

ECOWAS leaders pledge united front against coups, insecurity

ABUJA ECOWAS Heads of State and Government have agreed to forge a united front to end the spread of military coups across West Africa. Leaders also resolved to curb terrorism and other forms of insecurity threatening the region. The decision was taken in Abuja on Sunday during the 68th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority, following repeated military takeovers in the Sahel. President Bola Tinubu said incessant coups, organised crime, arms proliferation and cyber insecurity were regional crises requiring collective action. "These forms of criminality have no respect for borders," Tinubu told fellow leaders at the Nigeria-hosted summit. He acknowledged disagreements among member states but said differences did not erase shared identity or collective responsibility. "External threats confronting West Africa today demand nothing less than a united front," the Nigerian leader said. He warned that terrorism, unconstitutional changes of government and climate shocks recognise no borders across the region. "No single Member State can achieve enduring stability in isolation. Our security and prosperity are indivisible. We must act with shared resolve," Tinubu said. He reaffirmed Nigeria's "unwavering commitment" to ECOWAS ideals and collective defence of the region's future. "Our unity is not transactional, but foundational. Fraternity, not force, must define ECOWAS," he said. The President regretted deepening internal disagreement.

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The Nigerian Observer

...that the people may know

PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968 | VOL. 46, NO. 1,153 | MONDAY 15TH DECEMBER, 2025.

Defections: Tinubu 'll never use EFCC to harass opposition —Presidency

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Edo reviews Radisson Hotel deal amid ₦385m monthly debt

BENIN CITY The Edo government has said that it is servicing a ₦385 million monthly Irrevocable Standing Payment Order for the Radisson Hotel project. The Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Mr Kassim Afegbua, disclosed this on Sunday in Benin City. Afegbua said the obligation stems from a ₦25 billion capital market facility secured by the previous administration. He noted that the liability has prompted a comprehensive review of the transaction and its underlying agreements. According to him, Edo continues to bear the debt burden despite emerging concerns over the project's equity arrangement. He expressed concern that a private investor reportedly holds 80 percent equity, while the state retains 20 percent, despite substantial financial exposure. Afegbua said preliminary records show the state raised the ₦25 billion facility and began the project before introducing a private investor. "The concern is not political; it is about understanding how public funds were deployed and how equity interests were structured," he said. He added that reviewed documents do not clearly show the private investor's financial contribution before the equity restructuring. Afegbua also said no evidence of a competitive bidding process had been identified during the assessment. He explained that the review extends to other inherited projects, including the Museum of West African Art. The commissioner said the exercise aims to determine the state's financial obligations, liabilities and benefits. He stressed that the Governor Monday Okpebholo administration is guided by due process, transparency and accountability in public finance management. "We owe Edo people clarity on how their money was used," Afegbua said, describing it as essential for continuity and record-keeping. He disclosed that, after the reviews, the government would act within the law, including engaging regulatory and anti-corruption agencies where necessary. Responding to opposition criticism, Afegbua said the government welcomed constructive engagement but urged restraint to allow institutional reviews. On Government House power supply, he clarified that Edo has no ownership stake in Osiomo Power Plant. He said the state adopted alternative energy sources, including solar and BEDC services, to improve cost efficiency. Afegbua added that the governor prioritises infrastructure delivery and funding for institutions, including Ambrose Alli University and Edo State University. He called on former public officials to cooperate with the reviews, reaffirming that transparency and accountability remain central to governance.



OSUN STATE APC PRIMARY ELECTION: Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo (2nd right); flanked by the Governor of Ondo State, Lucky Aiyedatiwa (2nd from left); Chairman of All Progressives Congress (APC), Osun State, Sooko Tajudeen Lawal Olaniyi (right) and Munirudee Oyebamiji during the APC, Osun State primary election at the party Secretariat in Osun .

Asset tracking: ICPC recovers ₦37.44bn, \$2.35m in 2025

ABUJA The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) has announced the recovery of ₦37.44 billion and \$2.353 million in 2025 through asset seizures and forfeitures. Its Spokesperson Okor Odey said this in a statement on Sunday in Abuja. Odey explained that the ICPC Chairman, Dr Musa Adamu Aliyu, SAN, disclosed the figures in Abuja at the ICPC's End-of-Year Engagement, Send-off for retiring staff, and Annual Merit Awards. The chairman described the feat as one of the commission's most significant annual recovery figures to date. Aliyu described 2025 as "a pivotal year marked by substantial progress across enforcement, prevention, and public enlightenment." Reviewing operational achievements, Aliyu revealed that ICPC investigated 263 cases, exceeding its target of 250, and filed 61 cases in court, achieving a 55.74 per cent conviction rate. "Among the year's notable successes was the conviction of Prof. Cyril Ndifon of the University of Calabar, who received a five-year prison sentence for offences relating to sexual harassment and cyberbullying." Aliyu noted that this judgment sent a strong signal of the Commission's resolve to confront all forms of abuse of office.

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Defections: Tinubu 'll never use EFCC to harass opposition — Presidency

ABUJA

The Presidency has said that President Bola Tinubu will never de-

ploy the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to harass opposition figures.

Presidential Spokesperson,

Mr Bayo Onanuga, made this known in a statement on Sunday in Abuja.

Onanuga insisted that recent defections to the All Progressives Congress (APC) were voluntary.

He described claims by some opposition politicians that democracy was under threat as baseless and self-serving.

He said politicians joining the APC did so freely, driven by confidence in President Tinubu's reform agenda.

"Our Constitution guarantees freedom of association and the right to change political affiliation at any time," he said.

Onanuga noted that no individual was coerced into joining the governing party.

He dismissed allegations that the EFCC was being weaponised, stressing that the anti-graft agency is independent and operates within its statutory mandate.

"President Tinubu does not

issue directives to any anti-corruption agency on whom to investigate, arrest, or prosecute," he said.

He added that those with cases before the EFCC should defend themselves through due process rather than politicise accountability.

Onanuga said allegations against the government were distractions by politicians running out of issues to challenge the administration.

"No one is above the law.

Political affiliation should not shield anyone from investigation," he said.

He also recalled that some critics had faced EFCC investigations even before Tinubu assumed office in 2023.

Onanuga urged political actors to respect national institutions and support the collective fight against corruption.

"The fight against corruption is a shared responsibility and must not be trivialised by politicised narratives," he said.

Ebonyi workers to get N150,000 Xmas bonus —Nwifuru

ABAKALIKI

Governor Francis Nwifuru of Ebonyi State on Sunday announced a N150,000 Christmas bonus for all categories of civil servants in the state.

Nwifuru made the announcement, during a Sunday Church service at the Government House Chapel, Abakaliki.

The Governor explained that the gesture aligned with his administration's unwavering commitment to improving the welfare of workers in the state.

According to Nwifuru, this in spite of the insignificant revenue that had accrued to the state in the past one year.

On the forthcoming local government election in the state, he promised a level-play-

ing ground for all the aspirants.

Nwifuru explicitly declared that he had "no preferred candidate" and had "anointed no one" for the exercise.

He said, "As far as I am concerned, the will of the people must prevail, the people must choose their representatives without interference from any quarters."

The governor reiterated his directive to political appointees wishing to contest the local government election to resign in line with the extant electoral guidelines.

"It is not my duty to pick you as the Chairman of your local government area

"If you are contesting for the Chairmanship position in the next year's council election as an appointee, you must resign as stipulated by the law," Nwifuru insisted.



GRADUATION CEREMONY:

L-R: Governor Caleb Mutfwang of Plateau State; Vice President Kashim Shettima; Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Vice President, Sen Ibrahim Hadejia and other dignitaries at the Graduation ceremony of Senior Executive Course 47, National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru, in Jos at 4th weekend.

ECOWAS leaders pledge united front...

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ments, warning they had shaken the bloc's foundations.

"We are most vulnerable not when challenged from outside, but when weakened from within," Tinubu said.

He thanked member states for efforts to restore stability and confidence across West Africa.

"Our shared geography is an opportunity to protect the dignity of our peoples," he added.

ECOWAS Authority Chairman, President Julius Maada Bio of Sierra Leone, thanked Tinubu and Nigeria for hosting the session.

Bio praised Nigeria's leadership and commended its role in safeguarding constitutional order in Benin Republic.

He described the session as a defining moment for ECOWAS and a turning point for over 400 million West Africans.

Bio disclosed that from January 2026, ECOWAS will re-

duce air travel costs across the region.

ECOWAS Commission President, Dr Omar Touray, acknowledged support from foreign and continental partners.

He said recent events showed the strength of regional solidarity and swift collective responses.

Touray cited instability in Guinea-Bissau and an attempted coup in Benin Republic, addressed through decisive regional action.

He also revealed that Aliko Dangote will serve as Chairman of the ECOWAS Business Council.

AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Youssouf said the session strengthened coordination to advance democracy and regional stability.

Represented by Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Amb. Bankole Adeoye, he described recent coup attempts as "unacceptable to the African Union."

Let's resist disunity by external forces, ex-finance minister, others urge Nigerians

WASHINGTON

Mrs Zainab Ahmed, Nigeria's former Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, has urged Nigerians to resist any attempt by external forces to divide them along religious and ethnic lines.

Ahmed told newsmen at the Nigeria Day celebration at the Nigerian Embassy in Washington, DC that "Nigerians are one."

Ahmed, now at the World Bank as the Executive Director for Angola, Nigeria and South Africa, served under late President Muhammadu Buhari from 2019-2023.

"I think it's very thoughtful

of the Nigerian community and the Nigerian Embassy to have put this event together, and it's very timely, because we need to tell the world that we are actually one," she said.

"We may have our differences, but we are a delight in the differences that we have.

"We don't need any external person, external body or external country to come and sort things out for us.

"We have the full capacity to sort ourselves out and we must not allow any external parties to come between us."

She commended the organisers for holding the event in spite of the recent designation of Nigeria as a Country of Par-

ticular Concern (CPC).

"What I see tonight is unity in our diversity. We are different people, but we are also the same," she stressed.

"There is no country we can call home but Nigeria. So, I'm really glad that this happens, because it brought people together. We use these opportunities to bond.

"We had fun in the process, but it's important that we should do more of this in different places and show the world that we are one."

Ahmed commended Nigerians in the U.S. and beyond for making Nigeria proud and flying the country's flag high wherever they are.

"Nigerians are extremely hard-

working people, outstanding in various fields of endeavour across the U.S. and no, not just across the U.S. but across the world.

"We should celebrate the good that we are as Nigerians," she said.

Nigeria's Acting Ambassador to the U.S., Amb. Samson Iteboje (middle) and some Nigerian-American community leaders during the Nigeria Day celebration at the Nigerian Embassy in Washington, DC.

Also speaking with newsmen, the acting Ambassador of Nigeria to the U.S., Amb. Samson Iteboje, lauded Nigerian-Americans for their leadership in medicine, technology, business, public service, academia and the arts.

Asset tracking: ICPC recovers...

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The chairman highlighted extensive preventive work undertaken across Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs).

"A total of 344 MDAs were assessed using the Ethics and Integrity Compliance Scorecard, while 66 corruption-monitoring activities and 1,490 project-tracking exercises were carried out nationwide.

"Systems Study and Corruption Risk Assessments were also completed in 12 MDAs, designed to reduce structural

vulnerabilities to corruption.

"On public enlightenment, ICPC reached more than 235,000 Nigerians through 644 sensitisation activities, generated 3.5 million digital engagements, established 86 Anti-Corruption Clubs and Vanguard, and trained 2,707 participants at the ICPC Academy," he said.

According to him, the commission also broadened its partnerships, initiating 15 collaborative activities, while civil society organisations executed 57 complementary engagements

Troops kill 14 terrorists, intercept ransom in nationwide operations

ABUJA

Troops of the Nigerian Army have recorded major operational gains nationwide, killing no fewer than 14 terrorists and intercepted N9 million ransom in the last 48 hours.

A credible source at Army Headquarters told newsmen that troops also apprehended several suspects and rescued many kidnapped victims in coordinated operations across multiple theatres.

In the North-East, he said the troops of Operation HADIN

KAI sustained offensive actions in Borno and Yobe States, killing 11 ISWAP/JAS terrorists in ambushes, fighting patrols and follow-up exploitation operations in Bama, Konduga and Guzamala Local Government Areas.

He added that weapons, ammunition, motorcycles, bicycles and terrorist logistics, including energy drinks and food items were recovered.

According to him, troops also arrested three suspected ISWAP/JAS collaborators, including logistics suppliers intercepted along the Konduga-Bama road, with 700 packs of

energy drinks, mobile phones and cash recovered.

In the North-West, the source said the troops under Operation FANSAN YAMMA engaged terrorists in Zurmi and Maradun Local Government Areas of Zamfara, forcing them to retreat into surrounding bushes.

"In a major breakthrough, troops in Kaduna State intercepted a vehicle conveying N9 million ransom, meant for the release of six kidnapped children abducted in Katsina State," he said.

The source said the troops in the North-Central foiled kid-

napping attempts and rescued victims in Plateau, Nasarawa and Taraba.

He said that several victims were freed after kidnappers fled on sighting troops, while five suspected kidnappers were arrested in Kaduna State, adding that efforts were ongoing to rescue other abducted persons and apprehend fleeing criminals.

In the South-South, he said the troops conducting anti-illegal bunkering operations in Akwa Ibom uncovered about 600 litres of illegally refined AGO, which was handled in line with operational directives.

NEWS

Okpebholo inspects Ogheghe, old Sapele roads, pushes for rapid completion

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, on Sunday carried out an unscheduled inspection of the ongoing construction of Ogheghe Road and Old Sapele Road in Benin City, directing contractors to double the pace

of work to maximise the dry season window.

The governor, who visited the project sites after a church service, said the inspection was necessary to personally assess progress and ensure timely delivery of the roads.

"I have not been around here for some time, so coming

to look at this work and see what is going on is important," Okpebholo said.

He stressed that the dry season offered a limited opportunity for accelerated construction, urging contractors to take full advantage of the period.

"We are experiencing the dry season now. Apart from

this time, there is no more time. We need to take advantage of the season, so the speed has to be doubled," he added.

While expressing satisfaction with the quality of work, the governor said that the tempo must be increased to meet project timelines, noting that only about five months of dry season remained.

"Now that I'm here, I've seen the extent of what they are doing and they are doing well. But

I still need them to buckle up and be faster with the pace of work I'm seeing now," he said.

Okpebholo explained that photographs taken during the inspection were to verify compliance with approved specifications.

"The reason I snapped those pictures in one of the sections of the road is to see if what is on the ground matches the specification I have in my record," he stated.

He recalled that the 4.1-kilometre Ogheghe–Old Sapele Road project was initiated following complaints by residents over erosion and safety concerns.

"When we came here last time, people thought it would never be possible. We heard that a child died here as a result of flooding and erosion; the child was washed away, and that was the essence of our intervention," the governor said.



CONDOLENCE VISIT:

Former President Goodluck Jonathan (R), signing a condolence register of the Late Deputy Governor of Bayelsa State, Sen. Lawrence Ewhrudjakpo, during his condolence visit to the deceased family. With him is the Governor Douye Diri of Bayelsa State in Yenagoa on Sunday.

EIRS, Lottery Commission seal partnership to strengthen gaming regulation

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS) and the Edo State Lottery Regulatory Commission have agreed to deepen collaboration to strengthen regulation and unlock the revenue potential of the gaming sector.

Executive Chairman of EIRS, Otunba Bankole-Balogun, made the pledge while receiving the Chairman of the Lottery Regulatory Commission, Hon. Frank Okiye, and his team on a courtesy visit.

Balogun said the visit pro-

vided an opportunity to cement institutional relationships and ensure that the Lottery Commission effectively discharges its mandate.

He cautioned against regulatory pitfalls in the gaming sector, noting that some emerging practices and bills could conflict with principles of natural justice, if not properly managed.

The EIRS chairman said the revenue service possessed vast expertise and institutional knowledge in gaming regulation, having been empowered under Section 9(b) of the Edo State Tax Administration Law

of 2012 to collect all internally generated revenue for the state.

"You are sitting on a potentially massive revenue base for the state," Balogun told the Lottery Commission chairman, urging him to conduct due diligence and identify areas of strength, while leveraging collaboration for effective regulation.

He assured the commission of EIRS' commitment to its success, describing synergy between both agencies as critical to achieving the development objectives of Governor Monday Okpebholo.

In his response, Okiye said the visit became necessary following the governor's assent to the Edo State Lottery Com-

mission Law on September 26, transferring regulatory responsibilities from EIRS to the newly established commission.

He said the commission, inaugurated on October 14, commenced operations immediately, making engagement with key stakeholders imperative.

"We are partners and compatriots with a common mission to deliver for Edo State through synergy and knowledge transfer," Okiye said, soliciting support from EIRS.

He added that the commission was focused on building public trust through transparent regulation, collaboration and institutional support.

Outrage in Edo as family alleges organ harvesting at mortuary

MUSA IDAHOSA/
MIKE OSAROGIAGBON

BENIN CITY

Tension gripped Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State at the weekend after a family alleged that vital organs were missing from the body of their late father and relative, sparking outrage and the arrest of a mortuary attendant.

The incident occurred after the corpse, which had been deposited at Akugbe Hospital Mortuary along Omokaro Street, was taken home for burial rites.

Family members reportedly noticed an unusual stench during the lying-in-state, which raised suspicion that the body had been tampered with. Sources said that in an attempt to mask the odour with perfume, relatives made a shocking discovery that some internal organs were allegedly missing, while the stomach area was said to have been stuffed with cellophane.

The development reportedly halted burial preparations, as the family immediately returned the corpse to the mortuary and demanded explanations from the management.

The allegation sparked outrage in the community, with an angry mob said to have vandalised parts of the mortuary. Some other families with corpses stored at the facility were also reported to have hurriedly removed their loved ones' remains over fears of similar treatment.

A video that later went viral on social media showed the corpse with a visible opening on the chest area, as well as pieces of cellophane allegedly removed from the body, further fuelling public anger.

Confirming the incident, the spokesperson of the Edo State Police Command, SP Eno Ikoedem, said a mortuary attendant, identified as Mr. Obakpolor, had been arrested following a distress call.

She said investigations had commenced to determine the circumstances surrounding the alleged organ harvesting, assuring that anyone found culpable would be prosecuted in accordance with the law.

According to reports, the deceased was identified as Mr. Uyi, aged 45, a commercial tricycle rider operating in the Nomayo area and a native of Urhonigbe Community in Orhionmwon Local Government Area of Edo State.

Universal Health Coverage: Edo takes free healthcare, insurance enrolment to communities

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government, through the Edo State Health Insurance Commission (EDOHIC), has marked the 2025 Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day with health walks, free medical screenings and on-the-spot enrolment into the State Equity Plan across the three senatorial districts.

The activities were part of efforts to strengthen equitable healthcare delivery and expand enrolment into the Edo State Health Insurance Scheme.

The 2025 UHC Day, themed, "Unaffordable Health Costs, We're Sick of It," aligned with the global call for resilient health systems that protect families from financial hardship.

Speaking at the event, Director-General of EDOHIC, Dr. Augusta Ikpea-Enaholo, reaffirmed the state government's

commitment to accessible, affordable and quality healthcare.

"Universal Health Coverage is a shared responsibility. Today's health walk, free screenings and enrolment into the State Equity Plan are practical steps toward ensuring no resident is left behind," she said.

A health walk was held around Oka Market in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area, with participation from the Ministries of Health, Local Government, Women Affairs and Social Development, EDOSEMA, NEMA, EDSTMA, EDOCOHEST and the Edo State College of Nursing Sciences.

Free medical services were also provided at Afashio Primary Health Centre in Etsako West and Olinin Primary Health Centre, Uzea, in Esan North East, covering blood pressure and blood sugar checks, physical examinations and health education.

Edo Assembly orders speed-up on Upper Ekehuan road

BENIN CITY

The Edo State House of Assembly Special Ad-hoc Committee on Project Inspection has directed the contractor handling the Upper Ekehuan Road project to accelerate work to enable residents benefit from the project.

Chairman of the committee, Hon. Addeh Isibor, gave the directive during an inspection of the road at Igo Community in Ovia North East Local Government Area.

Isibor said the visit formed

part of the House's continuous oversight of projects being executed by the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo across the state.

Although heavy rainfall hindered full assessment of some sections, he noted that the committee was impressed that the contractor remained on site despite the weather challenges.

Hon. Kingsley Ugabi, a member of the committee, said the project reflected the governor's sensitivity to the needs of communities in Oredo East and Ovia North East Local Govern-

ment Areas, adding that residents were already witnessing dividends of democracy.

Similarly, Hon. Donald Okogbe described the Upper Ekehuan Road as a major legacy project; he commended the quality of the toll-bin works, but urging the contractor to significantly increase construction speed.

He said the committee had conveyed its concerns to the Commissioner for Works, expressing confidence that the intervention would improve performance and ensure timely delivery.

Providing technical updates, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Projects, Engr. Phoebe Williams-Bello, disclosed that the 12.6-kilometre road had recorded over one kilometre of toll-bin construction on both sides, with about 850 metres of earthworks completed.

She identified persistent rainfall as the major constraint.

The Commissioner for Works, Hon. Felix Akhabue, assured that monitoring would be intensified, expressing optimism that work would progress faster with the onset of the dry season.

FG bans admission, transfer into SS3 classes

ABUJA

The Federal Government has announced a nationwide prohibition on the admission and transfer of students into Senior Secondary School 3 in all public and pri-

vate secondary schools.

This is contained in a statement made available to newsmen in Abuja on Sunday by Mrs Folasade Boriowo, Director of Press and Public Relations, Federal Ministry of Education.

Boriowo said the directive followed growing concerns over the increasing incidence of examination malpractice, including the use of special centres during external examinations.

She said such centres undermine the integrity and credibility of Nigeria's education system.

According to her, the policy will take effect from the

2026/2027 academic session, with admissions and transfers now restricted strictly to Senior Secondary School One and Senior Secondary School 2.

"Admission or transfer into Senior Secondary School Three will no longer be permitted under any circumstance," she said.

She added that the measure was aimed at discouraging

last-minute movement of students for examination-related advantages.

Boriowo said the policy would also ensure proper academic monitoring and promote continuity in teaching and learning.

"School proprietors, principals and administrators nationwide have been directed to

comply fully with the policy.

"Any violation will attract appropriate sanctions in line with existing education regulations and guidelines," she said.

She reaffirmed the ministry's commitment to maintaining academic standards, promoting fairness and restoring credibility to public examinations across the country.

UNIBEN mourns former VC Baikie

BENIN CITY

The Vice-Chancellor (VC) of the University of Benin, Prof. Edoba Omoregie has expressed his condolences over the death of a former Vice-Chancellor of the institution, Prof. Adamu Baikie, who passed away at the age of 94.

In a statement by the University's Public Relations Officer, Dr Benedicta Ehanire, Omoregie commiserated with the Baikie family and the academic community.

The VC described the late scholar as a towering figure in education, whose influence spanned Nigeria and the African continent.

Prof. Baikie, who served as VC of the University of Be-

nin from 1978 to 1986 died in Zaria, Kaduna State.

The deceased was also recognised as the first Professor of Education in Northern Nigeria.

Omoriegie described the late Baikie as "an astute educationist and administrator" who charted many innovative and impactful paths in Nigeria's educational history and across Africa, leaving indelible footprints.

Beyond his tenure at UNIBEN, he explained that the deceased rendered distinguished service as VC of the National University of Lesotho and later the Nasarawa State University.

He said that the former VC contributed significantly to the growth of higher education in different climes.

NAF begins nationwide aptitude test for 2025 recruitment of 20,000 candidates

ABUJA

No fewer than 20,000 applicants nationwide are participating in the Nigerian Air Force Zonal General Aptitude Test for the 2025 Basic Military Training Course 46 recruitment exercise.

The Director of Public Relations and Information of the Nigerian Air Force, Air Commodore Ehimen Ejodame, said in a statement on Sunday that the aptitude test began on Saturday across the country.

Ejodame described the test as a key stage of the recruitment process and said it was being conducted simultaneously at 15 zonal centres located in Sokoto, Minna, Kaduna, Kano, Bauchi, Maiduguri, Yola, Makurdi, Jos, Ilorin, Ipetu-Ijesa, Enugu, Benin, Port Harcourt and Ikeja.

He said the nationwide spread of the centres reflected the commitment of the Nigerian Air Force to inclusiveness, equal opportunity and a trans-

parent, merit-based recruitment system that allows qualified Nigerians from all parts of the country to compete fairly.

According to him, the large turnout underscores the sustained confidence of Nigerian youths in the Air Force as a disciplined, professional and patriotic institution, as well as its resolve to attract capable, motivated and resilient personnel to strengthen national defence and internal security operations.

Speaking on the exercise, the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Sunday Aneke, said the recruitment process was guided by fairness, integrity and strict adherence to established standards.

According to him, the Nigerian Air Force remains firmly committed to recruiting the best candidates by merit, noting that the quality of personnel is fundamental to operational effectiveness and the successful execution of its constitutional mandate.



INSPECTION EXERCISE:

L-R: Commissioner for Works, Hon. Felix Akhabue; Chairman of the Committee, Hon. Addeh Isibor and Committee members, Hon. Ugabi Kingsley, Hon. Donald Okogbe and Hon. Atu Evbaguehita, during the Ad-hoc Committee of the Edo State House of Assembly's inspection of ongoing government projects at inspection exercise of the reconstruction of Palace Road, Upper Mission Extension, Benin City, with the State Commissioner for Works.

PHOTO: GODWIN ISEGUAN.

Osun 2026: Accord confident of Adeleke's re-election

LAGOS

The Forum of South West Chairmen of the Accord Party has expressed confidence that Osun Governor Ademola Adeleke will win re-election in 2026.

The spokesperson of the forum and Chairman of the Accord Party in Ogun State, Mr Rotimi Oke, expressed the confidence in an interview with newsmen in Lagos.

Oke attributed the forum's confidence to Adeleke's performance in office, public acceptance, effective mobilisation and growing unity within the Accord Party across the South West.

He said Adeleke's leadership had delivered tangible benefits that meet the needs and expectations of residents.

"If a leader is good, even his critics cannot overlook his genuineness and sincerity in governance," Oke said.

He said Adeleke's administration is built on service and performance, adding that the governor is not given to deceit or political manipulation.

Oke recalled that the governor, after securing his party's ticket on December 10, outlined key accomplishments of his administration.

Listing some of the achievements, he said Osun State's ranking in national examina-

tion performance improved from 33rd under the immediate past administration to seventh under Adeleke.

According to him, the improvement in education standards under the governor is widely acknowledged, even by the opposition.

He also said the state's infrastructure deficit dropped from over 80 percent in 2022 to about 40 percent in 2025.

Oke said Adeleke's administration had also paid over 40 percent of inherited state debt, adding that the Debt Management Office confirmed the significant debt reduction.

He added that Adeleke had repositioned the health sector,

with the state emerging top in the South West in access to primary healthcare services, describing the feat as evidence of people-oriented governance.

Oke cited spontaneous public support after Accord's primary election as proof of mass acceptance, saying party leaders and supporters embarked on an unplanned procession through Osogbo, during which residents trooped out chanting slogans in support of Adeleke and the Accord Party.

He said with the public support being enjoyed by the governor and his performance in office, Adeleke would defeat other candidates to win the 2026 governorship election

Transportation expert lauds Mbah over security, infrastructure in Enugu

ABUJA

A transportation expert and elder statesman, Chief Chris Chigboh, has commended Enugu State Governor Peter Mbah for the remarkable improvements recorded in security and infrastructure in the state.

Chigboh, a former Secretary of Transportation in the Federal Capital Territory, stated this in an interview with newsmen in Abuja shortly after returning from Enugu State.

He said he personally observed the transformation programmes being implemented by the Mbah administration.

According to him, the developmental strides recorded in the state in the last two years indicate that Enugu State is on course to surpass the governor's target of building a \$30 billion economy by 2031.

"What I saw in Enugu beats my imagination, especially when compared with the state's lean receipts from the federation account.

"The security operation control centre is second to none. The recent addition of drones and other security infrastructure will help flush out terrorists and criminal elements from the state.

"With these measures, citi-

zens are set to enjoy crime-free Yuletide and New Year celebrations. The latest transportation infrastructure will also ease the movement of goods and services across the state," he said.

Chigboh said terrorism and banditry had negatively affected development plans in many parts of the country, leaving citizens in fear and deepening economic hardship.

He expressed satisfaction with the recent deployment of surveillance drones in a late-night operation around the Opi-Nsukka and Ugwogo-Nike forest, a notorious kidnappers' hideout, noting that the operation led to the evacua-

tion of bandits from the area.

"With the frontal attacks on criminals in Enugu, the state will attain greater economic prosperity in the near future," he added.

The Enugu State Government recently added two surveillance drones and 10 security vehicles to its security fleet, and also procured 200 Bus Rapid Transit buses and several electric vehicles for commercial transportation.

Chigboh, who also served as Secretary of Area Councils in the Federal Capital Territory, commended the cleanliness of Enugu metropolis and the rollout of smart schools across political wards in the state.

CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **IBUDE ESOSA** and **IBUDE GLAMOUR ESEOSA** are one and the same person. Henceforth, I now wish to be known as **IBUDE GLAMOUR ESEOSA**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **EMMANUEL EMMANUEL WISDOM** and **CHUCKWUMA EMMANUEL WISDOM** are one and the same person. Henceforth, I now wish to be known as **CHUCKWUMA EMMANUEL WISDOM**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known and addressed as **MISS ONONSELASE JOSEPHINE ESELEGBORIA** now wish to be known as **MRS IYOKA JOSEPHINE**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

RECONCILIATION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **ESESUMOKHAI ETINOSA**, **ASUKWO ESTHER ETINOSA** and **EMOVON ESTHER ETINOSA** are one and the same person. Henceforth, I now wish to be known as **EMOVON ESTHER ETINOSA**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

NEWS

Shettima: Tinubu to remodel NIPSS into global centre of excellence

JOS

Vice-President Kashim Shettima said that President Bola Tinubu's administration will remodel the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) into a digital and financially stable global centre

of excellence by 2030.

Shettima stated this on Saturday when he represented President Tinubu at the Graduation Ceremony of Senior Executive Course 47 of NIPSS in Kuru, Plateau State.

He said the institute's Senior Executive Course represents a deliberate investment in the

nation's future leadership, adding that NIPSS remains a meeting point for ideas that define policy, guide reform and influence the course of national development.

"President Bola Tinubu has been unequivocal in his commitment to supporting NIPSS in its transformation agenda, particularly in its ambition to become a digitally driven, financially stable and globally recognised centre of

excellence by 2030.

"We recognise the Institute's critical role in shaping national policy and in building the leadership capacity required to navigate an increasingly complex world," he declared.

Shettima said the support being given by the Tinubu administration goes beyond funding, infrastructure and the provision of a conducive research environment.

"Our support must therefore go beyond funding, infrastructure and a conducive research environment.

"It must ensure that NIPSS produces implementation-ready policy papers and that its outputs are fully integrated into national decision-making and execution frameworks," he said.

The Vice-President commended the theme of Senior Executive Course 47, 'Blue Economy and Sustainable Development in Nigeria', describing it as a clear reflection of current national priorities.

According to him, the theme "captures the reality that development, security, environmental stewardship and social inclusion are inseparable."

Shettima, however, observed that the strength of academic work does not lie only in its depth, but also in its practicality.

"But in its insistence that policy must be practical, implementable and firmly grounded in Nigeria's realities.

"We are grateful for your sustained and rigorous enquiries into the affairs of the maritime domain, enquiries that continue to provide the nation with insights it depends upon.

"Your latest research makes it clear that securing Nigeria's water-

ways, coastlines and inland communities goes far beyond safety alone. It speaks to livelihoods, food security, environmental protection and national cohesion.

"When young people have productive work, when communities trust the state and when institutions coordinate effectively, insecurity loses its oxygen," he said.

Shettima assured that the Tinubu administration takes evidence-based policymaking seriously, noting that relevant ministries, departments and agencies have been directed to give the report and recommendations of the graduands the attention they deserve, both for immediate application and long-term strategic planning.

He thanked the Director-General of NIPSS, Prof. Ayo Omotayo, the management and members of staff for their dedication, professionalism and commitment, assuring that the President would continue to uphold NIPSS as the nation's foremost centre for strategic thought and leadership development.

The Vice-President also applauded Governor Caleb Mutfwang and the people of Plateau State for sustaining a peaceful environment that has enabled the institute to function as a true national asset.



COURTESY VISIT:

Executive Chairman, Edo State Internal Revenue Service, (EIRS), Otunba Bankole-Balogun (left) making a presentation to the Chairman, Edo State Lottery Regulatory Commission, Hon. Frank Okiye during a courtesy visit to EIRS headquarters in Benin City.

CCB central to Nigeria's anti-corruption fight —Bello

ABUJA

The Chairman of the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB), Dr. Abubakar Bello, has said that the bureau is the centre of Nigeria's anti-corruption architecture.

Bello stated this on Sunday in Abuja during an interview with reporters.

"The CCB is the centre of the anti-corruption fight. Our work is intelligence.

"We have information on public servants through asset declaration," he said.

He highlighted improved collaboration among anti-corruption agencies, noting that the

bureau is working closely with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU).

Bello said some cases investigated by the ICPC had been transferred to the CCB for further action, while efforts were ongoing to formalise cooperation with the EFCC through memoranda of understanding.

"When the EFCC or ICPC requests any information, we provide it within the limits of the law, and they use it for investigation, prosecution and

convictions.

"The bureau also receives intelligence from the NFIU, tax authorities and registries, reinforcing its central role as a hub for both input and output in the anti-corruption ecosystem," he said.

According to him, these efforts are yielding results, citing Nigeria's improved international ratings and the country's recent exit from the grey list, led by the NFIU with support from other agencies.

Bello disclosed that the CCB is pursuing asset recovery cases abroad and has secured interim forfeitures, which he believes will further enhance Nigeria's global image once concluded.

"International organisations and embassies are now engaging the CCB, inviting us for discussions and support.

"This is happening because of the work we are doing.

"Once the CCB is fully resourced and doing what it is supposed to do, perceptions will continue to change," he said.

The CCB chairman said improved staffing, technology, motivation and inter-agency cooperation were critical to sustaining gains in the fight against corruption.

He explained that the bureau's challenge is not only about staff strength but also about skills and tools.

ABUJA

The Public and Private Development Centre (PPDC) has announced plans to establish a fully accredited digital academy to equip Nigerians of all ages with critical digital skills.

The Chief Executive Officer of PPDC, Mrs. Lucy Abagi, disclosed this in an interview in Abuja, saying the initiative would boost efficiency and global competitiveness.

She said the academy would be open to participants from as young as five years old to adults of any age.

Abagi emphasised that digital skills have become indispensable in Nigeria's expanding economy, describing them as essential tools for navigating, creating and managing information in a technology-driven world.

"PPDC is about 80 percent technology-driven. Everything we do has a technology component.

"Globally, tech skills are in high demand, and I foresee a time in the near future when the global market will come to Nigeria in search of skilled professionals," she said.

She noted that the rapid growth of internet usage, even at the community level, underscores the urgency of long-term investment in digital capacity building.

"The digital world is constantly evolving, and everyone wants to go digital.

"As a tech-driven organisation,

we must ensure that we have the skills needed to sustain and manage our products," she said.

Building on its safer internet and online capacity-building initiatives, Abagi said PPDC is expanding its vision with the creation of the PPDC Digital Academy.

"The academy will be open to everyone, from age five to adulthood, offering training in coding, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and more," she said.

According to her, about 20 young Nigerians have already benefited from the academy during its pilot phase.

She added that another pilot phase is planned for 2026, alongside efforts to finalise accreditation that will enable the academy to certify trainees.

"Our goal is to make it a fully accredited academy.

"We are putting structures in place to begin with at least two courses in the first phase," she said.

Abagi said the academy would strengthen PPDC's work while providing Nigerians with opportunities to compete in the global digital economy.

"We need an academy that trains Nigerians and advocates, empowering them with the digital skills required to thrive in today's world," she said.

PPDC was established in 2003 as a citizen-oriented organisation dedicated to promoting public participation in governance and strengthening the integrity of public institutions and governance processes.

Doctors advise regular screening for non-communicable diseases

ABUJA

Dr. Iorfa Tor-Ayiin, a Consultant Family Physician at the Federal Medical Centre, Makurdi, has advised Nigerians to undertake regular medical check-ups to prevent non-communicable diseases.

Tor-Ayiin gave the advice in an interview with journalists at the closing session of the Ninth Annual Abuja Cardiovascular Symposium in Abuja.

The symposium, themed "Hypertension, Diabetes and Heart Disease: Domesticating Global Solutions to Nigeria's

Deadly Trio," was organised by Cardiocare Multi-Specialty Hospital, a subsidiary of Limi Hospital, Abuja.

The two-day event attracted medical professionals from various health disciplines.

Tor-Ayiin said hypertension, diabetes and heart disease were selected as focus areas because they have become the leading causes of death among non-communicable diseases in Nigeria.

"Previously, people mainly died from infectious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and gastroenteritis.

"Today, lifestyle-related diseases like diabetes and hypertension are responsible for most deaths. These are conditions people develop due to lifestyle choices and ageing," he said.

He said the increasing burden of non-communicable diseases underscores the need for continuous training of healthcare workers.

"These diseases are not new, but their prevalence is increasing. This symposium is meant to refresh the knowledge of health workers on managing diabetes, hypertension and heart failure," he said.

Tor-Ayiin noted that participants included doctors, nurses, laboratory scientists and other healthcare professionals.

He said the symposium also focused on educating Nigerians on early warning signs and preventive measures.

"These diseases affect the heart and blood vessels, which are present throughout the body. That is why they affect virtually every organ," he said.

He urged Nigerians to regularly check their blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels, and to adhere strictly to medical advice.

CPC designation: Nigerians in U.S. unite in solidarity for homeland

WASHINGTON DC

Nigerians in the United States weekend rose above religious and ethnic affiliations in solidarity with the homeland amid Nigeria's recent designation as a "Country of Particular Concern" by the United States.

The Nigerians, who trooped out in colourful outfits, converged on the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in Washington, DC to celebrate the 2025 Nigeria Day.

"Despite the challenges facing our country, Nigerians remain united by a common commitment to peace, coexistence and national progress," Iteboje said.

"Across religious, ethnic and regional lines, Nigerians continue to work together to build

a more secure, prosperous and inclusive country."

The Nigerian envoy noted the recent concerns surrounding Nigeria's designation as a Country of Particular Concern.

According to him, the Nigerian government believes that the designation presents another opportunity to deepen Nigeria-United States relations.

"The Government of Nigeria recognises the seriousness of the CPC and welcomes sustained engagement and dialogue with the United States.

"Nigeria firmly believes that complex security and humanitarian challenges are best addressed through partnership rather than isolation.

"We remain committed to protecting all citizens, regardless of faith or background and to

strengthening accountability, early-warning mechanisms and coordinated responses to insecurity."

Making reference to Nigeria's role in aborting the recent military coup in the Republic of Benin, Iteboje said Nigeria remained the bulwark against backsliding democracy and the war against terrorism in the West

African sub-region and the Sahel.

"It was Nigeria, following the call for assistance by the government of Benin, that immediately sent troops to forestall that coup attempt.

"This is what Nigeria is capable of doing in the region.

"The United States needs to continuously partner with Nige-

ria to stabilise the sub-region and rid it of terrorism and undemocratic government," he stressed.

He extended "Nigeria's sincere appreciation" to the United States Government, Members of Congress, diplomatic partners and friends of Nigeria for their continued engagement and friendship.

"When the most powerful

country in the world, which also doubles as the bastion of democracy teams up with the biggest democracy in Africa, rest assured that big things will happen.

"We look forward to deepening our partnership in a spirit of mutual respect, shared responsibility and constructive collaboration," he said.



VISIT OF GLOBAL WOMEN COUNCIL:

L-R: Husband of the immediate past Governor of Delaware, USA, Prof. Naan Hall-Long; National President, Nigerian Air Force Wives Association (NAFOWA), Mrs Ngozi Aneke; immediate past Governor of Delaware, USA, Dr Bethany Hall-Long and National President, Global Women Council for Political and Parliamentary Leaders, Sen. Uche Ekwunife, during the visit of the delegation from the Global Women Council for Political and Parliamentary Leaders to the NAFOWA President in Abuja at the Weekend.

How logistics cost fuel 44% increase in Lagos onion prices

LAGOS

The price of onions in major markets in Lagos State has witnessed a significant surge, with bulk sellers reporting up to 44 percent increase in the cost per bag.

The sellers attribute the increase largely to the rising cost of transportation from northern production hubs.

The market stakeholders told newsmen in Lagos that the price hike had significantly impacted vendors and consumers alike, as the festive season draws nearer.

A bulk onion seller at the Mile 12 market, Mr Muhammad Kililu, said that the cost of a bag of onions had risen sharply.

"We used to sell onions for seventy thousand to ninety thousand Naira, but now it is between one hundred thousand to one hundred and thirty thousand Naira, depending on the size," he said.

Kililu attributed this significant shift in price to the rising cost of logistics.

"The transportation costs from the North to Lagos have increased, contributing to the price rise," he said.

The surge in the wholesale prices of the commodity now appears to be crippling retail profit margins.

A retail seller, Mrs Olurotimi Abimbola, who came for shopping at the Mile 12 market, chronicled her business experience as follows:

"I used to buy and sell them for seventy-five Naira each. Now I am buying them for seventy-five Naira each and selling for one hundred Naira; it is unsustainable, but what choice do I have," she lamented.

Meanwhile, mixed reactions have trailed the views of consumers on the development.

A buyer, Mrs Olayemi Janet, who appeared undaunted by the inflation simply said: "December is an off-season for onions, and I am prepared for the price hike.

"The economic situation in the country is not helping, so I am not surprised."

Group rallies grassroots media to counter misinformation, promote unity

LAGOS

The Tinubu Media Force (TMF) said that it is mobilising grassroots media communicators nationwide to counter misinformation and promote unity at the community level.

The National Coordinator of the TMF, Mr Gbenga Abiola, who disclosed this in a statement issued on Sunday in Lagos, said that people at the grassroots deserved being fed with credible news for national unity and progress.

Abiola said the group would host Nigeria's largest grassroots

media summit on December 16 in Abuja to help promote nation building through credible grassroots media.

He said the summit would bring together more than one thousand grassroots media communicators and community-based media practitioners.

According to him, participants will be drawn from the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory.

He said the summit themed "Amplifying the Renewed Hope Through Grassroots Voices: Empowering Grassroots Media for National Development," was designed to

strengthen community-level communication nationwide.

Abiola said it would also deepen public engagement with the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Tinubu.

He noted that grassroots communicators remained the most influential voices within local communities, playing a critical role in shaping public understanding of government policies.

"Grassroots media practitioners help counter false narratives and promote unity at the community level," he said.

Abiola said the summit was a deliberate effort to empower community media actors.

He added that the initiative would build their capacity to responsibly amplify national development initiatives.

According to him, the programme will focus on insecurity, economic reforms and youth employment, as well as human capital development.

Abiola stressed that effective grassroots communication remained essential for sustainable national progress.

He said participants would engage in strategic discussions and interactive sessions, which would equip practitioners with skills for informed public discourse.

He added that the summit underscored TMF's commitment to building a coordinated grassroots media network.

NAPTIP hands over 11 victims of human trafficking to Jigawa LG

DUTSE

The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) has handed over 11 victims of human trafficking to Ringim Local Government of Jigawa State.

While handing over the victims at a meeting in Dutse on Sunday, the NAPTIP Commander in the state, Abdulkadir Turajo, said the victims were rescued by the agency's operatives in Lokoja town of Kogi State.

Turajo, represented by Mr Yunusa Mohammed, the command's Head of Operations, said the victims, all males aged

between seven and fifteen, are from Tsaba, Kunkurawa and Tsabare villages of Ringim Local Government Area.

He said the handover was facilitated by the Jigawa State Ministry for Local Government and Community Development.

The commander appreciated the Ringim council and ministry for local government for their prompt response that facilitated the quick reintegration of the victims with their respective families.

Turajo further reiterated the agency's readiness to combat human trafficking through victim identification, rescue and reunification across the country.

LAGOS

The insurance industry is addressing long-standing solvency and capacity gaps through phased recapitalisation, a reform designed to strengthen underwriting capacity, restore public confidence and support broader economic growth.

Operators said that the Nigerian Insurance Industry Reform Act (NIIRA) 2025 provides a gradual transition that enables insurers to build capital sustainably, improve governance, enhance risk absorption and better protect policyholders.

NIIRA 2025, enacted to support Nigeria's ambition of building a \$1 trillion economy, seeks to reposition the insurance sector for resilience, competitiveness and increased contribution to national development.

Under the Act, minimum capital requirements have been raised to fifteen billion Naira for non-life insurers, \$10 billion for life insurers, \$15 billion for composite insurers and N35 billion for reinsurance companies, with full compliance required by July 30, 2026.

Recent disclosures by operators indicate that insurers are adopting structured and mar-

ket-sensitive strategies, rather than rushed capital raising, to meet the new thresholds.

Linkage Assurance Plc is among operators taking concrete steps, announcing plans to raise up to \$16 billion to strengthen its balance sheet and support future growth, subject to regulatory approvals.

Similarly, Sovereign Trust Insurance Plc has secured board approval to raise an initial \$5 billion through a rights issue as part of a broader recapitalisation programme, reflecting an industry-wide commitment to meeting the NIIRA 2025 requirements.

In a filing with the Nigerian Exchange Ltd., Linkage Assurance disclosed that its board had been authorised to raise the funds through private placement, rights issue, public offer or a combination of these options, subject to regulatory approvals.

The company said the exercise would involve an increase in its authorised share capital, with newly issued shares carrying equal rights with existing ordinary shares, alongside amendments to its Memorandum and Articles of Association in line with the Companies and Allied Matters Act 2020.

NEWS

Father arrested in Edo over alleged killing, secret burial of teenage son

BENIN CITY

The Police Command in Edo has arrested a forty-nine-year-old man

over the alleged killing of his fifteen-year-old son and the secret burial of the boy within their family compound.

ASP Eno Ikoedem, the

command's Public Relations Officer, disclosed this in a statement made available to newsmen on Sunday, December 14, 2025, in Benin City.

Ikoedem explained that the incident occurred in Uhe Community, Igubeben Local Government Area of Edo State.

She said the arrest followed credible intelligence received by the police on December 6, 2025, which prompted operatives led by the Divisional Police Officer to visit the residence, where the disturbing report was confirmed.

According to the police

spokesperson, preliminary investigations revealed that the suspect allegedly assaulted the teenager with a stick on December 5, 2025, at about 7:00 p.m.

This attack, she said, reportedly led to the boy's death.

"The suspect allegedly dug a grave within the family compound and secretly buried the corpse," Ikoedem said.

She added that the deceased's grandmother and the suspect's mother, an eighty-two-year-old woman living in the same house, provided critical information that aided the investigation.

The spokesperson explained that following due administrative procedures, police exhumed the grave, documented the scene with photographs,

and recovered the stick allegedly used in committing the offence as an exhibit.

The suspect has been taken into custody, while investigations continue to unravel the full circumstances surrounding the incident.

She said the Commissioner of Police in the State, Monday Agbonika, had ordered the transfer of the case to the Homicide Section of the State Criminal Investigation Department for thorough investigation and prosecution.

She said Agbonika warned against all forms of violence, urging residents to remain vigilant and promptly report suspicious activities to the nearest police station.



RECEIVING THE 8TH EDO HERITAGE AWARD:

Editor and correspondent, Edward Oseghe (left) receiving the 8th Edo Heritage Sports, Carnival Award from the organisers' special guest, Dr. Theodore Ehannire, Edo State Coordinator, National Health Insurance Authority, Benin City.

Artisans arraigned for allegedly stealing building materials worth N7.3m

IBADAN

The Police has charged three artisans before an Iyaganku Chief Magistrates' Court in Ibadan for allegedly stealing building materials valued at N7.3 million.

The defendants, Abubakar Ibrahim, 37; Oketayo Taiye, 39; and Adetife Kazeem, 47, were

charged on two counts bordering on conspiracy and stealing. They each pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The prosecutor, Insp. Sikiru Opaleye, told the court that the defendants, alongside others still at large, conspired to commit the offence between January and November at New Akala Expressway, Elebu area of Ibadan.

He alleged that the defendants stole iron rods, planks and other building materials valued at N7.3 million belonging to their employer, Mr Oyeniyi Durojaye.

According to the prosecutor, the defendants were artisans engaged to work at the construction site but allegedly took advantage of their access to remove the materials without the consent or knowledge of the owner.

He said the offence contra-

vened Sections 383 and 516 of the Criminal Law of Oyo State, 2000.

The Chief Magistrate, Mrs Olabisi Ogunkanmi, granted the defendants bail in the sum of N1.5 million each, with two sureties each in like sum.

Ogunkanmi ordered that one of the sureties must be a blood relative of each defendant.

She adjourned the case until March 25, 2026, for hearing.

Sales representative docked over alleged theft of N6.7m

IBADAN

A 44-year-old man, Clement Bamidele has been arraigned before an Iyaganku Chief Magistrates' Court in Ibadan over alleged theft of N6.7 million belonging to his employer.

Bamidele, a sales representative whose address was not disclosed, was charged with stealing and pleaded not guilty.

The prosecutor, Sgt. Akeem Akinloye, told the court that the defendant was employed by Carrot Top Drugs Company as a sales representative and was responsible for selling drugs and remitting proceeds to the company.

He alleged that Bamidele fraudulently converted proceeds from drug sales amounting to N6.7 million to his personal use instead of remitting the same to the company's account.

Akinloye said the offence was committed between July 2024 and February 2025 at the company's premises in Ibadan.

He said the offence contravened Sections 383 and 390 (9) of the Criminal Code Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

The defence counsel, Mr Adesayo Adaralegbe, prayed the court to admit the defendant to bail in liberal terms, assuring the court that the de-

fendant would not jump bail.

The Chief Magistrate, Mrs Olabisi Ogunkanmi, admitted the defendant to bail in the sum of N2.5 million, with two sureties in like sum.

She ruled that one of the sureties must own landed property within the court's jurisdiction, while the second surety must be a blood relation of the defendant.

The case was adjourned until March 3, 2026, for hearing.

Law week: FIDA highlights technology's role in women's rights enforcement

IKEJA

The International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Ikeja Branch has described technology as a vital tool for advancing and enforcing the rights of women and children in society.

The branch stated this during its 2025 Law Week themed "From Paper to Power: Enforcing Women's Rights Through Technology and Legal Frameworks."

In her welcome address, the Chairperson of the Law Week, Mrs Uchechi Erugo, said that globally, women's rights had increasingly moved beyond written commitments to enforceable actions driven by innovation and sustained advocacy.

She noted that modern justice systems must integrate digital tools to strengthen accountability, evidence gathering, case tracking and legal protection.

Erugo said technology has tak-

en a new dimension in promoting justice, equity and protection of vulnerable persons, particularly women and children.

"Laws on paper are not enough because effective enforcement must be modern, sustainable and technology-supported," she said.

In her goodwill message, the Country Vice President of FIDA, Mrs Eliana Martins, reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to deploying technol-

ogy to expand women's rights and reduce barriers to justice.

She said the Law Week, being a longstanding tradition, provides a platform for engagement on emerging rights issues, professional growth and collective action.

Martins noted that for over six decades, FIDA Nigeria has remained consistent in campaigns promoting, protecting and preserving the rights of women and children.

Court fixes judgment date in NDLEA case against Abba Kyari

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja has fixed February 26, 2026, for judgment in a case filed by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) against suspended DCP Abba Kyari.

The NDLEA is prosecuting Kyari, a former head of the Police Intelligence Response Team, alongside his two younger brothers, Mohammed Kyari and Ali Kyari, on allegations bordering on non-disclosure of assets and money laundering.

Justice James Omotosho fixed the date after counsel to the NDLEA, Mr Sunday Joseph; Kyari's lawyer, Mr Onyechi Ikpeazu, SAN; and counsel to his brothers, Mr Monjok Agom, adopted their final writ-

ten addresses.

The NDLEA, in a 23-count charge, alleged that the defendants failed to make full disclosure of assets, including shopping malls, residential estates, lands, farmlands and a polo playground located in Abuja and Maiduguri.

The agency also alleged that over N207 million and €17,598 were discovered in Kyari's accounts with Guarantee Trust Bank, United Bank for Africa and Sterling Bank.

Kyari denied the allegations, insisting that he declared his assets in line with the law and that some of the properties belonged to his late father.

The court had earlier dismissed Kyari's no-case submission and ordered him to enter his defence.

Court dissolves petitioner's marriage over interference

IBADAN

A Grade A Customary Court sitting at Mapo in Ibadan has dissolved the eight-year-old marriage between Olatunji Jimoh and his estranged wife, Mariam, on grounds of frequent interference by the wife's father.

Delivering judgment, the court president, Mrs O. E. Owoseni, held that the marriage had ceased to be in the interest of peaceful living.

She said efforts at out-of-

court settlement failed as both parties remained resolute in dissolving the union.

The court granted custody of the two children of the marriage to the respondent, citing their tender ages.

The petitioner was ordered to pay a monthly feeding allowance of N100,000, bear responsibility for the children's education and welfare, and pay the rent on the three-bedroom apartment occupied by the respondent and the children.

He was granted reasonable access to the children.

Man jailed 10yrs for sexual harassment

CALABAR

A Family Court sitting in Calabar has sentenced a 28-year-old man, Mr Uduak Aniete, to 10 years' imprisonment for sexually assaulting a minor.

Justice Franca Isoni found the convict guilty and sentenced him to prison without an option of fine.

The offence was committed in 2020 at the Nyanghasang area of Calabar after the convict lured the victim to an apartment under the pretext of helping her secure a job.

Counsel to the complainant, Mr James Ibor, said judgment on the matter was delayed because the judge went on a national assignment.

He said the state's family court system remains proactive in ensuring that sexual assault cases are diligently prosecuted.

Foreign

NEWS

Israel targets senior Hamas official in deadly Gaza strike

Israel said it killed a senior Hamas commander on Saturday in a strike on a vehicle inside Gaza.

In a joint statement, the Israeli military and security agency Shin Bet announced it had “eliminated” Raed Saad, the head of weapons production for Hamas’s military wing, the Qassam Brigades, in Gaza city.

Saad had been regarded as one of the most prominent Qassam commanders and led several brigades during Hamas’s 7 October attacks on Israeli communities east of Gaza City.

The Hamas-run Civil Defence spokesman, Mahmoud Basal, told the BBC that four people were killed in the strike. He said multiple passers-by

were also injured by the blast.

A local Hamas official in Gaza told the BBC that the strike also killed Saad’s aide and another lower-ranking official identified as Abu Imad al-Laban.

The BBC is prevented by Israel from reporting independently from inside Gaza and is unable to verify details of the incident.

The IDF and ISA joint state-

ment added that Saad had been “responsible for the deaths of many soldiers” killed in the Gaza Strip as the result of explosive devices.

Saad is believed to be a member of the newly formed five-member leadership military council established since a ceasefire took hold in October. Israel has attempted to kill

him on multiple occasions.

One of the most notable attempts was during a surprise Israeli operation in Gaza City in March 2024, when Israeli forces reportedly sought to arrest or kill him. Sources at the time said Saad had been inside the targeted complex but managed to escape moments before the raid.

He has long been considered one of Israel’s most wanted Hamas figures, with Israeli attempts to kill him spanning more than two decades.

Saturday’s attack happened on the Palestinian-controlled side of the so-called Yellow Line which has divided Gaza since an unstable US-led ceasefire came into effect on 10 October.

Israeli forces control the area to the east of the line, which includes just over half of the Gaza Strip.

The first phase of US president Donald Trump’s 20-point plan for peace in the region required the return of all 20 living

and 28 dead hostages taken in the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on 7 October 2023.

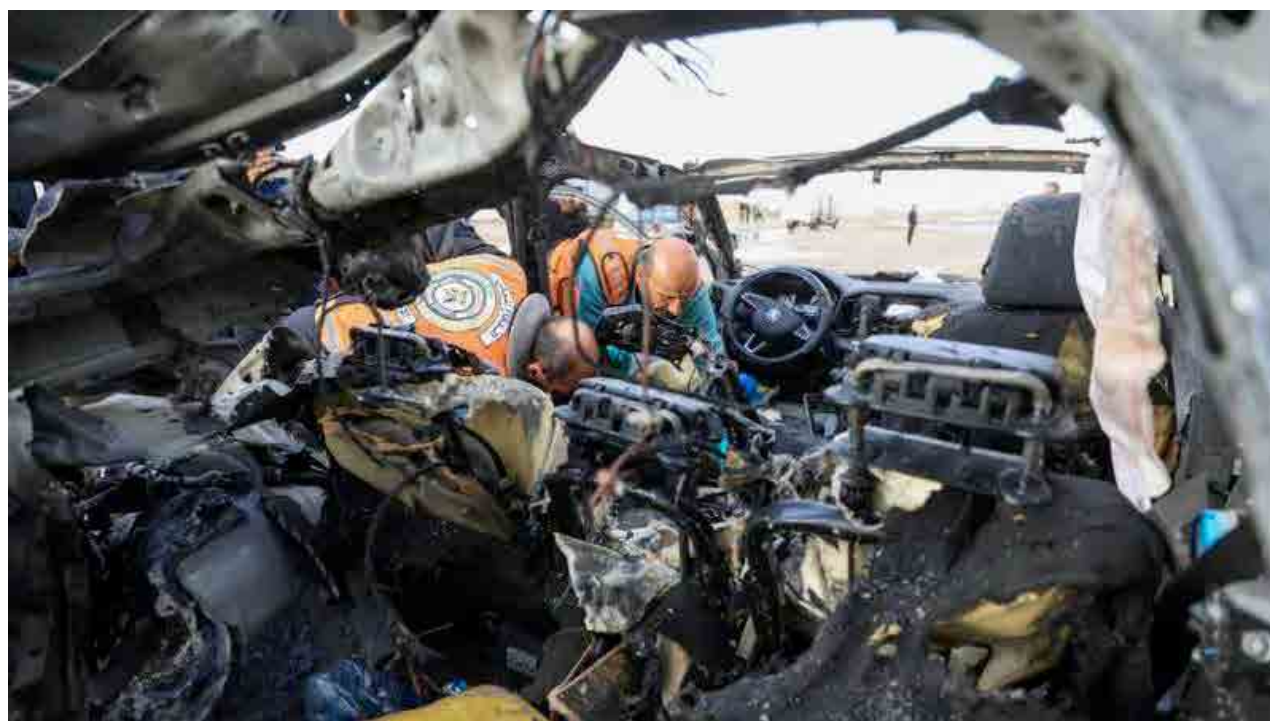
About 1,200 people were killed in the attack and more than 250 people were taken hostage.

All have been returned except for the remains of an Israeli police officer, Ran Gvili, 24, who is believed to have been killed while fighting Hamas gunmen in Kibbutz Alumim.

Since then, according to Gaza’s Hamas-run health ministry more than 70,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli military action.

The diplomatic focus is now shifting to the next stage of President Trump’s plan which would require the disarmament of Hamas as part of what it calls the de-radicalisation and redevelopment of Gaza.

It envisages Gaza being run by the “temporary transitional governance of a technocratic, apolitical Palestinian committee,” overseen by a “Board of Peace” chaired by Trump.



MILITARY STRUCK VEHICLE:

The senior Hamas commander’s vehicle struck by Israeli military.

King ‘appalled and saddened’ by Bondi attack on Jewish community

King Charles has said he is “appalled and saddened by the most dreadful antisemitic terrorist attack on Jewish people” at a Hanukkah celebration in Australia.

At least 11 people were killed in the shooting at Bondi Beach on Sunday and a further 29 taken to hospital, police said.

The King said his and Queen Camilla’s “hearts go out to everyone who has been affected so dreadfully”. He praised the “spirit of community and love that shines so brightly in Australia”, adding that the light of the Hanukkah festival “will always triumph over the darkness of such evil”.

Rabbi Eli Schlanger, a London-born rabbi, was among those killed in the attack, his family has confirmed.

The 41-year-old father of five was described as “vivacious, energetic, full of life and a very warm, outgoing person” by a cousin, Rabbi Zalman Lewis.

He told the BBC people should

“spread light” by doing charitable acts in Rabbi Schlanger’s name: “I know how he would have been reacting and it was something he said recently.

“Every human being on earth has a positive way to contribute to making the world a better place, and we just have to keep spreading light. The world is a positive place and we need to show that and I know Eli would be saying that.”

Sir Keir Starmer described the Bondi attack as “sickening” and said the government was working with Community Security Trust (CST), a Jewish security organisation, on the policing of Hanukkah events in the UK.

In a statement on X, the UK prime minister said: “The United Kingdom will always stand with Australia and the Jewish community.”

The Prince and Princess of Wales have also issued a statement, saying their “thoughts are with every Australian today,”

adding: “We extend our deepest condolences to the families and friends of those who have lost their lives and stand with the Jewish community in grief.”

The Metropolitan Police has confirmed that it was increasing its “police presence, carrying out additional community patrols and engaging with the Jewish community to understand what more we can do.”

“It is an awful reality that Jewish communities across the world continue to face a higher level of threat,” the force said in a statement.

“At a time when London’s Jewish communities are coming together to begin the celebration of Hanukkah, we know this attack will be the cause of not just terrible upset but also significant heightened concern about safety.”

In October, two people were killed in an attack at a synagogue in Manchester on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish religious calendar.

On Sunday, the UK’s Jewish Leadership Council (JLC) called on the police and government to protect events celebrating Hanukkah which begins this evening and lasts for eight days.

Hanukkah, also known as Chanukah, is a festival of light usually observed in December. “We are devastated and angered that in Sydney, Jews appear to have been targeted once again for being Jewish,” the JLC said in a statement.

“We know that such hatred also exists in this country, as we are still reeling from the attack on a synagogue in Manchester on Yom Kippur.

“As we prepare to celebrate Chanukah over the next eight nights, we call on government and law enforcement to work with our community to protect Jewish life in the UK and ensure that events this week can go ahead safely. We must not let hatred extinguish the festival of light.”

What we know so far about the Brown University shooting

Police have detained a person of interest in connection with a US shooting at Brown University that left two people dead and nine others injured.

An earlier order for people on the Brown campus and surrounding areas to shelter in place has also been lifted.

The attack on the campus brings the number of mass shootings in the US to 389 for this year, according to the independent analysis website Gun Violence Archive.

It defines mass shootings as having four or more victims killed or injured, not including the attacker.

What happened?

A map showing the location of Rhode Island and the city of Providence.

The gunman opened fire in a classroom at around 16:00 local time (21:00 GMT) on Saturday at the Holley engineering building at the eastern end of Brown’s campus, according to officials.

Final exams were taking place in the building at the time of the shooting, the school said.

The Barus and Holley engineering building is a seven-storey block that includes 117 laboratories, dozens of classrooms and three lecture halls.

An economics professor told local public media outlet Ocean State Radio that the shooting

had taken place during a review session for her course, which was led by her teaching assistant.

“He said that the shooter came in the doors, yelled something - he couldn’t remember what he yelled - and started shooting,” Rachel Friedberg said.

“Students started to scramble to try to get away from the shooter, trying to get lower down in the stadium seating, and people got shot,” she added.

On Saturday, investigators said they were not immediately sure how the shooter got inside the first-floor classroom.

Outer doors of the building were unlocked but rooms being used for final exams required badge access, Mayor of Providence Brett Smiley said.

Two students, who were studying in the nearby Rockefeller library when the active gunman alert came through, told the BBC they “stayed away from the windows” as they awaited a police escort.

Officers searched the floor, made them drop their bags and raise their hands before being led out of the library, the pair said.

Brown University, one of the oldest higher education institutions in the US, is part of the Ivy League, a group of elite universities in the northeast of the country.

Three Americans killed by IS gunman in Syria, US military says

Two US soldiers and a US civilian interpreter have been killed in Syria in an ambush by an Islamic State (IS) gunman, the US Central Command (Centcom) has said.

Officials said three other service members were injured in the attack, during which the gunman was “engaged and killed”. Syria’s state news said two Syrian service personnel were also injured.

US President Donald Trump wrote on social media that it was “an ISIS attack” against the US and Syria and said there would be “a very serious retaliation”. The Syrian government has issued a statement condemning the attack.

The identities of those killed are being withheld for 24 hours until their next of kin have been informed, Centcom said.

In a post on X, Centcom,

which directs American military operations in Europe, Africa and the Indo-Pacific, said the attack was “the result of an ambush by a lone ISIS gunman”, while a Pentagon official said initial assessments showed the attack was “likely” to be carried out by the Islamic State group.

The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the attacker was a member of the Syrian security force.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, and the identity of the gunman has not been released.

The ambush occurred in Palmyra, located in the centre of the country, while the soldiers were “conducting a key leader engagement”, according to Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell.

He added the attack is under investigation.

A Pentagon official said:

“This attack took place in an area where the Syrian president does not have control.”

Trump added that the three injured US soldiers were “doing well”.

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said: “Let it be known, if you target Americans - anywhere in the world you will spend the rest of your brief, anxious life knowing the United States will hunt you, find

you, and ruthlessly kill you.”

In a post on X, Syria’s Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani said the country condemned the attack, and extended its condolences to the families of the victims.

Tom Barrack, US ambassador to Turkey and special envoy for Syria, said: “I strongly condemn the cowardly terrorist ambush targeting a joint US-Syrian government patrol in central Syria.

NEWS

Foreign

Five arrested over plot to attack German Christmas market

Five men have been arrested in Germany suspected of being involved in a plot to drive a vehicle into people at a Christmas market.

Three Moroccans, an Egyptian and a Syrian were detained on Friday over the plan to target a market in the southern Bavarian state. Authorities said they suspected an "Islamist motive".

Prosecutors said the Egyptian - a 56-year-old - was alleged to have "called for a vehicle attack... with the aim of killing or injuring as many people as possible". The Moroccans allegedly agreed to carry out the attack.

Officials in Germany have been on high alert after previous attacks at Christmas markets, including in Magdeburg last December that killed six people.

Authorities did not say when the planned attack was supposed to take place or which market was the target, though said they believed it to be one in the Dingolfing-Landau area, north east of Munich.

German newspaper Bild reported the Egyptian man was an imam at a mosque in the area.

Police said the Moroccan men - aged 30, 28 and 22 - were arrested accused of having agreed to commit murder, while the Syrian man, a 37-year-old, was accused of encouraging the suspects "in their decision to commit the crime".

The five suspects appeared before a magistrate on Saturday and remain in custody.

Joachim Herrmann, Bavaria's state interior minister, told Bild the "excellent cooperation between our security services" had helped to prevent "a potentially Islamist-motivated attack".

Christmas markets are popular festive attractions throughout Germany, frequently attracting large crowds and significant tourism.

Security at events has been increased in recent years, since an attack in Berlin in 2016 when a man drove a lorry into a market crowd, killing 12 people.

Iran raises gasoline prices for the first time since deadly 2019 protests

Iran introduced a new pricing tier Saturday for its nationally subsidized gasoline, attempting to rein in spiraling costs for the first time since a price hike in 2019 that sparked nationwide protests and a crackdown that reportedly killed over 300 people.

Cheap gasoline has been viewed for generations as a birthright in Iran, sparking mass demonstrations as far back as 1964 when a price increase forced the shah to put military vehicles on the streets to replace those of striking taxi drivers.

But Iran's theocracy faces a growing squeeze from the country's rapidly depreciating rial currency and economic sanctions imposed due to Tehran's nuclear program.

That has made the cost of having some of the world's cheapest gasoline at a few pennies per gallon that much more expensive. However, the government's hesitant move toward increasing prices likely signals it wants to avoid any confrontation with the nation's exhausted public after Israel launched a 12-day war on the country in June.

"Our discontent has no result," fumed Saeed Mohammadi, a teacher who works as a taxi driver in his spare time to make ends meet. "The government does whatever it likes. They don't ask people if they agree or not."

The new rate is still pennies per gallon.

At four gas stations in northern Tehran on Saturday morning, drivers seemed relaxed as they refueled in clear, cold weather. Single police vehicles were stationed nearby at times, but there were no long lines at the pumps or other

visible problems.

The new pricing system implemented on Saturday adds a third pricing level to the country's long-running subsidy system. The revised structure allows motorists to continue receiving 60 liters (15 gallons) per month at the subsidized rate of 15,000 rials per liter, or 1.25 U.S. cents, and the next 100 liters (26 gallons) will remain at 30,000 rials per liter, or 2.5 cents.

Anything purchased beyond that falls under the new pricing scheme of 50,000 rials per liter, or about 4 cents per liter. Iran introduced fuel rationing back in 2007, but that has yet to ease demand for the ultracheap gasoline.

Even at that new rate, Iranian gasoline prices remain among the lowest in the world.

The difference between the cost of production and delivering the fuel and the price at the pump is the subsidy paid by Iran's government. The Paris-based International Energy Agency ranked Iran as paying the world's second-highest energy subsidy costs in 2022, behind only Russia. The IEA put Iran's oil subsidies at \$52 billion that year, with Iranian officials acknowledging tens of billions of dollars a year go toward artificially keeping energy prices low.

Tehran-based economist Hossein Raghfar said that since 2009, gasoline prices have risen 15-fold, offering a pessimistic view of the government's subsidies.

"Not only did it fail in lessening the budget deficit, but it also trapped the country's economy in a negative loop of inflation and budget deficit," he said.



PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN:

Supporters of Presidential candidate Faustin Archange Touadera rally during a sand storm in the streets of Bangui, Central African Republic.

CAR presidential campaign launches amid tension and promises of peace

Election campaigning has officially begun in the Central African Republic ahead of the presidential vote scheduled for December 28.

Incumbent President Faustin-Archange Touadera launched his campaign on Saturday, December 13, 2025, at Bangui's Omnisports Stadium, where he addressed thousands of supporters. Returning from the town of Sibut, where he had earlier kicked off his re-election bid, Touadera was greeted by an enthusiastic crowd. His camp is banking on a strong turnout to secure victory in the first round.

Igor Tola Kogadou, a candidate for the National Assembly from the ruling United Hearts Movement (MCU), hailed the scale of mobilisation in favour of the president.

"I saw the population mobilizing for this election, for the victory of the Head of

State, Professor Faustin-Archange Touadera, candidate number one, the champion of the United Hearts Movement in the first round," he said.

Touadera, who is seeking a second term, is presenting himself as the guarantor of stability. For his supporters, his record on peace and the prospect of a return to lasting stability are key reasons to renew their confidence in him over his rivals.

"You see there is joy, enthusiasm, and a lot of emotion, because we see that the population has understood that peace is needed. And the Central African people want peace with President Faustin-Archange Touadera. That is why we are all here, truly joyful, to begin this presidential, legislative, regional, and municipal campaign," said Josiane Nina Bemakassui, former Minister of Humanitarian Action.

Opposition puts forward an

alternative vision

Even before the official start of the campaign, opposition presidential candidate Anicet-Georges Dologuélé unveiled a programme built around 25 social pillars. His platform focuses on building a strong state and reviving the country's fragile economy.

"Without a strong state, there is neither development, nor stability, nor a future. The third pillar is economic recovery and the creation of opportunities for all. We want a country where initiative is encouraged and where work pays," Dologuélé said.

The opposition leader also announced Serge Bokassa's support, a former minister previously allied with Touadera, in a move seen as a symbolic defection from the ruling camp.

At the same time, Dologuélé launched a stinging attack on the authorities, ac-

cusing them of instrumentalising questions of nationality and weakening democratic institutions.

"The architecture of Central African democracy has collapsed. Nationality is being handed out left and right; they even talk about distributing it through some tokenization. I don't know what, and meanwhile, the nationality of fellow citizens is being challenged," he said.

A tense campaign climate The campaign period, which will run for two weeks, is unfolding in a highly tense context, according to the United Nations, with concerns about security, political polarisation and the risk of violence.

Despite the tensions, all main candidates, including President Touadera, have called for a peaceful, orderly campaign and for citizens to express their choices at the ballot box rather than in the streets.

UN condemns deadly drone strike on peacekeepers in Sudan's Kordofan

The United Nations has condemned a recent drone attack that targeted its Sudanese logistics in the central region of Kordofan base in Kadugli, resulting in fatalities & injuries of members of the Bangladeshi Peacekeeping contingent.

The UN's Secretary General António Guterres said in a statement that attacks against UN peacekeepers like this one are unjustifiable & may constitute war crimes. He further reminded the parties to the war of their obligation to protect UN personnel & civilians, while also calling for accountability.

A drone strike hit the UN facility in war-torn Sudan on Saturday, killing six peacekeepers, according to the U.N. Eight other peacekeepers

were wounded in the strike.

All the victims are Bangladeshi nationals, serving in the U.N. Interim Security Force for Abyei, UNISFA.

"Attacks targeting United Nations peacekeepers may constitute war crimes under international law," said Guterres, who called for those responsible for the "unjustifiable" attack to be held accountable.

The Sudanese military blamed the attack on the Rapid Support Forces, RSF, a notorious paramilitary group at war with the army for control of the country for more than two years.

There was no immediate comment from the RSF.

The attack "clearly reveals the subversive approach of the rebel

militia and those behind it," the military said in a statement.

The military posted a video on social media showing plumes of dense black smoke over what it said was the U.N. facility.

The oil-rich Abyei is a disputed region between Sudan and South Sudan, and the U.N. mission has been deployed there since 2011 when South Sudan gained its independence from Sudan.

Guterres also called for an immediate ceasefire in Sudan to allow "a comprehensive, inclusive and Sudanese-owned political process" to settle the conflict in the northeast African country.

Sudan was plunged into chaos in April 2023 when a power struggle between the

military and the RSF exploded into open fighting in the capital, Khartoum, and elsewhere in the country.

The conflict has killed over 40,000 people — a figure rights groups consider a significant undercount.

The fighting has recently centered on Kordofan, particularly since the RSF took control of el-Fasher, the military's last stronghold in the western region of Darfur.

The war has wrecked urban areas and has been marked by atrocities, including mass rape and ethnically motivated killings which the U.N. and rights groups have said amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, especially in the western region of Darfur.

Feature



Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Governorship Primary Election Committee and Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo, addressing the APC Stakeholders on Friday at the APC Osun State stakeholders' meeting.

How Okpebholo brought Osun APC together and set the stage for 2026

EBOJELE PATRICK, PhD

Governor Monday Okpebholo's political engagement in Osun State came at a moment when the All Progressives Congress (APC) needed clarity, calm and direction. With the 2026 governorship election approaching, the party faced the familiar danger of internal rivalry overshadowing collective purpose. What played out instead was a carefully managed process that produced not just a candidate, but renewed confidence and unity within the Osun APC.

As Chairman of the APC Osun State Governorship Primary Election Committee, Governor Okpebholo approached the assignment with a clear message from the outset. Speaking at a stakeholders' meeting in Osogbo, he reminded party leaders, aspirants and delegates that the moment demanded sacrifice and cooperation. "We have reached a decisive point," he told them. "We must work together to take back what belongs to us."

The statement set the tone. Okpebholo made it clear that the battle ahead was not about individual ambition, but about reclaiming Osun State for the progressive family. He urged all tendencies within the party

to see themselves as one indivisible unit, stressing that unity would be the APC's strongest weapon heading into 2026. "We must unite as one strong family," he said. "The bigger task ahead is the governorship election, and only unity will deliver victory."

Beyond the rhetoric, Okpebholo focused heavily on process, fully aware that distrust around primaries often breeds crisis. He assured stakeholders that the election would be guided strictly by transparency and fairness. According to him, the committee adopted an affirmation and consensus model to deepen internal democracy and avoid unnecessary friction.

"No delegate will be allowed in without proper accreditation," Okpebholo declared. "We want every stakeholder to understand the process clearly, so that fairness and accountability are guaranteed." The emphasis on proper screening of all 166 delegates helped calm anxieties and set clear expectations ahead of the primary.

That clarity proved crucial. By the time party members gathered the next day at Eboluwa International School, Osogbo, the mood was markedly different from the tension that usually characterises such exercises. Presiding

This is a great day for the APC in Osun State," he said, noting that the peaceful atmosphere reflected a shared resolve to move forward together

over the primary election, Okpebholo described the moment as historic for the party. "This is a great day for the APC in Osun State," he said, noting that the peaceful atmosphere reflected a shared resolve to move forward together.

He thanked the National Working Committee and fellow governors who served on the election committee, adding: "We do not take the confidence reposed in us for granted. We are fully committed to delivering a process that truly reflects the will of

party members."

When the motion for a consensus candidate was moved and seconded, it sailed through without objection. Bola Oyebamiji emerged as the APC flag bearer, with co-aspirants openly accepting the outcome. The absence of protest or parallel claims spoke volumes. As Okpebholo observed, "What we witnessed here is a clear demonstration of unity of purpose. This unity will strengthen our party as we move towards 2026."

The Edo governor also used the occasion to situate Osun's political future within a broader national context. He drew attention to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, praising ongoing reforms and economic interventions across the country. "Under the Renewed Hope Agenda, Mr President has initiated projects and reforms that are shaping our nation," Okpebholo said. "These efforts deserve our full support, not just today, but as we look ahead to the future."

According to him, Osun State's alignment with the federal government is critical for attracting development, investment and economic opportunities. He urged party members to remain steadfast, stressing that political harmony between state and

centre would translate into tangible benefits for the people.

The presence of governors, former governors and senior APC leaders from across the country further reinforced the significance of the exercise. Their attendance underscored confidence in Okpebholo's leadership and the credibility of the process he supervised.

By the end of the primary, the APC in Osun had achieved what is rare in Nigerian politics: consensus without crisis. Governor Monday Okpebholo did not impose unity; he nurtured it through dialogue, transparency and firm adherence to agreed rules. In doing so, he helped reset the party's internal dynamics.

As preparations for the 2026 governorship election gather momentum, the Osun APC now moves forward with a single candidate, a calmer house and renewed belief in its structures. Okpebholo's role stands as a reminder that strong leadership is not always loud. Sometimes, it is the steady voice insisting on fairness, unity and purpose that brings a party together and prepares it for the contest ahead.

Ebojele Akhere Patrick, PhD, is the Chief Press Secretary to Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State.

Sports

● Football ● Athletics ● Golf ● Basketball ● Tennis ● Boxing

Megwo praises team performance, following Abia Warriors 1-0 win over Kun Khalifat in Owerri

Abia Warriors Forward, Sunday Megwo, has praised the team performance, following the vital 1-0 away win over Kun Khalifat, in a Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) matchday 17 encounter, On Sunday, at the Dan Anyiam Stadium, Owerri.

The forward, who captained the side in the game, for the ten time this season, featured for 86th minute as the Imama Amapakabo's led side secured their third away victories of the season.

The forward, while speaking shortly after the encounter, ex-

pressed excited for getting the maximum points against Kun Khalifat in Owerri.

"Of course, we are happy to have secured the maximum points, but it was a difficult game against Kun Khalifat, but we knew that we had to win the game to get back to winning ways which we did. So it's a massive three pointson the road for us."

The Umuahia-born goal poacher, further expressed that the team will continue working hard to get back nto winning ways at home, when they play host to back Warri Wolves, in a matchday 18 Clash next Sun-

day in Umuahia.

"Yes, it is a long season, and I believe in what the team can achieve at the end of the campaign. But we have to continue working work to get more victories and move forward in the log table. I have the confidence that we will get a positive result against Warri Wolves next weekend."

Megwo, so far this season, has scored four goals and registered two assists in Ten league appearances for the Imama Amapakabo's led side, as they maintained second place in the NPFL Standings on 27 points from 17 matches.



ABIA WARRIORS TEAM

AFCON: NFF launches 'NAIJA 4 THE WIN' campaign as Super Eagles target AFCON glory in Morocco

The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) has unveiled the NAIJA 4 THE WIN campaign as the Super Eagles return to African soil for the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations in Morocco, signalling a renewed determination to reclaim the continent's most coveted football prize.

Three-time African champions, Nigeria, head into the tournament with a proud history and a clear sense of purpose.

Their runner-up finish at the 2023 AFCON in Abidjan, while widely applauded, has been framed by the federation as unfinished business and a driving force behind the current campaign.

Led by Head Coach Eric Sékou Chelle and backed by the full support of the National Sports Commission and the NFF, the Super Eagles are building towards the tournament on a foundation of discipline, experience, emerging talent and collective ambition.

The target, according to the federation, is unequivocal: to surpass the last outing and return the Africa Cup of Nations trophy to Nigeria.

The NAIJA 4 THE WIN initiative is designed as a rallying call to Nigerians at home and in the diaspora, reinforcing belief in the team's ability to once again scale the heights of African football.

The campaign draws inspiration from Nigeria's previous AFCON triumphs in 1980, 1994 and 2013, each etched into the nation's sporting memory, with Morocco 2025 seen as the next opportunity to write a fresh chapter.

The NFF has called on fans to throw their weight behind the team throughout the tournament, whether from living rooms and viewing centres

across the country or from the stands in Morocco.

The federation stressed that the passion, encouragement and visible presence of Nigerian supporters remain a vital ingredient for success.

As preparations intensify, the message from the NFF is clear: the journey has begun with purpose, the mission is well defined, and the Super Eagles are ready to rise again. Football



SUPER EAGLES

NPFL26: Bendel Insurance forced to 1-1 draw as Rangers escape in Benin

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The recently found form and steam leading to a speedy recovery of Bendel Insurance Football Club, weekend suffered a temporary setback as

Rangers International of

Enugu scored a late equaliser to force a 1-1 draw in Benin

The Nigeria Premier Football League Match Day 17 encounter at the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium in Benin City lived up to its hype with the two premier League giants battling to a goal-

less Stalemate in the first half of the game but with the hosts having a larger percentage of control and comfort over their opponents throughout the duration.

The visitors however made some dangerous incursions through their left wing but the Benin Arsenal's defense network led by the captain Efe Enabulele, Promise Ito and Chigozie Dennis made it difficult for the Flying Antelopes to have their way.

On return from the halftime break, Kennedy Boboye made his first substitution, making Elmer Arunta to give way for Austin Osayande. Coach Boboye made double substitution in the 65th minute of the game as the battle raged, introducing Promise Anyanwu and Jacob John in the place of Emmanuel Dung, Emmanuel Akpan.

Insurance FC got the breakthrough in the 81st minute of the game through substitute Promise Anyanwu who comfortably finished the good job Kayode Oke started. Kayode's initial effort was blocked but he recovered well on time to deliver a low line breaking cross that found Anyanwu ready for a clinical finishing.



BENDEL INSURANCE PLAYER WITH AS RANGERS

AYG: Nwankwo, Tejiri, Majekodunmi win gold in Athletics

Team Nigeria enjoyed a highly successful outing in athletics on Saturday at the ongoing African Youth Games (AYG) in Luanda, as Rosemary Nwankwo, Tejiri Ugoh and Hafsoh Majekodunmi combined to deliver three gold medals.

In the girls' sprints, Tejiri Ugoh produced a standout performance to claim gold in the 200m, stopping the clock at 23.95 seconds.

She finished comfortably ahead of South Africa's Isabella Gunter, who took silver in 25.38s, while Gambia's Njie Adama secured bronze in 26.01s.

Nigeria also reached the podium in the boys' 200m, where Perfect Faye ran 21.47s to earn silver, finishing behind South Africa's Jayden Fourie, who won gold in 20.88s.

Another gold medal came in the girls' 400m, as Hafsoh Majekodunmi dominated the quarter-mile, crossing the line in 55.16s. Ethiopia's Desta Kurni settled for silver in 56.74s, while Congo's Maguerita Athouaby claimed bronze in 58.22s. I

In the boys' 400m, South Af-

rica's Fairlie Jaydon edged Nigeria's David Udoh to gold, clocking 47.66s against Udoh's 47.77s, with Ghana's Agyaemang Evans taking bronze in 48.23s.

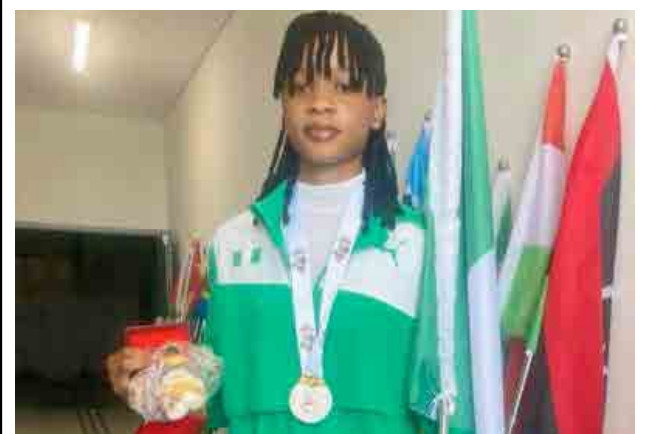
Rosemary Chigozie Nwankwo stormed to gold in the girls' 100m, posting 11.77s ahead of South Africa's Oluchi Ndubueze (12.12s) and Morocco's Maria Saadi (12.27s).

In the boys' race, Emmanuel Akolo ran 10.76s to secure silver, finishing just behind South Africa's Micah Africa, who won gold in 10.67s, while Namibia's Mouton Miheshco claimed bronze in 10.78s.

Nigeria also impressed in the field events, as Godswill Anelechi Nkemakolam won silver in the boys' long jump with a best effort of 7.18m.

South Africa's Jayden Fourie claimed gold with a leap of 7.59m to complete a double at the Games, while Algeria's Leith Bencharef settled for bronze.

The African Youth Games which is open for athletes aged 14-17 runs until December 20, 2025, and also serve as qualification for the 2026 Youth Olympics to be hosted by Dakar, Senegal



ROSEMARY NWANKWO

OPINION

The Nigerian Observer
...that the people may know

OKPEBHOLO'S COMMITMENT TO A SAFER EDO IS PAYING OFF

From crackdowns to security reforms



EBOJELE PATRICK

Since taking office in November 2024, Edo State Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo has made the security of lives and property a central pillar of his administration. Through a series of bold and strategic moves, the governor has signalled that Edo is a state where criminality will not go unchecked. Recent operations and reforms indicate that his promise of a safer Edo is steadily becoming a reality.

One of the most visible actions under Governor Okpebholo's leadership is last week's crackdown on cultism and criminal hideouts. In Uromi, Esan North-East Local Government Area, the government recently demolished buildings linked to violent cult activities. The demolition followed a raid by the State's Special Security Squad on 17 November 2025, conducted in collaboration with the Nigerian Army and other security agencies. Thirty-one suspects were arrested during the operation, while leaders of the notorious Black Axe and Eiye confraternities were given a seven-day ultimatum to surrender. When they failed to comply, the state moved decisively to pull down the buildings, citing incriminating evidence recovered from the properties.

Idemudia Noah, coordinator of Operation Flush Out Kidnappers and Cultists, said the demolition was necessary to send a strong message. "This exercise should serve as a warning to landlords and property owners to properly profile their tenants. These houses were demolished because they were linked to criminal activities," he said. The affected properties are now being repurposed as operational bases for security personnel, further strengthening the government's presence in key areas.

The crackdown extended beyond cultism. In a separate operation, 15 people were arrested in Uromi's Hausa quarters for possession of illicit drugs. Authorities highlighted the connection between drug trafficking and violent crime, noting that narcotics often attract hoodlums and kidnappers. One of the suspects, Tajudeen Lawal, admitted to selling marijuana with two others. According to Noah, these arrests are part of a wider strategy to eliminate the networks that fuel insecurity in the state.

Governor Okpebholo has also reinforced the legal framework for his anti-crime initiatives. His administration championed the Secret Cult and Similar Activities (Prohibition) Law, 2025, and strengthened the Kidnapping Prohibition Law, introducing

harsher penalties for offenders. These legal tools provide law enforcement with the authority to act decisively against cultists and kidnappers, signalling that Edo is no longer a haven for criminal networks.

The governor's commitment goes beyond legislation. In Benin City, he recently received the new Commander of the 4 Brigade, Nigerian Army, Brigadier General Ahmed Olatunboju Balogun, reaffirming his administration's support for military collaboration. Governor Okpebholo assured the Army of state support and pledged to improve infrastructure critical to security operations, including roads and facilities at Ekenwa Barracks. He also announced the procurement of multifunctional drones to enhance surveillance and intelligence gathering.

The results of these efforts are already visible. Over 300 cult leaders have been arrested since the current administration began active security operations, multiple buildings linked to criminal hideouts have been demolished, and illegal firearms have been recovered or neutralised. The Special Security Squad continues to operate across Edo's 18 local government areas, with thousands of trained personnel, vehicles and motorcycles deployed to hotspots.

Public sentiment reflects growing confidence in the government's approach. Youth groups and community leaders have expressed support for the administration's initiatives, organising peaceful rallies and urging residents to cooperate with authorities. Communities are increasingly aware that law enforcement is no longer passive but actively pursuing criminals and disrupting their networks.

Despite the progress, Governor Okpebholo acknowledges that challenges remain. Civil society groups have called for due process safeguards and continued community engagement to ensure that anti-crime measures are effective yet fair. The administration, however, appears committed to balancing these concerns with the urgent need to secure the state.

In conclusion, Governor Monday Okpebholo's approach to security is comprehensive and results-driven. By combining strict legal measures, aggressive enforcement, community engagement and technology-enhanced surveillance, the administration is transforming Edo into a state where criminal elements face real consequences. While the journey toward a completely crime-free Edo is ongoing, the foundation has been firmly laid, and the trajectory is clear: Okpebholo's Edo is becoming safer, more se-

Over 300 cult leaders have been arrested since the current administration began active security operations, multiple buildings linked to criminal hideouts have been demolished, and illegal firearms have been recovered or neutralised.

cure and increasingly resilient against criminal threats.

Ebojele Akhere Patrick, PhD, is Chief Press Secretary to the Edo State Governor.