

FG targets six million jobs through Youth Farmers initiative **PAGE 2**



Petrol price rises to N1,150 despite oil marketers' assurance **PAGE 7**



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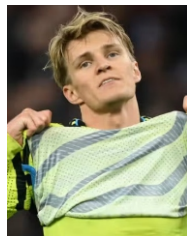
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FG targets six million jobs through Youth Farmers initiative

By Dave Oludare Oso



owing to the prevailing hardship in the country, the Federal Government has unveiled the Youth Farmers Enrollment Portal strategic initiative designed to address the growing challenges of unemployment and food insecurity across Nigeria.

Disclosing the development on Friday, the Minister of Youth Development, Ayodele Olawande, in a statement by Director, Information & Public Relations, Omolara Esan said the initiative is importance in creating economic opportunities for young Nigerians and strengthening the agricultural sector.

The minister said the initiative was part of the Nigerian Youth Economic Engagement De-Radicalisation programme.

The statement read, “This intervention is designed to align you people with the economic agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s administration, promoting active youth participation in economic development.”

The Minister detailed the ambitious scope of the initiative aiming to generate six million direct jobs for youth in 2025 across agriculture, food and beverage and agro-allied sectors.

He highlighted the initiative’s focus on tackling youth unemployment, reducing household poverty, and improving food security – issues he described as threats to national security.

The portal, which targets Nigerians

aged 18 to 35, offers a comprehensive of resources, including agricultural training programmes modern farming techniques, mentorship opportunities, and financial support for starting or expanding agricultural ventures.

He stated, “This initiative is not just about increasing food production. It is empowering young Nigerians with sustainable skills, creating jobs in rural and urban areas, and ensuring the welfare and security of our citizens.”

He urged young Nigerians to seize this opportunity to shape the future of agriculture and contribute to national development. Interested individuals can enroll through the portal at www.niyeedep.org.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

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9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
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Death toll of Niger tanker explosion rises to 77

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

The death toll of the Saturday tragic tanker explosion at Dikko Junction, Niger State, which plunged the community into deep mourning, has risen to 77.

The Director General of the Niger State Emergency Management Agency (NSEMA), Abdullahi Baba-Arah, confirmed the death toll during a phone interview with Channels Television.

According to eyewitnesses, who revealed that members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) were among those present at the scene, the explosion occurred while some individuals were scooping fuel from the overturned tanker into containers.

The sources said that a generator, used in the process of transferring the fuel, sparked the explosion, leading to the tragic incident.

The NSEMA chief also disclosed that 25 injured victims were swiftly transported to hospitals in Suleja, Wuse, and nearby facilities for urgent medical attention.

In response to the incident, Governor Umaru Bago visited the site and announced immediate safety measures. He directed that vehicles coming from the Maje axis must avoid the Dikko Bridge, using alternate routes instead.

Governor Bago also urged the



Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) to deploy officers to enforce the directive and called on transport unions to cooperate with road safety efforts.

Describing the incident as “pathetic,” the Governor expressed gratitude that the explosion did not extend to nearby communities.

He urged the Federal Government to expedite the completion of the long-delayed Minna-Suleja road project, citing its significance in preventing further tragedies.

The governor also acknowledged the swift efforts of emergency response teams, including the NSEMA, Fire Service, and FRSC, in evacuating victims and managing the situation.

He announced the redeployment of doctors from Minna hospitals to provide additional medical support to the injured being treated at Suleja General Hospital.

This catastrophe underscores the persistent dangers posed by fuel tankers on Nigerian roads. Residents are calling for stricter traffic enforcement and heightened vigilance to avert similar disasters.

Authorities are currently investigating the cause of the explosion, with early suspicions pointing to mechanical failure or human error.

The scene at Dikko Junction remains a stark reminder of the devastating impact of such incidents. The community mourns its losses while holding on to hope for recovery and better safety measures in the future.

This tragedy follows a series of similar incidents, including one in October that claimed over 170 lives in Jigawa State. According to the FRSC, 1,531 fuel tanker accidents occurred in 2020, resulting in 535 fatalities.

Brazil confirms Nigeria as BRICS partner country

By Friday Omosola

The Brazilian government has confirmed Nigeria's inclusion as a partner country in the BRICS bloc.

This development was announced in a statement released by Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Friday.

According to the statement, Brazil emphasised the shared objectives between BRICS and Nigeria, particularly in promoting collaboration among Global South nations and advocating for reforms in international institutions.

"Nigeria, with the sixth-largest population in the world and the largest in Africa, as well as its status as one of the continent's leading economies, shares aligned priorities with BRICS



members.

"The country is actively involved in advancing South-South cooperation and championing the reform of global governance—key issues on the agenda during Brazil's presidency," the statement read.

Brazil assumed the BRICS presidency for 2025 on January 1, taking over

from Russia.

Nigeria now joins Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Thailand, Uganda, and Uzbekistan as the ninth partner countries in BRICS.

This partner country category was introduced during the 16th BRICS Summit, held in Kazan in October 2024.

Tinubu reportedly backs creation of new state

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Bola Tinubu has agreed to support the creation of Ijebu State after a high-level meeting with the Awujale of Ijebuland, Oba Sikiru Kayode Adetona, at his Lagos residence on January 5, 2025, sources have said.

The meeting addressed the long-standing demand for Ijebu State to be carved out of Ogun State, a proposal that has been under consideration for decades.

The Awujale emphasized the historical significance of Ijebu as the only colonial-era province yet to attain statehood.

Highlighting the region's viability, the monarch outlined its resources, including industrial estates, an expanding airport, and other infrastructure that could support a successful transition into statehood.



A source privy to the meeting revealed that President Tinubu quickly acknowledged the merit of the proposal.

"The president didn't allow Awujale to overflog the matter before agreeing," the source stated.

The renewed push for Ijebu State gained traction in November 2024 when Senator Gbenga Daniel of Ogun East introduced a bill to the National Assembly seeking a constitutional amendment to enable the state's

creation.

Senate President Godswill Akpabio has since advanced the proposal through legislative stages.

While the idea has garnered widespread support, it has also faced criticism. Opponents argue that Nigeria's pressing challenges, such as poverty and high national debt, should take precedence over state creation.

Others view the move as politically motivated, speculating that it could bolster Tinubu's influence ahead of the 2027 elections.

Proponents, however, believe Ijebu State's establishment would unlock economic growth and development for the region.

We're fully committed to reviving Nigeria's economy – Shettima

By Friday Omosola

Vice President Kashim Shettima has reaffirmed the Tinubu administration's commitment to revitalizing Nigeria's economy and transforming the nation's healthcare system.

He made this statement on Friday during a courtesy visit by Mark Daniel Maloney, Chair of the Trustees of the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International, at the Presidential Villa in Abuja.

Shettima commended Rotary International and other stakeholders for their significant contributions to Nigeria's development.

"President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is fully committed to repositioning the Nigerian nation. He is a revolutionary leader who has made far-reaching decisions unmatched in contemporary history," he said.

Highlighting the administration's priorities, the Vice President emphasised the need for economic growth, environmental regeneration, and investments in education.

He urged Rotary International to increase its involvement in addressing environmental challenges, such as desertification and deforestation, through initiatives like the Great Green Wall project.

"We need your support in aggressive environmental regeneration. It's a win-win for all," he added.

On education, Shettima noted its transformative power, saying, "Education is the ultimate game-changer. With education, within a



generation, the son of a pauper can become a celebrated icon. Nigeria, with an average age of 16.9 years, must harness its youthful demographics for national growth."

The Sir Emeka Offor Foundation (SEOF) announced a \$5 million donation to the Rotary Foundation to tackle maternal mortality in Nigeria.

Speaking on behalf of the foundation, Sir Emeka Offor pledged continued support for government healthcare initiatives, saying, "We want to ensure that the intentions of the present government under the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu are actualized."

READ ALSO: Tinubu applauds NNPC for reopening Warri Refinery

This gesture was lauded by the Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Muhammad Ali Pate, who described the donation as life-changing.

"Contributions like these will go a

long way in addressing maternal mortality. Beyond this, Sir Emeka Offor's philanthropic efforts in federal hospitals over the last year and a half have been commendable. He sets a good example for other wealthy Nigerians," Pate stated.

Mark Daniel Maloney praised Nigeria's achievements in healthcare, particularly the eradication of wild poliovirus. He attributed this success to strong government partnerships.

"The Rotary Foundation has funded \$34 million in health-related projects in Nigeria over the past year. We appreciate the government's efforts in combating vaccine-derived polio and other health challenges," Maloney said.

With strong partnerships between the government, private sector, and international organizations, Nigeria's economic and healthcare transformation appears set on a progressive path.

Oyedele: Subsidy removal marks turning point for Nigeria's economy

By Friday Omosola

The Chairman of the Presidential Committee on Fiscal Policy and Tax Reforms, Taiwo Oyedele, has assured Nigerians that the economic reforms initiated by the Bola Tinubu administration are beginning to yield positive outcomes.

Speaking at The Platform, an event organized by the Covenant Nation on Saturday, Oyedele explained the benefits of the ongoing reforms, emphasizing that removing petrol subsidies was a crucial and necessary step for Nigeria's progress.

"Subsidy removal is one of the best decisions we have made as a country. For the first time, we can confidently say the subsidy is gone, and we're no longer living in a distorted economic reality.

"Two years ago, the naira exchange rate was officially pegged at N450, but was that truly the real rate? Petrol was sold at under N200 per litre, but could we sustain that price? A nation cannot afford to sell petrol cheaply when it lacks the resources to fund it," Oyedele said.

Using a personal analogy, Oyedele compared the situation to parenting. "As a parent, I'd love to send my kids to a school costing N200 million per term. But if I can't afford it, it's only realistic to enrol them in a school of N200,000 per term instead. That's how a country should think about its resources."

He described the pre-reform era as one where Nigeria was burdened by a false sense of economic stability.

"Our economy was doing far worse than we believed. We claimed to be Africa's largest economy, with a GDP of \$450 billion and a per capita income of \$2,000, but these figures weren't



accurate.

"We used all our revenue to service debt without even repaying it. Salaries, security expenses, and other government activities were funded through borrowing, often at high-interest rates."

Oyedele warned of the dire consequences Nigeria faced before the reforms, likening the country's trajectory to economic collapses in Sri Lanka and Venezuela.

"In those countries, people held money but couldn't access basic necessities like fuel. At one point, Sri Lanka had to ration driving days due to fuel shortages. Nigeria was heading down a similar path. Our GDP growth over the past decade averaged less than 10%—and in real terms, it was negative."

He revealed that the government resorted to printing money to finance expenditures, a dangerous practice that fueled inflation.

"We printed over N40 trillion, including interest, through Ways and Means. When foreign lenders deemed Nigeria too risky, and local borrowing capacity was exhausted, we had no choice but to print money. This unsustainable

approach worsened inflation and economic instability."

Oyedele also highlighted the ripple effects of the crisis, such as foreign airlines suspending operations in Nigeria due to unmanageable foreign exchange debts.

Despite these challenges, he urged Nigerians to adopt a positive outlook.

"There's nothing inherently wrong with Nigeria—perhaps the issue lies with those governing it. In the U.S., gun violence is a daily reality, yet Americans never say, 'May America never happen to you.' We must shift our mindset and start saying, 'May Nigeria work for me.'"

He expressed optimism, noting, "Based on current data, I firmly believe the worst is behind us."

Since assuming office in May 2023, President Tinubu has implemented key reforms, including the removal of fuel subsidies and the introduction of controversial tax policies.

While these changes have led to a surge in prices of goods and services, Oyedele maintains that they are necessary steps toward long-term economic recovery.

Petrol price rises to N1,150 despite oil marketers' assurance

By Dave Oludare Oso

Following the hike in the cost of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), also known as petrol by the Dangote Petroleum Refinery and various depot owners, the pump prices of the commodity have risen to between N1,050 and N1,150/litre at different areas of the country.

Oil marketers have before now predicted the continued rise in petrol prices as long as the major component in fuel production, crude oil, continue to be on the upward swing as the case had been in recent times.

Anticipating the development, the National President of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN), Festus Osifo, earlier predicted this when he noted that petrol prices might soon rise if the cost of crude oil continued to increase.

Osifo stated in Lagos, "The crude price rose to \$80 per barrel today (Thursday). Without exchange rate improvements, PMS prices will increase in the coming weeks."

NEW DAILY PRIME reported that on Friday, there was an upward adjustment in the price of petrol produced by the Dangote Petrochemical Refinery.

The \$20bn plant raised its PMS from N899/litre to N955/litre at its loading gantry.

The refinery, in an email statement sent to its customers and obtained by journalists, said its refined products would now be priced at the new cost.

It noted that marketers buying between two million and 4.99 million litres would now buy at N955/litre, while five million litres and above would buy at N950/litre.

The amount marks an increase of N55.5



or 6.17 per cent from N899.50/litre announced as a holiday discount for Nigerians last December.

This adjustment applies to all stock balances yet to be lifted by the stated time, while pending stock as of the effective time will also be repriced at the updated rates.

The statement added that the new price regime took effect from 5:30pm on Friday.

The notice, titled, 'Communication on PMS Price Review', read, "Dear esteemed customer, Trust this email finds you well.

"Kindly be advised that effective from 5:30 pm today (Friday), an upward adjustment has been implemented on the gantry price of Premium Motor Spirit. Quantity Previous Price (NGN/Litre): 2 million-9.99 million – N899.50; 10 million litres & above – N895.

"Quantity New Price (NGN/ Litre): 2 million – 4.99 million – N955; 5 million litres & above – N950.

"Please note that all stock balances yet to be lifted as of the above-stated time are to be repriced at the new reviewed prices. We shall communicate with customers on their revised volumes based on the reviewed prices, in due course."

The price increase sparked widespread

effects on the downstream petroleum sector, particularly private depots and retail markets.

Findings showed that private depots, despite having old stocks, increased their loading costs to N970 in Lagos and N1,000 in Calabar.

A breakdown analysing petrol price movements at loading depots after the announcement of the new price showed that Sahara depot increased its loading price by N20 to N970/litre from N950/litre on Thursday.

Pinnacle Depot increased its price to N970 from N921, while Wosbab Depot made a similar change to N965 from the N940 it sold a litre of petrol on Thursday.

NIPCO increased its loading costs by N30 to N980 from N950 on Thursday.

Also, a private depot, Rainoil, increased its loading costs to N970 from N950. A private depot, Alkanes, in Calabar, asked retailers to pay N1,000/litre to receive products.

Zone 4 and Mainland depots increased their loading costs to N1,005/litre from N985, which sold products on Thursday.

Oil marketers operating under the auspices of the Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria projected a steep increase in the retail cost of petrol, stressing it could hit N1,100/litre in Lagos and neighbouring states.

IPMAN also said petrol customers in the Federal Capital Territory might pay N1,150 for a litre.

The IPMAN National Publicity Secretary, Chinedu Ukadike, said the product would now trade for more than N1,000/litre, especially in hinterlands

Tax Reform Bills: TETFund different from NELFund, ASUU tells Tinubu

By Alade Adisa

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Lagos Zone, has said there is a world of difference between the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) and the Nigeria Education Loan Fund (NELFund), therefore, the administration of President Bola Tinubu should not kill the former for the latter.

The Zonal Coordinator, Prof. Adelaja Odukoya, stated this while briefing the press in Lagos on the Tax Reform Bills before the National Assembly and how they affect the education sector.

He added that lecturers would do everything possible to ensure that TETFund is not sacrificed on the altar of making NELFund survive.

“The substitution of TETFund for NELFund encourages a culture of student debt, similar to troublesome models observed in nations such as the United States. This could deepen socioeconomic gaps by discouraging low income families from going to higher institutions of learning out of concern about accruing debt. It may be difficult for students from underserved or rural areas to get or repay loans, which would exacerbate already existing socioeconomic injustices.



“By raising educational quality and opportunities, the TETFund on the other hand, helps institutions and indirectly improves communities. One public asset that helps society is education. The common societal benefits of education, including lower crime rates, improved public health and greater civic involvement, are undermined when the public supported model, TETFund is replaced with individualised one, NELFund,” he said

Adelaja noted that inadequate facilities and learning materials, as well as lack of motivation for lecturers would have detrimental effects on education.

Adelaja opined that when TETFund is denied its percentage of Development Levy, which is the Education Tax being collected now, the government is saying it should

cease to exist.

“With all the Development Levy going to Student Loan Scheme or NELFUND, public tertiary institutions will be forced to increase tuition fees. That will surely be exorbitant. Also, phasing out TETFund is going to be a threat to tertiary education in Nigeria and all the gains of the struggle put up to set up Education Tax Fund which later became TETFund would just be a waste.

“If you go to our public tertiary institutions, you would know that if not for the Fund, many would have collapsed as a result of lack of basic facilities. In fact, on some campuses, anything you see that looks decent and new has been provided by TETFund, so we appeal to the federal government not to kill tertiary institutions in the country and reconsider this plan,” he said.

Police hunt for Reno Omokri over alleged defamation of Pastor Enenche

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

At any moment now, Reno Omokri, a former Special Assistant on New Media to then-President Goodluck Jonathan, may become a prison inmate as the Police have obtained a "Remand Order, Launch Search For Reno Omokri Over Alleged Defamation Of Dunamis Church Pastor, Paul Enenche."

With this, the police are looking for Omokri, the political commentator with the most followers on X (formerly Twitter) in Africa.

The Police secured the order from the Chief Magistrate Court of the Federal Capital Territory, Wuse Zone 6, Abuja, to remand Omokri in prison custody along with former Dunamis Church Pastor Abraham Daniel and two others—Mr. Enenche Enenche and Alexander Enenche.

The court presided over by His Worship, Chief Emmanuel A. Iyanna, issued the remand warrant through an ex-parte Motion filed by the Inspector General of Police Kayode Egbetokun on January 13, 2025.

Granting the ex-parte application filed by Francis Gabriel, Esq on



behalf of the Police Chief, in Motion No: ME/07/2025 Between Inspector General of Police as Applicant and Mr. Daniel Abraham, Mr. Enenche Idoga Alexander, Oboyinlo Enenche Peter and Mr. Reno Omokri as 1st to 4th Respondents, the Chief Magistrate directed the Police to produce the Respondents on return Court date on January 30.

Iyanna held: "Upon hearing the application and submissions of learned FRANCIS GABRIEL, ESQ, and upon careful consideration of the averments, the annexures and issues as raised in the submissions of the applicant. The application is hereby granted as prayed.

"It Is hereby ordered as follows: An Order of this Honourable Court for remand warrant of the Respondents (i) MR. DANIEL ABRAHAM (ii) MR. ENENCHE IDOGA ALEXANDER (iii) OBOYINLO

ENENCHE PETER and (iv) MR. RENO OMOKRI in the custody of the Nigeria Correctional Service pending investigation, arraignment/prosecution.

"It is here ordered that the Respondents be arraigned before a Court of competent jurisdiction after the conclusion of the said investigation.

"On the return date, the Respondents should be produced.

"The matter is adjourned to 30 Day of January, 2025."

His remand warrant was predicated on a petition to the Inspector General of Police by Patrick O. Okolo, SAN against "Mr Reno Omokri, Gistlover Blog, Aunty Adul, Peter Obonyiro, Kelechi TV, and their agents and co-conspirators for alleged defamation."

Former Miss Nigeria, Edna Ibru passes away in London

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Mrs. Edna Ibru (née Park), the former First Lady of Delta State and Miss Nigeria 1964, has passed away at the age of 80. She died on Wednesday in a London hospital after a brief illness.

Edna, who was the first Nigerian and African to represent Nigeria at the Miss Universe competition, was the wife of Olorogun Felix Ibru, the first civilian Governor of Delta State from 1991 to 1992.

The Ibru family, hailing from Agbarha-Otor Kingdom in Delta State, confirmed her death in a statement issued by her son, Dr.



Paul Ibru, which was shared with journalists in Warri on Saturday. Edna Ibru is survived by two children.

“Our amazing mother passed into glory on Wednesday 15, January

2025 after a brief illness”, the statement partly read.

It continued, “Until her death, she was full of life and we never expected her to leave us so soon but we cannot question the will of God in her precious life.

“She was a lover of people, a mediator, a mother to many, outrageously humorous, deeply caring, down to earth, full of stories all of the time, and we will miss her very dearly.”

Paul added that arrangements for her burial would be announced by the family later.

Police arrest two suspects for alleged child trafficking in Edo

By Helen Okechukwu

The Ondo State Police Command has announced the apprehension of two alleged child traffickers, Mr. Lukman Isiaka and Abosede Olanipekun, for stealing and selling an 18-month-old boy.

This information shared via their X page on Saturday stated that the mother of the minor left her child in the custody of Mr. Isiaka’s sister, Olanipekun, fondly called Bose.

In addition, Olanipekun left with the baby, disguising himself to buy biscuits, while Mr. Isiaka, who proposed a relationship earlier to the baby’s mother, lured her into Olukayode Plaza, a phone shop, pretending to purchase a phone for her.



Suspects of child stealing

According to the disclosure, Mr. Isiaka abandoned the mother of the 18-month-old boy in the plaza, whose name cannot be certain.

Realising that Mr. Isiaka was nowhere to be found, she went for her baby at the shop, where she found out that her 18-month-old boy had been stolen.

Upon hearing about the news about the disappearance of the minor, the police swung into action and commenced a thorough search that led to the apprehension of the two suspects at Ottah village in Edo state.

The statement read partly, “The suspects confessed to having sold the baby to one Mrs. Sabina Izuorah in Ihiala, Anambra state. The police moved to the state and arrested the said woman with 4 babies and 10 children (2-6 years).

“Some parents have been able to identify their children, while some are yet to see theirs; effort is on to ensure other kids are found.”

Tinubu has no plan, surrounded by 'misfits' – Bauchi gov

By Dave Oludare Oso

Governor Bala Mohammed of Bauchi State has expressed disappointment with the performance of the government of President Bola Tinubu, noting that as an opposition governor during the 2023 general elections, he jumped in jubilation over his (Tinubu's) victory, believing that it is Uhuru but in the long run, "freedom and development are eluding us."

He maintained that the President came to power without a blueprint or a clear-cut manifesto, adding that he is surrounded by people who are "misfits."

The governor spoke while fielding questions from journalists when he received the Founder and General Overseer of Omega Fire Ministry, Apostle Johnson Suleiman, who paid him a courtesy visit at the Government House, Bauchi during his two-day crusade in the state.

The governor further said, "I respect President Tinubu so much. But someone must rise to the occasion and tell him the truth that he is surrounded by misfits and I can now understand from the Man of God, definitely, he (Tinubu) came into governance ill prepared, without an agenda and without a manifesto.

"We believe so much in him because of his pedigree and antecedents as a Lagos State governor who was able to do the magic. I was jumping when he became the President even though he's from a different party.

"I thought the Uhuru had come, but I

have seen freedom and development eluding us and I must advise as a statesman, as a responsible citizen, as a head of a sub-national, that you cannot stifle the aspiration of Nigerians by making all the citizens of Nigeria just customers in a bid to



actualize your aspiration."

Mohammed maintained that he has no personal grudge against the President whom he noted he has so much respect for, but was only against policies introduced by his administration which will have negative consequences on the people.

"First of all, I want to seize this opportunity to clarify in the presence of a Man of God, Apostle Johnson Suleiman, I don't have any personal grudge against the President. I am one of those who respect the institution of leadership, especially that of the President.

"You know my antecedents in the Senate when I rose for the Doctrine of Necessity. It was to dignify that office of the Vice President, where my boss (Goodluck Jonathan) became the

President.

"We should see Nigerians as citizens not as customers, we should not bring policies that will divide us, we should live and let live. We should respect our diversities.

"We should not practise impunity where people feel that they are shortchanged, we should practice inclusivity the way Prophet Suleiman is going around, a global icon, a universal preacher, a young person who has risen to the occasion going to all the nooks and crannies. He heard voices from doubting Thomases but he still came to Bauchi," he said.

The Governor added, "That is why I want the President to believe me, I mean well. I'm just trying to say that, in your governance, you can do it better by accommodation, by inclusion, and by coming up with a strict vision where you want to take Nigerians to.

"It should not be a fire brigade approach where you will be running after policies and programmes that are alien to us, that are not understood and may be misconstrued.

"It is because they don't have any clear-cut vision, they are always taking us to a road of perdition and destruction. And that is why when I talk, I talk about the tax, it is not because I don't want reforms, but I want a reform that will have a positive impact on us. I don't have anything against the President other than respect."

Another communal clash claims four lives in Ondo

By Olamilekan Botti

A violent clash between two neighboring communities in Ondo State has claimed the lives of six people, with four more reportedly killed in a separate incident on Friday. The tragic event unfolded in Gbalegi, a village located on the disputed border between Akure, the state capital, and Idanre.

The bloodshed erupted early Friday morning around 8:00 a.m. after weeks of rising tensions in the area. According to reports, heavily armed assailants stormed the village, opening fire on unsuspecting residents. The bodies of the victims, riddled with bullets, were initially taken to a nearby police station before being transferred to a morgue in Akure.

Confirming the incident, the Ondo State Police Command stated that it received a distress call reporting an attack by armed thugs in Gbalegi. The village, known for its long-standing land dispute between Akure and Idanre communities, has been a flashpoint for violent confrontations in recent years.

Police spokespersons disclosed that officers responded swiftly to the scene and arrested seven suspects believed to be involved in the attack. The suspects were found in possession of charms, seven single-barrel guns, and a cache of both live and spent ammunition.

“The command received a distress call that some armed hoodlums mobilized to Gbalegi, a disputed area between Akure and Idanre, and attacked the residents. Our officers moved in promptly, neutralized the situation, and apprehended seven suspects with firearms and

ammunition,” the statement read.



Authorities have assured the public that a full investigation is underway to uncover the circumstances surrounding the attack and bring all perpetrators to justice. Meanwhile, security has been heightened in the area to prevent further violence.

This latest incident has intensified concerns over the persistent communal clashes in Ondo State, particularly over land ownership disputes, which continue to threaten peace and stability in the region.

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EFCC busts Benin 'Yahoo Academy,' arrests 25

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Operatives of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Benin Zonal Directorate have uncovered a cybercrime training centre in Benin City, Edo State, leading to the arrest of 25 suspected internet fraudsters.

EFCC's spokesman, Dele Oyewale in a statement on Friday said the raid, conducted on Thursday, January 16, 2025, followed a tip-off that revealed the apartment was being used as a "Yahoo Academy" — a hub where individuals were trained in internet fraud and other illicit activities.

Oyewale added that acting on this intelligence, operatives moved swiftly to apprehend the suspects at the hideout, noting that the team confiscated six exotic cars, several laptops, and mobile



phones, all suspected to be tools used for cybercrime during the operation.

The discovery of such an organised training school highlights the growing sophistication of internet fraud in the

region.

Oyewale said investigations were ongoing to unravel the extent of the suspects' criminal network.

"We will ensure thorough investigations and bring the suspects to court as soon as possible," he said.

The agency reiterated its commitment to eradicating cybercrime in Nigeria, calling on the public to remain vigilant and provide credible information to aid their operations.

This latest crackdown is part of the EFCC's broader strategy to dismantle criminal syndicates and restore public confidence in the fight against financial crimes.

Enugu council chief pays 1,759 students' WAEC fees

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Chairman of Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State, Beloved Dan-Anike said he has paid West African Examination Council (WAEC) registration fees for 1,759 students in public schools in the council as part of activities to mark his 100 days in office.

The council boss also said the gesture was part of his bid to give back to the society that voted him into power.

Dan-Anike spoke in a meeting with principals of the 13 public secondary schools in the council area on Friday at the council headquarters in Nkwo Nike.

The council chairman said that the fees covered every eligible student resident and schooling in the government owned secondary schools in the LGA.

He urged principals to refund those who had already paid for the WAEC fees and inform their parents and the various



communities about the gesture for accountability and transparency.

Dan-Anike also said that he would extend the same gesture to students in the Army Day Command Secondary School resident in the council area.

He said, "I know that not all SS3 students in the Command School live in the local government area but I would like to have a list of the eligible students

that reside in the area so that they can benefit from the gesture.

The chairman commended the principals for providing quality education for the students and pledged to look into their challenges for possible solution.

Anike also presented a 25 kilogram bag of rice to each of the school principals in the local government area.

In her remarks, the Principal of the Community High School, Emene, Ms Chioma Ebue, thanked the chairman for his magnanimity to the education sector in the state and pledged their unalloyed support to him.

Ebue also thanked him for awarding scholarships to some indigent students in public schools in the area and prayed God to bless and sustain his efforts.

Exclusive Interview: Expert warns untreated tooth decay can be life-threatening

By Helen Okechukwu

In this interview with New Daily Prime, Dr. Esther Wodi, a dentist with eight years of experience, currently practices at Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH) and Sonabel Medical Centre in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The specialist shares her valuable insights on oral health protection. She warns that untreated tooth decay and pain can lead to severe consequences, including death, if neglected.



New Daily Prime: Can you please explain what tooth decay is?

Dr. Wodi: Tooth decay, also known as dental caries, is the breakdown of the tooth enamel. The structure consists of crown, enamel and pulp. Normal bacteria in the mouth, such as *Streptococcus mutans*, usually cause no harm. However, improper oral hygiene allows these bacteria to feed on leftover food particles, releasing acid that breaks down the enamel, leading to tooth decay. But when you don't practice proper oral hygiene, these bacteria tend to feed on the leftover particles of food in the mouth, thereby releasing acid that breaks down the tooth enamel. That is when you have tooth decay, or call it dental caries.

New Daily Prime: What are the most common causes of tooth decay, and how can they be prevented?

Dr. Wodi: There are many common causes of tooth decay, but I'm going to speak more on two, which are the major causes that we see in our society: the poor oral hygiene and excessive consumption of sugary or acid foods.

Some people cannot eat any food without a bottle of Coke. They can't eat any food without fruit juice. You know, they all contain sugar. And after taking them, they don't rinse their mouth immediately. That is where the problem comes in. So if at all you should take it, it should not be like every day. It tends to stick to the crown of your teeth. And if not rinsed off immediately, the bacteria feed on it, then cause it to break down your teeth. That is where you

have these holes in your teeth, which we call dental caries.

In summary, these are the preventive measures:

Practice proper oral hygiene by brushing your teeth at least twice daily or after meals. Rinse your mouth with water after eating.

Minimize consumption of sugary or acidic foods such as sweets, ice cream, and soft drinks. If consumed, rinse your mouth immediately.

Avoid frequent snacking between meals and ensure children rinse their mouths after consuming snacks like biscuits.

Visit your dentist at least twice a year for regular check-ups. Dentists can detect tooth decay early and take corrective measures before it worsens.

New Daily Prime: Can you explain how tooth decay is identified and treated, and what steps can patients take to prevent it from worsening?

Dr. Wodi: Symptoms of tooth decay include pain, discomfort, visible black spots on teeth, difficulty chewing, and sometimes swelling of the jaw. These symptoms often worsen at night. At times, you may find it difficult to chew on the affected side, and brushing your teeth might also become challenging. In some cases, your jaw may even become swollen.

Sometimes this tooth decay may not be seen with your eyes. Only diagnostic tools like X-rays can confirm its presence. Early treatment includes filling the cavity to prevent further damage. If decay reaches the pulp, the only solution is tooth extraction.

It is crucial to visit your dentist at least twice a year. Regular check-ups allow dentists to examine your teeth for cavities or decay and address any issues early. If any cavities or decay are detected, the dentist can fill them to preserve the tooth. The key to preventing further damage is timely dental care.

New Daily Prime: How do you handle patients who are anxious about visiting the dentist? What methods do you use to ease their fears?

Dr. Wodi: Dental anxiety is common due to misconceptions about pain and discomfort during procedures. To ease a patient's fears, a good dentist must establish strong rapport and create a relaxed environment for patients, avoiding exposure to distressing visuals, such as blood. Additionally, the dentist should clearly explain the procedures and introduce tools like local anesthetic sprays that minimize pain during extractions.

New Daily Prime: What long-term effects can result from delaying treatment for tooth pain or other dental concerns?

Dr. Wodi: Delaying treatment can lead to severe pain, jaw swelling, pus buildup, and eventual tooth loss. In extreme cases, untreated tooth decay can result in life-threatening infections. For example, I encountered a patient at the Garrison Dental Clinic in Port Harcourt who refused treatment, allowing a molar infection to spread to her throat, ultimately leading to her

Cont from page 15

death. When she was brought to the hospital, her throat was already filled with pus due to what began as a simple toothache. Regular dental visits and timely treatment are crucial to prevent such outcomes.

New Daily Prime: How does the cost of dental care influence patients' decisions to seek treatment, and how does this affect the oral health of different communities?

Dr. Wodi: Financial constraints often deter people from seeking dental care. Additionally, misinformation, such as the belief that dental visits always lead to tooth extraction, contributes to reluctance. Public awareness campaigns are essential to dispel these myths.

New Daily Prime: Is there any health insurance that covers dental care in your area?

Dr. Wodi: Dental coverage is limited in this region. Some Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) provide coverage, but accessibility is often restricted to those employed by specific companies. It is mostly common in developed countries. So, you hardly see any insurance like that for dental, especially for people living in undeveloped countries. So there is no proper health insurance for dental care, as far as I'm concerned in this country.

New Daily Prime: What advice would you offer someone who has difficulty maintaining oral hygiene due to pain or sensitivity?

Dr. Wodi: Some people with excessive plaque in their mouths often go to pharmacies or supermarkets and request a strong toothbrush, commonly referred to as a smoker's toothbrush. They believe that using this toothbrush will remove plaque or yellowish stains from their teeth. However, they may not realize that this approach can cause more harm than good.

For individuals with sensitivity or difficulty maintaining oral hygiene, it's important to use a soft-bristled toothbrush instead of a hard-bristled one. Toothbrushes come in medium, soft, and

hard bristles, and the hard-bristled ones, like smoker's toothbrushes, can exacerbate sensitivity and cause discomfort.

Additionally, people should avoid brushing too forcefully, as this can lead to recurring pain around the teeth and gums. Instead, brushing gently in a downward stroke is recommended, as it helps protect the teeth and maintain oral health.

New Daily Prime: What role should public healthcare or insurance play in improving access to dental care for underserved populations?

Dr. Wodi: Public healthcare should establish dental clinics that are accessible and entirely free in remote communities across the state, focusing primarily on underprivileged children and vulnerable populations. For someone struggling to afford basic necessities like food, scaling and polishing their teeth may not even be a consideration.

Therefore, there should be at least one or two clinics in such areas providing free dental care, whether for routine check-ups or treatment. This initiative would encourage people to visit the dentist, address their oral health concerns, and receive the necessary treatment without financial barriers.

New Daily Prime: What are the most common misconceptions people have about dental health, and how can these be corrected?

Dr. Wodi: The most common misconception about dental health is that once you extract one tooth, you will continue to extract more. I have heard this countless times, but it is not true. If you extract a tooth and maintain the remaining ones by improving your oral hygiene, further extractions can be avoided.

Another common belief is that scaling and polishing will cause sensitivity. In my experience, I have not encountered this. Scaling and polishing help clean the teeth and remove plaque, leaving your teeth sparkling and white when maintained properly.

A further misconception involves parents believing that children, especially babies, do not need to brush their teeth because they are not eating solid food. As soon as a baby begins developing primary teeth (milk teeth), their teeth should be cleaned. Breast milk tends to stick to the surface of the teeth, and cleaning is necessary to prevent issues. There are toothbrushes and toothpaste specially designed for children. Parents should purchase these and ensure their children's teeth are brushed regularly.

Even for babies under one year, parents can use a soft towel to clean their teeth and gums. I have seen children as young as 2-3 years old with dental caries severe enough to require extractions. Early oral care is essential to prevent such outcomes.

New Daily Prime: How do diet and lifestyle impact oral health, and what practical tips can you offer for maintaining healthy teeth and gums?

Dr. Wodi: Avoid drinks or snacks with excessive sugar, as they are harmful to overall health. Diets that include sugary beverages, alcohol, and coffee can negatively affect oral health. For instance, coffee can darken the surface of the teeth. If you consume these items, rinse your mouth immediately to minimize their impact. To improve oral health, it is advisable to avoid the mentioned substances. Replace sugar with honey as a healthier alternative. For babies whose teeth are still developing, parents should avoid giving them tetracycline, as it can damage their teeth by leaving permanent stains.

New Daily Prime: What advancements in dental care or technology excite you most, and how do you envision them benefiting patients in the future?

Dr. Wodi: What excites me is the innovation of Digital Smile Dental and Laser Dental. Both are new technologies and they are very expensive in this part of the world. Digital Smile helps to put a smile on patients' faces like veneers. It makes teeth bright. Braces are also employed to correct dentition and malalignment of the teeth. Lasers help to ease pain and discomfort.

EFCC Chairman: Public sector corruption, Nigeria's greatest problem

By Friday Omosola

The Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Ola Olukoyede, has identified public sector corruption as Nigeria's most significant challenge, with procurement and contract fraud accounting for 90 per cent of the country's corruption cases.

Olukoyede made this known during a meeting with the management team of the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP), led by its Director-General, Adebowale Adedokun, at the Commission's headquarters yesterday.

"In the EFCC, we tackle both private and public sector fraud. However, when it comes to the public sector—one of our greatest challenges in Nigeria—we found that contract and procurement fraud makes up more than 90% of public sector corruption. These range from commingling to contract splitting and other unethical practices," Olukoyede stated.

He highlighted the negative impact of such corruption on



infrastructure and development, emphasising the need for collective action to address the issue.

"Infrastructure and other developmental problems are attributable to contract and procurement fraud. It lies with you and me to make a change. If we work together, we can leave this country better than when we met it," he added.

Olukoyede also called for stronger collaboration between the agency and the BPP, particularly in project implementation and monitoring, pledging to ensure accountability in the execution of the 2025 national budget.

In response, Adedokun assured the anti-graft agency and

Nigerians of the BPP's renewed commitment to transparency and good governance.

He emphasised the importance of trust and accountability in the procurement process.

"We are here to reassure you and Nigerians that procurement under my leadership will be handled with integrity. The EFCC can trust our documents in investigations related to fraud and procurement. It's no longer business as usual, and we've already begun this transformation," Adedokun stated.

He also pledged to deploy procurement as a tool for delivering good governance, emphasising value for public funds.

Ondo LG poll gets underway without PDP

By Dave Oludare Oso

As the Local Government election gets underway in Ondo State, 12 political parties will be jostling for the chairmanship and councillor offices in the 18 local government areas of Ondo State.

Most notably, the leading opposition party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) will not be participating in an election that has generated so much attention in the last few months.

Before the scheduled poll, the last council election in the state was conducted on August 23, 2020, with the tenure of the elected council officials elapsing on August 22, 2023.

Since then, the administration of the 18 council areas of the state has been managed by civil servants, specifically the Heads of Local Government Administrations.

However, after several postponements, the Ondo State Independent Electoral Commission finally fixed January 18, 2025, for the conduct of the election.

Although political parties were screened and cleared for the poll, only 12 parties will be participating in the election.

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) announced its decision to withdraw from the election, saying



it does not believe in the Ondo State Independent Electoral Commission to conduct a credible election.

The names of the 12 political parties contesting in the election include: Action Alliance, Action Democratic Party, Action People's Party, All Progressives Congress, All Progressives Grand Alliance, Boot Party, and Labour Party.

Others include the National Rescue Party, New Nigeria Peoples Party, Social Democratic Party, Young Progressive Party, and Zenith Labour Party,

The Chairman of ODIEC, Dr Joseph Aremo, gave assurance that the commission was fully ready to conduct the election.

He said the commission had successfully recruited and trained ad hoc staff to conduct the election.

Aremo assured the residents of the state, especially the voters of adequate security, adding that the

electoral body was working with relevant security agencies in achieving this.

The State Commissioner of Police, Wilfred Afolabi on his part said there would be adequate police deployment in all parts of the state, warning that police will not hesitate to arrest any miscreant that may want to cause violence during the election.

The state government had declared Friday, 17th January 2025 a work-free day to allow public servants who may want to travel to vote in the election.

The government had restricted movement in the state between 6 am and 4 pm on Friday.

The situation is currently calm in Akure as policemen are stationed at strategic points along the major roads, inspecting vehicular movement. Business and commercial activities are also shut in compliance with the directive.

FG, states, LGs share N1.42trn in January 2025

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) has disbursed a total sum of N 1.424 trillion to federal, state and local governments.

The total amount is derived from the federation account revenue generated in December 2024.

The disbursement, which was made at the January 2025 FAAC meeting held in Abuja on Friday comprising distributable statutory revenue of N386.124 billion, distributable Value Added Tax (VAT) revenue of N604.872 billion, Electronic Money Transfer Levy (EMTL) revenue of N31.211 billion and Exchange Difference revenue of N402.714 billion.

According to a communiqué issued by the committee, the total gross revenue of N2.310 trillion was available in the month of December 2024, while the total deduction for cost of collection was N84.780 billion, total transfers, interventions and refunds was N801.175 billion.

According to the communiqué, gross statutory revenue of N1.226 trillion was received for the month of December 2024. This was lower than the sum of N1.827 trillion received in the month of November 2024 by N600.988 billion.

Also, the gross revenue of N649.561 billion was available from the Value Added Tax (VAT) in December 2024. This was higher than the N628.973 billion available in the month of November 2024 by



N20.588 billion.

The communiqué stated that from the N1.424 trillion total distributable revenue, the federal government received total sum of N451.193 billion while state governments received total sum of N498.498 billion.

The local government councils received total sum of N361.754 billion and a total sum of N113.477 billion (13 percent of mineral revenue) was shared to the benefiting states as derivation revenue.

On the N386.124 billion distributable statutory revenue, the Federal Government received N167.690 billion and the state governments received N85.055 billion while local government councils received N65.574 billion. The sum of N67.806 billion (13 percent of mineral revenue) was shared to the benefiting states as derivation revenue.

“From the N604.872 billion distributable Value Added Tax (VAT) revenue, the Federal Government received N90.731 billion, the State Governments received N302.436 billion and the Local Government Councils received N211.705 billion.

“A total sum of N4.682 billion was received by the Federal Government from the N31.211 billion Electronic Money Transfer Levy (EMTL). The State Governments received N15.605 billion and the Local Government Councils received N10.924 billion.

“From the N402.714 billion Exchange Difference revenue, the communiqué stated that the Federal Government received N188.090 billion and the State Governments received N95.402 billion. The Local Government Councils received N73.551 billion, while the sum of N45.671 billion (13% of mineral revenue) was shared to the benefiting States as derivation revenue,” the communiqué stated.

Lagos Health Commissioner undergoes eye surgery at LASUTH, commends team

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Lagos State Commissioner for Health, Professor Akin Abayomi, has successfully undergone eye surgery at the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH), receiving widespread commendation for promoting the quality of healthcare available in public institutions.

Sharing his experience on X (formerly Twitter) on Friday, Abayomi expressed gratitude to the medical team, led by Prof. Bola Adekoya and Dr. Rosemary Ngwu for their expertise in conducting the oculoplastic procedure.

He described the surgery as painless and praised the professionalism of the LASUTH Eye Department.

The post read, "Huge thanks to the



incredible oculoplastic surgeons in the Eye Department, especially Prof. Mrs. Bola Adekoya and Dr. Rosemary Ngwu, for their expertise and for making the procedure painless."

The commissioner also lauded the nursing team, led by Apex Nurse Adejoke Okeowo, for their exceptional care.

"A special shoutout to the amazing nursing care led by Apex Nurse Adejoke Okeowo—you truly made a difference!" he added.

In his posts, Abayomi extended appreciation to Prof. Adebowale O. Adekoya, LASUTH's Director of Clinical Services and Training, and Prof. Adetokunbo O. Fabanwo, the Chief Medical Director, for their leadership in driving excellence at the hospital.

The posts, accompanied by pictures showing Abayomi during his recovery and interactions with staff, have sparked positive reactions, with many applauding his decision to undergo treatment at a public health facility.

NAFDAC seals Abuja Pharmacy for selling expired drugs worth million

By Helen Okechukwu

The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) has sealed an Abuja pharmacy for allegedly selling expired and unregistered drugs worth over seven million naira.

The aim of this development is to combat the rising health risks in the country.

The federal agency made this known via its X page on Saturday, acknowledging that the action was taken following a tip-off from a concerned citizen.

"NAFDAC's enforcement team uncovered several expired items worth over seven million naira,

including expired H-Pylori test kits, which posed significant risks to public health," NAFDAC stated.

"Despite attempts by the pharmacy staff to obstruct the operation, the enforcement team successfully confiscated the expired products and secured the premises."

During the operation, the pharmacy's Managing Director and Superintendent Pharmacist were taken into custody for further questioning.

The anti-drug agency stated that, as a deterrent to unethical practices, stringent sanctions would be imposed.

In addressing this issue, the federal agency appealed to the public to remain vigilant while purchasing regulated products, urging them to report suspicious activities to the nearest NAFDAC office.



WHO Seeks \$1.5 Billion for 2025 Health Emergency Response

By Helen Okechukwu

The World Health Organization (WHO) has launched a \$1.5 billion Health Emergency Appeal (HEA) for 2025 to fund health interventions worldwide deeming it as the primary factors fueling prolonged health crises persist.

The aim of this appeal initiative is to support communities affected by conflict, climate change, displacement, and disease outbreaks with humanitarian assistance.

WHO Director-General (DG), Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, underscored the urgent need to address 42 ongoing health emergencies, including 17 Grade 3 crises.

With health systems under immense pressure and financial resources stretched thin, the WHO seeks to address urgent health needs in crisis-affected regions.

WHO DG Dr. Ghebreyesus emphasized that health emergencies are no longer sporadic but have become persistent and increasingly complex.

“From controlling cholera outbreaks to providing mental health support in conflict zones, WHO’s work extends beyond the immediate care we provide. We empower communities to protect themselves, prioritize equity, and build a legacy of preparedness. This appeal is about enabling WHO to save lives, protect the right to health, and provide hope where there is none,” he stated.

The appeal outlines WHO’s commitment to supporting vulnerable populations in conflict-affected areas



such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the occupied Palestinian territory, and Sudan.

The agency’s response focuses on delivering essential medical supplies, treating malnutrition, conducting vaccination campaigns, and addressing mental health needs among displaced and traumatized communities.

These challenges exacerbate vulnerabilities, making emergency preparedness and response more critical than ever.

“This appeal is about more than just funding – it is a call to action. As crises grow more frequent and severe, the gap between global needs and available resources continues to widen. Supporting WHO’s Health Emergency Appeal is a vital investment in global solidarity and health equity,” the document noted.

A spokesperson for the WHO said the new U.S. administration had not yet

taken office and needed time to do so, in response to questions about the future of the partnership.

“WHO values greatly its relationship with the US and is committed to maintaining and strengthening it,” she added. “WHO will do everything to cooperate with the incoming US administration.”

Public health experts in the U.S. and globally said the WHO was hoping for the best but should be preparing for the worst.

“For those of us... who are fighting for WHO in conversations with key people, they are not making my life easier or giving us any ammunition. We want them to say we understand the problem, we could do better,” said Ashish Jha, dean of the Brown University School of Public Health and former COVID-19 White House coordinator.

Trump names Sylvester Stallone, Mel Gibson special envoys to Hollywood

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

President-elect Donald Trump wants to make Hollywood “bigger, better and stronger” and has cast Mel Gibson, Jon Voight, and Sylvester Stallone as stars of what he is calling his “Special Ambassadors to a great but very troubled place, Hollywood, California.”

The President-elect announced on his social media site on Thursday that the three actors would be his eyes and ears to the movie-making town.

“It will again be, like The United States of America itself, The Golden Age of Hollywood!” he wrote on Truth Social.

He also called the trio special envoys though Special ambassadors and envoys are typically chosen to respond to troubled hot spots like the Middle East, not California.

In a statement provided to CBS News on Thursday, Gibson said he “got the tweet at the same time as all of you and was just as surprised. Nevertheless, I heeded the call. My duty as a citizen is to give any help and insight I can. Any chance the position comes with an Ambassador’s residence?”

Gibson’s Malibu home was destroyed in the wildfires which scorched the Los Angeles area.

U.S. film and television production has been hampered in recent years, with setbacks from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hollywood guild strikes of 2023, and in the past week, the ongoing wildfires in the Los



Angeles area. Overall production in the U.S. was down 26% from 2021, according to data from ProdPro.

In the greater L.A. area, productions were down 5.6% from 2023 according to FilmLA, the lowest since 2020.

This past October, California Gov. Gavin Newsom proposed expanding California’s Film & Television Tax Credit program to \$750 million annually, up from \$330 million. Other U.S. cities like Atlanta, New York, Chicago and San Francisco have used tax incentives to lure film and TV productions to their cities. Actor Mark Wahlberg is even making plans for a Las Vegas production hub.

It’s unclear what exactly Gibson, Voight and Stallone will be doing in this effort to bring productions back to the U.S. Representatives for Voight and Stallone did not immediately respond to request for comment.

Trump’s decision to select the actors as his chosen “ambassadors” underscores his preoccupations with the 1980s and ’90s, when he was a rising tabloid star in New York, and Gibson and Stallone were among the

biggest movie stars in the world.

Stallone is a frequent guest at Trump’s Mar-a-Lago club and introduced him at a gala in November shortly after the election.

“When George Washington defended his country, he had no idea that he was going to change the world. Because without him, you could imagine what the world would look like,” Stallone told the crowd. “Guess what? We got the second George Washington. Congratulations!”

The decision also reflects Trump’s willingness to overlook his supporters’ most controversial statements.

Gibson’s reputation has been altered in Hollywood since 2006 when he went on an antisemitic rant while being arrested for allegedly driving under the influence. But he’s also continued to work in mainstream movies and directed the upcoming Wahlberg thriller “Flight Risk.”

Voight is a longtime Trump supporter who has called Trump the greatest president since Abraham Lincoln.

Fuji legend, KWAM 1 bereaved again, loses mum

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Legendary Fuji musician, Wasiu Ayinde, fondly called Kwam 1, has lost his mother, Alimotu Shodiya Anifowoshe.

She was aged 105.

Mama Anifowoshe passed away in the early hours of Saturday in Ijebu Ode, Ogun State.

The old woman's passing comes just four days after the death of the former wife of the famous musician, Hafsat Anifowoshe, who passed away at age 65 after battling an undisclosed illness.

The death of the singer's mother was announced via an Instagram post on his media page.

"With heavy hearts, we announced the passing of King Ayinde's beloved mother. May her soul rest in peace, Alimotu Shodiya Omo Akeredolu Aya Anifososhe. Iya rere, sun re," the post reads.

Several celebrities, his colleagues and fans have taken to the post's comment section to offer their condolences.

Several dignitaries have also visited and called the singer to commiserate with him.

In a video, President Bola Tinubu



was heard sympathising with Kwam 1 during a phone call, offering prayers for the singer's long life and well-being.

"You will live long, you will not suffer. An orphan does not suffer. God bless you," the President said.

My mother was talented

The Fuji musician has disclosed that he got his singing talent from his mother who was not allowed to sing despite her gift.

K! De Ultimate also added that his mother was a king's daughter and his grandparents did not allow her to pursue a career in music

because they wanted her to get married.

"I was blessed with the gift of music from a young age, I was born into music. My mother was a singer before she got married. She had the git of music and she was a princess.

"She was not allowed to sing back then because she was a princess and her parents were worried that allowing her to be a musician would delay her from getting married sooner. her parents said my mother won't be allowed to sing because she is the daughter of a king," he said.

Armed attacker kills two Supreme Court judges in Iran

By Dave Oludare Oso

Two prominent judges were killed in an armed attack at Tehran's Supreme Court on Saturday, with reports suggesting a third judge was targeted, Iranian state media reported.

"This morning, an armed person infiltrating the Supreme Court in a planned action attempted to assassinate two brave and experienced judges... Following this terrorist act, two serving judges – revolutionary and decisive in the face of those who undermined the security of the people – were martyred," the Iranian judiciary's media outlet, Mizan reported.

Mizan said the attacker, who had no prior criminal record, killed himself while security forces tried to arrest them.

Three judges were targeted, according to Fars news agency, which is affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Mohammad Moghiseh and Ali Razini were killed.

Razini survived a previous assassination attempt in 1999 when he was serving as chief justice for Tehran province.



He was injured by a "magnetic bomb attached to his car," according to Mizan, which has accused the United States and Israel of being behind the killings.

Moghiseh's career began in the 1980s in Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Court. He initially worked at Qezel Hesar and later at Rajai Shahr, two of Iran's harshest prisons located in Karaj, using the pseudonym "Naserian," according to Mizan.

In 2022, he was transferred to the Supreme Court where he presided over some high profile cases including the prosecution

of leaders of the persecuted Baha'i sect, as well as some protesters in 2009, and people facing charges of enmity against God, a common charge for protesters and political dissidents.

The widespread 2009 protests known as the Green Movement brought millions of people into the streets for months of demonstrations.

Moghiseh was sanctioned by the United States in 2019 for a "miscarriage of justice" against dual nationals and political prisoners, accused of violating their freedom of speech.

US tightens security at border with Mexico ahead of Trump inauguration

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Just a few days before President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration, US law enforcement agents Friday carried out exercises using barbed wire and concrete blocks at a crossing on the border with Mexico as tensions rise ahead of the all-important event.

Vehicle crossings on an international bridge connecting Ciudad Juarez and El Paso, Texas were halted for about 40 minutes while US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers carried out training, an AFP journalist said.

According to the CBP office in El Paso, the exercises began in 2019 and aim to ensure that agents are prepared for potential border incidents.

Residents in Ciudad Juarez said the



exercises have multiplied as Trump prepares to take office on Monday, having vowed the largest deportation of undocumented migrants in the history of the United States.

"This is the second closure I've seen this week," said Yadira Martinez, who was among those trying to cross.

Ciudad Juarez is one of the main

gateways to the United States for migrants fleeing poverty, violence or political instability in their countries.

It is also one of the official entry points for migrants with appointments to file an asylum application through the US government's cellphone app CBP One.

Earlier this week, another Mexican border city, Tijuana, declared an emergency to free up funds to deal with the potential arrival of deportees.

Trump, who repeatedly called the arrival of migrants an "invasion," has promised to declare a national emergency at the border with Mexico after taking office and to expel millions who lack residency papers.

Woman arrested for stripping naked, posing on public sculpture

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A woman was arrested after doing a nude photoshoot on a popular seaside sculpture in Mexico.

Olga Larrea was seen in video footage stepping on the base of the La Perla sculpture in the city of La Paz on Friday, Jan. 17, and quickly removing her dress as a photographer prepared to take snaps.

The 30-year-old then hurled her dress at the photographer and climbed atop the monument.

She posed on the sculpture as traffic along the two-lane avenue next to the boardwalk slowed and bystanders looked on in shock.

Larrea then signalled to her photographer to hand her her dress and climbed down.

The Mexico City resident was approached by cops and she was placed under arrest.

She was taken to the local prosecutor's office and released after paying a fine of 3,365 Mexican pesos, or about \$163.

Larrea had posted the photoshoot pictures on her Facebook account before deleting them.

The nudist has criticised the authorities for not granting her the right to express herself.

"Guess who was arrested for simply existing?" she wrote.

"Why is the human body censored, but not violence?"



Canadian bizman, Kevin O'Leary offers \$20bn cash to buy TikTok

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Canadian businessman and investor, Kevin O'Leary, has offered TikTok's owners \$20 billion in cash to buy the platform.

Recall a bipartisan bill, which President Biden signed, called "TikTok a threat to national security" and forced ByteDance, the platform's Chinese parent company to divest from the platform or sell it in order for TikTok to remain in American app stores. ByteDance's deadline is Sunday.

The Supreme Court ruled Friday on TikTok's challenge to the law, upholding the ban.

During a Friday appearance on Fox News's "America's Newsroom," O'Leary made note of the fines that could



be in store for any provider that allows access after the deadline.

"As of midnight on the 19, any service provider ... that could be an Apple, that could be an Oracle, it could be a video compression technology company that's being paid as a consulting service, any of them that keep this thing alive is subject to \$5,000 a day fine times 170 million,"

O'Leary told anchor Bill Hemmer in the interview. "That's over a billion dollars a day."

"We don't know if an executive order can override a law from Congress. There's a case in 1937 that was used successfully, but you don't know."

O'Leary went on to say he can offer of \$20 billion to buy the social media platform, which boasts 170 million U.S. users.

"Right now, \$20 billion is on the table, cash, cash, \$20 billion," O'Leary said touting his bid at the conclusion of the call-in.

He said he's waiting to see if the offer is enough.

Russian missile attack on Kyiv kills four, injures many

By Olamilekan Botti

A deadly Russian missile strike on Kyiv on Saturday left four people dead and at least three others injured, according to city officials. The assault, described by Ukraine's Foreign Minister as a "heinous" act of aggression, involved the use of ballistic missiles targeting the heart of the Ukrainian capital.

The attack struck Kyiv's central Shevchenkivsky district, a densely populated area known for its cultural landmarks and residential neighborhoods. Tymur Tkachenko, head of Kyiv's military administration, confirmed the casualties in a statement on Telegram, saying, "We already have four dead in Shevchenkivsky district."

The barrage caused significant damage to the area. Fragments from intercepted missiles rained down,

severely damaging an industrial facility, parts of the city's metro infrastructure, and nearby residential buildings. The strike also temporarily disrupted local water supplies,



exacerbating the hardship for residents.

In a separate overnight assault, Russian forces targeted the southern city of Zaporizhzhia, wounding at

least 10 people, according to regional authorities. This latest escalation underscores the intensifying pressure on Ukrainian cities far from the front lines.

While Kyiv has remained relatively shielded from large-scale casualties due to its advanced air defense systems, Saturday's attack highlights the persistent threat posed by Russia's continued missile and drone strikes. Despite frequent targeting, fatalities in the capital have been rare compared to other regions more vulnerable to bombardment.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister condemned the missile strike as a brutal violation of international norms, reflecting growing international concern over Russia's use of heavy weaponry in civilian areas.

DONE DEAL: Israel to free 737 Palestinian prisoners on today

By Dave Oludare Oso

7 37 prisoners and detainees will be freed as part of the first phase of the Gaza ceasefire and hostage release deal approved Saturday, Israel's justice ministry has said.

It said in a statement on its website that "the government approves" the "release (of) 737 prisoners and detainees" currently in the custody of the prison service.

Israel's cabinet voted to approve the ceasefire deal early Saturday, according to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office, ending days of uncertainty about whether the truce would go into effect this weekend.

Those named by the ministry include men, women and children who it said will not be released before Sunday at 4:00 pm local time (1400 GMT).

It had previously published a list of 95 Palestinian prisoners, the majority women, to be freed in exchange for Israeli captives in Gaza.

Among those on the expanded list was Zakaria Zubeidi, a chief of the armed wing of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas's Fatah party.



Zubeidi escaped from Israel's Gilboa prison with five other Palestinians in 2021, sparking a days-long manhunt, and is lauded by Palestinians as a hero.

Also to be freed is Khalida Jarar, a leftist Palestinian lawmaker whom Israel arrested and imprisoned on several occasions.

Jarar is a prominent member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a group designated a "terrorist organisation" by Israel, the United States and the European Union.

Detained in late December in the West Bank, a Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967, the 60-year-old has been held since then without charge.

Two sources close to Hamas told AFP that the first group of hostages

to be released consists of three Israeli women soldiers.

However, since the Palestinian Islamist movement considers any Israeli of military age who has completed mandatory service a soldier, the reference could also apply to civilians abducted during the attack that triggered the war.

The first three names on a list obtained by AFP of the 33 hostages set to be released in the first phase are women under 30 who were not in military service on the day of the Hamas attack.

Justice Ministry spokeswoman Noga Katz has said the final number of prisoners to be released in the first swap would depend on the number of live hostages released by Hamas.

Unforgivable! Odegaard flops as Gunners suffer crushing title blow

By Dave Oludare Oso



Belgian forward, Leon Trossard was the catalyst again as the Gunners made it 2-0 – this time he collected the ball and took his time up against Matty Cash before creating the space to send a deadly ball in for Kai Havertz to volley in.

Less than five minutes later, though, Yuri Tielemans got his head to a fantastic cross from substitute Lucas Digne to send it beyond Raya. The Belgian midfielder came close to tying it up a minute later but his shot hit the post. On both occasions, he left Mikel Merino scrambling – and failing – to stop him.

Villa weren't done there. In the 68th minute, Cash's cross flew just

over Havertz's head and dropped to Watkins in loads of space at the back post to lash in the equaliser.

Arsenal pushed to regain their lead and thought they had won the game when Merino, who had been useless for much of the contest, sent the ball bouncing into the net, but VAR intervened to disallow the goal for a handball from Havertz.

Merino came close yet again in stoppage time but ended up hitting the post and then Trossard fluffed his lines as he went through on goal.

Villa were able to hold on from there and collect a point, leaving Arsenal six behind a Liverpool

team who boast a game in hand.

Arsenal's collapse leaves them with one win from their last five matches in all competitions, while they now trail Premier League leaders Liverpool by six points, though Arne Slot's men have a game in hand. The manner of their surrender against Emery's men, Merson says, sums up why they will not win the English crown again this season.

The Gunners are in action again in midweek when they meet Dinamo Zagreb in the Champions League. That will be followed by a Premier League trip to Wolves on January 25

Griezmann misses penalty as Atletico dream run ends

By Dave Oludare Oso



La Liga leaders, Atletico Madrid's club-record 15-game winning run has come to an end with a surprise defeat at neighbours Leganes.

Atletico had a chance to at least keep their unbeaten record going when they were awarded a last-minute penalty, but their all-time record scorer Antoine Griezmann put the spot-kick wide.

Diego Simeone's side had won every game since a loss at Real Betis on 27 October.

But the crucial goal on Saturday came when Leganes centre-back Matija Nastasic headed in from Dan Raba's cross.

Julian Alvarez and Griezmann had both hit the woodwork in the first half with the game goalless.

Real Madrid, who are just one point behind Atletico, can go top if they win or draw at home against Las Palmas on Sunday

Atletico captain Jan Oblak

told DAZN: "We didn't come in well. There was a lack of energy, not enough.

"It was our own issue. It shouldn't have to happen. With a bit more energy we could have turned it around.

"We didn't play well but we should have our head up. After 15 games, we've lost."

Leganes are 15th, three points above the relegation zone, after the surprise win.