

**FG begins direct payment of allocations to Lgs next month** **PAGE 6**



**Oyebanji signs Ekiti N375.8bn 2025 budget into law** **PAGE 7**



# The New Daily Prime



# Finally, Warri Refinery commences operations

**PAGE 5**

**I will capture Ayra Starr – Ugandan President’s son** **PAGE 23**

**WORLD PAGE 30**

**Trump loses \$5m sexual assault, defamation verdict appeal**



**No power-sharing deal with Atiku, Obi – Kwankwaso** **PAGE 2**

**UK raises salary thresholds for skilled worker visas** **PAGE 31**

**ENTERTAINMENT**

**‘Everybody Loves J enifa’ sets record, grosses N1bn in 19 days** **PAGE 24**



**DSS arrests ‘whistleblower’ Mahdi Shehu over false French military base claim** **PAGE 4**

# No power-sharing deal with Atiku, Obi – Kwankwaso

By Dave Oludare Oso

The presidential candidate of the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) in the 2023 general elections, Senator Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso has denied entering into a power-sharing agreement with Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP).

The former Kano State governor, speaking in an interview with BBC Hausa, described the rumours as unfounded and malicious, alleging that Atiku's camp had been meeting with clerics and regional leaders to propagate the claim.

Kwankwaso said, "This issue deeply angers me, to hear that respected elders are spreading lies about something that never happened.

"I was told that nearly 45 clerics were gathered and informed about this fabricated story. They were told that I had agreed to a deal where Atiku would serve for four years, I would serve another four years, and Peter Obi would serve for eight years. This is completely false; such an agreement never existed."

The former governor added that since leaving the PDP for the NNPP, he has found peace and a sense of relief from what he called the "humiliation" he and his supporters endured in the PDP.

"Such lies and deceit are precisely why we left. Myself, Peter Obi, Wike, and others all left. Now they are coming back, asking us to help those who humiliated us to achieve their goals," he claimed.



Kwankwaso also expressed concern over recent calls for Kano State Governor, Abba Kabir Yusuf to distance himself from him. Referring to a controversial movement "Abba Tsaya Da Kafarka" (Abba, Stand on Your Own), Kwankwaso said the move was an attempt to create division between him and the governor.

Kwankwaso said, "What people fail to understand is that Kwankwasiyya is a movement, not just a political party. People believe in us, so if a governor or legislator we endorsed fails to meet expectations, it's not just their name that will be criticised; they will say Kwankwasiyya has failed."

He further denied interfering in Kano State's government affairs, stating that his role is to provide advice only when requested.

"From the start, I made it clear that I would only give advice if asked. That is exactly what I have been doing, and even then, it is only upon

request," he clarified.

Kwankwaso alleged that those pushing for Governor Yusuf to sever ties with the Kwankwasiyya movement have ulterior motives.

He claimed that their ultimate aim was to exploit any mistakes the governor makes to undermine both him and the movement.

"Some prominent individuals think that if Abba stands alone and leaves Kwankwasiyya, they might have a chance to take over. They hope to capitalise on any errors he makes, dragging him and us down in the process to achieve their selfish goals," Kwankwaso said.

The former governor commended Governor Yusuf for his loyalty, urging him to resist attempts by political actors seeking to create gap between them for their self-seeking interest.

# Tinubu okays establishment of varsity in Southern Kaduna

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has congratulated Ghana's President-elect, John Dramani Mahama, following his victory in the December 7, 2024 general elections.

In a statement on Sunday by Bayo Onanuga, Tinubu's Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, the President extended his best wishes to Mahama after his opponent, Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia conceded defeat in a speech.

During a telephone conversation with the President-elect, Tinubu expressed optimism that Mahama's return to power would foster greater stability within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), where Tinubu currently serves as chairman.

He commended the Ghanaian people for their unwavering commitment to democracy, demonstrated through the peaceful and transparent conduct of the presidential and parliamentary elections.

"Once again, Ghanaians have shown the world that democracy is the cornerstone of political stability, economic growth, and social justice in Africa," Tinubu said.



Tinubu also lauded Vice President Bawumia for his dignified decision to concede defeat, describing it as a testament to Ghana's deeply rooted democratic ethos.

He further acknowledged Mahama's leadership qualities, noting that his return to Jubilee House, after serving as President from 2012 to 2017, signifies the trust Ghanaians have in his vision to lead the country towards greater progress.

Highlighting Mahama's extensive political career—including his time as Vice President from 2009-2012, Member of Parliament from 1997-2009, and as a deputy minister—Tinubu expressed confidence in his ability to steer Ghana to new heights.

President Tinubu reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to deepening its fraternal ties with Ghana, built on shared history, cultural affinity, and a mutual dedication to democracy, the rule of law, and regional economic integration.

Tinubu also praised outgoing President Nana Akufo-Addo for his exemplary leadership and contributions to Ghana's development and regional stability.

He expressed enthusiasm about working with Mahama's administration to strengthen bilateral relations and advance shared goals for a prosperous West Africa.

# DSS arrests 'whistleblower' Mahdi Shehu over false French military base claim

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Department of State Service (DSS) has arrested a Kaduna-based activist and political commentator, Mahdi Shehu over claims of plans to establish a French military base in Northwest region of Nigeria.

The arrest, which occurred over the weekend, followed allegations that Shehu shared a controversial viral video in which he claimed that plans were underway to establish a French military base in the North-West region of the country.

Although Shehu deleted the video, it had already gained significant traction online, raising concerns about national security.

Zagazola Makama, a security analyst and counter-insurgency expert in the Lake Chad region said Shehu is in DSS custody in Kaduna and may face court proceedings soon.

Authorities have reportedly issued directives for his arraignment while ensuring his rights are respected during detention.

Mustapha Abubakar, Shehu's lawyer, told SaharaReporters that he got to know about the arrest from Shehu's family,



stressing that that he couldn't provide further detail about the issue as he is currently not in Kaduna State.

Meanwhile, the DSS has yet to release an official statement on the matter.

In February, Shehu was arrested and detained by the police in Abuja.

Sources revealed that Shehu was arrested following a petition from the law office of a former Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation, Abubakar Malami (SAN) on behalf of the former minister and his family.

A source close to Shehu confirmed the arrest and detention to newsmen, saying the businessman and whistleblower was still being detained by the police.

"I was told that he was arrested pursuant to a petition written by the chambers of the former AGF, Abubakar Malami on behalf of Malami and his family. The letter came with the letterhead of A.A. Malami & Co. Law Office and the petition is on behalf of Malami and his family.

"He was arrested by the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Monitoring Unit at the Force Headquarters IN Abuja," the source said.

Abubakar later said his client's arrest and detention by the police might be connected to efforts by Malami and some members of Muhammadu Buhari's immediate past government to silence him for demanding accountability from them.

# Finally, Warri Refinery commences operations

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Warri Refining and Petrochemicals Company (WRPC) has commenced operations.

Mele Kyari, the Group Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited, NNPC, disclosed this during a tour of the facility on Monday.

Addressing the team during the tour of the facility, Kyari said, “This plant is running. Although it is not 100 percent complete, we are still in the process.

“Many people think these matters are not real. They believe real things are not possible in this country. We want you to see that this is real.”

Located in Ekpan, Uvwie, and Ubeji, Warri, the 125,000 barrels per day petrochemical plant produces 13,000 metric tonnes per annum (MTA) of polypropylene and 18,000 MTA of carbon black.

Commissioned in 1978 and managed by NNPC, the WRPC was built to supply markets in the southern and southwestern regions of Nigeria.

A video posted by Channels TV



on Monday showed Kyari addressing a tour team, which included the Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority, Farouk Ahmed.

Before the tour commenced, Kyari explained that the inspection aimed to show Nigerians the level of work completed so far.

According to him, although the repairs on the facility are not yet 100 per cent complete, operations have commenced.

He said, “We are taking you through our plant. This plant is running. Although it is not 100 per cent complete, we are still in the process. Many people think

these things are not real. They think real things are not possible in this country. We want you to see that this is real.”

The mechanical completion of the facility was initially scheduled for the first quarter of 2024, according to the NNPC spokesperson, Olufemi Soneye.

“Warri should be done by Q1 (first quarter) 2024,” Soneye stated.

The WRPC is one of Nigeria’s four refineries, alongside the old and new Port Harcourt Refining Company in Rivers State and the Kaduna Refining and Petrochemical Company in Kaduna State.

# FG begins direct payment of allocations to LGs next month

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) will begin to pay local government councils their allocations from the federation account next month.

According to a source in the know, FAAC will begin with the disbursement of this month's allocation to the tiers of government.

The direct receipt from FAAC will end the delay in the implementation of the July 11 judgment of the Supreme Court granting financial autonomy to councils.

Since the judgment was delivered, the Federal Government has been making an effort to ensure minimal disruption to state/local government operations.

The umbilical cord of the state/local government joint account into which council allocations are paid has been difficult to break because of subtle resistance by governors, many of who are displeased with the Supreme Court judgment.

A member of the Inter-Ministerial Committee established to enforce the Supreme Court judgment told our correspondent that approval has been given for the direct FAAC allocations to LGAs from next month after all the issues were laid to rest.

The source explained that though some councils have been collecting their allocation directly, the process will be fully operational by next month.

The committee member declined a request to name the councils that have been receiving direct allocations.

The source said: "A few LGAs have already started receiving their direct allocations but all of the 774 LGAs will fully start receiving their allocations from January 2025.

"Our committee will reconvene in January to review its progress and finalise measures before the Accountant-General of the Federation issues



authorisation for the complete rollout.

"This is a critical juncture in Nigeria's governance structure.

"Our January 2025 meeting will also address the actions of governors attempting to undermine the autonomy of democratically elected LGA chairmen, deputies, and councillors, ensuring they are not coerced into serving state interests."

This move is believed to be a critical step in empowering councils to carry out their constitutional responsibilities effectively without undue interference by governors.

The source expressed disappointment with the suspension for two months of democratically elected local government chairmen and deputies by the Edo State House of Assembly, following a petition by Governor Monday Okpebholo accusing them of insubordination for not making available their financial statements as directed.

"It is highly undemocratic for governors to dissolve elected LGAs.

"Such actions undermine the autonomy granted to local governments and create an environment where LGAs become pawns in the hands of state executives,"

the source said.

The committee, chaired by Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) George Akume has as members Coordinating Minister of the Economy Wale Edun, Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice Lateef Fagbemi (SAN), Minister of Budget and Economic Planning Abubakar Bagudu, Accountant General of the Federation Oluwatoyin Madein, Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Governor Olayemi Cardoso, Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission Chairman Muhammed Shehu and representatives of state governors as well as local governments.

President Bola Tinubu threw his weight behind the financial independence of councils.

The inter-ministerial committee endorsed the implementation of constitutional provisions that recognise councils as the third tier of government.

Fagbemi had threatened to initiate contempt proceedings against defiant governors who failed to comply with the July 11 Supreme Court judgment.

Justifying councils' financial autonomy, Fagbemi said: "Local government autonomy is meant to empower the grassroots, not enrich individuals.

"Any chairman found guilty of diverting funds will face severe legal consequences."

The Senate also weighed in, urging full compliance with the Supreme Court judgment.

It advocated constitutional amendments to remove ambiguities in Section 162(6) of the 1999 Constitution, which created state/local government joint accounts.

Senate President, Godswill Akpabio emphasised the need for a clear framework to enforce local government autonomy effectively.

# Oyebanji signs Ekiti N375.8bn 2025 budget into law

By Dave Oludare Oso

Governor Biodun Oyebanji of Ekiti State, on Monday, signed the N375.79 billion 2025 budget into law.

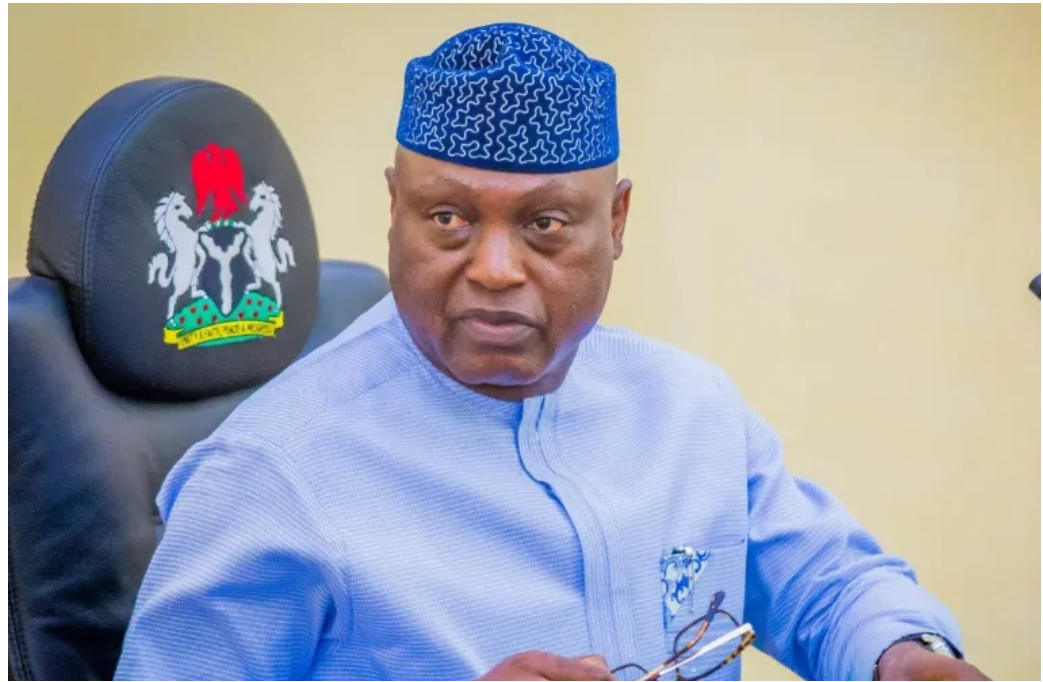
The budget totals N375.79bn, with 51 per cent allocated for recurrent expenditure and 49 per cent for capital expenditure after being passed by the state House of Assembly and presented to the governor for assent.

While signing the document into law in Ado Ekiti, the state capital, Oyebanji said the budget, “which is a product of wide consultation with the people of Ekiti State, was prepared based on our expected economic realities over the next year. It also aligns with the fiscal principles of transparency, accountability, and inclusivity.”

The governor added, “Top priority has been given to agriculture and food security, wealth creation, and infrastructural development in the 2025 fiscal year.

“Furthermore, the document will allow us to consolidate our achievements as a government, complete all ongoing programmes and projects, and provide the required infrastructure for the economic transformation of our towns and communities across the state.”

The governor, who emphasised that the successful implementation of the budget depends largely on the availability of funds, lauded President Bola Tinubu and his team for the economic reforms that have been implemented to address the structural problems confronting the country’s economy and promote



sustainable development.

He said, “These reforms have significantly improved the revenue accruing to the state from the Federation Account in the past year. We expect this enhanced revenue flow to continue in 2025 and beyond.”

Oyebanji also praised the Ekiti State Internal Revenue Service for improving revenue collection and generation through various strategies, without placing additional burdens on the people. He assured that his administration would continue to provide the necessary support to strengthen EKIRS and improve its revenue generation drive.

He stated, “In a bid to enhance the effectiveness of EKIRS, our administration has approved the construction of a befitting building as the Ekiti Revenue House. It is our desire that, in the near future, the state will be able to meet its overhead costs from Internally Generated Revenue, thereby freeing up allocations from the Federation Account for developmental projects.

“In the 2025 fiscal year, we will strive to meet our revenue targets to ensure the implementation of all the ambitious programmes and projects in the budget. We will also continue to strengthen our relationship with our development partners and seek their support for the implementation of specific projects in the state.”

Oyebanji, who reiterated his commitment to the welfare of workers and pensioners, said, “We are up to date with our monthly pension payments and have significantly reduced the state’s gratuity backlog. To date, we have settled outstanding gratuities owed to civil servants to the tune of N5.6bn, thereby reducing the backlog by four years.”

The governor also expressed his gratitude to the 6th State Assembly, describing it as “a worthy partner in progress with the Executive, rather than constituting a hindrance to progress. I urge you to continue in this spirit and place the Ekiti project above partisan politics.”

# Police bring babies to our home – Founder, Arrows of God orphanage

By Efemena David

The 83-year-old founder of Arrows of God Orphanage in Anambra State, which was sealed last year, Clara Chinwe, has stated that operatives of the Nigeria Police Force from both Anambra and Lagos states often bring abandoned babies to her orphanage.

She said this during an exclusive interview with this reporter, noting that all the babies brought to the orphanage come with a police extract detailing where and how the babies were found.

My background, antecedent

The retired Lieutenant Colonel said during the interview: “I was trained as a nurse years ago in London and as a professional psychiatric nurse. I lived in Britain for 14 years, got married, and then returned to Nigeria. I worked well in the military and was promoted until I reached the rank of lieutenant colonel. I was in charge of the Armed Forces College of Nursing. I continued to work in the military, and then suddenly, I got a call from God that I should disengage from the army for a special assignment. The Lord spoke to me clearly that nobody cares because babies are dying.

“The call kept coming, and I looked around; babies were dying and nobody cared. The assignment was that I should go and feed them. I lived in the barracks and worked there, so I didn’t understand this. I sought advice from men of God, and they advised me to disengage from the army. So, I started praying and appealed for voluntary retirement.

“After leaving the army, I attended Bible School and completed my studies, earning a master’s degree in public administration in University of Lagos, Unilag. I registered the orphanage with the Corporate Affairs Commission, gathered supporters, and obtained my certificate. I then registered with the Lagos State government and the police, showing them my papers. My training was sound, and I acquired all necessary equipment. I employed nannies and cooks.

Our modus operandi

“Babies don’t come to me directly; the police bring them. The Lagos State Police bring them to us directly while in Anambra State, it’s the people in hospitals that send them to the police. Every letter regarding adoption is addressed to the commissioner of any state I work in. My letters go to their office after the children have stayed with me for three months. It is a requirement that the children stay in the home for three months before the adoptive parents can take them.

“We keep detailed records of all the children in the home. Statistics are done on a monthly basis and submitted to the ministry, court, Department of State Service (DSS) and the police. At the end of the process, we compile statistics in Lagos State and send them to the commissioner, as well as to the Anambra State authorities, if I am in Anambra.

Every child brought to us is documented. I run the orphanage home according to the rules and regulations stipulated by both states I operate, Lagos and Anambra. We don’t search for babies neither do we go around gathering babies or children. The ministry brings them to us, when young girls come to us, we direct them back to the ministry, when

people bring abandoned children to us, we direct them to the police/ministry.”

What child adoption entails

Speaking on the process for child adoption, the 83-year-old retiree further said, “We normally go to the ministry and they give us a paper for requirements of adoption. These papers are what we give to anyone coming to adopt a child with a payment of N5, 000 as registration so that the papers can be prepared for them. If they send their files through Lagos, it’s N25,000 because they cover transport. This is all part of registration. We register them as potential foster parents and start looking for a baby for them.

“Sometimes we have babies and sometimes we do not. Statistics show in the military and in the police, the number of babies that we have. Then, when eventually they come and they want a baby, they pay for the registration, we make photocopies of files, give them a copy, and keep ours.

“The orphanage home is running as usual. We only have suspended the adoption process till the case is over, and even at that, the Ministry of Women Affairs in Awka still sends us prospective parents. The home has been open since December 6th, 2023.”





# Police warn against dragging IGP into civil matters

By Friday Omosola

The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has issued warning to Nigerians against attempts to implicate the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kayode Egbetokun, in civil disputes.

The warning comes amidst a recent land matter involving one Bilikisu Ishaqu Aliyu and the Yesufu family.

Police spokesperson, Olumuyiwa Adejobi in a statement today expressed concern over allegations aimed at tarnishing the IGP's reputation.

He described the claims as baseless and misleading, adding that they



portrayed the police as an irresponsible and meddling institution.

The controversy arose following a publication by AIT on July 10, 2024, titled "Yesufu family seeks justice as police authorities fail to investigate Bilikisu Ishaqu."

Adejobi accused the media outlet of distorting facts and misinforming the public about the case.

He reiterated that the police's primary role is to maintain law and order, as well as public safety.

Furthermore, Adejobi warned that IGP should not be dragged into civil matters such as land disputes unless there are clear criminal elements involved.

He also dismissed claims of a rift between the NPF and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) as "unfounded, laughable, and without merit."

# Gunmen kidnap two pastors in Adamawa

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Church of the Brethren in Nigeria in Adamawa State has been thrown into a deep mourning with the abduction of two of its pastors by suspected kidnapers on Sunday.

The Church, popularly known as Ekklesiyar Ya'Uwa A Nigeria (EYN), has congregations across the North-East region, with its headquarters in Hong Local Government Area of Adamawa State.

The abducted pastors, Rev. James Kwayang and Rev. Ishaku Chiwar, were serving at the Local Council Church (LCC) branch in Mbila-Malibu, Fufore Local Government Area, where they were abducted around 11 p.m. on Sunday.

Spokesman for the Adamawa State Police Command, Suleiman



Nguroje, confirmed the incident and stated that personnel have been deployed to track the gunmen and rescue the clerics.

This sad development comes on the heels of the killing of a priest, Chukwujekwu Okonkwo, by kidnapers in Anambra State on Boxing Day, throwing the Catholic community into mourning

The cleric was shot dead on the Onitsha-Owerri Expressway in

one of the security breaches recorded across the country during the Christmas holidays.

Seventy-five-year-old retired Anglican Bishop of Nnewi Diocese also in the state, Most Rev Godwin Okpala, remains in kidnapers' den two weeks after his abduction.

A member of the Anambra State House of Assembly, Justice Azuka, was also abducted on Tuesday night on Ugwunapampa Road in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State.

There is no information yet about his fate.

Security personnel are said to still be searching for him.

# 2024 hard for Nigerians but 2025 will be better – Obasanjo

By Dave Oludare Oso

With 2024 coming to an end in just a little over 24 hours, former President Olusegun Obasanjo, has yet again voiced his optimism about Nigeria getting ahead of the myriads of challenges currently affecting her socio-economic growth and development.

Speaking in an interview on ARISE TV aired on Monday morning, Obasanjo said, “I will say to Nigerians, we are going through hardship, but they should never lose hope. I am an incurable optimist about Nigeria, and we have a great country.”

The former president, while expressing his optimism, admitted though that the country is not where it should be at the moment going by the action or inaction of Nigerians and those in government.

He said, “And where we are is not where God wants us to be. And I believe that sooner than later, we will get to where God wants us to be. God wants Nigeria to be a land flowing with milk and honey, not a desert.

“But God is God of great things for Nigeria. I believe God has great



things for Nigeria in the immediate future.”

While giving his New Year message to Nigerians, Obasanjo assured Nigerians of better days ahead, saying, “I wish all Nigerians a happy new year, a prosperous 2025, and I hope every family, every living Nigerian will see something better in the year 2025.”

On what to expect from the incoming US president, Donald Trump administration, Obasanjo said that Nigeria can benefit from the president-elect’s foreign policies by being proactive in our international relations.

“Whether anybody likes it or not, the American people have decided that Trump will be their leader. And I believe there will be policy makers

around him that we can reach and we can also talk to.

“I believe that there is no leader that if you present facts and figures and what I would call enlightened interest of that leader’s country — because America has enlightened interest in Africa – we should make that known to Trump, and to say, look, this is in your interest, don’t ignore it.

“We are ready to work with you. Give us our respect and dignity that is due to us. Respect our citizens that are in your country, and let us work together for a peaceful world, a world that is secure, the world that is stable, and the world where the prosperity will be shared, where security will be common. I believe Trump will understand that,” he noted.

# FG accuses CBN of misappropriating N2.7trn Ways and Means interests

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Federal Government has declared that the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) misappropriated N2.73 trillion in interest payments from Ways and Means advances, in recent years.

This development raises serious concerns over irregularities in managing government funds.

The allegation was disclosed in the consolidated financial statement of the Federal Government for the year ended December 31, 2021, submitted to the National Assembly by the Auditor-General, Shaakaar Chira, with reference number AuGF/AR.2021/01 and dated July 31, 2024.

The Ways and Means facility, a temporary loan mechanism provided by the CBN to the government to finance budget deficits, is at the centre of the controversy.

According to the report, the Federal Government claimed that the CBN retained interest charges amounting to N2.73tn, using the funds “for its sole benefit” rather than returning them to the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

The negative cash balance of the CRF stood at N17.1tn as of December 31, 2021, a figure which also included N4.4tn in Ways and Means advances.

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended), and the Financial Regulations of 2009 strictly prohibit unauthorised withdrawals from the CRF or overdrawn government accounts.

Section 80(2) of the Constitution states that no funds shall be withdrawn from the CRF without approval by an appropriation act or supplementary



act, while paragraph 710 of the Financial Regulations bars overdrafts and mandates that any interest incurred must be refunded.

The report, however, revealed that the CRF and four other ministries, departments, and agencies had overdrawn accounts totalling N17.1tn, a figure not supported by appropriate approvals or documentation.

The breakdown of the CRF’s negative balance included N9.41tn for reconciled domestic debt service, N4.45tn for Ways and Means withdrawals, and N483.97bn for Paris Club loan refunds.

Other components included deferred state loan deductions and CPV coupon payments.

The report read, “The CRF negative balance of (N17,105,111,709,523.00) as at 31st December 2021 included actual Ways and Means advance of N4.4 trillion taken by Government and interest charged on it for the sole use of CBN as though the Ways and Means a loan from CBN funds or from any syndicated group of lenders.”

The Federal Government, in its

response, stated that the CBN had mismanaged the Ways and Means facility, treating it as though the funds were loans from its balance sheet or a syndicated facility from local or foreign lenders.

It argued that the N2.73tn interest charged on these advances was wrongly retained by the apex bank and called for its immediate refund to the CRF.

The report noted, “The interest charged on Ways and Means by CBN was misappropriated by CBN for its sole use whereas the Actual Ways and Means was not a facility from its funds or balance sheet, nor was it a syndicated facility from a group of local and foreign lenders.

“CBN must therefore refund to the Federal Government of Nigeria the interest of N2.73 trillion it cornered for its sole use as of 31st December 2021.”

The government further instructed that the interest charges should not be securitised, unlike other components of the overdraft being handled by the Debt Management Office.

The Office of the Auditor-General, in its evaluation, maintained that the findings remained valid until the Federal Government provided evidence of proper approvals and documentation for the transactions.

The Auditor-General recommended that the Accountant-General of the Federation justify the N17.1tn overdraft to the Public Accounts Committees of the National Assembly and ensure that sanctions outlined in paragraph 3106 of the Financial Regulations were applied for irregular payments from public funds.

# W'Bank loans Nigeria \$1.5bn for tax bills, subsidy removal

By Dave Oludare Oso

Following Federal Government's implementation of key reforms, including removing fuel subsidies and introducing comprehensive tax policies, the World Bank has disbursed a \$1.5bn loan to Nigeria.

Per PUNCH, the loan, part of the Reforms for Economic Stabilisation to Enable Transformation Development Policy Financing initiative, is among the fastest disbursements Nigeria has received with both tranches released in less than six months.

A World Bank document seen by NEW DAILY PRIME on Sunday, stated that the loan was approved on June 13, 2024, with the first tranche of \$750m disbursed on July 2, 2024.

The second tranche, tied to the fulfilment of specific economic reform conditions, was disbursed in November 2024.

This rapid disbursement contrasts with other loan programmes, which typically experience delays due to slow or partial implementation of conditions.

For more context, another loan of \$750m was approved on the same day (June 13, 2024) for the Accelerating Resource Mobilisation Reforms Programme for Results project in Nigeria.

It was observed that the World Bank has only disbursed about \$1.88m to Nigeria at the time of filing this story, which is less than one per cent of the total approved \$750m for the ARMOR project.

The \$1.5bn loan disbursed to Nigeria was structured in two tranches with different maturity periods.

The first tranche was a \$750m credit from the International Development Association, featuring a 12-year maturity and a six-year grace period.

The second tranche, a \$750m loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, has a 24-year repayment period with an 11-year grace period.



The World Bank document read, "This document summarises the progress made under the Reforms for Economic Stabilisation to Enable Transformation Development Policy Financing for the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Borrower or Recipient), which was approved by the Executive Directors on June 13, 2024.

"The DPF is a standalone operation comprised of two tranches: (1) first tranche comprising \$750m credit from the International Development Association (Association) (Shorter Maturity Loan terms with 12-year maturity and grace period of 6 years, Credit No. 7567-NG); and (2) second tranche comprising \$750m loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (Bank) (US dollar-denominated, commitment-linked loan with 24-year maturity and grace period of 11 years, Loan No.9683-NG).

"The Financing Agreement and Loan Agreement were signed and declared effective on June 19, 2024 and June 26, 2024, respectively. The first tranche was released on July 2, 2024."

While the document itself did not clearly state when the disbursement for the second tranche was made, further findings showed that Nigeria got a \$750m disbursement from the World Bank in November.

According to the document seen by NEW DAILY PRIME, a critical reform that unlocked the second tranche was the removal of fuel subsidies.

The World Bank commended the government for not only meeting the condition but exceeding expectations by fully deregulating the fuel market.

The document noted, "In terms of implementation, while the TRC (Tranche Release Conditions) formulation required introducing the change over a specified time-bound implementation period, the Borrower has moved ahead and made the change immediately, thereby overachieving the TRC in this respect.

"Effective October 2024, the price of PMS has been determined by the international market and the exchange rate set by the Central Bank of Nigeria."

This move has allowed petrol prices to align with international market rates and exchange rates, effectively ending the implicit subsidies that had burdened public finances.

Fuel prices have increased more than fivefold since the reform process began in mid-2023, a change that has drawn both praise for its fiscal prudence and criticism for its impact on living costs.

In addition to removing fuel subsidies, the Federal Government introduced sweeping tax reforms aimed at improving revenue mobilisation.

The Nigeria Tax Bill 2024, submitted to the National Assembly, proposes a gradual increase in the Value Added Tax rate to 10 per cent by 2025, alongside measures to simplify tax compliance and expand input tax credits for businesses.

# Gov Aiyedatiwa signs N698bn 2025 budget into law

By Friday Omosola

Ondo State Governor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa, has signed the 2025 Appropriation Bill into law, a major step toward fulfilling his administration's promises to the people of the state.

The signing ceremony took place on Monday at the Exco Chamber in the Governor's office in Akure, with the Deputy Governor, Olayide Adelami, state lawmakers, members of the executive council, and other key stakeholders in attendance.

Governor Aiyedatiwa described the 2025 fiscal plan, dubbed the "Budget of Recovery", as a bold and strategic move aimed at revitalizing the state's economy and addressing its socio-economic challenges.

He emphasised that the budget marked a critical moment in his administration's journey and was a fulfillment of the promises made during his election campaign.

"This is a critical moment for our administration, one that marks a significant step towards fulfilling the promises we made to the people of Ondo State during the electioneering processes," he said

The budget, totaling N698.659 billion, allocates N433.622 billion (62.06 per cent) to capital expenditure and N265.037 billion (37.94 per cent) to recurrent expenditure.

Governor Aiyedatiwa added that the prioritisation of capital expenditure would stimulate the economy and drive large-scale infrastructural development across the state.

The governor highlighted that the budget had been shaped by input from residents through town hall



meetings held across Ondo State.

The 2025 budget includes substantial allocations to agriculture, infrastructure, education, healthcare, security, and social welfare.

Governor Aiyedatiwa stressed that these investments are essential to improving the lives of the people and securing a prosperous future for the state.

To ensure transparency and accountability, the governor announced that the 2025 budget would be made available on the state's budget portal starting January 1, 2025.

"The 2025 budget is a tool for achieving the O'DATIWA O'DIRORUN (OUR EASE) goals, and we will ensure its implementation is done with utmost responsibility and efficiency," he affirmed. "I want to reassure the good people of Ondo State that our government remains focused on its goals of economic development, achieving sustainable food security, resilient community development,

and the facilitation of social inclusion and security."

The Speaker of the Ondo State House of Assembly, Olamide Oladiji, also commended Governor Aiyedatiwa for his commitment to advancing key sectors of the state's economy.

He noted the upward revision of the budget from N655.230 billion to N698.659 billion, reflecting the administration's determination to address the growing needs of the state.

The Speaker also praised the governor for signing several key legislative frameworks into law, including the Agriculture Law, Transparency Law, Building Plans Law, and the Anti-Land Grabbing Law.

These laws, he said, represent significant strides in promoting good governance and ensuring social justice.

# Tinubu applauds NNPC for reopening Warri Refinery

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has expressed immense satisfaction with the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC) for the reactivation of the Warri Refining and Petrochemical Company.

In a statement issued by his Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, Tinubu hailed the refinery's resumption as a significant milestone in 2024, bolstering Nigerians' confidence in his administration.

"Today, the Warri Refinery returned to operation weeks after NNPC Limited restarted the 60,000 Barrels per day at the Port Harcourt Refinery in November.

"With Warri Refining and Petrochemical Company (WRPC) going into operation after several years of inactivity, President Tinubu has once again expressed his administration's determination to ramp up local refining capacity and make Nigeria a hub for downstream industrial activities in Africa", he said.

The administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, led by the All Progressives Congress, awarded the contract for the comprehensive rehabilitation and overhaul of the four state-owned refineries.

President Tinubu expressed confidence that with the 125,000 barrels per day (bpd) Warri

Refinery now operating at 60% capacity, his administration's strategic plan to achieve energy efficiency and security is firmly on track.

He commended the Mele Kyari-led NNPC management for their dedicated efforts in restoring Nigeria's status and pride as a leading oil-producing nation.

"The restart of Warri Refinery today brings joy and gladness to me and Nigerians. This will further strengthen the hope and confidence of Nigerians for a greater and better future that we promised. This development is a remarkable way to end the year following the feat recorded earlier with the old Port Harcourt Refinery. I am equally happy that NNPC Limited is implementing my directive to restore all four refineries to good working

condition.

"I congratulate Mele Kyari and his team at NNPC for working hard to restore our national pride and make Nigeria a hub for crude oil refining in Africa," President Tinubu said.

President Tinubu urged the NNPC to expedite repairs on the Kaduna Refinery and the 150,000 bpd second refinery in Port Harcourt to strengthen Nigeria's standing as a leading global energy provider.

The WRPC will prioritize the production and storage of essential products, including Straight Run Kerosene (SRK), Automotive Gas Oil (AGO), as well as heavy and light Naphtha.



## God used Umahi to make me governor – Nwifuru

By Dave Oludare Oso

Governor Francis Nwifuru of Ebonyi State has expressed his profound gratitude to the Minister of Works, Senator David Umahi, crediting him as the divine instrumentality through which he ascended to the esteemed position of governor in 2023.

The governor spoke during an empowerment programme hosted by Honorable Nkemkanma Kama, the member representing Ohaozara/Onicha/Ivo Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives, held at Ishiagu, Ivo Local Government Area of Ebonyi on Monday.

According to Governor Nwifuru, his ascension to the governorship was largely facilitated by the benevolent influence of Senator Umahi, whom he described as the catalyst that enabled him to attain the pinnacle of success.

He emphasized that he owes his current position to the fact that he was the



greatest beneficiary of Umahi's governance.

The governor articulated his sentiments by stating that God could have potentially utilized another individual to elevate him to the position of governor, but Senator Umahi was the chosen vessel, uniquely positioned to facilitate his ascension.

He said: "God would have used another person to make me governor but Umahi was the only person available to be used. At the time God searched for a person to use in making me governor, Umahi made himself available."

Governor Nwifuru further acknowledged that Senator Umahi played a pivotal role in his appointment as Speaker of the state House of Assembly, a position he held for eight years.

He reflected on his tenure as Speaker, noting that he discharged his duties with integrity and honesty, and that his experience under Senator Umahi's leadership was instrumental in shaping his perspective and informing his approach to governance.

The governor also lauded Senator Umahi's exemplary leadership, highlighting his exceptional ability to excel in various sectors, including peacekeeping, infrastructure development, and human capital development.

He described Senator Umahi as a goal-getter, adept at seizing opportunities and achieving his objectives with precision and determination.

## Sanwo-Olu approves appointment of three new Perm Secs

By Dave Oludare Oso

Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State has approved the appointment of three new Permanent Secretaries in the state public service, reinforcing his administration's commitment to effective governance and service delivery.

The newly appointed officials are Mr Abdul Rafiu Omowole Fashola, who currently serves as the Director of Administration and Human Resources and Secretary of the Staff Housing and Loans Board; Mrs Kaphayah Olayemi Sarumi, Director of State Counsel at the Lagos State Waterways Authority and Mr Abdul-Rasheed Abiola Muri-Okunola, Director of Administration and Human Resources as well as General Manager of the Motor Vehicle Administration Agency (MVAA).

In a statement announcing the appointments, the Head of Service, Bode Agoro, highlighted the exceptional



qualifications of the new appointees, praising their diligence, intellectual capacity, and unwavering dedication to their duties.

"These individuals have demonstrated an outstanding level of commitment and competence, earning this recognition to serve in higher capacities. Their contributions will undoubtedly enhance the quality of service delivery in Lagos State," he said.

Agoro assured the public of the new officials' readiness to contribute meaningfully to the administration's goals, while also wishing them a rewarding and impactful tenure in office.

The appointments are effective from 31 December 2024, with their respective deployments to be announced in due course.

Agoro emphasised that these appointments align with the administration's resolve to ensure professionalism and excellence in the state's civil service.

This development underscored Governor Sanwo-Olu's strategic focus on building a highly efficient public service framework that drives the state's vision for sustainable growth and development.

# Akeredolu's family faults naming uncompleted project after late gov

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The family of the late Ondo State governor, Rotimi Akeredolu, has expressed dissatisfaction with the naming of an uncompleted project after him by Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa, describing the gesture as “premature and insincere.”

The family emphasized that true honour lies in completing the projects initiated by the late governor.

In a statement issued by Babajide Akeredolu on behalf of the family, they commended the groundbreaking of the Judicial Complex, a project dear to the late governor, but criticized the politics surrounding it.

The family described the decision to name the project after the late governor before its completion as premature.

They urged Governor Aiyedatiwa to demonstrate genuine commitment to Akeredolu's legacy by prioritizing the completion and functionality of such projects.

The family noted a clash between the government's Leadership Lecture Series and the Akeredolu family's remembrance programme in Owo.

Babajide Akeredolu stated that the family had formally informed the governor of their plans, but the state government organized its event without consulting or inviting any family members.

This omission was termed “discourteous and disrespectful” for an event meant to honour a former governor.

The family listed the following as



critical projects initiated by Akeredolu that require urgent attention;

The completion of the flyover at Onyearugbulem Junction, a flagship infrastructure project meant to be completed within 18 months but is now progressing slowly.

Addressing abandoned road projects, the family noted that roads behind SIB and Ijoka Road have been neglected, causing hardship for residents.

They also said Oda Road has seen substandard work compared to projects completed during Akeredolu's tenure.

The family criticized the state government for discrepancies in salary payments, high tax burdens, and failure to implement a fair minimum wage.

The family accused Governor

Aiyedatiwa of alienating individuals associated with Akeredolu and called for an end to divisive actions, while urging the governor to emulate his predecessor's courage and conviction in leadership.

The family appreciated the Deputy Governor for representing the state at the remembrance event and other functions in the governor's absence.

They advised Governor Aiyedatiwa to separate politics from governance and focus on effective leadership to leave a lasting legacy.

The family reassured the people of Ondo State of their commitment to preserving the late governor's legacy, speaking truth to power, and holding leaders accountable.

The statement concluded, “True loyalty and respect for the late governor must be reflected in actions, not empty gestures or political gimmicks.”



# Alleged terrorism financing: EFCC to freeze 24 bank accounts

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A Federal High Court in Abuja, on Monday, approved the application by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to freeze 24 bank accounts domiciled in different banks over allegations bordering on terrorism financing.

Justice Emeka Nwite, who granted the application after the EFCC's lawyer, Martha Babatunde, moved an ex-parte motion to the effect, gave the commission the go-ahead to freeze the accounts for 90 days pending the conclusion of investigation.

The motion ex-parte, marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/1897/V/2024, was filed by Ekele Iheanacho, SAN.

Iheanacho sought an order freezing the bank accounts stated in the schedule which accounts are owned by Lawrence Lucky Eromosele who is currently being investigated in a case involving kidnapping pending the conclusion of the investigation.

He said the bank accounts in respect of which the reliefs were sought are subject matters of investigation by the EFCC in relation to money laundering and terrorism financing.

The senior lawyer said the preliminary investigation conducted thus far revealed that the bank accounts are linked to persons who take advantage of the virtual cryptocurrency exchange platforms to illegally manipulate the value of naira and laundering proceeds of unlawful activities.

He said there was need to preserve the funds in the identified bank accounts pending the conclusion of investigation and possible prosecution.



In the affidavit deposed to by Mohammed Khalil, an investigator attached to the Special Investigation Team of the EFCC domiciled in the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), he said he was a member of the team assigned to investigate the matter.

He said the National Security Adviser (NSA), Nuhu Ribadu, directed the team to investigate a serious threat by a syndicate threatening the lives of senior operatives of the NSA by making demands for payments of ransom.

He said on receipt of the directive, the team began investigation by conducting surveillance of the activities on these syndicates, requesting bank instruments.

Kalil said investigation revealed Lawrence Lucky Eromosele as one of the perpetrators of the crime.

According to him, the operatives received a direct threat involving their families, with the perpetrators providing the homes addresses, family locations and specific movements with a threat to kidnap following

failure to remit redemption payments.

He alleged that "one unknown individual contacted an operative, demoing some monies in exchange for their freedom and that of their families."

"Attached and marked as Exhibit EFCC 1 is the printout of the chat between one of the perpetrators and the operative."

The officer said in a bid to mitigate some of the threats, the team had identified bank accounts linked to the individuals making the threats.

"Attached and marked as Exhibit EFCC 2 are the bank statements of one of the suspects.

"Further intelligence has revealed that proceeds of crimes and funds for terrorist activities are covertly exchanged through these platforms," he said.

Kalil said the order of the court was necessary to freeze the said accounts clearly described in schedule 1 to the motion paper for which investigation is ongoing.

# Tinubu has final say on Mele Kyari's exit – NNPC

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) has said that President Bola Tinubu has the final say on the purported exit of its Group Chief Executive Officer (GCEO), Mele Kyari in January 2025.

However, NNPC has described Kyari exit claims in January 2025 as false.

NNPC spokesperson, Olufemi Soneye told NEW DAILY PRIME in an interview on Monday.

This comes as some industry stakeholders believe that Kyari, who would turn 60 years on January 8, 2025, may retire from service and be replaced with one Bayo Ojulari.

Reacting, Soneye said the claims are rumours and false.

According to him, Kyari has his time and tenure in the NNPC; however, it is the prerogative of President Bola Tinubu to keep or fire the company's GCEO.

"I don't know anything about that; all those things are rumors and false. The man (Mele Kyari) has his time and tenure; the president has the final say. As the Minister of Petroleum, anything he wants to do, he will do. For us, it is to continue with our work and do it right."

He further explained that NNPC's appointments are based on expertise, skills, and ability to deliver, not on ethnicity, religion, or other sentiments.

"This is a global energy company. Movement in the company is based on expertise, skills, and ability to deliver, not on the basis that you are from X, Y, or Z; you are Muslim or Christian. Gone are the days we did that; if we do



that, we cannot have foreigners working for us. We have Dutch, American, and British managing directors of our businesses. If we are doing only Muslim, Christian, Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, we won't have them. Where we have Nigerians that can deliver, they are there. We, the company, look for professionals that can deliver," he said.

This comes as some other players in the oil and gas sector stated that the GCEO's tenure is expected to terminate in 2027, in line with Section 59 (2) of the Petroleum Industry Act 2021, which states that, "The composition of the Board of the NNPC Limited shall be determined in accordance with the Companies and Allied Matters Act and its Articles of Association."

Reports have that Kyari, alongside the Chief Executive of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Commission, Gbenga Komolafe, are appointees of ex-President Muhammadu Buhari who have survived President Bola Tinubu's sack sledgehammer.

Kyari, in November 2023, was reappointed by Tinubu to continue to lead the country's oil behemoth, its management board chairman, and members.

Recently, United States-based Nigerian professor of journalism, Farooq Kperogi stirred controversy over Tinubu's key appointments into NNPC.

Kperogi, in an article titled 'Tinubu's Buharisation of the NNPC,' accused Tinubu of ethnic bias in his appointments at NNPC in the manner former President Buhari did.

Reacting to Kperogi's article, the ex-governor of Kaduna State, Nasir El-Rufai chided Tinubu, saying two wrongs don't make a right and therefore urged that inclusion in NNPC would have trumped exclusion.

However, the presidency, through Tinubu's spokesperson, Bayo Onanuga, said El-Rufai is taking a cheap shot against the president.

Earlier, former Kaduna Central Senator, Shehu Sani faulted El-Rufai's alleged nepotism claim at NNPC.

Recall that in November 2024, NNPC appointed Adedapo Segun as its new Chief Financial Officer (CFO), taking over the position from Mr. Umar Ajiya.

# Okpebholo pledges to replicate Akpabio's developmental blueprint in Edo

By Friday Omosola

**E**do State Governor, Monday Okpebholo, has vowed to emulate the transformative achievements of Senate President Godswill Akpabio in Akwa Ibom State to drive development in Edo.

Speaking during a reception held in his honor in Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom State, Governor Okpebholo described Akpabio's tenure as Governor of Akwa Ibom (2007–2015) as a period of unprecedented transformation.

He commended Akpabio for repositioning the state into one of Nigeria's most vibrant and aesthetically appealing regions.

"The man I love to call 'the uncommon man' did so much when he was Governor, and today, Akwa Ibom's history cannot be written without Akpabio's transformation magic. Before his tenure, Akwa Ibom was one of the states written off. But within eight years, he achieved so much that Uyo is now regarded as one of the finest cities in Nigeria," Okpebholo said.

The governor expressed his determination to replicate Akpabio's development model in



Edo State, adding that his visit to Akwa Ibom had solidified his vision for transforming Edo.

"With what I have seen and heard during this visit, I am more confident that the mandate given to us by the people of Edo is achievable. Akpabio did it in Akwa Ibom, and we will do it in Edo," he assured.

He also praised Akpabio's legislative achievements, noting his exceptional leadership as Senate President.

"What Akpabio has accomplished in legislation is unparalleled. Within one year in office, he has achieved feats that many who served as Senate Presidents for eight years

couldn't. When things get tough in the Senate, he has a unique way of calming everyone down and taking charge," the governor added.

In response, Senator Akpabio lauded Governor Okpebholo's humility and willingness to learn, describing these traits as key to his eventual success in governance. He encouraged Okpebholo to remain focused on delivering people-oriented projects that will transform Edo State.

Okpebholo's remarks have sparked optimism among Edo residents, who eagerly anticipate the governor's efforts to implement Akwa Ibom's transformative template in their state.

# ABUTH to begin kidney transplants next year

By Helen Okechukwu



**I**n a major feat aimed at improving lives and checking medical tourism, the Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital (ABUTH) in Zaria will begin kidney transplants in 2025.

The hospital's Chief Medical Director (CMD), Prof. Ahmed Umdagas, disclosed this development yesterday in an interview with NAN

He attributed the delay in the operations of the Urology Centre of Excellence where kidney transplants will be carried out ,to lack of equipment.

However, he announced that the

centre would begin high-quality operations in the first quarter of 2025.

He added that with trained personnel and most of the necessary equipment now available, the centre was now fully ready to function effectively.

Furthermore, the centre has been equipped to provide standard, world-class rooms for patient comfort ,and equally features a website showcasing doctors' profiles.

The CMD further disclosed that in order to enhance cancer treatment,

the teaching hospital was now equipped with a 128-slice CT scan machine, which offers services at significantly lower costs.

“If you undergo an investigation abroad requiring the 128-slice CT scan, it costs no less than \$200, which is over ₦300,000. Meanwhile, ABUTH charges just ₦30,000 for the same service,” the CMD revealed.

Other advanced services provided at the health facility include cutting-edge imaging, lithotripsy services, and IVF implants, in collaboration with leading partners.

# Smoking reduces lifespan by 20 minutes per cigarette

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

A UCL study reveals each cigarette cuts 20 minutes off life, doubling previous estimates. Quitting smoking drastically improves health, as UK introduces stricter anti-smoking measures in 2024.

A groundbreaking study conducted by scientists at University College London (UCL) has revealed that each cigarette smoked could shave up to 22 minutes off a woman's life and 17 minutes off a man's. These findings, commissioned by the Government, nearly double previous estimates, which suggested that a cigarette costs an average of 11 minutes of life.

The research underscores the cumulative damage caused by smoking, emphasizing that quitting, even after years of smoking, can significantly improve health and extend life expectancy. For example, a person who smokes 10 cigarettes a day and quits on January 1 can prevent the loss of a day of life by January 8, a week by February 20, and an entire month by August 5.

The study coincides with the Government's introduction of stricter anti-smoking measures. Proposals include extending the indoor smoking ban to outdoor areas such as playgrounds, school entrances, and hospital grounds to protect vulnerable individuals from secondhand smoke. Additionally, plans to restrict vape advertising, limit flavors and packaging, and ban

disposable vapes by June 2025 are part of the broader Tobacco and Vapes Bill. The bill also aims to gradually increase the legal smoking age for anyone born after January 1, 2009.

Andrew Gwynne, a health minister, highlighted the transformative health benefits of quitting smoking. "From the moment you quit, your body begins to heal. Within hours, your heart rate slows, and oxygen levels improve," he said. Gwynne

"Each cigarette reduces life expectancy, but quitting can significantly improve health outcomes," she said.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jeanelle de Gruchy reinforced the call for action, urging smokers to make quitting their New Year's resolution. "Stopping smoking is one of the best decisions you can make for your health. Start the year fresh and leave smoking in the past," she said.



also praised the new legislation as a critical step toward tackling the harms of smoking and preventing nicotine addiction among young people.

The study, published recently in the *Journal of Addiction*, also notes that smoking accelerates aging, with a 60-year-old smoker having the health profile of a 70-year-old non-smoker. Dr. Sarah Jackson, from UCL's Alcohol and Tobacco Research Group, stressed the importance of public awareness.

Tobacco kills more than 8 million people each year, including an estimated 1.3 million non-smokers who are exposed to second-hand smoke and, remains a leading cause of preventable deaths in the UK, killing approximately 80,000 people annually and contributing to a quarter of all cancer cases. As UK Government introduces stronger measures to combat smoking, the message is clear: quitting not only extends life but enhances its quality.

# Woli Arole reveals 2025 prophecies, warns against infidelity

By **Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi**

Actor and prophet Woli Arole has revealed his prophecies for the year 2025, focusing on the consequences of infidelity and immoral lifestyles.

In a message shared on his Instagram page, Arole issued strong warnings, particularly to men, about the risks of neglecting their marital commitments and seeking relationships outside their marriages.

## Warning to men

Woli Arole specifically warned men against abandoning their wives for younger women, predicting that such actions would lead to regret. He emphasized that 2025 would be a year of reckoning for those who prioritize extramarital relationships.

In his post, Arole urged men to remain committed to their marriages, cautioning that their decisions could have lasting consequences.

“2025 will be a year of regret for men who prioritize extramarital relationships over their marriages,” he stated. His message highlights the potential fallout from infidelity and the emotional turmoil it could bring.

Disgrace for women involved with ‘sugar daddies’



In addition to warning men, Woli Arole directed his prophetic insight toward women who engage with older, wealthy men—often referred to as “sugar daddies.” He predicted challenging times ahead for these women and prophesied disgrace for them in the upcoming year.

“2025 is not a good year for girls who rely on sugar daddies. Side chicks will be disgraced,” he declared. His warning serves as a reminder of the societal consequences that often follow such relationships.

## Calls for repentance and moral renewal

In his conclusion, he called for repentance and a return to moral values. He urged both men and women to turn away from sinful lifestyles and embrace repentance, emphasizing that this message is a divine warning for all.

“Men and women, repent. This is a prophetic warning for 2025,” he stated. Arole believes that turning away from immoral behaviors is essential to avoid the predicted hardships and regrets.

## Impact on society

His prophecies have sparked conversations about infidelity, moral choices, and the potential consequences of pursuing relationships outside one’s marriage or moral boundaries. His warnings resonate with many who believe in the power of prophetic messages to influence behavior and choices.

While some may view his statements as a reflection of religious or cultural values, they highlight ongoing societal debates about fidelity, morality, and the impact of infidelity on personal and family life.

# I will capture Ayra Starr – Ugandan President's son

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



**M**uhoozi Kainerugaba, the son of Ugandan President, Yoweri Museveni, has made headlines with a strong statement about sensational Nigerian songstress, Ayra Starr.

In a tweet, he conveyed his admiration for the Mavin Records star and also stated that his grandfather has permitted him to get any woman on earth.

He wrote on his X account: “My late grandfather, Mzee Amos gave me permission to get any woman on earth. I will capture that girl. Ayra Starr.”

The audacious statement has sparked widespread interest and speculation among fans.

Ayra Starr, who recently performed an amazing performance at the 27th edition of Blankets and Wine alongside South African pair Blaq Diamond, is now receiving international attention.

Ayra Starr's real name is Oyinkansola Sarah Aderibigbe. She was born on June 14, 2002 in Cotonou, Benin to Nigerian parents.

Starr is a Nigerian Afrobeats singer and songwriter who

blends amapiano, funk, pop, and R&B with Afrobeats. She's known for her hit songs “Bloody Samaritan” and “Rush.”

Starr's career began as a model, but she transitioned to music after gaining attention for her cover songs on Instagram.

She chose her stage name “Starr” because she knew what she could be, and the Arabic name “Ayra” because it means “honorable and respected.”

# ‘Everybody Loves Jenifa’ sets record, grosses N1bn in 19 days

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**E**verybody Loves Jenifa,’ produced by Nollywood actress, Funke Akindele has grossed over N1 billion in the box office within three weeks, marking another remarkable milestone in her chosen career.

Akindele revealed in a post on X.com on Monday, that ‘Everybody Loves Jenifa; has become the second Nollywood film to hit the N1 billion mark within the last 12 months, achieving a cumulative total of ₦1,034,091,220.

The movie has also made history by becoming the fastest Nollywood title to reach the N1 billion threshold, doing so in just 19 days.

The film has reportedly dominated the December box office, accounting for about 40% of the total revenue with 202,604 admissions.

Akindele noted that this success has solidified her position as the “highest-grossing producer and director,” with her holding the record for the “top 4 highest-grossing Nollywood films.”

Akindele expressed gratitude to her fans, saying, “God did!



**THANK YOU!**  

**1,034,091,220**

**THE MAESTRO STRIKES AGAIN!**

**SECOND 1 BILLION BOX OFFICE IN 12 MONTHS**

**HIGHEST GROSSING PRODUCER & DIRECTOR OF ALL TIME**

**HOLDS THE RECORD OF THE TOP 4 HIGHEST GROSSING NOLLYWOOD FILMS OF ALL TIME**

Thank you, Jenifans, for supporting Everybody Loves Jenifa!

“We couldn’t have gotten here without you.”

“We’re excited for what’s to come with this massive win. Keep watching in all cinemas nationwide!” She added.

The success of Everybody Loves Jenifa is not limited to Nigeria.

Just eight days after its international debut on December 20, the film has earned an impressive \$194,560 (approximately

N300 million) across various countries outside Africa, including the UK, US, Canada, and other regions.

Funke Akindele is known for her success at the box office.

Earlier in 2024, her film ‘A Tribe Called Judah’ also broke box office records, becoming the first Nollywood film to gross ₦1 billion within 21 days of its release.

In Everybody Loves Jenifa, she returns as the popular character Jenifa, delivering humour, drama, and suspense that audiences love.



# Commissioner: Greater Lagos countdown set to feature Wizkid, Burna Boy, Olamide, others

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Lagos Commissioner Toké Benson-Awoyinka announced Greater Lagos Countdown 2025 with Wizkid, Burna Boy, Tiwa Savage, Seyi Vibe, and Olamide on Dec. 31.

Benson-Awoyinka emphasized that the event aims to usher in the New Year in style, offering a 24-hour celebration packed with music, culture, and entertainment. The festivities will kick off at 7:00 p.m. and run throughout the night, ensuring a memorable transition into 2025.

In her statement, Benson-Awoyinka highlighted the Greater Lagos Countdown as a unique platform for uniting residents while showcasing the rich cultural diversity and vibrant energy of Lagos.

She described the upcoming event as more than just a celebration, but a tribute to the spirit of the city and its people.

“This year, the event will feature a lineup of Afrobeats superstars, including Wizkid, Burna Boy, Tiwa Savage, Seyi Vibe, and the legendary Olamide, alongside other renowned artists,” Benson-Awoyinka said.

The performances will be held simultaneously across the five IBILE divisions of Lagos: Ikorodu Townhall, Badagry Grammar School, Agege Stadium, Epe Recreation Centre, and Tafawa Balewa Square (TBS).

Interested attendees can register via



<https://bit.ly/GreaterLagosCountdown25>, and tickets can be obtained at <https://lagoscountdown.live> for access to the various venues.

“This year’s countdown is not just an event—it’s a celebration of Lagos’ dynamic spirit,” Benson-Awoyinka said. “With music, dance, food, and an awe-inspiring fireworks display, we are committed to creating an unforgettable experience for everyone.”

Greater Lagos countdown set to feature Wizkid, Burna Boy, Olamide, others – Commissioner The commissioner also assured residents that robust security measures have been put in place across all venues to ensure attendees’ safety and comfort.

She urged Lagosians and tourists

alike to join the festivities and embrace the energetic spirit of Lagos as the city gears up for a remarkable 2025.

The event will reach its peak with a dazzling fireworks display at midnight, symbolizing the start of the New Year.

In addition to live music, attendees can look forward to cultural performances, food fairs, and other activities that showcase the essence of Lagos.

“The Greater Lagos Countdown stands as a testament to Lagos State’s tradition of ending the year on a high note and welcoming the New Year with grandeur and style,” Benson-Awoyinka said.

# Lateef Adedimeji's Lisabi ranks among Nigeria's top films of 2024

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Actor Lateef Adedimeji thanked fans on Instagram as his film *Lisabi: The Uprising* became one of 2024's most-searched Nigerian movies.

The achievement, driven by immense public interest, highlights the impact of Adedimeji's work in the Nollywood industry. Known for his dynamic performances and storytelling, the actor celebrated the milestone with an emotional message to his followers.

A major milestone for "Lisabi" Adedimeji announced the film's part 2 premiere just last week. The news created a buzz among fans, who eagerly awaited the continuation of the Lisabi saga. The movie, which explores themes of resilience, unity, and cultural heritage, has struck a chord with audiences across Nigeria and beyond.

"This is a moment I'll never forget," Adedimeji shared in his Instagram post. He praised the unwavering support of his fans, attributing the movie's success to their enthusiasm.

The journey continues While celebrating the success of *Lisabi: The Uprising*, Adedimeji hinted that the story is far from over. He announced that the next chapter, *Lisabi: A Legend is Born*, will debut on Netflix on January 10.

This development has further fueled excitement among fans, who are eager to see how the Lisabi story unfolds. The Netflix premiere marks a significant step in bringing Nigerian storytelling to a global audience.

"Grateful beyond words! *Lisabi: The Uprising* has become one of 2024's most-searched Nigerian films, and we couldn't have done it without your love and support," Adedimeji wrote. "The journey isn't over—*Lisabi: A Legend is Born* premieres January 10 on Netflix. Get ready for the next chapter!"



## Building anticipation

The announcement has sparked widespread anticipation on social media. Fans have flooded the comment section of Adedimeji's post, sharing their excitement and speculating about what's to come in the sequel.

Many praised the actor's dedication to highlighting Nigerian culture through his work. "This is more than a movie; it's a celebration of our heritage," one fan wrote. Others expressed pride in seeing Nigerian films gaining international attention.

## Expanding Nollywood's reach

The success of *Lisabi: The Uprising* reflects the growing global appeal of Nollywood. With its rich storytelling and cultural depth, the industry continues to capture audiences worldwide.

Adedimeji's partnership with Netflix for the upcoming release underscores the streaming platform's commitment to showcasing African cinema. This collaboration provides a platform for Nigerian filmmakers to share their stories on an international stage.

## What's next for Adedimeji?

As the release date for *Lisabi: A Legend is Born* approaches, Adedimeji remains focused on engaging with his audience. His consistent interaction with fans on social media has played a key role in building excitement around the Lisabi franchise.

"I want everyone to feel connected to this journey," he said in a recent interview. "It's not just my story; it's our story. I hope it inspires people to embrace their roots and believe in their potential."

Adedimeji's passion for storytelling and his commitment to showcasing Nigerian culture have earned him widespread admiration. His journey serves as an inspiration for aspiring filmmakers and actors looking to make their mark in Nollywood.

## Conclusion

Lateef Adedimeji's success with *Lisabi: The Uprising* marks a significant moment for Nigerian cinema. As fans eagerly await the next chapter, the actor's dedication to his craft and his audience continues to shine.

# Burna Boy: I'm BIG7, not Fela

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Grammy-winning Nigerian artist Burna Boy, whose real name is Damini Ogulu, has made it clear he wants no part in comparisons to Afrobeat pioneer Fela Kuti.

In a bold Instagram post on Monday, Burna Boy declared, "I'm not Fela, I'm BIG7." This statement came amid his broader reflections on integrity and authenticity, topics he addressed passionately as 2024 nears its end.

### Standing apart from Fela Kuti

Burna Boy has often been linked to Fela Kuti due to his Afrobeat influence and outspoken personality. However, in his latest remarks, the self-styled "African Giant" distanced himself from the legendary musician, emphasizing his unique identity. By adopting the moniker "BIG7," Burna Boy signals his focus on carving his own path in music and beyond.

### Call for positivity

In his social media post, Burna Boy emphasized themes of "positivity, peace, and prosperity." While his message carried an uplifting tone, he didn't shy away from adding a sharp edge. In a striking declaration, he said, "Honestly, I'd rather kill you than die for you." The bold remark, while controversial, underscores his emphasis on self-preservation and staying true to his principles.

### Criticism of dishonesty

The award-winning musician took direct aim at what he sees as a culture of dishonesty, particularly on social media. Without naming specific individuals, Burna Boy pointed out instances of people flaunting lifestyles that don't match reality.

He criticized those who falsely claim ownership of luxury properties,



stating, "If you ever lied about buying Sujimoto's house in Banana Island when you only rented it, do better in 2025." He also called out similar behavior regarding another property, saying, "If you ever lied about Elele's house being yours, do better in 2025."

Burna Boy extended his critique to those boasting about counterfeit luxury items. He highlighted fake watches, warning, "If you have an aftermarket 'rainbow Daytona,' please stop telling people it's real. Do better in 2025."

### Advocating for honesty

Burna Boy's message was clear: honesty should take center stage in the new year. "It should be a criminal offence to tell as many lies as certain men. The list can go on and on," he added. This blunt statement reflects his frustration with the growing prevalence of dishonesty in society, particularly among influencers and public figures.

### Potential interview with Ebuka

In a lighter moment, he hinted at the possibility of an interview with renowned Nigerian media

personality Ebuka Obi-Uchendu. While expressing his general dislike for interviews, he wrote, "Ebuka still dey do all those interviews? I no like interview at all, but I go like run 1." This suggests fans may soon get a deeper insight into Burna Boy's thoughts and experiences, potentially offering more candid revelations.

### A Complex figure

Burna Boy's post underscores his complexity as a public figure. He is unapologetically authentic, blending positivity with sharp critiques of societal norms. Even if it sparks controversy, his willingness to speak his mind has solidified his position as a leading voice in African music and culture.

As 2025 approaches, his message serves as both a challenge and a call to action. By urging people to embrace honesty and integrity, he sets a standard for himself, his fans, and his peers. Whether through his music or his outspoken remarks, Burna Boy continues to make waves, shaping conversations about culture, identity, and authenticity.

# Kiddwaya announces plan to marry, saying he's off the market

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**K**iddwaya, ex-BBNaija star, announced on X he plans to marry in 2025, declaring he's "officially off the market" and ready to settle down.

## Kiddwaya's Engagement Plans

In a post, he wrote, "I'm officially settling down next year. I'm taking myself off the market." The message was clear and direct, indicating his commitment to a future with his fiancée, Laura. Fans were quick to express excitement and well wishes for Kiddwaya, who has been relatively private about his personal life since leaving the Big Brother Naija spotlight.

His announcement marks a significant milestone in his personal life, as he has always remained in the public eye since his rise to fame. His fans, eager for updates on his life, are now looking forward to more details about the upcoming wedding.

## The Relationship with Laura

Kiddwaya and his fiancée, Laura, had previously been the subject of media attention due to a reported fallout.

The trouble began when Laura unfollowed him on Instagram after he admitted to kissing a female colleague, Mercy Eke, during the Big Brother Naija All Stars show in 2023. This revelation stirred controversy and led to speculation about the state of their relationship.

Following his eviction from the show, Kiddwaya expressed optimism that Laura would "come



around," but neither party made any public statements regarding their reconciliation. The uncertainty surrounding their relationship has only added to the intrigue for fans, leaving many wondering about the current status of Kiddwaya and Laura's engagement.

## Public Reaction and Speculation

His announcement has sparked a wave of reactions from fans and followers who are curious about his relationship with Laura and the upcoming wedding. Social media platforms were flooded with congratulatory messages and inquiries about the wedding date and venue.

Fans remain hopeful that the couple will provide more details in the coming months, fueling ongoing discussions about their relationship status. The mystery surrounding the couple's relationship has only heightened public interest and made Kiddwaya's 2025 wedding

announcement a topic of widespread speculation.

## The Future of Kiddwaya and Laura

As the year 2025 draws closer, fans are eager to see how his personal life will evolve. His decision to marry indicates a shift toward stability, and many are curious to know if Laura will be by his side throughout this new chapter.

Though the status of Kiddwaya and Laura's relationship remains uncertain, his announcement has given fans something to look forward to. Whether or not they choose to publicly address their past issues, the upcoming wedding will undoubtedly keep them in the spotlight, as fans continue to track every development.

As 2025 approaches, all eyes will be on Kiddwaya and his fiancée as they embark on this new journey together.

# Mr Eazi's Detty Rave rocks Accra with global superstars

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

The Detty Rave Festival, founded by Afrobeats superstar Mr. Eazi, brought an electrifying and unforgettable experience to fans worldwide last week in Accra.

The event drew tens of thousands of fans from around the world, cementing its reputation as a must-attend celebration of African music and culture.

Star-studded performances and energy

This year's festival lineup was nothing short of extraordinary. BellaWorldwide, DJ Tunez, Shifa Ligeri, Smallgod, Chichi DJ, Kelvin DJ, and Choplife Soundsystem (featuring Mr. Eazi and DJ Edu) lit up the stage with electrifying performances. Their energy was contagious, keeping the crowd on their feet all night.

The surprises didn't stop there. International stars like Adekunle Gold, Tekno, King Promise, Donaeo, Young Jonn, Kweku Smoke, BlaqBonz, and Arajay made unannounced appearances. Each performance brought a new wave of excitement, elevating the festival to new heights. Fans couldn't get enough of the unique collaborations and vibrant energy.

Feast for the senses

Themed "Red and White Noise," this year's Detty Rave featured cutting-edge production. The laser light shows were mesmerizing, blending perfectly with immersive stage designs and stunning visuals. Every element was carefully crafted to enhance the experience.

Beyond the music, attendees were treated to an authentic cultural showcase. The festival included interactive art installations, live



performances, and pop-up food stands offering delicious local and international cuisine. Every corner of the venue buzzed with activity, making it a true celebration of African creativity.

Message of unity and celebration

Sponsored by BetPawa Ghana, the festival stood out as a beacon of unity and creativity. Mr. Eazi reflected on the event's success, saying, "Detty Rave isn't just a festival; it's a celebration of African creativity and unity." His words captured the essence of the event—a place where people from all walks of life come together to celebrate the richness of African culture.

The festival's commitment to showcasing Africa's potential was evident in every detail. From the world-class performances to the vibrant atmosphere, Detty Rave demonstrated the power of African music to bring people together.

Gratitude and future plans

As the event wrapped up, Mr. Eazi shared his gratitude. He praised his hardworking team, the talented DJs, and the loyal fans who made Detty Rave a resounding success. "This year's edition was not just a music festival; it was an experience and a

celebration of African creativity and unity," he said. His heartfelt words resonated with everyone who attended, reflecting the deep connection between the festival and its audience.

Looking ahead, the Detty Rave team is already planning the 2025 edition. Mr. Eazi promised an even bigger and more exhilarating experience, raising expectations for what's to come. Fans can't wait to see how the festival will evolve and continue to set the standard for global music events.

Detty Rave: A global phenomenon

Over the years, Detty Rave has grown into more than just a music festival. It has become a global hub for African dance music, creativity, and cultural unity. By blending top-tier performances with immersive experiences, the festival has carved out a unique place in the hearts of music lovers worldwide.

This year's edition reinforced Detty Rave's mission to celebrate the boundless potential of African music and arts. As fans reminisce about the unforgettable moments, one thing is clear: Detty Rave is here to stay, and its impact on the global music scene will only continue to grow.

# Trump loses \$5m sexual assault, defamation verdict appeal

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

A federal appeal court on Monday upheld a \$5-million verdict that E. Jean Carroll won against Donald Trump when a jury found the U.S. president-elect liable for sexually abusing and later defaming the former magazine columnist.

A unanimous three-judge panel of the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Manhattan rejected Trump's argument that the trial judge should not have let jurors hear evidence about the Republican's alleged past sexual misconduct, making the trial and verdict unfair.

The court said that evidence, including Trump bragging about his sexual prowess on an "Access Hollywood" video that surfaced during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, established a "repeated, idiosyncratic pattern of conduct" consistent with Carroll's allegations.

"Taking the record as a whole and considering the strength of Ms. Carroll's case, we are not persuaded that any claimed error or combination of errors in the district court's evidentiary rulings affected Mr. Trump's substantial rights," the court said in an unsigned decision.

The May 2023 verdict stemmed from an incident around 1996 in a Bergdorf Goodman department store dressing room in Manhattan, where Carroll, now 81, said Trump raped her, and an October 2022 Truth Social post where Trump denied Carroll's claim as a hoax.



Though jurors in federal court in Manhattan did not find that Trump, 78, committed rape, they awarded the former Elle magazine advice columnist \$2.02 million for sexual assault and \$2.98 million for defamation.

**'HOAX,' TRUMP SPOKESPERSON SAYS**

A different jury ordered Trump in January to pay Carroll \$83.3 million for defaming her and damaging her reputation in June 2019, when he first denied her rape claim.

In both denials, Trump said he did not know Carroll, she was "not my type," and that she fabricated the rape claim to promote her memoir.

Steven Cheung, a Trump spokesperson, said in a statement that Americans "demand an immediate end to the political weaponization of our justice system and a swift dismissal of all of the Witch Hunts,

including the Democrat-funded Carroll Hoax, which will continue to be appealed."

It was not clear if any appeal would go to the U.S. Supreme Court. Trump tapped Cheung last month to be his White House communications director.

Roberta Kaplan, a lawyer for Carroll, said in a statement: "E. Jean Carroll and I are gratified by today's decision."

Carroll's cases are continuing despite Trump's having won a second four-year White House term.

In 1997, in a case involving former President Bill Clinton, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that sitting presidents have no immunity from civil litigation in federal court over actions predating and unrelated to their official duties as president.

**EVIDENCE SHOWED PATTERN – COURT**

Trump argued the \$5-million verdict should be thrown out because the trial judge, U.S. District Judge Lewis Kaplan, who is not related to Roberta Kaplan, should not have let jurors hear testimony from two other women who accused him of sexual misconduct.

One, businesswoman Jessica Leeds, said Trump groped her on a plane in the late 1970s. The other, former People magazine writer, Natasha Stoyloff, said Trump forcibly kissed her at his Mar-a-Lago estate in 2005.

# UK raises salary thresholds for skilled worker visas

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The United Kingdom (UK) government has announced a major update to its immigration rules, significantly raising salary thresholds for Skilled Worker visas.

This adjustment was to ensure that only highly skilled and well-compensated workers are able to enter the UK job market, with some salary thresholds increasing by as much as 82%.

Starting from January 1, 2025, the UK said it will implement the most significant salary increases for Skilled Worker visa applicants in recent years, raising the minimum salary from £26,200 to £38,700 for most applicants.

This review will affect a wide

range of industries, including technology, healthcare, and engineering, making it more challenging for workers to secure a Skilled Worker visa without a higher-paying job offer.

Those with a relevant PhD will also see their salary requirement increase from £23,800 to £34,830, while those with a relevant STEM PhD will need to meet a threshold of £30,960, up from £20,960.

For jobs on the shortage occupation list and new entrants to the workforce, the salary requirement will also increase to £30,960.

This increase signifies the government's plan to ensure that only the most qualified individuals can access the Skilled

Worker visa programme.

The raised thresholds are based on median salary figures, which are expected to further limit the pool of eligible applicants to those who are among the highest earners in their fields.

DAAD Scholarship disclosed that for job seekers aiming to work in the UK, these changes present both challenges and opportunities.

Workers in fields such as software development, engineering, and healthcare will now need to secure job offers that meet the new salary thresholds.

Additionally, the 20% discount for shortage occupation roles will be removed under the new system. However, workers with relevant PhDs, especially in STEM fields, will still be eligible for some discounts.

New entrants to the workforce, such as recent graduates, will continue to benefit from discounts, making it slightly easier for them to meet the salary requirements.

For employers in the UK, the increased salary requirements will mean higher costs when sponsoring foreign workers.

Companies will need to adjust their budgets to accommodate these changes, but the result may lead to recruiting more qualified workforce into the UK.



# World leaders pay tribute to former U.S. president Jimmy Carter

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

World leaders, including President Bola Tinubu of Nigeria, former President Olusegun Obasanjo, and others, have paid heartfelt tributes to former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, who passed away on Sunday at the age of 100.

President Tinubu expressed deep admiration for Carter, hailing him as a “beacon of humanity” whose life post-presidency exemplified leadership and unwavering service to global causes.

In a statement issued by his Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, Tinubu praised Carter’s legacy in peacebuilding, disease eradication, and the promotion of democracy.

“President Carter showed us all how to remain relevant and impactful after leaving office,” Tinubu said.

“He tackled the challenges of the developing world, from combating diseases to mediating conflicts and promoting democratic values. His unwavering commitment to humanity has left an indelible mark on the world.”

Tinubu also highlighted Carter’s historic visit to Lagos in 1978, which strengthened the relationship between Nigeria and the U.S., noting Carter’s role in eradicating Guinea worm disease and river blindness in Nigeria through The Carter Center.

Similarly, former President Olusegun Obasanjo reflected on Carter’s leadership, describing him as a humble leader who exemplified lifelong service to humanity.

Speaking on Arise TV, Obasanjo remarked, “True leadership does not end with tenure. The experiences and relationships gained during the time in



office should be used for the betterment of humanity.”

He commended Carter’s post-presidential engagements, adding that Carter’s active involvement in global affairs and his efforts to hold successors accountable were a testament to his dedication to peace and stability.

Carter’s legacy as a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and his tireless efforts in humanitarian work and global diplomacy resonated worldwide, with leaders from Egypt, Israel, China, France, the United Kingdom, and more sharing their condolences.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi praised Carter as a symbol of humanitarian and diplomatic efforts, emphasizing his contributions to preserving the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel.

“His legacy ensures that he will be remembered as one of the world’s most prominent leaders in service to humanity,” el-Sisi stated.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog lauded Carter’s role in facilitating the historic Camp David Accords, which established peace between Israel and

Egypt.

“His legacy will be defined by his deep commitment to forging peace between nations,” Herzog said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping acknowledged Carter’s significant role in establishing diplomatic relations between China and the United States, reflecting on his contributions to the development of China-U.S. relations.

In France, President Emmanuel Macron described Carter as a “steadfast advocate for the rights of the most vulnerable,” while British Prime Minister Keir Starmer paid tribute to his “decades of selfless public service,” highlighting his role in the Camp David Accords and his ongoing dedication to peace through The Carter Center and Habitat for Humanity.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky also expressed condolences, recalling Carter’s steadfast support for Ukraine’s independence and his commitment to global peace and human rights. “Peace matters, and the world must remain united in standing against those who threaten these values,” Zelensky said.

From Canada, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau remembered Carter for his “compassion, kindness, empathy, and hard work,” while Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva described him as a “lover of democracy and a defender of peace.”

Carter’s passing marks the end of a remarkable life defined by his tireless service to humanity. His work through The Carter Center and his efforts in global diplomacy and humanitarian initiatives will continue to inspire generations to come.



# Biden declares Jan 9 national mourning day for Jimmy Carter

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



United States President, Joe Biden has declared January 9, 2025 as a national day of mourning for Jimmy Carter.

Carter, the 39th US president, died on Sunday at 100. He was the first ex-US president to become a centenarian.

Biden described Carter as an extraordinary leader, statesman, and humanitarian.

“With his compassion and moral clarity, he worked to eradicate disease, forge peace, advance civil rights and human rights, promote free and fair elections, house the homeless, and always advocate for the

least among us,” Biden said in a statement following Carter’s death.

“He saved, lifted, and changed the lives of people all across the globe.

“He was a man of great character and courage, hope and optimism. We will always cherish seeing him and Rosalynn together,” he added, referencing Carter’s wife of 77 years who died in November 2023.

Biden ordered that flags be displayed at half-staff at the White House, all public buildings and grounds, at all military posts and naval

stations, and on all naval vessels for a period of 30 days from Carter’s death.

The president said similar arrangements applied to US representatives in foreign countries at embassies, legations, consular offices, and other facilities abroad.

“I do further appoint January 9, 2025, as a National Day of Mourning throughout the United States,” Biden added.

The president urged Americans and people around the world who share in the grief to honour Carter’s memory on the said day.

# CAF fines Libya \$50, 000 after attack on Benin Republic players

By Dave Oludare Oso



The Confederation of African Football (CAF) has fined the Libyan Football Federation (LFF) \$50,000 and ordered the country to play two matches behind closed doors.

CAF, in a statement on Sunday, charged Libya with “misconduct” during and after the 2025 African Cup of Nations (AFCON) qualification game against the Benin Republic in Tripoli on November 18.

Gernot Rohr, head coach of the Cheetahs of the Benin Republic, had recounted how the Libyan police assaulted him and his players “with batons” after the game, which ended goalless.

The goalless draw was enough to ensure the Benin Republic qualified for the 2025 AFCON, while Libya stayed outside the qualification zone at the bottom of the group.

According to Rohr, the Squirrels were set upon by Libyan authorities and fans after the final whistle.

Videos that surfaced online showed some Benin Republic team members massaged injuries with ice packs following a reported attack in their dressing room.

In its ruling, the CAF disciplinary board “found the LFF guilty of violating articles 82 and 151 of the organisation’s disciplinary code for

the behaviour of its supporters and officials during and after the match”.

Libya’s latest sanction comes three months after the country was also punished for the treatment of Super Eagles during the AFCON qualification campaign.

Ahead of a game scheduled for Benghazi, the Nigerian national team’s flight was diverted to Al Abaq airport, and the players and coaches were held for over 20 hours without food and drinks.

Libya eventually forfeited the game and was fined \$50,000. Nigeria was also awarded three points and three goals.

# Mohamed Salah focuses on premier league glory amid personal accolades

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye



Mohamed Salah has downplayed any thoughts of personal awards, including the Ballon d'Or, as he remains focused on helping Liverpool secure the Premier League title.

The Egyptian forward played a key role in Liverpool's 5-0 demolition of West Ham on Sunday, contributing a goal and two assists to extend the Reds' lead at the top of the table to eight points. Despite his standout performances, Salah emphasised the collective goal of winning the league over individual recognition.

"I'm not thinking about the Ballon d'Or. I want to win the Premier League," Salah told Sky Sports after the game.

"I will do my best for the team to win a trophy. There are other teams who want to catch up with us, but we have to stay humble and focused."

Salah's comments came after an impressive team display, which saw Liverpool continue their march toward a record-equalling 20th top-flight title.

Luis Diaz opened the scoring in the first half, followed by Salah's assist for Cody Gakpo, before Salah scored his own 20th goal of the season. In the second half, Trent Alexander-Arnold and Diogo Jota rounded off the victory, both benefiting from Salah's vision.

Arne Slot's team, in his first

season as manager, have been relentless in their pursuit of the title, having won 23 of their 27 matches this season. Slot himself was delighted with the team's performance, calling it a rare occasion where he could "sit back and enjoy" the match.

Salah's comments come amid speculation over the futures of several key players, including him, Trent Alexander-Arnold, and Virgil van Dijk, who could negotiate with foreign clubs starting in January. However, Salah reaffirmed his commitment to Liverpool's title ambitions.

"The only thing on my mind is I want Liverpool to win the league and I want to be part of that," he added.

# AC Milan name Sergio Conceicao as new head coach

By Dave Oludare Oso



Following the dismissal of Paulo Fonseca, AC Milan on Monday appointed Sergio Conceição as their new head coach.

and regain their stature in Italian football.

Fans await the tactical adjustments and leadership Conceição will bring to the Rossoneri.

Fonseca was relieved of his duties after failing to secure a consistent push for Champions League qualification in Serie A.

Conceição, renowned for his achievements with FC Porto, now steps in to guide Milan through a crucial phase.

The 51-year-old Portuguese manager hinted at his determination to return to Europe's elite competition

His compatriot, Sergio Conceicao, was expected to replace the former Shakhtar Donetsk, Roma and Lillie coach.