case but no further comments can be given on the subject at this point," the NBI stated.

Ekpa gained notoriety for his calls to boycott Nigeria's 2023 general elections, which led to violent enforcement measures and attacks on residents.

He was first arrested in February 2023 for inciting violence and issuing sit-at-home orders to Igbos and other South-East residents.

The suspect's activities prompted global petitions from Nigerians urging the Finnish and Nigerian governments, as well as the European Union, to take action.

In response, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned the Finnish Ambassador to Nigeria, Leena Pylvanainen, to demand Finland's cooperation in addressing the threats posed by Ekpa.

Last Thursday, the District Court of Päijät-Häme, Finland, ordered that Ekpa be imprisoned "with probable cause on suspicion of public incitement to commit a crime with terrorist intent." Ekpa, a Finnish citizen of Nigerian origin, was accused of inciting crimes with terrorist intent, while the other suspects face charges of financing terrorism.

As a prominent figure in the separatist



Indigenous People of Biafra, he has championed a controversial call for an independent Biafran state.

His rhetoric escalated in recent years, with explicit endorsements of violence and disruptions to Nigerian elections. Finnish authorities have linked Ekpa to coordinated attacks targeting civilians and the security forces, with investigations tracing some of these activities back to 2021.

His use of social media as a platform for incitement and fundraising is a central element of the case.

The sit-at-home orders enforced by the ESN had caused devastating economic consequences in the South-East.

According to reports, the region has lost over ₦4trn in two years due to these activities and the resulting insecurity.

On the heels of Ekpa's detention, the Federal Government said it would monitor the legal proceedings in Finland.

In a statement by the spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kimiebi Ebienna, on Friday, the government described Ekpa's arrest as a critical step in addressing IPOB's activities and mitigating the influence of transnational actors on Nigeria's national security.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirms that the arrest of Mr Simon Ekpa is a significant development in addressing the activities of IPOB and also neutralising the influence of transnational actors on our national security.

"The ministry will continue to monitor the legal proceedings and provide further updates as the case progresses," the statement read.

Sean 'Diddy' Combs denied bail for third time

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Sean Combs popularly known as "Diddy," has been denied bail for the third time in connection with charges of sex trafficking and racketeering.

A court filing on Wednesday confirmed the judge's decision, citing concerns over witness tampering and unauthorized communications while in custody. Prosecutors argued that Combs, despite being incarcerated, has allegedly contacted witnesses and used unapproved platforms, raising risks of interference with the judicial process. His legal team, however, maintains that he should be granted bail, emphasizing his commitment to cooperate with authorities.

"For the following reasons, Combs's motion is DENIED — no condition or combination of conditions will reasonably assure the safety of the community," federal judge Arun Subramanian said in an order.

Subramanian also denied Combs's application to be released from detention in order to prepare his defence.

"Combs has not carried his burden of demonstrating that release from detention is necessary for trial-preparation purposes," the judge wrote.

Federal prosecutors allege that Combs, 55, sexually abused women and coerced them into drug-fueled sex parties using threats and violence.

He has pleaded not guilty to all charges, and his criminal trial is currently slated to begin on May 5, 2025.

Wednesday's ruling follows a court appearance by Combs at the end of last week.

Outside the Manhattan



courthouse, bystanders shouted at Combs's mother Janice Combs, "Your son is a predator." Other family members were seen outside the hearing.

Combs's lawyers argued that a defendant in another prominent federal sex trafficking case, former Abercrombie CEO Mike Jeffries, received bail which should apply to their client.

"The nature and circumstances of the offenses are substantially different," prosecutors wrote to the court on Friday.

"There are no allegations that Jeffries committed non-trafficking-related violent acts or that he used firearms during the charged period. The indictment against Combs alleges both.

"With respect to the charged

offenses, Jeffries does not include a racketeering offense. By contrast, Combs is charged with leading a racketeering enterprise."

Prosecutors have previously indicated there is still more evidence to explore and that more charges could be added to the indictment against Combs.

Public allegations have been building against the Grammy winner since late last year, when singer Cassie, whose real name is Cassandra Ventura, alleged Combs subjected her to more than a decade of coercion by physical force and drugs as well as a 2018 rape.

Share

Police nab Lagos BDC operator over N320m fraud

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Chinedu Ngwaka, a self-proclaimed Bureau de change (BDC) operator, has been arrested by operatives of the Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID) for alleged fraud to the tune of N320 million.

FCID spokesperson in Lagos, Aminat Mayegun, in a statement posted on her X page, said Ngwaka also used a fraudulent presidency number plate on his Toyota Hilux vehicle.

The FCID spokesperson said the suspect was also apprehended with a fake identity card.

Mayegun said the police received a petition on September 9 addressed to Ayodeji Ogundele, assistant inspector general of Police (AIG), FCID annex in Lagos.

The statement reads, "On September 9, 2024, the Nigeria Police Force received a petition addressed to the Assistant Inspector-General of Police, FCID Annex, Lagos, from Chinedu Laz and Partners (Deo Gratia Chambers) on behalf of Mr Tochukwu Unachukwu, the Managing Director of Casco Electronics Company Limited.

"The petition filed was against Chinedu Ernest Ngwaka and his wife, Janet Onyekachi Ngwaka, of being involved in a fraudulent scheme amounting to N320m.

"Upon receipt of the petition, detectives from the Special Investigations Team of the anti-fraud Section attached to Force Criminal Investigations Department (FCID) Annex, Lagos, swiftly swung into the intelligence-led investigation.

"The team reviewed relevant banking records and secured a warrant of arrest, which led to the apprehension of Chinedu Ernest Ngwaka, a self-acclaimed Licenced Bureau De Change (BDC) operator."

The spokesperson said further investigation revealed that between March and May 2024, Unachukwu made payments totalling N320 million to Ngwaka and his wife.

"Unachukwu made payment of N320 million through Ngwaka company



accounts, Edunaco Multiple Resources Limited and Bright Janes World, for the procurement of \$200,000 USD to facilitate the supply of goods from China," Mayegun said.

"However, additional intelligence uncovered fraudulent document, including a telex confirmation from Zenith Bank, which purportedly shows the completion of the transactions in two \$100,000 USD tranches.

"The Chinese suppliers confirmed that no such funds were received. During the operation, the SIT recovered a black 2024 Toyota Hilux with a fraudulent Presidency number plate (02B679FG) from Ngwaka, who falsely claimed to operate under the name Phobia BDC Ltd.

"Verification with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) confirmed that he had no association with the company in any form, and that the company's license has been revoked earlier in the year.

"Additionally, a fake identity card, purportedly issued by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, was discovered, fraudulently

identifying Ngwaka as a consultant of the ministry.

"Another letter of introduction addressed 'to whom it may concern', purportedly issued by the Head of Service of the Federation, seeking allocation of presidency number plate to the suspect was also recovered from him.

"Relevant authorities have confirmed the illegitimacy of the document.

"The investigation further revealed that the Toyota Hilux, imported into Nigeria in June by Humble Autos, who sold same to a local dealership, Don-Neiel Automobiles Nigeria who subsequently sold to Ngwaka, after he had engaged in the fraudulent transaction with Unachukwu."

Mayegun added that there were "other petitions against Chinedu Ernest Ngwaka, including claims from Mr. Moses Chizoba Enechukwu and Chinedu Nwaforcha, seeking the recovery of ₦1 billion and ₦840,000,000 respectively".

The FCID spokesperson said Ngwaka, alongside his co-conspirators, will be charged to court at the end of the investigation.

Edo Police Inspector sacked for collecting N45k bribe to conceal rape

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



Edith Uduma, an inspector, has been dismissed by the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) for allegedly collecting a bribe from Abraham Uzuobo, a sergeant, to conceal a rape incident.

Few months back in a case that shook the internet, Sergeant Uzuobo was accused of raping a 17-year-old female suspect in a room inside South-Ibie police station in Edo State.

The suspect was detained at the police station for allegedly receiving stolen property.

In October, a video showing Uzuobo hurriedly wearing his trousers while the female suspect was lying on a chair inside a room in the police station appeared on social media.

In the video, Uzuobo was challenging a female officer for recording the incident.

The female officer in the background of the video was later identified as Uduma.

Uduma was the charge room officer (CRO) on duty on the day the incident happened.

Muyiwa Adejobi, force spokesperson, in a statement released on Wednesday, said Uduma called her husband, Ibrahim Mohammed, a police inspector, instead of reporting the incident to the appropriate authorities.

Adejobi said Uduma and her husband demanded a N1 million bribe from Uzuobo to assist him in concealing the incident.

The force spokesperson said Uzuobo offered the couple N45,000.

Adejobi said, “However, the sergeant offered only N45,000 in cash, which they collected at that instance, and after a few days, contacted the sergeant to request the same sum of N1,000,000, but the sergeant refused to comply.

“Dissatisfied by his refusal to follow through with the blackmail, they decided to report the erring officer to the DPO and also simultaneously share the video on social media.

“Everyone culpable in this case has been sanctioned appropriately, as there is no intention to impede justice.

“The erring sergeant has been dismissed and prosecuted and is currently in prison custody as the trial progresses.

“Inspector Edith Uduma was also dismissed for her role, while her complicit husband has been reduced to the rank of sergeant.

“However, it has come to the attention of the force that following her dismissal, Mrs. Edith has made

numerous unfounded claims regarding her innocence and has sought to taint the reputation and integrity of the adjudicating authority, the inspector-general of police, in person and the entire police force.

“It is imperative to set the record straight and provide clear context regarding her actions and the decision to dismiss her from service.

“The dismissal of former police inspector Edith Uduma was not only justified but necessary, based on thorough investigations that presented irrefutable evidence of her failure to follow standard incident report protocol to immediately document the incident, attempt to conceal an offender for benefit, participation in extortion, and manipulating the justice process for personal gain.”

N8.8bn spent to repair vandalized transmission towers – TCN

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

The Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Transition Company of Nigeria (TCN), Ahmed Abdulaziz, has confirmed that the government spent N8.8 billion for the repair and restoration of transmission towers that were vandalized across various regions of the country in 2024.

Abdulaziz disclosed this at the Quarterly Power Sector Working Group meeting in Abuja.

Also, in a statement he signed on Wednesday, the Special Adviser to the Minister of Power on Strategic Communication and Media Relations, Bolaji Tunji, said the government is yet to achieve prosecution of arrested vandals as they were released on bail by the Nigerian Police.

Abdulaziz, who was represented by the Executive Director, TCN Transmission Service Provider, Engr. Olugbenga Ajiboye revealed that 128 transmission towers have been destroyed either by vandals or bandits, across the country between January and November 2024.

He further lamented that apprehended



perpetrators are being granted bail, enabling them to return to their illegal activities and wreaking more havoc on the vital transmission infrastructure in the country

“As I talk to you today, 128 of our towers have been destroyed by either vandals or bandits. To date, we have spent about N8.8bn, by our estimation, to put them back to full and functional use.”

He explained that when the vandals were apprehended and handed over to police for prosecution, they were bailed based on theft and not vandalism.

“It is so sad that each time the vandals were caught and taken to the police for prosecution, police would arrest them for

theft instead of vandalism, and they would be bailed. If they are charged for vandalism, they cannot be bailed, but this is where we are. So many of them have been arrested, but each time they will be bailed because police often incident their cases as that of theft.

“When the Shiroro-Mando-Kaduna towers were destroyed, we had to get the full military escorts

for our contractors to get the transmission lines and towers restored, and in some cases, they would tell us that we could only work for two hours in some days.

Abdulaziz said, “In some instances, they would even tell us that it was not safe to move there. How do we get out of this? How can we deliver electricity to Nigerians under these terrible circumstances? These are part of the challenges we are facing in the power sector.”

Share

LNG: Shell launches arbitration case with Venture Global

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

Shell has launched arbitration hearings over the supply of liquefied natural gas from Venture Global’s Calcasieu Pass facility.

According to a Reuters report, Shell CEO Wael Sawan confirmed the development in a statement on Thursday.

The report further said Shell and other companies including BP, Galp and Repsol have also launched contract arbitration cases in the United States over inability to obtain contract cargoes for more than two years.

Sawan said, “Frustratingly, we have got no volumes against our term agreement which underpinned the financing for the project. We’re going through arbitration hearings this quarter.”

Shell and others say they have lost billions of dollars in profit from gas promised under long-term contracts but it was not delivered. Venture Global LNG contends it has not fully

commissioned the Louisiana plant.

Previously, Venture Global LNG had criticized Shell for its poor performance record at its own LNG facilities.

Industry observers see this accusation by Venture Global as reminiscent of the legal issues faced by NLNG, a Shell subsidiary, where it was found that the company had breached a contract by failing to deliver at least 19 cargoes of LNG under a contract signed in January 2020.

This led to a London arbitration panel and an England and Wales High Court of Justice ruling against NLNG in July 2024.

The arbitration panel included John Beechey CBE, J. William Rowley KC, and Nevil Phillips.



Shell accuses Venture Global LNG of wrongfully earning \$3.5 billion, according to an earlier report by the Financial Times.

Tinubu to transmit ambassadors-designate's names to Senate next week

By Dave Oludare Oso

Upon his return from France where he is currently on a three-day state visit, some sources have said that President Bola Tinubu will transmit names of ambassadors-designate to the Senate for screening and confirmation.

The sources said the list comprises nominees who will serve as Nigeria's ambassadors and high commissioners to various countries and multilateral organizations.

According to government officials with knowledge of the developments, the names of the nominees would be transmitted in early December.

The development comes 14 months after 83 ambassadors were recalled in September 2023.

Nigeria has 109 missions, 76 embassies, 22 high commissions and 11 consulates globally.

The PUNCH reported on November 21, 2024, that the Federal Government had commenced the deployment of consular officers to diplomatic missions worldwide, before the anticipated release of the ambassadorial list.

On Wednesday, the President left Abuja for a three-day state visit to France at the invitation of President Emmanuel Macron.

Afterwards, he is expected in South Africa for a state visit, his second appearance in the country after attending President Cyril Ramaphosa's inauguration ceremony last June.

Upon assuming office in May 2023, Tinubu reassessed Nigeria's foreign policy, leading to the recall of the 83 career and non-career ambassadors from their stations.

The envoys were instructed to return to Nigeria by October 31, 2023.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yusuf Tuggar, said the ambassadors served at the President's behest in their host nations and it was his "prerogative to send or recall them from any country."

However, 14 months later, they were yet to be replaced, leaving a diplomatic void.

Section 171(2)(1c) and Subsection 4

of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) stipulate that appointments to the office of ambassador, high commissioner or other principal representatives of Nigeria abroad be made by the President and shall not have effect unless the Senate confirms it.

On March 25, Tuggar confirmed that the ministry had compiled and forwarded the names of prospective career diplomats to the President for consideration.

"We have collated everything on our part and forwarded it to Mr President," Tuggar told our correspondent.

Though it was unclear whether the nominees were political or career diplomats, indications suggested they primarily comprised the latter.

While career diplomats are determined by their progression through the Foreign Service, political diplomats are often appointees of the President.

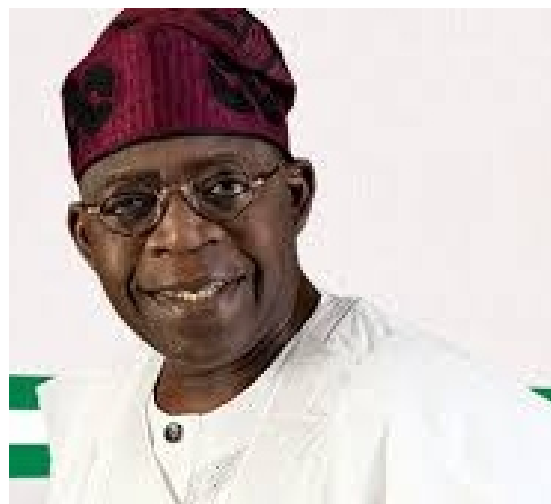
The President's Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Mr Bayo Onanuga, who earlier spoke on the issue, said such nominations must pass through a thorough process before a final list is transmitted to the National Assembly.

"Don't forget that the ambassadorial list has two components. There are career ambassadors and political ambassadors. The foreign affairs list and the consolidated list will still go through certain processes before it is released," he said.

In a recent interview, one official who asked to remain anonymous as he was not authorised to speak to the press confirmed that the appointment was imminent.

"Ambassadorial appointments require approval from the National Assembly. So, the list will be submitted to the Senate President, who will then announce it. But it has not been submitted yet. Yes, I can confirm that.

"Once submitted to the Senate President, they will publish it the following day. So, that means it would be until he (President Tinubu) comes back from France and South Africa



because he is going to South Africa from France for a state visit. After that, he will release it," said the official.

In April 2024, the government appointed 12 consuls-general and five chargés d'affaires to represent Nigeria in 14 countries, but these interim measures fell short of filling the leadership vacuum in key missions.

Consuls-general and chargés d'affaires can perform routine administrative duties and oversee the operations of an embassy. They, however, lack the diplomatic weight to engage at the highest levels, such as with heads of state or critical international negotiations.

On May 28, the foreign affairs minister cited lack of funds as the primary reason for the delay in the appointment of new ambassadors.

A few days later, former Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Eche Abu-Ode, said any new ambassadorial appointments would depend on budget allocations.

A senior official in the nation's Foreign Service with knowledge of the developments said although the appointees would be named in early December, they would not begin their tour of duty until months later.

The official explained, "This is the last week of November. Within the first week of December, it should be out. It's long overdue. What happens is that the Senate will screen those appointed. "There's usually an agreement; it's like one president writing to another president informing them that 'I am sending such and such a person as my principal representative to your country.'

Police Unveil VIGISCOPE App for Rapid Emergency Response in Schools

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kayode Egbetokun, has launched a new emergency reporting and response application, VIGISCOPE, designed to enhance security in schools across Nigeria. The app, which aims to provide a swift and coordinated response in times of crisis, was introduced at the conclusion of a two-day seminar held from November 26 to 27, 2024, marking the inauguration of the Safe School Protection Squad.

In a statement on Thursday, Ogun State Police Public Relations Officer, Omolola Odutola, explained that VIGISCOPE is an advanced alert system connected to a central base in Abuja.

The app allows school authorities such as principals and students to report emergencies or request immediate assistance via their smartphones. The system is designed to ensure rapid responses by coordinating with the appropriate security agencies.

“The app is linked to a central base in Abuja, which enables immediate identification of emergencies and facilitates rapid response coordination,” Odutola said.

“It enhances technical intelligence in crime resolution, allowing police to access areas that may be difficult to reach and ensuring effective sharing of information and threat detection.”

The app, which is internet-enabled, allows users to send a ‘rescue me’ message in times of distress. This message activates the VGS central headquarters,



which then mobilises a tactical team for a swift response.

The system aims to offer timely interventions in emergencies, from accidents to potential security threats, thereby improving safety for students and staff alike.

According to Odutola, the app can be used by schools across Ogun State, and potentially nationwide, wherever internet access is available.

“It is data-driven and allows schools to send distress messages to tactical team commanders when in danger. Within minutes, the VGS central headquarters will contact the relevant commanders to dispatch rescue teams,” she added.

VIGISCOPE is also designed to enhance technical intelligence,

enabling law enforcement officers to access otherwise inaccessible areas without casualties. This includes supporting the interception of critical information and identifying potential threats before they escalate.

The launch of the app marks a significant step towards improving security in educational institutions and addressing the growing concern over safety in schools. It is part of a broader initiative by the Nigerian Police to ensure that schools are equipped with modern tools for combating crime and responding to emergencies swiftly.

As the app begins its rollout, it is expected to provide peace of mind for students, teachers, and parents, knowing that help is just a tap away in case of an emergency.

Fire guts Radio Nigeria office in Lagos

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Radio Nigeria's office on Ikoyi Road, Lagos, was on Wednesday evening engulfed in fire, resulting in a significant damage to the studio section of the building.

As of the time of this report, the cause of the fire remains unknown

Confirming the development, the Director of the Lagos State Fire and Rescue Service, Margaret Adeseye, said the agency received an alert around 5:30pm.

Firefighters from the Dolphin, Ebute Elefun, and Oba Onitolo Fire Stations responded swiftly to contain the fire.

According to her, emergency responders worked throughout the night to fully extinguish the flames and prevent further damage.

Adeseye noted, "The public is assured that collaborative efforts with the Federal Fire Service and other



emergency responders, including the Nigerian Police, have brought the situation under control, confining the fire to the studio section of the U-shaped one-story building where it started. While the

cause of the fire is yet unknown and no casualties have been reported, damping down of the fire embers continues."

Tinubu appoints Jami'u Abiola as SSA on Linguistics, Foreign Matters

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has appointed Jami'u Abiola as the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Linguistics and Foreign Matters, with effect from November 14, 2024.

Jami'u Abiola is a son of late business mogul and acclaimed winner of the 1992 presidential elections, Chief M.K.O Abiola.

The announcement was made in a statement by Segun Imohiosen, Director of Information and Public Relations, on behalf of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation.

The appointment aligns with the Certain Political and Judicial Office Holders (Salaries and Allowances, etc.) Act 2008, as amended.

Before this role, Jami'u Abiola



served as Special Assistant to the President on Special Duties in the Office of the Vice President.

His new assignment will involve close collaboration with the Federal

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, leveraging his experience to enhance Nigeria's linguistic and diplomatic engagements.

President Tinubu urged him to bring his expertise to bear in fostering international relations

Ebonyi gov suspends health commissioner over inefficiency

By **Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE**

Governor Francis Nwifuru of Ebonyi State has announced the suspension of the state Commissioner for Health, Dr. Moses Ekuma, for a period of three months, citing his lack of capacity to manage the ministry effectively.

Nwifuru made the announcement on Wednesday, November 27, during a citizens' engagement forum for the 2025 budget proposal in Abakaliki.

The governor expressed concern over the state of the health ministry, which he described as "sick," despite the presence of qualified personnel. He emphasized that individuals in positions of authority must be accountable and responsible in their duties.

"When one is in a position of authority, such a person should know that it comes with a lot of responsibilities," Nwifuru stated.

"People in authority should not be lackadaisical in their approach to work and should deliver on their mandates."

The governor further criticised the management of the health sector, particularly highlighting the lack of progress despite substantial government investments. He pointed out that while significant funds had been allocated to improve the state's health facilities, the results had been disappointing.

"People have been paid for services that have not been delivered. For instance, one contractor collected N3 billion to supply equipment and consumables to primary healthcare centres, yet there are no visible improvements," he said.

"We've spent billions to upgrade primary healthcare centres and general hospitals, but there are no



tangible outcomes."

As part of the administration's plan to address these issues, Governor Nwifuru announced that committees would be set up to inspect health facilities across the state.

He revealed that the government had implemented a drug revolving fund for general hospitals, which had achieved 60% delivery so far.

The governor emphasised that the government is committed to improving health services, particularly in rural areas, by equipping health facilities so that residents can receive immediate care before being referred to specialist hospitals.

In a bid to improve efficiency, Nwifuru also revealed plans for greater autonomy for health facilities once they are fully rehabilitated. He proposed that doctors would be responsible for generating funds to pay their salaries and other staff while

generating revenue for the state government. This model would be similar to the state broadcasting service, which is to be run as a public liability company.

The governor warned that public officeholders must take their duties seriously or face consequences.

"We have spent over a year in office, and anyone that is joking should do so in their own house," Nwifuru stated, signaling his intention to sanction other officials for inefficiency.

The forum also saw several stakeholders praise the governor for his inclusive approach to governance, expressing their support for his administration's initiatives.

Africa's largest UK visa application centre opens in Lagos

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

The United Kingdom (UK) has unveiled its largest Visa Application Centre in Africa, located in Ikeja, Lagos.

The opening of the new centre on Wednesday marks a significant step in enhancing visa application services for Nigerians travelling to the UK.

A statement by the British High Commission in Lagos disclosed the development on Wednesday.

With additional centres in Abuja and Victoria Island, Lagos, now operational since November 19, the facility in Ikeja is designed to streamline visa submissions and offer applicants a seamless experience.

The British Deputy High Commissioner, Jonny Baxter, attended the launch in Ikeja, emphasizing the importance of the UK-Nigeria relationship.

He expressed optimism that the new centre would provide improved services for applicants.

"I am delighted to witness the opening of this, the largest visa application centre in Africa. Nigeria remains one of the UK's most important partners, and we hope that VFS deliver ever-improving services for those applying for visas to the UK," Baxter said.

Also, the Director of Visa, Status and Information Services at UK Visas and Immigration, Marc Owen, described the development as a milestone in offering world-class visa services.

Owen noted that over 225,000 UK visa applications from Nigerian nationals were processed in the year to June 2024, reflecting the growing demand for travel to the UK.

"The opening of our new VAC in Ikeja marks an exciting milestone for UKVI and VFS Global in the



provision of a world-class UK visa service here in Nigeria and elsewhere across Africa.

"In the year to June 2024, we processed more than 225,000 UK visas for Nigerian nationals across all categories and this new partnership demonstrates our continued commitment to ensuring our visa services are accessible, efficient and meet the needs of all applicants," he noted.

The new partnership introduces a range of enhanced services, including document upload assistance, extended submission hours, SMS updates, courier passport returns, and the option for applicants to retain their passports after biometric enrolment.

Additionally, Abuja residents can now submit applications from their preferred locations using the Mobile Visa Service, while a Premium Lounge option offers a personalised experience with dedicated staff.

These optional services aim to enhance convenience for applicants without affecting processing timelines or outcomes.

The UK remains a top destination for Nigerian travellers, who account for five per cent of all global UK visit visa applications.

The new facility underscores the UK's commitment to meeting this demand while maintaining efficient and accessible visa services.

VFS Global, a long-term partner of UK Visas and Immigration since 2003, has expanded its operations from 58 countries to 142, further cementing its role in managing visa services worldwide.

Terrorism: Finnish court sets May 2025 deadline for Ekpa's trial

Gov Mutfwang visits Akwa Ibom, sympathises with Gov Eno over wife's demise

By Friday Omosola

Plateau State Governor, Caleb Mutfwang, has expressed profound condolences to Akwa Ibom State Governor, Umo Eno, following the passing of his wife, Patience, after a brief illness.

During a condolence visit to Governor Umo Eno at the Government House in Uyo, Governor Mutfwang described the loss as a significant tragedy for the Eno family, Akwa Ibom State, and Nigeria as a whole.

"We are here to commiserate with you on the demise of your dear wife. Thank God He has begun to grant you the fortitude to bear this great loss. Death is always painful, as it leaves a void that only God can fill," Governor Mutfwang said.

Mutfwang

Plateau State Governor, Caleb Mutfwang and Umo Eno [PHOTO CREDIT: X]

Reflecting on the late Mrs Eno's life,

Governor Mutfwang highlighted her invaluable role as a supportive pillar to her husband's leadership, a moral compass, and a selfless servant of God and society.

He praised her integrity, compassion, and dedication to raising godly children who have positively impacted society.

"Her legacy of justice, fairness, and service to humanity will continue to inspire generations to come," he added, praying for God's strength and comfort for the bereaved family.

READ ALSO: Gov Mutfwang presents N471.13 billion 2025 budget to House of Assembly

Governor Umo Eno expressed deep gratitude for the visit, calling it a significant act of solidarity during his time of sorrow. He described his late wife as his closest friend and companion of 40 years.



"She left at a time when her influence, service, and immense contributions were most needed," he said, seeking divine strength for himself, their children, and the people of Akwa Ibom to endure the loss.

The Director General of the PDP Governors' Forum, Emmanuel Agbo, and his team also extended their condolences, praying for divine comfort and strength for the grieving family and state.

IGP orders restructuring of Kebbi CID, advocates specialisation in investigative units

By Friday Omosola

In a bid to bolster professionalism and efficiency within the Nigeria Police Force, the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Kayode Egbetokun, has mandated the immediate restructuring and sanitisation of the Kebbi State Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

This move is part of the IGP's vision to establish specialised investigative units capable of delivering modern policing standards.

In a press release issued by Olumuyiwa Adejobi, the police's spokesperson, the IGP ordered the reassignment of all officers currently attached to the Kebbi CID to other commands, formations, and training schools.

The directive aims to introduce highly skilled personnel to the department, enabling it to conduct investigations and intelligence



gathering in compliance with the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, 2015, the Police Act, 2020, and other applicable laws.

The IGP further reiterated the importance of consistent training for officers involved in investigations to enhance their competence and adherence to the rule of law.

"This restructuring is pivotal to improving the quality of investigations,

public trust, and ensuring justice is served efficiently," Mr Egbetokun stated.

The Kebbi CID reform is the first phase of a larger initiative to standardise investigative practices across all units within the police, pending reports from technical committees on the ongoing reforms.

Afripol, Interpol nab 1,006 cybercrime suspects in Africa

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Following its recent joint major cybercrime operation with the African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL), tagged Operation Serengeti, INTERPOL has arrested over 1,000 cybercrime suspects from Africa.

A total of 19 countries in Africa, including Nigeria, Ghana, Mozambique, South Africa, Cameroon and Algeria, participated in the operation between September and October.

The others were Angola, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Tunisia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

According to INTERPOL, Operation Serengeti clamped down on criminals who were behind ransomware, business email compromise (BEC), digital extortion, and online scams. These crimes were all identified as prominent threats in the 2024 Africa

Cyber Threat Assessment Report.

INTERPOL noted that over 35,000 victims were identified during the operation.

Valdecy Urquiza, Secretary General of INTERPOL, asserted that the volume of cybercrime attacks is of utmost concern.

Urquiza said, "From multi-level marketing scams to credit card fraud on an industrial scale, the increasing volume and sophistication of cybercrime attacks is of serious concern.

"Operation Serengeti shows what we can achieve by working together, and these arrests alone will save countless potential future victims from real personal and financial pain. We know that this is just the tip of the iceberg, which is why we will continue targeting these criminal



groups worldwide."

In another of its operations, which spanned between April and July, INTERPOL arrested over 300 people who had links to Black Axe, one of West Africa's most feared criminal networks and its affiliated groups.

INTERPOL identified over 400 additional suspects and facilitated the blocking of more than 720 bank accounts.

EFCC arrests internet fraudster in Abuja, arraigns land racketeer in Maiduguri

By Friday Omosola

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has intensified its crackdown on fraud-related activities, with two major operations reported on Wednesday.

In Abuja, EFCC arrested an unnamed suspected internet fraudster at No. 25 Aliyu Modibbo Street, Guzape Hills, following credible intelligence about his involvement in cybercrime.

Items recovered from the suspect included a 2019 Range Rover Velar, \$4,100, N2 million in cash, an AP silver wristwatch, two mobile phones, and a laptop. The suspect is expected to be charged in court upon the conclusion of investigations.

Meanwhile, in Maiduguri, the EFCC's Zonal Directorate arraigned one Bukar Umar Alhaji before Justice Muhammad Maina of the Borno State High Court on charges of obtaining by pretence and criminal

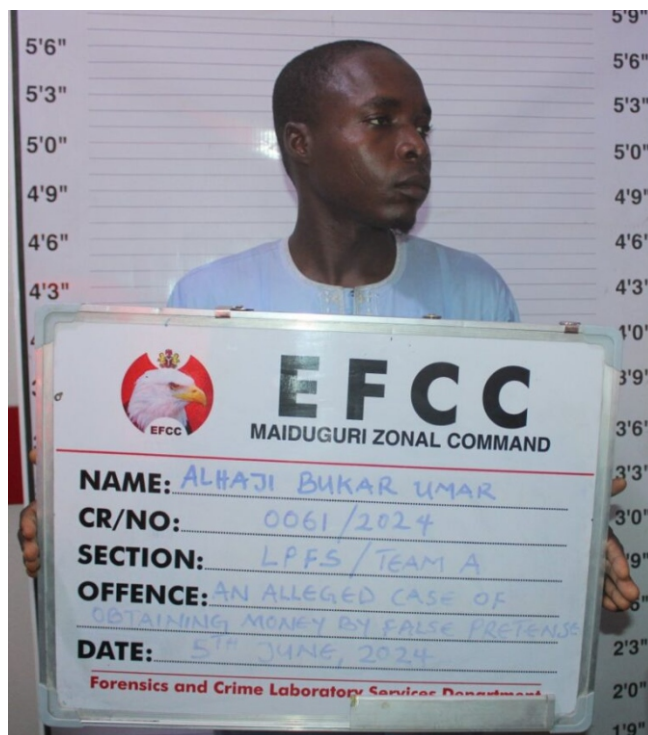
misappropriation amounting to two million one hundred thousand Naira.

According to the charges, the defendant, alongside an accomplice now at large, fraudulently obtained the sum under the guise of selling two plots of land in Mafa Local Government Area, Borno State, despite knowing the claim was false.

The defendant pleaded "not guilty" to the charges.

Prosecuting counsel Faruk Muhammad requested a trial date and for the defendant to be remanded in custody.

Justice Maina granted the request, setting December 4, 2024, for the commencement of the



trial. The defendant was remanded in the Maiduguri Maximum Correctional Facility.

N80.2bn fraud: EFCC arraigns Yahaya Bello today

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), will this morning (Thursday), arraign the immediate past Governor of Kogi State, Alhaji Yahaya Bello, before the Federal High Court in Abuja.

The ex-governor will be docked before trial Justice Emeka Nwite, on a 19-count charge that borders on alleged N80.2 billion fraud.

It will be recalled that Justice Nwite had on April 17, issued a warrant for the arrest of the former governor following his repeated failure to appear before the court for his arraignment.

Effort by operatives of the EFCC to execute the arrest order at Bello's residence in Abuja was allegedly thwarted by the incumbent governor of Kogi State, Ahmed Ododo, who

was said to have whisked him away in his official car.

However, after months of hide-and-seek, Bello, last Tuesday, surrendered himself to the anti-graft agency which docked him before a High Court of the Federal Capital Territory on Wednesday.

Justice Maryanne Anenih of the FCT high court had upon the plea of not guilty by the defendant, remanded him in custody of the EFCC.

Meanwhile, though the instant case at the Federal High Court was originally adjourned till January 21, 2025, however, the anti-graft agency persuaded trial Justice Nwite to shorten the date.



Those to be arraigned alongside the ex-governor are his nephew, Ali Bello and two others – Dauda Suleiman and Abdulsalam Hudu.

The EFCC alleged that the defendants engaged in money laundering, breach of trust and misappropriation of public funds.

ShareV

Reps to summon CBN's Cardoso, bank CEOs over unverified POS operators

By Gbenga Oluranti OLALEYE

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I—R—O—N—I—C: So, OBJ STILL HAS MOUTH TO ABUSE OTHERS?

By Agency Reporter

Sheer hypocrisy is what makes Chief Olusegun Obasanjo to accuse today's INEC of malpractices when the same INEC under him in 2007 organised what was popularly adjudged the worst election in Nigeria's history through Professor Maurice Iwu (Wuruwuru). So much that the beneficiary of the ill-gotten mandate, President Umar Yar'Adua, openly admitted the glaring irregularities and, as his own atonement, instituted the Uwais Panel to come up with electoral reforms.

Back in 2003, so brazen was the electoral fraud perpetrated by Obasanjo that in his native Ogun State, the court ruled that the figures announced by INEC for PDP were far more than the number of accredited voters! Obasanjo apparently forgot his calculator.

So autocratic in behaviour, Obasanjo during his second term infamously tore the results of the selection exercise undertaken by the council of kingmakers in his native Owuland simply because his favourite candidate did not come first.

Who has forgotten how Obasanjo orchestrated the kidnap of elected Governor (e.g Chris Ngige of Anambra) or the illegal impeachment of others with few compromised lawmakers as was witnessed in Oyo, Plateau, Bayelsa and Ekiti. In some cases, such illegality was later reversed by the Supreme Court.

So depraved and shameless was OBJ in corruption that the vice president, Atiku Abubakar, once told a senate committee panel that Obasanjo often sent him hand notes to release PTDF funds to buy brand new SUVs for some of his (Obasanjo's) menopausal concubines.

Another of Obasanjo's brazen misuse of public funds early in his first term was the award of a Turn Around Maintenance (TAM) contract for the Port Harcourt refinery to one of his cronies, Emeka Offor, at a whopping \$1b. It was another money down the

drain as the refinery new thereafter.

A princely \$16b was also phoney electricity contract Obasanjo without any tangible the nation's energy condition to the House of Representatives under Speaker Dimeji Banko. While public tertiary institutions often shut down over FG's meet ASUU demands, Obasanjo and funded his privately University in Otta. It is public that to win government jobs contractors were often cajoled "donate handsomely" to university in Otta.

A master of confusion or "acting before reflection ala James Bond 007" (apologies Professor Wole Soyinka), Obasanjo once gave out a mouth-watering contract to a crony to demolish all the toll-gates across the country as prelude to the removal of "petrol subsidy", without consulting the labour movement. Expectedly, NLC declared a crippling national strike which forced Obasanjo to back down on subsidy removal. By then, all the toll-gates had been demolished, amounting to double loss to the government.

Obasanjo's Aso Rock was, in fact, a virtual "toll gate" for extorting contractors and favour-seekers, as confirmed by U.S. congress report which indicted Halliburton Company. It was established that for oil contracts, Halliburton shared millions of dollars in bribes around Aso Rock under Obasanjo's watch. It is public records that the then Personal Assistant (Domestic) to the President admitted to have collected \$6m cash from Halliburton agents in Abuja on behalf of ... you know who!

Privatisation exercise under Obasanjo was also turned to a bazaar in which the nation's patrimony accumulated over the decades and estimated to be worth over US \$100b, were given away to cronies and fronts at ridiculous prices. For instance, ALSCON that was built for over \$3b by the military administrations



for a paltry \$130m!

In his deluded but failed desperation to become Nigeria's president-for-life, Obasanjo literarily emptied the national coffers by giving raw cash amounting to N17b to federal lawmakers to insert tenure elongation clause in the report submitted by the 2004/2005 constitutional conference. But once that clause was shot down by allied democratic forces within and outside the National Assembly, Obasanjo abandoned other recommendations contained in the bill altogether like a crate of rotten eggs at his Ota Farms.

So convinced was T Y Danjuma of Obasanjo's iniquities and atrocious corruption in office that the Taraborn General and erstwhile Obasanjo's supporter famously declared (in an interview granted the Sun newspaper in 2007) that verily, verily "Aremu of Ota deserves another term in jail".

This is your life Obasanjo!

We urge you to continue to run your basket-mouth. We shall soon publish a compendium of Obasanjo's "holier than thou" stint at Aso Rock. Watch out!

Share

BODE GEORGE: Onanuga will pay for insulting Obasanjo'— he's old enough to be his father

By Agency Reporter

Bode George, a former deputy national chairman (south) of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), says Bayo Onanuga, the presidential spokesperson, will face repercussions for insulting former President Olusegun Obasanjo.

BACKGROUND

Obasanjo, speaking at the Chinua Achebe leadership forum at Yale University in the US on November 16, said the 2023 general election was a “travesty”.

The former president said Nigeria’s failing state status is evident due to “widespread corruption, poor leadership, and immorality,” causing insecurity and underdevelopment.

He described the situation in Nigeria as chaotic under the “Baba-goslow” and “Emilokan” reigns.

“Emilokan” is a term popularised during President Bola Tinubu’s election campaign, when he said it was his turn to lead the country.

Obasanjo said Nigeria must appoint new and credible leaders for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) with short tenures to prevent corruption and re-establish trust in the institution.

ONANUGA HITS OBASANJO

While responding to Obasanjo’s comments, Onanuga said the former president left many unresolved problems for the country, adding that he presided over the most fraudulent election in Nigeria’s history.

Onanuga faulted Obasanjo for taking to the public media to “bestow his unsolicited wisdom on leadership and governance in Nigeria”.

The presidential spokesperson said



that the ex-president had continued to blame those who served after his tenure for the nation’s myriads of challenges even when he had his many flaws.

“The beneficiary of the sham election, Umaru Yar’Adua, admitted that the election was seriously flawed and, as Justice Muhammed Uwais’s panel recommended, worked towards electoral reforms,” Onanuga said.

“It is hypocrisy writ large when a man who presided over the worst election in Nigeria demands the sack of the leadership of the Independent National Electoral Commission.

“The only positive of the Obasanjo era was fiscal and monetary policy management buoyed by a consistent rise in crude oil prices throughout his eight-year tenure.

“This rise in crude oil prices started in 2000 and peaked in 2013 when it reached over 100 dollars per barrel before a decline in 2014, which set the oil-dependent economy downward.

“The current economic crisis the All Progressives Congress administrations have been battling since 2015 is the product of the poor choices in economic management made by Obasanjo and the two successors from his party.”

GIVE ROOM FOR INSULTING ELDERS’

However, in an interview on Nigeria Info FM, George said Onanuga would pay back for insulting an elder, noting that Yoruba culture does not condone such behaviour.

The PDP chieftain chided Onanuga for his comments against Obasanjo, noting that the former president was old enough to be his father.

“An old man who could be Bayo Onanuga’s father said something, and you took him on by blasting him right, left, and centre,” George said.

“That is his style because he did it to me before; he didn’t meet me at Ijebu Ode Grammar School.

“You can see how small he is when comparing himself to us; people give their opinion, and you insult them.

“Even if you want to react, the Yoruba culture does not allow that insult from him.

“Someday he would pay back, because there would be a day after, and that’s more important.

“He should be vigilant as he walks because it’s possible for him.”

‘YORUBA CULTURE DOESN’T

Cocoa firms pour money into Ghana in bid to avert more losses

By Agency Reporter

International buyers of Ghana's cocoa have made at least half a billion dollars of upfront payments to state marketing board Cocobod, according to Reuters' calculations, in a dash to secure supplies and avoid another season of heavy losses.

An abrupt overhaul of the three-decade-old marketing system in the world's No.2 cocoa grower has thrust traders and processors into a vastly expanded role in financing and bringing in the crop.

Previously, Cocobod would take on bank loans to buy farmers' cocoa, then sell the contracts for the crop forward to international companies. But after being financially hobbled by declining production and management decisions, the regulator for the first time since 1992 did not secure syndicated financing to purchase this season's crop but instead is using the companies themselves.

Cocobod says bypassing the banks will slash costs. But the shift also marks a new era of risk for private players, the cocoa sector in Ghana and the global chocolate industry.

"They've totally become dependent on private players to manage everything," one small trader operating in Ghana said.

For now, the industry is on board, but further losses may see buyers turn elsewhere.

Failed harvests in top growers Ivory Coast and Ghana sent world cocoa prices to all-time highs in April while Cocobod found it had vastly oversold and was unable to meet contracts.

Cocoa futures are again on the rise, promising to drive prices for holiday chocolates up further.

"There's all the ingredients for bad things," said a cocoa fund manager, pointing to concerns over the new marketing model, an uncertain crop outlook and next month's election in Ghana, which could have major implications for the sector.

The fund manager, like most of the dozen other traders and sector players

interviewed by Reuters, asked not to be named due to the sensitivity of commercial relationships in Ghana. Cocobod officials did not respond to a Reuters request for comment on its new marketing system and industry concerns over the current crop.

REDUCING EXPOSURE

Traders are still owed up to 350,000 metric tons of cocoa for contracts from last season that Cocobod failed to deliver, costing them at least \$1 billion on their corresponding futures market hedges.

Though it disputes the 350,000 ton figure, Cocobod has acknowledged contracts were rolled over and has told traders it will honour them this season.

That cocoa was pre-sold, however, at a fraction of current price levels. So to shield itself from losses and support farmer incomes, industry sources said Cocobod is requiring traders to buy additional contracts at near-record high spot prices to even out the gaping price difference.

Companies have been left with little choice but to keep buying since, for every ton of cocoa they can source at the low prices of last season's unexecuted contracts, they're reducing their exposure.

"You know how much you've lost. You just don't know how much more you might lose," said the head of cocoa for one major trade house.

A chart showing cocoa prices over the past 12 months

According to a Reuters calculation that two traders considered accurate, at current price levels, companies could lose another \$2,500 on their hedges for every ton of last season's cocoa contracts that remain undelivered.

To fill those contracts, Cocobod is counting on a strong production rebound traders worry may not materialise.

"The financial risks are enormous in Ghana at the moment," another trading company official said.



'AHUGE GAP TO FILL'

Until this season, Cocobod's main job was to purchase and market Ghana's cocoa production.

It would secure a syndicated loan to finance the licensed buying companies (LBCs) that purchase beans from farmers and transport them to Cocobod warehouses.

Cocobod, which initially planned to again borrow up to \$1.5 billion, announced in August just ahead of the new season that it would not tap the banks.

The decision will save \$150 million in interest payments, it said.

In the place of bank financing, Cocobod is requiring companies pay at least 60% of the value of their contracts upfront and pre-finance LBCs.

Several traders told Reuters that Cocobod is delivering one ton of cocoa to fulfil last season's unexecuted contracts for every ton companies purchase at this season's spot prices.

Blending the old and new contracts likely makes the average price per ton around \$5,000.

By the second week in November when season-to-date arrivals reached 183,000 tons, the advance payments would have added up to some \$550 million. Much of that cocoa has yet to be shipped.

Cocobod says the system is working. Farmers say they are getting paid. The view from the industry, however, is mixed.

Nigeria advocates transparency, collaboration at SIREXE conference

By Agency Reporter

Nigeria has called for strengthened governance, transparency, and regional cooperation in Africa's extractive industries to transform resource wealth into sustainable development.

Vice President Kashim Shettima made this assertion during the inaugural International Exhibition of Extractive and Energy Resources (SIREXE) held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

Addressing the summit themed "Policies and Strategies for the Sustainable Development of the Extractive and Energy Industries," Shettima emphasised that robust institutions are vital for turning natural resource wealth into national prosperity.

"This is not just about resources; it's about people, prosperity, and posterity. The strength of our governance institutions will determine whether resource wealth becomes a blessing or a curse," he remarked.

Nigeria Kashim Shettima representing Nigeria at the inaugural International Exhibition of Extractive and Energy Resources (SIREXE) held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire [PHOTO CREDIT: X] Highlighting Nigeria's strides in resource governance, Shettima pointed to the establishment of the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) in 2004.

"We became the first country in the world to domesticate the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative because we understood that opacity breeds inefficiency and corruption. Transparency is non-negotiable for building trust and ensuring inclusive benefits for all," he stated.

READ ALSO: Shettima urges recommitment to gender equity

The Vice President also underscored the transformation of Nigeria's oil

sector under the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021, which restructured the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) into a commercially-driven entity.

"NNPC Limited now operates with agility, transparency, and reduced government interference. This shift is setting a new standard for resource governance in Africa," he added.

Shettima emphasised the importance of local content development, citing Nigeria's Local Content Act of 2010, which boosted local participation in the oil and gas sector from 5% to nearly 30 per cent.

He highlighted projects like the Dangote Refinery, describing it as a testament to the potential of indigenous innovation.

Addressing regional challenges, he called for greater collaboration among African nations, stating, "Africa's energy future is intertwined. The progress of one state ripples across others. Nigeria stands ready to share its lessons and collaborate with ECOWAS partners to build an extractive industry that works for our people."

Côte d'Ivoire's Vice President, Tremoko Meyliet Kone, welcomed Shettima and other dignitaries, stressing the benefits of collaboration in the energy and extractive sectors.

He emphasised that cooperation could foster job creation, resource maximization, and sustainable development while cautioning against environmental degradation.

Côte d'Ivoire's Minister of Mines, Petroleum, and Energy, Mamadou Sangafowa Coulibaly, described the conference as a platform for shared



learning and innovation.

He expressed optimism that the gathering would yield actionable solutions to challenges facing the extractive industries.

READ ALSO: Shettima pays tribute to late Kurfi, Zakari

The Ambassador of Norway to Côte d'Ivoire, Madam Ingrid Mollestad, commended the event as a testament to the region's dedication to sustainable development.

"This gathering allows nations and professionals to partner, innovate, and champion sustainable practices in a sector vital to the global economy," she noted.

As Africa holds 40 per cent of the world's gold, 10% of its oil, and abundant critical minerals like cobalt and lithium, Shettima urged African leaders to rise to the challenge, stating, "Our potential remains untapped. Let us rise to this moment, not as isolated nations but as a unified region."

The SIREXE Conference concluded with a shared commitment to strengthening transparency, fostering innovation, and enhancing regional cooperation to secure Africa's position in the global energy landscape.

200m Nigerians at risk of NTDs – FG

By Helen Okechukwu



The Federal Ministry of Health revealed that 200 million Nigerians are burdened with the risk of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs), with about 165 million people seeking preventive treatment.

This came shortly after an advocacy meeting held with the 36 States Commissioners for Health and FCT Minister of Health, Dr. Iziaq Salako, on Wednesday.

Dr. Salako stressed the urgent need for coordinated action to combat NTDs, underscoring it as a pressing challenge in Nigeria that is linked to poverty, poor sanitation, and unsafe water.

In line with the World Health Organisation's (WHO) NTD Roadmap 2021–2030 global commitment and the Kigali Declaration, Nigeria has joined in the fight against NTDs, focusing on

accountability, integration, and resource mobilisation.

According to the WHO, NTDs are a diverse group of conditions that are mainly prevalent in tropical areas, where they thrive among people living in impoverished communities, leaving devastating health, social, and economic consequences.

This health condition can be caused by a variety of pathogens, including viruses, bacteria, parasites, fungi, and toxins.

The National Coordinator for NTDs at the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Fatai Oyediran, revealed that two out of every three Nigerians have at least one of the NTDs.

Meanwhile, since the collaboration, it has been learnt that progress has been made in some significant areas, such as the Eradication of Guinea Worm (2013) and the reduction in trachoma infection prevalence by 84%.

Other areas include the elimination of onchocerciasis in the Plateau and Nasarawa States and over 39.5 million people no longer requiring lymphatic filariasis treatment.

Moving forward in the call to action plan, the 36 state Commissioners for Health and the FCT Minister for Health agreed on state-level funding for better healthcare services; partnerships from donors, private sectors, and foreign partners, including accessing locally manufactured essential pharmaceuticals through the Unlock Healthcare Value Chain Initiative of FG.

In a unified voice, the health leaders pledge to combat NTDs affecting significant millions of Nigerians as they push for prioritising NTDs and ensuring that no Nigerian is left behind.

Sinach sued over 'Way Maker' copyright

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Gospel Sensation Sinach Faces Copyright Battle Over "Way Maker"

Gospel sensation Sinach faces N5B lawsuit over "Way Maker" copyright by producer Maye. High-stakes legal battle unfolds. Who owns the rights to the global hit?

The lawsuit, filed at the Federal High Court in Lagos under case number FHC/L/CS/402/2024, asserts that Oluwole is a co-author and co-owner of the iconic song. He is demanding substantial damages for the purported infringement of his rights.

Sinach, however, has vehemently denied the allegations, maintaining sole authorship of "Way Maker." She has underscored her substantial global recognition, achieved prior to the release of the song, as evidence of her independent creative prowess.

The trial commenced on Wednesday, November 27, 2024, at the Federal High Court in Lagos. The court has adjourned the case to January 29 and 30, 2025, to allow for further legal proceedings.

Gospel Singer Sinach

The clash

Sinach, a globally recognized gospel artist, has captured hearts worldwide with her soulful melodies and inspiring lyrics. Her song "Way Maker" has become an international sensation, topping charts and inspiring millions.

Michael Oluwole, a prominent music producer, has also made significant contributions to the Nigerian music industry. His work with various artists has earned him recognition and respect.

The dispute between these two talented individuals has sparked intense debate within the music industry and among fans. The outcome of the lawsuit could have far-reaching implications for copyright law in Nigeria and the broader music industry.

Legal experts weigh in

Legal experts have expressed varying opinions on the case. Some argue that the law surrounding co-authorship

and copyright infringement can be complex, especially in cases involving creative collaborations. Others believe that the burden of proof lies with the plaintiff, and Oluwole will need to provide compelling evidence to substantiate his claim.

Industry impact and public sentiment

The lawsuit has generated significant buzz within the Nigerian music industry. Many industry insiders are concerned about the potential impact of the case on future collaborations between artists and producers. The dispute has also ignited public debate, with fans expressing mixed opinions on social media.

As the legal proceedings unfold, the music world will be watching closely. The outcome of the case could set a precedent for future copyright disputes in Nigeria and shape the way artists and producers collaborate in the future.

Core of the dispute

At the heart of the controversy lies the question of authorship. Oluwole claims to be a co-author of the song, asserting that he contributed significantly to its creation. However, Sinach vehemently denies these claims, maintaining sole authorship.

The specific nature of Oluwole's alleged contributions remains unclear. Whether it involves musical composition, lyrical content, or production techniques is yet to be fully disclosed in the legal proceedings.

Legal Implications

The outcome of this case could have profound implications for the Nigerian music industry and the broader entertainment landscape. It could set a precedent for future copyright disputes, particularly in cases involving collaborative efforts between artists and producers.

If the court rules in favor of Oluwole, it could lead to increased scrutiny of collaborative processes and contractual agreements within the industry. Artists



and producers may need to take more stringent measures to protect their intellectual property rights, including formalizing agreements and documenting contributions.

Public perception and reaction

The public has been divided in its opinion on the case. While some fans have expressed support for Sinach, others have raised questions about the transparency of the creative process and the potential for exploitation of artists.

Social media has been abuzz with discussions, with many fans expressing concern about the potential impact of the lawsuit on Sinach's career and reputation. The case has also sparked debates about the importance of fair compensation for artists and the challenges they face in navigating the complexities of the music industry.

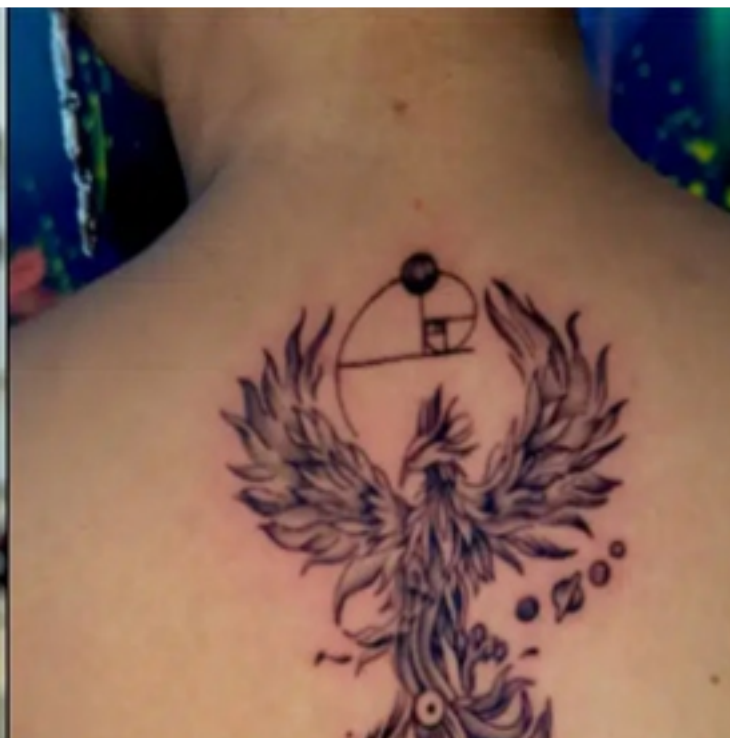
Road ahead

As the trial progresses, it remains to be seen how the court will weigh the evidence presented by both parties. The outcome of the case will undoubtedly shape the future of the Nigerian music industry and have a lasting impact on the way artists and producers collaborate.

Regardless of the outcome, the "Way Maker" controversy has highlighted the importance of protecting intellectual property rights and ensuring fair compensation for creative work.

My tattoo shows resilience, strength- Phyna

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi



Phyna's Phoenix: A Symbol of Resilience and Triumph

Phyna's Tattoo

BBNaija 'Level Up' winner Phyna shared the meaning of her Phoenix tattoo, symbolizing resilience, strength, and transformation, in a heartfelt Instagram post.

The Phoenix, a mythical creature renowned for its ability to rise from the ashes, mirrors Phyna's own experiences. She candidly shared how life has repeatedly tested her resolve, yet she has consistently emerged stronger and more determined. The tattoo serves as a tangible reminder of her past struggles, a celebration of her present triumphs, and a beacon of hope for her future endeavors.

"This phoenix on my back isn't just ink; it's a testament to my journey," Phyna explained. "It symbolizes resilience, strength, and transformation—the fire I walked through and the wings I earned. Life tried to break me, but like the phoenix, I chose to rise, rebuild, and soar higher than

before."

Each element of the tattoo, from the fiery flames to the graceful feathers, tells a story of rebirth and renewal. It serves as a constant reminder that even in the darkest of times, there is always the possibility of rising again, stronger, wiser, and more powerful.

"This tattoo is more than art; it's a part of me," she continued. "A tribute to my past, a celebration of my present, and a reminder of the infinite potential of my future. I am my own phoenix."

Phyna's decision to permanently etch the Phoenix onto her skin is a bold statement of her commitment to self-empowerment and personal growth. It signifies her refusal to be defined by adversity and her unwavering belief in her own ability to overcome challenges.

The tattoo also serves as a visual representation of Phyna's journey from obscurity to stardom. Before her participation in Big Brother Naija, she was a relatively unknown figure. However, her vibrant personality, quick wit, and infectious energy quickly captivated the nation and propelled her to fame.

Since winning the reality TV show,

Phyna has become a role model for many young people, inspiring them to embrace their individuality and pursue their dreams. Her Phoenix tattoo is a symbol of hope and inspiration, reminding others that they too can rise from the ashes and achieve greatness.

The tattoo has also sparked discussions about the power of body art as a form of self-expression. For many, tattoos are more than just decorations; they are meaningful symbols that represent personal experiences, beliefs, and aspirations. Phyna's Phoenix tattoo is a prime example of how body art can be used to tell powerful stories and inspire others.

As Phyna continues to make her mark on the entertainment industry, her Phoenix tattoo will undoubtedly remain a prominent symbol of her resilience, strength, and unwavering spirit. It is a testament to her journey, a celebration of her present, and a beacon of hope for her future.

Mr Macaroni: Faithfulness in marriage is tough

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Mr Macaroni Reflects on the Complexities of Faithfulness in Marriage

Comedian Mr Macaroni calls faithfulness in marriage “difficult but possible,” sharing candid insights on relationships on the Diary of a Naija Girl podcast.

In his conversation, Mr. Macaroni acknowledged the stark difference between offering advice on relationships and implementing those same principles in one’s personal life. While the importance of faithfulness is often emphasized, the reality of staying committed can be more complex than it appears from the outside.

**Mr Macaroni
Universal struggle**

During the discussion, Mr. Macaroni was careful to highlight that the challenges associated with faithfulness are not confined to a single gender. Both men and women, he noted, face temptations that can threaten their commitments. By addressing the universality of this struggle, Mr Macaroni reframed the issue as one that requires mutual effort and understanding, rather than placing blame on one party.

The comedian also delved into the dynamics of infidelity, describing it as a slippery slope. He remarked that once a person begins to engage in unfaithful behavior, it often becomes increasingly difficult to stop. This observation underscored the importance of self-awareness and discipline in relationships, particularly for individuals who might find themselves in situations where temptations abound.

Expert from outbox

Although Mr. Macaroni disclosed that he is not currently in a relationship, he humorously referred to himself as a “relationship expert.” This expertise, he explained, comes from the many conversations he has had with friends who seek his advice about their relationships.

“I think it’s easier for me to advise them because I’m outside the

relationship,” he shared. “When you’re not emotionally involved, it’s simpler to identify solutions and provide objective insights. However, for those inside the relationship, the challenges can feel overwhelming.”

By taking on the role of an advisor, Mr. Macaroni demonstrated how external perspectives can sometimes illuminate issues that are difficult to address from within. Yet, he admitted that providing advice is one thing, while living by those same rules is entirely different.

Harsh realities

In his reflections, Mr. Macaroni did not shy away from discussing the harsh realities of marriage. He admitted that remaining faithful requires significant effort and determination. “It’s possible not to cheat, but it is very difficult,” he stated. This comment resonated with many listeners, as it shed light on the human imperfections that often complicate marital commitments.

He elaborated further, explaining how a person might tell themselves they will only cheat “once,” but that initial lapse often paves the way for repeated actions. This pattern, he noted, can quickly spiral out of control, making it even harder to uphold the values of faithfulness.

Relationships

Mr. Macaroni’s candid approach to the topic of fidelity struck a chord with many who tuned in to the podcast. His ability to speak openly about the struggles faced by individuals in relationships created a sense of relatability, breaking down the stigma often associated with such discussions.

His reflections also served as a reminder that the journey to maintaining a successful relationship is rarely straightforward. Whether it involves resisting temptations, addressing past mistakes, or seeking external advice, the process requires ongoing effort and honesty from both partners.

Faithfulness

Despite his acknowledgment of the difficulties, Mr. Macaroni remained optimistic about the possibility of staying faithful in a relationship. His insights



reinforced the idea that while the road to fidelity may be challenging, it is a path worth pursuing for those who value the sanctity of their commitments.

By addressing the topic with humor and sincerity, the comedian added a fresh perspective to the ongoing conversation about relationships and fidelity. His remarks not only shed light on the realities of modern relationships but also encouraged listeners to approach these challenges with empathy and self-awareness.

In a world where societal pressures and individual vulnerabilities often collide, Mr. Macaroni’s reflections served as a poignant reminder of the complexities that accompany love and commitment. Through his words, he urged couples to prioritize communication, self-control, and mutual respect, as these are the cornerstones of any lasting relationship.

Ultimately, Mr Macaroni’s message resonated with listeners who appreciated his willingness to tackle a sensitive subject with both humor and insight. Mr. Macaroni’s thoughts on faithfulness may not have provided definitive answers, but they opened the door to deeper conversations about the realities of love and relationships in today’s world.

Read Also : Mr Macaroni challenges Sanwo-Olu on dangerous Lagos roads

Mr Macaroni’s fearless tale, recounts Police torture encounter

New Mexico man awarded \$412m payout over botched penile injections

By Dave Oludare Oso



Jurors in New Mexico have awarded a man more than \$412 million in a medical malpractice case that involved a men's health clinic that operates in several states.

The man's attorneys celebrated Monday's verdict, saying they are hopeful it will prevent other men from falling victim to a scheme that involved fraud and what they described as dangerous penile injections. They said the punitive and compensatory damages total the largest amount to ever be awarded by a jury in a medical malpractice case in the U.S.

"It's a national record-setting case and it's righteous because I don't think there's any place for licensed professionals to be defrauding patients for money. That is a very egregious breach of their fiduciary duty," said Lori Bencoe, one of the lawyers who represented the plaintiff.

"That's breach of trust and anytime someone is wearing a white coat, they shouldn't be allowed to do that."

The award follows a trial held in

Albuquerque earlier this month that centered on allegations outlined in a lawsuit filed by the man's attorneys in 2020.

NuMale Medical Center and company officials were named as defendants.

"This corporate scheme manipulates and uses fear as a tactic to convince these men to do this," Nick Rowley, a trial lawyer, told CBS affiliate KRQE.

According to the complaint, the man was 66 when he visited the clinic in 2017 in search of treatment for fatigue and weight loss. The clinic is accused of misdiagnosing him and unnecessarily treating him with "invasive erectile dysfunction shots" that caused irreversible damage.

Nick Rowley, another attorney who was part of the plaintiff's team, said the out-of-state medical corporation set up a "fraudulent scheme to make millions off of conning old men."

He provided some details in a social media post, saying clinic workers told patients they would have irreversible damage if they didn't agree to injections three times a week.

NuMale Medical Center told KRQE that they "disagree with the verdict and intend to pursue all available legal remedies, including appeal."

NuMale Medical Center President Brad Palubicki said in a statement sent Wednesday to The Associated Press that the company's focus is on continuing to deliver responsible patient care while maintaining strict safety and compliance standards at all of its facilities.

"While we respect the judicial process, due to ongoing legal proceedings, we cannot comment on specific details of the case at this time," he said.

NuMale also has clinics in Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Nevada, Nebraska, North Carolina and Wisconsin.

According to court records, jurors found that fraudulent and negligent conduct by the defendants resulted in damages to the plaintiff. They also found that unconscionable conduct by the defendants violated the Unfair Practices Act.

In a statement to KRQE, the man's attorneys said the verdict sends a powerful message that "medical providers cannot prioritize profits over patients' well-being without being held accountable."

TD Jakes suffers health scare during sermon, thanks wellwishers

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Celebrity bishop of The Potter's House, a megachurch in the United States, TD Jakes, has broken his silence after suffering a health scare during a sermon.

The 67-year-old cleric sat on a stool and was about to finish a prayer when he lowered the microphone and began shaking during a live-streamed sermon on Sunday.

The live stream was abruptly cut off, leaving thousands of viewers concerned about Jakes' well-being.

In a video shared on Instagram on Wednesday, the church leader appeared to be wearing a green baseball cap and sunglasses and seated in a wheelchair.

Jakes began by thanking the healthcare team that assisted him. He then extended his appreciation to the countless individuals who prayed, sent messages, and expressed their support.

"It didn't have to end this good. I'm so grateful," Jakes said, visibly in tears.

"I'm grateful to y'all, all the people who prayed, all the people who texted, all the people who had prayer vigils, all the people who were concerned and sent love and sent noes. I'm just grateful."

In the post's caption, the cleric reflected on the experience. He acknowledged the privilege of serving God's people and the importance of relying on divine strength. He also thanked God that his condition was not a stroke.

"Serving God's people is an extraordinary privilege, and Sunday was no exception as I gave my all in delivering the message God placed on my heart. Even when I sensed the weight of my



humanity and pushed through nonetheless, I'm reminded that even the strongest must rely on His strength," he wrote.

"I give thanks unto the Lord that I did not have a stroke, however the event could've been fatal if it weren't for God's intervention. A special thank you to God and the medical professionals in our city whose speed and expertise were beyond exceptional.

"My job is to recuperate and reflect on God's protection. I owe it to my amazing family and church members to rest and ruminate as He restores me towards His service. As God calls us to honor the Sabbath, I'm reminded that rest is not a weakness – it is a divine gift.

"While I continue to be strengthened by His grace, I stand in awe of my

family and the tremendous leadership team that surrounds me. Together, we press forward, steadfast in the work the Lord has set before us. I've heard from friends from the global community who expressed God's love in ways that were astonishing! God's faithfulness was unmistakable to all those present.

"I'm forever humbled by your outpouring of love and support. I will always give my best. May His presence continue to guide and sustain you and provide peace and protection over you all."

However, the church has yet to elaborate on what may have caused the health scare and Jakes' prognosis.

Russian Army Launches Massive Attack on Ukraine's Energy Sector Amid Winter Escalation

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Russian Army on Thursday, November 28, intensified its assault on Ukraine's energy infrastructure, forcing emergency power outages across the country as temperatures plummeted.

The strikes mark a significant escalation in Russia's ongoing campaign against Ukraine's energy grid, which has been a key target since Russia's invasion in February 2022.

Ukraine's Energy Minister, German Galushchenko, confirmed that the country's energy sector was under a "massive enemy attack," with the strikes affecting power facilities nationwide.

Following a nationwide air alert for incoming missiles, Ukraine's Air Force reported a barrage of Russian cruise missiles and attack drones aimed at several major cities, including Kyiv, Kharkiv, and the Black Sea port city of Odesa.

Galushchenko revealed that the country's national power grid operator, Ukrenergo, had been forced to implement urgent emergency power cuts as temperatures dropped to around 0°C (32°F). Energy provider DTEK also confirmed that regions including Kyiv, Odesa, Dnipro, and Donetsk were experiencing outages due to the strikes.

"The energy sector is under massive enemy attack. Attacks on energy facilities are happening across Ukraine," Galushchenko said.

The nationwide attack, which began overnight, was still ongoing as of 8 am (0600 GMT), and authorities warned that further details would be provided once the security situation allowed.

This wave of missile strikes comes as both sides have escalated their military actions, launching new weapons to gain the upper hand ahead of US President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration in January 2025.

Russian Tactics of Terror

The latest wave of strikes has been



condemned by Ukraine's leadership as part of Russia's continued "terror tactics." Andriy Yermak, President Volodymyr Zelensky's Chief of Staff, stated that Russia had stockpiled missiles specifically for attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure, aiming to cause maximum hardship to civilians during the harsh winter months.

"This is a clear strategy of warfare against civilians," Yermak said, warning that Ukraine would respond firmly to Russia's actions. A senior United Nations official, Rosemary DiCarlo, also cautioned that the ongoing Russian strikes could make this winter the "harshes since the start of the war."

As Russia targets Ukraine's energy infrastructure, the humanitarian toll is rising. Power cuts and damaged heating systems threaten to leave millions without warmth in sub-zero temperatures, compounding the suffering of a population already facing the devastation of war.

Russian Retaliation and Increased Tensions

The situation is further complicated by recent Ukrainian strikes on Russian territory. Ukraine has used US-supplied ATACMS missiles in attacks on Russian border regions, including at least three strikes on Russian-held areas. In response, Russia has deployed new weapons, including hypersonic ballistic missiles, and has reported downing 25 Ukrainian drones in one night.

Russian President Vladimir Putin also

delivered an angry address, warning that Russia's nuclear-capable missiles could target Western nations if they continue to supply arms to Ukraine. Putin's rhetoric and military actions underscore the increasing risks of broader conflict as the war enters its second year.

Meanwhile, the United States is adjusting its diplomatic approach to the conflict. President-elect Donald Trump, who has campaigned on securing a quick end to the war, recently appointed retired general Keith Kellogg as his envoy for Ukraine. Kellogg, a staunch loyalist, is tasked with finding a resolution to the ongoing crisis. However, his calls for peace talks have raised concerns in Kyiv, where there are fears that the US may pressure Ukraine to cede territory in exchange for a ceasefire.

Military Strain and Growing Manpower Shortages

On the battlefield, Russian troops have been making steady progress in the east, where they are benefitting from superior manpower and ammunition stocks. As Russia advances, Ukraine faces mounting pressure, and the Biden administration has urged Kyiv to lower the minimum age for military conscription to 18 to address severe manpower shortages along the front line.

ISRAELI-HEZBOLLAH WAR: New data reveals impact of war on civilians in Lebanon

By Agency Reporter

As residents of southern Lebanon begin returning to neighbourhoods reduced to rubble, new data shared with Sky News illustrates the impact of the conflict.

The Centre for Information Resilience has verified more than 400 videos showing 300 separate incidents of harm to civilians and damage to infrastructure in Lebanon.

It offers a window into the extent of the destruction since fighting began in October last year.

For nearly a year, attacks were concentrated in southern Lebanon, along the border with Israel.

In September, Israel stepped up its offensive. The red dots represent incidents from September to now.

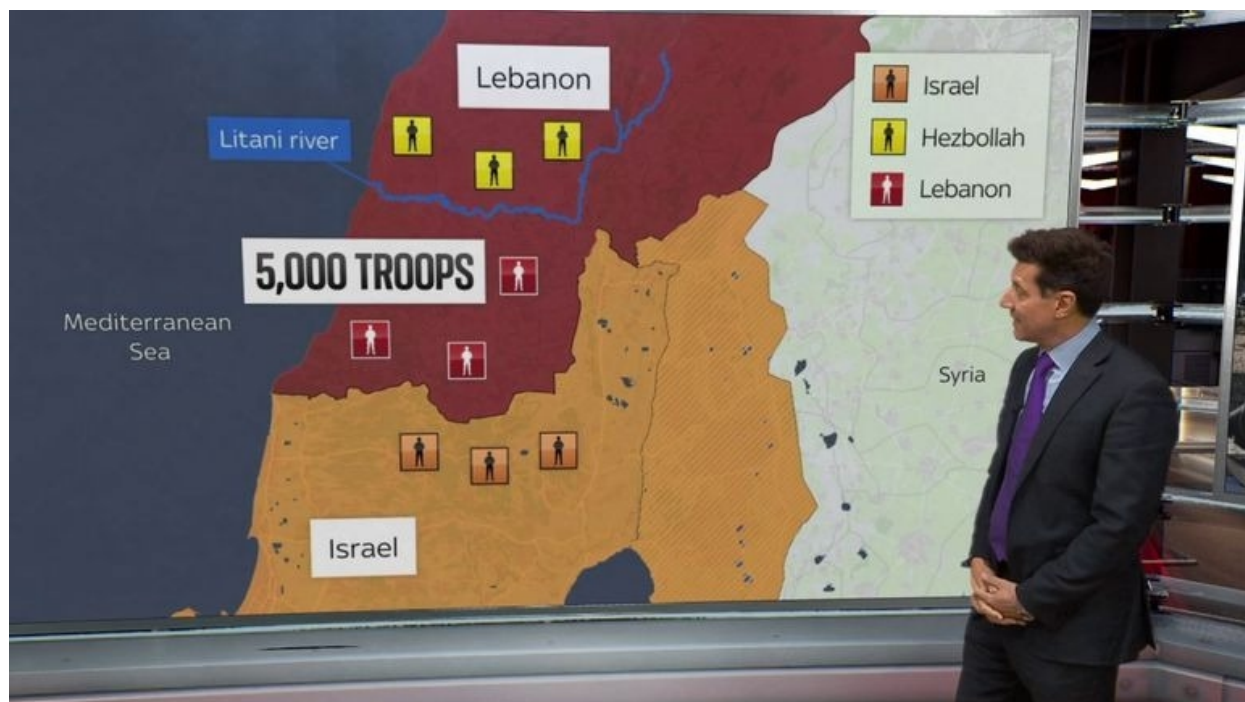
The country's capital, Beirut, has been attacked regularly in the past few months.

Beirut's southern suburbs, an area known to be a Hezbollah stronghold, were hit hardest.

This research is part of a larger set of open-source data showing harm to civilians and damage to infrastructure collected by CIR on and since 7 October last year, covering Gaza, the West Bank and Israel, as well as Lebanon.

Lebanon and Israel counting cost of more than a year's conflict

As of 25 November, fighting had displaced more than 899,000 people in Lebanon and killed nearly 4,000 people, according to the International Organisation for Migration, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



and the Lebanese health ministry.

The number of deaths – mostly recorded since September, when Israel ramped up attacks against Hezbollah members in Beirut – does not distinguish between civilians and Hezbollah fighters.

Across Lebanon, the cost of physical damages and economic loss due to the conflict is estimated at \$8.5bn, according to a World Bank report published on 14 November. Almost 100,000 housing units have been damaged or fully destroyed.

Across the border in northern Israel, more than 60,000 people have been evacuated from their homes, and 80 soldiers and 50 civilians have been killed in Hezbollah attacks, according to Israeli officials.

The Institute for the Study of War has recorded attacks by Hezbollah and Israel between 7 October 2023 and 26 November, the day before the ceasefire.

Since the ceasefire was announced, thousands of those displaced have started streaming back to deserted neighbourhoods in southern Lebanon. The Israeli military warned displaced Lebanese against moving south towards previously evacuated

villages.

“We inform you that starting from 5pm until tomorrow morning at 7am it is absolutely forbidden to travel south of the Litani river,” said Avichay Adraee, the IDF’s Arabic spokesperson.

“Whoever is north of the Litani river is prohibited from moving south. Whoever is south of the Litani river must remain where he is,” the statement added.

The warning was published on X just minutes before the curfew was due to come into force.

Some residents had already made the journey.

Further south, in Bint Jbeil, people returning home filmed from their car windows, showing destroyed buildings and empty streets. In most cases, residents are not coming back to the same places they left.

While the ceasefire brings an end to over a year of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, there is concern over whether the deal will hold.

Australia passes first-ever social media ban for children under 16

By Dave Oludare Oso

A social media ban for children under 16 passed the Australian Senate Thursday and will soon become a world-first law.

The law will make platforms including TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Reddit, X and Instagram liable for fines of up to 50 million Australian dollars (\$33 million) for systemic failures to prevent children younger than 16 from holding accounts.

The Senate passed the bill 34 votes to 19. The House of Representatives on Wednesday overwhelmingly approved the legislation 102 votes to 13.

The House has yet to endorse opposition amendments made in the Senate. But that is a formality since the government has already agreed they will pass.

The platforms will have one year to work out how they could implement the ban before penalties are enforced. The amendments bolster privacy protections. Platforms would not be allowed to compel users to provide government-issued identity documents including passports or driver's licenses, nor could they demand digital identification through a government system.

The House is scheduled to pass the amendments on Friday. Critics of the legislation fear that banning young children from social media will impact the privacy of users who must establish they are older than 16.

While the major parties support the ban, many child welfare and mental health advocates are concerned about unintended consequences.

Sen. David Shoebridge, from the minority Greens party, said mental health experts agreed that the ban could dangerously isolate many children who used social media to find support.

"This policy will hurt vulnerable young people the most, especially in regional communities and especially the LGBTQI community, by cutting them off," Shoebridge told the Senate.



Opposition Sen. Maria Kovacic said the bill was not radical but necessary.

"The core focus of this legislation is simple: It demands that social media companies take reasonable steps to identify and remove underage users from their platforms," Kovacic told the Senate.

"This is a responsibility these companies should have been fulfilling long ago, but for too long they have shirked these responsibilities in favor of profit," she added.

Online safety campaigner Sonya Ryan, whose 15-year-old daughter Carly was murdered by a 50-year-old pedophile who pretended to be a teenager online, described the Senate vote as a "monumental moment in protecting our children from horrendous harms online."

"It's too late for my daughter, Carly, and the many other children who have suffered terribly and those who have lost their lives in Australia, but let us stand together on their behalf and embrace this together," she told the AP in an email.

Wayne Holdsworth, whose teenage son Mac took his own life after falling victim to an online sextortion scam, had advocated for the age restriction and took pride in its passage.

"I have always been a proud Australian, but for me subsequent to today's Senate decision, I am bursting with pride," Holdsworth told the AP in an email.

Christopher Stone, executive director of Suicide Prevention Australia, the governing body for the suicide prevention sector, said the legislation failed to consider positive aspects of social media in supporting young people's mental health and sense of

connection.

"The government is running blindfolded into a brick wall by rushing this legislation. Young Australians deserve evidence-based policies, not decisions made in haste," Stone said in a statement.

The platforms had complained that the law would be unworkable, and had urged the Senate to delay the vote until at least June next year when a government-commissioned evaluation of age assurance technologies made its report on how young children could be excluded.

Critics argue the government is attempting to convince parents it is protecting their children ahead of a general election due by May. The government hopes that voters will reward it for responding to parents' concerns about their children's addiction to social media. Some argue the legislation could cause more harm than it prevents.

Criticisms include that the legislation was rushed through Parliament without adequate scrutiny, is ineffective, poses privacy risks for all users, and undermines the authority of parents to make decisions for their children.

Opponents also argue the ban would isolate children, deprive them of the positive aspects of social media, drive them to the dark web, discourage children too young for social media to report harm, and reduce incentives for platforms to improve online safety.

RUSSIA, UKRAINE WAR: Putin threatens Kyiv 'decision-making centres' with new missile

By Agency Reporter

Russia is selecting targets in Ukraine that could include "decision-making centres" in Kyiv in response to Ukrainian long-range strikes on Russian territory with Western weapons, Vladimir Putin has said.

Attacks launched by Moscow have not so far struck government buildings in the Ukrainian capital, which is heavily protected by air defences.

Putin says Russia's Oreshnik hypersonic missile, which it fired for the first time at a Ukrainian city last week, is incapable of being intercepted – although that claim has been questioned by at least one expert (see 7.55 post).

"Of course, we will respond to the ongoing strikes on Russian territory

with long-range Western-made missiles, as has already been said, including by possibly continuing to test the Oreshnik in combat conditions," Putin told a meeting of a security alliance of ex-Soviet countries in Kazakhstan.

"At present, the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff are selecting targets to hit on Ukrainian territory. These could be military facilities, defence and industrial enterprises, or decision-making centres in Kyiv."

Russia says Ukraine fired ATACMS ballistic missiles supplied by the US into western Russia for the first time on 19 November, prompting it to respond two days later by firing the Oreshnik, a new intermediate-range missile, at the Ukrainian city of Dnipro.

Since then, Russia says Ukraine fired more ATACMS at its Kursk region on 23



and 25 November.

Putin claimed Russia's production of advanced missile systems exceeds that of the NATO military alliance by 10 times, and that Moscow plans to ramp up production further.

Hackers steal \$17m from Ugandan Central Bank

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The theft of 62 billion Ugandan shillings (\$17 million) from the Bank of Uganda has sparked widespread controversy and raised questions about responsibility for the breach. Reports from New Vision suggest that hackers, allegedly from a Southeast Asian group called "Waste," breached the central bank's systems. The stolen funds were reportedly transferred to accounts in Japan and the UK earlier in the week.

However, Daily Monitor provides a slightly different figure, noting that 47.8 billion shillings were taken. The report hints at an internal conspiracy, with both central bank and finance ministry employees under investigation. An audit by the Bank of Uganda also supports the theory of an inside job.



While the central bank announced it had recovered 37 billion shillings, investigations remain ongoing to identify those responsible and recover the remaining funds. The incident has prompted heightened scrutiny of

Uganda's financial security systems.

Leicester City eye Ruud van Nistelrooy as next manager

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Manchester United legend, Ruud van Nistelrooy has emerged as the frontrunner to fill the managerial vacancy at Leicester City following the dismissal of Steve Cooper.

Van Nistelrooy, whose managerial stock has risen after a recent interim spell at Manchester United, is reportedly in advanced talks with Leicester City.

He was thrust into the interim role at United in October after Erik ten Hag's departure and impressed with three wins in four games, including back-to-back victories over Leicester.

Despite his success, his tenure ended with the appointment of Ruben Amorim as United's new head coach.

Leicester City parted ways with Steve Cooper on Sunday after a disappointing start to the Premier League season.

The former Nottingham Forest boss managed to secure only 10 points from 12 games, leaving the Foxes in the relegation zone.

Along with Cooper, his assistants Alan Tate and Steve Rands were also dismissed, paving the way for first-team coach Ben Dawson to temporarily take charge.

Van Nistelrooy's potential appointment is seen as a bold move by Leicester.

The Dutchman's experience includes a summer stint on Erik ten Hag's coaching staff and his interim role at United, where his tactical acumen and leadership were praised.

If finalized, Van Nistelrooy will inherit a Leicester squad desperate for revival, with the Foxes looking to regain stability and climb out of the relegation battle.

Leicester City fans will hope that Van Nistelrooy can replicate the sharp instincts he showcased as a prolific striker and bring them into his



The Telegraph reported on Wednesday night that Van Nistelrooy has become the frontrunner for the Leicester job, with his appointment likely before the club's weekend clash against Brentford.

The Telegraph said, "The Manchester United legend has held extensive talks with the Leicester hierarchy this week and is set to be confirmed as the replacement for Steve Cooper, who was sacked by the strugglers on Sunday afternoon.

"Van Nistelrooy is crucially available with no compensation after recently leaving United, following an interim spell of four matches in charge after the dismissal of Erik ten Hag.

"Leicester have discussed the post with the 48-year-old and, while the club's hierarchy has been determined to explore a number of options, could appoint the former Netherlands international before the trip to Brentford on Saturday."

This would mark Van Nistelrooy's second stint as a senior manager, following an 11-month spell at PSV Eindhoven.

Despite expressing his desire to remain part of United's coaching setup under Amorim, Van Nistelrooy was not retained. Reports suggest that Amorim did not establish communication with Van Nistelrooy during his interim period.

"Other possible candidates, including former Chelsea manager Graham Potter, and ex-West Ham manager David Moyes, have both been ruled out by sources close to Leicester," the report added.

Van Nistelrooy's potential move to Leicester has sparked intrigue, given his recent success in stabilizing Manchester United during a turbulent period.