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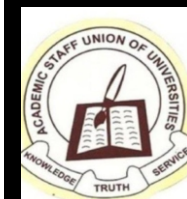
# The New Daily Prime

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## We'll take Nigeria to promise land, Tinubu assures

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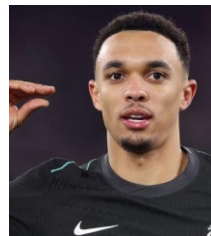
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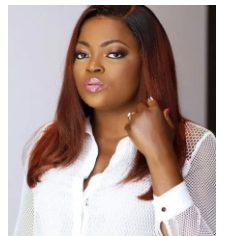
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# ASUU warns of potential confrontation with FG in 2025 over unresolved issues in education sector

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has issued a stern warning that 2025 could witness a prolonged confrontation between the union and the Federal Government unless concrete actions are taken to address long-standing issues in the university system.

The union, led by Prof. Ayo Akinwale of the Ibadan chapter, criticised the federal government's efforts in 2024 as insufficient, claiming that no significant changes were made in the university sector.

In a statement on Wednesday, January 1, ASUU lambasted the government for neglecting the education system and failing to address critical issues outlined in past agreements.

These include the non-release of withheld salaries, failure to fund the revitalisation of public universities, and the continued proliferation of public universities without proper funding or infrastructure support.

Akinwale further criticized the government for policy inconsistencies, particularly concerning the 18-year benchmark for tertiary education admission and the ongoing lack of implementation of the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) in favor of the proposed UTAS (University Transparency and Accountability Solution).



One of the union's significant concerns is the government's proposal to replace the education tax with a "development levy," which would severely impact the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund).

This funding body, established in 2011, has been crucial for the infrastructure development of public universities, but ASUU fears that the new levy system will undermine its role, with TETFund's share dwindling over time, eventually ceasing by 2030.

The union described this move as an attempt to "commodify" university education in Nigeria and undermine public institutions' ability to develop.

ASUU also rejected the 2025 budget allocation to education, which is roughly 7% of the total budget, well below the international benchmark of 15%-20% for developing countries as

recommended by UNESCO and the United Nations.

The union stressed that this underfunding, alongside unresolved issues like unpaid allowances and overdue salary payments, could lead to further disruption in the academic calendar and a renewed struggle for the improvement of the university system.

The statement concludes with a call to ASUU members to remain vigilant and prepared for potential unrest, urging the government to prioritize the sector and fulfill its promises to safeguard the future of Nigerian students and academic staff.

If the government fails to meet ASUU's expectations in 2025, the union predicts that another round of crisis and disruption in the university system is inevitable.



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# We'll take Nigeria to promise land, Tinubu assures

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has reiterated his administration's commitment to transforming Nigeria, pledging to lead the nation to the "Promised Land" through bold reforms and collaborative governance.

He expressed his gratitude for the unwavering support of the National Assembly, which he said has been pivotal to the administration's progress over the past 19 months.

The President made these remarks yesterday while receiving Vice President Kashim Shettima, Senate President Godswill Akpabio, Speaker of the House of Representatives Tajudeen Abbas, and former principal officers of the National Assembly at his Lagos residence.

The meeting, part of a New Year homage, was followed by a similar visit from the Nigeria Governors Forum.

He said Nigerians were at the heart of everything he's doing, adding that the transformative journey his administration had embarked upon is for current and future generations.

Acknowledging the lawmakers' contributions, Tinubu promised to intensify efforts to make courageous and innovative decisions for national development.

"We have a saying in Yoruba that it is only a courageous dog that will capture the animal in the bush," he



added, emphasising the administration's resolve to confront Nigeria's challenges head-on.

In his remarks, Akpabio lauded the President's bold reforms and assured him of the National Assembly's steadfast support.

"On this journey of restoration, transformation, and rebuilding the nation, you are not alone. The National Assembly stands firmly with you," Akpabio said.

He highlighted the economic strides achieved under Tinubu's leadership, including improved investor confidence, the oversubscription of Nigeria's Eurobond, and advancements in ease of doing business.

"Investors remain interested in Nigeria because of your leadership, and we will continue to smile as the benefits materialize,"

he added.

More so, Abbas praised Tinubu's respect and support for the legislature, noting the historic representation of former National Assembly members in key positions within the administration.

"The National Assembly today is more united and fulfilled than ever before," Abbas said. "There is nothing we have ever requested for the National Assembly that you have not obliged. This is commendable, and we thank you for bringing more succour to the poor."

The Speaker also expressed optimism about the country's future, predicting that 2025 would mark a turning point when Nigerians fully reap the benefits of the administration's reforms.

# How over \$2bn was squandered on non-functional refineries – Obasanjo

By Friday Omosola

**F**ormer President Olusegun Obasanjo has disclosed that subsequent administrations squandered over \$2 billion on Nigeria's refineries, yet none of them became operational.

In an interview with Channels Television, Obasanjo revealed that during his tenure, he sought to make the refineries functional by involving Shell, but the company declined.

According to him, Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited (SPDC), a pioneer in the country's petroleum industry, outlined four reasons why the refineries could not be made operational, with corruption being a significant factor.

This revelation comes shortly after President Bola Tinubu's administration announced that the Port Harcourt and Warri refineries have resumed operations.

He said, "I said, when I was president, I wanted to do something about the three refineries we have. Port Harcourt, Warri, and Kaduna. After I asked Shell to come and run it for us, Shell said they wouldn't. I said, please, come and take equity. They said, no, all right, don't take equity, come and run it. They said, no.

"Later on, I called them. I called the boss of Shell then. Come and tell me what is it. And he gave me four or five reasons. He said, well, first of all, we make a major profit from upstream, not from downstream. Downstream, we run just to keep our heads above water.

"Two, our refineries are too small. 60,000 barrels, 100,000 barrels, and I



think 120,000 barrels. He said, at that time, the average refinery was going for 250,000 barrels. Three, he said, our refineries are not well maintained. Four, he said, there was too much corruption around the activities of our refinery, and they would not want to get involved in that."

The Ogun-born politician further recounted that in 2007, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) rejected a \$750 million offer from billionaire business tycoon Aliko Dangote to manage the Port Harcourt and Kaduna refineries.

"And when anybody tells you a thing like that, what will you do? And it was after that, Aliko Dangote got a team together, and they paid \$750 million to take part in PPP, running the refinery. My successor refunded their money, and I went to my successor. I said, do you know? I told him what I transferred. He said NNPC said they wanted the refinery, and they could run it", Obasanjo added.

He stated that the NNPC, now rebranded as the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL), was aware of its inability to manage the national refineries but still

refused Dangote's offer.

The former President noted, "And I said, but you know they cannot run it. As I was told not too long ago, since that time, more than \$2 billion have been squandered on the refineries, and they still will not work. Anybody can tell you.

"If a company like Shell tells me what they told me, I will believe them. If anybody tells you now that it is working, well, are they now with Aliko? And Aliko will make its refinery work. Not only will it make it work, it will make it deliver.

"Announce whether our government refinery is working or not. Look, it is like they say in Yoruba, the man who plants 100 heaps of yam, and says he has planted 200 heaps, they say after he has harvested 100 heaps of yam, he will also harvest 100 heaps of lie. You know what that means?"

Obasanjo served as Nigeria's democratically elected President from May 1999 to May 2007.

He also held the position of Nigeria's military Head of State from February 1976 to October 1979.



# Support Tinubu for positive turnaround, Oyebanji urges Nigerians

By Friday Omosola

Ekiti State Governor, Biodun Oyebanji, has called on Nigerians to rally behind President Bola Tinubu in his unwavering commitment to transforming Nigeria's fortunes and improving the standard of living for its citizens.

Speaking at the 2025 Interfaith Thanksgiving Service held today at the Obafemi Awolowo Civic and Convention Centre in Ado Ekiti, Oyebanji urged Nigerians to refrain from making negative remarks about the country.

He emphasised that Nigeria is on the right track toward economic recovery and prosperity, with the President's reforms already yielding tangible results.

Governor Oyebanji expressed gratitude for President Tinubu's leadership, describing him as a courageous leader unafraid to make bold decisions for the greater good of the masses.

He encouraged Nigerians to appreciate Tinubu's efforts and trust in the positive outcomes of his policies.

The governor also used the occasion to reaffirm his commitment to advancing the development and prosperity of Ekiti State.

Responding to commendations from clerics at the service for his leadership, Oyebanji acknowledged the responsibility placed upon him, stating that his years of experience in governance have adequately prepared him for the role.

He praised the people of Ekiti for their trust and support, which enabled him to lead the state as its chief servant.

Oyebanji pledged to continue working alongside dedicated individuals to ensure growth and development in the



Land of Honour.

“As the chief servant of the people, I make a promise again before God and before all of you that are here today that I will serve you with every fibre, every energy. I will serve you in truth and I will serve you with fear of God and 2025 will be our year of accelerated growth and development for us as a state and individually,” he said.

The governor credited the recent increase in the state's allocation—which has led to higher salaries for civil servants, welfare packages for non-government workers, and ongoing and completed projects—to President Tinubu's generosity.

He highlighted Tinubu's approval of increased state allocations following the removal of the fuel subsidy as a key factor.

Oyebanji praised Tinubu for his support to him and the people of Ekiti, stating, “After God, whatever we might have achieved is through the President. When you find favour with the President, it translates to good things for our people.”

He further observed that Tinubu's bold policy shifts, once misunderstood, are now gaining appreciation in certain quarters.

As an example, he cited THISDAY Newspaper's decision to honour the President as Man of the Year, acknowledging his courageous and people-focused decisions.

He called on prominent sons and fathers of Ekiti, both at home and in the Diaspora, to follow the example of Afe Babalola, the founder of Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti (ABUAD), and former Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) President, Wole Olanipekun, by mobilizing support for the state government through their influence, resources, and goodwill.

He noted that these two distinguished citizens have consistently supported the state and expressed the need for similar contributions from other well-established individuals in Ekiti.

The service featured songs of praise, Bible and Qur'an readings, as well as sermons and prayers delivered by both Muslim and Christian clerics.

# “You’re key to Nigeria’s development” – Tinubu tells governors

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has reaffirmed the central role of governors in driving Nigeria’s development, emphasising their leadership as essential to achieving economic growth, food security, and national prosperity.

Speaking at his Ikoyi residence during a New Year homage by Vice President Kashim Shettima and members of the Nigeria Governors Forum (NGF), Tinubu lauded the governors’ support and called for greater collaboration between federal and state governments to tackle critical challenges.

“You are the most important link to Nigeria’s prosperity and development. The Federal Government accounts for about 30 to 35 per cent of the allocated revenue; the rest comes to you. The agricultural value chain depends on you. You own the land, and the job is in your hands”, he said.

He further stressed the need for synergy in addressing local government autonomy, agricultural productivity, and currency stability.

Dispelling rumour of discord, he reaffirmed his administration’s commitment to grassroots development.

“There were gossips that we had disagreements on local government autonomy. No. Just drive development at the local government. Nobody wants to take them away from you, but we need collaboration. Let’s do it together and ensure Nigeria is better off for it,” he said.

He urged governors to prioritise agricultural growth as a pathway to economic stability, stating, “We have to work harder, grow more, and ensure



the situation of our currency improves. Nigeria will see prosperity, but it requires consistent effort from all of us.”

President Tinubu commended governors for their achievements and encouraged them to take pride in their progress.

“There is no state we cannot visit and be proud of its development. We have better allocations now. Let me take the abuse; you take the privileges. Together, we will build a nation we are all proud of,” he said.

Reflecting on his leadership journey, the President expressed confidence in the administration’s direction, saying, “I am glad I asked for this job, and Nigerians gave me the mandate. We’ll be on this voyage together. Tinubu welcomed his recognition as “ThisDay newspaper’s Man of the Year”, describing it as a testament to the success of his policies.

He announced plans to visit Enugu State on January 4 as part of his scheduled state visits.

The President reiterated his

commitment to leading Nigeria toward prosperity. “We are on this journey together, and I thank all of you for where we are today and where we are heading,” he said.,

In his speech, Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq, Chairman of the NGF and Governor of Kwara State, described the ThisDay recognition as a significant endorsement of the administration’s progress.

“The policies are working. In agriculture, for instance, states like Jigawa are recording bumper harvests. We are encouraging ourselves to stockpile for the rainy day,” he said.

Governor AbdulRazaq also commended the restructuring of the economy, which has enabled states to execute more projects. “I must confess, I’ve done more projects in the last two years than in my first four years,” he noted.

He assured the President of unwavering support from the governors, particularly in strengthening local security and enhancing national development.



# NYSC set to open 2024 Batch 'C' Stream II portal

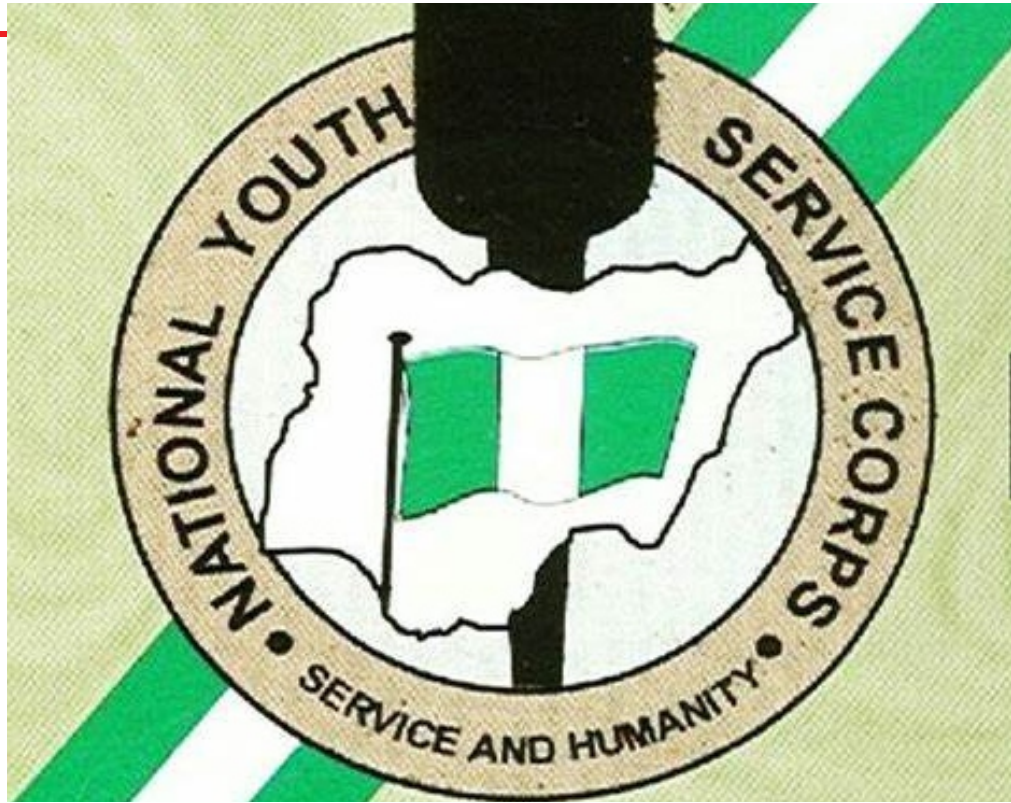
By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) has officially announced the opening of its portal for the 2024 Batch C Stream II registration for Prospective Corps Members (PCMs).

In a brief statement posted on its social media platforms, the NYSC confirmed that the portal will open on January 6, 2025. The statement emphasized, "Online registration for 2024 Batch C Stream II begins on January 6, 2025."

This announcement marks the start of the registration process for eligible graduates who wish to participate in the NYSC program. PCMs are advised to visit the official NYSC portal to complete their registration once it becomes accessible.

The scheme serves as a key platform aimed at fostering national unity and integration by deploying Nigerian graduates across different states for a year of service.



This initiative helps instil a sense of responsibility and contribution toward the nation's development.

As the deadline for registration approaches, prospective corps members are urged to ensure they meet all the requirements and prepare necessary documents in advance. This includes their academic credentials, personal details, and other relevant information.

The NYSC also emphasized the need for all PCMs to stay updated by regularly checking

the official NYSC website and social media pages. Important announcements, including registration guidelines and deadlines, will be shared on these platforms.

However, the portal opening on January 6, 2025, marks an essential step in the registration process for 2024 Batch C Stream II PCMs. Prospective corps members should act promptly to ensure a smooth registration process and secure their place in the program.



# TUC criticises Tinubu's optimism in New Year address, questions president's policies

By **Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

Festus Osifo, President of the Trade Union Congress (TUC), has expressed concern that the optimism conveyed in President Bola Tinubu's New Year speech does not align with the current state of Nigeria's economy.

Appearing on Channels Television's Politics Today programme on Wednesday, January 1, evening, Osifo was critical of the President's optimistic outlook, particularly the promises made to combat inflation, stabilise the naira, and foster economic growth.

In his address, President Tinubu outlined ambitious plans for the nation's economic recovery, including strategies to boost local food production, increase the manufacturing of essential medicines, and improve access to credit through the establishment of the National Credit Guarantee Company.

However, Osifo argued that while the President's speech may be intended to inspire hope, it fails to reflect the harsh realities of the nation's economic challenges.

He stated, "The president of a country is the chief salesman of a country, his own primary responsibility is to lay out the message that he has laid out. To paint a very bright picture, to paint a picture of a lot of goodies that could come in 2025. So he has done what any president in the world could do."



Despite acknowledging the President's intention to inspire hope, Osifo suggested that the message of optimism clashes with the struggles Nigerians currently face.

He continued, "So in reality, what the president has said is trying to inspire hope, but that hope that he's trying to inspire, is not really in tandem with what we have currently in our economy."

The TUC President also pointed out that both economic analysts and financial experts have identified the administration's policies as key contributors to the nation's economic difficulties.

According to Osifo, these policies have significantly worsened the situation, citing the depreciation of the naira and rising inflation as direct results of the current government's actions.

He added, "Nigerians know clearly that a lot of these policies have brought about challenges, and have brought about difficulties that we are facing today. Today our exchange rate is about 1,600, depending on the parallel market or The Nigerian Autonomous Foreign Exchange Fixing. It is also these policies that have also brought about the inflation that we have today."

Osifo also criticised the optimistic projections outlined by the President, such as the expected reduction in inflation to 15% by 2025 and a rise in crude oil production to 2.06 million barrels per day.

He questioned the feasibility of these targets, stating, "When you now analyse them, what are the parameters that have been put in place? What are those details that have been put in place that we can see that truly it is not just talkism, that truly what the president is saying, there are actions to match them?"

# 2027: Obi denies merger talks with PDP, others

By Friday Omosola

**A**head of the 2027 polls, the former governor of Anambra State, Peter Obi, has clarified that no merger agreement has been reached with the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP), or any other political group.

Speaking at a press conference in Abuja today, the 2023 presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP) addressed national issues while urging all patriotic Nigerians in the political space to unite against the All Progressives Congress (APC) in the next election.

He accused the APC of mismanaging Nigeria's resources and called for collective action to bring about a change in leadership.

Obi expressed concern over the worsening security situation, citing widespread deaths caused by banditry, terrorism, and kidnapping.



He described the current level of corruption as alarming and criticized the high cost of governance, which, according to him, has driven Nigeria's public debt to unprecedented levels under the administration of President Bola Tinubu.

He also condemned the frequent foreign travels by government officials in 2024, which he said amounted to reckless misuse of public funds.

Reflecting on the 2023 presidential election, Obi noted that Tinubu emerged victorious in 12 of Nigeria's

36 states, securing 8,794,726 votes—nearly two million more than his closest rival, Atiku Abubakar of the PDP, who garnered 6,984,520 votes.

Obi himself, a first-time presidential contender, made history with 6,101,533 votes, while Rabiu Kwankwaso of the NNPP placed fourth, winning in Kano State with 1,496,687 votes.

Interestingly, both Obi and Kwankwaso were PDP members before the 2023 elections but left the party, citing irreconcilable differences.



# Fubara signs N1.188trn 2025 budget into law

By Friday Omosola

Forty-eight hours after presenting the N1.188 trillion 2025 Appropriation Bill to the State House of Assembly, Governor Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers State has signed it into law.

Announcing the signing on his Facebook page today, the governor described the budget, titled 'Budget of Inclusive Growth & Development,' as a strategic plan for a prosperous year ahead.

He emphasised that the budget focuses on key sectors such as education, healthcare, agriculture, and infrastructure, setting the foundation for growth and development.

He wrote, "Today, I signed into law the 2025 Rivers State Appropriation Bill.



Tagged "Budget of Inclusive Growth & Development", the bill is estimated at N1.1 trillion. I deeply appreciate the Rivers State House of Assembly for their diligence and my executives for their unwavering commitment to

service.

"Together, we are setting the pace for a prosperous year ahead, focusing on education, healthcare, agriculture, and infrastructure. Let me, on this note, thank everyone and once again wish you a happy and prosperous New Year ahead as we continue the journey of making Rivers State great again."

Governor Fubara, in 2024, presented the budget to the three-member Rivers Assembly led by Victor Oko-Jumbo.

The governor's signing of the 2025 budget mirrored the events of the previous year, where he presented the N800 billion 2024 budget to a four-member assembly and assented to it within 24 hours.

# Kano gov opposes Tinubu's tax reforms, calls them "Inimical to Unity"

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Governor Abba Yusuf of Kano State has voiced strong opposition to President Bola Tinubu's proposed tax reforms, asserting that they are "inimical to the unity of the country" and would harm the welfare of Nigerians.

Represented by his Deputy, Aminu Gwarzo, during the 2025 celebration at the Filin Mahaha in Kano, Yusuf declared that the tax reform bill was not a solution to Nigeria's economic challenges.

Deputy Governor Gwarzo, speaking on behalf of Yusuf, described the tax reform proposal as "ill-timed, lopsided and inimical to the unity of the country."

He added that Nigerians, especially in the northern region, are grappling with hyperinflation and severe insecurity, and that the government's focus should be on addressing extreme poverty and hunger.

Kano State has stood firm against



The Asagba of Asaba, Prof. Epiphany Azinge (SAN), called on President Tinubu to ensure public accountability before proceeding with any tax reforms.

In his New Year message, Azinge emphasised that the government must address the burden of hardship before implementing new policies, stressing the importance of efficiently using taxpayers' money to restore public trust.

policies that negatively affect its citizens, with the deputy governor emphasizing the administration's achievements in healthcare, education, road construction, and foreign scholarship initiatives. He also reminded the residents of the Supreme Court ruling in January 2024, which affirmed Yusuf as the duly elected governor of Kano State.

The criticism of the proposed tax reforms comes as other public figures also weigh in on the issue.

Azinge also spoke about the importance of creating a buoyant and prosperous economy to improve education, healthcare, and overall living standards, particularly to prevent the 'Japa syndrome'—the mass migration of Nigerians abroad in search of better opportunities.

While addressing his own legal battles, Azinge expressed readiness to meet with former contenders for the throne in court after being crowned the Asagba of Asaba in October 2024.

# Abia gov pledges focus on education, health, others in 2025

By Friday Omosola

**A**bia State Governor, Alex Otti, has assured citizens that his administration will prioritise education, health, agriculture, and other critical sectors to advance the state's development in 2025.

In a statement shared on his X page today, Otti emphasised that 2025 holds significant promise for the state, urging citizens to prepare for robust government interventions in education and health.

He explained that in 2024, his administration allocated 35 per cent of the state's budget to these sectors, demonstrating his commitment to their transformation.

The governor also revealed plans to hold the ground-breaking ceremony for the Abia Medical City Project in the coming weeks.

He described the project as a game-changer for the healthcare ecosystem, aimed at reducing medical tourism, enhancing healthcare delivery, and attracting top medical professionals to the state.

Furthermore, Otti announced that the ongoing renovation of 200 primary healthcare centres will be completed by the first quarter of 2025.

This effort is expected to significantly improve access to quality healthcare, particularly in rural communities.

"We shall fast-track efforts to remake our schools into centres of excellence in effective teaching and learning. As you may know, the law mandating all children of school age to be in school every school day comes into effect from today. As soon as the new school term begins later in the month, it will be unlawful to find any child outside the walls of the classroom during school hours.

The governor stressed that the movement aims to eliminate any excuse for extortion or denial of a child's right



to learning and enlightenment, pledging strict enforcement to achieve this goal.

"We have stopped all forms of payments in the primary and secondary schools, not even PTA levies should be charged to any parent or guardian in any public school in the State. We have introduced an imprest account system for the running of schools. Headteachers and school principals are now entitled to specific sums every month for managing the day-to-day operations of their schools", he added.

He affirmed his commitment to enhancing efforts to make the state more investor-friendly.

Beyond increasing government revenue, he said his administration prioritises creating lucrative job opportunities for young people and expanding support for local entrepreneurs offering ancillary services.

He stated that attracting substantial local and foreign investments remains central to the state's economic development agenda, which will be pursued vigorously in 2025.

Otti noted, "Beyond our strategic infrastructure development initiatives as captured in the 2025 Appropriation Act which we intend to implement faithfully, we shall also continue to prioritise the security of lives and property, adopting necessary measures to keep criminals and their sponsors out of the State.

"Again, I would like to restate that we shall not hesitate to deploy the full might of the Government against any individual or group whose activities pose a threat to the safety of our people."

He disclosed that his administration has allocated N18.9 billion to support economically vulnerable individuals and families in 2025.

He assured that the welfare of civil servants and other state government employees in various capacities would receive adequate attention, recognizing their significant contributions to the success of the administration's comprehensive governance agenda.

"The established tradition of consistency in the payment of salaries and other entitlements to our hard-working civil servants and their counterparts working across departments and agencies shall remain."

The governor further emphasised his commitment to prioritising the agricultural sector to achieve food sufficiency and create meaningful employment opportunities for women and young people.

"The position of the Government is that we are too blessed to be hungry. I have directed the Commissioner for Agriculture and his team to develop an effective framework for putting all the agricultural assets in the State to good use in the New Year.

"The young people of this State are its future. The Government understands its obligation to the youth and will do its best to create an environment where their dreams can flourish, whatever the size of that dream. Our expansive investments in education, social infrastructure, sports, public utilities and security are all designed to make the State supportive of their ambition."



# Ekiti gov Oyebanji unveils plans for economic growth with new agro-allied cargo airport

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

**K**iti State Governor, Mr. Biodun Oyebanji, declared on Wednesday that with the newly developed Ekiti Agro-Allied International Cargo Airport, the state is on track to becoming Nigeria's leading agro-allied export hub.

Speaking in his New Year address, broadcast statewide, the governor expressed optimism that 2025 would usher in a period of unprecedented progress in food production, infrastructure, and government services, marking a historic transformation for the state.

Governor Oyebanji highlighted the recent approval granted by the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) for non-scheduled flight operations at the Ekiti State Airport, which he described as the ideal New Year gift for the people of Ekiti.

The approval came on December 13, 2024, with a six-month license for non-scheduled flights, serving as a test phase before full operational activities are launched on June 15, 2025.

"The Ekiti State Airport is now completed and ready for operations," Oyebanji proudly announced.

"The commencement of non-scheduled flights signifies a



major step toward connecting Ekiti's economy to the global stage. This is an exciting development that opens up vast opportunities for Ekiti."

The governor emphasised that the airport's operational status was a significant milestone in the state's vision of becoming the agro-allied export hub of Nigeria.

He expressed confidence that this achievement, combined with further infrastructural and economic advancements, would boost the state's agricultural production capacity and stimulate economic growth in the coming year.

Looking ahead, Oyebanji stressed that Ekiti's progress would not be limited to the airport but would also

encompass broader improvements in food production, infrastructure, and governance.

He expressed confidence that 2025 would see a resurgence in economic activity across Nigeria, contributing to higher incomes and improved revenues for the state.

The governor took the opportunity to thank a wide array of stakeholders, including political leaders, traditional rulers, religious figures, and the diaspora community, for their ongoing support and commitment to the state's development.

He also expressed gratitude to President Bola Tinubu and the Federal Government for their assistance in the state's progress.

# Outgoing Rivers CP hands over to successor, calls for peace, continue support

By Helen Okechukwu

The outgoing Commissioner of Police (CP) for Rivers State, Mustapha Bala, has officially handed over the leadership of the state command to his successor, Olubenga Adepoju.

The handover follows Bala's promotion to Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG) for Zone 6, Calabar.

At a press briefing held today at the Police Officers Mess, Old GRA, Port Harcourt, AIG Bala called on officers and stakeholders to prioritize peace and extend their unwavering support to the incoming leadership.

"I came in peace, I worked in peace, and I am leaving in peace," he remarked, reflecting on his tenure with gratitude.

AIG Bala highlighted significant milestones achieved during his leadership, including the rescue of 13 underage pregnant girls and a kidnapped corps member, recovery of firearms, retrieval of stolen



goods worth millions of naira, and clampdowns on oil theft and other criminal activities.

The new CP, Olubenga Adepoju, commended AIG Bala for his contributions to maintaining peace and order in Rivers State.

"On behalf of the officers and men of Rivers State, we thank you for your invaluable leadership and guidance," Adepoju stated.

During the ceremony, the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of Bori, Khana Local Government Area, Olufemi Okanlawon, was recognized as the Best Performing Officer

for November 2024.

His commendation stemmed from leading a successful operation that neutralized a notorious kidnapper and recovered firearms.

In an interview with this reporter, Okanlawon expressed his joy at receiving the award, citing his commitment to combating crime as his primary motivation.

He urged parents to play their role in reducing criminal activities, stating, "I encourage parents to guide their children and discourage them from engaging in crime.



# Police probe alleged assassination attempt on Kaduna senator

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Kaduna State Police Command has launched a comprehensive investigation into an alleged assassination attempt on Senator Usman Lawal, representing Kaduna-Central. The probe was initiated after the senator claimed on social media that he escaped an assassination attempt by thugs in Kaduna North on Wednesday.

According to a statement issued by the command's spokesperson, Mansir Hassan, the police were unaware of the alleged assassination attempt until they stumbled upon a publication on Senator Lawal's Facebook handle. The senator's post claimed that he was targeted by thugs in an unidentified location in Kaduna North, but did not provide further details, including the time of the incident.

Hassan stated that despite the lack of a formal complaint, Commissioner of Police Muhammad Rabiu has ordered a thorough investigation into the matter. The police have made efforts to contact Senator Lawal, but all attempts have been unsuccessful.

"The alleged assassination attempt on Senator Usman Lawal is unknown to the Police. The attention of the command has been drawn to a publication on the Facebook handle of Senator Lawal Usman," Hassan



said. "He claimed that he escaped an assassination attempt by some thugs in a yet-to-be-identified location in Kaduna North on Wednesday, and no time of the incident was given."

The police spokesperson emphasized that the command is committed to providing adequate security for all residents within the state. The investigation is currently ongoing, and the police are urging anyone with information regarding the alleged assassination attempt to come forward.

The incident has raised concerns about the safety and security of politicians in Kaduna State. The police have assured the public that they will do everything possible to ensure the protection

of all individuals, regardless of their status or position.

As the investigation continues, the police are appealing to Senator Lawal to cooperate with them by providing more information about the alleged assassination attempt. The police are also urging the public to remain calm and to report any suspicious activities to the authorities.

The alleged assassination attempt on Senator Lawal has sparked widespread concern and condemnation from politicians and civil society groups in Kaduna State. The incident has highlighted the need for increased security measures to protect politicians and other high-profile individuals in the state.

# 2024: Nigeria's year of economic uncertainties, woes

By Emmanuel Nwagboniwe

To a large extent, the year 2024 was one of visible economic hardship in Nigeria.

Undoubtedly too, the same year, majority of Nigerians witnessed as their living standards plummeted to ignoble and pitiable levels.

It was truly a year of visible economic deprivation and hunger, occasioned by the two major policies of the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu-led administration: Removal of oil subsidy and the unification of the foreign exchange market.

The two policies also triggered remarkable negative multiplier effects on the nation's economy in terms of depreciating value of the Naira, price hike, inflation, low productivity, unemployment, poor power supply/ high electricity tariff, high cost of living, among others.

Also, the issue of insecurity across the country, especially in the Northern parts of Nigeria, took the shine off 2024.

It need be affirmed that, barely a month after President Ahmed Bola Tinubu was sworn in on May 29, 2023, Nigeria's inflation rate rose sharply from 22.41% to 31.70% by February 2024, marking the highest rise ever experienced in nine months since 1999.

More worrisome, as at November 2024, the same inflation peaked to 34.6%, with food inflation alone hitting 39.93%, worsening the cost-of-living crisis in the country.

This unbearable situation made living costs high and led to ceaseless upward price review of goods and services across all sectors of the economy.

Even the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) did not help matters, as it raised interest rate about six times in 2024, all in a bid to stabilise the economy in the face of naira devaluation and rising fuel costs.

With increased CBN interest rates, the cost of doing business and production



skyrocketed. Many businesses had to source for funds under high interest rates by banks and other lending organisations.

## Power Supply

Last year, low and inadequate electricity generation and distribution led to high cost of production, as factories and companies generated their own electricity, leading to high costs of goods and services.

Nigeria's power supply in the last quarters of 2024 from its 23 power generating plants connected to national grid, with their total capacity of 11,165.4MWs hovered around 4,433.71 and 4,194.20MWs

## Fuel pricing

Again, the issue of fuel pricing in the country has remained a major problem even with the emergence of Dangote Refinery. In May 2023, petrol prices rose; initially priced at ₦195 per litre, prices rose to ₦540 in June and ₦617 in July. By September 2023, prices changed between ₦626.21 and ₦671.86 by December. In May 2024, petrol prices soared between ₦1,200 to ₦1,500 on the black market.

As of late December 2024, the Dangote Refinery reduced its petrol price to ₦899.50 per litre, leading to competitive pricing among marketers. However, there are fears that the December 2024 fuel price slash may be short-lived considering the ongoing hard economic situations

Even many Nigerians are not deceived by the recent disclosure that the Port-Harcourt and Warri refineries are back on stream.

Likewise, many stakeholders in the oil and gas sector still believe that the revival of these hitherto moribund refineries may not translate into increased fuel production given the often exaggerated production capacities of those facilities.

Therefore, the bottom line is that as long as Nigeria can't produce enough fuel for local consumption, the price of the product will continue to go higher.

## Security challenges

Insecurity remains rampant with multiple incidents reported; including kidnappings and attacks by insurgents. The World Food Programme also reports that conflict has displaced many people, escalating food insecurity and malnutrition.

The hunger situation led to nationwide protests from August 1-10, 2024

The widespread protests were against rising living costs and government corruption, organised under the #EndBadGovernance banner. Demonstrations occurred in major cities including Abuja, Lagos, Kano, Benin City, Gombe, and Jos.

Various pro-democracy groups championed the protests. The protests voiced frustrations over issues such as insecurity, food shortages, and poor governance while demanding the reinstatement of fuel subsidies and wider reforms.

Apparently in its bid to rijig, the Federal Government in the last two months initiated

Tax Reform Bill which has become thorny and controversial issue in the polity.

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### Nigerians Speak

According to Dayo Olusanya, a building materials dealer in Ogunpa market in Ibadan, he had one goal—to give his children a better life than he had. Olusanya, in his early 40s, wakes up every morning with a dream that seems farther from reality with each passing day. He continues: “For years, I poured my energy into building this business, hoping a better life would come.

But in 2024, that dream began to crumble under the weight of skyrocketing fuel prices and restrictive government policies.

“I wanted to give my kids a better life,” he said with a weary voice. “But now, I’m just trying to survive each day: when we heard at the beginning of this year that fuel prices increased, this year’s challenge is higher than I have ever witnessed.

“This was not how the shop was some years back, it’s big, well stocked with goodies, but blame fuel prices because I buy goods from Lagos, and transportation costs have increased daily. I had no choice but to raise the prices of my goods, but customers complained.”

Despite Olusanya’s rough 2024, he expressed optimism that 2025 will get better.

He echoes: “I hope fuel prices will be reduced and reforms are implemented, because a bunch of keys that cost N4,500–N5,000 before now costs N10,000 or more.”

Like Olusanya, many small business owners are struggling to survive in an economy that seems to be failing them. As they plead for government intervention in 2025, hope for a brighter future dwindles.

Mudinat Akintunde, an electronics seller since 1999, shares her story. “pray we don’t experience such hardship again,

she lamented, describing how the prices of items like extension boxes and fans have doubled or even tripled.”

In the same vein, Aderemi Joshua, a bed seller, lamented the rising costs of factory goods. “A bed that used to cost ₦14,000 now costs ₦20,000,” he said, highlighting the significant price increase. “Taxes, fuel prices, and customs fees have severely impacted my business.”

He also recalled the more prosperous times under President Goodluck Jonathan-led administration, stating, “during that era, I consistently turned a profit. Now, customers struggle to afford even essential items.”

Joshua Gabriel, a meat seller in Port Harcourt, and father of four, described 2024 as a year of survival. “If not for God, my business would have collapsed,” he said,

He adds: “The price of a healthy cow has nearly doubled from N700,000 in January 2024 to over N1.2 million or N1.3 million, recalling the loss he has incurred in his business as a butcher.

Struggling to cover cooling room fees, he avoids customers who delay payments, describing them as “business killers.”

“Just imagine sending 20kg of cow meat to a cool room, it is a very big problem for me. The cool room charges N300 for 1kg, how will I be able to pay? Because I will be running at a lost.”

Amarachi Clement, a trader who lives in a Port- Harcourt suburb, sells chemical soap, spoke about the implication of the unstable dollar exchange rate to her business. “Chemicals sold for as low as N1,500 last year now sell for N3,000 or more,” she revealed.

To retain her customers, she adds bonuses like extra fragrance but admits the burden of high vendor prices causes mental stress.

### Which way forward for Nigeria in 2025?

As Nigerians step into 2025, the tax reform bill will dominate debates and discourses in both the corporate and private circles.

Many argue that the tax reform bill is ill timed given the fact that agricultural and industrial reforms ought to be front burner.

According to a report by Prime Business Africa: “The proposed tax reforms aim to overhaul the existing tax system by doing away with outdated laws and introducing new measures to boost revenue collection. Key features include a gradual increase in Value Added Tax (VAT) rates and a reduction in corporate income tax for medium and large companies.”

Meanwhile, the Northern Governors forum, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and other corporate bodies have unequivocally rejected the bill.

However, many other notable professional bodies like NBA, corporate organisations and scholars have urged caution and dialogue over the passing of the bill into law.

However, Federal Government officials, including ministers, the ruling APC bigwigs, have been canvassing support for the tax reforms bill, echoing that it remains the magic wand taxation policy that will Nigeria to its enviable financial independence.

However, while tax reform is essential for improving fiscal stability, does it address the pressing needs of the agricultural and industrial sectors, crucial for economic growth and job creation?

Also, Nigeria’s current debt to the World Bank stands at about \$17.1 billion, having risen from \$16.5 billion in June 2024; a rise reflecting a \$600 million increase over three months.

# Funke Akindele thanks fans amid cinema drama

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**A**ward-winning actress and filmmaker Funke Akindele has finally addressed the ongoing controversy surrounding the Nigerian cinema industry.

In a heartfelt New Year message, Akindele expressed her deep gratitude to her fans for their unwavering support, which she credits as a key factor in the success of her film *Everybody Loves Jenifa*.

Acknowledging support and gratitude In her message, Akindele took a moment to recognize the fans who have stood by her throughout the journey of *Everybody Loves Jenifa*.

The actress wrote, “I cannot thank my amazing fans enough for making this movie a success. Your love and support mean everything to me.” She also extended her gratitude to her colleagues who participated in the film’s meet-and-greet event, acknowledging their contribution to the film’s success.

Addressing the cinema controversy Akindele’s comments come amidst reports of alleged favoritism by some cinemas, where certain films are said to receive preferential treatment over others.

This issue has sparked discussions within the industry, raising concerns about equity and representation in film exhibitions. Akindele wrote, “As we step into 2025, remember to stay focused, ignore the noise, and chase your dreams! You’ve got this!”

The actress made it clear that she is committed to rising above the noise and promoting positive energy within the film industry. Her call to action urges both fans and filmmakers to stay resilient despite the challenges they may face.

Keeping the momentum alive



Akindele reminded her fans that *Everybody Loves Jenifa* is still showing in cinemas across Nigeria, as well as in select theaters in the UK and the US (AMC & Regal). She urged her followers to continue supporting the film and to carry the momentum forward into the new year.

“We’ve come this far together,” Akindele wrote, “Let’s keep the momentum going and make 2025 unforgettable! HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL!!!”

Inspiring resilience and focus

In her New Year message, she emphasized the importance of staying focused and ignoring negativity. “The road to success is never smooth, but what matters is our determination to keep moving forward,” she stated.

*Everybody Loves Jenifa* by Funke Akindele

By promoting positivity and resilience, Akindele seeks to inspire her fans and peers to continue pursuing their dreams despite the

challenges they may encounter.

Her words serve as a reminder that, even amidst controversy and adversity, staying true to one’s goals and maintaining a supportive community can lead to success.

Akindele’s call to action urges fans and industry members to focus on what truly matters – the passion for filmmaking and the desire to create meaningful stories.

Conclusion

Funke Akindele’s New Year message reflects her unwavering commitment to her craft and her dedication to the Nigerian film industry.

As she moves into 2025, she remains optimistic and determined, inspiring both her fans and colleagues to remain focused and driven.

In a time of uncertainty, Akindele’s words offer hope and encouragement, reminding everyone that with hard work and perseverance, success is always within reach.



# Burna Boy Responds to 2025 Lagos Countdown Stage Incident

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**B**urna Boy responds to 2025 Lagos Countdown concert controversy after kicking a fan who touched him on stage, revealing PTSD struggles.

In an Instagram story, the music superstar revealed that he has been struggling with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which often leads him to react impulsively to sudden movements or interactions during performances.

Burna Boy explained, "It was a free show. I was supposed to perform for 10 minutes but ended up performing for nearly an hour. Everyone knows my rule about avoiding sudden interruptions on stage. I had a great time with Lagos State last night, but please, don't jump on my stage like that. I have PTSD, and I love you all. Happy New Year."

The incident sparked public debate, with many fans divided on his reaction. Some showed empathy and understanding, acknowledging his struggle with PTSD and defending his actions, while others criticized his behavior, labeling it unprofessional.

## Public reaction and debate

The response from Burna Boy has opened up discussions about the pressures faced by public figures and the challenges they endure while performing.

The fan's unexpected attempt to touch Burna Boy on stage caught him off guard, triggering an instinctive reaction.

For many who perform in front of large crowds, such moments of vulnerability and the fear of being startled can be heightened by mental health conditions like PTSD.

Some fans voiced support for Burna Boy, appreciating his honesty and acknowledging that public figures often endure intense scrutiny.

They recognized that performers, like Burna Boy, are humans with their own struggles, and incidents like this



highlight the need for understanding and empathy.

Nigerian Afrobeat Superstar Burna Boy Others, however, criticized his actions, calling them unprofessional and arguing that artists should maintain composure in such situations.

Burna Boy's openness about his PTSD reflects a growing awareness of mental health challenges within the music industry.

As artists continue to perform in front of large audiences, there is an increasing need for mental health support and understanding.

Burna Boy's candid message sheds light on these struggles and invites a broader conversation about mental well-being for public figures.

## The role of mental health awareness

Mental health awareness is becoming increasingly important, especially in the entertainment industry, where public figures are constantly in the spotlight.

Burna Boy's revelation highlights the challenges that artists face when dealing with the pressures of fame, as well as the emotional toll of live performances.

In recent years, there has been a greater emphasis on prioritizing mental health, not just for performers but also for fans who follow their journeys.

Burna Boy's message sends a powerful reminder that respect for boundaries, both personal and professional, is

essential.

His openness about his PTSD provides a platform for others in the industry to share their own mental health struggles, fostering a sense of empathy and support.

Artists like Burna Boy often put on high-energy performances, captivating crowds with their charisma and stage presence.

However, incidents like this remind us that beneath the lights and music, they are human beings navigating their own personal battles.

## Empathy and understanding

In today's world, where public figures often face intense scrutiny, Burna Boy's response encourages fans to approach situations with greater empathy and understanding.

The challenges faced by artists, particularly those with PTSD or other mental health conditions, are often overlooked amidst the spotlight and applause.

By sharing his experience, Burna Boy not only seeks to clarify his actions but also to educate fans about the impact of mental health.

His message calls for a greater awareness of boundaries and the need to respect the personal space of performers during their live shows.

Ultimately, the incident at the 2025 Lagos Countdown concert serves as a reminder that artists are human, subject to the same vulnerabilities and fears as anyone else.

Through Burna Boy's candid approach, there is hope that fans and the entertainment industry alike will adopt a more compassionate view of the challenges faced by those in the public eye.

# Why my husband married me – Actor Etim's wife

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi



**T**oyosi Etim-Effiong, wife of Nollywood actor Daniel Etim-Effiong, recently shared personal details about the start of their marriage.

In an interview, she revealed that her husband chose her over his ex-girlfriend because she was ready to settle down, while the other woman wasn't.

Toyosi explained, "The reason he left the person he was with was because she said she wasn't ready to settle down, but me, I was very ready." Her straightforward honesty adds a new layer to the public's perception of their union, which has already sparked interest due to its unconventional aspects.

## Marriage built on shared priorities

This revelation sheds light on the couple's early relationship and the factors that brought them together. Toyosi's readiness for marriage played a pivotal role in their union, highlighting the importance of aligning priorities when building a partnership.

The couple has often drawn attention for their openness about the challenges they face in their relationship. Daniel

has admitted to struggling with setting boundaries in the past. Toyosi, on her part, has candidly stated that she doesn't completely trust him. These admissions, while unusual, have made them a relatable couple to many who appreciate their transparency.

**Navigating challenges with honesty**  
Their story illustrates how different paths and choices can lead to meaningful connections. Daniel's decision to prioritise a shared vision of marriage over lingering attachments shows a commitment to aligning values with actions. Toyosi's readiness for a serious relationship gave him the foundation to take the next step in his life.

## Toyosi Etim-Effiong the wife of Daniel Etim-Effiong

Despite their differences and the issues they've publicly addressed, the couple remains an example of navigating relationships with honesty. They have not shied away from revealing the ups and downs of their marriage, earning admiration from some and criticism from others.

## Readiness: The deciding factor

Transitioning from dating to marriage is never simple. Toyosi and Daniel's story underscores the importance of

being on the same page about life's major milestones. Readiness for marriage, as Toyosi's story reveals, can make all the difference in deciding a relationship's future.

**Transparency sparks public interest**  
While some might view their admissions as unusual, others find them refreshing. Their openness about trust, boundaries, and readiness continues to spark conversations among their fans and the wider public. The pair's ability to share their struggles without sugarcoating has given many a deeper understanding of the complexities of marriage.

## Lessons from their journey

Toyosi and Daniel remain an intriguing couple in the public eye. Their ability to navigate challenges, prioritise shared values, and be honest about their journey offers lessons on partnership, even in the spotlight.

As their story unfolds, one thing is clear: their marriage, rooted in the shared decision to move forward when the time was right, is a testament to making thoughtful choices. For Toyosi and Daniel, readiness was the key to building their life together.



# Ruger explains skipping shows for 2025 crossover service

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

On December 31, singer Ruger, born Michael Adebayo, made a heartfelt return to the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) in Lagos.

The “Asiwaju” hitmaker attended the church’s crossover service, reconnecting with the spiritual roots of his childhood.

Having missed the previous two services due to international engagements, this return marked a significant moment for the artist.

Canceling commitments for spiritual priorities

He demonstrated his dedication to his faith by putting it above his career. Determined to attend the service, he instructed his manager to cancel any conflicting shows. “Whatever it is, we are not taking it,” he stated firmly. This decision highlighted the singer’s resolve to honor his spiritual commitments.

A deeply emotional encounter

The crossover service proved transformative for Ruger. During the ceremony, he experienced what he described as a profound spiritual moment. Overwhelmed with emotion, he cried for the first time in four years. “Today, I saw God again, and I cried,” Ruger shared with the congregation. “I thank God for my life and



everyone here.”

Gratitude for community and support

Addressing the church, Ruger expressed heartfelt appreciation for the role it has played in his journey. He thanked the congregation and church leaders for their spiritual guidance and support, crediting them for nurturing his growth. “This church has been my home since childhood,” he said. “I thank God for everyone who has nurtured me here. You’ve all been a part of my journey.”

Reflecting on faith and roots

The musician also praised the CCC as a place that fosters success and character. He acknowledged how its teachings

and community have shaped his life. Despite his global fame and demanding schedule, the singer’s return to his childhood church underscored his deep connection to his roots and faith.

A New year with renewed purpose

For him, the crossover service was more than a religious gathering—it was a moment of clarity, renewal, and gratitude. As he wished the congregation a Happy New Year, his words carried a powerful message about the importance of faith, family, and community.

This emotional return to the CCC marked a new chapter for Ruger, one where he reaffirmed his values and reconnected with the faith that continues to guide him.

# Deborah Fasoyin: I didn't compose 'Odun nlo sopin'

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

In a candid interview, gospel legend Mrs. Deborah Fasoyin revealed she's not the composer of "Odun Lo Sopin," clarifying the song predates her 1979 recording.

"I must confess, even to this day, we don't know who composed the song," Fasoyin explained. "We only added two verses to it."

Fasoyin's admission may come as a surprise to many who have long associated her with the song. "Odun Lo Sopin" became a staple of year-end celebrations and is often linked with her powerful voice.

However, Fasoyin's account sheds new light on its origin, emphasizing that the song existed long before her choir recorded it.

The song's widespread popularity before Fasoyin's recording

The singer noted that "Odun Lo Sopin" was widely known in the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) community long before her choir's official recording.

"There were many CAC churches in Ibadan. Back then, during year-end revival programmes, you would hear people singing 'Odun Lo Sopin' – meaning 'the year is coming to an end.' That chorus belongs to CAC. We only added two verses," she emphasized.

In the interview conducted in Yoruba, Fasoyin highlighted the song's widespread popularity before her choir formally recorded it. "We didn't go to any mountain to pray to get the song. It was everywhere before we recorded it," she reiterated.

Fasoyin's choir, the Christ Apostolic Church's Good Women Choir, had an important role in popularizing the song, but they were not the creators.

Fasoyin explained that they simply contributed additional verses, giving the song a fuller structure. The chorus, however, had already become a part of the cultural fabric of the CAC community.

The song "Odun Lo Sopin" has roots in the spiritual fervor of CAC revivals, particularly during the end-of-year period when believers gathered for prayer, thanksgiving, and reflection.

The communal nature of these gatherings led to the song's rise, as it became a way to



mark the closing of one year and the anticipation of the next.

Support from online commentators

In a 2020 interview with Sunday Scoop, Fasoyin spoke about translating the song into other Nigerian languages and its enduring impact.

However, despite her repeated acknowledgments over the years, many continue to associate her with the composition of "Odun Lo Sopin."

Online commentators have backed Fasoyin's account, some recalling that the song had been sung as early as 1975. Her honesty has earned widespread praise, with fans commending her for maintaining transparency.

The revelation has sparked discussions

and debates, with many acknowledging her humility and willingness to set the record straight. Fans who have long admired Fasoyin's contribution to Nigerian gospel music have praised her for her transparency and integrity.

Continued popularity of "Odun Lo Sopin"

"Odun Lo Sopin," popularized by Fasoyin and her choir, remains a staple in year-end gatherings, evoking prayers for divine protection, guidance, and provision as the year comes to a close.

The enduring relevance and spiritual resonance of the song have cemented its place in the hearts of many, making it a cherished tradition that transcends generations.

Whether sung in Yoruba, Hausa, or Igbo, "Odun Lo Sopin" continues to serve as a unifying force, bringing people together to reflect on the past year and seek blessings for the year ahead.

Fasoyin's admission about the song's origins might have surprised some, but it has also reinforced the song's legacy. "Odun Lo Sopin" is more than just a song—it's a symbol of faith, hope, and unity for many Nigerians.

Fasoyin's humility in acknowledging her role in popularizing the song, rather than composing it, has further elevated the song's cultural significance.

However, Mrs. Deborah Fasoyin's revelation clarifies the song's true origins but doesn't diminish its spiritual and cultural impact. "Odun Lo Sopin" continues to resonate deeply with Nigerians, reminding them of the importance of unity, gratitude, and hope as they transition from one year to the next.



# Terrorist attack on New Orleans' bourbon street leaves 15 dead, dozens injured

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A horrific terrorist attack occurred on New Orleans' iconic Bourbon Street in the early hours of New Year's Day, resulting in the deaths of at least 15 people and injuring dozens more. The attacker, identified as Shamsud-Din Jabbar, intentionally drove a rented electric Ford pickup truck into a crowd of revelers, avoiding police barricades and opening fire on officers before being fatally shot.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has confirmed that the attack is being investigated as an act of terrorism, with a black ISIS flag found flying from the truck's rear bumper. According to FBI special agent Alethea Duncan, investigators believe Jabbar may have had help carrying out the attack and are looking into potential affiliations with terrorist associations.

As the investigation continues, authorities have been searching for clues at an Airbnb in the St. Roch area of New Orleans, where Jabbar was staying while in the city. The building caught fire on Wednesday, and the investigation into that fire is ongoing. Investigators from the FBI, Homeland Security, and bomb squad have all been on the scene.

Duncan has asked that anyone with information about Jabbar contact the FBI. A U.S. official has confirmed that Jabbar had previously served in the U.S. military.

The attack occurred at approximately 3:15 a.m. local time, with witnesses



describing the scene as chaotic and horrific. Two police officers were injured during the exchange of gunfire with Jabbar, but are reported to be in stable condition.

In addition to the fatalities and injuries, law enforcement officials discovered multiple improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in the vehicle and nearby areas. One IED was detonated by law enforcement, while others were safely disposed of.

President Biden addressed the nation, stating that his "heart goes out to the victims and their families who were simply trying to celebrate the holiday".

The attack impacted the city's tourism industry, which had not yet fully recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic. Many hotels in the area were evacuated, and hospitality and service workers reporting for work later that morning were turned away from the area.

The 2025 Sugar Bowl, which was scheduled to take place at the Caesars Superdome later that day, was postponed to the following day due to ongoing security sweeps.

The FBI is leading the investigation and has opened a tip line.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Department of Homeland Security, and prosecutors for the National Security Division and the local federal prosecutor's office are assisting in the investigation.

As the investigation continues, authorities are urging anyone with information to come forward.

The city of New Orleans remains in shock, with residents and visitors alike mourning the loss of life and condemning the senseless act of terrorism.

# UK Schools may close as Met Office warns of -10°C Freeze across Britain

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

**S**chools May Close and Elderly at Risk as Met Office Warns of -10°C Temperatures Across Britain

Britain is set to endure an intense cold snap this weekend, with temperatures plunging as low as -10°C (14°F) and heavy snow forecast to blanket much of the country. Forecasters warn that the severe weather could cut off rural communities, disrupt schools, and paralyze travel infrastructure.

The Met Office has issued a 45-hour yellow weather warning, effective from midday Saturday through 9 a.m. Monday, as a powerful Arctic system moves in. The UK Health Security Agency has also activated a yellow cold health alert, citing risks to vulnerable populations, including the elderly and those with preexisting health conditions.

Temperatures are set to begin dropping sharply on Thursday, with Scotland bearing the brunt of the freeze. Parts of the Highlands could see lows of -10°C, while major cities like Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester, and even London may record temperatures between -5°C (23°F) and -7°C (19°F). Snow is expected to arrive in northern Scotland by Thursday, accompanied by icy conditions in northern England. By Saturday, widespread snowfall is predicted, with accumulations of 5 centimeters (2 inches) across the Midlands, Wales, and northern England, and up to 30 centimeters (12 inches) in higher elevations, particularly in the Pennines.

The Met Office has cautioned that heavy snow could cause power outages, disrupt mobile networks, and isolate rural residents. Forecaster Tom Morgan explained that the evolving nature of the storm system could lead to frequent updates to weather



warnings, urging people to monitor conditions closely. “It’s definitely going to start off as snow in many places,” Morgan said. “But how quickly it melts into rain will vary, particularly in southern England. If you’ve got travel plans on Sunday or Monday, stay tuned into the forecast.”

The UK Health Security Agency has echoed these concerns, warning of “significant impacts” on health and social care services. Officials predict an increase in cold-related illnesses and fatalities and are advising the public to check on vulnerable neighbors and relatives.

The country is already grappling with the aftermath of heavy rains that have battered the north of England, causing widespread flooding. Greater Manchester declared a major incident on Wednesday after roads were submerged, vehicles stranded, and hundreds of residents evacuated. Mountain rescue teams and fire services were deployed to assist local authorities. Parts of England saw nearly 100 millimeters (4 inches) of rain in 48 hours—nearly a month’s worth—leading to flooding that disrupted homes, businesses, and transportation. Major airports, including Gatwick and Manchester,

experienced delays and cancellations, leaving holiday travelers stranded.

The Environment Agency issued more than 60 flood warnings and 87 alerts on Wednesday night. River levels in northern England are expected to remain dangerously high through Thursday. Ben Lukey, flood duty manager at the Environment Agency, emphasized the risks. “Environment Agency teams will be on the ground, operating flood defenses and supporting affected communities. We urge people to stay away from swollen rivers and avoid driving through floodwater, as just 30 centimeters [1 foot] of flowing water can move a car.”

The severe weather has already taken a toll on New Year’s festivities. Edinburgh’s iconic Hogmanay street party and fireworks display were canceled due to safety concerns, with similar disruptions affecting events across the UK. As Britain braces for a weekend of bitter cold and heavy snow, officials are urging residents to prepare for potential disruptions and prioritize safety. The combination of freezing temperatures and lingering floodwaters underscores the challenges of navigating a turbulent start to the new year.



# Tesla cybertruck explosion near Trump hotel kills one, injures seven in Las Vegas

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye



A Tesla Cybertruck exploded outside the Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas, killing at least one person and injuring seven others. Authorities are investigating if the blast is linked to an earlier truck attack in New Orleans that killed 15.

US President Joe Biden mentioned the ongoing investigation into any possible connections between the two incidents, though no links have been found so far.

The FBI is treating the Las Vegas explosion as an isolated event but is investigating whether it was an act of terrorism.

Las Vegas Sheriff Kevin McMahon reported that the truck had been parked outside the hotel before it exploded. Video footage from the scene showed the

vehicle bursting into flames, followed by smaller explosions resembling fireworks.

It was revealed that the truck contained gasoline, camping fuel canisters, and large firework mortars in the back, which contributed to the severity of the blast.

Despite the explosion, the hotel's glass doors remained intact, largely due to the Cybertruck's design, which directed most of the blast upwards. McMahon confirmed that the explosion caused one fatality and minor injuries to seven individuals.

FBI agent Jeremy Schwartz stated that the investigation focused on confirming the identity of the person involved and determining whether the incident was connected to terrorism.

Authorities have found no indication linking the attack to Islamic State, but the incident is under close scrutiny due to the involvement of Tesla, a company backed by Elon Musk, who also supports President-elect Trump.

Musk addressed the explosion, noting that it was "unrelated to the vehicle itself" and promised that Tesla's senior team was investigating the matter.

The truck had been rented through the Turo app, which was also used to rent the vehicle in the New Orleans attack. However, no criminal backgrounds were found for the renters, and authorities are continuing to probe this potential coincidence.

The incident remains under investigation as law enforcement examines all possible angles

# Should Alexander-Arnold leave Liverpool?

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Liverpool's Trent Alexander-Arnold has been one of the most talked-about players in football this season. The right-back, now 26 years old, finds himself at a career crossroads as his contract with Liverpool edges closer to expiration. With speculation swirling about a potential move to Real Madrid, fans and pundits alike are debating whether Alexander-Arnold should stay at Anfield or embark on a new challenge in Spain.

## The Current Situation

Alexander-Arnold, like teammates Mohamed Salah and Virgil van Dijk, is entering the final six months of his Liverpool contract. Unlike his peers, however, the England international has remained silent about his future, fueling rumors of an impending exit. Reports indicate that Real Madrid has shown interest, with Spanish media suggesting they are likely to secure him on a pre-contract agreement for the summer.

Liverpool's management has already rebuffed an initial approach from Madrid, signaling their intent to retain the player, at least for now. Despite the uncertainty, Alexander-Arnold has continued to deliver for Liverpool this season, highlighting his importance to the team.

## Why a Move Makes Sense

Former players and pundits have weighed in on the potential move, with many acknowledging the appeal of Real Madrid. Gary Lineker, a former Barcelona player, argued on the Rest is Football podcast that Alexander-Arnold's exceptional passing range would be highly valued in Spain. Lineker emphasized the cultural differences, suggesting that Real Madrid fans would focus on his creative talents rather than scrutinizing his defensive abilities, as often happens in England.



Alan Shearer, another football legend, also voiced his understanding, noting that Alexander-Arnold has already achieved everything with Liverpool, including Premier League and Champions League titles. For a player in his prime, a fresh challenge at a prestigious club like Real Madrid could be an irresistible opportunity.

## The Impact on Liverpool

Alexander-Arnold has been integral to Liverpool since making his senior debut in the 2016-17 season. His creativity and reliability have made him a cornerstone of Jürgen Klopp's side. This season, he has created 36 chances and registered four assists, second only to Salah's 13 assists. Losing such a dynamic player would undoubtedly leave a void in Liverpool's squad.

However, there is hope for a seamless transition. Northern Ireland's Conor Bradley has emerged as a potential successor. The 21-year-old's standout performance against Real Madrid in November showcased his defensive prowess and composure under pressure, suggesting he could step up if Alexander-Arnold departs.

## Fan Reactions

The prospect of Alexander-Arnold leaving has divided Liverpool fans. While some understand his desire for a new challenge, others feel

disappointed, particularly if he leaves on a free transfer. Comparisons to Michael Owen and Steve McManaman, who left Liverpool for Spain under similar circumstances, have been unavoidable. For many, the idea of losing a homegrown talent like Alexander-Arnold is bittersweet.

Sean, a long-time fan, commented, "Trent has been at the club for 20 years and has won absolutely everything. You can understand if he wants a change of scene, but it's sad to see him go." Others, like Fraser, criticized the player's silence, accusing him of being selfish by potentially leaving without earning Liverpool a transfer fee.

## What's Next?

The ball is now firmly in Alexander-Arnold's court. If he chooses to stay, he will continue to be a pivotal figure for Liverpool. Should he decide to leave, his legacy at Anfield will remain intact, though not without some controversy.

For Liverpool, the focus will shift to securing the best possible outcome—whether through a lucrative transfer deal or preparing Conor Bradley to fill the void. Either way, the coming months promise to be pivotal for both Alexander-Arnold and Liverpool Football Club.



# Jarrold Bowen faces six weeks out with fractured foot

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

West Ham United's Jarrold Bowen is set to miss around six weeks after sustaining a fractured foot during the Premier League clash against Liverpool, Sky Sports News understands. The injury occurred in the first half, though the 28-year-old attempted to continue playing before being substituted in the 60th minute.

## A Major Blow for West Ham

Bowen's absence is a significant setback for manager Julen Lopetegui, who is under pressure to turn around the Hammers' fortunes. Currently sitting 13th in the Premier League with six wins from 19 games, West Ham find themselves eight points above the relegation zone.

Bowen has been pivotal for the team this season, leading as both top scorer with five Premier League goals and top assist provider with four. Lopetegui acknowledged the challenge ahead, stating, "Jarrod is one of our main players and our captain. Now it's the moment for other players to step up and show they are



ready to help us."

## Recovery and Replacements

The timeline for Bowen's recovery remains uncertain, with Lopetegui refusing to give a definitive return date. "We have to see how he develops in the next weeks. His character will help him recover quickly, but he will miss the upcoming matches," said the West Ham boss.

In Bowen's absence, Tomas Soucek is expected to take over as captain, starting

with Saturday's daunting trip to Manchester City. Lopetegui emphasized his belief in the squad's depth, adding, "This is an opportunity for other players to make their mark."

## Positive News Amid Challenges

There was some uplifting news for West Ham this week as Michail Antonio was discharged from the hospital following surgery on a broken leg sustained in a car accident. While Antonio faces a lengthy rehabilitation, his return home has boosted team morale.

"Michail is going to be out for a long time, but it's good news that he's at home with his family. We'll support him in his recovery," Lopetegui said.

## Upcoming Fixtures

Bowen's injury leaves West Ham short-handed for critical matches, including their showdown against Manchester City. Fans and the team will hope for a swift recovery for their captain while counting on the squad's resilience to navigate this challenging period.

# Super Falcons prospect Edna Imade Wins Liga F Player of the Month

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Granada striker Edna Imade has been named Liga F Player of the Month for December, cementing her reputation as one of the league's standout players. The 24-year-old Nigerian international delivered an exceptional performance last month, scoring three goals and registering one assist to secure the accolade.

Imade edged out a competitive field that included top talents such as Amaïur Sarriegi (Real Sociedad), Jone Amezaga (Athletic Club), Signe Bruun (Real Madrid CF), Esmee Brugts (FC Barcelona), Romane Salvador (RCD Espanyol), and Andrea Álvarez (SD Eibar).



The Super Falcons prospect currently sits second on the Liga F scoring chart with eight goals this season, trailing Barcelona star Ewa Pajor, who leads with nine.

Imade's achievement follows a trail blazed by Super Falcons captain Rasheedat Ajibade, who won the inaugural Liga F Player of the Month award in September. Notable past winners include Spain's Alexia Putellas and Patri Guijarro, who took the honors in October and November, respectively.

With her remarkable form, Imade continues to elevate her profile, signaling a bright future for Nigerian football on the global stage.