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Ibadan stampede: God will vindicate you, Ooni assures ex-wife

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi



The Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Ogunwusi, has pledged support to his ex-wife, Queen Naomi Silekunola, facing legal charges after a tragic stampede in Ibadan.

The monarch believes that God will ultimately clear her name and vindicate her.

No malicious intent, says Ooni

Oba Ogunwusi expressed his confidence that Silekunola had no ill intentions toward the children or other attendees at the event.

According to the Ooni, her sole purpose for organizing the funfair was to bring joy and happiness to underprivileged children, a cause she has always been passionate about.

The Ooni emphasized that Silekunola's actions were motivated by kindness, not harm.

Tragic stampede leads to legal charges
The devastating stampede claimed the lives of 35 children, leading to significant legal consequences for Silekunola and others involved.

Alongside Silekunola, Alhaji Oriyomi Hamzat, the owner of Agidigbo FM, and Abdulahi Fasasi, the principal of Islamic High School in Bashorun, Ibadan, are facing multiple charges, including conspiracy, causing death by negligence, endangering public safety, and failing to provide adequate security and medical facilities during the event.

Read Also: Ibadan Stampede: Court remands Ooni's ex-queen, others
Ibadan Stampede: Court to rule Jan. 13 on bail applications for Ooni's ex-wife, others

Court orders remand, bail denied

On December 24, 2024, an Ibadan Magistrate's Court ordered the three defendants to be remanded in custody while investigations continued.

Subsequently, Justice K.B. Olawoyin of the State High Court in Ibadan refused to grant bail to the accused during a hearing. The judge adjourned the ruling on the bail applications until January 13, 2025.

Supporters call for Oba Ogunwusi's intervention

Since the case began, Queen Naomi's supporters have been urging Oba Ogunwusi to intervene and help secure her release.

Some have criticized the Ooni for not taking more action to prevent her imprisonment. Despite this, the monarch has explained that he cannot interfere with the legal process and that only the courts and divine intervention will determine her fate.

Prophetess Naomi Silekunola, ex-wife of Ooni of Ife who was arrested and held responsible for the Ibadan Stampede.

Prophetess Naomi Silekunola, ex-wife of Ooni of Ife who was arrested and held responsible for the Ibadan Stampede. [Photo Credit: Google]

Ooni's response: prayers and support

In a recent interview, Oba Ogunwusi's Chief Press Secretary, Otunba Moses Olafare, conveyed the monarch's stance on the matter.

He made it clear that the royal family cannot interfere with the court process and will instead await the court's decision.

Olafare also reiterated that Oba Ogunwusi and his palace are praying for Silekunola's exoneration and believe in her good intentions.

Read Also: Ibadan stampede: Woli Agba prays for Naomi Silekunola

Legacy of charity: Silekunola's commitment to children

Oba Ogunwusi took the opportunity to highlight Silekunola's long history of charitable work, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

He recalled how she had organized similar events during her time in the palace without any incidents.

The Ooni emphasized that no one who organizes such events has harmful intentions and reiterated his belief that the tragic stampede was an unfortunate

accident.

Ooni defends Silekunola's integrity

The Ooni continued to defend his ex-wife's integrity, stating that she had always acted with good conscience.

He expressed his belief that she had no intention of causing harm to anyone at the event. The Ooni also shared his hopes that the court would ultimately rule in her favor, reflecting his faith in her character and good intentions.

Prayers for justice and vindication

Despite the legal challenges, Oba Ogunwusi's message to Queen Naomi was one of support and prayer.

He wished her well and prayed that God would grant her justice and eventual exoneration. The Ooni's belief in her integrity and his trust in the judicial system stand as a testament to his unwavering support for his former wife during this difficult time.

Looking ahead: A wait for the court's ruling

As the case moves forward, many are awaiting the court's final decision, hoping for justice and closure.

The Ooni of Ife's continued support for his ex-wife highlights his belief in her character and the good intentions behind her charitable efforts.

With the case adjourned until January 13, 2025, all eyes remain on the court, as supporters and the royal family alike pray for a favorable resolution.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

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PRODUCT COLOUR

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10X5	255,238.00
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10X3	179,608.00
9X6	254,977.00
9X5	225,738.00
9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
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CBN launches NRNOA to enhance diaspora investments, remittances

By Friday Omosola

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has introduced two new account types—the Non-Resident Nigerian Ordinary Account (NRNOA) and the Non-Resident Nigerian Investment Account (NRNIA)—designed to attract diaspora investments and remittances, thereby boosting foreign capital inflows into the country.

The NRNOA allows Nigerians living abroad to remit foreign earnings to Nigeria and manage funds in both foreign and local currencies.

In contrast, the NRNIA enables them to invest in Nigerian assets using either foreign currency (FCY) or Naira.

This new policy was disclosed in a circular signed by Dr. W.J. Kanya, Acting Director of the Trade and Exchange Department, and addressed to Authorised Dealer Banks (ADB) and the public.

The circular also includes a framework for the implementation of the initiative.

Under the policy, account holders can maintain FCY and/or Naira accounts, enabling seamless transactions and access to a wide range of investment opportunities in Nigeria.

According to the CBN, the initiative will strengthen the Nigerian economy by increasing diaspora contributions to socio-economic development.

Non-resident Nigerians (NRNs) can leverage their NRNIA to invest in various instruments, including Nigeria's Diaspora Bond and other local debt offerings designed for the diaspora or general investors.

The accounts offer a secure and direct platform for NRNs to manage their funds, minimizing reliance on intermediaries for meeting obligations such as education,



healthcare, or family upkeep.

Balances in both the NRNOA and NRNIA accounts, including investment returns, can be fully repatriated without restrictions, enabling seamless capital mobility for account holders.

Interest earned on deposits is subject to Nigerian tax laws, while account holders can negotiate interest rates directly with their preferred banks.

To ensure accessibility, banks are mandated to adopt digital platforms, such as the NIBSS NRBVN system, to streamline onboarding and simplify KYC processes for diaspora customers.

The CBN clarified that the accounts are available to eligible Non-Resident Nigerians starting January 1, 2025,

provided they meet Know Your Customer (KYC) requirements. These guidelines will be outlined in a forthcoming FAQ document.

Funds held in NRNOAs will be maintained in freely convertible foreign currencies approved by the CBN, with the option to convert into Naira at prevailing exchange rates. The accounts can be used for depositing foreign income, including salaries, allowances, dividends, and rental income, as well as covering personal expenses in Nigeria.

Similarly, NRNIA account holders can hold FCY or Naira accounts to facilitate investments in financial markets and instruments. The CBN emphasized that this initiative aligns with existing regulations under Memorandum 17 of the CBN Foreign Exchange Manual (2018).

Nasarawa state Judicial Commission demotes chief magistrate over Chioma Okoli's case

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Nasarawa State Judicial Commission has taken disciplinary action against Chief Magistrate Emmanuel Jatau, demoting him from Chief Magistrate II (Grade Level 15) to Senior Magistrate I (Grade Level 14) and stripping him of his magisterial duties.

The commission's decision, conveyed in a letter dated January 6, 2025, stems from Jatau's handling of the controversial case involving Chioma Okoli and the Nigeria Police Force.

The saga began on September 17, 2023, when Okoli claimed on Facebook that Nagiko Tomato Mix, a product of Erisco Foods Limited, was sugary. The company's CEO, Eric Umeofia, denied the claim and filed a petition that led to Okoli's arrest by the police. Okoli was subsequently arraigned on charges of conspiracy and cyberstalking, remanded at the Suleja Correctional Centre, and later granted bail. Tragically, Okoli suffered a miscarriage during her ordeal,



sparkling public outrage and calls for justice.

Okoli's legal counsel, Inibehe Effiong, filed a petition against Jatau, arguing that the magistrate had overstepped his jurisdiction. Effiong highlighted that Okoli neither resides in Nasarawa State nor committed any alleged offenses there. Furthermore, the charges of cybercrime fall under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Federal High Court, as stipulated in the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2015. Effiong described Jatau's actions

as a "brazen" abuse of judicial authority and demanded an investigation.

The Judicial Commission's decision to demote Jatau is a significant development in the case, reflecting the commission's commitment to upholding judicial integrity and accountability. The demotion also serves as a reminder of the importance of judicial officers acting within their jurisdiction and respecting the rule of law.

Nigeria suffers first National Grid collapse of 2025, disrupting power nationwide

By Helen Okechukwu

For the first time in 2025, the national grid has reportedly collapsed, leading to nationwide power failure.

The collapse was said to have occurred on Saturday, barely 10 days into the new year, marking it the 13th time in 13 months.

In a confirmation post shared by The Energy Time Podcast, it noted, "National Grid Suffers Major Collapse... First in 2025."

Although they disclosed that restoration work has already begun, "Currently generating 302 MW as of 02:40 pm."

The Energy Time Podcast further explained, "We understand the misunderstanding that could arise from your experience. And two truths can coexist. A little explainer here, if you don't mind."

"There are two main types of national grid collapse: Partial collapse—this is



where some parts of the country still have light even with the collapse experienced.

Read Also: National grid down again "Total collapse—this is when every part of the country is experiencing the blackout."

"On today's development, the grid collapsed around 01:56 pm, and we

reported 36 minutes later. That your light went off 10 minutes after our report does not make it false."

"On our last check, generation was a little above 1000 MW out of the possible 4500/4800 MW," The Energy Time Podcast wrote.

Lagos media staff set to begin strike

By Friday Omosola

Broadcasting staff under Lagos State Government-owned media outlets have issued a strike notice to Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, signaling their intention to protest.

Afolabi Ayantayo, the Commissioner for Establishments and Training, confirmed in a statement on Saturday that the strike is scheduled to commence on Monday, January 13, 2025.

According to Ayantayo, the strike is driven by the demands of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the Radio, Television, Theatre and Arts Workers Union of Nigeria (RATTAWU), who are urging the government to integrate their members into the mainstream civil service.

Lagos

He disclosed that the government began addressing the unions' request during a meeting held on January 8, 2025, which he chaired alongside union leaders.

The meeting concluded with an



agreement to escalate the unions' demands to the Lagos State Executive Council for further deliberation.

"For the avoidance of doubt, entry into the Lagos State Civil Service has laid down policies and procedures.

"Therefore, the Union members are

advised to rethink their plan to proceed on an industrial action for an amicable resolution of the dispute", Ayantayo said.

Former Kano state commissioner defects to APC, cites better platform for governance

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Abbas Sani Abbas, the former Commissioner for Rural and Community Development in Kano State, has officially joined the All Progressives Congress (APC) after leaving the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP). The announcement was made during his visit to a prominent APC leader in Kano, where he pledged his allegiance to the ruling party.

Hon. Abbas, known for his grassroots mobilization and dedication to community development, explained that his decision to switch parties was guided by a desire to contribute more effectively to good governance and development. "I believe the APC offers the platform to achieve the vision of a better Kano and a stronger Nigeria," he stated.

The defection was celebrated by top APC leaders in Kano, including the party's state chairman, Prince Abdullahi Abbas. The APC leader commended Hon. Abbas's decision and assured him of full support. "Hon. Abbas Sani Abbas is a dedicated grassroots mobilizer and a leader committed to the service of humanity. We are proud to have him join our great party,"



he remarked.

Prince Abdullahi Abbas emphasized the party's commitment to inclusivity and development. "Together, we will continue to promote the values of good governance, inclusivity, and service to humanity. This is a significant moment for our party in Kano as we strengthen our ranks with capable individuals like Hon. Abbas," he added.

The former commissioner's experience and dedication are expected to add value to the party's efforts in Kano State and beyond. Party loyalists and

political observers in Kano have hailed the defection as a significant boost for the APC, particularly in its grassroots mobilization efforts.

Many believe Hon. Abbas's entry into the APC will solidify the party's influence in rural communities across the state. Hon. Abbas concluded by expressing optimism about his new political journey. "I am fully committed to working with the APC leadership to ensure a brighter future for Kano State and Nigeria as a whole," he said.

NAMA begins calibration of landing equipment at Ekiti Airport

By Friday Omosola

Weeks after the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) approved non-scheduled flight operations at the Ekiti Agro-Allied International Cargo Airport for six months, the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA) on Friday began its calibration of landing systems.

In a statement made available to newsmen today on the state government Facebook page, the calibration signaled the final stages of preparations for commercial flight operations.

The NAMA calibration aircraft landed on the airport's runway at exactly 4:13 p.m., with the calibration exercise commencing immediately.

Calibration in the aviation sector ensures air navigation safety by conducting regular inspections, fine-tuning test equipment systems, and surveilling airspace systems. It is a critical step toward meeting global aviation standards for safe and efficient operations.

Calibration

NAMA team, the Technical Adviser to the Governor Biodun Oyeibanji on Airport Project, Sunday Makinde (Rtd); the Commissioner for Information, Taiwo Olatubosun; Commissioner for Environment, Tosin Aluko-Ajisafe; Commissioner for Transport, Kolawole Akobiewe; and the Special Adviser to the governor on Media and Strategy, Yinka Oyeboode, and others (PHOTO CREDIT: Facebook)

Present to receive the NAMA team were the Technical Adviser to the Governor Biodun Oyeibanji on Airport Project, Sunday Makinde (Rtd); the Commissioner for



Information, Taiwo Olatubosun; Commissioner for Environment, Tosin Aluko-Ajisafe; Commissioner for Transport, Kolawole Akobiewe; and the Special Adviser to the governor on Media and Strategy, Yinka Oyeboode, among others.

Speaking with journalists, Makinde described the calibration exercise as a pivotal step toward securing final approval for commercial operations.

He explained that the team was assessing and fine-tuning navigational aids at the airport, including instrument landing systems, communication radios, and other critical equipment for safe operations.

“What’s happening here today is essentially a working flight operation. This calibration plane from NAMA ensures that our systems, particularly navigational and communication, can pick up frequencies from any aircraft coming to Ekiti. I am pleased to confirm that the Ekiti Agro-Allied International Cargo Airport is fully ready for commercial operations,” Makinde said.

Additionally, the Commissioner for Information expressed excitement

about the milestone, describing it as a “dream come true.”

He noted that the airport had undergone rigorous inspections and certifications from regulatory aviation agencies, confirming its readiness for smooth operations.

Olatubosun added that the airport’s completion marks a significant step toward unlocking investment opportunities, boosting tourism, and accelerating economic growth in Ekiti State.

“This airport will transform Ekiti into a hub for local and international connectivity, fostering business, attracting investors, and improving the lives of our people,” he said.

He emphasised that the development underscores Governor Biodun Oyeibanji’s commitment to economic transformation and industrial growth in the state.

The NAMA team is expected to complete the calibration exercise and depart the airport on Saturday.

NASS rejects N9bn capital budget for mining sector

By Friday Omosola

The Joint National Assembly Committee on Solid Minerals has rejected the proposed N9 billion capital budget for the mining sector in the 2025 fiscal year.

The Assembly criticised the allocation, stating that it falls significantly short of the investment needed to establish solid minerals as the cornerstone of Nigeria's economic diversification efforts.

During the budget defense session on Friday, Senator Ekong Sampson, Chairman of the Joint Senate and House of Representatives Committee on Solid Minerals, expressed dissatisfaction with the proposed allocation.

He emphasised that without substantial investment in exploration and other critical areas, the sector's potential to drive the transition to green energy would remain untapped.

Mining sector

The Minister of Solid Minerals Development, Dele Alake and others during the session of Joint National Assembly Committee on Solid Minerals (PHOTO CREDIT: X)

Echoing this concern, Gaza Gbefwi, Co-chairman and House Committee Chairman on Solid Minerals, condemned the drastic reduction of the proposed N531 billion capital expenditure for 2025 to N9 billion.

He described it as a disservice to the sector, which he argued is pivotal for generating non-oil revenue and ensuring long-term economic sustainability.

"As a House, we will not allow the future of generations to be compromised because of misplaced priorities. We, as elected representatives, understand the urgent need to diversify our economy, and no sector holds more



promise in this regard than solid minerals. If we miss this opportunity to invest today, future generations will not forgive us," Gbefwi said.

Gbefwi highlighted countries such as Botswana, South Africa, and Ghana, which are making significant investments in exploration, and emphasised that Nigeria's vast reserves of critical minerals risk being underutilized if the mining sector continues to be underfunded, thereby hindering its potential as a major revenue driver for the nation.

The Minister of Solid Minerals Development, Dele Alake, revealed on his X page the positive outcomes of reforms implemented over the past year, noting that they have increased job creation in the sector to 45,000, compared to 30,000 in the previous year.

He further stated that the revenue projection of N11 billion for 2024 had already been surpassed, with N38 billion generated in the year under review.

"We have not only succeeded in attracting global attention to Nigeria's mining sector, but we have also seen an

increase in revenue, despite receiving only 18% of our 2024 capital budget. In our budget proposals for 2025, we estimated over N531 billion for capital expenditure but was allocated a mere N9 billion.

"This is unacceptable, as it will hinder any significant investment in exploration, which is crucial for generating the geo-data that will attract major players. We seek the support of the National Assembly for a radical upward review of the budget," Dr. Alake added.

Additionally, Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan stressed the need for a significant upward review of the 2025 budget proposal if Nigeria is genuinely committed to developing its mining sector.

She joined others in urging the outright rejection of the proposed budgetary estimates and called for the suspension of the screening process until the necessary revisions are made.

Following a unanimous voice vote, Sampson announced the committee's decision to reject the 2025 budgetary estimates, halt further budget screenings for the ministry, and summon the Ministers of Budget and National Planning, alongside Finance, to justify an increased allocation for the mining sector.

INEC warns of looming electoral crisis over 2025 budget shortfall

By Friday Omosola



The Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Mahmood Yakubu, has warned that the commission may struggle to carry out its constitutional duties in 2025 due to severe budgetary constraints.

He stated that the proposed N40 billion budget for the year is barely sufficient to cover staff salaries, leaving critical electoral activities unfunded.

Yakubu made this disclosure during a session with the Senate and House of Representatives Joint Committees on INEC and Electoral Matters on Friday.

He revealed that INEC would require at least N126 billion to effectively run its operations in 2025, highlighting that the N40 billion allocation represents a significant shortfall.

The Chairman INEC, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, appearing before the Joint Committee on Electoral Matters at the National Assembly Complex in Abuja today to defend the Commission's 2025 budget proposal. Yakubu expressed concerns that the

budget does not cover key elections scheduled for 2025 and beyond.

He pointed out that the Anambra State governorship election, set for later in the year, has no funding provision.

Similarly, Yakubu noted that planning for the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Area Council elections and the governorship elections in Ekiti and Osun states in 2026 must begin in 2025, but these activities are not reflected in the budget.

Yakubu also emphasised the urgency of beginning preparations for the 2027 general elections, including Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) and the redistribution of voters across polling units to ensure parity. However, these critical activities he said remain unfunded in the current budget.

The INEC chairman further noted that the commission lacks resources to replace essential materials such as BVAS machines, ballot boxes, and voting cubicles destroyed in attacks across states like Imo, Benue, and Delta.

“Renovation of INEC offices affected by arson also remains unaddressed”, said Yakubu.

Yakubu highlighted the financial burden of conducting frequent by-elections, which he described as unsustainable.

He said INEC has conducted nine by-elections in 2023 alone, with more pending in states like Adamawa, Kaduna, Jigawa, Kano, Rivers, Edo, Anambra, and Niger.

The INEC boss proposed that election funding be shared between the federal and state governments to ease the financial burden on the centre.

He recommended allocating a percentage of funds from the Federation Account to support elections nationwide.

Yakubu also disclosed that INEC has developed 142 proposals, including constitutional amendments, to address electoral challenges. Eight of these proposals are directed at the National Assembly.

However, Senator Ireti Kingibe, a member of the joint committee, stressed the importance of adequately funding INEC to ensure the credibility of Nigeria's elections.

The committee subsequently went into an executive session to deliberate on Yakubu's concerns and the way forward.

The session, chaired by Senator Sharafadeen Abiodun-Alli and Tayo Balogun, acknowledged the seriousness of the funding crisis and the need for immediate action to avert potential constitutional and electoral crises.

FG to use \$50M repatriated Diezani funds to boost rural electrification

By Friday Omosola



The Federal Government (FG) has revealed plans to allocate \$50 million of the \$52.88 million recovered from the United States, linked to former Minister of Petroleum Resources, Diezani Alison-Madueke, to enhance rural electrification projects across Nigeria.

Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Lateef Fagbemi, disclosed this on Friday in Abuja during the formal signing of the Asset Return Agreement between Nigeria and the United States.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that FG yesterday acknowledged the recipient of the funds.

Fagbemi said the Alison-Madueke, and her associates (referred to as the Galactica Assets) funds are set to enhance renewable energy infrastructure in the country.

He emphasised that the deployment of the funds through the World Bank would significantly improve the reliability and availability of

renewable energy.

He highlighted the agreement as a testament to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's commitment to fighting corruption and ensuring resources are dedicated to the country's socio-economic development.

He also acknowledged the United States' collaboration in facilitating restitution and promoting transparency in governance.

He added that the remaining \$2.88 million will fund the International Institute for Justice's (IIJ) "Rule of Law and Counter-Terrorism Project," which he said will enhance the capacity of criminal justice practitioners in Africa.

He added that the projects will contribute to creating an environment conducive to Nigeria's socio-economic growth and development.

Fagbemi noted that measures have been instituted to ensure the transparent and accountable utilization of the funds, saying regular reports on the implementation will be shared with both Nigeria and the United States.

Fagbemi appreciated the U.S. government for its steadfast support in the asset recovery process and urged continued cooperation on pending cases of repatriation.

Speaking at the event, U.S. Ambassador Richard Mills Jr., who signed on behalf of the United States, lauded the agreement as a milestone in the joint fight against corruption and the recovery of stolen assets.

He also expressed confidence in Nigeria's ability to utilize the recovered funds effectively and affirmed that the U.S. would not have signed the agreement without assurance of its proper use.

While urging Nigeria to use the remaining \$3 million to combat corruption and terrorism, Mills reaffirmed the U.S. government's support in ensuring transparency and accountability in the disbursement of the funds.

Obasanjo breaks silence: Why Abacha sent me to prison

By New Daily Prime

Former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo has shared details about his imprisonment under the military regime of the late General Sani Abacha in 1995. Speaking to a delegation of young leaders from the Future Africa Leaders Foundation, Obasanjo reflected on the challenges he faced during that period and his eventual decision to re-enter politics to help stabilize Nigeria.

In a statement released by his Special Assistant on Media, Kehinde Akinyemi, Obasanjo said, “Going to prison is a challenge, but I ended up there because I refused to keep quiet. For me, if there was something to comment on, I spoke out, and that landed me in prison.”

Obasanjo, who served as Nigeria’s military head of state from 1976 to 1979, explained that after his release from prison, the dire state of the country prompted many to urge him to run for office. “When I came out, the situation in the country was so dire that some people felt it needed saving, and pressure mounted on me to intervene,” he noted.

His incarceration reflected the broader repression during Abacha’s rule (1993–1998), a period notorious for human rights violations and suppression of dissent. Many political activists, journalists, and pro-democracy advocates were detained for opposing the military regime and advocating for a return to civilian rule. Obasanjo’s vocal criticism of corruption and human rights abuses placed him squarely in the crosshairs of Abacha’s administration.

One of the most infamous episodes of Abacha’s regime was the execution of the “Ogoni Nine” in 1995, led by environmental activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, which drew



widespread international condemnation. The regime’s actions highlighted its intolerance for opposition and disregard for human rights.

During his discussion with the youth delegation, Obasanjo also addressed Africa’s rising debt burden, criticizing the corruption and recklessness associated with many loans. He cited a specific example of a Nigerian state that borrowed funds to establish a carpet industry that never materialized, yet the debt was repaid.

“It is essential to ensure responsible governance and accountability to prevent saddling future generations with unnecessary financial burdens,” Obasanjo stated, emphasizing the importance of prudence in public

finance management.

Obasanjo’s reflections underscored the sacrifices made by pro-democracy advocates during one of Nigeria’s most turbulent periods. His leadership in Nigeria’s transition to civilian rule in 1999 remains a significant chapter in the country’s history, marked by efforts to restore democratic governance and promote stability.

Today, Obasanjo continues to be a prominent voice on governance, economic sustainability, and human rights, inspiring future generations to advocate for justice, accountability, and democratic ideals.

IMPACT moves to upgrade 58 Nasarawa health centres

By Helen Okechukwu



To curb maternal and infant mortality, the Immunisation Plus and Malaria Progress by Accelerating Coverage and Transforming Service (IMPACT) has move to revitalise and upgrade 58 Nasarawa health centres.

The project is said to cut across the Primary Healthcare Centres (PHC) located in 13 Local Government Areas (LGA) in the state.

At the one-day stakeholders' engagement meeting held today, the Project Manager of IMPACT in the state, Adamu Yakubu-Ohagenyi, revealed that this development was supported by the World Bank, the state government, and the Primary Healthcare Development Agency.

The project manager disclosed that the projects will be completed within six weeks.

Also, Yakubu-Ohagenyi said that along with its partners, they aim to build healthcare workers to fight malaria infection threats through immunisation and other

interventions.

Read Also: We'll improve healthcare services nationwide – NPHCDA

The Project Manager of IMPACT in the state said to strengthen access to the healthcare system, more healthcare workers will be empowered to visit homes and engage in medical outreach.

He said, "We have also bought some equipment for the basic health facilities, and currently we have commenced the revitalisation and upgrading of the 58 PHC facilities across the state."

He highlighted that most citizens have declined in visiting healthcare facilities despite the ongoing fight to stop the rise of disease and childbirth complications.

Yakubu-Ohagenyi said due to this low hospital patronage, the organisation and its partners have come up with this stakeholders engagement meeting with traditional leaders, religious leaders, and others to enlighten citizens about the need to visit their PHC for

immediate treatment.

The Permanent Secretary of the State Ministry of Health, Dr. John Damina, highlighted the efforts of the state government and its partner to put malaria under control despite the challenges as the fight continues.

Dr. Damina pledges the state government support to intensify advocacy and promote significant health-care programme along with partners.

To strengthen healthcare infrastructure, he said the state government will provide manpower, equipment, and other healthcare interventions to respond to challenges.

Davido set to release '5ive' album March 14

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Award-winning Nigerian singer Davido is preparing to captivate fans again with the release of his highly anticipated fifth studio album, *5ive*.

Scheduled for March 14, 2025, the album promises to showcase his journey, growth, and authenticity.

Confirmation through social media
The official release date was confirmed via a pre-save link shared by Davido on his social media platforms. This announcement generated buzz among fans, who eagerly await the full project.

Two tracks from the album, *Awake* featuring YG Marley and *Funds*, were released earlier in 2024, offering a glimpse into what's to come.

These singles have already gained traction, further heightening expectations for the complete album.

Personal and honest body of work
In December, the 32-year-old Afrobeats sensation described *5ive* as a deeply personal album. "My people. The journey continues in 2025 with my new album, *5ive*."

This is straight from the heart — my story, my truth, and my growth," Davido shared with his followers.

The statement highlights the introspective nature of the upcoming project, which is expected to delve into his life experiences and artistic evolution.

Remarkable career journey

Born David Adeleke, Davido burst onto the music scene in 2012 with his hit single *Dami Duro* from his debut album, *Omo Baba Olowo*. The song catapulted him to fame, establishing him as a force in the



music industry. Since then, he has released three more albums: *A Good Time* (2019), *A Better Time* (2020), and *Timeless* (2023).

Each project has showcased his growth as an artist and cemented his position as one of Africa's leading musicians.

Founder of a music empire

Beyond his music, Davido has made significant contributions to the industry through his record label, DMW (Davido Music Worldwide).

Founded in April 2016, DMW has nurtured numerous talents, playing a pivotal role in shaping the Afrobeats genre.

Under Davido's leadership, the label has become a powerhouse, producing chart-topping hits and introducing new stars to the global stage.

DMW CEO Davido. [Photo Credit: Google]

DMW CEO Davido. [Photo Credit: Google]

Legacy of achievements

Over the years, Davido has earned numerous accolades for his work. His music, characterized by its infectious rhythms and relatable lyrics, has

resonated with audiences across Africa and beyond.

With awards ranging from MTV Africa Music Awards to BET Awards, his impact on the music scene is undeniable. Each achievement further solidifies his status as a global ambassador of Afrobeats.

Anticipation builds for 5ive

The excitement surrounding *5ive* reflects Davido's enduring appeal. Fans are eager to hear how the artist translates his story and growth into music.

The album's March release marks another milestone in his illustrious career, promising to leave a lasting impression on listeners worldwide.

As the countdown begins, Davido continues to inspire with his talent, resilience, and commitment to his craft.

With *5ive*, he aims to connect with his audience on a deeper level, delivering a project that captures the essence of his journey.

Eniola Ajao announces 'Owambe Thieves' film project

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian filmmaker and actress Eniola Ajao has thrilled fans with an exciting announcement about her upcoming movie, set to premiere in 2025.

The talented star, who made her cinematic debut just last year, took to her Instagram page to share the big news with her followers.

In her post, Eniola revealed that the much-anticipated movie, titled *Owambe Thieves*, will be released around Easter. She urged her fans to remain patient, promising that the film would be well worth the wait.

“The year has started fully o, and it’s a good time to run you some updates,” she wrote. “If you’ve not been told, get updated now—*Owambe Thieves* is coming, and it’s going to be loud.”

The actress expressed deep gratitude to her supporters and reassured them that she is ready to deliver exceptional entertainment this year. With her characteristic energy and charm, Eniola promised that the project would leave her fans amazed.

In her words, “I came prepared for you all this year, and I’m only imploring you to be patient as Easter is just around the corner; wait for it. *Owambe Thieves* will wow you!”

Building excitement for *Owambe Thieves*

The announcement has sparked excitement among fans and film enthusiasts alike. Many are eager to see what Eniola has in store with her new project.

After her impressive debut last year, expectations are high, and the buzz surrounding *Owambe Thieves* is already growing.

Eniola’s decision to release the movie during Easter is strategic, as it’s a festive period when audiences are often drawn to cinemas for entertainment.



The title, *Owambe Thieves*, hints at a storyline that might explore the colorful and vibrant culture of Nigerian parties, commonly referred to as “owambe.”

A promising year ahead

The actress’s latest update underscores her commitment to her craft and her fans. By openly expressing her gratitude, Eniola shows a strong connection with her audience.

She has positioned herself as not just an entertainer but also as someone who values the support she receives from her followers.

The announcement also highlights Eniola’s confidence in her growth as a filmmaker. Her journey from a debut actress to a filmmaker with a highly anticipated project in such a short time speaks volumes about her talent and dedication.

Fans react with enthusiasm

Following her Instagram post, fans flooded the comments section with

messages of encouragement and excitement.

Many expressed their anticipation for *Owambe Thieves*, while others commended Eniola for her hard work and creativity.

One fan wrote, “We can’t wait, Eniola! You’ve never disappointed us, and we’re sure this one will be amazing.” Another commented, “Easter just got more exciting! Thank you for always bringing joy to your fans.”

What to expect from *Owambe Thieves*

Although Eniola has kept the details of the movie under wraps, the title alone has fueled curiosity. Viewers are speculating about the plot, cast, and unique elements the film might feature.

If her previous work is anything to go by, fans can expect a mix of humor, drama, and cultural richness.

Jike Kosoko: Dele Odule set to redefine arts and culture

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Renowned actor Prince Jide Kosoko recently expressed his admiration for fellow veteran actor Dele Odule, praising his remarkable dedication to African culture.

During a visit to Odule's expansive costume warehouse in Ogun State, Kosoko was left in awe. The visit, which took place as part of preparations for Kosoko's upcoming film, highlighted the rich efforts being made to preserve African heritage.

Preparations for a cultural epic Kosoko, 70, embarked on the tour as he gears up to shoot his highly anticipated movie, *Esugbayi Eleko – The Movie*.

This historical drama is expected to shed light on significant events in Nigerian history. The film, which holds cultural significance, requires meticulous attention to detail, particularly in costumes, prompting Kosoko's visit to Odule's theatrical treasure trove.

Awe-inspiring costumes and praise for Odule

Upon arriving at the site, Kosoko was visibly impressed. The warehouse, filled with traditional African costumes, showcased Odule's dedication to celebrating and preserving African culture.

With garments that reflect various ethnic groups and traditions, the collection serves as a bridge to the past. Kosoko did not hold back in applauding Odule's effort and commitment to the craft.

Speaking to the press, Kosoko described the experience as enlightening. "Dele Odule has done something remarkable here.

His dedication to preserving our cultural heritage through these costumes is commendable," he said. The veteran actor noted that such efforts were crucial for passing down history and identity to younger



generations.

Dele Odule's passion for culture

Dele Odule, a household name in the Nigerian entertainment industry, is widely respected for his work both on and off-screen.

His passion for promoting African stories is evident in his detailed and authentic approach to costume design.

The warehouse, a labour of love, serves as a resource for filmmakers and performers who wish to portray African culture authentically.

Costumes as a key to storytelling

Kosoko's visit wasn't just about admiration; it was also strategic. As a filmmaker known for his focus on quality and authenticity, he understands the importance of visual storytelling.

Costumes play a vital role in immersing viewers in a film's narrative, especially one as culturally rich as *Esugbayi Eleko*. By collaborating with Odule, Kosoko aims to elevate the film's visual appeal.

Bringing history to life

The film, which explores the life and times of Oba Esugbayi, a prominent figure in Lagos history, is expected to draw attention to Nigeria's rich cultural heritage.

Kosoko has been vocal about his desire to use storytelling as a tool for cultural

preservation. With *Esugbayi Eleko*, he hopes to inspire pride in African traditions and history.

Promise of excellence

As production begins, Kosoko has promised that the film will be a cinematic masterpiece. "This isn't just a movie; it's a celebration of who we are as a people," he said.

He expressed optimism that the film would resonate with audiences both locally and internationally, thanks to its authentic portrayal of history and culture.

Collaboration for a greater cause

The collaboration between Kosoko and Odule highlights the power of teamwork in the entertainment industry.

Both actors have spent decades contributing to the growth of Nigerian theater and film. Their shared vision for preserving and promoting African heritage underscores the importance of unity in achieving cultural goals.

Preserving culture through film

Kosoko's visit to Odule's warehouse is a reminder of the potential of African cinema to tell powerful stories. With the right resources and dedication, filmmakers can create works that not only entertain but also educate and inspire. Kosoko's upcoming film is a testament to this belief.

Gabriel Afolayan: “I make sacrifices for every role”

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular actor and singer Gabriel Afolayan has opened up about his sacrifices for every role he plays and his deep passion for music.

Punch in its report stated that in a recent chat with Saturday Beats, the multi-talented entertainer shared insights into his dedication to his craft and how he balances both careers.

Afolayan emphasised that acting demands wholehearted commitment. “Acting requires pouring one’s heart into every role,” he said. “It’s passion and dedication that drive excellence. That’s what makes people notice and say you’re doing great work.”

He explained that every role he accepts comes with its sacrifices, stating, “I wouldn’t say there’s one particular thing that has made me give so much. Each role is, in itself, a significant sacrifice.”

His words paint a picture of an artist fully invested in his craft, willing to go the extra mile to deliver performances that resonate with audiences.

This unwavering commitment, he believes, is what sets him apart in the competitive entertainment industry.

Passion for music

Beyond acting, Afolayan is also a talented singer. When asked about his music career, he revealed that his approach is rooted in love and passion rather than the pursuit of financial gain. “I do music for the love of it,” he said. “When you create out of passion, it resonates. If your goal is money, you put yourself under unnecessary pressure.”

He further explained that genuine passion shines through in his music, allowing his message to connect with listeners. “Doing it for love ensures that whatever you’re trying to communicate will always come

across. And because of that passion, it’s translating into money naturally.”

Afolayan’s philosophy highlights the importance of staying true to one’s artistic vision. He believes that authenticity and love for the craft are key to creating work that leaves a lasting impact.

Balancing two careers

While juggling acting and music might seem challenging, Afolayan insists that the two careers complement each other. “They complement each other because it’s still the same entity representing both,” he explained. “Whatever I do falls under the same Gabriel Afolayan brand.”

This synergy between his acting and music careers reflects his ability to harmonize his talents under one cohesive identity.

Whether he’s on set delivering a captivating performance or in the studio creating soulful melodies, Afolayan ensures that both pursuits align with his overarching artistic vision.

The pursuit of excellence

Afolayan’s commitment to excellence is evident in his body of work. His roles in film and television have consistently earned praise, while his music continues to garner fans across diverse audiences.

He approaches every project with the same level of passion, understanding that each opportunity is a chance to grow and connect with people.

Popular actor and singer Gabriel Afolayan. [Photo Credit: Google]
Popular actor and singer Gabriel Afolayan. [Photo Credit: Google]



His story serves as a reminder that success in any field requires dedication, authenticity, and a willingness to make sacrifices.

By staying true to his passions and embracing the challenges of his dual career, Afolayan has carved a unique path in the entertainment world.

In an industry where pressures can often lead to compromise, Afolayan’s philosophy stands out. He shows that when you lead with passion and remain authentic, success naturally follows.

As he continues to shine as both an actor and a musician, fans can look forward to more memorable performances and soulful music from this versatile entertainer.

Conclusion

Gabriel Afolayan’s journey is a testament to the power of passion and dedication. Whether through his compelling acting or heartfelt music, he continues to inspire and entertain.

Wildfires rage across Los Angeles, forcing evacuations and destroying homes

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



A devastating series of wildfires continues to ravage Los Angeles, with over 144,000 people under evacuation orders. The blazes, which have destroyed homes, businesses, and landmarks, have left a trail of destruction in their wake.

The West Los Angeles V.A. Medical Center has relocated residents from its community living facility on the North Campus “out of an abundance of caution” due to the proximity of the Palisades Fire. The medical center provides mental health care and cancer treatment to armed forces veterans.

“We are working closely with healthcare providers to facilitate a smooth transition for all affected residents,” a V.A. representative stated. “All necessary resources are being deployed to assure their

comfort and care during this process.”

The Palisades Fire, which has burned over 21,000 acres, is currently 8% contained, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The fire has destroyed numerous homes, businesses, and landmarks in Pacific Palisades, along Pacific Coast Highway, and Malibu.

Other fires raging across Los Angeles include the Eaton Fire, which has burned 14,117 acres in Altadena and Pasadena, and is currently 3% contained. The Kenneth Fire, which has scorched 1,052 acres near the border of Los Angeles and Ventura counties, is 50% contained.

The Hurst Fire, which burned through 771 acres in Sylmar, is 70% contained, with evacuation orders lifted. The Lidia Fire, located in the hills north of LA, has burned 395 acres and is 98%

contained.

As firefighters continue to battle the blazes, Governor Gavin Newsom has taken to social media to provide updates on the situation. “The fires are a reminder of the devastating impact of climate change,” he stated.

The Los Angeles Fire Department and other emergency services are working tirelessly to contain the fires and provide support to those affected. Residents are advised to follow evacuation orders and take necessary precautions to ensure their safety.

Ukrainian troops capture wounded North Korean soldiers in Russia's kursk oblast

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



In a significant development, Ukrainian troops have captured two wounded North Korean soldiers in Russia's Kursk Oblast, according to President Volodymyr Zelensky. The soldiers, who are receiving medical assistance, are currently in the custody of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) in Kyiv.

Zelensky expressed gratitude to Ukrainian paratroopers and soldiers from the Special Operation Forces for capturing the North Koreans, describing the task as "not easy." He claimed that Russian and North Korean soldiers usually execute wounded North Koreans to conceal evidence of North Korea's involvement in the war against Ukraine.

The Ukrainian intelligence service reported that the prisoners were captured on January 9 and provided with medical care as stipulated by the Geneva Convention. Communication with the prisoners is being carried out

through Korean interpreters, in cooperation with South Korea's National Intelligence Service.

During interrogation, one of the soldiers claimed he was issued a Russian military ID card in the autumn of 2024, allegedly for training purposes, not to fight in the war against Ukraine. The soldier, born in 2005, has been serving North Korea as a rifleman since 2021. The second prisoner, born in 1999, has been serving as a scout sniper since 2016.

Zelensky has instructed the SBU to grant journalists access to the prisoners, stating that "the world needs to know the truth about what is happening." The president also posted photographs of the wounded men and a red Russian military card, which listed the place of birth as Turan, in the Tuva Republic, near Mongolia.

The capture of the North Korean soldiers comes amid reports of Russia's increasing involvement with North Korea in the war against Ukraine. In December, South Korea's intelligence agency reported that a North Korean

soldier captured by Ukrainian forces had died from injuries sustained in combat. The White House has also stated that North Korean forces are experiencing mass casualties.

The Security Service of Ukraine is conducting an investigation into the circumstances of the North Korean military's participation in Russia's war against Ukraine. The investigation is being carried out under the procedural guidance of the Prosecutor General's Office, citing planning, preparation, unleashing, and waging an aggressive war.



IMF warns of global economic uncertainty amid Trump's tariff threats

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has cautioned that Donald Trump's proposed trade tariffs are fueling global economic uncertainty and driving up long-term borrowing costs, potentially exacerbating pressures on the global economy in 2025.

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva, speaking to reporters in Washington, highlighted the unpredictability of U.S. trade policies as a significant factor contributing to global financial instability. "That uncertainty is actually expressed globally through higher long-term interest rates," Georgieva stated, while noting that short-term interest rates have declined.

Reelected to the White House, Trump has vowed to implement steep tariffs on imports, including a blanket 20% tariff on all goods entering the U.S. He has also threatened specific measures, such as a 25% tariff on goods from Canada and Mexico—America's largest trading partners—and an additional 10% tariff on Chinese imports.

These proposed tariffs have raised fears of a new era of global trade wars. U.S. allies are watching closely to see whether Trump will enforce these blanket tariffs immediately after his inauguration on January 20 or adopt a more targeted approach that affects specific sectors.

Georgieva emphasized that the potential fallout of Trump's trade policies would disproportionately affect countries heavily integrated into the global supply chain,



particularly in Asia. Beyond trade, there is global interest in the broader economic policy agenda of the incoming administration, including potential tax reforms and deregulation.

Previewing the IMF's forthcoming World Economic Outlook for 2025, Georgieva noted that while global growth remains steady, regional disparities persist. The U.S. economy has outperformed expectations, while growth in the European Union is showing signs of stalling.

China faces deflationary pressures and challenges in domestic demand, according to Georgieva. Meanwhile, low-income countries remain vulnerable, with any new economic shocks likely to have significant negative impacts.

"In 2025, countries are still grappling with the legacy of high borrowing during Covid-19," Georgieva said, stressing the need for fiscal

consolidation to place public debt on a sustainable trajectory. "It has proven very difficult for fiscal policy to act promptly, given public sentiments, and that takes us to what is our main challenge at the fund—tackling this low growth, high debt conundrum."

Georgieva also commented on the state of the U.S. economy, noting that inflation is nearing the Federal Reserve's target, supported by a robust jobs market. She suggested the Federal Reserve could take a cautious approach, waiting for further data before considering additional interest rate cuts.

As the global economy faces a critical year, the IMF underscores the importance of measured and predictable policy decisions to mitigate uncertainty and foster stability in a challenging environment.

Nottingham Forest boss provides update on Aina's contract situation

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Nottingham Forest manager Nuno Espirito Santo has addressed the future of defender Ola Aina, who is entering the final months of his contract with the club.

Santo confirmed that Aina, along with other players in similar contract situations, remains fully focused on the team's current objectives and upcoming matches.

"Aina is not distracted by his contract," Santo told reporters. "What I see is that all the players, including Aina, are happy and focused on their work. We hope everything reaches good terms."

Alongside Aina, Forest is in talks with Chris Wood, Morgan Gibbs-White, and Murillo regarding contract extensions. Despite the ongoing negotiations, Santo emphasized that the squad is committed to improving and contributing to the team's



success.

On Murillo, Santo noted his impressive development and the strong partnership he has built with Nikola Milenkovic and Morato. The manager expressed optimism about the progress of his entire squad,

stressing that there is always room for improvement.

Forest will look to carry this positive focus forward as they continue their season.

Troost-Ekong's assist secures dramatic win for Al Kholood

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

William Troost-Ekong played a pivotal role in Al Kholood's thrilling 3-2 victory over Al Ettifaq in the Saudi Professional League on Friday.

With the match seemingly destined for a 2-2 draw, Troost-Ekong provided a pinpoint assist in the 10th minute of stoppage time, allowing Myziane Maolida to score the decisive winner. It was Troost-Ekong's first assist in 14 league appearances this season.

Maolida had earlier put Al Kholood ahead in the 54th minute after Jackson Muleka's opener was canceled out by former Liverpool star Georginio Wijnaldum.



The victory lifts Al Kholood to 13th place in the league table with 13 points, moving them out of the relegation zone.

Elsewhere, Odion Ighalo scored his

fourth goal of the season as Al Wehda beat Al Fateh 2-1, but they remain in the relegation zone.

Manchester City secure £33.6m deal for Lens defender Abdukodir Khusanov

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi



Manchester City has reached an agreement with French club RC Lens for the transfer of Uzbekistan international defender Abdukodir Khusanov. The deal, worth €40m (£33.6m), includes additional bonus payments and marks a significant step in City's efforts to reinforce their squad during the January transfer window.

Khusanov, 23, is set to undergo a medical ahead of the official confirmation of the move. The central defender will make history as the first Uzbek player to join a Premier League club. His signing is also City's most notable winter acquisition since Aymeric Laporte joined the club in 2018.

The deal highlights manager Pep Guardiola's intent to reverse Manchester City's recent struggles. The reigning Premier League champions have endured a difficult campaign, slipping to sixth in the

table and trailing leaders Liverpool by 12 points. Injuries have compounded their troubles, leaving Guardiola short on defensive options.

Injury Crisis Prompts Action

City's defensive woes have been evident throughout the season. Key players Ruben Dias, John Stones, and Nathan Ake have missed significant game time, with Dias ruled out since mid-December. This crisis has forced Guardiola to act decisively in the transfer market.

Khusanov has been in fine form for Lens, making 13 Ligue 1 appearances this season and scoring his first goal in a French Cup match against Paris Saint-Germain on 22 December. The defender's rapid development since joining Lens from Belarusian club Energetik-BGU for just €100,000 (£84,000) 18 months ago has caught the attention of Europe's elite clubs. He also boasts 18 international caps

for Uzbekistan.

City's Transfer Plans Continue

Khusanov's arrival may not be the last piece of January business for City. The club is in negotiations with Brazilian side Palmeiras over 18-year-old defender Vitor Reis, although Palmeiras' president has publicly denied any intention to sell the highly-rated prospect. Additionally, City is monitoring Egypt forward Omar Marmoush, who has impressed at Eintracht Frankfurt this season.

Welcome Boost to Squad

City fans have also been buoyed by the return of 21-year-old Norwegian winger Oscar Bobb, who is back in training after a five-month absence with a fractured leg. His recovery could provide Guardiola with an additional attacking option as the team seeks to regain momentum in the second half of the season.