

Tinubu seeks Senate approval of 2024 Appropriation Repeal and Re-enactment Bill

● Sends new Oil and Gas Regulatory nominees for Senate approval

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

The President Bola Tinubu has urged the Senate to approve the Appropriation Repeal and Re-enact-

ment Bill II of 2024.

The request was conveyed in a letter addressed to the Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, and read at plenary on Wednesday.

Tinubu said the request

aligns with established constitutional and legislative appropriation processes.

He explained that the proposal seeks authorization for the issuance of N43.5 trillion from the consolidated revenue

fund of the federation for the year ending December 31.

The sum comprises N1 trillion for statutory transfers, N8.2 trillion for debt service, N11.2 trillion for recurrent non-debt expenditure, and

N22.2 trillion for capital expenditure and development fund contributions.

According to the president, the bill is designed to end the practice of running multiple budgets while ensuring high capital performance rates for the 2024 and 2025 capital

budgets.

Tinubu noted that the proposal provides a transparent, constitutionally grounded appropriation mechanism for orderly consolidation of critical and time-sensitive expenditures in re-

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...that the people may know

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PenCom begins disbursement of N758bn to retirees

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US places travel restrictions on Nigeria, 19 others countries

● As Trump expands security ban

ABUJA

Nigeria has been listed among 20 countries placed under partial entry restrictions into the United States following a fresh proclamation by President Donald Trump expanding travel measures on national security grounds.

The decision, contained in a White House fact sheet released by the U.S. Embassy in Abuja

on Wednesday, cited persistent deficiencies in screening, vetting and information-sharing systems in the affected countries, which Washington said pose risks to U.S. national security and public safety.

Under the new measures, Nigeria joins Burundi, Cuba, Togo, Venezuela, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominica, Gabon, The Gambia, Malawi, Mauritania, Senegal, Tanzania, Tonga,

Zambia and Zimbabwe on the partial restriction list.

According to the document, many of the affected countries are challenged by widespread corruption, unreliable or fraudulent civil and criminal records, and weak or non-existent birth registration systems, which "systemically prevent accurate vetting" of travellers.

The proclamation, titled "President Donald J. Trump Further Restricts and Limits the

Entry of Foreign Nationals to Protect the Security of the United States," said the restrictions were based on data and designed to strengthen U.S. security through what it described as "common-sense" measures.

It added that high visa overstay rates and the refusal of some countries to repatriate removable nationals also contributed to the decision, placing additional burdens on U.S. immigration enforcement.

While Nigeria and others face partial restrictions, the proclamation maintained full entry bans on nationals of 12

countries earlier listed under Proclamation 10949, Afghanistan, Burma, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen.

Five additional countries, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, South Sudan and Syria, were newly placed under full restrictions, while holders of travel documents issued by the Palestinian Authority, Laos and Sierra Leone were upgraded from partial to full restrictions.

The U.S. government also pointed to terrorist presence, criminal activity and extremist threats in some of the listed countries as factors undermining effective vetting and government control.

However, the fact sheet clarified that the proclamation provides exemptions for lawful permanent residents, existing visa holders, diplomats, athletes and individuals whose entry is considered to be in the interest of the United States.

Multiple explosions hit Auchi

AUCHI (EDO)

The National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Tanimu Turaki, on Wednesday declared that the party has undergone a full rebirth and is now operating as a "true party" anchored on internal democracy, fairness and transparency ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Turaki spoke during a strategic meeting between the newly inaugura

Multiple explosions on Wednesday rocked Auchi, the administrative headquarters of Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State.

The explosions occurred in three different areas of Auchi at about 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday.

It was observed that the first blast occurred along Igbei Road, the second at the Igbo Shade area near an AP filling station, while the third explosion occurred along the Auchi-Okene Road,

close to Winners Junction.

Properties worth millions of naira were reportedly destroyed, including buildings and shops, across the three affected areas.

As of the time of filing the report, the cause of the explosions was unknown, and the number of casualties could not be ascertained.

An eyewitness, who spoke to newsmen on the condition of anonymity, said the explosions occurred almost simultaneously in different parts of Auchi.

The eye witness added that the blasts appeared to have been coordinated.

The eyewitness described the incident as a planned attack on the Auchi community and stressed the need for a thorough investigation to prevent future occurrences.

It was also gathered that a fuel tanker fell along the expressway, prompting residents

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CLOSED DOOR MEETING:

L-R: Senators Ireti Kingibe, Abubakar Bello, Jimoh Ibrahim; American Ambassador to Nigeria, Richard Mills; Senate President, Godswill Akpabio; Senators: Onyekachi Nwebonyi, Asuquo Ekpenyong, Yahaya Abdullahi and Osita Ngwu, after a closed door meeting with the Senate President in his office at the National Assembly Complex, Abuja, yesterday.

PHOTO BY OMOYE AMINU

EFCC arrests herbalists with \$3.43m, €280,000 in counterfeit notes in Osun, Lagos

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SEREC backs N70trn revenue projection for maritime, blue economy

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Opposition in DRC raises alarm over arrest of former presidential candidate Shadary

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World Cup absence costs Nigeria at least \$10.5m as FIFA confirms record payouts

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Buhari era misconstrued —Lai Mohammed

ABUJA

The Former Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed said his new book is aimed at correcting misconceptions, providing context, and sharing first-hand accounts of the Muhammadu Buhari administration.

Mohammed stated this in Abuja on Wednesday at the public presentation of his book, "Headlines and Soundbites: Media Moments that Defined an Administration."

He described the book as a

personal effort to document his work as the longest-serving Minister of Information and Culture in Nigeria's history, spanning information, culture, tourism and national orientation.

The former minister said the book placed his experiences within the wider context of how government policies under the Buhari administration were shaped and communicated to Nigerians.

"For almost eight years, I was at the centre of government communication, crisis management, national orientation, culture, and tourism.

"I saw firsthand how decisions were made, how narratives were shaped, and how misinformation often overshadowed facts.

"This book, therefore, is about correcting misconceptions, providing context, and sharing first-hand accounts, accounts that history must never forget," he said.

Mohammed said the publication reflected his belief that Africans must tell their own stories to avoid distortion, stressing that his long access to government decision-making placed a responsibility on him to preserve an accurate record. He said readers would gain in-

sights into tough decisions taken during his tenure, moments when he nearly resigned as well as government communication strategies during the 2023 elections.

Additionally, he said the book also provide insight into the recovery of stolen artefacts, and engagement with the Bring Back Our Girls movement, among others.

He added that the book documented efforts to counter misinformation on security, the "Change Begins With Me" national orientation campaign, and his personal reflections on the late president.

Asked whether the book

was written to defend Buhari's legacy, Mohammed said the truth required no defence, adding that the administration's achievements were documented through the Scorecard series and a legacy portal.

"President Muhammadu Buhari did his best and left the rest to posterity, which I am confident will be kind to him," he said.

He expressed hope that the book would serve as a resource for researchers, media professionals and students of politics, communication and public relations.

Mr Segun Adeniyi, the former Presidential Spokesperson and

Chairman, Thisday Editorial Board, who is the book reviewer, described the publication as an important insider account of the Buhari administration.

Adeniyi said the 584-page book served as a historical document, policy defence and, at times, a rebuttal of critics of both the Buhari administration and the former Minister of Information and Culture.

"What emerges is the portrait of a minister who saw himself not merely as a government spokesperson, but as a strategic communicator tasked with changing the narrative," the reviewer said.

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sponse to emergency exigencies.

He said the bill would advance the collective well-being of Nigerians, safeguard national security, and reinforce fiscal discipline, accountability, and broader public financial management.

"The bill will ensure that appropriated funds are released and applied strictly for purposes specified in the schedules," Tinubu said.

He added that the proposal allows virement only with prior approval of the National Assembly and sets conditions for corrigenda where genuine errors may hinder implementation.

The president further stated that the bill ensures separate recording of excess revenue while limiting its expenditure to acts or approval of the National Assembly.

It mandates due process compliance and periodic reporting on fund releases and revenue of MDAs.

Meanwhile, President Tinubu has forwarded nominations of two new chief executives for Nigeria's petroleum regulatory agencies following the resignations of Engineers Farouk Ahmed and Gbenga Komolafe.

Ahmed, former CEO of the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), and Komolafe, former head of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), both resigned from their positions.

They were originally appointed in 2021 by former President Muhammadu Buhari under the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA).

In separate letters to the Senate, Tinubu requested expedited confirmation of Oritsemeyiwa Amanorisewo Eyesan as

CEO of NUPRC and Engineer Saidu Aliyu Mohammed as CEO of NMDPRA.

The nominees bring decades of experience in the oil and gas sector. Eyesan, an Economics graduate of the University of Benin, spent nearly 33 years with the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and its subsidiaries, retiring as Executive Vice President, Upstream (2023-2024).

She previously served as Group General Manager, Corporate Planning and Strategy at NNPC from 2019 to 2023.

Engineer Mohammed, born in 1957 in Gombe, holds a Chemical Engineering degree from Ahmadu Bello University (1981).

He recently joined Sepilat Energy as an independent non-executive director.

His career includes leadership roles as Managing Director of Kaduna Refining and Petrochemical Company and the Nigerian Gas Company, and chairmanships of West African Gas Pipeline Company, Nigeria LNG subsidiaries, and NNPC Retail.

Mohammed also served as Group Executive Director/Chief Operating Officer, Gas & Power Directorate, leading major gas projects and policy frameworks, including the Gas Masterplan, Gas Network Code, and contributing to the Petroleum Industry Act.

His projects include the Escravos-Lagos Pipeline Expansion, the Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano (AKK) Gas Pipeline, and Nigeria LNG Train.

The President's Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, confirmed the nominations in a statement.

The Senate is expected to review and confirm the appointments, pivotal for implementing the Petroleum Industry Act and Nigeria's oil and gas sector growth.



HOUSE PLENARY:

Chairman, Joint Committee on Finance, Economic Planning and Development and Government, Community and Chieftaincy Affairs, Hon Aghedo Sunday (right) presenting the committee's report to the Clerk of the House, Alhaji Yahaya Omogbai during the house plenary. PHOTO: GODWIN ISEGUAN

Edo Community Kassel commissions third housing block at Ossiomo Leprosarium

OGAN (EDO STATE)

Edo Community e.V. Kassel, a nonprofit organisation of Edo indigenes in Germany, has commissioned a new housing block of four apartments at the Ossiomo Leprosarium in Ogan, Orhionmwon Local Government Area of Edo State.

The project aims to improve shelter and living conditions for residents.

The newly inaugurated block is the third housing facility rebuilt by the group, following similar projects completed in 2019 and 2022.

Residents, community leaders, and staff of the Communicable Diseases Hospital attended the commissioning ceremony.

The Chief Medical Director of the hospital, Dr. Osagie Igbiniye lauded the group for its continuous support to the Leprosarium.

He listed previous interventions to include, installation of water and electricity supply, kitchen structures, sanitary facilities and other amenities that were lacking.

He also commended the leadership of Edo Community Kassel, particularly its President, Mr. Lando Treasure Eguavoen, noting that his exposure to the

diaspora community in Germany helped drive the projects.

Comrade Samson Osayamen, a representative of the group, described the project as a moral duty.

He said the initiatives were made possible through collective sacrifices of members across different sectors.

Residents of the Leprosarium community welcomed the new housing block.

Michael Izibiri, Secretary of Ogan community, described the old structures as "death traps."

"When it rained, you worried about where to shelter your children. The roofs were like baskets. Today, we can sleep peacefully and use modern toilets," he said.

Community chairman Peter Enabulele also praised the group and prayed for God's upliftment upon all members of Edo Community Kassel.

Another beneficiary, Mrs. Josephine Omokhai, recalled the group's visit in 2019 when they promised to build her a new home.

She expressed gratitude that the promise was fulfilled with the latest project.

The Ossiomo Leprosy serves as a rehabilitation and resettlement centre for persons affected by leprosy.

It's mandate includes physical care, empowerment, social inclusion, and reintegration into society.

Multiple explosions hit...

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to scramble to scoop fuel.

It took the intervention of the Police Area Commander in Auchi, who mobilised officers to the scene to prevent a possible explosion as the crowd continued to grow.

The Police Public Relations Officer of Edo Command, ASP Eno Ikoedem, confirmed the explosions to newsmen

Ikoedem said the incident occurred at about 6:30 p.m. fol-

lowing the fall of a fuel tanker along the road.

She explained that spilled fuel seeped into underground tunnels, which later ignited and caused three explosions in different parts of the Auchi community.

According to her, officers from the Auchi Divisional Police Headquarters and the Area Command were mobilised to the affected areas and successfully cordoned them off so as to prevent loss of lives

Leadership vacuum in NERC imminent

BENIN CITY

Nigeria's electricity sector faces a potential governance crisis after six new Commissioners were confirmed for the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) without appointments for Chairman or Vice-Chairman, a development that is creating a statutory leadership vacuum with serious legal implications.

Professor Yemi Oke, a specialist in Energy and Electricity Law at the University of Lagos,

warned that the procedural gaps could paralyse the Commission's operations.

In a statement made available to journalists in Benin City, Professor Oke said that there are credible indications that two recently confirmed Commissioners, Dr. Fouad Olayinka Animashaun and Aisha Kanti Bello, may be appointed to the offices of Chairman and Vice-Chairman administratively, by-passing the required presidential nomination and Senate confirmation.

Such a move, he said, would

be illegal under the Electricity Act 2023.

"The Act contains no provision allowing a Commissioner to be upgraded, redesignated, or converted into Chairman or Vice-Chairman without a fresh nomination and confirmation for those specific offices," Professor Oke said.

He noted that any attempt to circumvent the law would be "ultra vires, inconsistent with Sections 35, 36, 40, and 41 of the Act, and therefore null and void in law."

He added that no administra-

tive order, presidential directive, or memo from the Secretary to the Government of the Federation could cure the defect.

"The Act establishes NERC with clearly differentiated statutory offices: Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Commissioners. These roles are not interchangeable," he explained.

"The Chairman is the Chief Executive and Accounting Officer, while the Vice-Chairman performs a defined leadership role.

"Commissioners exercise collective regulatory powers, but do not possess executive authority."

VC unveils tech-driven agenda, seeks renewable energy partnership

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

The Vice-Chancellor of Yakubu Gowon University, Abuja, Prof. Ha-keem Fawehinmi, has said the institution is repositioning to leverage technology to transform its operations and attain world-class standards in teaching, research and innovation.

Fawehinmi, the 8th substantive Vice-Chancellor of the university, stated this on Wednesday after an

interactive session with the Chairman, Senate Committee on Tertiary Education, Senator Muntari Mohammed Dandutse, during which key challenges facing the institution were discussed.

He said his administration is committed to creating an enabling environment where academic excellence drives increased research productivity, inclusivity and effective management of diversity.

"My vision is to create an environment where academic ac-

tivities and excellence promote research productivity, inclusivity and harmonious management of diversity," he said, stressing that all segments of the university community must work collectively to move the institution forward.

The Vice-Chancellor said staff and students' welfare and safety are central to his agenda, noting that improved welfare would enhance the university's ranking, visibility and the quality of its graduates.

Explaining the outcome of

the meeting with the Senate Committee chairman, Fawehinmi said discussions focused on generating renewable energy to address power challenges and boost academic productivity.

"We discussed modalities for generating renewable energy to increase power availability in the university. Improved power supply will significantly enhance academic activities and productivity," he said.

He disclosed that the proposed renewable energy pro-

ject would extend beyond the university, with plans to supply excess power to host communities as part of its corporate social responsibility.

According to him, the university plans to develop solar farms on elevated and ground locations, as well as explore solar installations on dammed sections of the Giri River, integrating agriculture, research, innovation and tourism.

Fawehinmi also expressed concern over the proliferation of universities in the country, warning that it poses risks to academic standards due to

weakened regulation and declining quality of manpower.

He said many private universities operate far below their admission capacities and are unable to meet broader national education needs, welcoming recent government efforts to suspend the establishment of new universities as a step toward safeguarding standards.

On security, the Vice-Chancellor said the university is strengthening surveillance through community policing, collaboration with security agencies and engagement with local vigilante groups to secure the expansive campus.



OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF ECMS:

Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs Esther Walson-Jack (L); with representative of the Minister of Youth Development, Dr Maryam Keshinro, during the official launch of the Enterprise Content Management System (ECMS) at the Federal Ministry of Youth Development in Abuja

Okpebholo broker peace over forest reserve use in Ovia communities

BERNADETTE IDALU

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has intervened to resolve disputes over the use of a government forest reserve for agricultural purpose in Ovia South West and Ovia North East Local Government Areas.

The mediation meeting, held on Wednesday at Government House, Benin City, brought together investors, traditional rulers and community leaders from Iguomon, Egbetta and Usen communities.

Speaking on behalf of the governor, the Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, said that the land in question belongs to the Edo State Government under the Land Use Act, stressing the need for public order and dialogue in resolving disagreements.

Idahosa traced the dispute to what he described as lapses by the previous administration, which allegedly allocated the forest reserve to investors without adequate consultation with host communities.

He said the meeting was convened to clarify issues, pro-

tect community interests and reposition Edo State as an investor-friendly destination.

"We just concluded a very important meeting. We have three investors interested in oil palm production in Ovia South West and Ovia North East. This aligns with the vision of Governor Monday Okpebholo to open Edo State to more investments," Idahosa said.

According to him, critical stakeholders, including community leaders led by the El-aware of Usen, Oba Wilson Oluogbe II, and Palace Chiefs, participated in the dialogue to ensure inclusiveness.

He disclosed that investors

agreed to increase the proposed community buffer from five to 10 percent, in recognition of the agrarian nature of Ovia communities, where a majority of residents depend on subsistence farming.

Idahosa added that investors would enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with host communities to guarantee their involvement in decision-making and protect their interests.

"Governor Okpebholo's administration is people-oriented. While investors are important to us, the welfare and livelihood of our people remain paramount," he said.

Ikhilor urges media support for govt policies, programmes

BENIN CITY

The Secretary to the Edo State Government (SSG), Umar Musa Ikhilor, has called on the media to continue to support government policies and programmes through objective, professional and balanced reportage, describing journalists as critical stakeholders in governance.

Ikhilor made the call while receiving members of the Governor's Press Crew, led by the Chief Press Secretary, Dr. Ebojele Akhere Patrick, during

a courtesy visit to his office as part of the season's greetings.

Expressing appreciation for the visit, the SSG said the media plays an indispensable role in governance and public accountability.

He noted that government activities would have little impact without effective reporting to inform the public, describing the press as the fourth estate of the realm.

The SSG stressed that journalists serve as the eyes, ears and voice through which the government connects with the people.

According to him, the present administration in Edo recognises the challenges faced by media practitioners, particularly in terms of welfare and working conditions, and is already taking steps to address them.

Ikhilor assured that with the passage of a new budget in the coming year, provisions would be made to substantially improve the welfare of media professionals, explaining that the current administration initially operated within the limits of an inherited budget.

He noted that government

spending must be guided strictly by appropriation, saying that expenditures outside approved budgets is a criminal offence.

The SSG urged journalists to remain committed to professionalism and the pursuit of truth, irrespective of personal relationships or prevailing circumstances.

Noting that consistency and integrity define credible journalism, he encouraged the media to continue supporting government policies and programmes through accurate and diligent reporting, emphasising the importance of teamwork in effective communication.

EFCC arrests herbalists with \$3.43m, €280,000 in counterfeit notes in Osun, Lagos

ABUJA

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has arrested a five-man syndicate allegedly in possession of counterfeit foreign currency totaling \$3,430,000 and €280,000 in Osun and Lagos States.

The Commission's Spokesperson, Dele Oyewale, disclosed this in a statement on Wednesday in Abuja.

Oyewale said the suspects, who also practice as herbalists, allegedly defrauded one Halima Sanni of N26,550,000.

They were arrested at their shrines on December 7 in Osun and December 8 in Lagos following thorough surveillance and

intelligence on their activities.

"The suspects defrauded unsuspecting individuals of their legitimate earnings under the pretense of providing spiritual cleansing and solutions to various ailments," Oyewale said.

He added, "They also allegedly assured their victims that they could conjure large sums of money, which had to be 'cleansed' through a spiritual sacrifice before being spent.

They accomplished this by hypnotizing victims into providing money for the rituals.

"Other items recovered include two exotic cars and mobile phones."

Oyewale said the suspects would be charged to court once investigations are concluded.

Tinubu to present 2026 budget to NASS on Friday

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu is scheduled to present the 2026 Budget to a Joint Session of the National Assembly on Friday at 2:00 pm.

The announcement was made in a letter from the Clerk of the National Assembly, Mr. Kamorudeen Ogunlana, signed on his behalf by Essien Eyo Essien, Secretary of Hu-

man Resources and Staff Development.

The letter directed all accredited personnel to report by 11:00 am, warning that those arriving late would be denied entry for security reasons.

Non-accredited persons were advised to stay away, while designated staff, including the Clerk and Deputy Clerk of both chambers, are exempted.

Staff were also instructed to park in the designated areas outside the Assembly complex

2027: Tinubu has done well for S'East, we'll vote him —Umahi

ABUJA

The Minister of Works, David Umahi, said President Bola Tinubu has performed well for the South-East and will be voted for in 2027.

Speaking at a news briefing on Wednesday, Umahi praised the president's inclusive governance and massive infrastructural investments in the zone, which had been historically excluded.

He stressed that South-East leaders should allow Tinubu to complete his tenure before agitating for their own political

ambitions, adding that current inclusion is a step toward addressing past marginalization.

Umahi listed several key projects in the region, including the Army Training Depot in Ebonyi State, the Enyimba Power Plant, major roads and bridges, and appointments of strategic security chiefs from the South-East.

He rejected allegations of procurement violations in federal projects, stressing that all due processes, including Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIA), stakeholder engagements, and international evaluations, were followed.

NEWS

Shareholders hail Austin Laz Coy's return to operations after over 12yrs of closure

HAMEED BRAIMAH

Benin City: Shareholders of Austin Laz Company Plc have lauded the management for returning the company to operations after over 12 years of production shutdown occasioned by eco-climate-induced challenges.

Speaking at the third Annual General Meeting of the manufacturing company in Benin City for the year ended 2024, shareholders commended the management and Board of Directors for their resilience, doggedness, innovation and creativity in bringing the company back on its feet.

Shareholders who attended the meeting physically, as well as those who joined virtually, applauded the company's performance in the 2024 financial year compared to previous years, expressing optimism about a brighter future for the company and its investors.

Some of the shareholders present included Agbaje Kehinde, Banji Olugbosun, Atolagbe Taofeek, Adewale Aremu, and Christopher Itua, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Austin Laz Company Plc, among others.

They described the 2024 financial performance as impressive and assured the management of their continued support.

The shareholders noted that despite the over 12-year operational setback and the prevailing harsh economic climate characterised by high inflation, rising production and power costs, the company recorded a turnover of ₦1.316 billion in 2024, with a gross profit of ₦156.280 million.

While expressing satisfaction with the company's 2024 business output despite the non-payment of dividends, the shareholders also commended the management for increasing the company's asset base from ₦1.3 billion in 2023 to ₦1.427 billion in 2024.

Earlier in his address, Christopher Itua said things had begun to improve for the company due to shareholders' advice and encouragement amid numerous challenges.

"This support is well appreciated, and we look forward to more of it as we move forward and prepare for full operations in 2026.

"For about 12 years, our operations were down, but we thank Almighty God for

sustaining us through those difficult years and enabling us to restart. We believe He will guide us and grant us favour to accomplish more than our dreams and vision," he said.

Itua stated that the company was moving into 2026 with renewed strength and conviction to achieve better results for all

shareholders.

He explained that as part of its restructuring efforts, the company continued test marketing of new products in the past year, including glazed ceiling (suspended ceiling) and glazed fascia boards.

According to him, the company is also developing additional building material products expected to enter the market between the first, sec-

ond and third quarters of 2026.

"Our First Lady Cooler, which we spoke about last year, is currently under test run, and we hope to introduce it into the market in the first quarter of 2026.

"The market reception has been very encouraging, and we are now poised to commence commercial production from the first quarter of 2026," he said.

Itua added that the company's major products were targeted at the housing and cooling industries, including ice block machines.

He assured shareholders and prospective investors that the company was currently implementing a phased restructuring timeline that commenced in October 2024 and is scheduled to be completed by October 2026.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:

Some shareholders immediately after the Austin Laz Company's Annual General Meeting in Benin City.

Agric Mgt Bill scales 2nd reading in Ogun Assembly

ABEOKUTA

A bill seeking to establish an agency to manage agricultural land and promote responsible land use has scaled second reading at the Ogun State House of Assembly.

The bill, titled Ogun State Agricultural Land Management Agency Law, 2025, passed second reading following a motion moved by its sponsor, Mr Waliu Owode, and seconded by Mr Folawewo Salami.

Owode said the proposed legislation would provide a comprehensive framework for inclusive and responsible land-intensive agricultural investment, enhance land tenure security

and boost investor confidence.

He added that the bill would promote food security, increase internally generated revenue and reduce land-related disputes.

Lawmakers including the Minority Leader, Mr Lukman Adeleye, and Mr Oluseun Adesanya, described the bill as critical to addressing land acquisition challenges, particularly in rural communities.

The Speaker, Hon. Oludaisi Elemide, said the bill would curb illegal occupation and misuse of agricultural land and strengthen land management practices.

The bill was subsequently referred to the House Committees on Agriculture, Lands and Housing for further legislative action.

New tax law 'll boost economy, drive growth —EKIRS chairman

ADO-EKITI

Chairman of the Ekiti State Internal Revenue Service (EKIRS), Mr Olaniran Olatona, has said that the new tax laws scheduled to take effect in January 2026 will ease burdens on Nigerians and boost economic growth.

Olatona said the tax reforms were aimed at modernising the tax system, improving revenue generation and promoting fairness, while dismissing fears of illegal deductions from individuals' bank accounts.

He clarified that the laws do not empower tax authorities to

withdraw funds without due process, adding that the reform would broaden the tax base, reduce multiple taxation and encourage voluntary compliance.

The EKIRS chairman also debunked claims that bank accounts of Nigerians without Tax Identification Numbers would be frozen, explaining that the initiative was intended to regularise and issue TINs.

He assured that low-income earners were protected under the law and urged Nigerians to disregard misinformation, adding that EKIRS would continue stakeholder sensitization across the state.

Dangote Cement rolls out ₦15.7m scholarship scheme for 120 students

IBESE (OGUN)

Dangote Cement Plc, Ibesse Plant, has announced a ₦15.72 million scholarship scheme for 120 students from its host community of Ibesse in Yewa North Local Government Area of Ogun State.

The scholarship covers 100 undergraduates and 20 pupils and students from secondary and primary schools across the company's 17 host communities.

The announcement was made during the company's annual Community Day celebration held in Ibesse.

Speaking on the company's social investment initiatives,

Head of Social Performance, Mr Demola Ojelowo, said Dangote Cement had executed 13 developmental projects, with 10 others ongoing and expected to be completed before the end of the year.

He listed some of the projects to include skills acquisition and empowerment programmes, women empowerment schemes, farmer support initiatives, health sensitisation programmes, construction of public infrastructure and installation of solar inverter systems.

According to Ojelowo, the social investment scorecard reflects steady progress in empowerment, education, health and infrastructure development.

"As a responsible corporate organisation in mining and manufacturing, we are committed under the Community Development Agreement to complement government's developmental efforts through the delivery of social and economic benefits to our community stakeholders.

"We remain committed to enhancing project efficiency, ensuring sustainability and fostering strong partnerships with communities and government stakeholders as we enter the next phase of our development efforts," he said.

In his address, the Plant Director, Mr Ayyagari Subbaraidu, represented by the Chief General Manager, Maintenance, Mr Hemant Dave, said the Community Day reflected the company's deliberate effort to deepen stakeholder engagement and com-

munity participation.

According to him, the event provides an avenue to account for the company's corporate social investments and reaffirm its commitment to care, inclusion and partnership with host communities.

Subbaraidu expressed appreciation to the Ogun State Government, customers, vendors and other stakeholders for their support.

In his goodwill message, the Speaker of the Ogun State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Oludaisi Elemide, commended the Dangote Group for its consistent support for community development.

He, however, expressed concern over indiscriminate parking by truck drivers on major roads in the area and urged the company to address the issue.

Protest: NLC President reveals discussions with Tinubu

ABUJA

President of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Mr Joe Ajaero, has said discussions held with President Bola Tinubu focused on addressing the financial insecurity facing Nigerian workers.

Ajaero disclosed this after a meeting convened by the Governor of Imo State, Senator Hope Uzodimma, with NLC leadership in Abuja.

President Tinubu had met with organised labour leaders at the State House as part of last-minute

efforts to halt the proposed nationwide protest over insecurity.

The NLC had earlier declared a nationwide protest scheduled for December 17, citing what it described as Nigeria's deteriorating security situation.

According to Ajaero, the engagement with the Federal Government was aimed at addressing concerns raised by labour and reviewing the planned protest.

"We are rounding off our engagements and will take whatever was discussed back to our members.

"The issue of meeting on the eve of an action is not new. However, the President was emphatic that insecurity will soon be a thing of the past and that concrete steps are being taken.

"We also discussed financial insecurity, because a worker who is not well fed or well paid will face more challenges," he said.

Ajaero added that President Tinubu assured labour leaders that Nigeria was on the path to prosperity, and both parties agreed to reconvene in January

to address outstanding grey areas.

On whether the protest had been cancelled, Ajaero said the union would consult its members, noting that the protest had already commenced and was not an indefinite action.

Also speaking, Governor Hope Uzodimma of Imo State and Chairman of the Progressive Governors' Forum, said that President Tinubu's intervention played a key role in resolving the matter and opening a channel for sustained engagement with labour.

Police, Bureau confirm crash landing incident at Sam Mbakwe Int'l Airport

OWERRI

The Nigeria Police Force and the Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau (NSIB) have confirmed a Tuesday night crash landing of a chartered aircraft at the Sam Mbakwe International Cargo Airport, Owerri, Imo State.

Reports indicated that no death

was recorded during the incident.

The aircraft, with call sign ASR and registration number 5N-ASR, a C-172 operated by SkyPower Express, was en route from Kaduna to Port Harcourt when it made an emergency landing at the Sam Mbakwe International Cargo Airport.

In a statement, the Police Public Relations Officer, Air-

port Command, Lagos, ASP Mohammed Adeola, said the incident occurred at about 6:58 p.m. on Tuesday.

Adeola said the aircraft experienced a crash landing at the threshold of Runway 17 and sustained varying degrees of damage.

He added that there were four crew members on board at the time of the incident.

"Upon receipt of the distress information, the airport police patrol units, in collaboration with airport emergency response teams, were swiftly deployed to the scene.

"All occupants were successfully rescued. Two of the crew members were in stable condition, while the remaining two, who were initially unconscious, were immediately evacuated to the hospital, where they are currently receiving medical attention," he said.

Adeola stated that airport op-

erations remained uninterrupted, as the situation was promptly brought under control. He added that the affected area remained under close monitoring to ensure continued safety and security, while relevant aviation authorities commenced necessary technical assessments in line with standard operating procedures.

"The Commissioner of Police, Airport Command, Olufunke Ogunbode, commends the professionalism and rapid coordination of all responding agencies.

"Ogunbode reassures the public of the command's unshaken commitment to aviation safety, public security and effective emergency response across all airports," the statement added.

Meanwhile, the NSIB also confirmed the incident in a statement signed by its Director, Public Affairs and Family Assistance, Mrs Bimbo Oladeji.

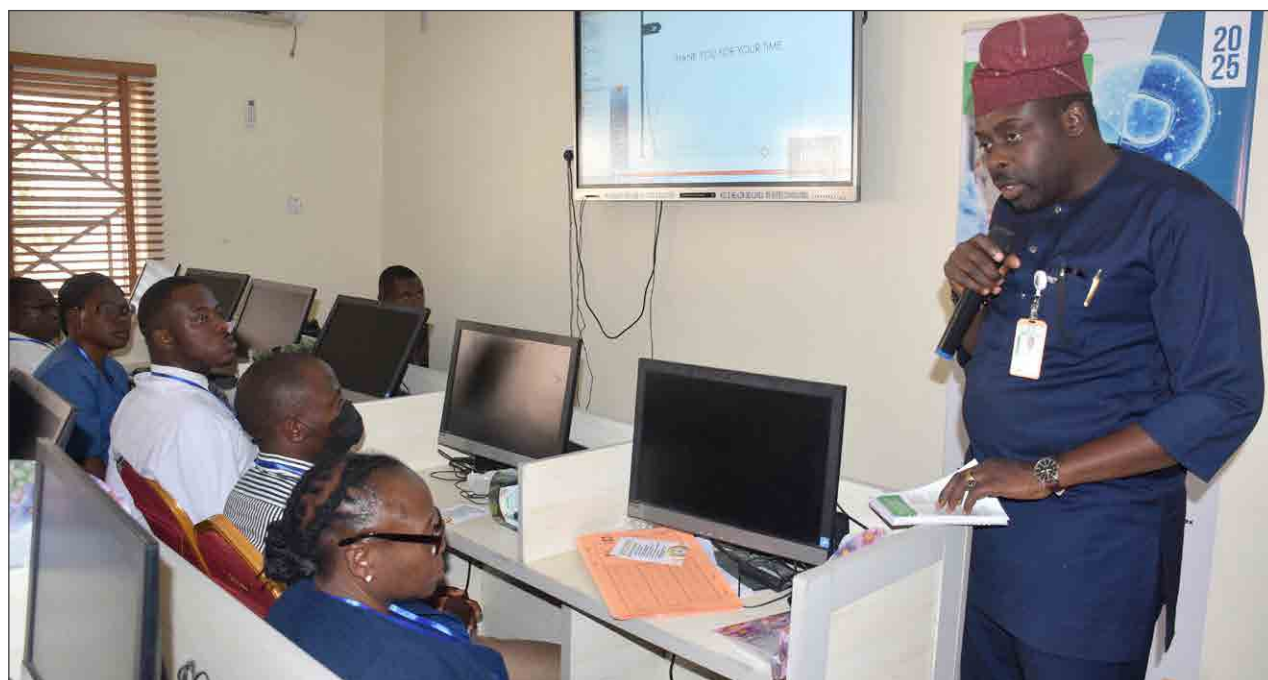
"The crew declared an emergency, necessitating a diversion to Owerri, where the aircraft subsequently crash landed in the approach area of Runway 17.

"There were four people on board at the time of the accident, with no fatalities reported so far," she said.

Oladeji stated that there was no post-crash fire, adding that the runway remained active for flight operations, with other aircraft taking off safely after the incident.

"Efforts are currently underway to coordinate the recovery and evacuation of the distressed aircraft from the crash site to allow for a detailed wreckage examination.

"The Director-General of the bureau, Capt. Alex Badeh Jr., expressed his deepest sympathies to the management of SkyPower Express and expressed relief that no fatalities were recorded."



3-DAY WORKSHOP:

Representative of the DG, National Institute for Cancer Research and Treatment (NICRAT), Dr. Akanni Oluwasegun (right) addressing participants during the 3-day workshop on Artificial Intelligence Application in Cancer, organised by National Institute For Cancer Research and Treatment (NICRAT), North Central Zone at the Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH) in Jos on Wednesday.

Mbah appoints 2 new commissioners, board chairmen, others

ENUGU

Governor Peter Mbah of Enugu State has approved the appointment of two new commissioners, board chairmen, executive secretaries and other senior officials into various positions in the state.

This was contained in a statement issued by the Secretary to the State Government, Prof. Chidiebere Onyia, on Wednesday in Enugu.

According to Onyia, the commissioners-designate are Mr Osinachi Nnajiyeze and Dr Charles Egumgbe.

Others appointed include Kenechukwu Nnamani as Managing Director, Enugu State Investment Development Authority; James Mbah as Executive

Secretary, Enugu State Scholarship and Education Loans Board; Dr Eric Oluedo as Executive Secretary, Local Government Staff Pensions Board; Mrs Sylvia Onwubuemel as Executive Secretary, Enugu State Library Board; and Monday Ani as State Coordinator, Community and Social Development Agency.

Onyia added that Governor Peter Mbah also approved the reconstitution of the Governing Board of the Enugu State Universal Basic Education Board.

Members of the board are Afam Nnaji, Dr Uche Eze and Dr Oge Uka, while Mrs Rita Chimaobi Ihemeje represents Enugu West Senatorial District and Mrs Justina Ugwu represents Enugu North Senatorial District.

Others are Dr Nnenna Og-

bonna, representative of Enugu East Senatorial District; Theophilus Nweke, representative of the Nigeria Union of Teachers; Mrs Juliet Ani, representative of the State Women Group; and Dr Luke Ohabuenyi Ezema as Secretary.

The Secretary to the State Government also stated that Dr Nneka Onyebuchi and Patrick Onwe were appointed members of the Post Primary Schools Management Board.

Other appointments include Nwabueze Ugwu as Chairman, Governing Council, Enugu State College of Education Technical; Chief Nwabueze Nnamani as Board Chairman, Enugu State Housing Development Corporation; Richard Onaga as Managing Director, Enugu State

Waste Management Agency; Bob Itanyi as Managing Director, Enugu State Transport Company and Richard Agu as Board Chairman, Enugu Air.

Also appointed are Uchenna Igwesi as Board Chairman, New Enugu Smart City Development Authority; Chika Igwesi as Chairman, Enugu State Road Maintenance and Development Agency; Chidera Odo as Chairman, Enugu State Roads Fund; Manfred Nzekwe as Executive Secretary, Enugu State Roads Fund; Dr John Egbo as Managing Director, Enugu East Zone Transport Terminals; Prince Emeka Mamah as Managing Director, Enugu North Zone Transport Terminals; and Rev. Chimaobi Aninwene as member, Enugu State Christian Pilgrims Welfare Board.

Gridlock at Omi-Adio as NRC fixes railway crossing in Ibadan

IBADAN

There was severe gridlock at Omi-Adio on Wednesday as the Nigeria Railway Corporation carried out repair works on the railway crossing in the area.

The repairs became necessary following the derailment of a cargo train at the spot on December 11.

The traffic congestion caused significant inconvenience to commuters plying the route.

A bus driver, Mr Taofik Alade, said that although the gridlock was frustrating, the repair work was a welcome development for motorists using the road.

He said the crossing had, for a long time, posed serious danger to motorists, noting that

drivers often had to grip their steering wheels tightly while crossing to avoid swerving and possible accidents.

"This repair is necessary to prevent accidents at the spot. We are very happy that it is finally being fixed," he said.

Similarly, a commercial motorcyclist, Mr Adekunle Bankole, described the repair work as a thing of joy for road users, urging the corporation to ensure regular maintenance of the railway track.

For her part, Mrs Khadijat Bello appealed to the Oyo State Government and the Chairman of Ido Local Government Area, Mr Sheriff Adejo, to remove market women trading around the railway crossing and roadside to ease traffic flow and prevent future disasters.

Marketers seek Tinubu's intervention in NMDPRA, Dangote face-off

ABUJA

Oil and gas marketers have called on President Bola Tinubu to urgently intervene in the ongoing dispute in the downstream petroleum sector to prevent further damage to the industry.

The marketers were reacting to the disagreement between the Authority Chief Executive of the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority, Mr Farouk Ahmed, and the President of Dangote Group, Alhaji Aliko Dangote.

Dangote had accused Ahmed of economic sabotage, alleging that the regulatory authority was undermining domestic refining through continued issuance of import licences for petroleum products.

He also accused the NMDPRA leadership of colluding with international traders and oil importers to frustrate local refining and raised concerns

over alleged conflict of interest.

Speaking with journalists, the National President of the Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria, Alhaji Maigandi Garima, called for swift intervention by the Federal Government.

Garima said the dispute could erode investor confidence and damage Nigeria's image in the international market.

"Such crisis is not good for the industry and could cause serious damage, especially in the global market. Quick intervention is needed to prevent escalation," he said.

Similarly, the Petroleum Products Retail Outlets Owners Association of Nigeria called for urgent intervention by President Bola Tinubu.

The National President of PETROAN, Dr Billy Gillis-Harry, said the development could discourage potential foreign investors and erode confidence in Nigeria's regulatory institutions.

SEREC backs N70trn revenue projection for maritime, blue economy

ABUJA

The Sea Empowerment and Research Center has endorsed experts' projection that Nigeria's maritime and blue economy sector could generate N70 trillion in revenue.

The Head of Research at SEREC, Dr Eugene Nweke, made the endorsement on Wednesday in Abuja.

He said the position followed a statement by maritime

law expert, Dr Olisa Agbakoba, that with improved governance and regulation, the sector could contribute up to N70 trillion annually to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product.

According to Nweke, the projection is timely and strategically significant amid rising public debt, limited fiscal space and the urgent need to expand sustainable non-oil revenue sources.

"The centre affirms that the maritime and blue economy

remains one of Nigeria's most potent, yet historically under-optimised economic frontiers," he said.

Nweke stressed the importance of effectively managing maritime-linked revenues, particularly those from international trade and port operations under the Nigeria Customs Service.

He said customs revenue, largely derived from seaborne trade, already constituted a ma-

major pillar of Nigeria's maritime economy and contributed multi-trillion-Naira inflows annually to the federation account.

He added that ongoing modernisation programmes of the Nigeria Customs Service, including digital trade platforms, risk management systems, advanced cargo information frameworks and the Customs-PACT initiative, were expected to boost compliance, reduce leakages and raise revenue.

NEWS

COAS fetes wounded heroes at Christmas luncheon in Kaduna

KADUNA
The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lieutenant-General Waidi Shaibu, has hosted a Christmas luncheon in honour of sick and wounded-in-action (WIA) soldiers at the 44 Nigerian Army Reference Hospital, Kaduna (44 NARHK).

He was represented by the Chief of Staff, 1 Division Nigerian Army, Brigadier-General Timothy Oporum.

The COAS said the event was organised to appreciate the wounded soldiers and medical personnel supporting their recovery in line with the "Soldier First Concept" of his command philosophy.

"Today, as we gather in this noble medical institution, those values find their truest expression in the courage and selflessness of the men and women we celebrate, our wounded heroes.

"Our WIA troops represent the very best of the Nigerian spirit: bravery in the face of danger, loyalty to duty, and unwavering commitment to the unity and security of our nation.

"I wish to state clearly, you are neither forgotten nor aban-

doned but deeply valued. I also acknowledge the families of our wounded heroes," Shaibu said.

He reassured the WIA personnel of the Nigerian Army's continued commitment to their welfare.

"May this Christmas bring comfort to every recovering soldier, peace to every family, and renewed strength to all caregivers.

May the New Year usher in improved health, lasting recovery, and greater national unity," he added.

Earlier, the acting Chief Medical Director, 44 NARHK, Brigadier-General Godwin Ogoh, described Christmas as a season of hope and sacrifice, reflecting the courage and selflessness of wounded soldiers who defended the nation.

"We are profoundly grateful for your commitment to serving our nation, and it is our privilege and responsibility to provide you with exceptional care during your recovery," he said.

The Chairperson, Nigerian Army Officers' Wives Association (NAOWA), 1 Division Chapter, Dr Halima Tafida-Wase, presented gifts to the WIA personnel and assured them of NAOWA's continued support.

She described the occasion as more than a ceremonial gathering, calling it a moment of reflection, gratitude, and renewed commitment to service.

"We honor their bravery and

salute their unyielding spirit. Equally deserving of recognition are the dedicated men and women who serve within our military medical institutions.

As we draw the curtain on

the year, this celebration reminds us that progress is built on unity, gratitude, and shared responsibility.

"It calls us to honor the sacrifices of the past year, appre-

ciate the achievements of the present, and look to the future with renewed hope," she said.

Highlights of the event included cultural dances and the presentation of gifts and awards.

**END OF THE YEAR TOUR:**

L-R: Stakeholder in Lekki Port, Mr Darlington Akali; Chief Operating Officer, Lekki Port, Mr Weiland Zhong; Managing Director, Lekki Port, Mr Wang Qiang; Managing Director, Lekki Free Trade (LFT), Capt. Jędrzej Mierzewski and Chief Operating Officer, LFT, Ajay Tyagi, during the End of the Year tour of the Port by Stakeholders, in Lagos, on Wednesday.

Police order autopsy, detain mortician over alleged organ removal in Edo morgue

MIKE OSAROAGBON

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Police Command has ordered a post-mortem examination into allegations of missing vital organs from a corpse at a mortuary in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of the state.

The mortician, Mr. Obakpolor Idahosa, 60, has been placed in protective custody pending the outcome of the autopsy, police said.

The Public Relations Officer of the command, ASP Eno Ikoedem, confirmed the development, noting that the postmortem would determine whether the corpse was tampered with, as alleged by the deceased's family.

Investigators from the Homicide Unit of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), alongside journalists, also visited the mortuary section of Akugbe Medical Centre on Upper Sokponoba Road, Benin City, where the incident allegedly occurred

on Friday, December 12, 2025.

Police sources disclosed that the mortuary attendant, described as having over 30 years' experience, may also be charged for disrespect to a corpse over the alleged unprofessional handling of the body.

The deceased was identified as Mr. Uyi Enogieru, 45, a commercial tricycle rider from the Nomayo area of Benin City and a native of Urhionigbe Community in Orhionmwon Local Government Area. His body was deposited at the mortuary in October.

Trouble reportedly erupted when family members who came to claim the body for burial discovered that vital organs, including the heart, eyes and kidney, were allegedly missing.

The mortician's alleged failure to provide a satisfactory explanation triggered outrage, leading to an attack on the facility by aggrieved mourners.

The violence forced mortuary workers and hospital staff to flee, leaving patients on admission and other families stranded.

PenCom begins disbursement of N758bn to retirees

ABUJA

The Director-General of the National Pension Commission (PenCom), Ms Omolola Oloworaran, has said the commission has begun the disbursement of a N758 billion bond approved by the Federal Government to clear outstanding pension liabilities.

Oloworaran made the disclosure while giving her one-year scorecard at the Pension Revolution Summit in Abuja.

She said the bond, approved by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in February, had been cashed, with over N600 billion already disbursed.

According to her, pension as-

sets in the country have grown to about N27 trillion due to bold decisions and structured reforms under Pension Revolution 2.0.

She added that the commission had rebuilt trust, expanded coverage, strengthened governance, and moved the contributory pension scheme into a new phase.

"Over a year ago, I was confirmed as Director-General with a clear mandate to rebuild trust. We expanded coverage, strengthened governance, and moved the contributory pension scheme firmly into the next phase.

"I am proud to say that this past year has been defined by bold decisions, structural refunds, and measurable im-

pacts," she said.

Oloworaran said Pension Revolution 2.0 was the most comprehensive reform agenda in the Nigerian pension industry since 2004.

She described it as structural, combining new regulations, stronger supervision, governance reforms, digital transformation, and industry realignment to future-proof the sector.

She added that Pension Post 1.0 had been introduced to enhance benefit adequacy, adding N2.68 billion to monthly pension payments for CPS retirees since June.

Full automation of critical pension processes, including pension plan certificates, benefit process-

ing, and contribution remittance, had also been achieved.

To strengthen collaboration, the commission established the Pension Industry Leadership Council, bringing together industry leaders to drive innovation, reinforce accountability, and build collective ownership of reforms.

Oloworaran said the micro pension plan had been restructured and rebranded into the Personal Pension Plan (PPP) to reach artisans, traders, market women, and the informal sector.

Digital enrollment was expanded, and accredited pension agents were introduced to serve both as a distribution channel and an employment strategy.

NMDPRA CEO denies response to Dangote's allegations, clarifies position

ABUJA

Mr Farouk Ahmed, the Chief Executive of the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), has denied responding to allegations made against him by Aliko Dangote, President of Dangote Industries Limited.

In a statement on Wednesday, Ahmed said he was aware of the "wild and spurious allegations" targeting him and his family.

"As a regulator of a sensitive industry, I opted not to engage in public brickbat," he said.

Dangote had accused the NMDPRA leadership of colluding with international traders and oil importers to frus-

trate local refining through the continued issuance of import licences.

He also alleged that Ahmed was living beyond his legitimate means, claiming that four of his children attend secondary schools in Switzerland at a cost running into several million dollars.

"My attention has been drawn to a purported response I was

said to have made on the recent allegations against my person. I hereby state that the statement did not emanate from me.

"Thankfully, the person behind the allegations has taken it to a formal investigative institution. I believe that would provide an opportunity to dispassionately distill the issues and to clear my name," Ahmed said.

RENOUNCIATION OF SECRET CULT

The general public is hereby notified that I, **EFOSA COURAGE** have renounced my membership of the **Supreme Vikings Confraternity** in December 2024. I join the group in **September 2014**. I am no longer a member of the group since I renounced, I no longer participate in any of their activities/meetings.

Concerned authorities, security agencies and the general public should please take note.

Signed:
EFOSA COURAGE

Lagos Police detain tiktoker Peller over reckless driving, suicide attempt

LAGOS

The Police Command in Lagos State has detained 20-year-old social media influencer Habeeb Hamzat, popularly known as Peller, over reckless driving.

The detention followed a viral video showing him crashing his vehicle while live streaming on social media.

SP Abimbola Adebisi, the

police spokesperson, confirmed the incident on Tuesday evening.

She said the video, recorded on Sunday, showed Peller driving dangerously and endangering his life and other road users. Adebisi described the act as a deliberate attempt to commit suicide and a serious threat to public safety.

The case has been transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department

(SCID), where investigations are ongoing.

The spokesperson said the outcome will be made public and the suspect will be charged before a competent court.

SP Adebisi said Commissioner of Police Mr Olohundare Jimoh warned social media influencers and the public against promoting reckless acts online.

"CP Jimoh emphasised that

such conduct poses serious risks to public peace and safety and warned that the Command would not hesitate to apply the full weight of the law. All road users must comply with traffic regulations to ensure safety," she added.

The command reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining public order and protecting lives and property across the state

JUDICIARY

NEWS

Supreme Court judgment on presidential authority wise, commendable —Ondo Attorney-General

LAGOS

Dr Kayode Ajulo, SAN, the Ondo State Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, has described the Supreme Court ruling on President Bola Tinu-

bu's intervention in Rivers State as wise and highly commendable.

Ajulo said the ruling also illuminated the tensions inherent in Nigeria's federal system.

This was contained in a statement issued by the Attor-

ney-General on Wednesday, following the Supreme Court judgment delivered on Monday in Attorney General of Adamawa State and 10 Others v. Attorney General of the Federation and another (SC/CV/329/2025).

In a landmark judgment de-

livered on December 15, the Supreme Court addressed the contentious scope of presidential authority under Section 305 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), following the declaration of a state of emergency in Rivers State by President Bola

Tinubu on March 18, 2025.

The six-to-one verdict, with Justice Mohammed Baba Idris, JSC, delivering the majority judgment and Justice Obande Festus Ogbuinya dissenting, sparked intense debate across Nigeria's political landscape.

Ajulo commended the wisdom of the apex court and President Tinubu's decisive leadership in navigating a crisis he said threatened national stability.

In the statement titled "Clarifying misconceptions on presidential emergency powers and the Rivers State declaration: An analysis of the Supreme Court judgment," the Attorney-General stated that a careful examination of the 14-page summary of the judgment, alongside legal analyses, media reports and expert commentaries, showed that media portrayals frequently oversimplified or misconstrued the court's reasoning.

According to him, the verdict was far from a carte blanche endorsement of executive overreach, as it struck a delicate balance by affirming judicial independence, emphasising procedural rigour and providing persuasive guidance on emergency powers, while ultimately dismissing the suit on jurisdictional grounds.

He noted that headlines suggesting an unqualified validation of the President's power to suspend elected officials distorted the essence of the judgment.

"The Supreme Court did not explicitly uphold the constitutionality of the Rivers State emergency proclamation, which entailed a six-month suspension of Governor Siminalayi Fubara, his deputy and the Rivers State House of Assembly, alongside the appointment of a sole administrator," he said.

Ajulo explained that the court struck out the originating summons filed by the Attorneys-General of 11 Peoples Democratic Party-led states—Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Enugu, Osun, Oyo, Plateau, Taraba, Zamfara and initially Delta State, which later withdrew under Section 232(1) of the Constitution.

He said the majority held that no justiciable dispute existed between the plaintiffs and the federation, as the emergency declaration was localised to Rivers State and had no direct repercussions for the challengers.

According to him, the absence of Rivers State's consent or a demonstrable cause of action rendered the invocation of the court's original jurisdiction improper.

He stressed that the jurisdictional strike-out was critical, noting that pronouncements in dismissed suits carry no binding precedential weight and function only as obiter dicta, given the grave constitutional significance of the matter.



40TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:

L-R: Representative, Olubadan of Ibadan Land, Oba Biodun Daisi; Chairman, Nigerian Institution of Surveyors (NIS), Lagos State Branch, Mr Kolade Kasim and former Minister of Works, Mr Babatunde Fashola, during the 40th Annual General Meeting, Luncheon and Investiture of the Nigerian Institution of Surveyors Lagos State Branch in Lagos on Wednesday

Man docked over alleged N9m land fraud

IBADAN

A man, Festus Olasunkanmi, was on Wednesday arraigned before an Iyaganku Magistrates' Court in Ibadan over alleged N9 million land fraud.

Olasunkanmi, whose address was not provided, is

facing charges of stealing and obtaining money under false pretence, to which he pleaded not guilty.

The prosecutor, Inspector Olagoke Adegbenro, told the court that the defendant committed the offence in January at Ologuneru area of Ibadan.

Adegbenro said Olasunk-

anmi collected N9 million from the complainant, Taiwo Oyedepo, under the pretext of transferring ownership of a plot of land.

He said the defendant failed to fulfil the agreement and instead converted the money to his personal use.

The offences contravene

Sections 419 and 390(9) of the Criminal Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

The Magistrate, Mrs Olasimibo Sanusi-Zubair, granted the defendant bail in the sum of N2 million with two sureties in like sum and adjourned the case until January 20, 2026, for hearing.

NBA extols late former Chief Justice of Nigeria Muhammad

LAGOS

The President of the Nigerian Bar Association, Mazi Afam Osigwe, SAN, has expressed the condolences of Nigerian lawyers on the passing of former Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Ibrahim Tanko Muhammad.

Osigwe described the late Chief Justice as a fine jurist whose loss would be deeply felt

by the Nigerian judiciary.

In a statement issued in Lagos, he said the Bar received the news of the jurist's death in Saudi Arabia with sadness.

According to him, the passing of Justice Muhammad marked the end of a significant chapter in Nigeria's judicial history, shaped by years of service at the highest levels of the bench.

He said the late Chief Justice contributed meaningfully to

the interpretation and application of law within Nigeria's constitutional framework.

The association commiserated with the family of the late Chief Justice, the judiciary, the Supreme Court of Nigeria, the National Judicial Council, as well as the government and people of Bauchi State and the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Justice Muhammad served the Nigerian judiciary for dec-

ades, rising through the Sharia Court of Appeal, the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court before becoming Chief Justice of Nigeria.

As Chief Justice, he presided over the Supreme Court during a challenging phase of Nigeria's democratic development.

Osigwe prayed that Almighty Allah grants him forgiveness and eternal rest, and comforts his family.

NDLEA secures court order to detain vessel, 21 crew members over cocaine shipment

ABUJA

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency has secured an order of a Federal High Court in Lagos to detain a vessel, its captain and 20 other crew members following the seizure of 25.5 kilograms of cocaine.

This was disclosed in a statement issued on Wednesday in Abuja by the Director of Media and Advocacy of the agency,

Mr Femi Babafemi.

Babafemi said the cocaine was discovered in the hatch of a commodity vessel from Brazil at the Apapa Seaport in Lagos.

He explained that NDLEA operatives, acting on credible intelligence, intercepted the merchant vessel, MV San Antonio, on December 6.

After the full discharge of cargo, a total of 21 crew members of various nationalities, including Russians, Filipinos,

Ukrainians and Azerbaijanis, were taken into custody alongside the drug exhibits.

He said the interception followed a similar operation involving another vessel, MV Nord Bosphorus, which arrived from the Port of Santos, Brazil, with about 20 kilograms of cocaine concealed under its cargo on November 16.

Babafemi said the NDLEA subsequently filed an ex parte application before Justice Frida Ogazi of the Federal High

Court, Lagos, seeking the detention of the vessel and crew members pending the conclusion of investigations.

Granting the application, the court ordered the detention of the vessel and the 21 crew members for an initial period of 14 days.

Reacting, the Chairman of the NDLEA, retired Brigadier-General Buba Marwa, said the seizure reinforced the agency's warning to international drug cartels and their local collaborators.

Man, 32, arraigned over alleged theft of N800,000 motorcycle

IBADAN

A 32-year-old man, Sulaimon Sikiru, was on Wednesday arraigned before an Iyaganku Magistrates' Court in Ibadan over the alleged theft of a motorcycle valued at N800,000.

Sikiru, whose address was not provided, pleaded not guilty to the charge of theft.

The prosecutor, Inspector Elisha Tellang, told the court that the defendant committed the offence at about 2:00 p.m.

on November 10 at Odo-Ona Kekere, Ibadan.

Tellang said Sikiru stole a TVS motorcycle belonging to the complainant, Joshua Abraham.

The offence contravenes Section 390(9) of the Criminal Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

The Magistrate, Mrs Moyosore Atanda, granted the defendant bail in the sum of N100,000 with two sureties in like sum and adjourned the case until January 14, 2026, for hearing.

Lagos High Court proceeds on Christmas recess December 24

IKEJA

The High Court of Lagos State has announced its 2025 Christmas vacation, scheduled to run from December 24 to January 2, 2026.

This was contained in a circular dated November 26, signed by the Chief Registrar of the Lagos State Judiciary, Mr Tajudeen Elias.

The circular stated that the Chief Judge of Lagos State, Justice Kazeem Alogba, approved the vacation pursuant to Order 49 Rules 4(c) and 5 of the High Court of Lagos State (Civil Procedure) Rules, 2019.

According to the notice, normal court activities will resume on Monday, January 5, 2026.

The judiciary also disclosed that arrangements had been made to handle urgent matters during the vacation.

It stated that judges would attend to urgent applications relating to cases already assigned to them, while unassigned urgent applications would be handled by designated judges.

The circular noted that urgent matters may still be heard during the vacation period, provided conditions prescribed by the rules are met.

NEWS

Foreign

Naveed Akram charged with 15 counts of murder over Bondi shooting

Naveed Akram, the surviving suspect in Sunday's mass shooting at Bondi Beach in Sydney, has been charged with 59 offences, including 15 counts of murder and one of committing a terrorist act, the New South Wales police say.

Akram, 24, was critically injured during the incident. His father Sajid Akram, 50, was killed in an exchange of fire with police at the scene.

Fifteen people were killed and dozens of others were injured in the attack, which targeted Australia's Jewish community at an event celebrating

the first night of Hanukkah.

It was the country's deadliest shooting since 1996.

'An unspeakable loss': Funeral takes place for rabbi killed in Bondi shooting

Akram also faces 40 charges of causing grievous bodily harm with intent to murder, as well as one charge of causing a public display of a prohibited terrorist organisation symbol.

Akram had his first hearing from his hospital bedside, the local New South Wales court said.

The case has been adjourned until April 2026, the court added.

Earlier on Wednesday, New

South Wales Police Commissioner Mal Lanyon said they were waiting for medication to wear off before formally questioning Akram.

"For his fairness, we need him to understand what is exactly happening," Lanyon said.

As of Wednesday evening local time, 17 people are still being treated in hospitals across Sydney. One is in critical condition, with four others described as critical but stable.

Police have designated the attack a terrorist incident, with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese saying it appears

to have been "motivated by Islamic State" group ideology.

On Tuesday, it emerged that the father and son had travelled to the Philippines in November.

The Philippine immigration bureau told the BBC that they were in the country from 1 November to 28 November. Their final destination was the southern city of Davao, an immigration spokesperson said.

Naveed Akram travelled to the Philippines using an Australian passport, while his father Sajid used an Indian passport, border authorities in Manila told the BBC.

Nick Reiner charged with murder of his parents Rob and Michele

Prosecutors in Los Angeles have filed murder charges against Nick Reiner over the deaths of his parents, Hollywood director Rob Reiner and his wife Michele.

Nick Reiner is facing two counts of first-degree murder with a special circumstance alleging multiple murders, district attorney Nathan Hochman said.

He could be sentenced to life without the possibility of parole or the death penalty if found guilty. He will be brought to court to formally face charges and enter a plea after he is medically cleared by prison officials, Mr Hochman said. US media report that could happen on Wednesday.

The couple were found dead on Sunday in their home in Brentwood, Los Angeles, with multiple stab wounds.

What we know about Nick Reiner, son charged in death of director Rob Reiner

The charges also include a "special allegation" that Reiner used a knife.

During a news conference on Tuesday, Mr Hochman said no decision had been made about whether prosecutors would seek the death penalty.

The suspect, 32, was also accused of using a "dangerous and deadly weapon, that being a knife".

He was initially expected to appear before a judge later on Tuesday for an arraignment hearing, though this was rescheduled.

Rob Reiner directed a handful of iconic films in a variety of genres, including *This is Spinal Tap*, *Misery* and *A Few Good Men*.

Michele Singer Reiner was an actress, photographer and producer, and the founder of Reiner Light, a photography agency and production company.

Getty Images Rob Reiner, Michele Singer, Romy Reiner, Nick Reiner, Maria Gilfillan and Jake Reiner at "Spinal Tap II: The End Continues" Los Angeles Premiere held at The Egyptian Theatre on September 09, 2025 in Los Angeles, California. (Getty Images)

Nick Reiner (right) is accused of killing his two parents

LA Police Department chief Jim McDonnell told the news conference: "This case is heartbreaking and deeply personal, not only for the Reiner family and their loved ones, but for the entire city."

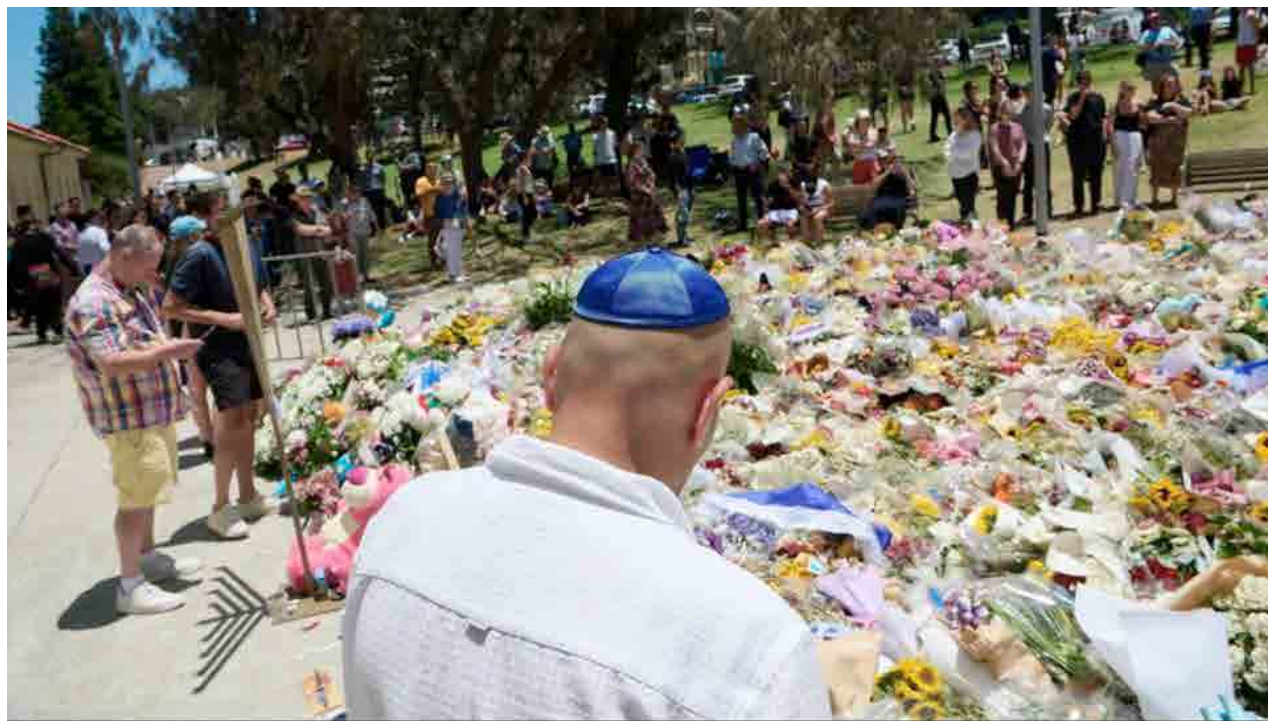
"We extend our deepest condolences to everyone affected by this tragedy."

Asked whether the murder weapon was recovered, Mr Hochman said that would be revealed in court.

Officials said autopsies, which have to be completed, would determine the precise cause, manner and times of death.

'We will miss them forever'

Rob Reiner's other major works included *Stand By Me*, *The Princess Bride* and *When Harry Met Sally*.



TRIBUTE FLORAL:

A floral tribute has been set up for the victims of the Bondi attack.

Venezuela denounces Trump's order for ship blockade as 'warmongering threats'

US President Donald Trump has ordered "a total and complete" blockade of all sanctioned oil tankers entering and leaving Venezuela - a move that Caracas has denounced as "warmongering threats".

Trump wrote that Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's government had been designated a foreign terrorist organisation (FTO), which had also engaged in "Drug Smuggling, and Human Trafficking".

His remarks come after the US seized an oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela last week - a move that was seen as significant given

Venezuela's reliance on oil.

The US has also recently conducted deadly strikes on alleged Venezuelan drug-smuggling boats, and has significantly built up its naval presence nearby.

Trump's post did not give further detail of how the wide-ranging blockade on sanctioned oil tankers would be enforced.

As of last week, more than 30 of the 80 ships in Venezuelan waters or approaching the country were under US sanctions, according to data compiled by TankerTrackers.com.

Multiple new US sanctions on ships said to be carrying Vene-

zuelan oil were issued after the tanker was seized. Sanctions were also placed on some of President Maduro's relatives and on businesses associated with what the US called his illegitimate regime.

In his Truth Social post on Tuesday, Trump wrote that Venezuela was "completely surrounded by the largest Armada ever assembled in the History of South America". He added that it would "only get bigger" and "be like nothing they have ever seen before".

Trump also accused Maduro's government of using "stolen" oil to "finance themselves, Drug Terrorism, Human Trafficking,

Murder, and Kidnapping".

The president has repeatedly accused Venezuela of drug smuggling, and since September the US military has killed at least 90 people with its strikes on boats that were allegedly carrying fentanyl and other illegal drugs to the US.

However, it has provided no public evidence that these vessels were carrying drugs, be it fentanyl - which is mainly produced in Mexico - or cocaine.

Tuesday's post from Trump suggested that a label the US had previously applied only to Maduro was now being widened to his whole government.

A floral tribute has been set up for the victims of the Bondi attack

Among those killed in the attack were two rabbis, a Holocaust survivor and a 10-year-old girl, named by her family as Matilda.

Boris and Sofia Gurman, a couple filmed wrestling with one of the gunmen during the early stages of the attack, were also among the victims.

Another 27 people were taken to hospital with injuries, including two police officers.

One of the officers, named as 22-year-old Jack Hibbert, has lost vision in one eye and faces a "long and challenging recovery", his family said in a statement.

Earlier in the day, thousands gathered to mourn British-born Rabbi Eli Schlanger, at the first funeral to be held for victims of the shooting.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was not present. Asked on ABC NewsRadio about his absence, he said: "I would attend anything that I'm invited to. These are funerals that are taking place to farewell people's loved ones."

The Jewish community has criticised Albanese for not taking enough action on antisemitism - he defended himself against those accusations, telling ABC NewsRadio he had taken a series of measures including appointing the country's first antisemitism envoy, toughening hate speech laws and increasing funding for social cohesion projects and Jewish institutions.

Speaking at Rabbi Schlanger's funeral, Rabbi Levi Wolff described his death as an "unspeakable loss" for the community.

"Eli was ripped away from us, doing what he loved best," he said.

"Spreading love and joy and caring for his people with endless self-sacrifice in his life and in his death, he towered above as one of the highest and holiest souls."

Rabbi Schlanger had helped organise Sunday's Hanukkah event.

Funerals for the other victims are expected to happen over the coming days, including for the youngest victim, Matilda, on Thursday.

US accused of using illegal workers at centre processing refugee claims in South Africa

The US has prioritised white South Africans despite reducing overall refugee numbers

South Africa has accused the US of using Kenyan nationals who did not have work permits at a facility processing applications by white South Africans for refugee status.

Seven Kenyans were arrested after intelligence reports revealed that people "had recently entered South Africa on tourist visas and had illegally taken up work" at the centre, said a statement from South Africa's department of home affairs.

While the US is trying to reduce overall levels of migra-

tion, it says that members of South Africa's white Afrikaner community can get asylum because they face persecution - a claim South Africa's government strongly rejects.

The US has reduced its yearly intake of refugees from around the world from 125,000 to 7,500, but says it will priori-

tise Afrikaners, who are mostly descendants of Dutch and French settlers.

This is one of the issues that have caused a sharp deterioration in relations between South Africa and the Trump administration.

White South Africans divided on US refugee offer

Is there a genocide of white

South Africans as Trump claims?

South Africa says the Kenyan nationals arrested in Tuesday's raid will now be deported and will be banned from entering the country for five years.

They had previously been denied work visas but were found "engaging in work despite only being in possession of tourist

visas, in clear violation of their conditions of entry into the country", the statement said.

South Africa also expressed concern that foreign officials appeared to have coordinated with undocumented workers and said it had reached out to the US and Kenya to resolve the matter.

Foreign

NEWS

Opposition in DRC raises alarm over arrest of former presidential candidate Shadary

Opposition parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are raising the alarm after the arrest of former presidential candidate Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary in Kinshasa on Tuesday.

Shadary's People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (PPRD) said he was detained "under conditions that raise serious concern." The offices of the Common Front for Congo (CFC) coalition were also raided during a nighttime search, the PPRD said.

Shadary is the PPRD's number two and was the candidate for the CFC in 2018, finishing third behind the current president, Felix Tshisekedi.

The PPRD was founded by former president Joseph Kabila who ruled the DRC for nearly two decades until 2019. He was sentenced to death earlier this year after being convicted in absentia of treason related to his alleged ties to the M23 rebel group.

Despite his exile, Kabila has remained active in DRC politics, hosting opposition figures in Nairobi.

The arrests come as the M23 rebels continue their campaign in eastern DRC, despite recently signed peace agreements with the government.

It's not clear if Shadary's arrest is related to the M23's activities.

South Africa raids US refugee centre, arrests seven Kenyans

Centre in South Africa processing applications for the United States refugee program was raided by immigration and law enforcement officers, and seven Kenyan nationals were arrested for working there illegally, South Africa's Home Affairs Ministry said Wednesday.

The centre in Johannesburg was processing applications by white South Africans under the Trump administration's new program, giving them priority for refugee status in the U.S.

The Kenyans were working at the centre alongside U.S. officials despite entering South Africa on tourist visas, which did not allow them to work, the Home Affairs Ministry said in a statement. It said no U.S. officials were arrested in the raid on Tuesday, and it was not a diplomatic site.

The raid is bound to increase tensions between the U.S. and South Africa. U.S. President Donald Trump has been especially critical of the South African government since he returned to office, claiming the country is violently persecuting its white Afrikaner minority and also pursuing an anti-American foreign policy.

Trump's widely rejected claims over the treatment of Afrikaners in South Africa led to his administration setting up the program offering them refugee status in the U.S.

South Africa's government has said that white South Africans do not meet the criteria for refugee status because there is no persecution, but says it won't stop them from applying for relocation under the U.S. program.

The South African Home Affairs Ministry didn't immediately say who the Kenyans worked for, but the U.S. government contracted a Kenya-based company, RSC Africa, to process the refugee applications by white South

Africans, according to the U.S. Embassy in South Africa. RSC is operated by Church World Service, a U.S.-based nongovernmental organisation offering humanitarian aid and refugee assistance across the world.

The statement by South Africa's Home Affairs Ministry said Kenyan nationals had previously been denied visas to travel to South Africa to work on the U.S. refugee program and questioned why the workers who entered the country on tourist visas were working at the refugee application site alongside U.S. officials.

"The presence of foreign nationals apparently coordinating with undocumented workers naturally raises serious questions about intent and diplomatic protocol," the ministry said.

It said South Africa's Foreign Ministry had started "formal diplomatic engagements with both the United States and Kenya to resolve this matter."

The seven Kenyan nationals were given deportation orders and banned from entering South Africa for a five-year period, South African authorities said.



US REFUGEE CENTRE:

Afrikaner refugees from South Africa arrive at Dulles International Airport in Virginia.

THE AP

Shock as popular South African DJ shot dead in Johannesburg

A popular South African radio and club DJ has been shot dead in the country's largest city, Johannesburg, sending shockwaves across the nation grappling with entrenched crime.

Warrick Stock, popularly known as DJ Warras, was gunned down in the city centre on Tuesday afternoon.

Police said the 40-year-old media personality was approached by three suspects, one of whom opened fire on him before fleeing on foot.

The motive of the shooting is unknown and no arrests have been made, police said.

Stock was a well-known radio and TV presenter and a podcaster in South Africa.

Fred Kekana, a local police chief, said Stock was attacked outside Zambesi House near Carlton Centre.

Stock spent several hours at the building overseeing the installation of security systems at the premises, which had been controversially occupied by unknown people, reports the state-run SABC.

"It is alleged the victim was approached by three unknown

suspects after parking his vehicle, and they opened fire at him before fleeing the scene on foot," the South African Police Service (SAPS) said in a statement.

CCTV footage showed a man with dreadlocks and dressed in what looked like a security uniform opening fire on Stock before fleeing, said Kekana.

The DJ tried to run away after he was shot but fell down across the street, the police chief added.

He said that Stock had an unused firearm on him and nothing was taken during the attack.

Key evidence, like cartridges, were discovered at the scene, according to the police.

Police have appealed to eyewitnesses and members of the public who may have seen the suspects to come forward.

"We know they walked a long distance after the shooting, and officers have been tracking them to determine their whereabouts," added Kekana.

His sister Nicole Stock told SABC that the family was struggling to process his death.

"I am in shock. I don't have words. I am shattered," she said.

"We know he was a voice for many people around the coun-

try. He spoke out bravely about issues not many people were willing to speak about. This is a tremendous loss."

She appealed to the public to refrain from sharing graphic images or videos from the scene, saying this was an incredibly difficult time, especially for Stock's three sons.

Stock was the presenter of Ngicel' iVisa, a reality show that premiered on Mzansi Magic, a South African digital satellite entertainment channel.

Beyond his media career, Stock was involved in various business ventures, including private security, providing elite guarding and VIP protection services and securing high-profile events across South Africa, according to local media.

He was also reportedly involved in property management and assisted with building evictions.

His murder has shocked the country and prompted an outpouring of tributes from his fans, the government and political parties.

Sports, Arts and Culture Minister Gayton McKenzie said he was angry and sad-

dened by Stock's murder.

"He spoke his truth without fear or favour. He even spoke up against me and my decisions as a minister. He was a pure example of who we should be," added McKenzie.

Leader of South Africa's Build One party Mmusi Maimane said the "brazen murder of DJ Warras in broad daylight is a shock for all South Africans".

"DJ Warras was more than just a face of a reality series. He was a talented storyteller, a passionate music lover and a warm soul who brought joy and energy to every moment on screen. His dedication to creativity left an indelible mark on our channels," said Shirley Adonisi, director of local entertainment Channels (Mnet).

In a statement, Mzansi Magic said Stock was known for his charisma, warmth and sharp wit, adding that his legacy "will live on".

South Africa, the continent's most industrialised nation, has one of the world's highest murder rates, fuelled by robberies and gang violence, with some 63 people killed each day between April and September, according to police data.

Starmar tells Abramovich to 'pay up now' or face court

British prime minister has said Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich must "pay up now" to victims of the war in Ukraine or face court action.

Mr Abramovich, the former owner of Chelsea Football Club, pledged in 2022 that the £2.5bn he made from the sale of the club would be used to benefit victims of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

But there has been a delay in releasing the funds, which are currently frozen in a British bank account, due to a standoff over how exactly they should be used.

The government wants the

money to be used for humanitarian aid, but Mr Abramovich insisted it should be used for "all victims of the war" – meaning that Russians could also benefit.

The oligarch cannot access the money under UK sanctions but the proceeds from the Chelsea sale still legally belong to him.

Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper told the BBC Mr Abramovich "needs to honour that commitment, pay that money".

Asked if a legal battle could drag out the process for years, Ms Cooper said: "I'm urging him not to try and pursue further court action."

But she confirmed the government will take the matter to court if he does not act.

Mr Abramovich's representatives declined to comment.

Speaking in the Commons on Wednesday, Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer said the UK had issued a licence "to transfer £2.5bn from the sale of Chelsea Football Club that's been frozen since 2022."

Sir Keir said: "My message to Abramovich is clear: the clock is ticking."

"Honour the commitment that you made and pay up now, and if you don't we're prepared to go to court and ensure that every penny reaches those

whose lives have been torn apart by Putin's illegal war."

The Treasury said that under the terms of the licence, the money must go to "humanitarian causes" in Ukraine and cannot benefit Mr Abramovich or any other sanctioned individual.

The government first threatened to sue Mr Abramovich in June.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves said: "It is unacceptable that more than £2.5bn of money owed to the Ukrainian people can be allowed to remain frozen in a UK bank account."


Mr Abramovich – a Russian billionaire who made his fortune in oil and gas – was

granted a special licence to sell Chelsea following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, providing he could prove he would not benefit from the sale.

He is alleged to have strong ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin, something he has denied.

It is understood that Mr Abramovich has 90 days to act before the UK considers taking legal action.

On Thursday, EU leaders are set to review proposals to use proceeds from frozen Russian assets to support Ukraine's huge budget and defence needs. Russia has fiercely opposed the proposals.

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Sports

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One year in office: Edo State Sports Commission celebrates pragmatic leadership as Edo SWAN decorates Enabulele as Patron

The Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN) has decorated the Executive Chairman of the Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele, as its Patron in recognition of his outstanding contributions to sports development and media relations in the state.

The installation ceremony took place at the Multipurpose Indoor Sports Hall of the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin City, and formed part of activities marking Hon. Enabulele's one year in office as Chairman of the Edo State Sports Commission.

Speaking at the event, the Chairman of Edo SWAN,

Comrade Kehinde Osagiede, commended Hon. Enabulele for his impactful leadership and consistent support for sports journalists since he assumed office on December 18, 2024,



The Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN) decorates Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele with as Patron

immediately after his appointment by the state Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo.

"One of the real joys of the season is the opportunity to express our gratitude for everything you have accomplished in your first year as Chairman of the Edo State Sports Commission, bringing joy to our community," Osagiede said.

He noted that the honour reflects the deep appreciation of Edo SWAN for the Sports Commission chairman, stressing that his administration has significantly improved collaboration, professionalism, and renewed optimism within the state's sports sector.

"We are specifically thrilled by your grassroots sports development policy which dis outages poaching of athletes in Edo and we are already feeling the impact. You have also been a solid pillar to SWAN and a friend. We assure you of our support.

Honourable chairman, we are not afraid to criticize your leadership style and programme when the need arises but so far you have impressed us and we want you to sustain the good work you have been doing and even do more."

"You will always hold a prominent place in our hearts and in the society. May joy and peace be with you now and forever," the SWAN chairman concluded.

The installation underscores Edo SWAN's commitment to strengthening relationships with key stakeholders in the Edo State Sports sector while celebrating leadership that prioritizes sports development and the welfare of sports journalists in Edo State.

The first anniversary celebration also attracted staff of the Edo State Sports Commission across all levels, including the Permanent Secretary Mrs Efe Amenze A.P, Executive Directors, and featured cultural displays alongside goodwill messages from prominent sports personalities within Edo State's sports community.

The ceremony was organized by the civil servants led by the Permanent Secretary Mrs Efe Amenze in honour of the hard working Sports Commission boss Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele and his board members.

The Executive Chairman of the Edo State Sports Commission Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele in his address highlighted some of his achievements and programme of events lined up for the 2026 which includes the Niger Delta Games to be hosted in Benin in February 2026 and the national sports festival to be hosted by Enugu state in the same year.

"First and foremost, I wish to express my profound gratitude to His Excellency, the Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo, and to the Rt. Hon. Deputy Governor, Dennis Idahosa, for the confidence they have reposed in me by appointing me to lead the Edo State Sports Commission. Your unwavering support, guidance, and shared vision for a new era of sports development in Edo State have laid the solid foundation upon which all our achievements of the past year stand." He said.

"Today, I am honoured to highlight some of the key milestones we have collectively achieved:

FIFA overturns three Malaysia matches amid player eligibility scandal

FIFA has overturned the results of three Malaysia matches after finding they had fielded ineligible players, the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) said on Wednesday, in the latest setback for the team amid a widening document forgery scandal.

FIFA had suspended seven naturalised players for 12 months and fined FAM 350,000 Swiss francs (\$439,257) in September after finding false documentation had been used to allow them to play in an Asian Cup qualifier against Vietnam in June.

World soccer's governing

body dismissed an appeal by FAM last month, saying it would launch a formal probe into the association's internal operations and notify authorities in five countries of potential criminal proceedings.

FAM said in response it would bring the case to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

In its latest decision, FIFA's disciplinary committee also changed the results of three friendlies the players had appeared in, handing down 3-0 defeats for games against Cape Verde on May 29, Singapore on September 4 and Palestine on September 8, FAM said.

The association has also been fined 10,000 Swiss francs.

Malaysia had drawn 1-1 with Cape Verde and earned 2-1 and 1-0 wins over Singapore and Palestine.

"FAM will make a written

application to obtain the reasons for the decision from the FIFA disciplinary committee before considering the next steps to be taken in this matter," the association said.

FIFA did not immediately respond to a request for comment outside of business hours.

The scandal has sparked uproar in Malaysia, with fans and some lawmakers calling for action against FAM as well as government agencies responsible for granting the players' citizenship.

Last month, the association suspended its secretary-general and formed an independent committee to investigate what it called a "technical error".

Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has vowed full transparency in domestic probes, but stressed that FAM should be allowed to defend itself



GIANNI INFANTINO

Negative effect of Ambush Marketing on sport assets

One of the most persistent challenges sports assets face globally is how best to curb the activities of ambush marketers. As the name implies, ambush marketing is a parasitic promotional strategy in which an advertiser "ambushes" an event to compete for visibility against official sponsors.

Another school of thought describes ambush marketing as a tactic through which a company aligns itself with a major event, such as the Olympics, the FIFA World Cup, or leading football leagues, without paying the official sponsorship fees, thereby diverting attention from legitimate sponsors. This is often achieved by "piggy-backing" on an event's popularity through clever but unofficial advertising techniques, such as sponsoring athletes, hosting fringe events, or running themed campaigns that create a

false sense of affiliation.

Numerous high-profile examples across global sport illustrate the harmful effects of this practice, hence the need for this second part of this subject matter.

Fundamentally, ambush marketers operate by creating a commercial link to an event without acquiring the rights. They target large and widely viewed sporting events, and they gain visibility through the backdoor by capitalizing on the event's audience, prestige, and goodwill. Typical methods include sponsoring participants, staging promotional activities near official venues, hosting event-themed parties, or deploying aggressive social media tie-ins.

However, the dangers associated with ambush marketing are substantial, legally, ethically, and commercially. These practices undermine the exclusivity purchased by official sponsors and can mislead consumers

regarding the authenticity of a brand's connection to the event. In many jurisdictions, including Nigeria, these actions may constitute trademark infringement or unfair competition, exposing offending companies to litigation, regulatory sanctions, and reputational damage.

Ambush marketing manifests in several forms, each carrying different levels of legal and ethical exposure:

1. Direct Ambush Marketing: Explicitly attempting to associate with an event, often by infringing on trademarks or protected intellectual property.

2. Predatory Ambushing: Intentionally attacking or overshadowing a competitor's official sponsorship to divert attention.

3. Trademark Infringement: Unauthorized use of official event logos, names, symbols, or slogans.

4. Self-Ambushing: When

an official sponsor exceeds its contractual rights by engaging in additional promotional activities not permitted under the sponsorship agreement.

5. Indirect Ambush Marketing: Subtle tactics that evoke the event without using protected IP or claiming sponsorship.

6. Ambush by Association: Using imagery, themes, colours, or cultural cues that create an implied link to the event.

7. Values Ambushing: Aligning a campaign with the broader values or themes of an event (e.g., female empowerment during a major women's sporting event) to create emotional association.

8. Intrusion/Distracton: Executing marketing activities or placing advertisements in or around designated "clean zones" to capture attention that should rightfully accrue to official sponsors.

In summary, the most effective

way to avoid the legal and reputational risks associated with ambush marketing is for brands to engage transparently and invest in official sponsorship arrangements. Whether for major properties such as the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) or the President Federation Cup (PFC),

authentic sponsorship ensures compliance with trademark and intellectual property laws and promotes a fair commercial environment. Companies that attempt to leverage events through ambush tactics often face litigation, financial penalties, and long-term damage to corporate credibility.



EL-KANEMI PLAYER WITH PILLARS PLAYER

SPORTS

WORLD CUP: FIFA approves record \$655m World Cup prize pool, launches global U-15 festivals

FIFA has announced that under the new structure for the expanded 48-team tournament, the champions will receive USD 50 million, while runners-up will earn USD 33 million. Teams finishing third and fourth will take home USD 29 million and USD 27 million, respectively.

Sides placed between fifth and eighth will each receive USD 19 million, while teams eliminated in the round of 16 (9th-16th) will earn USD 15 million. Those finishing between 17th and 32nd place will be paid USD 11 million each, while teams ranked 33rd to 48th will receive USD 9 million.



MEETING WITH FIFA COMMITTEE

In addition to performance-based rewards, each qualified team will be paid USD 1.5 million to cover preparation costs. This guarantees every participating Member Association a minimum of USD 10.5 million simply for qualifying for the tournament.

"The FIFA World Cup 2026 will also be groundbreaking in terms of its financial contribution to the global football community," FIFA President Gianni Infantino said.

Beyond the World Cup, the FIFA Council also confirmed the introduction of new FIFA U-15 festival-style tournaments for boys and girls, open

to all 211 FIFA Member Associations, as part of a renewed push to strengthen youth development.

The first edition, featuring boys' teams, will be staged in 2026, followed by a girls' tournament in 2027. From 2028 onwards, Member Associations will be invited to participate in both boys' and girls' U-15 competitions annually.

To suit the developmental needs of young players, matches will be shorter, played on smaller pitches, and feature teams of between seven and nine players per side.

"In recent years, FIFA has stepped up its efforts to boost youth football, the results of which are plain for all to see," Infantino said. "This is a natural next step and a very joyous one. Having FIFA U-15 festivals for boys and girls will be fundamental in FIFA's quest to give every talent a chance all over the world."

In another key decision, the FIFA Council approved the es-

ablishment of a post-conflict recovery fund, aimed at supporting football development in regions affected by conflict. The move follows an announcement made by Infantino at the Sharm El-Sheikh Summit for Peace in October 2025, where FIFA pledged to create a mechanism to help rebuild football structures in post-conflict environments.

The combined measures reinforce FIFA's strategy of re-investing World Cup revenues into prize money, youth development and football's broader social role across the globe.

The World Cup Dollar Pot
Champions: USD 50 million
Runners-up: USD 33 million
3rd place: USD 29 million
4th place: USD 27 million
5th-8th place: USD 19 million

9th-16th place: USD 15 million

17th- 32nd place: USD 11 million

33rd-48th place: USD 9 million



SUPER EAGLES IN TRAINING

World Cup absence costs Nigeria at least \$10.5m as FIFA confirms record payouts

Nigeria's failure to qualify for the 2026 FIFA World Cup has carried a high financial cost, with the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) missing out on a guaranteed minimum of USD 10.5 million following FIFA's approval of a record USD 655 million prize money pool for the tournament.

FIFA confirmed that every one of the 48 teams that qualify for the expanded World Cup in North America will receive USD 1.5 million in preparation funds, in addition to a minimum participation payout of USD 9 million for teams finishing between 33rd and 48th place.

This ensures that each participating Member Association earns at least USD 10.5 million simply for qualifying.

Nigeria's absence from the tournament means the NFF will receive none of these funds, a significant blow at a time when many African federations rely heavily on FIFA competitions to support national team programmes, grassroots development and administrative costs.

Beyond the guaranteed participation fee, deeper progression at the World Cup would have offered Nigeria the chance to earn far more.

Teams reaching the round of 16 will earn USD 15 million, while those advancing to the quarter-finals collect USD 19 million. The champions will receive USD 50 million, with runners-up

pocketing USD 33 million. The loss goes beyond prize money. World Cup qualification typically boosts commercial revenue through sponsorships, broadcast exposure and merchandising, while also strengthening a federation's negotiating power with partners.

Nigeria, a three-time African champion and one of the continent's most marketable football brands, will miss out on the global visibility that comes with participation in football's biggest event.

The financial setback also has implications for youth and grassroots development. FIFA President Gianni Infantino has stressed that revenues from the World Cup are being reinvested into global football, including the introduction of new U-15 festival-style tournaments for boys and girls from 2026.

Federations competing at the World Cup are often better positioned to leverage such programmes and funding opportunities.

For the NFF, the missed opportunity underscores the growing cost of failure to qualify for major tournaments in an era of expanding FIFA revenues.

With the 2026 World Cup offering unprecedented financial rewards, Nigeria's absence represents not only a sporting disappointment but also a major economic loss for the country's football ecosystem

Imo inaugurates Liaison committee as preparations for 2nd Niger Delta Games Gather Momentum

Preparations for the second edition of the Niger Delta Games received a major boost on Tuesday as organisers of the championship inaugurated the Imo State Liaison Committee ahead of the event proper scheduled to hold next year in Edo State.

The inauguration took place at the office of the Imo State Commissioner for Sports, where the Managing Director of Dunamis Icon Limited and Project Consultant for the Games, Sir Itiako Ikpokpo-Atanaru of Irri Kingdom, formally set the committee in motion.

Sir Ikpokpo, who was represented at the ceremony by veteran sports journalist, Sir Fred Edoreh, announced that the 2026 Niger Delta Games would strictly be an under-20 competition. He charged members of the liaison committee to ensure massive mobilisation and timely registration of Imo athletes on the Games' official portal, stressing that only duly registered athletes would be cleared to participate.

In his remarks, the Imo State Commissioner for Sports, Hon. Obinna Onyeocha, commended the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and Dunamis Icon Limited for

initiating and sustaining the Games for two consecutive years, describing the championship as a credible platform for talent discovery and development in the region.

Hon. Onyeocha noted that the Niger Delta Games align perfectly with the sports development vision of the administration of Governor Hope Uzodinma, assuring that Imo State is fully prepared to participate and comply with all rules and regulations guiding the competition.

"It is the mandate of His Excellency, the Governor of Imo State, for us to go to the grassroots to discover talents, and these Games have come to help us achieve exactly that," Onyeocha said. "On behalf of the committee, I assure you that



second edition of the Niger Delta Games received a major boost on Tuesday as organisers of the championship inaugurated the Imo State Liaison Committee

we will insist on quality, thoroughness, discipline and total compliance."

The Imo State Liaison Committee is chaired by Hon. Obinna Onyeocha, with Hon. Willie Okolieogwo serving as secretary.

Other members include the

Director of Sports, Lady Justina Akpulo, and Kennedy Onwunali.

The committee is charged with the responsibility of coordinating all pre-Games activities and handling logistics to ensure a hitch-free participation of Team Imo at the 2nd Niger Delta Games.

4th African Youth Games: Nigeria's Abijuwon storms into boxing semi-final, weightlifting starts today

Nigeria recorded another impressive outing at the 4th African Youth Games as its 50kg boxer, Abijuwon Furuk Olalekan, secured a convincing victory over Salmane Kochubati of Tunisia in the men's 50kg category.

Olalekan dominated the bout with confidence and technical superiority, earning a well-deserved win that has

now qualified Nigeria for the semi-finals in the boxing event.

His performance further highlighted Nigeria's strong presence and competitive edge at the Games.

Meanwhile, attention shifts to the weightlifting arena as the weightlifting competition is set to commence tomorrow at Dream Space, with Nigerian athletes expected to be in action.

