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Tinubu in Abu Dhabi, says Africa must develop itself

By Dave Oludare Oso

As the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW 2025) gets underway, President Bola Tinubu has said that Africa has what it takes to develop itself and should look inward to improve intra-African trade in the interest of the people and the continent.

Writing on his official X account on Monday, the President said he had successful conversations with the Rwandan President, Paul Kagame, as the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW 2025) enters day three. President Tinubu wrote, "We have the resources, the people and the capacity. We must look inward to improve intra-African trade and collaboration to benefit the African people and the

continent.

"The time for Africa is now. We can. We must. We will."

The President departed Abuja on January 11 to participate in the 2025 edition of Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week.

Sheikh Mohamed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, invited President Tinubu to attend the Summit, which began in the Emirate from Jan. 12 through 18.

The Summit is expected to bring together global leaders to accelerate sustainable development and advance socioeconomic progress.



The event titled, 'The Nexus of Next; Supercharging Sustainable Progress,' will enable policymakers, business, and civil society leaders to explore pathways to fast-track the transformation to a sustainable economy and evolve a new era of prosperity for all.

Police recover Dutch expatriate's body, CP Adepoju vows justice

By Helen Okechukwu

The Rivers State Police Command has recovered the lifeless body of the Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Rivers State Cassava Project Limited, Mr. Gibson Reuben, an expatriate from the Netherlands.

The police spokesperson, Grace Iringe-Koko, said the deceased, Mr. Reuben, lost control and crashed into the river at Aleto Eleme Bridge while trying to evade a kidnapper's attack from unknown gunmen at approximately 8:30 pm on Monday.

Meanwhile, the white Toyota Hilux van he drove, also submerged in the river, was also recovered by Command's Marine Unit.

Iringe-Koko notes that the Mobile Police personnel who accompanied Reuben escaped from the attack. "The recovery of the body and vehicle brings a sombre end to the rescue efforts," she noted.

During visitation, the Commissioner of Police (CP), Olugbenga A. Adepoju, condemned the attack, describing it as very barbaric, and promised to fish out the perpetrators as justice must be served.

He calls for a full-scale investigation of the gruesome attack.

At the scene were the Area Commander Eleme; DPOs within the Eleme Area Command; and tactical teams of the command.

"This incident is a disturbing situation, and the Police Commissioner's swift response is a welcome step towards addressing these concerns. He is calling on the good people of Rivers State to provide credible information that could lead to the arrest of the



fleeing perpetrators of this act," Iringe-Koko

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

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PRODUCT COLOUR

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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
5X2	42,916.50
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9X3	150,000.00
8X6	216,000.00
8X3	98,500.00
7X4	164,002.00
6X4	94,010.50
6X3	78,500.00
6X2	47,500.00
5X5	100,000.00
5X4	61,500.00
5X3	57,819.00
5X2	40,379.50
4X4	55,000.00
4X3	31,000.00
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5X4	65,833.00
5X3	49,375.00
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10X4	103,963.00
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9X6	162,222.445
9X5	168,191.50
9X4	N/A
8X6	N/A
8X3	N/A
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6X4	65,000.00
6X3	41,124.50
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5X3	29,858.00
5X2	22,841.00
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4X3	N/A
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PRESS RELEASE (4X4)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
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CBN fines nine banks N1.35bn for failing to disburse ATM cash

By Dave Oludare Oso



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The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has imposed fines of N150 million each on nine Deposit Money Banks (DMBs) for failing to dispense cash via Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) during the festive season.

This enforcement action follows spot checks on branches, revealing non-compliance with CBN's cash distribution guidelines.

The sanctioned banks are Fidelity Bank Plc, First Bank Plc, Keystone Bank Plc, Union Bank Plc, Globus Bank Plc, Providus Bank Plc, Zenith Bank Plc, United Bank for Africa Plc, and Sterling Bank Plc. The fines, totalling N1.35 billion, will be debited from the banks' accounts with the apex bank.

This is according to a press statement on Tuesday by CBN's Acting Director of Corporate Communications, Mrs. Hakama Sidi Ali.

The statement read "In a clear message of zero tolerance for cash flow disruptions, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has sanctioned Deposit Money Banks (DMBs) for failing to make Naira notes available through automated teller machines

(ATMs), during the yuletide season.

"Each bank was fined N150 million for non-compliance, in line with the CBN's cash distribution guidelines, following spot checks on their branches. The enforcement action follows repeated warnings from the CBN to financial institutions to guarantee seamless cash availability, particularly during periods of high demand.

"The affected banks include Fidelity Bank Plc, First Bank Plc, Keystone Bank Plc, Union Bank Plc, Globus Bank Plc, Providus Bank Plc, Zenith Bank Plc, United Bank for Africa Plc, and Sterling Bank Plc."

Sidi Ali confirmed the sanctions, stressing the importance of seamless cash availability.

"Ensuring seamless cash flow is paramount to maintaining public trust and economic stability.

"The CBN will not hesitate to impose further sanctions on any institution found violating its cash circulation guidelines," she stated.

The CBN's actions highlight its zero-

tolerance stance on cash flow disruptions, particularly during high-demand periods. The regulator had previously warned banks about adhering to cash distribution policies.

The CBN has announced intensified monitoring of cash hoarding and rationing, both at bank branches and by Point-of-Sale (POS) operators. It is collaborating with security agencies to curb illegal cash sales and enforce the N1.2 million daily withdrawal limit for POS operators.

Mrs. Sidi Ali stated that ongoing investigations and spot checks aim to ensure compliance, warning of further sanctions for violations.

The statement read, "The CBN's investigations and monitoring will continue to scrutinise cash hoarding and rationing, both at bank branches and by Point-of-Sale (POS) operators. The Central Bank is working with security agencies to crack down on illegal cash sales and operational violations, including enforcing POS operators' daily cumulative withdrawal limit of N1.2 million."

The sanctions underline the importance of regulatory compliance and prioritising customer needs. It is believed the measures will enhance accountability and improve cash distribution efficiency, ensuring Nigerians' uninterrupted access to cash during critical periods.

In September last year, the CBN announced that it would sanction banks failing to dispense cash through their automated teller machine (ATMs), as part of efforts to ensure sufficient cash in circulation.

By November, the apex bank urged bank customers to report ATM and branch cash withdrawal difficulties starting December 1, 2024, through designated state-specific phone numbers and email addresses.

Atiku, El-Rufai disgruntled people licking their wounds – APC

By Dave Oludare Oso

The All Progressives Congress (APC) has declared that it is not bothered by the ongoing political romance between the camp of former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, immediate past governor of Kaduna State, Nasir el-Rufai, and the opposition Social Democratic Party (SDP).

It could be recalled that the former governor, who is still a chieftain of APC, held a closed-door meeting with the leadership of the SDP and some allies of Atiku, who was the 2023 presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) last week, sparking talks of a coming merger or coalition of some sort for the 2027 general elections.

Although the agenda was not made public, the political rendezvous was described as a continuation of the clandestine alignment among major opposition figures to oust President Bola Tinubu in 2027.

What generated even more interest and talks about the meeting, which took place at the national secretariat of the SDP, was that it was also attended by Major Hamza Al-Mustapha, former Chief Security Officer of General Sani Abacha and a former spokesman of Atiku Abubakar, Otunba Segun Showunmi among others.

It was Showunmi who broke the news of the political stakeholders meeting on his Facebook page.

Many have alluded that the political grandstanding has something to do with the League of Northern Democrats being championed by a former governor of Kano State, Ibrahim Shekarau, and some elite to woo southern bigwigs for an alliance ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The Convener of the LND, Dr Umar Ardo, had on January 5 declared the group's readiness to transform into a political party, citing the need to create a unified and credible national political platform.

However, the National Chairman of the SDP, Shehu Gabam, has denied having an alliance with Atiku and El-Rufai as being speculated.

Gabam stated that the SDP's main

priority at the moment was to strengthen its structures and offer Nigerians credible alternatives.

Reacting to the development, the National Vice Chairman of the APC (South-East), Dr Ijeoma Arodiogbu, said the ruling party was not worried over the moves by the opposition figures.

He said, "As it is in the Bible, surely they shall gather and they shall scatter. We are not worried that they are gathering because they will definitely scatter. We are not worried about what El-Rufai does next. We know that his trajectory in politics is highly disturbed now.

"After our election (in 2023), he displayed himself as a man who cannot be trusted across the regions. The way he disparaged Christians in Nigeria, a secular society, has made him a leper. Nobody goes anywhere close to him. El-Rufai is just desperate for recognition now and I wonder why the media is giving him that attention.

"We are not worried about the unholy alliance because it will amount to nothing. It is just a gathering of disgruntled people trying to lick their wounds. Tinubu remains the president and there is nobody that can stop him in 2027."

Continuing, Arodiogbu argued that the controversial reforms that the opposition may be planning to campaign with are currently yielding the desired results Nigerians anticipated.

The APC chieftain also said the people cannot afford to surrender the leadership to desperate politicians whose sole interest is state capture.

He said, "So we are not worried about El-Rufai and their union. When 2027 comes, what will they use to campaign to Nigerians? Will you tell them that you plan to reintroduce fuel subsidy? Not possible. We are already bouncing back to the days of glory. They have



seen that the forest is stabilised, and the people are beginning to see a light at the end of the tunnel.

"People are now beginning to understand the essence of all the reforms he (President Bola Tinubu) has implemented. Did you read where they reported that PMS is likely to sell at N500 before the middle of this year? You can see that the benefits and gains of the policy reforms implemented by the President are beginning to yield fruit.

"That is because we have allowed the market forces to determine the price and taken off the pressure that fuel subsidy has on our economy and currency. We are now looking at exporting fuel outside Nigeria. That is a massive gain for Nigeria. I am telling you that we have hope for a very brighter tomorrow for Nigeria."

However, the Deputy National Organising Secretary of the APC, Nze Chidi Duru, said that the party cannot currently do anything about the immediate past governor of Kaduna until he takes a position on his political future.

According to him, El-Rufai has a constitutional right to mingle and associate with anybody he likes.

He said, "We are in a democracy and a republic. Part of what is in our constitution is the liberty to hold views, express views and, of course, the liberty to associate. These are inalienable rights guaranteed in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. So, long as these meetings are done within the laws of the country, it is welcome.

FG approves N1,125 for inmates' daily feeding allowance

By Dave Oludare Oso

Taking cognisance of the current economic realities in the country, the Federal Government has approved N1,125 daily feeding allowance for inmates of correctional centres.

Disclosing this while was addressing senior officers of the organisation on Monday in Abuja, Acting Controller-General of the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS), Sylvester Nwakuche, warned personnel against any action capable of soiling the image of the agency following recent corruption allegations.

The Acting C-G stressed that redeeming the image of the Service was critical to national security.

Nwakuche said, "Keeping inmates in secure custody is a premium mandate that should never be compromised" as he highlighted the policy thrust of President Bola Tinubu that prioritises national security

He added, "Our part within the internal security architecture of keeping people in safe and humane custody must be kept.

The issues of escapes, riots and attacks that more often than not are results of indolence should never be allowed to repeat themselves. The consequences of such grievous offences are severe and should be avoided at all costs. You have been warned. Take this message to staff under you."

The CG, who assured the top brass of the Federal Government's commitment to staff welfare, as communicated by the Minister of Interior, Dr Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, recalled that for the first time in a long while, staff salaries have been increased since December 2024, with the government also embarking on massive transformation and renovation of custodial facilities.

Touching on the worrisome issue of overcrowding in the custodial centres,



Nwakuche told his officers to continue engaging state chief executives to expedite the trial of the over 90 per cent of offenders in custody, as well as employ the non-custodial measures and early release mechanisms through the judiciary.

He said: "We will also fast-track the construction of proposed 3,000-capacity ultra-modern custodial facilities and other centres across the country. Presently, our statistics as of Monday, 6th January 2025, showed that 48,932 inmates in custody are Awaiting Trial Persons (ATPs)."

ASUU rejects proposed eradication of TETFund

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye



The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Akure Zone, has strongly opposed the proposed eradication of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) as outlined in the 2024 Nigeria Tax Bill currently under review by the National Assembly.

At a press conference held on Tuesday at the University of Medical Sciences, Ondo State, ASUU Akure Zone

Chairperson, Prof. Adeola Egbedokun, criticized provisions in the bill that propose significant reductions to TETFund's allocation. The bill suggests that from 2025 to 2026, only 50% of education tax will go to TETFund, with a complete cessation of allocations by 2030.

Egbedokun expressed concern over the implications of such measures, labeling them a direct threat to tertiary education in Nigeria. "The phasing out of TETFund will halt infrastructure and academic development while pressuring institutions into charging exorbitant tuition fees," he warned.

The union also rejected the replacement of TETFund with a proposed National Education Loan Fund (NELFUND), arguing that it could transform public universities into revenue-generating entities and

saddle students with unsustainable debt.

Egbedokun stressed that TETFund has played a vital role in improving physical infrastructure and staff capacity across Nigeria's tertiary institutions, describing the fund as "indispensable to Nigeria's educational system."

ASUU urged the National Assembly to reject any provisions in the Nigeria Tax Bill that undermine TETFund's existence. The union also called on education stakeholders and the general public to unite in preserving TETFund, labeling its survival as a matter of national importance.

Egbedokun concluded, "Any attempt to repeal the TETFund Act 2011 would be a profound disservice to Nigeria's education sector and the nation at large."

Atiba 9 rejects appointment of new Alaafin of Oyo

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye



group described the selection process as a disregard for Oyo's revered traditions and a violation of due process.

Governor Seyi Makinde had earlier presented the staff of office to Owoade based on Ifa's proclamation by Prof. Wande Abimbola, a US-based Yoruba scholar. However, Prince Sina Afolabi, speaking on behalf of the Atiba 9, argued that the process ignored the cultural protocols of the royal

customs in selecting the Alaafin. They also criticized internal disagreements within the Oyomesi (the traditional council responsible for the selection), urging them to resolve their disputes before proceeding with any appointment.

The group expressed fears that the controversial selection process might undermine the integrity and respect traditionally accorded to the Alaafin's stool. They also reaffirmed their legal challenge to the process that led to Owoade's emergence.

This marks the second major opposition to Owoade's appointment, with five kingmakers earlier declaring the selection invalid. The Atiba 9 insists that the sanctity of Oyo's royal institution must be preserved to avoid reducing the throne to "an object of ridicule."

Nine royal families in Oyo, collectively known as the Atiba 9, have rejected the appointment of Abimbola Owoade as the new Alaafin of Oyo. In a statement released on Tuesday, the

institution.

The Atiba 9 emphasized their legitimate claims to the throne and called for adherence to the established

NUPRC: Nigerian refineries to require 770,500 BPD for first half of 2025

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) has projected that the Federal Government, Dangote Petroleum Refinery, and eight other domestic refineries will collectively require 770,500 barrels of oil equivalent per day (BOPD) for processing between January and June 2025.

The NUPRC's forecast aligns with efforts to enhance refinery capacity utilisation and ensure a steady supply of crude oil, in accordance with Section 109 of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021.

Refinery Requirements

The refineries in focus include:

Dangote Refinery: 550,000 BPD

Port Harcourt Refinery (old): 60,000



BPD

Warri Refinery: 75,000 BPD

Kaduna Refinery: 66,000 BPD

OPAC Refinery (Delta): 5,000 BPD

Waltersmith Refinery (Imo): 4,500 BPD

Duport Midstream (Edo): 2,000 BPD

Edo Refinery: 1,000 BPD

Aradel Refinery (Rivers): 7,000 BPD

These requirements represent 37% of the projected daily crude production of 2,066,940 BPD for the first half of 2025.

Foreigner, others die as vehicle fleeing kidnappers plunges into river

By Dave Oludare Oso



A foreigner and others have been feared dead as a white Toyota Hilux believed to be owned by a company plunged into Okulu Aleto Bridge in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State while attempting to escape from suspected kidnappers.

According to reports, the driver lost control of the vehicle after gunmen attacked the convoy, causing it to skid off the bridge and plunge into the river.

A source in the area said a company convoy was attacked close to the bridge by some armed hoodlums and that the driver of the white Hilux had attempted to escape when the vehicle ended up in the Okulu River.

Although the Aleto bridge is undergoing reconstruction, the bridge which is on the East-West road that connects Port Harcourt with Ogoni communities as well as Akwa Ibom, has been in bad shape for a long time now.

It was gathered that the bridge has remained a death trap after vandals removed its railings.

It also learned that it was the deplorable state of the bridge that aided the easy access of the vehicle into the river.

It was further learnt that there is a kidnap gang that anchors by the river to kidnap people on that bridge and ferry them away through the river to unknown destination.

Chairman of the Property Owners on Eleme East-West Road, Joseph Obele, in a statement, said Monday's accident was one of the reasons for calling for the revocation of RCC's contract.

Obele said: "The accident led to a vehicle plunging off the dilapidated bridge, and rescue operations are underway. Emergency response teams, including the Rivers State Emergency Management Agency, National Emergency Management Agency, Federal Road Safety Corps, and local police, are working together to conduct rescue operations.

"Furthermore, road users have consistently complained about the hazardous condition of the Aleto bridge, which has been left unprotected for an extended period. Despite these warnings, RCC failed to take necessary

measures to address the risks, resulting in this tragic accident."

Meanwhile, a source in the area said the search and rescue operation team was mobilized by the Chairman of Eleme Local Government Area, Chief Brain Gokpa, Tuesday morning and that the search operation has been on.

The source, who preferred anonymity, noted that the victims were moving in a convoy of company workers when they were ambushed by armed hoodlums suspected to be kidnappers and in a bid to evade the ambush the van plunged into the river.

The source said the search team comprising men from the Nigerian Navy and other rescue agencies late on Tuesday found the van and one of the occupants dead.

However, at press time, the search operation is still ongoing to fish out other occupants of the Hilux van.

Meanwhile, the new commissioner of Police, Mr Olugbenga Adewole, led the police team to the scene while the operation was on and commended the local government chairman for his efforts so far.

Lagos APC denies directive for LG chairmen seeking re-election to resign

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye



The All Progressives Congress (APC) in Lagos State has dismissed reports claiming that incumbent Local Government chairmen seeking re-election have been asked to resign ahead of the 2025 council elections.

In a statement issued on Monday, the party's spokesperson, Seye Oladejo,

described the rumours as "fake news" intended to mislead the public and party members. "Our attention has been drawn to a false directive purportedly issued by the Lagos State Chairman of APC, Pastor Cornelius Ojelabi, requiring incumbent Council Chairmen seeking re-election to resign. We want to make it abundantly clear that there is no iota of truth in this publication, which has been twisted to serve the publisher's interest," Oladejo said.

He clarified that the only directive issued by the party applies to APC Local Government party chairmen

who aspire to contest in the forthcoming elections. These individuals must step down from their roles to ensure a fair electoral process.

Oladejo further explained, "Local government party chairmen who are also aspirants in the upcoming elections will be required to resign their current positions when the guidelines are released. This is to avoid situations where they serve as both contestants and umpires."

The APC urged party members and the general public to desist from spreading unverified information that could create unnecessary tension or disrupt the political atmosphere.

This clarification comes amidst heightened political activities ahead of the 2025 council elections in Lagos State.

Prioritise education funding, Obasanjo tells Tinubu

By Friday Omosola



Former President Olusegun Obasanjo has called on President Bola Tinubu to establish a sustainable plan for financing education in Nigeria.

Obasanjo made the appeal at the 70th birthday celebration of the Vice Chancellor of Bells University, Oludele Ojediran, held at Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomosho,

Oyo State on Tuesday.

He also encouraged governments at all levels to equip youths with the skills and resources needed to become job creators.

The former military head of state commended LAUTECH for producing exceptional academics and administrators, citing Professors Adeyemi and Ojediran,

both former Vice Chancellors of Bells University, as shining examples.

The Ogun-born reiterated his commitment to education, emphasising that he values education as a service to society rather than a profit-driven venture.

Meanwhile, the Soun of Ogbomosho, Oba Ghandi Olaoye, who also spoke at the event, praised the former president's impactful contributions to Nigeria's education and agriculture sectors.

Oba Olaoye encouraged Ojediran to use his expertise in agricultural engineering to advance the development of Ogbomosho.

The monarch further pledged to allocate farmland to individuals interested in agricultural initiatives within Ogbomosho and its environs.

LASG orders striking LTV workers, others back to work, knocks NLC

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Lagos State Government has ordered striking workers of Lagos Television (LTV), Radio Lagos/Eko FM, and Lagos Traffic Radio to resume duties immediately.

This directive, issued late Monday night by the Commissioner for Establishments and Training, Afolabi Ayantayo, comes amidst mounting tension between the government and labour unions.

The government accused the unions, including the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), the Radio, Television, Theatre and Arts Workers Union (RATTAWU), and the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), of resorting to violence during their strike.

In what the government described as a “disturbing show of aggression,” it said union members tore down doors, disrupted operations, and forcibly switched off transmitters at the three broadcast stations.

“The actions of the unions violate the rights of workers on essential duty and disrupt the vital services these stations provide to the public,” Ayantayo said in a strongly-worded statement.



The strike was sparked by demands for the inclusion of approximately 245 workers on the government’s payroll.

The government maintained that discussions to address these demands were already underway, with a meeting held on January 8 between the unions and officials led by Ayantayo.

Despite the ongoing dialogue, he said the unions reportedly escalated their actions, forcing staff out of the premises and halting broadcasts, plunging the stations into silence.

The Government warned union leaders against intimidating workers who wish to perform their lawful duties.

“A strike is not an excuse for violence or attacks on public facilities,” the statement read, emphasizing that the government is committed to addressing the workers’ concerns through dialogue.

Workers have been urged to return to their posts on Tuesday, with assurances of their safety and a call to avoid confrontations with union members.

Fee hike: Lagos Model Colleges experience low turnout of students

By New Daily Prime

Almost two weeks after schools resumed for the second term of the 2024/2025 session, most of the model colleges in Lagos are still experiencing low turnout of students due to the increase in fees for boarding students.

Most of the students in the model colleges are boarders, it is only a few that are day students.

The fee is for their feeding throughout the term.

The Lagos State government increased the fee for boarders to N100,000 from N35,000 per term.

Checks by New Daily Prime showed that the increase of about 185 per cent in the fee has kept some students at home, away from school.

Late last year, when the state government announced the increase in fees, parents and guardians protested the development.

A meeting held between the Chief of Staff to the Governor, Tayo Ayinde and the Parents Forum of Model Colleges, led by Mr Dapo Dawodu, did not yield any positive results.

The government stuck to its guns and the parents rejected the new fee regime.

Parents pleaded for between N45,000 and N50,000, while at a point, the government team was about yielding to N70,000.

However, when schools resumed, the only option parents saw while trying to pay fee was N100,000.

At Model Colleges in Meiran, Igbokuta, Ikorodu and others, most of the students have not resumed.

A parent, Ojuola Saheed, called on Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu to look into the matter.

“This is supposed to be a kind of

support from the government to the citizens. The colleges are not private ones. Some people have two or more children in the colleges across the state and with the economic situation in the country, coping has been difficult. We call on the government to reduce the fee. The hike is too high,” he said.



2025 Budget: NASS to exclude JAMB from FG grants

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

In a surprise midnight operation, the Jigawa State Command of Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), has rescued 10 victims of suspected trafficking in Babura Local Government Area of the state.

Disclosing the development while briefing newsmen in his office in Dutse, the state NIS Comptroller CIS. Musa said the interception is based on the "Operation Salama" team, carried out on January 12, 2025, at Naira Tsamiyar Kwance in Babura Local Government Area.

He said the victims, comprising eight females and two males, were en route to Europe through illegal migration channels.

CIS. Musa explained that the victims ages range between 21 and 30 years, with origins from Ogun, Oyo, Ondo, and Imo states.

"They include, Alatise Damilola, 29 years from Oyo State, Ayomide Adeyemi, 24 years of Ondo State, Wisdom Chikwuemeka, 29 years from Imo State, Lateef Jumoke, 30 years from Ondo State and Emyola Adeoye, 24 years from Ogun State.



NIGERIA IMMIGRATION SERVICE

"Others are Soneye Abigail, 22 years from Ogun State, Ogunleye Temitope, 29 years from Ogun State, Osirowo Rebecca, 21 years from Ogun State, Oniyide Kabirat, 27 years from Ogun State and Azizat Adaranijo, 26 years from Ogun State."

He said interrogation revealed that they were being trafficked from various locations to Kano and onward to Babura, with plans to cross into the Niger Republic, then to Libya, and eventually Europe via the Mediterranean Sea.

The victims have been handed over to

the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) for rehabilitation and further investigation.

During the media briefing, the Command expressed concern over the rising cases of human trafficking and illegal migration, urging parents and guardians to monitor their children and prevent them from falling prey to traffickers.

The Command, however, emphasized the ongoing commitment to reducing irregular migration in the state.

C'River man kills mother with stick, dumps corpse in well

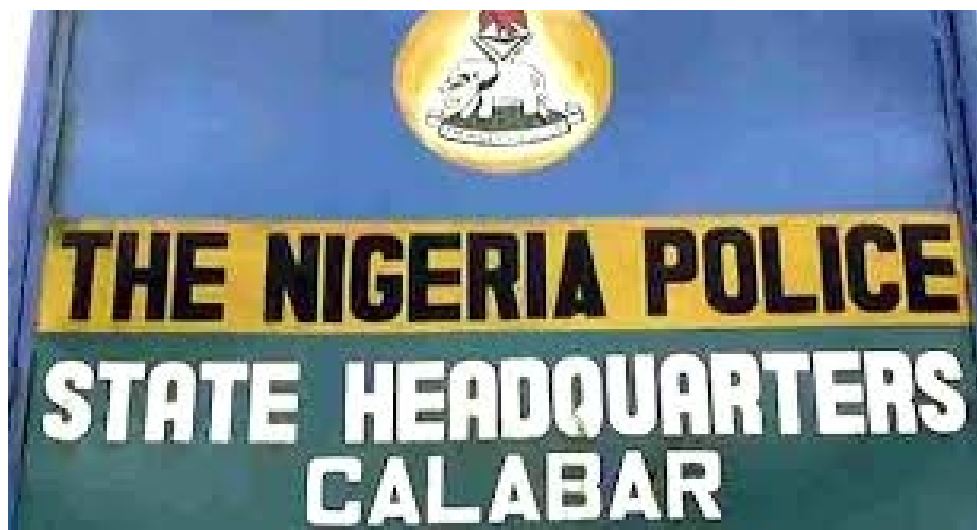
By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A man, who not only killed his mother with a stick but also dumped her corpse in a well, has been arrested by operatives of the Cross River State Police Command in Obudu Local Government Area of the state.

Mathias Amunde, who committed matricide, in an interrogation video shared on Instagram by user @isaacfayoseoriginal, confessed to the crime, revealing that he and an accomplice struck his mother with a stick, dragged her body outside, and threw it into a well.

He said in Pidgin (now translated), "I and Walcot killed her. We killed her with a stick. Walcot has gone to his house. After we killed her, Walcot dragged her out of the house and we jointly dragged her to the well.

"After we got to the well, I opened it and we jointly carried her body and threw it



into the well."

Also, confirming the incident on Monday, the state Police Public Relations Office, Irene Ugbo, noted that the case would be referred to the command's headquarters for further

investigation.

"Yes, he has been arrested. He will be transferred to the police headquarters for further investigation tomorrow (Tuesday)," Ugbo said.

Beggars, scavengers, others sue Wike, IGP for N500m over arrest

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Some residents of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), including scavengers, beggars, and petty traders, among others, have filed a suit against the FCT minister, Nyesom Wike, demanding N500 million in damages over an alleged breach of their fundamental rights.

A legal practitioner, Abba Hikima, who filed the suit marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/1749/3024 before the Federal High Court in Abuja on behalf of the vulnerable residents, listed as the applicant in the originating motion dated Nov. 19, 2024, but filed Nov. 20, 2024, said he is suing in public interest for the protection of vulnerable citizens in Nigeria.

The applicant sued Wike; Inspector-General (I-G) of Police; Director-General, Department of State Services (DSS) and Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) as 1st to 4th respondents.

The lawyer also joined the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF) and Federal Government of Nigeria as fifth to sixth respondents respectively.

He is praying for an order awarding the sum of N500 million as general and exemplary damages for the violation of the fundamental rights of the affected citizens.

He prayed the court to declare that “the arbitrary arrest, detention without charges, harassment and extortion of homeless persons, scavengers, petty traders, beggars and other vulnerable Nigerians resident in the FCT, constitute a violation of their fundamental rights.

The rights, they said, are guaranteed under Sections 34, 35, 41 and 42 of the Constitution of Nigeria 1999 (as altered).”

“A declaration that the treatment of vulnerable citizens, including verbal harassment, physical threats, extortion, and detention without charge, constitutes inhumane and degrading treatment contrary to Section 34 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended).

“A declaration that Nigerians regardless of their economic status, place, birth or appearance, have the liberty to move freely in the FCT, Abuja including the liberty to sleep on public roads without let, permission or hindrance whatsoever



in accordance with the spirit and purpose of Sections 35, 41 and 42 of the Constitution.”

He is, therefore, seeking “an order directing the respondents to issue a public apology to the affected individuals and Nigerian citizens at large for the inhumane, arbitrary and unconstitutional treatment meted on them pursuant to the directive of the 1st respondent (Wike) dated the 22nd October, 2024.

“An order mandating the respondents to set in motion and implement immediate policies and reforms, including public education for the realisation of the fundamental human rights of vulnerable Nigerians residing in Nigeria.”

Hikima, in the affidavit he deposed to, averred that on Nov. 12, 2024, at about 11pm, while passing through Ahmadu Bello Way in Abuja, he personally sighted a convoy of a joint task force security operatives and enforcement officers, including personnel of the military and police arresting numerous individuals perceived as homeless persons, scavengers and beggars.

He alleged that those arrested include hawkers of goods such as ice cream, sweets and biscuits; petty traders conducting lawful businesses along the roadside and persons dressed in ways reflecting their economic hardship or appearing homeless.

According to him, in my presence, these individuals were forcefully apprehended, verbally harassed and subjected to physical threats in full view of all passersby, thereby creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation.

He said he felt devastated as a human rights lawyer, and decided to trail the task force’s motorcade from a reasonable distance to Eagle Square along Shehu Shagari Way where they dropped off the victims.

He said he went back to the place where these persons were arrested and was able to get contacts of some of the victims.

He said on Nov. 15, 2024, he organised a meeting with three of the victims namely, Abdullatif Shehu, Hajiya Talatu Danladi and Judith Samuel, whose testimonies were recorded and verily believed to be correct and true.

The lawyer said the minister gave a directive for the arrest on Oct. 22, 2024, and that it was in the guise of enforcing the directive that the joint task force was constituted to carry out the directive.

According to him, it is not a crime to be homeless, beg or embark on a petty trade in Nigeria.

He said the homelessness, begging and petty trading for which the trio of Abdullatif, Talatu and Judith were arrested, detained and humiliated was occasioned by the harsh and unbearable government policies being experienced all over the country.

Hikima also attributes their plights to government’s failure and ineptitude in providing vulnerable Nigerians with security and decent lives.

The lawyer urged the court to grant their reliefs in the interest of justice to protect the fundamental rights of citizens and ensure accountability for the respondents’ actions.

Tax reform bills: Northern lawmakers stand fast as NASS resumes today By Dave Oludare Oso

As the National Assembly resumes today, Northern lawmakers in the legislative arm have concluded plans for a showdown if the tax reform bills currently before the assembly are not withdrawn.

With clear vehemence, they have reiterated their calls for the withdrawal of the bills, citing concerns about the timing, lack of proper consultations with stakeholders, and the structure and content of the bills.

Even though the bills passed second reading in the Senate before the red chamber went on the yuletide break, further legislative work was paused for additional consultations following widespread controversy.

In a bid to address these concerns, the Senate formed a committee led by Minority Leader Senator Abba Moro (PDP, Benue South) to meet with the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF) to resolve the issues surrounding the bills.

However, despite the ongoing controversy, the proposer of the bills, President Bola Tinubu has insisted that the tax reform is here to stay.

On their own, northern lawmakers remain firm in their stance that the bills should be withdrawn.

And they plan to make their position clear as the National Assembly resumes its sessions today, with the 2025 budget defence and the tax reform bills set to dominate the agenda.

One of the loudest and most visible opponent of the reform bills, Ali Ndume (APC, Borno South) in a recent interview identified four key issues with the bills: wrong timing, constitutional concerns regarding derivation, opposition to the proposed VAT increase, and lack of proper consultation.

Ndume emphasized that, "It's not against the Northern interest, but against Nigeria's federal system."

Ndume criticized the government's actions, saying, "There is an illegal commitment with the World Bank. Agencies have exceeded revenue targets; what did they do with that money? Why borrow when targets are met?"

In a like manner, the senator representing



Birnin Gwari/Giwa Federal Constituency in Kaduna State, Bashir Zubairu, warned against the bill, calling it an "imposition" designed to put the North at a disadvantage.

"We will fight the forces behind the plan to impose an unpopular legislation that will be detrimental to millions of Nigerians. It will be a big battle against people who think what they want must be implemented at the expense of others.

"The proponents are trying to do everything to see the bills through including blackmail and other means. They will try to do to us what they did to Senator Abdul Ningi. So, we are calling on our people to support us. We must not be left alone," he added.

Kabiru Alhassan Rurum, representing Rano Kibiya and Bunkure Federal Constituency of Kano State, reaffirmed opposition from lawmakers in Kano, stating, "We are against the bill. It is detrimental to the North, and we will fight it during and after the debate."

Another Kano federal lawmaker, Dr Ghali Mustapha Tijjani, representing Gaya and Ajingi Federal Constituency, also condemned the bill, describing it as a draconian measure that disregards the struggles of ordinary Nigerians.

But Senator Enyinnaya Abaribe (APGA, Abia South) suggested that the bills would likely be altered before passage.

"I do not see the bill being passed as it is. It will be rejigged," he said in a

message to one of our reporters.

Meanwhile, Rep Babajimi Benson, representing Ikorodu Federal Constituency in Lagos State, dismissed claims that the tax bills were aimed at stoking regional division. He defended the reforms as a progressive step towards economic growth, noting that the current tax system is outdated and inefficient.

"This reform is about creating a system where every state thrives based on its economic activities," he said.

Benson expressed confidence that President Tinubu, having received strong support from the North in the 2023 elections, would not implement policies that would harm the region.

"The president wants to make the North happy for his re-election," he added.

Rep Gboyega Nasiru Isiaka (Yewa North/Imeko-Afon Constituency) also supported the reforms, emphasizing that the current tax laws, some dating back to the pre-colonial era, needed modernization. "The reforms protect low- and middle-income earners while ensuring that those earning more contribute fairly," he said.

Despite the opposition, another federal lawmaker, who wished to remain anonymous, rejected claims that "executive high-handedness" would alter their stance. "We are determined to protect the interests of Nigerians and have made our position clear," the lawmaker said.

Fuel price hike looms as depot owners sell petrol at N950/litre

By Dave Oludare Oso



There is a high indication that Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), also known as petrol would likely cost more as depot owners increased prices by about 4.74 per cent to N950/litre due to the rising crude oil prices.

Recall that the cost of Brent, the global benchmark for crude, reached \$79.76 per barrel on Sunday.

With the new development, this current situation indicates that filling stations nationwide may adjust their pump prices to reflect the higher costs of refined products.

For instance, Nigeria's Bonny Light rose to \$80 per barrel this week from \$73 per barrel last week.

Going around one can see that already, some depots, including Swift Depot have increased their loading prices to N950 per litre from N907 per litre while Wosbab depot also increased its price to N950 per litre from N909 per litre.

Similarly, Sahara Depot increased its price to N950 per litre from N910 per litre

while Shellplux, increased its loading price to N960 per litre from N908 per litre.

Nipco Depot increased its price by N38 from N912 to N950, while the Matrix Warri Depot increased its cost from N925 per litre to N945.

The depot increased its price from N1,080 to N1,150. Ibeto Depot approved an increase from N1,050 to N1,150 per litre. Sahara Depot sold its product at N1,150 from N1,045 last week.

Nipco Depot increased its price to N1,150 from N1,120, while Optima Depot approved an N72 increase to N1,120 per litre from N1,048.

The average increase in depot prices for PMS stands at approximately 7-10 percent, while AGO prices have surged by 5-10 percent, depending on the depot and location.

Reacting in an earlier interview, an oil and gas expert, Olatide Jeremiah, said depots are poised to increase the loading price of refined petroleum

products.

Jeremiah, who is the Chief Executive Officer of petroleumprice.ng, said, "It implies that there is a possibility of increased fuel prices, particularly diesel prices.

"As of Friday, when Brent crude neared \$80, prices selectively increased in some depots in Lagos, and on Monday, prices might be jacked up by importers because a large chunk of oil marketers import petroleum products and Brent crude is a major determining factor in the refining process."

Another marketer, Bayo Adelaja said, "Depot rates have escalated sharply, and this is directly affecting pump prices. Consumers should expect further fluctuations in the coming weeks," he noted.

Meanwhile, despite the rise in depot prices, it was observed that the retail prices of petrol in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, have remained unchanged as of Monday, selling between N935 and N1,100 per litre across filling stations.

Alleged N1.3bn fraud: EFCC nabs 5 Katsina revenue officials

By Dave Oludare Oso

Five officials of the Katsina State Board of Internal Revenue have been arrested by operatives of the Kano Zonal Command of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) over the alleged diversion of N1,294,337,676.53 (One billion, two hundred and ninety-four million, three hundred and thirty-seven thousand, six hundred and seventy-six Naira, fifty-three kobo) belonging to the Katsina State Government.

Confirming the development on Monday in Abuja, EFCC Spokesperson, Dele Oyewale, who noted that the suspects are currently being detained at the Kano Zonal Command of the EFCC, said they will be charged to court upon the conclusion of investigations.

Oyewale named the suspects as, Rabiu Abdullahi, Sanusi Mohammed Yaro, Ibrahim M. Kofar Soro, Ibrahim Aliyu, and Nura Lawal Kofar Sauri.

The EFCC Spokesperson said the suspects were arrested following a petition from the Katsina State

Government, alleging that the suspects colluded and diverted the sum of N1,294,337,676.53 accruing to the state from the World Health Organization (WHO), Médecins Sans Frontières, and Alliance for International Medical Action (ALIMA).

Preliminary investigation by the Commission showed that Rabiu Abdullahi, a former Director of Collections of the Board and current Permanent Secretary of the Board, authorized the opening of a bank account in the name of "BOIRS" at Sterling Bank, where he allegedly designated Sanusi Mohammed Yaro, Director of Revenue Account, and Ibrahim M. Kofar Soro as sole signatories to the account.

Subsequently, the account became the primary channel through which all the funds were allegedly funnelled to the



main beneficiary, NADIKKO General Suppliers, a company owned and controlled by Nura Lawal Kofar Sauri, an Assistant Director of Career Skills/Staff Welfare of the Board.

Investigations further revealed that Nura Lawal and his company, "NADIKKO," became the principal conduits used to launder the stolen funds. These laundered funds were traced to the various bank accounts of the suspects.

Abducted Anambra nuns freed after 6 days

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Vincentia Nwankwo and Grace Okoli, the two reverend sisters, who were kidnapped in Anambra State have regained freedom after spending about six days with their captors.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ reverend sisters were abducted on their way back from a vocational association's meeting in Ogboji along the Ufuma Road in Orumba North Local Government Area of the state, on Tuesday, January 7, 2025.

Although the actual date of their release could not be ascertained, their release was confirmed in a press statement issued on Monday and signed by the Secretary General of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Maria Ikeotuonye.

The statement said the two reverend sisters were released unconditionally and are in good health.

The statement read in part, "I bring to



your notice in joy that our dear Sisters Vincentia Maria Nwankwo and Grace Mariette Okoli, who were kidnapped in the evening of Tuesday, January 7, 2025, have been released unconditionally and in good health.

"We thank God and thank you all for your prayers and support all through these rough and uncertain days. May God forever be blessed through Mary our Mother."

When contacted, the Anambra State Police Command Spokesman, SP Tochukwu Ikenga, confirmed their release but said the command was yet to take brief of what happened.

"Yes, we are hearing that the two nuns have been released, but the command is yet to take the brief from the victims to ascertain what happened. Further details shall be communicated," Ikenga

Hospitals must comply with drug sourcing law or face penalties- Ondo Health Com

By Helen Okechukwu



In an effort to support quality drug supplies and prevent shortages, the Ondo State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Banji Ajaka, has said that state hospitals are mandated to source drugs exclusively from Pharma Grade and warns of penalties for non-compliance.

He said this during an on-site inspection of the Pharma Grade facility while noting the importance of patronising the Ondo State Drug and Health Commodities Management Agency (ODHC).

Dr. Ajaka said, “It is crucial that hospitals provide the necessary drugs to patients, and the Pharma Grade has been established to meet these needs.”

Marking as the central medical store in the time past, he noted that it has been upgraded through the help of the Global Fund and the State Government.

He said, “It is now one of the largest facilities of its kind in the country, particularly in the South West.”

“We are already bringing in materials such as drugs and medical supplies. The facility includes cold chain compartments, essential drugs, and other health commodities. These supplies are to be stored here and distributed to hospitals throughout the state.”

Dr. Ajaka emphasised that under the state’s Drug and Health Commodity Management Agency (ODHCMA) law, all hospitals in the state must source their drugs and health supplies from Pharma Grade.

Read Also: Lagos health workers begin warning strike

He thanked the Federal Government and Governor Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa for their financial support and assured residents that drugs would remain available and secure.

“Previously, the operationalisation of the agency law began some time ago. Drugs must come from primary manufacturers or sole importers,

ensuring that they are affordable and of high quality,” Dr. Ajaka noted.

He also warned that hospitals must comply with the law, as there are penalties for violations, and noted ongoing efforts to raise awareness about the law.

Pharm. Amos Ayegbusi, Executive Secretary of ODHCMA, praised Governor Aiyedatiwa’s commitment to Pharma Grade, stating that it would improve drug security and storage.

“We can confidently vouch for the quality of the drugs in the warehouse, as they come directly from the manufacturers. This facility also opens the door for further partnerships with other health organisations. It is spacious enough for essential medicines and public health commodities,” Ayegbusi said.

He urged the government to provide delivery vans to improve the timely distribution of drugs and health commodities.

Paul Enenche's brothers, another pastor remanded in prison for cyberbullying him

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



Alexander and Enenche Enenche, who are both brothers of the senior pastor of the Dunamis International Gospel Church, Pastor Paul Enenche, have been remanded at the Keffi Prison in Nasarawa State.

Also remanded with the brothers by the Magistrate Court in Wuse, Abuja, was Abraham Daniel, a former pastor at the Dunamis church

The siblings were reportedly taken to the Keffi Custodial Centre of the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS) on Monday evening following a remand order the Nigerian Police Force secured from the Magistrate Court in Wuse Zone 6, Abuja.

According to SaharaReporters, upon honouring police invitation, the Enenche brothers as well as Abraham Daniel were kept in the police custody till Monday evening.

Alex Enenche and Daniel were arrested and detained on January 7,

2025, over allegations of cyberbullying and criminal defamation against Pastor Paul Enenche, but were released the following day (Wednesday) after an agreement was reached to resolve the matter amicably.

The Enenches and Abraham Daniel were instructed to report to the Force Intelligence Department (FID) on Friday, January 10, 2025, and Monday, January 13, 2025.

It was learnt that on Tuesday, the FID had detained Daniel and Alexander Eneche, following their appearance at the department in response to a police invitation.

A source said when they reported to the Force Headquarters on Monday, they were kept in police custody till the evening when police brought a remand order from a Magistrate Court in Wuse Zone 6 to remand them in prison.

The source said, "Upon honouring the Police invitation, Mr. Enenche

Enenche, Alexander Enenche and Abraham Daniel were kept in police custody till this evening when police brought a remand order.

"The police claimed to have gotten an Order from the Magistrate Court, Zone 6, Abuja for their remand.

"The name of the Magistrate and number of days they will be detained are not yet known at the moment.

"Currently, the three of them have been taken to Keffi Prison on remand."

Meanwhile, the source also said that a fundamental rights application would be filed on Tuesday.

"We will likely file fundamental right on this tomorrow," the source said.

Infants feared dead to inferno in Rivers community, father begs for assistance

By Helen Okechukwu

A six-month-old infant has died from an inferno that engulfed two of the seven units of the self-contained apartments on Rumuworlu Street in the Eneka community of the Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Speaking to New Daily Prime reporters on Tuesday, the neighbours of the victims family recounted that the fire started around 7 am yesterday with no trace, describing the incident as spiritual and mysterious.

Mr. Johnson Jonah, one of the neighbours narrated that the mother of the late six-month-old baby had gone out to buy something, adding that the children were locked inside the apartment while he went about washing his car before returning to his room.

He disclosed that the mother and her children recently returned from a trip.

Jonah said, "So we dey inside house dey hear fire o, fire o, fire, we no even know because this thing wey happen yesterday no even smoke, nothing like sign.

"So as she go buy indomie, she come lock the children inside, before we know we see fire for roof, we come dey rush but before she come back to open gate fire don already kill the small one, na the first son wey manage with the fire wey dey burn am, em manage open door come varander, na em survive but em dey hospital.

"The small one na six months, em no fit run, na cry em dey cry till em die and this one, if to say the protector no lock, em for run out, fire for no burn am like that."

Speaking on what could have led to the fire outbreak, as there was a trace of ignition, "Nobody knows what caused the fire. See the cylinder here (brings the cylinder), Jonah said. "She no dey cook inside house, na for varander; she no get kitchen inside house, the cylinder no burn, them no bring light, light no dey; I say nothing like smoke, no smell of something wey wan burn.

"This fire no be ordinary, the thing fear person like say na spiritual something, no be ordinary. This boy wey escape no so hot water pour am before him begin waka. This thing weak us."

Speaking with Mr. Saviour Moses, the husband and father to the victims, he said



his wife and the surviving sibling to the late infant have been admitted at the Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH).

Moses, while crying for assistance, shared his concerns: "I am helpless; nothing was rescued from our house, nothing; my baby died inside. I am helpless; I don't know where to start from and where to go. I need help. No place to stay, no money to pay hospital bill; I am confused.

"I want to beg everyone. I beg Obio/Akpor chairman; I beg people in this community; I beg those who feel my pain to please help me, help my family; I don't want to lose my wife

and my only child, please.

"I just wish this thing did not happen; since yesterday, I have been praying that it should be a dream, but till now, I have not woken up. Please help me, help me, please help me.

While observing the scene of the incident, it was gathered that the kitchen and bathroom were not damaged, but only the room was affected extensively.

Finance Minister advocates for reforms, smarter investments in Saudi Arabia

By Friday Omosola



The Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, has called for transformative, high-impact investments in infrastructure, agriculture, rail, and energy.

Speaking at the Islamic Development Bank Governors' (IsDB Group) Retreat in Al-Madinah, Saudi Arabia, Edun emphasised the need for innovative and sustainable financing strategies.

In a statement posted on the ministry's X page today, Edun urged the IsDB to prioritize investments with strong returns to ensure long-term financial sustainability.

Highlighting the need for a paradigm shift in development financing, he called on the bank to align its approach

with current economic realities.

Edun stressed the importance of designing innovative funding solutions tailored to national priorities and debt dynamics.

He also advocated for a concessional financing strategy that achieves developmental goals while minimizing debt accumulation.

The retreat featured significant contributions from Algeria's Minister of Finance and Chairman of the Board of Governors, H.E. Laaziz Faid, and Saudi Arabia's Finance Minister, H.E. Mohammed Al-Jadaan, who opened the discussions.

Responding to the IsDB's call for input, Edun underscored the

importance of robust monitoring systems to evaluate the real impact of the bank's initiatives.

His remarks reflected Nigeria's commitment to strengthening the bank's capacity to deliver measurable results for its member states.

The retreat, designed to build consensus on the IsDB's upcoming 10-year strategy (2026–2035), provided a platform for governors to exchange ideas and offer feedback on how the bank can address pressing developmental challenges in an evolving global landscape.

Akpabio urges senators to rededicate efforts toward national progress

By Friday Omosola



Godswill Akpabio, the President of the Senate, has urged lawmakers to renew their dedication to addressing Nigeria's pressing challenges, with an emphasis on national development and legislative reforms.

During a plenary session on Tuesday, which marked the Senate's return after the holiday break, Akpabio made this call for renewed commitment.

In his speech titled "Rising to the Greatness of Our Calling", he emphasised the necessity for a collective resolve to transform Nigeria into a nation characterized by progress and hope.

He highlighted the significance of the national budget, describing it as not merely a financial tool but as a reflection of the hopes and aspirations of millions of Nigerians.

The Senate President also stressed the urgency of completing electoral reforms ahead of the next election cycle.

"Electoral reform is not just a legislative task; it is a moral obligation," he remarked, noting that a transparent and credible electoral system is crucial to Nigeria's democratic stability.

Addressing the broader challenges facing the nation, Akpabio called for steadfast prayers for peace and unity, urging his fellow senators to recognize the power of collective intercession in guiding the nation's leaders and uniting its citizens.

Akpabio encouraged the senators to meet the challenges ahead with excellence, commitment, and a focus on nation-building.

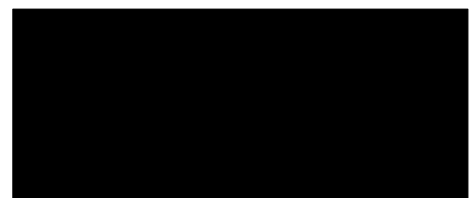
"Our work here is more than

legislation; it is about shaping the future of our nation and leaving a legacy for future generations," he concluded.

He stressed that we are now at the end of the first quarter of the 21st century, a time demanding bold action and visionary leadership.

"History calls on us to make a difference and craft a new narrative for our nation—one of progress, justice, and limitless possibilities," Akpabio affirmed.

With optimism for the year ahead, he called on his colleagues to unite in purpose and work toward the common good.



Ekiti builds storage facilities to combat food scarcity

By Friday Omosola



The Ekiti State government has taken proactive steps to ensure food security by establishing storage facilities across the state.

These facilities aim to purchase and store farm produce during harvest seasons, releasing them during periods of scarcity to stabilize food supply and prices.

Governor Biodun Oyebanji, during an inspection of one of the storage facilities in Ado-Ekiti yesterday, explained that the initiative is part of efforts to prevent the food scarcity experienced in the state last year.

He highlighted that the government is focused on addressing food shortages, reducing post-harvest losses, and ensuring year-round food sufficiency.

Speaking to journalists after the inspection, Governor Oyebanji, accompanied by key officials including his Chief of Staff, Niyi Adebayo, and the Commissioners for

Agriculture, Trade, and Investment, noted that the initiative aligns with President Bola Tinubu's directive for state governments to prioritize food security as a means to combat hunger nationwide.

"In 2024, Ekiti State cultivated over 6,000 hectares of farmland. However, the lack of storage facilities posed a significant challenge. These warehouses will help us regulate food prices and ensure availability during times of scarcity," Governor Oyebanji stated.

The governor expressed satisfaction that much of the produce was sourced from young farmers under the "Bring Back Youth in Agriculture" programme. He reaffirmed his administration's commitment to alleviating hunger and achieving food sufficiency, adding, "We promised good governance, and we are delivering on that promise. This initiative is part of our deliberate efforts to fight

hunger and ensure food security in Ekiti State."

The Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Security, Boluwade Ebenezer, emphasised the broader goals of the program.

He noted that it not only tackles hunger but also creates opportunities for young farmers. "By ensuring steady food supply and offering a ready market for their produce, the initiative encourages increased agricultural production."

"This programme reassures farmers that their hard work won't go to waste. The government is committed to buying from them and supporting their efforts," Mr. Boluwade said.

The storage facilities, once fully operational, are expected to help Ekiti State regulate food prices, provide a buffer against scarcity, and contribute to a more stable agricultural sector.

Bagudu outlines strategy to achieve N36.35trn revenue

By Friday Omosola



The Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Abubakar Bagudu, has expressed optimism that the Federal Government will meet its N36.35 trillion revenue projection for 2025.

Speaking during a National Assembly Joint Committee hearing on the 2025 Appropriation Bill, Bagudu attributed his confidence to the economic reforms introduced by President Bola Tinubu's administration, which he said are already yielding positive results.

He highlighted the impact of removing fuel and foreign exchange subsidies, noting that the resulting revenue boost for all levels of government began to materialize in October 2024. Bagudu emphasized that the savings from these reforms are expected to drive a steady increase in revenue in the coming years.

The minister also revealed that President Tinubu has instructed all revenue-generating Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) as well as Government-Owned Enterprises (GOEs) to intensify their efforts to enhance government earnings.

Additionally, the administration plans to increase oil production at reduced costs to further bolster revenue.

Following the approval of the 2025 Medium-Term Expenditure Framework and Fiscal Strategy Paper, President Tinubu presented an N49.74 trillion Appropriation Bill to the National

Assembly in December 2024.

The proposal is based on key assumptions, including a daily oil production of 2.06 million barrels at \$75 per barrel, an exchange rate of N1,500/\$, a 15.75 per cent inflation rate, and a 4.6 per cent GDP growth rate.

Despite a projected deficit of N13.08 trillion, Bagudu assured lawmakers that the government is confident in its ability to fund the budget. He stated that the administration would draw from its experience with the 2024 budget to meet its revenue goals.

He said, "The 2024 budget is this administration's first full-year budget, and lessons learned from 2024 have formed the basis of the assumptions in 2025.

"The principal among those assumptions and lessons was the removal of the fuel subsidy and its effect on revenue and expenditure, the removal or deregulation of the foreign exchange market and its impact on both government revenue and spending, and other price-distorting issues, such as electricity, which has not been fully dealt with.

"All the major, bold, and courageous steps taken with the support of the National Assembly are intended to generate more revenues for the three tiers of government, correct distortions in the economy, and

improve expenditure efficiency so that we can ensure that the revenue generated goes a long way."

Bagudu highlighted that 2024 experienced fluctuating revenue profiles, noting that the full impact of fuel subsidy removal only began reflecting in federation account revenues by October.

Despite the lingering effects of the subsidy regime, he assured lawmakers that the administration had gained valuable insights from implementing the 2024 budget.

These lessons, he stated, have bolstered confidence in achieving the 2025 revenue projections.

Bagudu said, "Because we have seen all the elements and learned many lessons, with the support of the National Assembly, the Budget Office was able to guide and rely on the best estimates, allowing us to make revenue assumptions based on 2.06 million barrels per day.

"The Minister of State Petroleum and the Federal Executive Council even said they hope we can do more. And Mr. President appreciates the security efforts and the fact that we have to challenge the management of institutions to do better, as well as the reduction of importation. These are all things that significantly affect the revenue profile."

NASS deems N11.8bn budget inadequate for Livestock Ministry's launch

By Friday Omosola



The National Assembly Joint Committee on Livestock Development has raised concerns over the proposed N11.8 billion budget allocation for the newly created Federal Ministry of Livestock Development, describing it as insufficient for the ministry's successful launch.

The Federal Government allocated N10 billion for capital expenditure and N1.8 billion for operational costs in the ministry's 2025 budget.

During the budget defence session on Tuesday, Minister Idi Maiha, along with senior officials and agency heads, outlined the ministry's financial needs to the joint committee.

Maiha explained that the ministry, which was separated from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, began operations three months ago.

However, it faces several challenges, including the absence of office space,

essential equipment, and operational facilities.

At present, the ministry is temporarily operating from the Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, while negotiations are underway with the Federal Capital Territory administration to secure permanent office accommodations.

Despite the budget limitations, Maiha emphasised that the allocated funds would provide a foundation for the ministry's development.

He outlined the ministry's primary goals: addressing the impacts of climate change, creating economic opportunities within the livestock sector, and engaging youth and women in sustainable activities.

Maiha added that capital projects would be distributed across the geopolitical zones based on specific

needs, to attract both local and international investments.

The ministry also plans to launch a nationwide sensitization campaign through national and local media to promote its objectives and initiatives.

In response, the joint committee urged the minister to present a supplementary budget that would better reflect the ministry's financial needs.

Wale Raji, Chairman of the House Committee on Livestock Development, questioned the level of support from the Presidential Implementation Committee for the ministry's establishment, calling for a more robust budget that aligns with the expectations of the Nigerian people.

Musa Mustapha, Chairman of the Senate Committee, reassured the ministry of the committee's support in helping it meet its mandate.

Edo Election Tribunal to begin full hearing on Ighodalo vs Okpebholo case Wednesday By Friday Omosola



Plateau State Governor, Caleb Mutfwang, has urged Christian pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land to use the opportunity to deepen their relationship with God and return as carriers of His presence.

The governor made the call during the farewell ceremony for the pilgrims in Jos, where he emphasised the transformative potential of the journey.

“This pilgrimage is more than just a journey; it is an opportunity for a life-changing encounter with God. May this experience positively transform your lives, benefit your families, and leave a legacy for generations to come,” he said.

Governor Mutfwang highlighted that true Christianity reflected in character and productivity at work, encouraging

the pilgrims to embody these virtues during and after their spiritual journey.

He also announced that the state government had facilitated the pilgrimage and was engaging the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) to expand the runway at the Jos Airport to allow international flights directly from Jos.

The Executive Chairman of the Christian Pilgrim Welfare Board, Bishop Jwan Zhumbes, lauded the governor for sponsoring the highest number of pilgrims in the country.

He called on the pilgrims to represent Plateau State as worthy ambassadors and return spiritually renewed.

During the ceremony, Rev. Associate Professor Caleb Dami

delivered a sermon titled “New Jerusalem Dweller”, drawing from the books of Hebrews and Revelation.

He reminded the pilgrims of the sacrifices required to visit earthly Jerusalem while urging them to aspire to dwell in the heavenly Jerusalem, made accessible through Christ’s ultimate sacrifice.

The pilgrims also received farewell prayers from the State Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Polycarp Lubi. They will be led to the Holy Land by Rev. Professor Pandam Yamsat.

This marks another milestone in Plateau State’s commitment to fostering spiritual growth and global connectivity for its citizens.

FG to launch youth farmers enrollment portal, partners NIYEEDEP to create jobs By Friday Omosola



The Federal Government (FG) has announced it is set to unveil a youth farmers enrollment portal as part of efforts to tackle unemployment and boost economic engagement among young Nigerians.

The announcement followed a meeting between the Minister for Youth Development, Ayodele Olawande, and a delegation from the Nigerian Youth Economic Engagement and De-Radicalisation Programme (NIYEEDEP).

The delegation, led by NIYEEDEP National Coordinator, Kennedy Iyere, included representatives from the American Association of Grant Writers, Marc Paley and Staci Smith, as well as Victor Obinna Edeh, the African representative for Bayern Munich Football Club.

READ ALSO: Edo Election Tribunal to begin full hearing on Ighodalo vs Okpebholo case Wednesday

During the meeting, the delegation

updated the Minister on the progress of the NIYEEDEP initiative, particularly the upcoming launch of the youth farmers' enrollment portal.

The portal aims to create direct jobs for young Nigerians across the agricultural value chain, empowering them to become entrepreneurs rather than job seekers.

Iyere emphasised the importance of the program in addressing the nation's economic challenges, noting that it is designed to generate opportunities in agriculture, agro-allied industries, technology, the creative economy, and sports.

He added that the portal unveiling event, scheduled for January 17, 2025, in Abuja, will attract government officials, industry leaders, NGOs, development partners, and youth groups.

"The portal is a critical step in operationalizing the NIYEEDEP initiative and transforming the lives of young Nigerians by equipping them with the resources and opportunities they need to thrive," Iyere stated.

In his remarks, Minister Olawande

commended the delegation for their efforts to address youth unemployment and expressed his gratitude for their support.

He reiterated President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's commitment to empowering Nigerian youth through capacity building, skills development, and job creation.

"The government is dedicated to ensuring that Nigerian youth benefit from meaningful programs that deliver tangible results. This initiative reflects our resolve to create opportunities that uplift our young people," the Minister said.

He urged the delegation to ensure the swift implementation of the project so that its impact is felt nationwide.

The youth farmers enrollment portal will provide Nigerian youth with access to agricultural grants and support, further advancing the government's efforts to engage young people in productive and sustainable economic activities.

National grid collapses to persist, says FG

By Friday Omosola



The Federal Government (FG) has acknowledged that national grid collapses will continue due to its inability to repair a critical transmission line in northern Nigeria, citing persistent insecurity as a major barrier.

Minister of Power, Adebayo Adelabu, disclosed this during the 2025 budget defence session with the Senate Joint Committee on Power.

He identified the damaged Shiroro-Kaduna-Mando transmission line, which has been out of service since a vandalism incident in October 2024, as a key factor contributing to the grid's instability.

"The Shiroro-Kaduna-Mando line is one of two main lines supplying power to the north. While the Ugwuaji-Makurdi line, which was also vandalized, has been repaired, insecurity has made it impossible to fix the Shiroro-Kaduna line," Adelabu explained.

Minister of Power, Adebayo Adelabu

"This situation leaves the grid overly dependent on a single line, making it highly fragile and prone to failure," he added.

The minister acknowledged that while efforts to prevent collapses entirely are ongoing, the government is prioritising measures to minimize their frequency and ensure faster restoration when outages occur.

Adelabu emphasised the critical role of security collaboration, particularly with the Office of the National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu, to combat vandalism—one of the biggest threats to the power sector.

During the session, the minister outlined a proposed N2 trillion budget for the ministry and its agencies, with N229 billion allocated to the ministry itself.

He highlighted key initiatives, including a N700 billion Power Metering Initiative (PMI) aimed at closing the metering gap, improving billing transparency, and curbing fraud in the power system.

Additionally, Adelabu announced plans to invest N36 billion in the procurement and distribution of transformers across the six geopolitical zones.

To address insecurity and protect critical infrastructure, the minister proposed the installation of solar-powered streetlights and CCTV cameras along highways. This initiative, budgeted under a N200 billion allocation, is designed to monitor and deter vandalism and other criminal activities.

Toyin Abraham's 'Alakada' grosses N401m in box office

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian actress Toyin Abraham celebrates a career milestone as her film *Alakada Bad and Boujee* earns an impressive N401 million at the box office.

This achievement solidifies her position in Nollywood and highlights the unwavering support she receives from her fans and supporters.

Heartfelt gratitude on social media Taking to her social media platforms, Toyin expressed her heartfelt gratitude. She thanked God, her fans, and everyone who played a role in making this success possible.

Her message was filled with appreciation and humility, emphasizing the power of support and love in her journey.

Giving thanks to God

Toyin began her post with a message of thanks to God. She described the milestone as a moment of divine favor.

"I am the one who has come back to say, Thank You," she wrote. "Thank You, God, for this extraordinary personal career milestone, a moment that feels like heaven smiling down on me. Your grace is undeniable, and I stand in awe of Your faithfulness."

Acknowledging her audience

She also extended her gratitude to everyone who watched the movie. According to her, their support gave life to the project.

She noted that each viewer played a crucial role in the film's success, and she deeply appreciated their efforts.

"To every single soul who has taken the time to watch *Alakada Bad and Boujee*, thank you from the depths of my heart. Your love and support have breathed life into this project, and I'm eternally grateful," she shared.

Celebrating the Toyin Titans

Much of her message was directed at her fan base, the Toyin Titans. Known for their loyalty and enthusiasm, they have stood by her through thick and thin.

Toyin acknowledged their unwavering encouragement and the sense of family they bring to her

career. "To my cherished Toyin Titans, my loyal family of believers and encouragers, thank you for riding this journey with me. Your unwavering support lifts me higher every day. Together, we are unstoppable, and we keep breaking barriers!" she added.

A career of consistent success

The success of *Alakada Bad and Boujee* marks a remarkable chapter in Toyin's career. It reflects not just her talent but also the strong connection she has built with her audience over the years. The film's achievement is a testament to her hard work, dedication, and the collective effort of her team.

Leading Nollywood's evolution

Toyin Abraham is no stranger to success in Nollywood. With multiple hits under her belt, she has consistently proven her ability to create stories that resonate with audiences.

Her unique style of storytelling, coupled with her passion for her craft, continues to set her apart in the industry.

Box Office triumph

The milestone of N401 million at the box office is a significant accomplishment. It places *Alakada Bad and Boujee* among the top-grossing films in Nigerian cinema.

This success also highlights the growing influence of Nollywood on the global stage. The industry has witnessed a surge in quality productions and audience engagement, and Toyin Abraham remains at the forefront of this evolution.

A Shared victory

As the film continues to attract viewers, Toyin's gratitude serves as a reminder of the importance of community in achieving greatness.



Her acknowledgment of God, her fans, and her team underscores the collective nature of success.

An inspirational journey

The actress's heartfelt message has resonated widely, with fans and colleagues alike celebrating her achievement. Social media platforms have been flooded with congratulatory messages, further demonstrating the impact of her work on the entertainment industry and beyond.

Paving the way for Nollywood

Toyin Abraham's journey is one of resilience, creativity, and inspiration. Her success with *Alakada Bad and Boujee* is not just a win for her but for Nollywood as a whole. It paves the way for more groundbreaking projects and reaffirms the potential of African cinema on a global scale.

Prioritise results, Wumi Toriola advises leaders

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Actress Wumi Toriola urges young leaders to embrace discipline, focus, and hard work as key to success in a heartfelt message on Instagram.

Through her candid Instagram post, Wumi shed light on what it truly takes to achieve meaningful results in today's fast-paced world.

A natural look, a powerful message Wumi Toriola took to Instagram to connect with her audience in a deeply personal way. Accompanying her post was a strikingly natural photograph of herself, free from makeup, symbolizing authenticity and a no-nonsense approach.

Alongside the image, she shared a heartfelt letter brimming with practical advice for young leaders who aspire to excel in their careers and personal lives.

Prioritize results over distractions

In her message, Wumi urged young leaders to focus on outcomes rather than distractions. She stressed that in the quest for success, results matter more than excuses.

Highlighting the importance of clarity, she wrote, "Dear Young Leader. Work-life balance doesn't feature in conversations where you're behind on deliverables."

Her statement resonated as a reality check for many, emphasizing that achieving significant milestones often requires sacrifices, especially when deadlines loom.

The actress made it clear that prioritizing results is not just an opinion but a vital strategy for success.

Discipline: The cornerstone of success

One of the key points in Wumi's message was the importance of discipline. She encouraged young leaders to develop the habit of seeing tasks through to completion. "Develop the discipline to see things through," she advised, pointing out that perseverance is crucial when tackling challenges.

Discipline, as Wumi suggested, is not



just about sticking to a schedule but also about staying committed to goals, even when the journey becomes difficult. This mindset, she believes, separates those who achieve from those who merely dream.

Shutting out distractions

In today's world, distractions abound—from social media to endless entertainment options. Wumi reminded young leaders that success often depends on the ability to tune out these distractions.

She urged them to focus on their work and remain undeterred by external noise. "You must learn to shut off distractions. Get work done," she wrote.

This advice is particularly relevant in an age where multitasking and constant connectivity can hinder productivity.

By staying focused and cutting out unnecessary interruptions, Wumi suggested, young leaders could significantly enhance their efficiency and effectiveness.

A toast to success

She concluded her message with an uplifting note, cheering on young leaders and expressing confidence in their potential. "Cheers to your success," she wrote, leaving her audience with a sense of motivation and encouragement.

Why Wumi's message matters

Wumi Toriola's words come at a time when many young professionals struggle to balance ambition with the challenges of modern life.

Her advice serves as a timely reminder that hard work, discipline, and focus remain timeless principles for achieving success.

Moreover, her natural and unfiltered approach to delivering this message added authenticity and relatability, inspiring her followers to take her words to heart.

Conclusion

Her heartfelt Instagram post is more than just a piece of advice; it is a call to action for young leaders to step up, stay disciplined, and focus on achieving their goals.

Her message underscores the importance of resilience and determination in a world that often demands shortcuts.

By prioritizing results, shutting out distractions, and maintaining discipline, young leaders can chart a path to success. As Wumi aptly put it, "Get work done. Cheers to your success."

Portable: I look like Lil Wayne, not Asake

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Controversial Nigerian singer Portable has expressed frustration over comparisons being made between his facial tattoos and those of fellow artist Asake.

Portable, known for his bold personality and distinctive style, took to social media to voice his disapproval in a direct and fiery response.

The drama began after Asake revealed his new facial tattoos. The fresh ink, featuring dollar signs and the word “Believe,” caught the attention of fans and sparked online debates.

Many were quick to notice similarities between Asake’s tattoos and Portable’s signature look, which has long been part of his unique identity.

Some fans on social media compared the two artists, pointing out their shared use of bold facial tattoos. This commentary didn’t sit well with Portable, who wasted no time in addressing the matter.

“Don’t compare me to Asake,” Portable declared in a video posted on his social media pages. “I don’t look like Asake. I look like Lil Wayne. Stop comparing me to overrated artists.”

His blunt remarks quickly ignited further discussions among fans and industry observers. While some supported Portable’s stand, others saw it as an unnecessary outburst.

Many social media users debated the importance of individuality and originality in the music world, with the conversation extending beyond tattoos to personal branding and artistic expression.

Tattoos and Music: A Personal Statement

Facial tattoos have long been a topic of intrigue in the music industry. For artists like Portable, tattoos serve as a form of self-expression and a statement of their individuality.

His tattoos, combined with his outspoken personality, have helped him carve a niche in the competitive



Nigerian music scene.

Asake, on the other hand, has risen to fame with his own unique style and musical talent. His decision to get facial tattoos appears to be a personal choice, reflecting his artistic journey and beliefs.

However, the timing of the unveiling seems to have sparked unintended comparisons with Portable, who has worn his tattoos for years.

Fan reactions: Divided opinions

The online reaction to Portable’s comments has been mixed. While some fans applauded his confidence and refusal to be compared to others, others criticized his choice of words, particularly the phrase “overrated artists.”

Critics argued that such statements could come across as disrespectful to his peers and detract from his own artistic achievements.

Supporters, however, defended Portable, saying he has every right to protect his identity and brand. “Portable is just being himself,” one fan wrote on Twitter. “He’s not trying to copy anyone, and people should respect that.”

Meanwhile, Asake has remained silent on the matter, choosing not to respond publicly to the comparisons or Portable’s remarks.

His fans have also rallied around him,

emphasizing that every artist has the freedom to express themselves in their own way.

The bigger picture

This incident highlights a recurring theme in the entertainment industry: the pressure on artists to stand out while also facing constant scrutiny and comparisons.

As public figures, musicians are often judged not only on their work but also on their appearance and lifestyle choices.

For Portable, this moment serves as a reminder of the challenges that come with fame. His strong personality and bold statements have made him a polarizing figure, but they have also ensured that he remains a topic of conversation.

As the debate continues, it’s clear that both Portable and Asake have their own paths to success. While comparisons may be inevitable, fans and critics alike are reminded that true individuality comes from more than just appearances.

In the end, this incident serves as a reflection of the vibrant and ever-evolving Nigerian music scene, where artists are constantly pushing boundaries and making bold statements.

May D: 'I was once bigger than Wizkid, Davido'

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian singer May D recently made a bold declaration, stating that he was once on par with music giants Wizkid and Davido.

In fact, he claimed to have surpassed them at one point in his career.

The bold claim

During his appearance on The Honest Bunch podcast, May D reflected on his career and status in the industry.

"Then it was Wizkid, David, and I. I was even like bigger. Wetin be 'Holla at Your Boy' compared to 'Soundtrack?'" he said, referencing his early success with his hit track "Soundtrack" and comparing it to Wizkid's breakout song "Holla at Your Boy."

A Promising career start

May D's rise in the Nigerian music industry was rapid and impressive. After signing with Square Records, owned by the iconic P-Square duo, in 2011, he quickly gained fame with hits that resonated across Nigeria. His track "Soundtrack" was especially well-received and positioned him as a rising star.

The turning point: Exit from square records

However, things took a dramatic turn in August 2012 when Square Records announced that May D was no longer part of the label.

This fallout marked a crucial shift in his career, which he believes derailed his trajectory.

May D has since spoken openly about how his separation from the label affected him. He claimed that this pivotal moment limited his opportunities and ability to compete with his contemporaries.

Comparing careers: May D, Wizkid, and Davido

In the early 2010s, May D was undeniably one of the top names in



the industry. His music was gaining attention alongside Wizkid's "Holla at Your Boy" and Davido's "Dami Duro." Together, the three represented a new era of Nigerian artists taking the spotlight.

While Wizkid and Davido continued to soar to international fame, May D faced challenges that slowed his career progression.

Wizkid, backed by EME Records and later Starboy Entertainment, expanded his influence globally. Davido, with strategic collaborations and his family's support, became a dominant force in the industry.

May D, on the other hand, struggled without the backing of a powerful label. His career trajectory became a cautionary tale about the importance of a solid support system in the competitive music world.

Impact of the Label Fallout

May D has repeatedly pointed to his fallout with Square Records as a turning point. Without the resources and connections of a major label, his music promotion and career growth were significantly affected. He claims this setback created a gap between him and his peers, one he found difficult to bridge.

The Road Ahead for May D

Despite the challenges, he remains an active figure in the Nigerian music scene. He continues to release music and collaborate with other artists.

Though he may not share the same global fame as Wizkid and Davido today, his contributions to the industry are undeniable.

A Reminder of Music Industry Realities

May D's story highlights the unpredictability of the music industry. While talent is essential, timing, resources, and strong support systems often play equally critical roles in sustained success.

His recent statements have reignited conversations among fans and industry watchers about what could have been.

Whether May D can reclaim his place among Nigeria's top music stars remains uncertain, but his journey serves as a powerful reminder of the highs and lows of a music career.

Hollywood icon Dalyce Curry found dead amid Los Angeles wildfires

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Legendary actress Dalyce Curry, celebrated for her iconic roles in *Blues Brothers* and *Lady Sings the Blues*, has tragically passed away at the age of 95.

Her body was discovered at her Altadena home, which was severely damaged by the ongoing wildfires in Los Angeles.

The heartbreaking discovery was made days after flames swept through the area, leaving a trail of destruction. On Sunday, authorities confirmed her remains had been found at the property.

TMZ reported that officials announced the news alongside the statement, "Her remains were indeed found at the property. #RIPMOMMADEE."

Hollywood Mourns a Star

Dalyce Curry's death has sent shock waves through the entertainment industry. Known for her grace, talent, and unforgettable performances, she was a beloved figure in Hollywood.

Her portrayal of strong, dynamic characters earned her a place in the hearts of audiences worldwide.

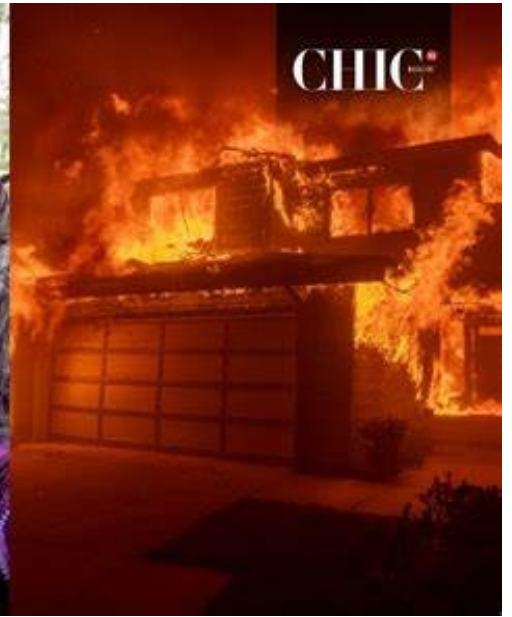
Fellow actors, fans, and filmmakers have expressed their grief on social media. Tributes poured in, highlighting her influence on the silver screen and her legacy as a trailblazer for women in the industry.

A Life of Stardom

Curry's career spanned decades, leaving an indelible mark on cinema. She first rose to fame in the 1970s, delivering powerful performances that showcased her versatility.

Her role in *Lady Sings the Blues*, a biographical drama about singer Billie Holiday, was particularly lauded.

Critics praised her ability to bring complex emotions to life, solidifying her reputation as a talented actress.



In *Blues Brothers*, Curry demonstrated her comedic timing and charm, captivating audiences with her vibrant energy. These films remain classics, cherished by generations of fans.

Tragic End Amid Chaos

The wildfires in Los Angeles have caused widespread devastation, destroying homes and displacing families.

Unfortunately, Curry's Altadena residence was among the properties ravaged by the flames. The fires, fueled by high winds and dry conditions, have been relentless, leaving communities reeling.

Neighbors described Curry as a kind and generous woman who often engaged with her local community. Many expressed their sorrow, sharing fond memories of her warm personality and unwavering kindness.

Investigation Underway

Authorities are still investigating the circumstances surrounding Curry's death. While it appears the fire was the primary cause, officials are working to piece together the events leading to the tragedy.

The Altadena neighborhood has been one of the hardest-hit areas, with emergency services working tirelessly to contain the flames and assist residents.

Remembering a Legend

Dalyce Curry will be remembered not only for her contributions to film but also for her spirit and resilience. She inspired

countless individuals, breaking barriers and paving the way for future generations of actresses.

Her passing marks the end of an era, but her legacy will live on through her work and the memories she created.

As fans and colleagues mourn her loss, they celebrate a life well-lived and a career that will never be forgotten.

While the wildfires continue to wreak havoc in Los Angeles, the loss of Dalyce Curry underscores the human toll of these natural disasters.

Her death serves as a reminder of the need for continued efforts to combat climate change and protect communities from its devastating impacts.

A Final Goodbye

As Hollywood says farewell to one of its brightest stars, Dalyce Curry's influence remains undeniable. Her films, her grace, and her courage will continue to inspire.

Though her life ended amid tragedy, her legacy endures—a testament to her incredible talent and enduring spirit.

Rest in peace, Dalyce Curry.

Israel, Hamas reach breakthrough in hostage, ceasefire deal

By Dave Oludare Oso

Mediators have handed Israel and Hamas the final draft of a deal that could finally bring the 15-month-long Gaza war to a close — with US officials saying a ceasefire was closer than it's ever been after a midnight breakthrough in negotiations.

An official briefed on the talks — which have been attended by envoys of both US President Joe Biden and President-elect Donald Trump — told Reuters that Qatar presented terms to both sides at a conference in the nation's capital of Doha.

The ceasefire agreement's text would end hostilities and release hostages — and another round of talks planned for Wednesday morning will let the opponents hammer out the remaining details, the official said.

Demonstrators holding a poster and cutouts of hostages outside Likud party headquarters in Tel Aviv, demanding their immediate release. REUTERS

In a Tuesday statement, Hamas said it was keen on reaching a deal.

Meanwhile, an Israeli official said negotiations to release up to 33 Israeli hostages taken during Hamas' savage October 2023 attack were in advanced stages.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told MSNBC the two sides were "closer than we've ever been" to a deal. And the ball is in Hamas' court.

"We are very hopeful that we get it over the finish line, finally after all this time," he said, adding that the proposal was built off a framework Biden put forward back in May.



Neither side confirmed they've agreed on a final draft, but both reported forward movement.

"The negotiation over some core issues made progress and we are working to conclude what remains soon," a Hamas official told Reuters.

Israel War Update

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar echoed the comments, saying, "There is progress, it looks much better than previously."

"I want to thank our American friends for the huge efforts they are investing to secure a hostage deal," Saar said.

The US, Egypt and Qatar have tried to end the brutal conflict for more than a year.

"I think there is a good chance we can close this," Jake Sullivan, Biden's national security advisor, told reporters. "The parties are right on the cusp of being able to close this deal."

Both Hamas and Israel have sought to end the fighting for months — and both want Israeli and Palestinian hostages released.

But Hamas has insisted the deal must halt the war for good. And the militant group wants a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, an enclave of about 2.1 million along the Mediterranean Sea.

Israel has said it won't leave until it

eliminates Hamas.

Trump's inauguration on Jan. 20 has long been seen as a deadline, with the president-elect warning Hamas there would be "hell to pay" if the hostages are not released.

Biden has also pushed hard for the deal, stressing in a Sunday phone call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the "immediate need for a cease-fire in Gaza and return of the hostages with a surge in humanitarian aid enabled by a stoppage in the fighting under the deal," the White House said.

Hamas is still holding about 100 hostages, including seven Americans, in Gaza following the group's 2023 attack on Israel.

Up to half of them may be dead, according to officials.

Meanwhile, the Israelis have killed more than 46,000 people in Gaza, Palestinian health officials have claimed, though a study by UK-based Henry Jackson Society found that an upwards of 17,000 were Hamas terrorists.

Taliban don't see women as human beings – Malala

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



Nobel Peace Prize winner, Malala Yousafzai has urged Muslim leaders to challenge the Taliban government in Afghanistan and its repressive policies for girls and women.

“Simply put, the Taliban in Afghanistan do not see women as human beings,” she told an international summit hosted by Pakistan on girls education in Islamic countries.

Ms Yousafzai told Muslim leaders there was “nothing Islamic” about the Taliban’s policies which include preventing girls and women from accessing education and work.

The 27-year-old was evacuated from Pakistan at 15 after being shot in the head by a Pakistan Taliban gunman who targeted her for speaking out about girls’ education.

Addressing the conference in Islamabad on Monday, the Nobel Peace Prize winner said she was “overwhelmed and happy” to be back in her home country. She has only returned to Pakistan a handful of times since the 2012 attack, after making her first return in 2018.

On Sunday, she said the Taliban government had again created “a system of gender apartheid.”

The Taliban were “punishing women and girls who dare to break their obscure laws by beating them up, detaining them and harming them,” she said.

She added that the government “cloak their crimes in cultural and religious justification” but actually “go against everything our faith stands for.”

The Taliban government declined to respond to a BBC request for comment on the advocate’s remarks. They have previously said they respect women’s rights in accordance with their interpretation of Afghan culture and Islamic law.

The Taliban government leaders were invited to the summit run by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Pakistan government and the Muslim World League, but did not attend.

Conference attendees included dozens of ministers and scholars from Muslim-majority countries who advocated for girls’ education.

Since the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan in 2021, its government has not been formally recognised by a single foreign government. Western powers have said their policies restricting women need to change.

Afghanistan is now the only country in the world where women and girls are

prevented from accessing secondary and higher education – some one and a half million have been deliberately deprived of schooling.

“Afghanistan is the only country in the world where girls are completely banned from education beyond grade six,” said Ms Yousafzai during the conference.

The Taliban has repeatedly promised they would be re-admitted to school once a number of issues were resolved – including ensuring the curriculum was “Islamic.” This has yet to happen.

In December, women were also banned from training as midwives and nurses, effectively closing off their last route to further education in the country.

Ms Yousafzai said girls education was at risk in multiple countries. She said in Gaza, Israel had “decimated the entire education system.”

She urged those present “call out the worst violations” of girls’ right to education and pointed out that crises in countries including Afghanistan, Yemen and Sudan meant “the entire future of girls is stolen.”

TikTok denies plan to sell app to Elon Musk

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**



ByteDance, the parent company of social media platform TikTok, has denied reports on the potential sale of the app to billionaire and Tesla boss, Elon Musk to continue its operations amid a possible ban by the US government.

Bloomberg News and The Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday that Chinese officials have discussed allowing the sale to the Tesla and SpaceX CEO to avoid a ban scheduled to take effect on Sunday unless China-based owner ByteDance sells off TikTok's US operations

Citing people familiar with the matter, Bloomberg reported that Beijing officials strongly prefer that TikTok remains under the ownership of parent ByteDance Ltd., and the company is contesting the impending ban with an appeal to the US Supreme Court.

The report estimated the value of TikTok's US operations at between \$40 and \$50 billion.

Although Musk is currently ranked as the world's wealthiest person,

Bloomberg said it was not clear how Musk could execute the transaction, or if he would need to sell other assets.

The US government passed a law last year that requires TikTok's ByteDance to either sell the wildly popular platform or shut it down. It goes into effect Sunday — a day before President-elect Donald Trump takes office.

The US government alleges TikTok allows Beijing to collect data and spy on users and is a conduit to spread propaganda. China and ByteDance strongly deny the claims.

TikTok has challenged the law, taking an appeal all the way to the US Supreme Court, which heard oral arguments on Friday.

At the hearing, a majority of the conservative and liberal justices on the nine-member bench appeared skeptical of arguments by a lawyer for TikTok that forcing a sale was a violation of First Amendment free speech rights. Bloomberg characterized Beijing's consideration of a possible Musk transaction as "still preliminary," noting that Chinese officials have yet to

reach a consensus on how to proceed.

It said it was not clear how much ByteDance knew of the Chinese government planning.

TikTok did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment, but a representative was cited by Variety as saying: "We can't be expected to comment on pure fiction."

Musk is a close ally to Trump who is expected to play an influential role in Washington in the coming four years.

He also runs the electric car company Tesla, which has a major factory in China and counts the country as one of the automaker's biggest markets.

Trump has repeatedly threatened to enact new tariffs on Chinese goods, which would expand a trade war begun in his first term and which was largely upheld, and in some cases supplemented by outgoing President Joe Biden.

Over 100 dead in illegal South African gold mine

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



Six more bodies have been recovered from an illegal gold mine in South Africa, where scores of people have reportedly died underground since authorities tried to force them out and seal the mine in November, BBC News reported.

Eight people were rescued alive on Tuesday and 26 were recovered on Monday, the BBC reported.

Over 100 people who were illegally mining in the abandoned mine have reportedly died since the crackdown began, a group representing the miners told British broadcaster Sky News.

Arguing that the miners had entered without permission, the crackdown involved authorities cutting off their access to food and water, the BBC

reported.

Last week, the government was ordered by a court to facilitate a rescue operation.

Videos that appear to have been taken on mobile phones inside the mine and brought to the surface by those being rescued show what appear to be emaciated people and corpses wrapped in makeshift body bags. CBS News has been unable to independently verify the videos.

The General Industries Workers of South Africa, a trade union also known as “Giwusa,” released one video CBS News has been unable to independently verify that shows dozens of men sitting on a floor with a voice off camera saying they’re hungry and need help.

“We’re starting to show you the bodies of those who died underground,” said the voice in the video. “And this is not

all of them. ... Do you see how people are struggling? Please – we need help.”

In a briefing on Monday, Giwusa leaders called the situation in the mine a “massacre,” the BBC reported.

“What this footage does is show a pile of human bodies, of miners that died needlessly,” Giwusa president Mameitlwe Sebei said.

South Africa’s department of mineral resources told the BBC the rescue operation on Monday involved lowering a cage into the mine that is designed to hold six or seven people. It said the cage has been going up and down the shaft every hour.

Ukraine launches largest attack of war so far

By Dave Oludare Oso

Ukraine struck several targets deep inside Russia on Tuesday in what it says is its “most massive” attack of the war so far.

Ammunition depots and chemical plants were hit across several regions, some of which were hundreds of kilometres from the border, according to the General Staff of Ukraine’s Armed Forces.

Sources in Ukraine’s SBU intelligence agency told the BBC the overnight attack was a “painful blow” to Russia’s ability to wage war.

Russia said it had shot down US-supplied Atacms missiles as well as UK-made Storm Shadow cruise missiles, and vowed to respond to the attack.

At least nine airports in central and western Russia temporarily halted traffic, while the strikes prompted schools in the southwestern Saratov region to close.

Strikes in the border region of Bryansk caused explosions at a refinery, ammunition depots and a chemical plant said to produce gunpowder and explosives, a Ukrainian security source told the BBC.

But Kyiv also struck far deeper into the country, with the General Staff claiming to have hit targets up to 1,100km (700 miles) from the border.

In the western region of Saratov, officials reported a “massive” drone attack.

Two industrial plants in the cities of Engels and Saratov were damaged, regional governor Roman Busargin wrote on Telegram.

Students were taught online on Tuesday after local schools were closed.

Last week, Kyiv said it had struck an oil storage facility in Engels – prompting a days-long effort to tackle the blaze and Busargin to declare a state of emergency.

Officials in the western region of Tula also reported an overnight attack, where regional governor Dmitry Milyaev Russian said air defences had shot down 16 drones.

There were no casualties, he said, although falling debris had damaged some cars and buildings.

Elsewhere, a gas storage site near Kazan was struck in a drone attack in the southwestern region of Tatarstan, local officials said, without reporting any casualties.

Ukraine said Russia also launched dozens of drones across Ukraine overnight, with multiple air raid alerts in and around Kyiv.

According to its tally, all but one were shot down or lost.

Some were dummy, or decoy, drones – used to try to overwhelm air defences.

As air raid alarms sounded over Kyiv last night, one drone flew back and forth for some time, its movement tracked on various Telegram groups.

One user joked that it had been a “great idea” to send troops from the air force – who operate the air defence systems – to the front line as infantry.

Today, the Ukrainska Pravda newspaper quoted a source saying more than 5,000 troops were to be transferred from air to ground forces, following an order by General Oleksandr Syrskiy.

The acting commander of the Air Force responded by insisting that specialists “who are objectively difficult to replace” would not be moved, especially those trained on foreign-supplied weaponry and equipment. That presumably includes F16 planes and Patriot air defence systems.

The General Staff also commented, conceding that the situation on the frontline “is not easy” with a shortage of infantry “in many areas.”

“The decision to strengthen the ground brigades on the front line at the expense of servicemen from units of other types and branches of the Armed Forces of Ukraine is a forced step of the military leadership to strengthen our defence,” a statement read.

It was, Ukraine says, a fiery night.

Videos posted online seem to confirm at least some of the claims – although Russia’s defence ministry says US- and British-made missiles were shot down over Bryansk and the Black Sea

The BBC asked Ukraine’s General Staff to comment on Russian claims that they shot down 14 of these Western-made missiles overnight.



A spokesman, Bohdan Senyk, said his office had “no knowledge of the information you are asking about.”

Ukraine is trying to push back, however it can, against Russian military advances on the ground, with a week to go until President-elect Donald Trump’s inauguration.

The authorities in Kyiv have come under pressure from the US administration to lower the conscription age and enable it to send more soldiers to the frontlines.

Trump’s national security adviser, Mike Waltz recently told ABC News that Ukraine should address its shortage of troops and needed to be “all in for democracy” if it wants the US to be “all in” for Ukraine.

They were stark words, given the immense price Ukraine has already paid to defend itself and Nato’s eastern flank, and they seemed to herald a change of tone from Washington as Trump returns to the White House.

On Tuesday in Kyiv, Zelensky said again that there was no point lowering the age of conscription from 25 to 18 when those Ukrainian troops already deployed are short on weapons.

“We have more than 100 brigades on the battlefield, and each of them requires daily replenishment and equipment,” Zelensky said.

Kyiv often claims its allies are slow to send the weapons it has promised, including air defence systems and missiles.

Trump has said he is preparing to meet Vladimir Putin upon his return to the White House – and to make ending the war in Ukraine a priority.

He is not made clear how he plans to do that.

Biden announces aircraft carriers will be named after Bush, Clinton

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



President Joe Biden announced Tuesday that two of the Navy's future aircraft carriers will be named after former commanders-in-chief, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

"The future USS William J. Clinton (CVN 82) and the future USS George W. Bush (CVN 83) will begin construction in the years ahead," Biden said in a statement issued just a week before he is replaced in office by Donald Trump.

"When complete, they will join the most capable, flexible, and professional Navy that has ever put to sea," Biden said. "They will be crewed by sailors who hail from every corner of the United States, and who will sail these ships into harm's way, defending our interests overseas and our safety here at home."

The United States has a long tradition of naming some of its aircraft carriers — massive

warships that are crewed by thousands of sailors and carry dozens of planes — after former presidents.

The latest line of U.S. carriers is named for Gerald R. Ford, and another of the multi-billion-dollar ships bears John F. Kennedy's name — the second time he has been honored in that way.

According to the Navy, the Ford-class of aircraft carrier is the first new class in more than 40 years and begins the phased replacement of Nimitz-class carriers.

USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier refuels from the underway replenishment oiler USNS Laramie in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, Oct. 11, 2023. Petty Officer 2nd Class Jacob Mattingly/AP

Clinton, who did not serve in the military, was president from 1993 to 2001, a period that saw US warplanes carry out strikes in Iraq and Yugoslavia, and American troops battle Somali militiamen in the infamous Black

Hawk Down incident, among other conflicts.

Bush, who served as a pilot in the Air National Guard, held America's highest office from 2001 to 2009.

His presidency was defined by the so-called "War on Terror" that he launched in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, a military effort that spanned the globe and included the devastating, long-running wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that left tens of thousands of people dead.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin hailed the choice of the names, saying that the ships "will serve as lasting tributes to each leader's legacy in service of the United States."

"Like their namesakes, these two future carriers, and the crews who sail them, will work to safeguard our national security, remind us of our history, and inspire others to serve our great republic," Austin said in a statement.

Russia-Ukraine war: Who are North Korea's suicide soldiers?

By Dave Oludare Oso



North Korean soldiers sent to bolster Russia's forces are resorting to extreme measures. One recently detonated a grenade and blew himself up to avoid getting captured by Ukrainian troops.

For weeks, Ukrainian troops have been fighting against an unfamiliar enemy — North Korean soldiers sent to bolster Russia's forces on the battlefield.

More worryingly, North Korean soldiers have posed new challenges for Ukraine by blowing themselves up before getting captured.

According to a social media post by Ukraine's Special Operations Forces, after a battle in Russia's Kursk region this week, Ukrainian forces found the bodies of more than a dozen slain North Korean soldiers.

A destroyed Russian tank sits on a roadside near the town of Sudzha, Russia, in the Kursk region (AP)

Among them, one NK soldier was

still alive and as the Ukrainian forces approached, he detonated a grenade, blowing himself up, said the post.

According to the Ukraine forces, some North Korean soldiers are resorting to extreme measures as they support Russia's three-year war against Ukraine.

North Korea's suicide soldiers "Self-detonation and suicides: that's the reality about North Korea," Reuters quoted a former North Korean soldier, who defected to the South in 2022, as saying.

"These soldiers who left home for a fight there have been brainwashed and are truly ready to sacrifice themselves for Kim Jong Un," he added.

South Korean lawmaker Lee Seong-kweun, citing the country's spy agency, on Tuesday said that the number of North Korean soldiers killed and injured on the battlefield suggests they are unprepared for modern warfare, such as drone attacks, and may be being used as "cannon fodder" by Russia.

There are signs these troops have been instructed to commit suicide, he added.

"Recently, it has been confirmed that a North Korean soldier was in danger of being captured by the Ukrainian military, so he shouted for General Kim Jong Un and pulled out a grenade to try to blow himself up, but was killed," Lee, who sits on the South Korean parliament's intelligence committee, said, adding memos carried by slain NK soldiers also show that North Korean authorities emphasised self-destruction and suicide before capture.

North Korea has sent around 11,000 soldiers to support Russian forces in the western Kursk region, which Ukraine seized in a surprise incursion last year. More than 3,000 have been killed or injured, according to Kyiv.

However, Moscow and Pyongyang had dismissed reports about the North's troop deployment as "fake news."

Cristiano Ronaldo flies in style! Superstar buys stunning new \$75m private jet

By Dave Oludare Oso

Jet capable of reaching 610mph and big enough to seat 19 passengers

Cristiano Ronaldo is a man that has grown accustomed to the finer things in life, with the Portuguese treating himself to a new €75m (£61m) jet.

- Portuguese treats himself to new plane
- Can travel with friends & family
- Jet includes beds, kitchen & Wi-Fi
- WHAT HAPPENED?

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner has ensured that he will continue to travel in style when heading out of the Middle East – where he is currently turning out for Saudi Pro League outfit Al-Nassr. The 39-year-old had been the owner of a \$24m (£20m) Gulfstream G200.

· THE GOSSIP

According to Turkish news outlet Daily Sabah, Ronaldo has parted with that mode of transport and upgraded to the Gulfstream G650. Said jet comes with a hefty price tag and can reportedly reach speeds of up to 610mph.

· THE BIGGER PICTURE

The plane in question can accommodate



up to 19 passengers, meaning that Ronaldo's partner Georgina Rodriguez and their children can join him on his travels. There is capacity for 10 of the travellers on board to make use of sleeping facilities.

DID YOU KNOW?

It is also equipped with an impressive range of amenities, which includes Wi-Fi, a telephone, electric oven, microwave, multimedia system and a

refrigerator. There is also storage for Ronaldo and Georgina's designer clothes, outside of any suitcases that are taken with them.

· WHAT NEXT?

Ronaldo's elaborate new purchase is adorned with his CR initials and a silhouette of his iconic 'Siuuu' goal celebration pose. The jet is designed for intercontinental travel, meaning that the Portugal international can use it when moving between commitments with club and country.

Pep Guardiola, wife split after 30 years of marriage

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The manager of English Premier League giants, Josep Pep Guardiola has reportedly separated from his wife after 30 years together.

The multiple award winning coach's attentions have been on turning around the form of the current champions of England, but it appears off the field he has gone his separate ways from long-term partner, Cristina Serra.

The Sunday Mirror reported in 2019 that Serra had returned to Barcelona with one of their three children, and more than five years on the couple have now split,

according to reports in Spain.

Despite the split, Guardiola and Serra are said to be on good terms. They were seen together at Christmas going to the theatre with one of their daughters.

The couple met in 1994 when Guardiola was a player for Barcelona, but did not marry until 2014 in an intimate ceremony.



They have three children, daughters Maria and Valentina and son, Marius.