

Marketers upbeat over Warri Refinery, project further price reduction

PAGE 4

Nigerian doctor in Diaspora allegedly poisoned while on yuletide break

PAGE 12



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World welcomes 2025 with fireworks, celebrations

PAGE 5



Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie finalise divorce after 8-yr saga

PAGE 24

WORLD PAGE 27

Elon Musk, Zuckerberg top 2024 World's Richest Billionaires ranking



Tinubu rescued Nigeria from certain death - Akpabio

PAGE 2

SPORTS PAGE 32

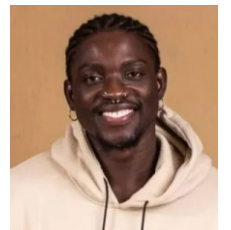
Plymouth Argyle sack Rooney after 25 matches



ENTERTAINMENT

No money missing, it was a prank - VeryDarkMan

PAGE 17



71 dead as truck plunges into Ethiopian river

PAGE 29

Tinubu rescued Nigeria from certain death – Akpabio

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Senate President and Chairman of the 10th National Assembly, Senator Godswill Akpabio, has said the country was on a “life support” as at the time President Bola Tinubu assumed office in May 2023.

Speaking at his 2024 Constituency Briefing and Empowerment Programme held at the Ikot Ekpene Township Stadium, Akpabio, who represents Akwa Ibom Northwest Senatorial District, he called on Nigerians, particularly the people of Akwa Ibom State, to continue supporting President Tinubu as he works to address Nigeria’s economic challenges.

“Nigeria was on life support,” he said.

His stance comes following ongoing major reforms such as the introduction of the tax bills, removal of fuel subsidies, floating of the naira, and others introduced by Tinubu.

Akpabio recounted a conversation with President Tinubu about the state of the economy inherited from the previous administration.

“Nigeria was on life support when Asiwaju Bola Tinubu took over. I once asked him, ‘Are you excited about being president after seeing the economy left behind by Emefiele?’ He replied, ‘I must tell you, I didn’t know it was this bad.’”

The Senate President expressed optimism about ongoing economic reforms, noting that while they may be painful, they are necessary for sustainable growth.

“You did it in Lagos, and you will do it again for Nigeria. It’s just a matter of time. We are praying for you, and God will grant you the wisdom to lead us to El Dorado.”



He advised beneficiaries not to sell their empowerment tools but to use them to uplift their families economically.

“We have enough foodstuff to distribute; there should be no stampede. These items are being extended beyond Ikot Ekpene to other senatorial districts in the state.”

“Your support has not only enhanced our educational experience but also inspired us to strive for excellence. Thank you for your unwavering support.”

Akpabio commended Governor Umo Eno for promoting peace and inclusivity in Akwa Ibom.

“Without peace, there cannot be development. The governor has embraced all Akwa Ibom people, regardless of political affiliations.”

He also acknowledged the governor’s Christmas gesture of distributing 1,000 bags of rice to the APC family in the state and announced an additional 1,500 bags of rice for the PDP State Chairman.

Akpabio praised Senate Minority Leader, Senator Abba Moro, for fostering unity in the Senate.

“Everyone in the Senate has an equal voice, regardless of party affiliation. Opposition is good, but it should be constructive.”

Senator Abba Moro described Akpabio as a leader committed to empowering his people.

“It takes wisdom to know what to give people for lasting benefits rather than instant gratification.”

Senator Asuquo Ekpenyong, Chairman of the Senate Committee on NDDC, called the empowerment programme “mega, marvellous, and magnificent.”

The event was attended by key political and community leaders, including, Obongemem Ekperikpo (Minister of Petroleum Resources, Gas) Senator Ita Enang (APC Chieftain), Senator Ekong Sampson (Akwa Ibom South), Paramount Rulers of Ikot Ekpene and Essien Udim.

In closing, Akpabio emphasised the importance of collective effort in building a better Nigeria and assured constituents of continued representation and development-focused initiatives.

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
5X2	42,916.50
4X4	60,166.50
4X3	36,499.50
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3X3	28,000.00
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Marketers upbeat over Warri Refinery, project further price reduction

By Dave Oludare Oso

Following the long-awaited commencement of operations at the Warri Refining and Petrochemicals Company Limited, oil marketers and the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) have said the prices of refined petroleum products are set to drop further.

The thinking among industry stakeholders and dealers in the downstream oil sector is that with the resultant competition in the sector pace getting stiffer, domestic refiners would be forced to reduce prices to corner buyers to their sides.

NMDPRA stated this following the announcement by the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) that the 125,000 barrels per day WRPC in Delta State had commenced operations, on Monday.

The Group Chief Executive Officer of NNPCL, Mele Kyari, had during an inspection tour of the facility on Monday, also announced plans to begin the export of locally refined products to foreign countries in exchange for foreign currency.

The development comes barely a month after the commencement of operations at the 60,000 barrels per day-old Port Harcourt Refinery in Rivers State.

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

Addressing a tour team, which included the Chief Executive Officer of NMDPRA, Farouk Ahmed, and the NNPC Board Chairman, Pius Akinyelure, Kyari, noted that the repairs on the facility were not yet 100 per cent complete, but refining operations had commenced and would focus on producing straight-run kerosene, diesel, and naphtha.

However, President Bola Tinubu, in a statement celebrating the milestone, said



the facility is operating at 60 per cent, representing 75,000 barrels per day capacity.

Kyari said, “We are taking you through our plant. This plant is running. Although it is not 100 per cent complete, we are still in the process. Many people think these things are not real. They think real things are not possible in this country. We want you to see that this is real.”

The GCEO stated that the restart of the Warri refinery will help the nation become a net exporter of petroleum products, as some of these products will be sent to the international market.

His statement read, “Secondly, this plant had three stages; we have started plant one, which we call Area One. It’s able to produce AGO (diesel), kerosene, naphtha, and a blend of crude oil. These are high-grade quality products that are required in the country, and we may need to export them. So this will give us cash, this company will make money and the promise of Mr President that this country must be a net exporter of petroleum products is already happening. Some of these products will go into the international market.

“Most importantly, I must put on record that Mr President believes that we can get this to work and get them to start and gave us the charge that we must start all three refineries. It’s already happening; we have started the 60,000 barrels per

day refinery, and Area One of the Warri refinery is already working. Other plants that would produce PMS are being streamed and they would also come alive.

“Lastly, the Kaduna refinery is also on stream. We are not going to give you a date, but we would surprise Nigerians as we did the other day, and Kaduna would start operations. We thank Mr President for supporting us all the way through. I must congratulate our team for their determination and extreme belief that this country can restart this plant. This has brought this result in collaboration with our contractors and our entire staff. I would like to thank them and appreciate them for making history and that it’s possible to start a plant that you deliberately shut down. It’s possible and we have proved it.”

On his part, the National Operations Controller of the Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria, Mustapha Zarma, said the competition in the downstream oil sector is now going to intensify.

Stressing that the development will definitely force down refined petroleum products’ prices, he said, “Certainly, there is going to be a further drop in prices once the facility starts pumping out products in large volumes. This is because there is going to be a lot of competition and the market will be driven by market forces at the end of the day.

World welcomes 2025 with fireworks, celebrations

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

Countries across East and Southeast Asia, including China, the Philippines, and Malaysia, welcomed the New Year with dazzling fireworks displays and innovative drone shows. From Beijing to Kuala Lumpur, cities lit up the skies in celebration. However, in some regions, celebrations were scaled back or canceled. South Korea, in particular, observed a somber start to the year following the Muan air crash on Sunday, which claimed 179 lives.



In Sydney, 2025 was ushered in with a breathtaking fireworks display over the harbor. Cheers erupted as the clock struck midnight, with thousands gathering to witness the iconic spectacle.

Up next, Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia will ring in the New Year at 17:00 GMT, adding to the global wave of celebrations.

Meanwhile, in Nigeria, some planned events were canceled due to

security concerns and the adverse effects of fireworks. For instance, the police banned the use of fireworks and explosives in Kwara and Delta States. Authorities emphasized that distributing or using fireworks, bangers, and other explosive devices is strictly prohibited, citing serious security and safety risks. These items can create panic and potentially serve as a cover for criminal activities. Violators will face strict legal action.

In pictures: New year celebrations in Japan and South Korea

The offices of Tokyo's metropolitan government was lit up by projections to usher in 2025

Celebrations in South Korea were muted following Sunday's Muan air disaster – although the traditional bell tolling at the Bosingak pavilion in central Seoul did take place

Iran is set to welcome the New Year at 20:30 GMT, joining the global wave of celebrations. Meanwhile, in the UK, London has confirmed that its iconic New Year's Eve fireworks display will proceed as planned, despite adverse weather conditions causing many other parts of the country to cancel events.

In Nigeria, Lagos State has implemented a ban on fireworks today, citing safety and security concerns, further limiting celebratory activities in the region.



New Year in the UK: Nigerians gather for worship, Britons celebrate with fireworks, pubs

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

Nigerians in the UK endure severe weather for crossover church Services, While Britons Celebrate with pubs and fireworks

Celebrations to mark the beginning of a new year have been a tradition for thousands of years, with people around the globe embracing unique customs and rituals to usher in fresh beginnings.

January 1st is universally recognized as a time for reflection on the past year and a moment to set aspirations for the future. Despite cultural differences, the shared themes of hope, renewal, and new opportunities make this occasion deeply significant.

In the days leading up to New Year's Day, people often gather with loved ones, attend places of worship, or join public festivities in parks and squares to welcome the new year. This year, however, the UK's celebrations faced significant disruptions due to severe weather conditions.

Heavy rainfall, strong winds, and snow swept across the country, prompting the Met Office to issue multiple warnings. These adverse conditions led to the cancellation of numerous events and created widespread travel challenges.

Weather Challenges

Parts of England experienced up to 100 mm of rain, resulting in widespread flooding that affected homes, businesses, and transportation. Major airports, including Gatwick and Manchester, faced delays and cancellations due to fog and other adverse conditions,



leaving many holiday travelers stranded. Despite these obstacles, the spirit of the New Year remained undeterred as people found ways to celebrate.

Nigerian Communities Usher in the New Year

Among the many cultural groups in the UK, Nigerians and other African communities are known for their vibrant New Year's celebrations. A common tradition is attending crossover church services, which feature heartfelt prayers, praise, and jubilant songs to welcome the year ahead.

Our correspondent visited the Redeemed Christian Church of God (Strong Tower) along Oldham Road, Manchester, to witness one such celebration. By 11 p.m., the church's parking lot was already full, with cars double-parked as attendees eagerly flocked to the service.

Inside, the church was packed to capacity, with congregants standing shoulder to shoulder. Yet, the crowd continued to grow as more people

arrived to partake in the spiritually uplifting event.

RCCG Strong Tower church positioned on a quiet street, the church stands as a beacon of faith, offering a serene and sacred space for reflection, prayer, and community fellowship.

New Year's Eve in the City

Meanwhile, in the heart of Manchester, the atmosphere was equally lively but took on a different flavor. Popular pubs and bars around Piccadilly were bustling with activity. Traffic in the area was so congested that ambulance crews were occasionally forced to abandon their vehicles and walk to reach patients.

Pubs were filled to capacity, with some charging entry fees of up to £7. Despite the packed venues and hectic traffic, the mood was festive as revelers from all walks of life gathered to count down to midnight.

Minister: FG projects 3m/bpd crude oil production by 2025

By Dave Oludare Oso

Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), Heineken Lokpobiri, has said that the projection of the federal government is to achieve a target of three million barrels per day (bpd) in crude oil production by next year.

Speaking during the launch of the second phase of Operation Delta Sanity II (OPDS II) by the Nigerian Navy in Port Harcourt on Monday, the minister said the initial phase of OPDS, launched on January 10, has contributed to the improved production figures, prompting the navy to proceed with the second phase.

He said, "In August 2023, Nigeria's daily crude oil production was barely a million bpd. Currently, the nation produces about 1.8 million bpd.

"Our target is to reach 3 million bpd by 2025, and we are confident that the second phase of OPDS will play a key role in achieving this milestone."

He said the government would continue to collaborate with other security agencies to combat oil theft and pipeline vandalism.

More so, Lokpobiri expressed concern about the persistent sabotage of the Trans Niger Pipeline.

"The Trans Niger Pipeline remains a major challenge, with criminals breaking into pipelines to siphon crude oil," he said.

"However, the Nigerian Navy has



pledged to intensify its efforts to protect these national assets, building on its successes in 2024."

The minister underscored the broader implications of curbing oil theft, highlighting the potential for increased government revenue and enhanced allocations to states and local governments.

He called on security agencies, maritime contractors, traditional rulers, and local youths to support the navy's efforts.

On his part, Emmanuel Ogalla, chief of naval staff, expressed optimism about the feasibility of reaching the three million bpd production target.

Ogalla said Operation Delta Sanity was specifically designed to address oil theft, pipeline vandalism, and other maritime crimes, ensuring a secure environment for legitimate operations.

"The initial phase of the OPDS led to numerous arrests of vessels and oil thieves, as well as the dismantling of several illegal refining sites across the Niger Delta," Ogalla said.

"These measures resulted in significant improvements in legitimate maritime activities and boosted crude oil production, with several oil companies reporting 100 per cent terminal factors."

Nevertheless, Ogalla said the navy saw the need to refine the operation to achieve even better outcomes.

"Rejigging the operation involves deploying newly acquired maritime domain awareness infrastructure, attack helicopters, armed drones, and enhanced intelligence-gathering systems," he added.

Ogalla expressed confidence that OPDS II would further stabilise oil and gas operations in the Niger Delta by 2025.

New Year Message: Your Sacrifices will not be in vain, Tinubu to Nigerians

By Oluwatosin Ologun

President Bola Tinubu, on New Year day, assured Nigerians that all their sacrifices since he took over as the leader of the country would not be in vain.

In his New Year message, the president, who promised to continue to serve every Nigerian diligently and wholeheartedly,

President Tinubu also listed some of his achievements in the year that just ended, despite the challenges his government faced.

However, setting agenda for the New Year, the president who listed some of the plans in the offing, intended to make 2025 a much better year, urged the citizens, too, to play their part in collective interest.

This was as other leaders across political leanings and faiths, have sent out their New Year messages to the people, praying that 2025 brings with it better deals.

In his moderately long message delivered in an early morning broadcast, Tinubu said: “To all citizens, your sacrifices have not been in vain over the past 19 months. I assure you they will not be in vain even in the months ahead. Together, let us stay the course of nation-building.

“The New Year will bring us closer to the bright future we all desire and the Nigeria of our dreams.

“On a personal note, thank you for placing your confidence in me as your president. Your trust humbles me, and I promise to continue serving you diligently and wholeheartedly.”

Starting by way of introduction, he said, “As we enter 2025, I wish everyone a happy and prosperous New Year. May you be rich in joy, success, and good



health.

“As the new year dawns, it brings many hopes, aspirations, and prospects for better days. By the grace of God, 2025 will be a year of great promise in which we will fulfill our collective desires.

“Though 2024 posed numerous challenges to our citizens and households, I am confident that the New Year will bring brighter days.”

Sharing some good news on the state of play, he said, “Economic indicators point to a positive and encouraging outlook for our nation.

“Fuel prices have gradually decreased, and we recorded foreign trade surpluses in three consecutive quarters. Foreign reserves have risen, and the Naira has strengthened against the US dollar, bringing greater stability.

“The stock market’s record growth has generated trillions of naira in wealth, and the surge in foreign investment reflects renewed confidence in our economy. Nevertheless, the cost of food and essential drugs remained a significant concern for many Nigerian households in 2024.”

However, in 2025, he said, “Our government is committed to intensifying

efforts to lower these costs by boosting food production and promoting local manufacturing of essential drugs and other medical supplies.

“We are resolute in our ambition to reduce inflation from its current high of 34.6% to 15%. With diligent work and God’s help, we will achieve this goal and provide relief to all our people.

“In this new year, my administration will further consolidate and increase access to credit for individuals and critical sectors of the economy to boost national economic output.

“To achieve this, the federal government will establish the National Credit Guarantee Company to expand risk-sharing instruments for financial institutions and enterprises.

“The Company—expected to start operations before the end of the second quarter—is a partnership of government institutions, such as the Bank of Industry, Nigerian Consumer Credit Corporation, the Nigerian Sovereign Investment Agency, and Ministry of Finance Incorporated, the private sector, and multilateral institutions.

**Continue on
next page**

Cont from page 8

“This initiative will strengthen the confidence of the financial system, expand credit access, and support under-served groups such as women and youth. It will drive growth, re-industrialisation, and better living standards for our people.

“We will continue to embark on necessary reforms to foster sustainable growth and prosperity for our nation. I seek your cooperation and collaboration at all times as we pursue our goal of a one trillion-dollar economy. Let us stay focused and united.

“We are on the right path to building a great Nigeria that will work for everyone. Let us not get distracted by a tiny segment of our population that still sees things through the prisms of politics, ethnicity, region, and religion.”

Appealing to the people as partners in the Nigerian project, he said, “To achieve our national goals and objectives, we must become better citizens and uncompromising in our devotion and allegiance to Nigeria.

“Citizens’ moral rectitude and faith in our country are fundamental to the success of

the Renewed Hope Agenda. In 2025, we will commit to promoting adherence to ethical principles, shared values, and beliefs under the National Identity Project.

“I will unveil the National Values Charter, already approved by the Federal Executive Council, in the first quarter of 2025. I will launch an ambitious national orientation campaign that fosters patriotism and love for our country and inspires citizens to rally together.

“The Charter will promote mutual commitments between the government and citizens and foster trust and cooperation among our diverse population and between the government and the citizens.

“As far-reaching and foundational as our reforms are, they can produce the desired outcomes only through shared common values and identities and unconditional love for our country.

“The Youth Confab will begin in the first quarter of 2025, a testament to our commitment to youth inclusiveness and investment as nation-builders.

The Ministry of Youth will soon announce the modalities for selecting the conference’s representatives from our diverse, youthful population.

“Dear Compatriots, I urge you to continue believing in yourselves and keeping faith in our blessed country.

“Let me use this New Year’s message to urge our governors and local council chairpersons to work closely with the central government to seize emerging opportunities in agriculture, livestock, and tax reforms and move our nation forward.

“I commend governors who have embraced our Compressed Natural Gas initiative by launching CNG-propelled public transport. I also congratulate those who have adopted electric vehicles as part of our national energy mix and transition.

“The Federal Government will always offer necessary assistance to the states. God bless you all, and may God bless our beloved country, Nigeria. Happy New Year and a prosperous 2025 to you all!”

Another Edo council chairman impeached

By Dave Oludare Oso

The wave of impeachments continues to spread through Local Government Areas of Edo, following the face-off between Governor Monday Okpebholo and the elected Chairmen of the councils.

Just last week, the Chairman of Egor Local Government Council, Eghe Ogbemudia, was impeached by the Councillors who accused her of Budget-padding and other misconduct.

The latest to go are the Chairman of Owan East Local Government Council, Aminu Kadiri and his Deputy, Clement Ojebuovbo.

Eight of the 10 Councillors endorsed their impeachment.

The legislative members of the Council accused Kadiri of awarding contracts to his associates without payment and following proper procedures, misappropriated public funds, and disregarded the needs of the people.

The motion for their impeachment was moved by Friday Henry Oisawemi,



representing Ward 7, and was seconded by Marcus Sunday of Ward 1.

Leader of the House, Haruna Mohammed who presided over the impeachment has since been sworn-in as Acting Chairman.

Sources are accusing the Edo State Government of instigating the impeachment of the Council Chairmen.

Recall that the State House of Assembly had on 17 December, 2024, suspended the 18 Council Chairmen and Vice Chairmen for a period of two months.

The suspension resulted from a petition to the House from the State Governor, who accused the Council Chairmen

of gross misconduct and insubordination for failing to obey his order to submit their account reports to his government.

The State Chief Judge, Justice Daniel Okungbowa however ruled against the suspension in a case brought to the Court by the embattled Council Chairmen.

The suspended chairmen were also invited by the Benin City office of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), over allegations of miss appropriation of funds and shady contracts.

Reports indicate that fear has gripped the other 16 Council Chairmen over impending impeachment.

FCT Police recover cache of weapon from Abuja resident

By Dave Oludare Oso

Police operatives in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), have recovered an array of weapons from the residence of 33-year-old Obinna Nwigwe after he was arrested for shooting one Andrew Philemon at a guest house in Bwari area of the capital city.

FCT Police Command spokesperson, Josephine Akeh, in a statement said Nwigwe was arrested on 26 December, following a report of a shooting incident at Najob Guest House, Bwari.

“On December 26, 2024, police officers responded to a distress call from Najob Guest House in Bwari, where gunfire had been reported.

“Upon arrival, they discovered 29-year-old Andrew Philemon bleeding from critical injuries,” Akeh said in the statement.

She added that upon his arrest, Nwigwe told police operatives that he shot Philemon in self-defence following a heated argument. But at the time of the incident, he was armed with a pump-action rifle.”

The Police spokesperson revealed that subsequent search at the residence of Nwigwe yielded an alarming array of weapons, including five Dane guns, one English-made single barrel gun, an AK47 magazine containing 29 rounds of 7.62 live ammunition, four live cartridges, 17 expanded cartridges, bow with arrows, various knives, a sword stick, and a toy gun, a taser and a bulletproof



jacket and multiple sets of police uniforms and boots.

“Andrew Philemon is currently receiving treatment at the National Hospital, while Obinna Nwigwe is expected to face charges once the investigation concludes,”

Akeh also revealed in the statement that police also recovered a vehicle belonging to 45-year-old Onyeka Vincent that was stolen while parked outside Saint Louis Catholic Church in Byazhin area of the FCT.

“Prompt investigative efforts led officers to Suleja, where they found the stolen vehicle in the possession of 45-year-old Evans Omagba.

“During questioning, Omagba confessed to the theft and revealed that he had acted with the help of three accomplices who are still at large. Additionally, police recovered two more stolen vehicles from Omagba, highlighting the ongoing challenge of vehicle theft

in the area.”

“The Commissioner of Police for the FCT underscores the critical role of community involvement in enhancing safety. He advises residents to install Security devices in their vehicles to deter car theft and to aid in the swift recovery of stolen property.

“The safety and security of our community rely on the active participation of all citizens. We urge everyone to report any suspicious activities to the police,” he stated.

“These recent incidents reflect the ongoing commitment of the FCT Police Command to uphold public safety and maintain law and order across the Federal Capital Territory. As investigations progress, authorities remain dedicated to dismantling criminal networks and ensuring the well-being of residents,” Akeh concluded.

Nigerian doctor in Diaspora allegedly poisoned while on yuletide break

By Alade Adesina

A Nigerian medical doctor based abroad, identified simply as Tony by a post on Facebook, has allegedly died after he took a drink allegedly laced with poison by one of his kinsmen.

The incident reportedly happened in his village, Nenu, in Obingwa Local Government Area of Abia State on Boxing Day.

One of the deceased's friends, Prince Agbara, who said this in a Facebook post, said the alleged culprit fled the village with his family after the doctor died.



"This is disheartening. Somebody that was alive and healthy on the 25th, poisoned on the 26th through drink and he vomited and that was it, by his kinsman. On noticing that my friend had died he ran away with his family,"

he wrote.

It is not yet clear whether the Abia State Police Command has stepped into the matter.

Reconsider travelling to Nigeria, Australian govt warns citizens

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Australian government has issued a stern travel warning, urging its citizens to reconsider the need to take a trip to Nigeria.

In a statement obtained on Tuesday, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) cited a volatile security environment marked by terrorism, kidnapping, and the potential outbreak of civil unrest as reasons for the advice.

The travel advisory read "Reconsider your need to travel to Nigeria overall due to the volatile security situation and threat of terrorism, kidnapping, violent crime, and the risk of civil unrest.

"There's a high risk of terrorist attacks across Nigeria by various militant groups. Attacks could be indiscriminate or may target foreign interests.

"Potential targets include places where crowds gather, such as hotels, bars, restaurants, political meetings, government buildings, places of worship, schools, markets, shopping malls, sporting events, transport hubs



and networks, law enforcement facilities, international organisations and camps for displaced people.

"Reconsider your need to travel to Nigeria overall, including the capital Abuja.

"Do not travel to Adamawa, Anambra, Akwa Ibom, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Borno, Cross Rivers, Delta, Federal Capital Territory (excluding Abuja), Gombe, Imo, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Niger, Plateau, Rivers, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe and Zamfara states.

The caution comes amid recent data from Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics, which reported 2,235,954 abductions between May 2023 and April 2024.

Ransom payments during this period totalled an estimated N2.2 trillion, with an average ransom of N2.7 million per incident.

The North-West region accounted for the highest ransom payments at N1.2 trillion, while the South-East reported the lowest at N85.4 billion.

IGP: Officers who serve honourably retire with fulfillment

By Mena David

The Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kayode Egbetokun, has commended police officers who serve with integrity and commitment, emphasizing that such officers retire with pride, fulfillment, and a legacy of honor. He made these remarks on December 31, 2024, at the Police College in Ikeja, Lagos, during the pull-out ceremony for Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Abiodun Alabi and Assistant Inspectors General of Police (AIGs) Ayodeji Ogundele and Olanrewaju Olaosebikan.

Egbetokun praised the retiring officers for their dedication, professionalism, and resilience. “Their integrity, professionalism, and passion for the Nigeria Police have been the cornerstone of their remarkable service to our nation,” he stated.

Highlighting their achievements, the IGP noted DIG Alabi’s extraordinary vision and leadership in the Force Criminal Investigation Department (CID). He credited AIG Ayodeji Ogundele with transformative leadership at the Force CID Annex and recognized AIG Olanrewaju Olaosebikan’s outstanding contributions at the Force Headquarters.

The Journey of DIG Abiodun Alabi
DIG Abiodun Alabi, born on December 31, 1964, in Ilawe Ekiti, earned a bachelor’s degree in Sociology from the University of Lagos in 1986 and a master’s degree in the same field from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, in 1989. He joined the Nigeria Police Force in March 1990 as a



cadet officer.

In January 2022, Alabi succeeded Hakeem Odumosu as the Lagos State Commissioner of Police. Prior to that, he served as the Commissioner of Police for Bauchi State and the Central Criminal Registry at the Force CID Annex in Alagbon, Lagos. His career also included roles as Deputy Commissioner of Police in Taraba and Ekiti States, and as Assistant Commissioner of Police with the elite Police Mobile Force.

Alabi is a fellow of the Nigerian National Defence College, a member of the Nigerian Institute of Management, and an affiliate of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

Reflections and Farewell

DIG Abiodun Alabi, along with AIGs Ayodeji Ogundele and Olanrewaju Olaosebikan, retired at the statutory age of 60, leaving behind a legacy of dedicated

service to the nation. Reflecting on his career, Alabi emphasized the importance of ethical leadership and leading by example. He urged officers to remain committed to their duties while upholding the rule of law and ethical standards.

As he bid farewell, Alabi expressed a deep attachment to the police uniform, which he described as a symbol of authority and service. “I will miss the uniform and the daily interactions with people,” he said. “Serving humanity has been my greatest fulfillment.”

A Celebration of Distinguished Service

The ceremony celebrated the remarkable careers of officers who dedicated their lives to the service of the nation. Their professionalism, commitment, and resilience remain an inspiration for the next generation of police officers.

Oyebanji pledges support for revenue agency to boost IGR

By Friday Omosola

Ekiti State Governor, Biodun Oyebanji, has reaffirmed his commitment to strengthening the Ekiti State Internal Revenue Service (EKIRS) to boost the state's Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) and promote sustainable development.

The governor spoke yesterday in Ado Ekiti at the ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of the new Revenue House, which will serve as EKIRS' corporate headquarters.

Oyebanji emphasised the need for collaboration between EKIRS and all revenue-generating Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) to eliminate revenue leakages.

He urged MDAs to cease manual tax and revenue collection practices, which often result in fraud.

While commending EKIRS for increasing the state's monthly IGR from ₦600 million to N1.8 billion in 2024, the Governor praised the agency's chairman, Olaniran Olatona, and its staff for their



exceptional performance, which earned them national recognition as one of Nigeria's best-performing revenue agencies.

The governor assured EKIRS staff of his administration's continued support, noting that their welfare remains a top priority. He promised to take strict action against MDAs that engage in fraudulent revenue practices, stating,

Meanwhile, EKIRS Chairman, Olatona

expressed gratitude to the Governor for providing a prime location for the new office complex, which he said would enhance tax administration, improve taxpayer experience, and attract partnerships with bodies like the Joint Tax Board.

Olatona stressed that the project reflects the agency's commitment to transparency and excellence, with all professionals involved in its construction sourced locally to showcase the state's talent.

Man to sweep court for 40 days over wallet theft

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A 23-year-old man, Rabiu Gambo, has been sentenced to sweep the premises of a Kaduna Chief Magistrates' Court for 40 days after being convicted of stealing a wallet.

The ruling was delivered by Magistrate Ibrahim Emmanuel on Tuesday.

Gambo, who pleaded guilty to the theft, was handed a lenient sentence due to his cooperation and for not wasting the court's time.

This case highlights the use of non-custodial sentencing in certain theft cases, where offenders are assigned corrective tasks instead of imprisonment.



In a related development, the police in Ogun State have arrested two individuals for allegedly stealing a motorcycle.

He warned Gambo to desist from committing any crime after serving

his punishment.

Emmanuel said that the sentence would serve as deterrent to others.

The prosecution, Insp Chidi Leo, told the court that on Dec. 27, one Yusuf Mai-shago of Ungwan Sarki, Kaduna, reported the matter at the Malali Police Station for investigation.

Leo said Gambo stole the complainant's wallet containing N50,000, two ATM cards and other identity cards.

The prosecutor said the offence contravene the Penal Code of Kaduna State, 2017.

Adeleke pledges full implementation of 2025 budget

By Friday Omosola

Governor Ademola Adeleke of Osun State has assured the full implementation of the newly signed 2025 budget to benefits of the people.

Governor Adeleke made this commitment during the signing ceremony of the 2025 budget into law, highlighting that the event underscores the administration's dedication to advancing the state's growth and development in the new year.

The budget, tagged the "Budget of Sustainable Growth and Transformation," amounts to ₦427.75 billion.

The governor directed Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) to vigorously pursue its implementation, stating, "Our budget performance must remain commendable every quarter."

He further urged the Ministry of Economic Planning, Budget, and Development to monitor the implementation process to ensure delivery aligns with set targets and expectations.

"The Appropriation Act will serve as our faithful instrument to deliver on the five-point agenda for good governance," Adeleke added, assuring Osun



residents that the budget will meet public expectations.

He commended the Ministry of Economic Planning, Budget, and Development for their professionalism throughout the budgetary process and expressed gratitude to the House Speaker and members of the State Assembly for their contributions.

"The Executive arm welcomes oversight activities by the lawmakers," the governor noted. "I urge members of the State Executive Council to collaborate with the lawmakers as they exercise their mandate during the 2025 fiscal year."

Meanwhile, the Speaker of the House, Adewale Egbedun,

described the signing ceremony as the culmination of a thorough budgetary process focused on maximizing public benefits.

The speaker said the budget reflects the vision and agenda of the executive, infused with insights from the legislature as representatives of the people.

Providing a technical breakdown, the Commissioner for Economic Planning, Budget, and Development, Moruf Adeleke, assured the public that the budget's parameters stem from Governor Adeleke's unwavering commitment to the welfare of Osun State residents.

Justice Eberechi Suzzette: Woman behind Nyesom Wike

By Michael Damilola

Nyesom Wike, the current Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and former Governor of Rivers State, remains a towering figure in Nigeria's political sphere. Renowned for his outspoken demeanor, decisive actions, and focus on infrastructure development, Wike has consistently commanded attention and sparked debates across the nation.

Since assuming office as FCT Minister, Wike has initiated bold reforms, including the revocation of undeveloped plots owned by prominent Nigerians, such as Labour Party's Peter Obi. His tenure has also been marked by high-profile demolitions of illegally constructed properties in Abuja—actions that have courted controversy, especially in the face of Senate directives to halt such operations.

Indeed, apart from the President, Nyesom Wike is often regarded as one of Nigeria's most influential and compelling politicians within the two major political parties. Beyond his political accomplishments, his personal life—particularly his relationship with his wife, Justice Eberechi Suzzette Wike—offers insight into a family grounded in service and excellence. Wike and Eberechi Suzzette Obuzor were married on December 19, 1999, and their union is blessed with three children: Jazmyne, Joaquin, and Jordan.

Justice Eberechi Suzzette Wike: The Woman Behind the Leader

Justice Eberechi Suzzette Wike is not just the wife of a political heavyweight; she is a formidable figure in her own right. A distinguished judge, philanthropist, and advocate for social justice, Justice Wike embodies excellence, integrity, and dedication to public service. As the wife of Nyesom Wike, she has been a steadfast source of support throughout his political journey.

However, her identity transcends her role as a politician's spouse. Justice Wike's career and community contributions have



established her as a respected leader and role model. From her distinguished work in the judiciary to her philanthropic endeavours, Justice Wike's story is one of passion, commitment, and impact.

A Closer Look at Justice Eberechi Suzzette Wike

Justice Eberechi Suzzette Wike, born on May 24, 1972, in Odiokwu, Ahoada West, Rivers State, Nigeria, pursued her higher education at the Rivers State University of Science and Technology, where she earned her LL.B. (Hons.) degree in 1996. Following her undergraduate studies, she attended the Nigerian Law School, obtaining her Barrister-at-Law (B.L.) degree in 1997, and was called to the Nigerian Bar on February 25, 1998.

She further advanced her legal education by obtaining a master's degree in law (LL.M.) from the University of Sussex, United Kingdom, as a recipient of the British Chevening Scholarship for the 2005/2006 session.

Justice Wike's professional journey began as a lawyer before she ascended to the bench as a judge in the Rivers State Judiciary. Her career highlights include serving as Chairperson of the Rivers State Judicial Service Commission, where she upheld principles of fairness and justice. Records show that she was sworn in as a Justice of the Court of Appeal on July 9, 2024.

Beyond her legal career, Justice Wike has made significant contributions to society through philanthropy. She is deeply

committed to promoting education, improving healthcare, and championing women's empowerment. Her efforts have earned her numerous awards and widespread admiration, making her one of Nigeria's most respected public figures.

Controversies and Public Discussion

Justice Eberechi Suzzette Wike's elevation within Nigeria's judiciary has been a topic of public discussion. The most notable controversy arose when the National Judicial Council (NJC) recommended her promotion from the Rivers State High Court to the Court of Appeal.

This recommendation coincided with the nomination of other judicial officers, including the daughter-in-law of the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Justice Olukayode Ariwoola, for various judicial appointments. Critics expressed concerns over potential conflicts of interest and perceived favoritism, given the familial connections involved.

Despite these controversies, Justice Eberechi Suzzette Wike was officially sworn in as a Justice of the Court of Appeal on July 9, 2024, by the CJN. Her supporters emphasize her qualifications and long-standing dedication to the judiciary, asserting that her promotion was well-deserved.

The Legacy of Justice Eberechi Suzzette Wike

Justice Eberechi Suzzette Wike's journey is a testament to the power of hard work, integrity, and a commitment to the greater good. As a judge, philanthropist, and advocate for justice, she continues to inspire countless Nigerians. Together with her husband, she represents a partnership dedicated to service, excellence, and making a lasting impact on their community and beyond.

6 Things You Should Know About Justice Eberechi Suzzette Wike

Who is Justice Eberechi Suzzette Wike? Justice Eberechi Suzzette Wike was born on May 24, 1972, in Odiokwu, Ahoada

No money missing, it was a prank – VeryDarkMan

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



Social media critic Martins Vincent Otse, popularly known in social circles as Very Dark Man, has finally admitted that the missing N180 million allegedly stolen by hackers was a prank.

He made the admission in a video posted on his official Instagram page, saying he pulled off the stunt just to show that 80% of people on social media are dumb.

VDM stated that no money is missing as the cash is secured

in his account, but he deliberately raised the false alarm to show that people on social media are stupid.

According to him, when he raised the false alarm, some people were so happy about his supposed predicament, and nobody even asked for evidence to back up his spurious claim.

“80% of the people that use social media are dumb, and the whole thing that happened with the N180 million is a clear opportunity

to show you. I deliberately did it to just show you people that you are stupid. No money is missing; my money is secured.

”The way people are so excited about bad is really sad. I told my website guy, shut the website, let us use these people catch cruise. Nobody bothered to ask for evidence. They just went with what is being said. I am so happy I did this,” he said.

Ayra Starr to unveil lover in video

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian singer Ayra Starr, 22, plans to unveil her love interest in the music video for her hit song, Lagos Love Story, thrilling fans worldwide.

Known for her private nature, Ayra Starr has kept details about her personal life under wraps. However, this new development has fans buzzing with anticipation.

Ayra Starr, whose real name is Oyinkansola Sarah Aderibigbe, made the announcement on her official X account.

She revealed her decision to feature her real-life partner as a vixen in the video. According to the singer, the aim is to keep the project authentic to its theme. In her post, she wrote, "I promise you guys a Lagos Love Story music video with the actual loml [love of my life]. Don't know when, but I want it to be real."

This announcement marks a significant shift for the singer, who has rarely shared personal details with the public.

Her fans, often referred to as "Starrs," have long speculated about her romantic life, but the singer has successfully kept them guessing. Now, with this bold move, Ayra Starr appears ready to offer a glimpse into her private world.

Rising Star with a Global Presence

Ayra Starr rose to fame with her hit singles and distinctive style. Signed to Mavin Records, she quickly gained recognition for her unique sound, blending Afrobeats, R&B, and pop influences. Songs like Away and Rush have earned her international acclaim, solidifying her place among Nigeria's top musical talents.

At just 22, Ayra Starr has achieved remarkable success. Her debut album, 19 & Dangerous, showcased her versatility as an artist, earning critical acclaim and multiple award nominations. Despite her rapid rise, she has managed to maintain a level of mystery about her personal life, adding to her allure.

A new chapter in her career

By incorporating her real-life partner into the Lagos Love Story music video, Ayra



Starr is taking a bold step. This decision reflects a growing trend among artists who choose to infuse their personal experiences into their work. For Ayra Starr, it's a chance to connect with her audience on a deeper level.

The move also aligns with the song's theme. Lagos Love Story is a heartfelt track that explores love and relationships in the bustling city of Lagos. Featuring her true love in the video adds an authentic layer to the narrative, making it more relatable and impactful.

Fans react with excitement

Following her announcement, fans flooded social media with reactions. Many expressed excitement, while others speculated about the identity of her mysterious partner. The post quickly garnered thousands of likes and comments, reflecting the high level of interest in her personal life.

One fan wrote, "This is going to be epic! Ayra Starr never disappoints." Another added, "Can't wait to see the real loml. This video will be a masterpiece!" The anticipation for the music video has only grown, with fans eager to witness this unique blend of art and reality.

Authenticity as a driving force

Ayra Starr's emphasis on authenticity is a recurring theme in her career. From her lyrics to her performances, she strives to stay true to herself and her craft. Featuring her real-life partner in the Lagos Love Story music video is a testament to this commitment.

In an industry where image often takes precedence, Ayra Starr's decision stands out. By choosing to share a personal aspect of her life, she is breaking down barriers and redefining what it means to be an artist in today's world.

Looking ahead

As fans eagerly await the release of the Lagos Love Story music video, one thing is certain: Ayra Starr knows how to keep her audience engaged. Whether it's through her captivating music or her intriguing personal revelations, she continues to be a force to reckon with in the music industry.

This new chapter in her career promises to be both exciting and inspiring. By merging her personal life with her art, Ayra Starr is setting a new standard for authenticity in music. Her fans, no doubt, will be there every step of the way, cheering her on and celebrating her journey.

In the meantime, speculation about her love interest is sure to dominate conversations among fans. Who is the lucky individual? How will their chemistry translate on screen? These questions will keep the buzz alive until the video finally drops.

Ayra Starr's decision to share her love story through music is a bold and refreshing move. It's a reminder that behind every artist is a human story waiting to be told. With Lagos Love Story, Ayra Starr is not just telling a story—she's living it. Fans around the world can hardly wait to see it unfold.

Kenny Ogungbe denies causing Plantashun Boiz breakup

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Kenny Ogungbe, the renowned CEO of Kennis Music and a leading figure in Nigeria's music industry, has addressed rumors about his alleged involvement in the breakup of the iconic music group, Plantashun Boiz

Speaking during an episode of The Honest Bunch podcast, Ogungbe set the record straight, denying any role in the group's dissolution.

For years, speculation has swirled around the reasons behind the separation of Plantashun Boiz, a group once celebrated for its unique sound and groundbreaking albums.

The trio, consisting of 2Face (now known as 2Baba), Blackface, and Faze, initially disbanded in 2004 after releasing their second album, *Sold Out*.

While they briefly reunited in 2007 to create their third album, *Plan B*, they eventually parted ways permanently. Many fans blamed Ogungbe, given his influence in shaping the Nigerian music scene and his connection to 2Face's subsequent solo success.

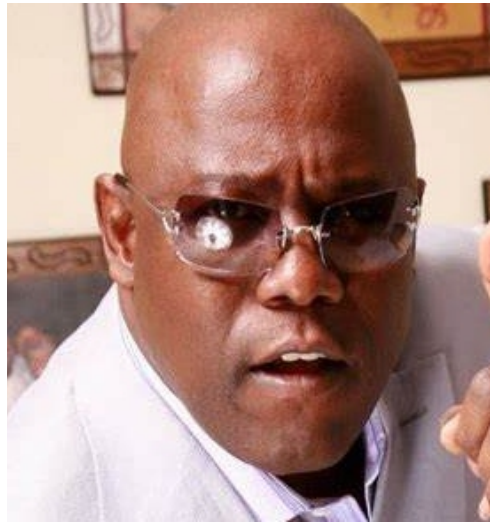
However, Ogungbe insists the breakup had nothing to do with him. "People have been saying I'm the one responsible for the breakup of Plantashun Boiz," Ogungbe said during the podcast interview.

"That's not true. 2Face came to me himself after the group had broken up. He told me he wanted to sign with Kennis Music, and Eedris Abdulkareem advised me to sign him, which I did."

This revelation sheds new light on the events leading to the group's disbandment. Ogungbe emphasized that Kennis Music only became involved with 2Face after the group had already gone their separate ways. "The group's issues were their own," he explained. "We came into the picture much later, after 2Face had decided to pursue a solo career."

The Plantashun Boiz Legacy

Plantashun Boiz was more than just a music group—they were trailblazers in Nigeria's burgeoning hip-hop and R&B scene in the late 1990s and early 2000s.



Their debut album, *Body and Soul*, released in 2000, was an instant hit, earning them widespread acclaim.

Songs like "You and I" and "Don't You Know" showcased their vocal harmony and lyrical depth, winning the hearts of fans across Africa.

However, cracks in their relationship began to show after the release of *Sold Out*. Creative differences and personal conflicts reportedly caused tension among the members.

By 2004, the group had officially disbanded, with each member embarking on solo projects.

2Face's solo career quickly took off, thanks in part to his signing with Kennis Music. His debut album, *Face 2 Face*, released in 2004, featured the timeless hit "African Queen," which catapulted him to international stardom.

Meanwhile, Blackface and Faze also pursued individual careers, though their paths were less commercially successful than 2Face's.

Ogungbe's Role in 2Face's Rise

Kenny Ogungbe played a pivotal role in shaping 2Face's career after the breakup. Kennis Music, under Ogungbe's leadership, became a powerhouse in promoting Nigerian artists. When 2Face approached the label for support, Ogungbe recognized his potential and decided to invest in his talent.

Ogungbe credited Eedris Abdulkareem,

another Kennis Music signee and a prominent Nigerian rapper, for encouraging him to sign 2Face. "Eedris told me, 'This guy is talented; you should sign him,'" Ogungbe recalled. "And I'm glad I listened. 2Face was ready to make his mark, and we gave him the platform to do so."

Under Kennis Music, 2Face achieved unprecedented success, becoming a global ambassador for Afrobeat and African music.

Ogungbe takes pride in the artist's accomplishments but remains firm in his stance that he had no role in the group's initial split.

Fans React to Ogungbe's Statement

Following Ogungbe's remarks on The Honest Bunch, fans and industry insiders have weighed in on the controversy.

Some praised him for finally addressing the rumors, while others believe there is still more to the story.

"The Plantashun Boiz breakup was a huge moment in Nigerian music history," said a fan on social media. "It's good to hear Kenny Ogungbe clear the air, but I wonder if we'll ever know the full truth."

Another fan commented, "Kennis Music was instrumental in making 2Face a legend. People should stop blaming Kenny for something that wasn't his fault."

Moving Forward

The breakup of Plantashun Boiz remains a bittersweet chapter in Nigeria's music history. While the group's legacy lives on through their timeless music, their story also serves as a reminder of the challenges that come with creative collaborations.

For Kenny Ogungbe, the focus has always been on nurturing talent and growing the industry. His work with 2Face and other artists at Kennis Music has left an indelible mark on African music, paving the way for the next generation of stars.

With this clarification, Ogungbe hopes to put the rumors to rest and let the achievements of Plantashun Boiz and its individual members continue to inspire music lovers worldwide.

Femi Branch slams cinemas for bias in film promotion

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Actor Femi Branch has voiced frustration over an alleged growing trend where cinemas appear to prioritize one movie at the expense of others.

He raised concerns during a meet-and-greet event for Toyin Abraham's latest film, *Alakada Bad and Bougie*, at a local cinema.

In a video shared online, Branch detailed some troubling practices he observed. According to him, cinema staff often wear promotional T-shirts for a specific film, sidelining other movies.

He claimed media cards for competing films are removed from counters and replaced with materials for the promoted movie.

These actions, he said, give undue advantage to select films while marginalizing others.

Branch alleged that staff members sometimes go a step further by lobbying patrons to watch certain films.

He claimed they actively persuade moviegoers, assuring them that the promoted film is superior to their initial choice. Such behavior, he argued, undermines the audience's freedom to decide what to watch.

Call for fairness in the industry
The actor did not mince words in addressing the issue. He stressed that cinemas have a responsibility to maintain neutrality.

"Cinemas should not dictate what people watch," he said, calling for an end to biased practices. Branch warned those involved to reconsider their actions, noting that favoritism creates divisions within the industry.

He emphasized the need for a level playing field where all producers have



an equal chance to succeed.

Branch's remarks have sparked broader conversations about fairness in cinema operations. He urged stakeholders to prioritize transparency and equity, arguing that the current practices harm the industry as a whole.

Producers face uphill battle
The controversy comes amid claims by actress and producer Toyin Abraham, who recently shed light on the challenges filmmakers face in promoting their work.

According to Abraham, some fans expect gifts or incentives as a condition for watching her films. This expectation, she explained, places an unfair burden on producers who cannot afford such giveaways.

Abraham's concerns align with allegations made by her and fellow actress Mercy Aigbe. They accused certain cinemas of deliberately sabotaging their films, further complicating the already competitive landscape.

Such accusations highlight the growing tension between filmmakers and cinema operators.

Audience manipulation raises eyebrows
Branch's account of audience

manipulation by cinema staff has particularly drawn attention. Convincing patrons to change their viewing preferences undermines consumer choice and raises ethical questions about cinema marketing strategies.

Critics argue that such tactics erode trust and damage the reputation of cinemas as neutral venues for showcasing diverse films.

The actor's call for change resonates with many in the industry. Producers, actors, and even fans have taken to social media to share their experiences, with some corroborating Branch's claims. The discussion has reignited debates about the role of cinemas in supporting or stifling creativity within Nollywood.

Toward a transparent system
Branch's message is clear: the industry must address these issues to ensure its long-term growth. He believes that fostering transparency and fairness is crucial for Nollywood to thrive.

Without these values, he warns, the industry risks alienating filmmakers and audiences alike.

The actor's plea for fairness has struck a chord with many. His willingness to speak out highlights the need for collective action to tackle the challenges facing Nigerian cinema.

As the conversation unfolds, it remains to be seen whether stakeholders will take meaningful steps to address these concerns.

For now, Branch's advocacy has sparked much-needed dialogue. His call for accountability serves as a reminder that the success of Nollywood depends on an industry built on fairness, respect, and equal opportunity for all filmmakers.

Odumodublck: Why I don't love music

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian rapper Odumodublck recently shared surprising insights into his unique relationship with music during a candid and thought-provoking interview.

Contrary to what fans might expect from an artist of his caliber, Odumodublck made it clear that his passion for music does not stem from love.

Instead, he sees music as a reliable companion—someone who never lets him down but doesn't inspire deep affection either.

"I don't love music," he said. "But music and I are friends. I like you [music], and one thing I know about you is that you're a stand-up guy. When you say you're going to do something, you do it because you meet me at the point of my contact."

A friendship, not a love affair

In the interview, Odumodublck described music as dependable but transactional. He acknowledged that whatever effort he puts into his craft, music gives back in equal measure. However, he stopped short of attributing this to any special bond between them.

"Whatever work you put in, music will give you back. Music doesn't cheat anyone," he explained. "But to say I now love music? No, no, no, no. Because music, on its own, hasn't gone out of its way to do anything for me."

The work behind the art

The rapper emphasized that his success in music is purely the result of his hard work. For him, music is simply a medium that responds directly to the energy and effort he invests in it. He expressed no resentment but was firm in stating that



his relationship with music is practical, not emotional.

"It was the work I put in that made music reciprocate," he said. "I don't have any problem with that. So, music should not have any problem with me telling her I don't love her."

Unique perspective on passion

Odumodublck's perspective challenges the common narrative of artists who describe their craft as a labor of love. His honest admission may surprise fans, but it also highlights a pragmatic approach to his career. For Odumodublck, music is a tool—a partner that delivers results when treated with diligence and respect.

This mindset may explain the rapper's consistent rise in the music industry. Known for his distinct style and lyrical prowess, Odumodublck has gained a loyal following. His songs often reflect raw authenticity, blending storytelling with street-smart insights. Perhaps his practical view of music is what keeps his work grounded and relatable.

Balancing art and reality

While many artists romanticize their connection to music, Odumodublck's relationship is refreshingly grounded. He sees music

as a collaboration rather than a romance. This outlook allows him to maintain a sense of balance in his life, avoiding the emotional highs and lows that can come with a more passionate attachment.

Nigerian Rapper Odumodublck

His comments also serve as a reminder that success in any field requires hard work and commitment. While love for one's craft can be a driving force, Odumodublck's journey shows that a clear-eyed, disciplined approach can yield impressive results too.

Message to fans and creators

Odumodublck's statement resonates with anyone who has ever struggled with their craft. His honesty about not "loving" music may encourage others to view their work from a new perspective. Passion can sometimes be fleeting, but reliability and consistency often lead to long-term success.

By framing music as a trustworthy partner rather than a romanticized ideal, Odumodublck challenges the traditional narrative surrounding creativity. His perspective underscores the importance of effort and discipline, offering a fresh take on what it means to succeed as an artist.

Conclusion

Odumodublck's revelation is a bold statement in an industry where artists often equate their craft with love and passion. His pragmatic approach to music as a reliable friend—not a beloved partner—sets him apart.

For fans, his words provide insight into the mindset of an artist who prioritizes hard work over sentimentality. For creators, it's a powerful reminder that success is often less about love and more about showing up and putting in the work.

Lege Miami's matchmaking event draws huge crowd

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Adams Kehinde, widely known as Lege Miami, made headlines on Sunday with his much-anticipated "Singles Hookup Matchmaking End-of-the-Year Party."

The Nigerian actor and singer hosted the lively event at the prestigious Radisson Blu Hotel in GRA Ikeja, Lagos.

The party, which offered free entry, drew a massive crowd of singles eager to meet, mingle, and perhaps discover love as 2024 wound down.

Attendees filled the venue, creating an electrifying atmosphere that quickly gained traction online.

By Monday, the event was trending across social media platforms, with fans and participants sharing their experiences and reactions.

Viral sensation on social media

On X.com (formerly Twitter), users flooded timelines with comments about the party. One user, #abdullahayofel, posted, "Lege Miami Single Matchmaking End of the Year Party 2024. See how the ladies are plenty." The post reflected the staggering number of attendees, particularly women, at the event.

Another user, #Alice_Blondelle, highlighted the event's success, tweeting, "Lege Miami recently hosted an exclusive party catering specifically to single individuals, and it seems the event was a resounding success. The guest list was filled with eligible bachelors and bachelorettes, all looking to mingle and potentially find that special someone."

However, not everyone could gain access to the highly anticipated event. #KingDiamondplus shared his disappointment, writing, "Lege Miami show was so hilarious yet painful yesterday. After preparing for days, I still

couldn't enter the premises because of the crowd."

Echoing the sentiment, #the_lateefah remarked, "Lege Miami doesn't joke with this his matchmaking business. Man even threw an event. The turnout of people wasn't small too."

Lege Miami's reaction and gratitude

Known for his dedication to matchmaking, Lege Miami took to Instagram on Monday to express his appreciation for the overwhelming support. In a heartfelt post, he shared a video of the bustling crowd, captioning it,



"See crowd. 2024 singles hookup matchmaking end-of-the-year party. Thank you, lovers."

In another video, he thanked his fans and supporters more directly, saying, "Thank you, Nigerians, I'm grateful. I want to thank all the people that supported me for this last event. I thank all the givers that brought out money to support me."

Promises for bigger and better events

While celebrating the event's success, Lege Miami also acknowledged its challenges. He admitted that the Radisson Blu Hotel could not accommodate the unexpected number of attendees, leaving

some fans disappointed.

In his post, he said, "We got a massive crowd that Radisson hotel couldn't contain everybody. Next year, I'll get a bigger place in GRA Ikeja." Switching to Yoruba, he added, "I apologise to the singles who were present but couldn't come in. We won't host the event at Radisson next year, but it'll be in GRA on the mainland."

His promise to secure a larger venue indicates his commitment to improving future events and ensuring everyone has a chance to participate.

Growing legacy in matchmaking

Lege Miami has built a reputation for bringing singles together through his matchmaking initiatives. Over the years, his events have gained popularity among Nigerians, particularly those seeking meaningful connections in an engaging and entertaining setting.

Sunday's party was no exception, further cementing his status as a trusted figure in the matchmaking space. With a mix of humor, energy, and genuine care, Lege Miami continues to win the hearts of many, both on and offline.

A night to remember

The "Singles Hookup Matchmaking End-of-the-Year Party" was more than just an event; it was a celebration of hope and connection. Singles came in droves, ready to take a chance on finding love. For some, it was an opportunity to laugh and make new friends, while for others, it was a moment to reflect on the year and step into 2025 with optimism.

As Lege Miami plans for an even bigger and better event next year, fans can look forward to another unforgettable experience. His unwavering dedication and the enthusiastic response from attendees make it clear that this matchmaking tradition is here to stay.

Paulo Okoye urges Wizkid, Davido, Burna Boy to unite

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Talent manager Paulo Okoye urges Afrobeat icons Wizkid, Davido, and Burna Boy to set aside differences, embrace unity, and inspire Africa and the world.

His heartfelt message, shared on Instagram, underscores the significance of harmony in their personal and professional lives as the year winds down.

Paulo, widely respected in the African entertainment industry, expressed his deep admiration for the trio's remarkable achievements.

He urged them to reflect on their humble beginnings and the immense blessings they have received over the years.

"Dear Wizkid!! Davido!! Burna Boy!! As 2024 comes to an end, I wish for unity and brotherhood among three Afrobeat legends," he wrote. His words resonated with fans and industry stakeholders, who have long awaited reconciliation among the music heavyweights.

A Call for Brotherhood and Forgiveness

In his post, Paulo highlighted the transformative power of forgiveness and the importance of moving past old grievances. He reminded the artists of their collective influence, stating that together, they inspire Africa and the global music scene. "Life is short, and God has blessed you guys abundantly. I pray they remember their humble beginnings and forgive past differences," he added.

This message comes at a crucial time, as tensions among the trio have occasionally cast a shadow on their groundbreaking contributions to Afrobeat. Their individual success stories have propelled African music to unprecedented heights, earning them international acclaim.

However, public spats and rumored rivalries have often dominated headlines, leaving fans divided.

Celebrating their impact on African music



Paulo's message also served as a reminder of the trio's unparalleled contributions to the music industry. Wizkid, often called "Star Boy," has consistently delivered chart-topping hits and collaborated with global stars, cementing his status as a trailblazer.

Davido, affectionately called "OBO" (Omo Baba Olowo), is known for his infectious energy and numerous anthems that have become staples at celebrations worldwide.

Paulo Okoye

Meanwhile, Burna Boy, the self-proclaimed "African Giant," has redefined Afrobeat with his unique blend of traditional and contemporary sounds, earning him a Grammy Award.

Despite their achievements, Paulo believes their collective power holds even greater potential. "United, they inspire Africa and the world with their hard work and talent. Let's see a united 2025!" he emphasized.

Vision for a peaceful 2025

The talent manager's vision extends beyond personal reconciliation. He envisions a future where Wizkid, Davido, and Burna Boy collaborate to push Afrobeat to even greater heights. "You three are billionaires and have the power to do anything in this world. All peace!! 2025!! No matter what!!!" he declared passionately.

Paulo's words struck a chord with fans, many of whom took to social media to share

their thoughts. Supporters applauded his courage in addressing the issue and echoed his call for unity.

Others speculated on the possibility of a joint project or performance featuring the trio, a prospect that has long been a dream for Afrobeat enthusiasts.

Fans rally behind the message

Social media platforms were abuzz following Paulo's post, with fans expressing their hopes for a resolution.

Many pointed out that a united front among Wizkid, Davido, and Burna Boy would not only benefit their careers but also serve as a powerful message of solidarity for African youth. "Imagine what they could achieve together! This is bigger than music; it's about setting an example," one fan wrote.

Critics, however, cautioned against placing undue pressure on the artists, noting that reconciliation is a personal journey that requires time and genuine effort.

Still, the overwhelming sentiment leaned toward optimism, with many believing that Paulo's heartfelt plea could mark the beginning of a new chapter.

The road ahead

As 2024 draws to a close, Paulo's message serves as a timely reminder of the importance of unity, forgiveness, and shared purpose.

Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie finalise divorce after 8-yr saga

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt have reached a divorce settlement following an eight-year legal battle, according to her lawyer.

The pair, who married in 2014 and have six children, were among the most high-profile couples in the entertainment industry and were dubbed 'Brangelina' by the press.

Jolie filed for divorce in 2016, citing "irreconcilable differences." It later emerged during separate court proceedings that she had accused Pitt of being abusive to her and two of their children on a private jet that year.

Pitt was not charged following a police investigation into the incident and has denied the allegations.

His lawyers have not publicly commented on the divorce settlement.

Jolie's lawyer James Simon said in a statement to People magazine that his client has been focusing on "finding peace and healing for their family" since divorce proceedings began.

He continued: "This is just one part of a long ongoing process that started eight years ago. Frankly, Angelina is exhausted, but she is relieved this one part is over."

The terms of the agreement have not been made public.

When news of their separation first emerged in 2016, the couple said in a joint statement that it would be conducted privately – and neither have spoken extensively about their relationship in the years since.

However, details have emerged in overlapping court cases which paint a picture of an acrimonious divorce – with Jolie accusing her ex-husband

of "waging a vindictive war", and Pitt accusing her of seeking to deliberately undermine his businesses.

While Jolie's lawyers have said a divorce settlement has been reached, it is unclear whether it will end a long-running legal battle between the pair over a French vineyard.

They have been involved in a bitter dispute over Chateau Miraval, a sprawling property which they bought together in 2008 for a reported 25 million euros (£21.3m) and where their wedding would eventually take place.

In 2022, Pitt accused Jolie of selling her stake in the property to Russian oligarch Yuri Shefler – a drinks industry magnate who owns, among other brands, Stolichnaya vodka – without his knowledge in order to deliberately damage his wine investment.

S'Korea starts releasing Jeju Air crash victims to families

By Dave Oludare Oso

South Korean authorities began releasing the bodies of plane crash victims to families Tuesday, as investigators raced to determine why the Jeju Air Boeing 737-800 crash landed and burst into flames.

US investigators, including from Boeing, arrived at the crash site in southwestern Muan, officials said, as South Korean authorities began assessing two black boxes retrieved from the burned-out wreckage of the aircraft.

The plane was carrying 181 people from Thailand to South Korea when it made a mayday call and belly-landed before crashing into a barrier and bursting into flames.

Everyone aboard Jeju Air Flight 2216 was killed, save two flight attendants pulled from the wreckage.

South Korea is observing seven days of mourning, with flags flying at half-mast.

Acting President Choi Sang-mok, who has only been in office since Friday, said the accident was a “turning point” for the country, calling for a full overhaul of air safety systems.

He urged officials to “thoroughly reexamine the overall aircraft operation system... and immediately address any necessary improvements.”

“Today marks the final day of 2024,” he said Tuesday, urging citizens to “reflect on the past year and prepare for the new one.”

“I am well aware that whenever challenges arose, both domestically and internationally, all citizens and public officials united with one heart and mind to overcome these crises.”

– ‘Pray for eternal peace’ –

At Muan airport, investigators combed over the wrecked fuselage and soldiers picked carefully through the fields around the airport Tuesday, as people left ritual offerings for victims — including food and letters — near the airport’s perimeter.



“Captain, first officer, and crew members thank you so much for doing your best to save the passengers. I pray for your eternal rest,” one letter left on the fence said.

Inside the airport, where victims’ relatives had been camped out since Sunday, waiting for information, anger was growing over delays in identifying passengers on the doomed plane.

But officials said they had begun releasing the first bodies to relatives, even as work to identify all victims continued.

“Of the 179 victims, the bodies of four have completed the handover procedures to their bereaved families for funerals,” transport minister Park Sang-woo said at Muan airport Tuesday.

“For 28 victims, whose identities have been confirmed and autopsies completed, we will allow funeral procedures to begin from 2 pm (0500 GMT) today with the consent of their families,” he added.

One family lost nine members — including the oldest passenger on the plane, who was taking his first-ever overseas trip to celebrate his birthday, local broadcaster KBC reported.

The passenger, surnamed Bae, was travelling with his wife, his two daughters, one son-in-law, and four grandchildren, including a five-year-old.

The entire family was killed, with only one of the daughter’s husbands — who

was not able to join the trip — left behind to face the loss of his wife and three children.

“Yesterday, the village chief went to Muan Airport and said the son-in-law was in utter despair, saying, ‘I should have gone with them and died with them,’” KBC said.

Memorial altars for the victims have been set up nationwide, including in Seoul.

At Muan airport, families were overseeing the set-up of a new altar Tuesday, with black-and-white funeral flowers filling the area.

– Black box analysis –

A fuller account of what went wrong in the flight’s final moments is expected once authorities have analysed the black boxes.

“Regarding the black box, surface contamination cleaning has been completed at the testing and analysis centre, and its condition is currently being assessed,” deputy civil aviation minister Joo Jong-wan said.

“However, the flight data recorder’s data storage unit is still under evaluation,” he said, as it was found to have a missing connector.

Technical reviews are underway to determine how to extract the data.

Chinese hackers breach US Treasury Department systems in major cybersecurity incident

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

In a significant cybersecurity breach, a Chinese state-sponsored hacker infiltrated the systems of the US Treasury Department, gaining access to employee workstations and some unclassified documents, American officials revealed on Monday.

The breach, described as a “major incident,” occurred in early December and was disclosed to lawmakers in a letter from the Treasury Department.

The attack was facilitated through a security override using a key associated with BeyondTrust, a third-party service provider offering remote technical support to the department’s employees.

Officials stated that the compromised service has since been taken offline, and there is no evidence suggesting continued access to the Treasury’s information.

The breach was initially detected on December 2, but it took three days for BeyondTrust to confirm the suspicious activity as a hack. The Treasury Department was officially notified on December 8.

According to a spokesperson, the hackers accessed several user workstations and certain unclassified documents, though the exact nature and sensitivity of the files remain undisclosed.

Investigators believe the attack was conducted by a China-based Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) actor. Treasury officials explained in their letter that, per departmental policy, APT-related intrusions are automatically categorised as major cybersecurity incidents.

The Treasury Department has been collaborating with the FBI, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), and third-party



forensic investigators to assess the overall impact of the breach.

The department emphasised its commitment to safeguarding its systems and data from external threats, noting that it takes such incidents “very seriously.”

While the breach appears to have been an act of espionage rather than a financial theft attempt, officials cautioned that hackers may have been able to create accounts or alter passwords during the three-day period they remained undetected.

The department assured lawmakers that a supplemental report on the breach would be submitted within 30 days, offering further insights into the incident and its implications.

Responding to the allegations, Liu Pengyu, a spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in Washington, dismissed the claims as baseless and politically motivated.

“The US needs to stop using cybersecurity to smear and slander China, and stop spreading all kinds of

disinformation about the so-called Chinese hacking threats.

“The US needs to stop using cyber security to smear and slander China, and stop spreading all kinds of disinformation about the so-called Chinese hacking threats,” Liu stated.

He also called for a “professional and responsible attitude” in attributing cyber incidents, underscoring the challenges of tracing their origins.

This breach marks the latest in a series of high-profile cyberattacks attributed to Chinese espionage hackers. Earlier in December, another hack targeted telecommunications companies, potentially compromising phone record data across the United States.

The incident highlights the persistent vulnerabilities in critical US government systems and the growing sophistication of state-sponsored cyber threats. As investigations continue, the Treasury Department and other agencies face mounting pressure to enhance their cybersecurity measures and safeguard sensitive national information.

Elon Musk, Zuckerberg top 2024 World's Richest Billionaires ranking

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The world's 500 richest people became considerably richer in 2024, with a combined \$10 trillion net worth.

Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg and Jensen Huang are leading the group of billionaires in 2024, according to the latest Bloomberg Billionaires Index.

The world's 500 richest people became considerably richer in 2024, with a combined \$10 trillion net worth, according to the report.

The Bloomberg Billionaires Index is a daily ranking of the world's richest people.

The tech billionaires collectively saw their wealth increase by an impressive \$903 billion.

US technology stocks played a key role in turbocharging the trio's wealth, as well as the fortunes of Larry Ellison, Jeff Bezos, Michael Dell and Google co-founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin.

The eight tech entrepreneurs alone gained more than \$600 billion this year, 43% of the \$1.5 trillion increase among the 500 richest people tracked by the Bloomberg Billionaires Index.

Musk's close relationship with the incoming president helped increase the value of his companies, including Tesla Inc., SpaceX and xAI.

The development report boosted his fortune to an unprecedented \$442.1 billion, up \$213 billion from the beginning of the year.

Trump's election win, Bloomberg said it added to the gains as the S&P 500 hit a then all-time high on Nov. 6 in its best post-Election Day performance in



history.

The billionaires represented on the index gained a combined \$505 billion in the five weeks following the election, 34% of the yearly total.

Trump's victory also sparked a historic rally for digital assets, pushing Bitcoin above \$100,000 for the first time. That especially boosted crypto billionaires, Binance Holdings' Changpeng Zhao, known as CZ, saw his wealth surge 60% to \$55 billion. The net worth of Coinbase Global Inc. co-founder Brian Armstrong rose more than 50% to \$11.1 billion.

The \$237 billion gap between Musk and Bezos on Dec. 17 was the largest ever recorded between the first- and second-ranked names on Bloomberg's wealth index.

"Across the board, the world's wealthiest benefited from a stock market that defied expectations in 2024.

The S&P 500 Index gained 24% through Monday, powered by the small group of stocks dubbed the "Magnificent Seven," including Musk's Tesla, Zuckerberg's Meta Platforms Inc. and Huang's Nvidia Corp., which accounted for more than half of the stock benchmark's performance."

The total value of the fortunes tracked by the Bloomberg Billionaires Index was \$9.8 trillion at Monday's close, down slightly from a Dec. 11 peak of \$10.1 trillion following a post-Christmas selloff.

Here are some of this year's biggest losers and winners as ranked by the BBI:

Losers

French luxury billionaires: The fortunes of Bernard Arnault, Françoise Bettencourt Meyers and François Pinault, whose wealth comes from holdings in the luxury goods sector, took big losses in 2024.

After years of pandemic-fueled gains, when luxury shopping supplanted spending on dining and entertainment, slowing sales — especially in the key Chinese market — cost the three billionaires a total of \$71 billion.

Colin Huang: Huang had the biggest wealth decline among Chinese billionaires. The e-commerce mogul behind Temu briefly became China's richest person in August, but ended the year down \$18 billion after a lackluster earnings report sent his company's shares plummeting 29% in a single day.

China denies claims of cyberattacks on US Treasury

By Dave Oludare Oso

China on Tuesday denied accusations that the country's state-sponsored actor was behind a cyber breach at the US Treasury Department, calling the claims "groundless."

According to a letter to Congress, the Treasury said the attack resulted in access to some of its workstations.

According to the Treasury, the incident happened earlier this month, when the actor compromised a third-party cybersecurity service provider and could remotely access the workstations and some unclassified documents.

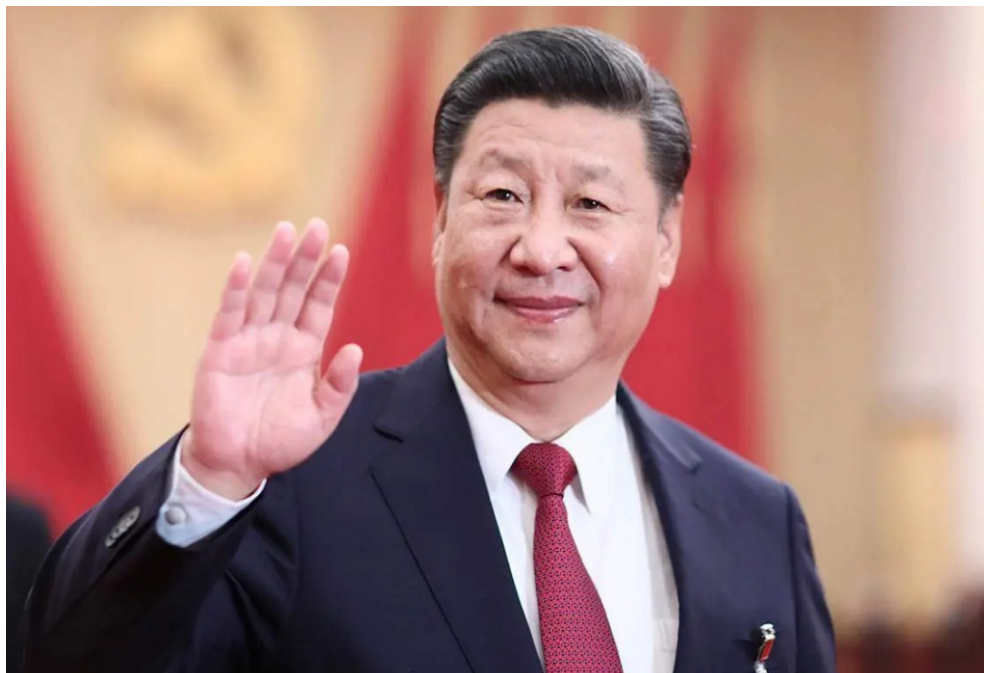
China denied the claims, with the foreign ministry saying Beijing "has always opposed all forms of hacker attacks, and we are even more opposed to spreading false information against China for political purposes."

"We have stated our position many times regarding such groundless accusations that lack evidence," foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said.

The Treasury contacted the US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency after it was alerted by its provider BeyondTrust, and has been working with law enforcement to ascertain the impact.

"The compromised BeyondTrust service has been taken offline and there is no evidence indicating the threat actor has continued access to Treasury systems or information," the department's spokesperson said.

In its letter to the leadership of the Senate Banking Committee, the Treasury said: "Based on available indicators, the incident has been



attributed to a China state-sponsored Advanced Persistent Threat actor."

An APT refers to a cyberattack where an intruder establishes and maintains unauthorised access to a target, remaining undetected for a sustained period of time.

The department did not provide further details on what was affected by the breach but said more information would be released in a supplemental report at a later date.

"Treasury takes very seriously all threats against our systems, and the data it holds," the spokesperson added.

Several countries, notably the United States, have voiced alarm in recent years at what they say is Chinese-government-backed hacking activity targeting their governments, militaries and businesses.

Beijing rejects the allegations and has previously said that it opposes and cracks down on all forms of cyberattacks.

In September, the US Justice Department said it had neutralised a cyber-attack network that affected 200,000 devices worldwide, alleging it was run by hackers backed by the Chinese government.

In February, US authorities also said they had dismantled a network of hackers known as "Volt Typhoon."

The group was said to be targeting key public sector infrastructure like water treatment plants and transportation systems at the behest of China.

In 2023, tech giant Microsoft said Chinese-based hackers seeking intelligence information breached the email accounts of a number of US government agencies.

The group, Storm-0558, had breached email accounts at approximately 25 organisations and government agencies.

Accounts belonging to the State Department and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo were among those hacked in that breach.

71 dead as truck plunges into Ethiopian river

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



At least 71 people were killed after a truck full of passengers plunged into a river in southern Ethiopia over the weekend.

The truck fell into a river on Sunday evening in the Bona district of Sidama state, around 300km south of the capital Addis Ababa, the regional communication bureau said.

Five passengers were admitted to hospital in a critical state and were under treatment, according to Wosenyeh Simion, spokesperson for the Sidama regional government.

At least three women were among those killed in the accident, he told Reuters.

Some of the passengers were returning from a wedding ceremony, Mr Simion said, adding that traffic police in the area had reported the truck was overloaded, which likely caused the accident.

Police said the truck missed a bridge on a road with many bends and fell into the river

People try to pull the submerged vehicle out of water (Sidama National Regional State Health Bureau/Facebook)

Authorities did not reveal how many people were on the truck or provide details about the victims. But it was reported that multiple members of some families were killed.

Pictures shared by the Sidama Regional Health Bureau on Facebook showed a crowd of people trying to pull out the vehicle with the help of ropes. One picture showed the dead bodies lying on the ground covered in blue tarpaulin.

Deadly traffic accidents are common in Ethiopia, where driving standards are poor and many vehicles badly maintained.

At least 38 people, mostly students, were killed in 2018 when a bus plunged into a ravine in Ethiopia's mountainous north.

Gov Abiodun appoints Anthony Joshua as Sports Ambassador

By Friday Omosola

Ogun State Governor, Dapo Abiodun, has appointed two-time former world heavyweight boxing champion, Anthony Joshua, as the state's Sports Ambassador.

The announcement was made on the governor's X page following Joshua's visit to the Government House in Abeokuta yesterday.

Abiodun wrote, "As a gesture of our collective pride and recognition of his contributions to sports, we were delighted to present him with a letter appointing him as a Sports Ambassador for Ogun State. This appointment underscores our commitment to celebrating excellence and supporting individuals who bring honour and pride to our state."

"Together, we look forward to Anthony Joshua achieving even greater victories and continuing to be a beacon of inspiration for Ogun State and beyond."

The governor praised Joshua's outstanding accomplishments in the



world of boxing, noting that they continue to inspire millions, including the people of the state.

He highlighted that Joshua's dedication, discipline, and excellence reflect the core values upheld by the state.

The boxer was joined by some of his family members during the special courtesy visit.

Governor Abiodun announced plans to construct a new indoor boxing ring, which will be named after Joshua.

He also revealed that the 35-year-old boxer will ignite the Gateway Games National Sports Festival torch, which has been rescheduled to May next year.

West Ham's Michail Antonio discharged from hospital after car accident

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

West Ham United striker Michail Antonio has been discharged from the hospital after more than three weeks of recovery following a serious car accident on December 7.

The 34-year-old, who is West Ham's all-time leading scorer in the Premier League with 68 goals in 268 appearances, sustained a broken leg in the crash, requiring surgery to treat a lower limb fracture. Antonio was trapped in his vehicle after the accident, which occurred in Epping, Essex, and had to be freed by emergency responders before being rushed to a central London hospital.

Antonio's recovery has been nothing short of remarkable, with West Ham manager Julen Lopetegui calling it a "miracle" that the Jamaican international is now stable. Despite his injury, Antonio remained connected with his teammates via a video



call, offering support before West Ham's vital 2-1 victory over Wolverhampton Wanderers on December 9. The players honored Antonio by wearing "Antonio 9" shirts before kick-off.

In a show of appreciation for the emergency services and medical staff who supported Antonio, West Ham United announced they would donate nearly £60,000 to the NHS and Air Ambulances UK charities, the proceeds coming from the auction of the commemorative shirts.

"Everyone at the club would like to reiterate their heartfelt thanks to the first responders, emergency services, air ambulance staff, and the NHS for the incredible support given to Michail in the wake of the accident," a West Ham statement read.

The club has been buoyed by the outpouring of support from fans and fellow players alike, and Antonio's recovery continues to inspire hope as he begins the next chapter of his healing process.

A Year in Sports: Global and Nigerian highlights of 2024

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

The year 2024 was a thrilling one for sports enthusiasts worldwide, with numerous events that showcased the best of human athleticism, skill, and determination. From historic tournaments to inspiring achievements, both globally and in Nigeria, here is an expanded overview of the year's most memorable moments in sports.

Global Sporting Highlights

Paris 2024 Summer Olympics

The Paris Summer Olympics, held from July 26 to August 11, captured global attention with its innovations and celebrations of diversity. Among the standout moments were the debut of breaking (breakdancing) as an Olympic sport and the achievement of full gender parity in athlete participation.

The United States emerged as the overall leader with 40 gold medals and a total of 113 medals.

Host nation France delighted home fans with its best-ever performance, securing 16 gold medals and finishing fifth overall. Athletes from smaller nations also shone, with countries like Fiji excelling in rugby sevens and Jamaica continuing their dominance in sprint events.

UEFA Euro 2024

Germany played host to the UEFA European Football Championship, a tournament that featured high-octane action and stunning upsets. Italy triumphed as the champions, defeating England 3-1 in a dramatic final in Berlin.

ICC Men's T20 World Cup

Co-hosted by the United States and the West Indies from June 4 to 30, the ICC Men's T20 World Cup was a spectacle of cricketing excellence. India claimed the title, defeating South-Africa in the final, thanks to a scintillating performance by star batsman Virat Kohli, who was named Player of the Tournament.

Formula One

As Formula 1 returns to the grid for the 2024 season the drivers assemble at pre-



season testing in Bahrain.

The Formula One season saw Max Verstappen continuing his dominance, securing his fourth consecutive drivers' championship. Notably, Lewis Hamilton made history by becoming the first driver to achieve 200 career podium finishes.

Super Eagles at AFCON 2024

The Africa Cup of Nations was a rollercoaster for Nigeria's Super Eagles. Under the leadership of coach Jose Peseiro, the team reached the final, demonstrating resilience and skill. Although they narrowly lost 2-1 to host nation Ivory Coast, the Super Eagles' journey reignited hope among fans and showcased the emergence of new talents such as Victor Boniface and Gift Orban.

2024 Nigeria Summer Olympics Performance

Nigeria sent a contingent of athletes to Paris to compete in athletics, wrestling, boxing, cycling, and canoeing. While the team did not secure any medals, several athletes achieved personal bests:

Tobi Amusan advanced to the 100m hurdles final, continuing her streak as one of the world's top hurdlers.

Nigeria's women's relay team set a new African record in the 4x100m event, finishing fourth overall.

D'Tigress' Basketball Triumph

Nigeria's women's basketball team, D'Tigress, continued their dominance on the African continent, winning the 2024 FIBA Women's AfroBasket

Championship. The team also made strides globally, reaching the quarterfinals of the Women's Olympic Basketball Tournament, their best performance yet.

National Youth Games Success

At the National Youth Games, Lagos State emerged as the overall champion, excelling in athletics, swimming, and team sports. The event highlighted the depth of talent in Nigeria and underscored the importance of grassroots development programs.

Notable Individual Achievements

Asisat Oshoala had an impressive 2024, winning her third UEFA Women's Champions League and the Supercopa de España with Barcelona. She also joined Bay FC in the NWSL, scoring the club's first-ever goal, and was named among The Guardian's Top 100 Best Female Footballers.

Victor Boniface had an exceptional year with Bayer Leverkusen in 2024, helping secure the Bundesliga title, DFB-Pokal, and DFL-Supercup. Individually, he won the Bundesliga Rookie of the Season, earned a spot in the Team of the Season, and was the UEFA Europa League joint top scorer in 2023. Despite his success, he was disappointed about missing the 2024 CAF Player of the Year shortlist.

The Road Ahead

The successes and challenges of 2024 have set the stage for further growth in Nigerian sports. Investments in infrastructure, coaching, and athlete welfare are crucial to ensuring consistent success on the global stage. Similarly, the inspiring performances across various disciplines underline the need for sustained support for youth and grassroots programs.

Globally, 2024 reminded us of the unifying power of sports, bringing nations together in the spirit of competition and camaraderie. As the world looks forward to 2025, the lessons and triumphs of this year will undoubtedly inspire even greater achievements.

Plymouth Argyle sack Rooney after 25 matches

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Former Manchester United star, Wayne Rooney, has been sacked by Plymouth Argyle manager after just 25 matches and seven months in charge of the club in the Championship.

The 39-year-old is returning to his wife and children in Cheshire after another disastrous spell in management ended after seven months.

In an official statement released by the club, today, Argyle and Rooney “mutually part ways with immediate effect” and will depart the club with Assistant Head Coach Mike Phelan and first team coach Simon Ireland.

“We would like to thank Wayne and his team for all their efforts and wish them well for the future.

“The club will be making no further comment at this stage with updates on our new first team management staff in due course,” the club statement said.

The departing Rooney said: “I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board of Plymouth Argyle Football Club, in particular Simon Hallett and Neil Dewsnip who I shared great relationships with.

“Thanks also to all the staff who made me feel welcome and who make the club such a special place, the players and fans for their efforts and support during my time as Head Coach and I wish them all the best for the future.

“To the Green Army thanks for making the games at Home Park so special, they are memories that we will share forever.

“I would also like to give a special mention to my coaching staff Kevin Nancekivell, Simon Ireland, Darryl Flahavan and Mike Phelan for their



knowledge, dedication, help and support.

“Plymouth Argyle will always hold a special place in my heart, and I will continue to look out for and take interest in their results.”

In a statement, Rooney thanked the club for giving him the job in May, declaring that Argyle would always have a ‘special place in my heart’ and he and the fans would have ‘memories that we will share forever’.

But his failure at Plymouth raises questions about whether he will manage again at the top level with broadcasters queuing up to offer him a top pundit role after temporary stints with the BBC and Sky Sports in the past.

Rooney’s sacking came hours after a new video emerged appearing to show him giving a mystery woman a tour of his £5,000-a-month apartment after an evening in a local pub singing karaoke.

Last night he said it was ‘simply not true’ the female companion entered alone, insisting that a ‘couple kindly gave me a lift home’ and he then

showed them around his penthouse flat close to the city’s famous Hoe.

Wayne was appointed to the Plymouth boss in May – his third stint in the English second-tier after failures at Derby County and Birmingham City. He has also managed in the United States following a glittering playing career where he was England’s best player for a generation.

Rooney oversaw only 25 matches in all competitions at Argyle, with his side having recorded just five wins. Plymouth lost five of his last six games, including two 4-0 shellackings over the Christmas period.

And off the pitch, there were concerns about his lifestyle – including from his wife Coleen, who was said to be worried about how he spent many evenings alone eating fast food, drinking and playing video games.

Rooney reportedly struggled to adapt to life away from his wife and sons. He had been spotted drinking regularly in Plymouth’s pubs and bars, making new friends while enjoying quiz nights and also belting out hits at karaoke events.