

Okpebholo honours fallen heroes, launches Armed Forces Remembrance Fund with ₦10m

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, on Tuesday paid tribute to Nigeria's fallen heroes, describing their supreme sacrifice as the bedrock of the nation's unity, peace and stability.

The governor spoke at the official launch of the 2026 Armed Forces Remembrance Day Emblem Appeal Fund,

held at the Festival Hall, Government House, Benin City.

Represented by the Speaker, Edo State House of Assembly, Hon. Blessing Agbebaku, Okpebholo expressed condolences to the families of deceased service personnel, noting that their loss remained a collective national sacrifice that must never be forgotten.

He said the freedoms enjoyed by Edo people and Nigerians were secured at great cost

by members of the armed forces who laid down their lives in defence of the country.

The governor described Armed Forces Remembrance Day as a solemn period of reflection and national gratitude, while reaffirming his administration's commitment to the welfare of veterans and families of fallen heroes.

To demonstrate this commitment, Okpebholo announced the launch of the 2026 Emblem

Appeal Fund with a personal donation of ₦10 million.

"The peace and unity we enjoy today, as a state and as a nation, came at a great price," the governor said.

"Our fallen heroes gave their lives so that Nigeria may endure. We honour their courage, stand with their families and recommit ourselves to the ideals for which they fought."

Earlier, the Edo State Chairman of the Nigerian Legion,

Mr. Sunny Egbogie, commended the governor for his sustained support and empathy towards the Legion, describing the donation as a major morale booster for veterans and widows of fallen service members.

Egbogie appealed to the state government to integrate trained veterans into the State security architecture, saying that their experience and discipline would strengthen security operations.

He also requested logistical

support, including operational vehicles and motorcycles, a review of the Legion's overhead subvention, and special consideration for widows and veterans during the yuletide.

The event was attended by top government officials and security chiefs, including heads of security agencies, commissioners, permanent secretaries, directors of ministries and parastatals, as well as widows of fallen heroes.

The Nigerian Observer



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...that the people may know

Okpebholo pledges to clear AAU salary arrears, gratuities

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N100bn non-remittance: Reps summon Benin, PH, Ibadan Discos

Warns of stiffer sanctions over long-standing debts

ABUJA

The House of Representatives has summoned the management of Be-

nin, Port Harcourt, and Ibadan Electricity Distribution Companies (Discos) over alleged non-remittance of N100 billion into the Federation Account.

The summon, issued on Monday by the Chairman of the House Public Accounts Committee, Rep. Bamidele Salam, comes after repeated failures by the companies to respond to previous invitations.

The discos are expected to

appear before the committee on Thursday.

Rep. Salam explained that the directive followed the consideration of an interim report presented by the subcommittee chairman, Rep. Mark Chidi Obetta.

He expressed concern over the decade-long nature of some of the debts, stressing the urgent need for recovery and proper accountability of public funds.

The committee warned the affected companies of stiffer sanctions should they fail to honour the latest invitation, describing their previous

non-compliance as deliberate acts of legislative contempt.

The development is part of a broader probe into electricity sector debts.

On August 20, the Public Accounts Committee had summoned 11 electricity distribution companies over a cumulative N2.6 trillion owed to the Federation Account.

Senate rejects NBS figures, moves to enforce compulsory digital birth, death registration

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

The Senate on Monday openly rejected population figures churned out by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), declaring them unreliable and unfit for national planning, as it moved to impose compulsory digital registration of all births and deaths in Nigeria.

Chairman of the Senate Committee on National Identity Card and National Population, Senator Victor Umeh, said the continued dependence on estimated population data had crippled governance, distorted resource allocation and excluded millions of Nigerians from government programmes.

Speaking at a public hearing in Abuja on a bill to repeal the Births, Deaths, etc. (Compulso-

ry Registration) Act, 2004, and enact the Compulsory Civil Registration Act, 2025, Umeh said Nigeria could no longer afford to "build policies on guesswork."

"We cannot continue to work with estimated figures of about 250 million people," he said.

"If births and deaths are not registered, people are excluded from national planning. Government planning and family allocations will now be driven strictly by verified national registers."

Umeh said decades of weak civil registration had left Nigeria without credible demographic data, forcing authorities to rely on projections that undermine planning in education, healthcare, security, social welfare, electoral boundary delineation and economic development.

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2026 ARMED FORCES REMEMBRANCE DAY:

The Edo State Chairman of Nigerian Legion, Mr Sunny Egbogie (right) decorating the Speaker, Edo State House of Assembly, Hon. Blessing Agbebaku who represented the State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo at the official launch of the 2026 Armed Forces Remembrance Day Emblem Appeal Fund in Benin City yesterday.

Tinapa can generate over 12,000 jobs when fully operational —MD

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Supreme Court affirms President's power to declare emergency rule, suspend elected officials

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ECOWAS rejects Guinea-Bissau transition, warns of sanctions

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Morocco 2025: Eagles battle Pharaohs in Cairo friendly today

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Police foil cult initiation in Edo, neutralise suspect, arrest 27

BENIN CITY

The Police Command in Edo has neutralised a suspected cultist and arrested 27 others during a late-night operation that disrupted an alleged initiation ceremony in the state.

The command's Public Relations Officer, ASP Eno Ikoedem, stated this in a statement issued on Monday in Benin City.

Ikoedem said that the raid followed "credible intelligence" that members of Neo Black Axe Movement of Nigeria, also known as Black Axe, had

converged on the community, about 18 kilometres from Ekpoma, for an initiation exercise.

She said that the raid was carried out at about 10:00 p.m. on Saturday at Urohi village in Esan-West Local Government Area of the state.

Ikoedem further stated that

a combined team of police tactical operatives, local vigilantes and hunters was led on the operation by the Divisional Police Officer of Ekpoma Division, SP Nelson Igbinoaba.

She said that the operatives came under gunfire while attempting to effect arrests, adding that

"one of the cultists opened fire on the police and, in the ensuing gun duel, the suspect was neutralised."

She said that firearms, dangerous weapons, vehicles, mobile phones and substances suspected to be hemp were recovered from the scene.

The police spokesperson said that the Commissioner of Police in the state, Monday Agbonika, had ordered the immediate transfer of the suspects to the State Criminal Investigations Department for thorough investigation and prosecution.

"The commissioner of police commended the operatives for their swift response and professionalism, and reassured members of the public of the command's unwavering commitment to combating cultism and all forms of criminality across the state," Ikoedem said.

She urged residents to continue to support the police with timely and credible information, assuring that the command would sustain its offensive against cult-related violence and other threats to public safety in the state.



END-OF-YEAR PARTY:

Managing Director, Edo State Development and Property Corporation Barr. Folarin Okungbowa (middle) flanked by the Director of Human Resources, Mrs. Flora Inneh (right), and Mrs. Augusta Ogbejele, during an end-of-year party organised by the corporation.

Edo moves to scale up LIFE-ND, targets youth agribusiness, food security

ABUJA

The Edo State Government has announced plans to upscale the Federal Government-backed Livelihood Improvement Family Enterprises-Niger Delta (LIFE-ND) project to deepen youth agribusiness development and strengthen food security across the state.

The Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Security, Mr Jerry Uwangue, disclosed this at a high-level national event on scaling youth agribusiness for food systems transformation, held in Abuja.

Uwangue said the state, under Governor Monday Okpebholo, would extend the FGN/NDDC/IFAD-funded LIFE-ND project to the eight local government areas currently not covered, under a proposed LIFE-ND Plus Initiative.

The event, themed, "Scaling Youth Agribusiness for Food Transformation in Nigeria," brought together representatives of the Federal Government, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and participating state

governments to review progress and chart expansion strategies.

In a keynote address, the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Senator Abubakar Kyari, described LIFE-ND as a proven model for youth agribusiness and a critical tool for transforming Nigeria's food security landscape.

He stressed the need to scale the initiative nationwide, outlining plans to improve youth access to land, finance, digital platforms and smart agricultural innovations.

Uwangue said LIFE-ND had demonstrated strong outcomes in Edo, including practical agribusiness skills acquisition by

youths, incubation and mentorship across priority value chains, improved household incomes, enhanced rural productivity, women empowerment, and stronger market and finance linkages for smallholder farmers.

According to him, the partnership among the Federal Government, NDDC and IFAD underscores the impact of coordinated development efforts, noting that Edo State remains a committed partner to the programme.

He explained that the proposed LIFE-ND Plus Initiative would consolidate existing gains and expand benefits to more communities, in line with Edo's economic diversification agenda.

Okpebholo pledges to clear AAU salary arrears, gratuities

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has pledged to tackle years of unpaid salaries, pensions and gratuities owed staff of Ambrose Alli University (AAU), Ekpoma, describing the inherited liabilities as unfair and unacceptable.

Okpebholo gave the assurance on Monday at the Government House, Benin City, when he received the Vice-Chancellor

of the university, Professor Eunice Eboserehimen Omonzeje, and members of her management team on a courtesy visit.

The governor said the non-payment of salaries for several years had placed the institution "on life support," adding that his administration would take the resolution of the arrears as a priority project.

"It is not right for people to work and not be paid," Okpebholo said. "The issue of unpaid salaries, pensions and gratui-

ties running into billions of naira is something we inherited, and we will address it."

He commended the vice-chancellor and her team for stabilising the university despite its challenges and assured them of government support to reposition the institution and restore its lost glory.

Okpebholo also acknowledged other challenges confronting the university, including poor hostel infrastructure, accreditation-related gaps and the need for improved

facilities for programmes such as Medical Laboratory Science.

He urged the management to clearly capture these needs in their budget proposals, noting that although the current budget was already at an advanced stage, government would explore ways to move the institution forward.

Earlier, Omonzeje said she inherited a moribund university plagued by infrastructural decay, unpaid salaries and accreditation challenges.

Senate rejects NBS figures, moves...

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He described the proposed law as a decisive break from outdated, paper-based systems, stressing that Nigeria must align with global standards by adopting a fully electronic and integrated civil registration and vital statistics system.

"The world has gone digital. Nigeria must move from fragmented and inconsistent records to an integrated electronic system if we are serious about development and global competitiveness," he said.

According to him, the bill mandates the registration of every birth and death and strengthens collaboration among the National Identity Management Commission, National Population Commission, Immigration Service, Federal Road Safety Corps and health institutions to ensure accurate, real-time data capture.

Umeh said the reform would tighten national security through a verified demographic database, protect children's rights by guaranteeing access to healthcare and education, and ensure fair and evidence-based allocation of public resources.

He also blamed poor death registration for rampant payroll fraud

in the public service, noting that deceased persons often remain on government payrolls for years.

"When death is not registered, there is no way to clean up the payroll. That is why people who are long dead still receive salaries in Nigeria," he said.

The senator added that early birth registration would enable the government to plan ahead for schools, hospitals and other social services, insisting that unregistered children remain invisible to the state.

"When a child is born and not registered, nobody knows that child is a Nigerian," he said.

Umeh called on hospitals to register births and deaths immediately, security agencies to enforce compliance, and data institutions to ensure interoperability and seamless data-sharing. He also urged religious and community leaders to mobilise citizens, while calling on development partners, including UNICEF, to provide technical support.

In a speech delivered by Senator Onyekachi Nwabonyi, the Senate President backed the bill, describing credible birth and death registration as central to Nigeria's sovereignty and governance.

Delta Assembly passes 2026 appropriation bill of N1.729trn

ASABA

The Delta State House of Assembly on Monday passed the 2026 appropriation bill of N1.729 trillion.

The budget was approved by voice vote at plenary presided over by the Speaker, Mr Dennis Guwor.

Governor Sheriff Oborewori had presented the proposal of N1.664 trillion to the assembly on November 26.

Presenting the committee's report, the Chairman, House Committee on Finance and

Appropriation, Mrs Marilyn Okowa-Daramola, said N500 billion was earmarked for recurrent expenditure, while N1.229 trillion was allocated for capital expenditure.

She attributed the increase in the budget size to projected growth in the economy and improved internally generated revenue.

The Speaker later directed that a clean copy of the bill be forwarded to the governor for assent and commended lawmakers for its speedy passage.

MISSING DOCUMENT

The general public is hereby notified that I, **MR KENNETH NOSAWEMA LATO** is the bonafide and lawful owner of a piece/parcel of land, measuring 50ft by 100ft with a building of eight rooms and parlours, being, lying and situate at **No. 9, Osarodion Street off Uzama, Oliha quarters, Benin City, Edo State**. I inherited the house in August 2021, from my late mother, **MRS EGHENAYONRE FELICIA LATO**.

The title documents which include the Deed of Transfer, Community documents and other related land documents attached was discovered missing in **March 19, 2024** and all efforts to trace it has proved abortive, hence this publication for record purposes.

The general public and concerned authorities should please take note.

Signed: MR KENNETH NOSAWEMA LATO

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **MISS JENNIFER ANAMESE OMEKAM** now wish to be known as **MRS. JENNIFER OSUCHUKWU**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known, called and addressed as **PRISCILLIA OYARA** now wish to be known, called and addressed as **MRS. PRISCILLIA MAJOR ITANFUAMHEN**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned Authorities and the general public should take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **MISS OSASU UYINMWEN**, now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS. OSASU AKHIGBE**. All former documents remain valid. General public should please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME

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

Writer tasks parents on benefits of reading culture among children

ABUJA

Mrs Teresa Ameh, an accomplished author of children's books, has urged parents to encourage reading habits among their children, saying it boosts their confidence and ability to interact with others.

Ameh gave the advice at the launch of her ninth and tenth books, *The Rise of the Phoenix* and *Mariamo and the Bowl of Cashews*, in Abuja on Monday.

The author, who is also a civil servant with the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI), said children who do not read often grow into adults who struggle with self-expression.

She noted that many adults find it difficult to express themselves in public because they were not exposed to read-

ing early in life.

"I have been writing for children for 20 years now, and with each book, I am pleased to say that there are improvements.

"We are trying to raise children who can compete with their peers around the world on any topic," she said.

Ameh, a trained psychologist, said her passion for writing children's books was driven by the desire to positively influence young minds.

"For me, with a lot of words, I am a great storyteller. My son and I used to engage in storytelling every night," she said.

According to her, such stories have positive effects on children because they are packed with lessons on values and behaviour.

"That was how I realised that if I could have this effect on my child, I should put it in writing to reach other children," she said.

She also said she founded the Aunty Talatu Reads Foundation to encourage reading among children and empower the girl-child.

Reviewing *Mariamo and the Bowl of Cashews*, Salama-

tu Sule commended Ameh for her creativity, saying the author understood how stories and colours shape childhood and memory.

She explained that the book highlighted three key lessons:

the mother as friend, teacher and mentor; everyday experiences as teachable moments; and friendship, trust and emotional bonding.

Earlier, the chairman of the occasion, Alhaji Tijani Ahmed,

Federal Commissioner, NCFRMI, commended the writer, saying children are leaders of today, not tomorrow.

Ahmed was represented by the Director, Human Resource, Malam Bello Mohammed.



2025 NYSC INTERNAL AUDIT WORKSHOP:

L-R: Former NYSC Director, Internal Audit, National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), Mr Leke Abiodun; Acting Director, Finance and Account Department, Auta Mary; Director of Internal Audit, Dr Levi Agim; and representative of the Director-General, Alhaji Ibrahim Muhammed during the 2025 NYSC Internal Audit workshop in Abuja on Monday.

Ooni of Ife confers chieftaincy title on Ghanaian President Mahama

ILE-IFE (OSUN)

The Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Ogunwusi, on Monday conferred a chieftaincy title on the President of Ghana, John Mahama, as part of activities marking his 10th coronation anniversary.

Mahama was installed as Atayeto of Oduduwa of the Source at a ceremony in Ile-Ife.

The Ooni said the honour was in recognition of Maha-

ma's efforts at economic reform and his commitment to Africa's development.

Governor Ademola Adeleke of Osun, represented by his deputy, Kola Adewusi, commended Mahama for his contributions to peace and regional stability.

In his response, Mahama thanked the Ooni for the honour and reaffirmed his commitment to strengthening ties between Nigeria and Ghana.

FCT High Court proceeds on Christmas, New Year vacation

ABUJA

Judges of the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) will from December 22 proceed on a two-week Christmas and New Year vacation.

The vacation will end on Jan. 2, 2026, while judges will begin regular sittings in their various divisions of the court from January 5, 2026.

The vacation was declared by the FCT Chief Judge, Justice Hussein Baba-Yusuf, in a memo addressed to all the judges of the court, dated December 2.

According to the memo, the

CJ declared the vacation pursuant to the provisions of Order 48 Rule 4(c) of the extant Rules of the Court.

According to the memo, this is pursuant to the provisions of Order 48 Rule 4(c) of the extant Rules of the court.

Justice Baba-Yusuf then wished the judges and staff of the FCT High Court a fulfilled Christmas and prosperous New Year.

"I wish Your Lordships and the entire staff of the FCT High Court a very happy, peaceful and highly fulfilled Christmas and a Prosperous New Year in advance."

ABUJA

Havel Corporate Concept Ltd. has introduced Artificial Intelligence (AI) Clubs in Nigerian schools to empower young people to become ethical digital citizens.

The Chief Executive Officer of the firm, Dr Ahmed Badanga, disclosed this at the AI and Blockchain Conference and Training in Abuja on Monday.

Badanga said the firm had received approvals from the Federal Capital Territory Universal Basic Education Board and the Federal Capital Territory Secondary Education Board to run a pilot phase in

selected schools in the territory.

He said the project would begin with 30 students drawn from Government Secondary School, Wuse Zone 3, Abuja, and Government Day Secondary School, Wuse 2, Abuja.

According to him, the organisation is the first to focus on educating young students on responsible use of AI and to develop a strategy on AI literacy, critical thinking and ethical awareness.

He said this would ensure that young people use AI as a tool that enhances, rather than replaces, human skills and values.

"As AI becomes increasingly

integrated into children's lives, there is a growing need to ensure that young users understand its impact, potential and risks.

"This informed our decision to introduce AI Clubs in Nigerian schools," he said.

Badanga described AI as one of the most important innovations of the time, noting that combining AI with blockchain technology could create intelligent, secure and transparent systems across industries.

He said the conference was organised to examine how AI and blockchain could be effectively integrated, while also highlighting challenges in infrastructure and the imple-

mentation of national strategies.

Also speaking, the Director General of the Bureau of Public Service Reform, Dr Dasuki Arabi, said the Federal Government had introduced AI and blockchain as part of the inclusive digitalisation of the public service.

The Acting Executive Chairman of the FCT Universal Basic Education Board, Alhassan Sule, commended the initiative, saying it would enhance the adoption of technology in public schools.

Awards were later presented to individuals and organisations advancing AI technology across sectors.

Judiciary must guard credibility ahead of 2027 polls —CJN

ABUJA

The Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun, has urged the judiciary to maintain discipline, consistency and strict adherence to constitutional timelines in resolving election disputes ahead of the 2027 general elections.

She gave the charge on Monday in Abuja while declaring open the 2025/2026 Legal Year

of the Federal High Court of Nigeria and its 41st Annual Judges' Conference.

Kekere-Ekun said the judiciary would again play a stabilising role in the electoral process, stressing that pre-election disputes must be resolved with clarity and balance to maintain public confidence.

She warned that conflicting interim orders, forum shopping and abuse of ex parte processes undermine the credibili-

ty of the justice system.

The Chief Justice also expressed concern over delays in the administration of justice, describing them as among the most persistent complaints from the public and the bar.

She said the National Judicial Council would continue to strengthen oversight of case progression to improve justice delivery.

In his remarks, the Chief Judge of the Federal High

Court, Justice John Tsoho, highlighted reforms including the introduction of e-affidavit and e-filing systems, as well as improved infrastructure.

The President of the Nigerian Bar Association, Mr Afam Osigwe, SAN, called for specialised courts and improved case management to enhance efficiency.

A one-minute silence was observed in honour of deceased judges and court staff.

ATBU conversion bill sparks sharp divide at Senate hearing

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

Debate over the future of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU), Bauchi, took centre stage as a Senate public hearing exposed

deep divisions among stakeholders over a bill seeking to convert the institution from a specialised University of technology into a conventional university.

While some stakeholders welcomed the proposed amendment as a pathway to

broaden academic opportunities, others warned that the move could weaken technological education in the North-East.

Former Bauchi State Governor, Isa Yuguda, emerged as one of the strongest advocates of the conversion, insisting that the

university's current status limits access to critical courses needed for regional development.

Speaking at the hearing organised by the Senate Committee on Tertiary Institutions and TETFund, Yuguda said the push for a conventional struc-

ture was driven by practical realities rather than sentiment.

He argued that several key disciplines, including economics and other social science and arts courses, were absent at ATBU, to the disadvantage of students in Bauchi State and neighbouring areas.

According to him, expanding the university's mandate would

correct long-standing gaps and reflect its evolving role.

In contrast, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), ATBU branch, firmly rejected the proposal.

The union maintained that the global trend favours stronger investment in science and technology institutions, not their dilution.

NEWS

Tinubu reaffirms commitment to Nigerian Army as chief of army staff conference opens in Lagos

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to the welfare, professionalism and operational effectiveness of the Nigerian Army.

The President, represented by Vice President Kashim Shettima, stated this on Monday at the opening of the Chief of Army Staff Annual Conference 2025 in Lagos.

The assurance was contained in a statement by the Acting Director of Army Public Relations, Colonel Appolonia Anele.

Tinubu said his administration would continue to support

the Armed Forces to enable them to effectively discharge their constitutional responsibilities.

He paid tribute to serving and retired senior military officers, describing their sacrifices, leadership and institutional memory as pillars that have shaped the Nigerian Army and sustained its fighting spirit.

The President noted that the presence of former Service Chiefs and elder statesmen at the conference underscored the enduring heritage and professionalism of the Armed Forces.

He commended officers and soldiers for their courage and patriotism, saying their sacrifices in defence of Nigeria's sover-

eignty and unity would remain etched in the nation's history.

Tinubu said the conference provided a critical platform for strategic reflection, evaluation and improvement in training, administration and operations, especially amid evolving security challenges.

Speaking at the event, the Minister of Defence, retired General Christopher Musa, described the conference as a vital forum for reviewing operational posture, assessing readiness and aligning the Army's direction with national security priorities.

Musa stressed the need for joint operations, inter-agency collaboration and a whole-of-so-

ciety approach to tackling Nigeria's complex security challenges, urging commanders to ensure that outcomes of the conference translate into concrete results on the battlefield.

In his welcome address, the Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Waidi Shaibu, thanked the President for sustained political will and strategic support to the Army, particularly in personnel welfare, equipment modernisation, training and reforms.

Shaibu also acknowledged the support of the National Assembly, noting that it had significantly enhanced the Army's operational readiness across all theatres.

He reaffirmed that the Nigerian Army remained at the forefront of efforts to combat terror-

ism, insurgency, banditry and other criminalities, adding that the force was transforming into a more professional, adaptive and technology-driven army.

Also speaking, Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, described security as a prerequisite for development and commended the Nigerian Army for its role in maintaining peace and stability in the state.

He assured the Army of the continued support of the Lagos State Government.

The event was attended by senior government officials,

Service Chiefs, former Chiefs of Defence and Army Staff, senior military officers, heads of security agencies, diplomats and other dignitaries.

The conference is expected to deliberate on key operational, administrative and strategic issues aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Nigerian Army.

As part of activities lined up for the conference, a book on the biography of the late twenty-third Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Taoreed Abiodun Labaja, Commander of the Federal Republic, was unveiled.

Tinapa can generate over 12,000 jobs when fully operational —MD

CALABAR

The Managing Director of Tinapa Business Resort, Dr Francis Ekom, has said the business and leisure hub, with Free Trade Zone status, has the potential to generate no fewer than twelve thousand direct and indirect jobs when fully operational.

Ekom disclosed this in an interview with journalists in Calabar on Monday.

He said significant efforts were being made to reposition the resort for investors and to avoid past mistakes that led to the takeover of the complex by the Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria.

While noting that several investors had indicated interest in the resort, Ekom said the government was yet to take a final decision on any of them.

"All I can assure you is that we are doing everything necessary to ensure a glorious future for Tinapa.

"There is huge potential in the resort in terms of revenue generation and job creation. The place holds a bright future for Cross River State.

"The entire complex can generate a minimum of twelve thousand jobs, both direct and indirect.

"At the moment, we are working behind the scenes to put all that is required in place to prepare the facility for the future and potential investors," he said.

It would be recalled that the Cross River State Government recently took over Tinapa Business Resort from the Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria.

Tinapa, conceived in two thousand and seven by former Governor Donald Duke as a business and leisure hub with Free Trade Zone status, was designed to boost trade, tourism and investment in the state.

However, the project ran into financial difficulties and was taken over by the Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria in two thousand and eleven.



40TH CONVOCATION CHURCH SERVICE:

L-R: Chaplain, The Lord's Chapel, Rev. Idowu Akinbola; Bursar, The Polytechnic Ibadan, David Taiwo; Deputy Rector, Princess Olaide Salawu; Rector, Dr Taiwo Lasisi; his wife, Omowunmi; Registrar of The Polytechnic, Mr Joseph Ogunjimi, during a Church Service to mark the commencement of The Polytechnic Ibadan 40th Convocation at Lord's Chapel Ibadan..

Oshiomhole empowers 300 women, youths in Edo North

AUCHI

Senator Adams Oshiomhole of the All Progressives Congress, representing Edo North Senatorial District, on Monday donated hair dryers, sewing machines and grinding machines to three hundred women and youths in his constituency.

Oshiomhole said the items were provided to expose the beneficiaries to viable sources of income and improve their

economic wellbeing.

Represented by his Chief of Staff, Mr Victor Oshioke, the senator said the empowerment items were meant to enable beneficiaries to start their own businesses and earn a sustainable living.

"Empowering our constituents will further enhance livelihoods and create sustainable opportunities for our people.

"We are committed to your welfare by championing causes that are vital to the prosperity and wellbeing of the Edo

North Senatorial District.

"Today, we are distributing items to improve the wellbeing of our people, and we will continue to strive for development and the betterment of our beloved constituency," he said.

Also speaking, the legislative aide to the senator, Adams Mumin, urged the beneficiaries to utilise the opportunity to lay a strong foundation towards becoming established entrepreneurs and boosting the economy of their immedi-

ate communities.

"Please do not sell the empowerment tools and other materials. Make good use of them," he advised.

Some of the beneficiaries, who spoke with journalists, expressed gratitude to the lawmaker for the gesture, saying many families would now have means of livelihood.

"These empowerment tools are ladders that will change our lives for the better," said Iyabo Musa and Abeni Raji

Company trains 35 youths on offshore safety skills in A'Ibom

EKET

Azimarine and General Services Limited has trained 35 youths on Basic Offshore Safety Induction and Emergency Training and Offshore Safety Permit in Akwa Ibom State.

Managing Director of the company, Mr Michael Abakam, disclosed this on Monday at a three-day intensive training programme held at Alpattech along Eket-Ibena Road.

Abakam said his decision to sponsor the training was not politically motivated but driven by a commitment to human capacity development in line with the Arise Agenda policy of Akwa Ibom State Governor, Mr Umo Eno.

The Ibena-born chemical engineer said the initiative was also borne out of his desire to provide practical life skills for youths in his constituency and across the state.

He said over one million naira was spent on each trainee, covering emergency response, sea

survival, firefighting and first aid.

According to him, the programme also included emergency breathing systems, practical preparation for real-life offshore hazards and helicopter underwater escape training.

Abakam promised to absorb the beneficiaries into his company as offshore personnel immediately after completing the training.

"My aim is to engage you to work in the offshore sector within one week," he said.

He added that beneficiaries, including non-indigenes, were selected from the four local government areas in Eket Federal Constituency and other parts of Akwa Ibom State.

Abakam urged the trainees to take the programme seriously and make good use of the opportunity to become useful to themselves, their families and society.

Speaking on behalf of the beneficiaries, Mr Otuekong Udofia expressed gratitude to the sponsor for providing what he described as an expensive and life-changing training.

ESDPC MD hails staff commitment, lauds outstanding performance

BENIN CITY

The Managing Director of the Edo State Development and Property Corporation (ESDPC), Barrister Folarin Okungbowa, has commended the management and staff of the Corporation for their dedication, hard work and outstanding performance over the past year.

Okungbowa gave the commendation at the Corporation's end-of-year party organised to

appreciate staff for their contributions

He expressed optimism that the zeal, diligence and commitment displayed would be sustained in the coming year.

He noted that the Corporation surpassed its operational targets for the year, attributing the feat to teamwork and collective responsibility among staff.

The Managing Director also prayed for God's continued protection over all employees

in the year ahead.

The ESDPC boss paid special tribute to the Director of Human Resources, Mrs Flora Inneh, and the Head of Accounts, Mrs Augusta Ogbejele, for their exemplary leadership in managing the Corporation's human and material resources, noting that their dedication played a key role in the successes recorded.

He thanked them for their unwavering support and urged continued cooperation, stress-

ing that collective effort remained critical to institutional growth.

Responding on behalf of staff, Mrs Inneh thanked the Managing Director for organising the end-of-year celebration and for his support throughout the year.

She reaffirmed the commitment of staff to discharge their duties with renewed vigour and encouraged continuous self-development to enhance service delivery.

Senate pushes for electronic, integrated civil records to boost national planning

ABUJA

The Senate on Monday pushed for electronic and integrated civil records to boost national planning.

Chairman, Senate Committee on National Identity Card and National Population, Sen. Victor Umeh, made the push at a public hearing organised by the committee in Abuja.

The hearing was on "A Bill for an Act to Repeal the Births, Deaths, etc (Compulsory Registration) Act Cap. B9 LFN 2004 and to Enact the Compulsory Civil Registration 2025 to Provide for Electronic Civil Registration System; and for Other Related Matters, 2025 (SB. 913).

In his address, Umeh, who is

the sponsor of the bill, said that the world had moved towards digital and international civil registration systems, urging Nigeria to tow the same path.

"If Nigeria must compete globally and plan effectively, we must transition from paper-based, inconsistent records to a fully electronic and integrated platform," he said.

The lawmaker said that the reform was critical to ensuring that every birth and every death in Nigeria were accurately recorded.

"It is the foundation for credible population data, effective national planning and transparent governance," he stated.

The senator explained that the public hearing was designed to collect expert opinions, sec-

torial perspectives and stakeholders' recommendations to help finalise a law that would reflect global best practices.

Umeh further said that Nigeria had operated for decades under an outdated civil registration framework that could not support modern development needs.

"We have relied on estimated projections and fragmented identity systems, challenging

the accuracy of planning across education, health and national security," the lawmaker said.

According to him, the bill seeks to guarantee that every birth and death was recorded, regardless of location, socio-economic status, gender or faith.

"It will enable real time, digital registration across the country, including rural communities through mobile and

electronic means.

"It will also strengthen the national identity architecture through synergy with the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), National Population Commission (NPC), Immigration, Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) and health institutions," he added.

In his opening remarks, the Senate President, Godswill Ak-

pabio, said that accurate and comprehensive vital registration was Nigeria's DNA as a sovereign state.

"It is the tool that empowers the government to plan for the future, allocate resources effectively from schools and hospitals to infrastructure, and most importantly, provide a definite legal identity for every citizen," he said.

NIWRMC to digitise water use licensing, monitoring —Zaria

ABUJA

The Nigeria Integrated Water Resources Management Commission (NIWRMC) said it will digitise water use licensing and monitoring as part of reforms introduced within the first 100 days of its Executive Director, Dr Aminu Zaria.

Zaria disclosed this on Monday in Abuja while briefing journalists on achievements recorded since he assumed office.

He said the milestone reaffirmed the commission's commitment to safeguarding Nigeria's water resources, strengthening national water security and advancing President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda.

Zaria described the commission as Nigeria's water regulatory authority established under the Water Resources Act to promote equitable, economically and en-

vironmentally sustainable water resources management.

According to him, the commission regulates and controls rights to develop and use water resources shared by more than one state.

He said the commission's mandate includes defining water footprint standards, regulating water resources development and planning water resources management nationwide.

Zaria added that operational responsibilities cover water abstraction licensing, allocation planning, monitoring and enforcement, catchment management, aquifer protection, regulatory compliance and conflict resolution.

He said the commission plays a critical role in national development, food security, industrial growth, environmental sustainability and climate resilience.

Infrastructure: Izombe, oil-bearing community appeals to FG, Imo govt for intervention

ABUJA

Leaders of Izombe, an oil-bearing community in Oguata Local Government Area of Imo State, have appealed to the Federal and State Governments to urgently intervene in the provision of basic infrastructure to improve the living conditions of the people.

Mr Valentine Onwuka, Chairman of the Izombe Central Union, Abuja Branch, and a patron of the union, Chief Vitus Egwuagu, made the appeal at the union's end-of-year get-together in Abuja.

Onwuka, who lamented the underdevelopment in the community despite its status as an oil-bearing area, said Izombe lacked basic amenities such as good roads, schools, electricity

and other social infrastructure.

He described the level of underdevelopment as unacceptable for an oil-producing community.

"As an oil-producing community, these basic necessities are not privileges; they are our rights. They are needed to improve life in the community," he said.

He said economic trees in the area had been destroyed by gas flaring and environmental degradation linked to oil activities, adding that there was nothing on ground to show that oil was being produced in Izombe.

According to him, Izombe is one of the first oil-producing communities in Imo State but has not benefitted from opportunities usually associated with such status, including scholarships and community development projects by oil companies.



2025 NBA LAW WEEK:

L-R: Senior Advocate of Nigeria, (SAN), Chief Folake Solanke; Chairman of the Occasion, Justice Olabode Rhodes-Vivour and Judge of the National Industrial Court Nigeria, Ibadan, Justice Dele Peters, during the 2025 Law Week of Nigeria Bar Association, Branch in Ibadan on Monday.

NAF aircraft was never on any mission in Burkina Faso

ABUJA

The Nigerian military has debunked reports alleging that a Nigerian military aircraft was involved in a clandestine intelligence operation in Burkina Faso, describing the claims as false, misleading and unsupported by facts.

A competent source told reporters that the aircraft was on a duly authorised ferry flight to Portugal for scheduled periodic depot maintenance, a routine requirement in the lifecycle of military transport aircraft.

According to the source, the aircraft had no operational tasking or intelligence mission

and was covered by all necessary flight documentation, including provisions for diversion in line with international aviation standards.

He said the precautionary landing at Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, was initiated purely on safety grounds and in strict compliance with established aviation protocols.

"At no time was the aircraft intercepted, forced to land or operating without authorisation. Claims of airspace violation or hostile intent are fabrications," the source said.

The source further dismissed allegations of espionage, signals intelligence operations, foreign sponsorship or

external network involvement.

He added that personnel on board were standard aircrew and mission-support officers on a legitimate military air movement.

"The aircraft was not equipped with surveillance or data-collection systems of any kind, and the interaction between Burkinabe authorities and the NAF crew has remained professional," he added.

The source also clarified that contrary to online speculation, no official statement was issued by the Nigerian Air Force claiming that the crew had been released.

He said issues relating to the aircraft and its personnel were being responsibly handled by

relevant Nigerian government ministries and agencies through established diplomatic channels, in line with international norms and bilateral relations.

The source described the spread of the reports as a deliberate disinformation effort aimed at discrediting Nigeria, undermining public trust and straining regional relations.

He urged Nigerians to remain calm, rely on verified information and disregard sensational narratives capable of distorting facts and threatening regional stability.

"In an era of heightened information warfare, citizens must engage national security matters with discernment and responsibility," the source said.

Ughelli North APC strategises for Tinubu, Oborevwo, others

AJUWA VICTOR

UGHELLI

Leaders of the All Progressives Congress in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State have unanimously pledged to deliver President Bola Tinubu, Governor Sheriff Oborevwo and all APC candidates in the 2027 general elections.

The resolution was reached at a strategic meeting held at the Uduere country home of the Ughelli North Local Government Chairman, Hon. Jaro Egbo.

The high-level session,

described as the first major convergence since the recent merger of political structures in the local government area, brought together influential party stakeholders who projected a unified front anchored on solidarity, reconciliation and readiness for electoral victory.

A founding leader of the APC in Delta State and leader of the party in Ughelli North, Olorogun O'tega Emerhor, lauded the defection of Governor Oborevwo and the entire Peoples Democratic Party structure into the APC, describing it as "the beginning

of a new dawn."

He said the development had positioned the APC for unprecedented political strength in the state. Emerhor also praised the renewed unity within the party and urged elected officials and appointees to give their full support as preparations intensify for the 2027 elections.

Host of the meeting and Chairman of Ughelli North Local Government Area, Hon. Jaro Egbo, said the APC had entered the 2026 election season in "a different gear," stressing that the party was determined to prevent any oppo-

sition challenge in the area.

He urged members to deepen mobilisation efforts, noting that Ughelli North, Delta State's largest voting bloc, must deliver overwhelming support for President Tinubu and Governor Oborevwo.

"As a party, we are all sailing together. Our mandate is simple: deliver all APC candidates in 2027," Egbo stated.

Ughelli North APC Chairman, Hon. Samuel Ewighono, described the meeting as historic, noting that it was the first time the entire party structure had converged since the merger.

NEWS

Yuletide: Oyo govt subsidises food items for its workers

IBADAN

The Oyo State Government has begun subsidising some food items, including bags of rice, vegetable oil, chicken and other essential commodities, for its workers.

The state Commissioner for

Information and Civic Orientation, Prince Dotun Oyelade, disclosed this in a statement issued in Ibadan.

Oyelade said the initiative was part of the state government's efforts to cushion the effects of the current economic challenges on workers and ensure a more comfortable De-

cember festive season.

"The intervention aligns with the welfare-driven agenda of the state government, aimed at improving the standard of living of workers and promoting food affordability," he said.

According to him, the initiative, driven by the Agricultural Credit Corporation of Oyo

State, will see subsidised food items valued at one hundred million naira sold to civil and public servants across the state.

"The initiative is strictly for state workers who have indicated interest, and beneficiaries must be properly collated by their respective ministries' account sections to ensure a

smooth and transparent process," Oyelade said.

He added that payment for the commodities would be made through salary deductions beginning from February

2026

"The arrangement is designed to ease the financial burden on workers while ensuring accountability," the commissioner said.



NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS DISCOURSE:

Chairman, Presidential Fiscal and Tax reforms Committee, Taiwo Oyedele (R) presenting a document to the Chairman, Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC), Mohammed Bello, during a National Stakeholders Discourse themed, "Enhancing Fiscal Efficiency and Revenue Growth under the Nigeria Tax Act 2025" organised by RMAFC in Abuja on Monday.

Expert warns of zoonotic disease risks during harmattan

BAUCHI

A veterinarian, Dr Abdulkadir Baba, has warned that the ongoing harmattan season in Bauchi State may increase the risk of zoonotic diseases.

Baba gave the warning on Monday in an interview with

journalists in Bauchi, attributing the risk to dry and dusty weather conditions that favour the spread of infections from animals to humans.

He explained that rodents such as rats often migrate into homes during harmattan in search of food, increasing the risk of Lassa fever, leptospiro-

sis and Q fever through contact with rodent urine, droppings or contaminated dust.

Baba added that the season coincides with the dog reproductive cycle, leading to aggressive behaviour and a higher risk of rabies transmission.

He also cautioned against anthrax, noting that its spores

could be carried by strong harmattan winds and inhaled by humans.

The veterinarian advised the public to maintain good hygiene, keep homes free of rodents, ensure proper cooking of meat and dairy products, and avoid contact with stray animals during the season.

FRSC inaugurates operation zero tolerance, deploys 1470 personnel in Kaduna

KADUNA

The Federal Road Safety Corps, Kaduna State Sector Command, has inaugurated Operation Zero Tolerance and deployed one thousand four hundred and seventy personnel across the state.

The Sector Commander, Mr Tijjani Iiyasu, disclosed this on Monday while inaugurating the operation and briefing officers and men of the command in Kaduna.

He said the Federal Road Safety Corps had inaugurated the 2025 Operation Zero Tolerance, an intensive end-of-year safety operation aimed at reducing road traffic crashes, injuries and fatalities during the yuletide period.

Iiyasu disclosed that the operation was scheduled to run from Monday to January 15, 2026

According to him, the exercise would involve the deployment of one thousand four hundred and seventy regular personnel, four hundred and one special marshals, thirty patrol vehicles and two motorcycles.

He added that two heavy-duty tow trucks, one carrier tow truck, ten ambulances and drones would also be deployed for effective traffic surveillance along major highways and critical corridors within Kaduna State.

The sector commander charged personnel to conduct themselves professionally and avoid any acts capable of tarnishing the image of the corps.

He said the operation would focus on the enforcement of critical traffic offences, including non-use of passenger manifests, dangerous driving and overtaking, over speeding, tyre

violations, use of mobile phones while driving, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and seat belt violations.

Other offences to be enforced include lane indiscipline, route violations, and overloading of goods and passengers.

Iiyasu said periodic mobile court sittings, strict enforcement and robust public enlightenment campaigns would be sustained throughout the operation to ensure voluntary compliance by road users.

To enhance prompt emergency response, he said traffic camps and help areas had been activated at Rigachikun, Kwanan Farakwai, Birnin Yero and Gonin Gora to manage traffic gridlocks and respond swiftly to crashes.

He added that roadside clinics had been fully equipped with trained personnel and

medical consumables to attend to minor injuries of crash victims and members of nearby communities.

The sector commander called on the public to obey traffic rules and regulations and make use of the Federal Road Safety Corps emergency platforms, including the One Two Two toll-free emergency line and the National Traffic Radio One Zero Seven Point One FM for road advisories.

He also disclosed the availability of the Federal Road Safety Corps mobile application for speed monitoring, black spot identification and reporting of erring drivers.

Iiyasu wished the people of Kaduna State a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year, assuring them of the corps' commitment to safer roads throughout the festive period.

Why Muftwang is joining APC —Aide

ABUJA

Governor Caleb Muftwang of Plateau State is set to join the ruling All Progressives Congress.

Mr Istifanus Nwansat, the political adviser to the governor, made this known in an interview with journalists on Monday in Abuja.

Nwansat said the governor's decision to join the All Progressives Congress was based on what he described as the option with the least risk in the face of the crisis rocking the Peoples Democratic Party.

He explained that the impending defection of Muftwang to the All Progressives Congress would also align with President Bola Tinubu's political and governance trajectory on the Plateau.

According to him, the crisis

in the Peoples Democratic Party had made the platform an unrealistic podium for political actors to contest elections.

"From the assessment and analysis of all the available options, we have concluded that the safest decision for us today, with the least risk factor, is to move into the All Progressives Congress," he said.

"That is why the governor is moving into the All Progressives Congress. Again, the governor believes it is good and reasonable as a leader for him to move his people to align with Mr President.

"This is because, by our own assessment as a state, even though we are members of the Peoples Democratic Party, we appreciate and recognise the efforts of Mr President in putting things right," Nwansat said.

Stakeholders want 6-month paid maternity leave to boost exclusive breastfeeding

KATSINA

Stakeholders in Katsina State have called for the extension of paid maternity leave from four to six months to encourage exclusive breastfeeding.

The call was contained in a communique jointly signed on Monday by Alhaji Badamasi Sani of the State Primary Health Care Agency and Mr Umar Shehu of the Ministry for Local Government and Emirate Affairs.

The communique was also signed by Mr Yusuf Ibrahim-Kaita of the Ministry of Finance, Professor Saifullahi Sani-Ibrahim, the State Statistician General, and Mr Abdulazeez Abba Balarabe of the Ministry of Agriculture.

The stakeholders issued the communique following a meeting on the adoption of the Child Nutrition Fund and the implementation of a six-month paid maternity leave.

They said the extension of paid maternity leave was aimed at encouraging exclusive breastfeeding among working mothers.

The stakeholders also called on the state government to expedite the operationalisation of the multi-sectoral nutrition strategic plan and to conduct an assessment of malnutrition across the thirty-four local

government areas of the state.

They said the assessment would provide reliable data for proper planning and budgeting and help contextualise solutions to malnutrition at the local level.

They further urged the government to allocate adequate funds for nutrition interventions and ensure the timely release of such funds.

"We also want local manufacturing of nutrition commodities in the state to strengthen the local government food and nutrition committees.

"Additionally, the government should institutionalize technology-driven data generation for real-time decision-making," the communique stated.

The stakeholders resolved that sustained investment in nutrition remained vital for sustainable development, economic prosperity and the overall well-being of Nigerians.

They noted that malnutrition still affected one in three people globally, with Nigeria ranking as the country with the second-highest number of stunted children.

"In Katsina State, 60.5 percent of children under five years are stunted, 26.8 percent are underweight and 16.7 percent are wasted, according to the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2023," they said.

Supreme Court affirms President's power to declare emergency rule, suspend elected officials

ABUJA

The Supreme Court on Monday ruled that a sitting President has the constitutional power to declare a state of emergency in any part of the federation to forestall a breakdown of law and order or a descent into chaos or anarchy.

Delivering the lead judgment in a split decision, Justice Mohammed Idris held that Section 305 of the Constitution empowers the President to deploy extraordinary measures to restore normalcy where emergency rule is proclaimed.

The judgment arose from a suit filed by Adamawa State and ten other Peoples Democratic Party-controlled states

challenging the validity of the state of emergency declared by President Bola Tinubu in Rivers State, during which Governor Siminalaye Fubara and other elected state officials were suspended for six months.

In the six-to-one decision, the apex court held that the President could suspend democratically elected officials during a period of emergency rule, but stressed that such suspensions must be for a limited duration.

The court ruled that Section 305 of the Constitution is not specific on the nature of the extraordinary measures permitted, thereby granting the President discretion on the steps to take during an emergency.

Earlier, the court upheld preliminary objections raised

by the defendants, the Attorney-General of the Federation and the National Assembly, challenging the competence of the suit.

In upholding the objections, Justice Idris held that the elev-

en states failed to disclose a cause of action capable of invoking the original jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.

He consequently struck out the suit for lack of jurisdiction, and also proceeded to consider

the matter on the merits, dismissing it.

However, in a dissenting opinion, Justice Obande Ogbuinya held that the suit succeeded in part.

According to him, while

the President has the power to declare a state of emergency, such power cannot be extended to suspending elected state officials, including governors, deputy governors and members of state legislatures.

SAN urges lawyers to balance innovation with integrity

IBADAN

Professor Yusuf Ali, Senior Advocate of Nigeria, has urged lawyers to strike a balance between innovation and integrity, warning that innovation without integrity could erode public trust, while integrity without innovation could render the profession irrelevant.

He made the call on Monday at the opening of the 2025 Nigerian Bar Association Ibadan Law Week, themed, "Law, Ethics and Innovation: Sustaining the Future of Legal Practice."

Ali delivered the keynote address, known as the Owolabi Afuye Memorial Lecture, through his representative, Mr Adebayo Ojo, Senior Advocate of Nigeria.

He said the future of legal practice would not be determined by technology alone, but by how lawyers choose to deploy it.

Ali urged legal practitioners to embrace relevance, innovation,

ethics, competence and progress, stressing that the future of law in Nigeria must be shaped through deliberate action, ethical leadership and fearless innovation.

He called for the strengthening of ethical infrastructure, updating of the rules of professional conduct, investment in capacity building and promotion of responsible innovation.

Ali also emphasised the need to preserve the human essence of the law and build a future-oriented judiciary.

Chairman of the occasion, Justice Olabode Rhodes-Vivour (Retired), described the theme as timely in view of prevailing social and technological changes, and urged participants to engage fully in the programme.

The Matriarch of the Bar, Chief Folake Solanke, Senior Advocate of Nigeria, called on the association to restore the golden age of the profession, when lawyers and judges enjoyed public confidence.

Assailant murders one in Kano, lynched by mob

KANO

The Nigeria Police Command in Kano State on Monday confirmed that a resident, identified as Ladan Zubairu, was killed by an unknown assailant at Yusuf Garko Mosque in Maraba Quarters, Kano.

The command's spokesperson, Chief Superintendent of Police Abdullahi Kiyawa, said eyewitnesses reported that the suspect was pursued by an angry mob and lynched.

He added that the mob also set the suspect's residence on fire.

According to him, normalcy has been restored in the area, with security personnel deployed

to maintain law and order.

Investigators, he said, recovered the victim's severed throat from the suspect's pocket.

Both bodies were taken to the Mohammed Abdullahi Wase Teaching Hospital, Kano, where they were confirmed dead and are awaiting autopsy.

Kiyawa said the Commissioner of Police, Ibrahim Bakori, has ordered a thorough investigation to ensure that all those involved are brought to justice.

He appealed to members of the public to remain calm and cooperate with law enforcement agencies, urging anyone with useful information to contact the nearest police station, assuring that all information would be treated confidentially.



INTERNATIONAL NURSES WEEK IN:

Chairman, National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives (NANNM), Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH) Chapter, Victoria Samson, distributing gifts to patients at the hospital wards to mark the International Nurses Week in Jos on Monday.

Court to rule on Ngige's bail application Thursday

ABUJA

An Abuja High Court on Monday adjourned ruling on the bail application of former Minister of Labour and Employment, Dr Chris Ngige, until Thursday.

Ngige is to remain at the Kuje Correctional Centre pending the ruling.

Earlier, Justice Maryam Hassan ordered his remand in custody after the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission arraigned him on eight counts of fraud and acceptance of bribes on Friday, December 12.

The anti-graft agency accused the former minister of awarding contracts to his associates, an offence said to violate Section 19 of

the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act, 2000.

Other charges include the alleged collection of bribes from some of the associates, which the commission said contravenes Section 17(a) of the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act, 2000, and is punishable under Section 17(c) of the same Act.

Ngige, however, pleaded not guilty to all the charges.

The defendant is a former governor of Anambra State, who served on the Peoples Democratic Party platform from May 2003 to March 2006. He also served as Nigeria's Minister of Labour and Employment from 2015 to 2023, during the administration of late former President Muhammadu Buhari.

At the resumed hearing of his bail application, counsel to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Mr Sylvanus Tahir, Senior Advocate of Nigeria, submitted that Ngige was a flight risk who could leave the country at will.

Counsel to the defendant, Mr Patrick Ikwueto, Senior Advocate of Nigeria, urged the court to grant bail on four grounds.

Ikwueto argued that Ngige could not be a flight risk because his international passport was stolen.

"Where will he go without the visa? The defendant is not a flight risk and has no capacity, factual and legal, to leave the country," he said.

However, Tahir told the court

that Ngige violated the terms of the administrative bail earlier granted to him by the commission.

He said the former minister requested his passport on September 5 to travel for a medical appointment and promised to return it, but failed to do so or formally report it stolen.

"He made a promise to return it by November 19 2025. The defendant did not return it. His signature on the affidavit of loss shows that the defendant came back on November 14 2025. It was never forwarded to us.

"Between the date he returned and the date he undertook, a clear five days elapsed. He did not turn himself in, nor return the travel documents," Tahir said.

Judges task lawyers to secure Nigeria's legal future

KANO

Senior judges in the country have urged lawyers to uphold judicial ethics, professionalism and integrity, while embracing technology, to secure the future of legal practice in Nigeria.

The judges made the call on Saturday at the maiden symposium of Nureini Jimoh, Senior Advocate of Nigeria, Chambers, held in Kano.

The symposium was organised as part of activities marking the inauguration of the chambers' new building and was themed, "The Future of Le-

gal Practice in Nigeria: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities."

Justice Abdu Aboki, Justice of the Supreme Court (Retired), who chaired the occasion, described the symposium as timely, noting that the legal profession stands at a critical juncture between tradition and innovation.

Aboki called for closer collaboration between the Bench and the Bar, describing them as indivisible and inseparable partners in the administration of justice.

He commended the presence of serving and retired justices, senior advocates and oth-

er judicial officers, noting that their participation reflected a strong commitment to mentorship, ethical grounding and the development of the next generation of lawyers.

In his presentation, Justice Tijjani Abubakar of the Supreme Court said digital transformation has become a defining feature of modern legal practice.

He cited the adoption of electronic filing, electronic court lists, virtual hearings and electronic service as pathways to leveraging technology, stressing that lawyers must acquire technological competence to meet ethical and pro-

fessional standards.

According to him, digitization is no longer optional, warning that the Nigerian Bar must adapt to avoid stagnation.

Abubakar also highlighted the growing use of artificial intelligence in legal research, drafting and analytics, noting that courts and counsel must prepare for artificial intelligence-generated evidence and automated decision-support tools.

He cautioned, however, that technology should not replace human judgment, urging the profession to establish clear ethical boundaries for the use of artificial intelligence.

NEWS

Foreign

Dozens killed in Morocco flash floods

Flash floods have killed at least 37 people in Morocco's coastal Safi region, according to state-owned television.

Cars and mounds of rubbish were seen sweeping through the main port city of Safi after torrential rain hit on Sunday.

Dozens of people have been receiving treatment in hospital for their injuries, say local authorities,

and at least 70 homes have been inundated in the old city centre.

Local reports say access to and from the city is blocked on certain roads because of damage and debris.

Residents on Sunday described it as a dark day, with one telling the AFP news agency: "I've lost all my clothes. Only my neighbour gave me some to cover myself. I have nothing

left. I've lost everything."

Another survivor said he wanted to see government trucks at the scene to pump out the water.

Moroccan authorities say search and rescue missions are still under way.

Experts say the climate crisis is in part responsible for the extreme weather fluctuations seen in the North African state.

It has suffered seven years of drought in a row, depleting its reservoirs.

Last year was officially the hottest ever on record.

This latest, sudden downpour is expected to continue on Tuesday together with snowfall across the Atlas mountains, Morocco's weather service warns.

Ukraine ceasefire talks continue as US says 'progress was made'

Talks between Ukraine and the US aimed at reaching a peace deal with Russia are continuing in Berlin for a second day.

Zelensky and his chief negotiator Rustem Umerov met US envoy Steve Witkoff and Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner for five hours on Sunday, joined by German Chancellor Friedrich Merz.

"A lot of progress was made," a US readout said. The same team resumed talks on Monday morning.

Ahead of the start of the meeting, Volodymyr Zelensky signalled he would give up ambitions to join Nato in exchange for security guarantees.

Recognising that "some partners from the US and Europe" did not support Ukraine's bid for Nato membership, Zelensky said he was instead seeking strong security guarantees modelled on Nato's Article 5 clause of mutual protection.

"And this is already a compromise on our part," he said on Sunday.

Witkoff has travelled to Moscow to hold talks with Vladimir Putin on several occasions, but Sunday's meeting at the chancellery in Berlin was the first time he met Zelensky. Nato Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Alexus Grynkeiwich was also present at the talks.

Several European leaders as well as European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen are expected to join further talks with the Ukrainian and US delegations on Monday evening.

At the core of the discussions in Berlin is the 20-point peace plan proposal presented to the US by Ukraine last week to counter an initial American plan which was seen as heavily favouring Russia.

Details haven't been shared, but last week Zelensky said the points should be seen as a "foundation" on which to build provisions for the reconstruction of Ukraine and security guarantees.

For Russia, Kyiv's membership of Nato is a red line, and Moscow has repeatedly demanded that any ambitions for Ukraine to join the alliance are shelved forever. "This issue is one of the cornerstones and requires special discussion," said the Kremlin on Monday.

The US too has repeatedly stated it does not want Ukraine to be part of Nato. But Kyiv

fears that a peace deal without watertight security guarantees would fail to detract Russia from attacking again.

Before the talks began, Zelensky also addressed the thorny issue of sovereignty over the eastern region of the Donbas, which Russia mostly occupies and which it wants Kyiv to hand over in their entirety.

The Ukrainian president said that while he was open to freezing the conflict along the current front line he was not prepared to have his troops withdraw from the percentage of the Donbas they still hold - unless Russian forces did the same in the areas they control.

For it to be a fair arrangement Russia would have to withdraw the same distance, Zelensky said. This matter was "extremely sensitive and heated," he added.

Any proposal hashed out by the Ukrainian, American and European side will still have to be presented to Moscow - although Zelensky said that the US delegation "so to speak present the Russian side's perspective, because they relay Russia's signals, demands, steps, and indications of readiness or lack thereof."

The Kremlin said it expected the US to provide us with the "concept" discussed on Monday.

The talks in Berlin come at a crucial time for Ukraine, which is enduring its fourth winter of war amid sustained power cuts caused by Russia's attacks on its energy facilities. Over the weekend more than a million households in Ukraine were left without electricity following a barrage of strikes.

Later this week, EU countries will be voting on a plan to send €90bn (£78.6bn) worth of frozen Russian assets held in a Belgium-based financial institution to prop up Ukraine's economy.

On Friday, EU governments agreed to immobilise the Russian assets indefinitely - but there is no consensus yet on whether they can be sent to Ukraine. Belgium has been resisting the legally contentious proposal, and in recent days other countries, including Italy, have said "alternative options" should be put forward.

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas acknowledged the discussions were "increasingly difficult".

"But we're doing the work, and we still have some days," she added.



MEETING WITH US ENVOY:

Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukrainian negotiator Rustem Umerov and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz met Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and US envoy Steve Witkoff in Berlin on Sunday.

Chile elects far-right José Antonio Kast as next president

Chile has elected the far-right wing José Antonio Kast to be its next president, after an election campaign that was dominated by themes of security, immigration and crime.

Kast beat the governing left-wing coalition candidate Jeanette Jara decisively with more than 58% of the vote in his third attempt at running for president.

It marks the biggest shift to the right since the end of Chile's military dictatorship in 1990. Kast has openly praised Chile's former right-wing dictator, Augusto Pinochet.

In his first speech to supporters as president-elect, Kast said: "Chile will once again be free from crime, free from anguish, free from fear."

"Criminals, delinquents - their lives are going to change. We're going to look for them, find them, judge them and then we're going to lock them up,"

he added. At a gathering of his backers in the capital Santiago, many draped in Chilean flags, chanting and taking selfies, there was jubilation as the results came through. "I'm happy we can recover the country's security and patriotism," said Augustina Trancoso, donning a red "Make Chile Great Again" cap.

"We've been trying to win an election for years," said Belem Valdivieso. "In Chile, you used to be able to walk the streets peacefully, lately we've experienced problems with insecurity. I'm hoping his promises will be kept and he'll focus on security."

Throughout the campaign, Kast portrayed Chile as a country that was descending into chaos and insecurity. He pledged to restore order and crack down on irregular immigration, as well as implementing sharp spending cuts.

Kast is an admirer of Donald Trump, who is likely to become a close ally, and his policies

echo those of the US president. He has pledged a border wall on Chile's porous frontier with Peru and Bolivia, maximum-security prisons, and mass deportations of irregular migrants, many of whom are from Venezuela.

Chile is one of the safest and more stable countries in South America, but a rise in immigration and organised crime in recent years has concerned many voters. Kast regularly drew links between the two.

His critics, though, say the problem is being exaggerated.

One voter in Santiago, Javiera Carrasco, liked some of Kast's policies but ended up voting for Communist Party member Jara. She said she felt "like a false sense of insecurity is becoming widespread."

"In other countries, there are much worse things happening than here. It just doesn't add up for me."

Chile's murder rate is now

falling, and some studies suggest those born abroad commit fewer crimes on average. But the perception of growing insecurity was the motivation for many of Kast's voters.

"We are transforming into Colombia, a lot of terrorism, thieves, robbery, society is very unsafe," one voter Max Struber said.

"It may sound harsh to say it, but we need the government to continue Pinochet's work. Human rights abuses existed, that's true. But as a government it was good, we used to have peace and tranquility."

Kast's brother was a minister during Pinochet's dictatorship, and his father was a member of the Nazi party. Pinochet was an army general who led a US-backed military coup in 1973 and established a 17-year-long military dictatorship that was marked by brutal human rights abuses, forced disappearances and free-market economic policies.

Pro-democracy Hong Kong tycoon Jimmy Lai convicted in high-profile national security trial

Hong Kong pro-democracy campaigner and media tycoon Jimmy Lai has been found guilty of colluding with foreign forces under the city's controversial national security law (NSL).

The 78-year-old UK citizen, who has been in jail since December 2020, pleaded not guilty. He faces life in prison and is expected to be sentenced early next year.

Lai used his now-defunct

Apple Daily newspaper as part of a wider effort to lobby foreign governments to impose sanctions on Hong Kong and China, the court found.

Hong Kong chief executive John Lee welcomed the verdict, noting that Lai's actions "damaged the country's interests and the welfare of Hong Kongers". Rights groups called it "a cruel judicial farce".

They say the NSL, which Beijing defends as essential

for the city's stability, has been used to crush dissent.

Delivering the verdict on Monday, Judge Esther Toh said there is "no doubt" that Jimmy Lai "harboured hatred" for the People's Republic of China (PRC), citing his "constant invitation to the US to help bring down the government of the PRC with the excuse of helping the people of Hong Kong".

When Lai testified in No-

vember, he denied all the charges against him, saying he had "never" used his foreign contacts to influence foreign policy on Hong Kong.

Asked about his meeting with then US Vice President Mike Pence, Lai said he did not ask anything of him: "I would just relay to him what happened in Hong Kong when he asked me."

He was also asked about his meeting with then-secretary of state

Mike Pompeo, to which he said he had asked Pompeo, "not to do something but to say something, to voice support for Hong Kong".

Lai, one of the fiercest critics of the Chinese state, was a key figure in the pro-democracy protests that engulfed Hong Kong in 2019. Beijing responded to the months-long demonstrations, which sometimes erupted into violent clashes with police, by introducing the NSL.

The law was enacted without consulting the Hong Kong legislature and gave authorities broad powers to charge and jail people they deemed a threat to the city's law and order, or the government's stability.

Lai was accused of violating the NSL for his role in the protests and also through his tabloid Apple Daily, which became a standard bearer for the pro-democracy movement.

Foreign

NEWS

DR Congo: Is Katanga the next target for M23 rebels?

Following the takeover of Uvira by Rwanda-backed M23 rebels, is the financial and strategic hub Katanga next? Africanews spoke to political scientist Christian Moleka Kibamgu about what the rebels might do next.

After the fall of Uvira, questions are mounting about a possible advance by AFC-M23 rebels in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Analysts say the rebels now have a number of options, including an advance south towards Katanga, a region considered vital to Kinshasa's economy and strategy.

Political scientist Christian Moleka Kibamgu spoke to Africanews to discuss what might happen next:

"After Uvira, the M23 has three options: either leave Walikale and head towards Maniema and Kindu, or go north towards Kisangani, or

go south towards Katanga. And I believe that the most likely scenario is that they will head south towards Katanga. Because they are in Uvira, they are on Lake Tanganyika, which also opens up to Kalemie and Tanganyika. But they can also descend towards Katanga from the mountains of the Mitambwe plateau.

"Katanga is strategically important because it is Kinshasa's financial stronghold, including for the rebellion if they were to take control of the province. But they could also find a kind of political support base there, given the hostility of some Katangan leaders towards the Kinshasa regime. And today there are also far too many community tensions. So Katanga could be a much more favorable ally for the rebels than moving towards Kisangani."



BONDI'S HANUKKAH FESTIVAL:

Sydney's iconic Bondi Beach as crowds of Jewish families gathered at a park to celebrate the first night of Hanukkah.

ECOWAS rejects Guinea-Bissau transition, warns of sanctions

West African leaders have rejected a transition programme announced by Guinea-Bissau's military rulers, calling instead for a swift return to constitutional order and warning of targeted sanctions against those obstructing the process.

The position was reaffirmed on Sunday in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, where heads of state and government met for the 68th summit of the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS, amid growing concerns over insecurity, economic pressures and political instability across the region.

Opening the summit, ECOWAS Commission Chairman and Sierra Leone's President, Julius Maada Bio, warned that the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government continues to pose a serious threat to regional stability.

"The architects of ECOWAS understood that democracy is inseparable from peace, justice and development," Bio said. "Today, that democratic order is being tested. The resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government threatens our regional stability, undermines our citizens' rights, and weakens our collective future."

He pointed to the ongoing instability in Guinea-Bissau and an attempted coup in Benin as reminders that democracy in the region requires constant vig-

ilance and principled action.

Nigeria's Vice President, Kashim Shettima, representing President Bola Tinubu, urged leaders to reaffirm their commitment to regional solidarity, stressing that West Africa's unity goes beyond political disagreements.

"West Africa is not a random assemblage of borders drawn by chance. It is a family bound by memory, culture, struggle, and aspiration," Shettima said. "We disagree, we contest ideas, and we test one another's patience. But disagreement does not erase belonging."

He added that Nigeria believes dialogue and fraternity — rather than force — must define the future of the regional bloc.

Beyond political tensions, leaders reviewed progress on economic integration, including the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme, energy cooperation and major infrastructure projects. Discussions also focused on the impact of climate change on food security, with calls for coordinated regional responses to recurring floods and droughts.

The summit comes as ECOWAS continues negotiations with several military-led governments that have either withdrawn from or suspended their participation in the bloc — developments that have raised questions about the future of regional unity and cooperation.

How Bondi's Hanukkah festival turned from joy to horror within minutes

It was a night that promised to bring "joy and light" to Sydney's iconic Bondi Beach as crowds of Jewish families gathered at a park to celebrate the first night of Hanukkah, also known as the festival of light.

They were among thousands of other swimmers, surfers and sunbathers who had flocked to Australia's most famous beach on a scorching summer's afternoon.

But not long after the Hanukkah event kicked off at 17:00 local time and the first free donuts were doled out, festive music was drowned out by the sounds of screams and the echo of gunshots.

It's unclear exactly when the first shot was fired, but the initial call to police was made at 18:47. In the minutes that followed, two gunmen would kill at least 15 people, and injure dozens more, authorities said.

A local high school teacher, Chavi, told the BBC she dropped to the ground to protect her baby as "bullets were flying above us".

"It was pandemonium and chaos," another attendee, who identified himself as Barry, said as he described watching a throng of people trying to escape the scene that had suddenly devolved into a nightmare.

In one video verified by the BBC, upbeat music from the Hanukkah event can still be heard in the background as people crouch down and shots are heard, interspersed between shrieks.

The eerily jubilant music continues playing while the camera pans over the grass, revealing prostrate bodies completely still, their condition unclear.

Separate footage shows groups of people lying atop one another on the grass, as one woman tries to cover a young child's head with her hand.

Panic soon spread from the park to the sand, where videos show terrified beachgoers sprinting away from the gunfire.

Screams, honking car horns and ambulance sirens fill the air in the next chaotic minutes.

Some cars crashed as people desperately tried to get away, witnesses have told the BBC.

A nearly 11-minute video, verified by the BBC, provides perhaps the clearest timeline of the attack - though it is unclear exactly how far into it the recording started.

It begins as the two gunmen make their way across Campbell Parade - the long stretch of road, lined with cafes, that curves around the beach - and onto a pedestrian bridge above the park where the Hanukkah event was taking place.

It is from there that two men - named as Sajid Akram, 50, and his son Naveed, 24 - allegedly use the elevated position to carry out the remainder of the attack, using what an expert told the BBC were "two sporting shotguns".

One man, believed to be Naveed Akram, remains on the bridge, while the other makes his way towards the park on foot. Shots continue to echo at one-second intervals in some

of the footage, while people can be heard screaming.

As the older man, believed to be Sajid Akram, begins to move away from the bridge, he starts firing at people.

Just a few minutes later, a passerby - who is seen crouching behind parked cars - catches Sajid off guard and is able to wrestle the firearm off him within a few seconds.

The gunman stumbles away, and the man, who has been identified as Ahmed al Ahmed, points the firearm at him, before laying the weapon down against a tree and putting his hands up to signal to officers that he is not the suspect.

Ahmed, who was shot twice during the attack, has been hailed as a hero and credited by New South Wales Premier Chris Minns for saving "countless lives" with his brave actions.

Less than a minute after being disarmed, however, Sajid Akram returns to the bridge and resumes shooting at people with another weapon.

Ugandan priest detained by Military amid rising election tensions

Uganda's military has confirmed it is holding Father Deusdedit Ssekabira, a Catholic priest who went missing nearly two weeks ago.

The army says he is suspected of involvement in "violent subversive activities" and will face charges in court.

The Catholic Diocese of Masaka had earlier reported that Father Ssekabira was "kidnapped by

men in Uganda Army uniform." The church has not commented on the military's accusations.

Church Calls for Immediate Release

The Masaka Diocese raised alarm over the priest's disappearance on Saturday.

Bishop Serverus Jjumba described the incident on 3 December as a "grievous wound" for the local church, the wider

Catholic community, and Father Ssekabira's family.

He said the diocese and its legal team are working to ensure the priest returns safely.

The national police also said they were looking into social media reports of the priest's abduction. In a post on platform X, they said they were "verifying the claims" and would provide updates once more information was available.

Rising Political and Human Rights Concerns

The detention comes amid heightened scrutiny of Uganda's security forces, particularly as the country prepares for elections next month.

Opposition leader Bobi Wine, who will challenge President Yoweri Museveni, criticised the army for detaining civilians.

Wine alleged that many of

his supporters have also been abducted, calling the situation a reflection of the current government's approach to dissent.

In recent months, other high-profile disappearances have raised alarms. In October, two Kenyan human rights activists went missing for five weeks after allegedly being abducted at a campaign event for Wine, only to be released later.

President Museveni acknowledged their arrest, describing them as "experts in riots" who were detained temporarily.

The detention of Father Ssekabira adds to a pattern of concern about the treatment of opposition figures and activists in Uganda.

As the election approaches, observers warn that tensions between the government, security forces, and civil society could intensify.

AU condemns deadly attack on Jewish community in Australia

The African Union has condemned what it called the "heinous terrorist attack" targeting the Jewish community in Australia.

The attack on Sydney's Bondi Beach killed at least 15 people who had gathered at the popular spot to celebrate Hanukkah. A 10-year-old girl, a

rabbi and a Holocaust survivor were among the dead.

In a statement on Sunday, the chairperson of the African Union extended his condolences to the victims' families and said the AU rejects terrorism in all its forms.

The massacre underscores the imperative of protecting all communities from hatred, vio-

lence and extremism, Mahmoud Ali Youssouf said. He called for unity and cooperation among states and societies to prevent radicalisation, counter violent extremism and ensure accountability for those responsible.

The attack is the deadliest shooting in Australia in almost three decades.

Authorities say the shooters were a father and son. One of the gunmen was shot and killed by police. The other, a 24-year-old man, is being treated for gunshot wounds.

At least 38 others were being treated at hospitals on Monday morning, several of them in a critical condition.

FEATURES

Scaling Access to Justice: Media executives trained on Effective reportage, documentation of SGBV cases

GRACE IJEOMA UMEH

Media Executives, drawn from both print and electronic media, have been tasked on accurate documentation, ethical reporting of and proper follow up on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Cases.

This formed part of a 2-day training organized by the Women's Rights and Health Project, WRAHP, held in Benin City, the Edo State capital on Tuesday, December 9 and Wednesday December 10.

The project, according to the Facilitators, was aimed at scaling access to justice-related social services for women and girls who had survived SGBV in Lagos and Edo states, being the organization's focal areas at the moment.

It further stated that the training will also strengthen the capacity of media practitioners in both states on understanding the extent of work needed to be done in advocating for justice for the survivors and best practices in the pursuit of justice.

In his opening remarks, Festus Umoh, Programme Manager, WRAHP, Lagos stated that the organization is an NGO that promotes health and general development of women, girls and communities, but not excluding men.

He enumerated the visions, mission and achievements of the organization to include the pursuit of a just society where the dignity of women, young people and communities are respected and they enjoy sound health and maximize their potentials.

He also listed the Key Thematic areas to include: health - squaring up with communicable and non communicable diseases, women's rights, safeguarding principles towards protecting women from SGBV and SRH and promoting gender equality and inclusivity.

Among the organizations accomplishments, he stated, included the launch of the Ireti Resource Centre in 2020, provision of psychosocial support services to over 1000 survivors of SGBV and conviction of 2 perpetrators, including the ongoing training of advocates to respond to SGBV cases, make appropriate referrals and implement community level awareness sessions on SGBV and other cases of assault unleashed on women and the Girl-Child, among other accomplishments.

The Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption (RoLAC) project, stated that it is a European Union-funded initiative implemented by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). The project's primary goal is to consolidate the rule of law and anti-corruption reforms in Nigeria, and listed its Objectives to include:

1. Enhanced Performance of the Criminal Justice System*: Improve the quality and oversight of the criminal justice system and justice service delivery.
2. Improved Access to Justice*: Enhance access to justice for vulner-



able groups, including women, children, juveniles, persons with disabilities, and victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

3. Increased Transparency and Accountability*: Strengthen anti-corruption systems and reforms, promoting transparency and accountability.

He also enumerated its activities to include:

- Supporting policy and legislative reforms
- Building capacity of justice sector institutions
- Promoting access to justice for vulnerable groups
- Enhancing anti-corruption efforts and transparency
- Supporting civil society organizations and citizen engagement

IMPLEMENTATION:

RoLAC II is being implemented in six focal states: Adamawa, Anambra, Edo, Kano, Lagos, and Plateau, with possible extension to two other states. The project is expected to run from 2023 to 2027.

Taking participants on their role in addressing SGBV through effective documentation and reporting, Dr Nosakhare Erhunmwunsee, an academic, cleric and Gender rights advocate stated that it is not just about learning but demonstrating the learning by saying the truth.

He added that the media plays a crucial role in addressing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) through effective reporting and documentation. He further highlighted some key aspects:

RAISING AWARENESS

- *Breaking the silence*: Media coverage can help break the silence surrounding SGBV, bringing attention to the issue and encouraging victims to speak out.

- *Informing the public*: Accurate and sensitive reporting can educate the public about SGBV, its causes, and its consequences.

Influencing Public Opinion

- *Shaping attitudes*: Media representation can shape public attitudes and perceptions about SGBV, promoting empathy and understanding.
- *Promoting positive change*: Media can highlight successful initiatives and interventions, inspiring positive change and community engagement.

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS

- *Safe reporting*: Media can provide a platform for survivors to share their stories, promoting safe and supportive reporting practices.
- *Resource provision*: Media outlets can share resources and support services for survivors, connecting them with help.

HOLDING PERPETRATORS ACCOUNTABLE

- *Exposing perpetrators*: Media can expose perpetrators and highlight cases of SGBV, promoting accountability and justice.
- *Monitoring response*: Media can monitor the response of authorities and institutions, pushing for effective action.

BEST PRACTICES

- *Sensitive reporting*: Report SGBV cases with sensitivity, avoiding victim-blaming language and stereotypes.
 - *Accuracy and fact-checking*: Ensure accuracy and fact-check information to avoid spreading misinformation.
 - *Respect for survivors*: Prioritize survivors' dignity, safety, and consent when reporting.
- By adopting these practices, the

scholar noted, the media can play a powerful role in addressing SGBV and promoting a culture of respect, empathy, and accountability.

He also gave some key ethics and practices for SGBV reporting:

ETHICS

1. Do no harm*: Prioritize the safety and well-being of survivors and victims.
2. Respect dignity and autonomy*: Treat survivors with respect and dignity, ensuring their autonomy in decision-making.
3. Confidentiality*: Protect survivors' identities and personal information.
4. Accuracy and truthfulness*: Ensure accurate and truthful reporting, avoiding sensationalism and misinformation.

BEST PRACTICES

1. Obtain informed consent*: Get explicit consent from survivors before sharing their stories or images.
2. Use sensitive language*: Avoid victim-blaming language and stereotypes.
3. Focus on facts*: Report facts, avoiding speculation or assumptions.
4. Provide resources*: Share resources and support services for survivors.
5. Protect identities*: Use pseudonyms, blur faces, or omit identifying details to protect survivors' identities.
6. Avoid graphic details*: Avoid graphic descriptions of violence or abuse.
7. Contextualize*: Provide context about SGBV, including root causes and prevalence.

GUIDELINES

1. UNICEF Guidelines*: Use guide-

lines for reporting on children and SGBV.

2. WHO Guidelines*: Follow WHO guidelines for reporting on SGBV.
3. Media Code of Ethics*: Adhere to media code of ethics and industry standards.

RESOURCES

1. Survivor support services*: Provide resources and contact information for support services.
2. Expert sources*: Consult experts, including survivors, advocates, and professionals.
3. Training and education*: Seek training and education on SGBV reporting and ethics.

He stated that by following these ethics and practices, journalists and media professionals can report on SGBV responsibly and respectfully, promoting a culture of empathy and accountability.

Dr. Erhunmwunsee highlights key aspects of SGBV journalists should focus on, including:

- Conflict-Related SGBV*: Prioritize dignity, safety, and well-being of survivors, avoiding re-traumatizing language and ensuring accuracy¹.
- Types of SGBV*: physical, emotional, and psychological violence, child marriage, femicide, trafficking, rape, and socio-economic violence².
- Causes of SGBV*: poverty, patriarchal privilege, cultural norms, and power imbalance.
- Consequences of SGBV*: physical injuries, psychological trauma, sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, and unsafe abortions³.

When reporting SGBV, journalists should:

- Obtain informed consent from survivors
- Use sensitive language, avoiding victim-blaming
- Focus on facts, avoiding speculation
- Provide resources and support services
- Protect survivors' identities and dignity

In her goodwill message, Uchenna Nwokedi, ROLAC Coordinator Edo stated that ROLAC is working with CSOs to increase awareness and to support with necessary resources for reporting and documentation of cases. She tasked journalists on the need to protect the identity of victims/survivors, stop lack of confidence, stigma. She also encouraged them to be abreast of the trend of SGBV cases

Earlier in her opening remark, Uchenna Bose Ironsi, Executive Director, WRAHP, stated the organization works on 3 key pillars, including prevention to mitigate risks and work efficiency. She noted that violence against women is an evil act that should be abhorred by all and sundry. She tasked the media to see the training as an opportunity to enhance their reporting skills and enjoined them to use the wealth of resources garnered in the training to impact on reducing SGBV to the barest minimum.

Sports

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

Morocco 2025: Eagles battle Pharaohs in Cairo friendly today

Three-time winners Nigeria and seven-time champions Egypt will be at each other's jugular at the Cairo Stadium on Tuesday evening, in a friendly match meant to prepare both teams for their campaigns at the 35th Africa Cup of Nations finals kicking off in Morocco on Sunday.

Both teams will have the opportunity to test a clutch of newbies with Nigeria manager Eric Sékou Chelle able to field the likes of goalkeeper Amas Obasogie, defender Ryan Alebiosu, midfielders Usman Muhammed, Tochukwu Nnadi and Ebenezer Akinsanmiro, and forwards Paul Onuachu and Salim Fago Lawal, if he so desires.

Pharaohs' Coach Hossam Hassan, himself an AFCON legend, scored seven goals as Egypt won the 1998 edition of the championship in Burkina Faso, finishing as joint top scorer with South Africa's Ben-

ni McCarthy, whose team ended up with the silver medals.

Hassan will most probably weave his game plan for the friendly match and the AFCON tournament around Liverpool ace Mohamed Salah, who, despite a hefty trophy shelf, is looking for his first AFCON title. There will also be Manchester City of England's Omar Marmoush, Al Ahly's Mohamed El-Shenawy, Mohamed Hany, Yasser Ibrahim, Emam Ashour and Mahmoud Trezeguet.

There are also CAF Champions League holders Pyramids' Mohamed Hamdy and Mostafa Fathi, and UAE-based Ibrahim Adel, as well as Mostafa Mohamed of FC Nantes in France.

Chelle is most likely to set his store by goalkeeper Stanley Nwabali, defenders Bright Osayi-Samuel, Semi Ajayi Calvin Bassey and Zaidu Sanusi, midfielders Wilfred Ndidi,

Frank Onyeka and Alex Iwobi, and forwards Samuel Chukwueze, Victor Osimhen and Ademola Lookman.

The match will kick off at 8pm Egypt time (7pm Nigeria time). As of Monday afternoon, 17 of the 28 players in Nigeria's final list were in Cairo, with more players expected to arrive before Monday evening's training session.

The Super Eagles will depart Cairo for the Moroccan city of Fés aboard a chartered flight on Thursday.

Nigeria's campaign for a fourth continental crown (following triumphs in 1980, 1994 and 2013), is already themed NAIJA 4 THE WIN, and rolls off the ground on Tuesday, 23rd December with a clash against Tanzania's Taifa Stars, in a repeat of the opening match of the 1980 finals that Nigeria hosted and won.

The Eagles will then clash



SUPER EAGLES IN TRAINING

with 2004 hosts and winners Tunisia on Saturday, 27th December, before their final Group C encounter against Uganda's Cranes on Tuesday, 30th December. All of Nigeria's group phase matches hold at the Complexe Sportif de Fés.

AFCON 2025: What fans cannot bring to Moroccan Stadiums

With just 30 days remaining until the kickoff of the 2023

African Cup of Nations (AFCON) in Ivory Coast, football enthusiasts can now secure their tickets as the Local Organising Committee (LOC), in collaboration with the Confederation of African Football (CAF), has initiated ticket sales.

Africa's premier football tournament, AFCON 2025, begins in Morocco on Sunday, 21 December. The hosts face Comoros in the opening match at Rabat's Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium, with kick-off scheduled for 19:00 GMT.

Morocco, ranked 11th in the world, is bidding to win the Africa Cup of Nations for the first time since 1976. Egypt captain Mohamed Salah will again be chasing his maiden AFCON title after finishing runner-up in 2017 and 2021.

Supporters attending matches have been warned about a strict list of prohibited items. Fireworks, pyrotechnics, laser pointers, sharp objects, glass, and weapons are not permitted, alongside cigarettes, alco-

hol, and narcotics. Items bearing offensive or inappropriate messages are also banned.

Large or bulky objects measuring more than 40 by 30 centimeters will not be allowed inside stadiums. This includes prams, large umbrellas, helmets, balls, animals, and oversized flags. Whistles, horns, confetti, lighters, matches, professional cameras with detachable lenses, and recording equipment are equally prohibited. Masks, gas sprays, flammable substances, and any articles deemed discriminatory, offensive, or politically motivated are also forbidden.

Fans attending AFCON 2025 must follow strict stadium rules. Fireworks, alcohol, sharp objects, umbrellas & cameras are among items banned

Six cities will host matches during the tournament. Rabat, Casablanca, Marrakech, Agadir, Fès, and Tangier were selected based on stadium standards and wider infrastructure, as Morocco continues preparations towards a joint bid to co-host the 2030 World Cup with Portugal and Spain.

9th UBTH CMD Cup ends as Benin recreation Club emerges second Runners-Up, earns commendation

Weeks of exciting football action came to a close at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH) Sports Complex, Benin City, as the Benin Recreation Club (BRC) football team emerged second runners-up at the 9th edition of the UBTH Annual Interprofessional/Veterans Football Championship, popularly known as the CMD Cup.

The championship, which brought together professionals from various sectors, once again lived up to its billing as a vibrant platform for promoting unity, networking, sportsmanship, and healthy competition within and beyond the medical community.

Reacting to the team's performance, the Public Relations Officer of Benin Recreation Club, Edoko Wilson Edoko, described the achievement as a true reflection of the determination, discipline, and focus exhibited by the players throughout the tournament.

He commended the team for flying the Club's flag with pride and resilience, noting that the result further reinforces BRC's established reputation in veterans and interprofessional football competitions.

The Captain of the BRC Football/Swimming Section, Mr. Thompson Osaghae, also applauded the team's spirited display, praising the players for their unity, commitment, and fighting spirit from the opening match to the final whistle of the competition.

In the same vein, the Vice

Captain and Team Leader, Mr. Joel Obeto, expressed delight over the third-place finish, describing it as a deserving reward for the team's hard work, teamwork, and consistent preparation.

The Benin Recreation Club football team capped their impressive campaign with a 1-0 victory over Dominion FC in the third-place encounter, earning a cash prize of N300,000 and bringing their participation at the prestigious tournament to a successful close.



Football team emerged second runners-up at the 9th edition of the UBTH Annual Interprofessional/Veterans Football Championship, popularly known as the CMD Cup.

AYG 2025: Nigeria wins gold in Beach Volleyball as Nimrod commends players, NSC

Team Nigeria defeated Team Egypt 2-0 (21-17, 21-15) to win the gold medal in the women's beach volleyball event at the ongoing African Youth Games in Angola on Sunday, December 14.

President of the Nigeria Volleyball Federation, Engineer Musa Nimrod, commended the players for making the country proud with their outstanding performance.

Nimrod, who also serves as

President of the CAVB Beach Volleyball Commission, said the gold medal serves as compensation for Nigeria's absence from two World Championships in Qatar and Australia.

He explained that Nigeria is fast becoming the home of beach volleyball in Africa, citing the impressive performances of the women's team.

According to Nimrod, the target of the Nigeria Beach Volleyball Commission is to

ensure the country qualifies for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games, after finishing second in the last two qualification campaigns.

He said, "I want to congratulate the players for making the country proud at the African Youth Games in Angola. Pamela Bawa and Joy Lawrences have written Nigeria's name in gold."

"The duo missed two World Championships, but this medal means a lot to the Federation and the country. I also want to commend coach John Iwerima for his proper guidance."

Nimrod also praised the National Sports Commission for ensuring beach volleyball's participation at the African Youth Games.

He expressed confidence that beach volleyball would continue to win laurels for Nigeria at both continental and intercontinental competitions.



BEACH VOLLEYBALL TEAM COACH



SPORTS

Sports Journalist Oseghe Honoured at 8th Edo Heritage Sports Festival 2025



SPORTS JOURNALIST EDWARD OSEGHE HONOURED

Accomplished sports journalist and editor Edward Omoruyi Oseghe, has been honoured as one of the distinguished award recipients at the 8th Edo Heritage Sports Festival and Carnival 2025.

Oseghe received the award during the grand finale and awards ceremony held on Friday, December 12, in Benin City, Edo State.

Speaking at the ceremony, the festival sponsor, Pastor Princess Omoyemwen Adeyinka-Afolabi, said the Awards were instituted to recognise individuals whose contributions continue to motivate and uplift young people through culture, sports and positive values. "Your example lights the path for the next generation," she said. The honour marks a significant milestone in Oseghe's journalism career, recognising years of dedication to authentic sports storytelling and the promotion of Edo athletes on national and international platforms.

Renowned for his accuracy, insightful analysis and passion for grassroots sports development, Oseghe has earned a reputation as one of Edo State's most consistent and credible sports media voices.

Through his work with The Nigeria Observer, News Source Media and Publishing (publishers of Nigeria News Source), and Grand Delta Communications Network (publishers of Grandnews Online), Oseghe has consistently spotlighted grassroots talents, local competitions and emerging stars who now shape Nigeria's sports landscape.

Colleagues describe him as a committed professional whose reporting bridges the gap between athletes and the public, while inspiring a new generation of sports journalists.

Organisers noted that the award recognises not only his media contributions but also his role in strengthening community engagement through sports writing.

"Edward represents the spirit of excellence we seek to celebrate—individuals who work behind the scenes to build and sustain the sports culture we are proud of," they said.

The event attracted prominent personalities, including Dr. Theodore Ehannire, Edo State Coordinator, National Health Insurance Authority; Mrs. Sabina Chikere, Executive Director, Sports Development and Operations, Edo State Sports Commission; Hon. Lucky Agazuma A., Director-General, Edo State Migration Agency; and Rivers Angels Head Coach and sports advocate, Tosan Blackson, among others. They commended the award recipients for their contributions to the advancement of sports and cultural heritage in the state.



SUPER EAGLES CAMP SWELLS IN CAIRO

AFCON: Super Eagles camp swells in Cairo ahead of Egypt friendly

The Super Eagles' camp in Cairo, Egypt, is set to swell to 23 players later tonight as preparations intensify for Tuesday's international friendly against the host nation.

Zaidu Sanusi arrived in camp on Monday morning, while 12 additional players are expected to join the squad later in the evening, significantly boosting the team's numbers ahead of the high-profile encounter.

According to information from the camp, the Super Eagles will hold their first training session at 8:00 pm inside the main bowl of the Cairo International Stadium, the venue for Tuesday's friendly.

The match brings together two

of Africa's most decorated football nations and record-holders at the Africa Cup of Nations. Egypt, the continent's most successful team, have won the AFCON title seven times and will be aiming to extend that record with an unprecedented eighth crown. Football kits

Nigeria, on the other hand, boast an impressive history of consistency at the tournament. No team has finished third more often than the Super Eagles, who have claimed bronze medals on seven occasions. They have also been runners-up five times and crowned African champions three times, accounting for 15 podium finishes and 10 appearances in AFCON finals.

Turkey: Osimhen faces backlash over alleged intentional suspension

Super Eagles forward Victor Osimhen has found himself at the centre of controversy in Turkey, following claims that he may have deliberately picked up a suspension ahead of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations.

The Nigerian striker, who is expected to link up with the Super Eagles squad for the AFCON in the coming days, has been criticised in sections of the Turkish media after receiving a late yellow card in his club's Super Lig fixture against Antalyaspor on Saturday.

Osimhen went into the match already under disciplinary pressure, having previously been booked in league games against Beşiktaş, Kocaelispor and Fenerbahçe. His caution in the 85th minute against Antalyaspor proved costly, as it pushed him over the threshold and triggered an automatic one-match suspension.

As a result, the prolific forward will miss his club's next league encounter against Kasımpaşa. With Osimhen already named in Nigeria's 28-man squad for the upcoming AFCON, the timing of the ban has raised eyebrows, as the suspension will now be served while he is away on international duty.

According to Turkish publication Gazete Gerçek, the situation may not end with a routine one-match ban. The

report claims that Osimhen could be referred to the Turkish Football Federation's Disciplinary Committee, known as the PFDK, for further scrutiny over the circumstances surrounding the yellow card.

Under Article 37 of the Turkish disciplinary code, players can be investigated for allegedly "deliberately receiving a yellow card" in order to serve a suspension at a more convenient time. If Osimhen is found guilty of intentionally



VICTOR OSIMHEN

National Sports Commission hails Nigeria's outstanding showing at 2025 Africa Youth Chess Championships

The National Sports Commission has expressed delight over the impressive performance of Nigeria's youth chess team at the 2025 Africa Youth Chess Championships, held in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Nigeria's contingent, featuring promising young talents such as Deborah Quickpen, Michelle Nwankwo, Jason Nwankwo, Zita Agusionu, Olakitan

Elegbede, and Adeola Elegbede, delivered commendable performances while competing against some of the finest young chess players from across the African continent.

Competing in various age categories, the Nigerian players demonstrated high levels of tactical intelligence, mental resilience, and exemplary sportsmanship.

The Commission also ac-

knowledged the leadership of Senator Ibrahim Dankwambo, President of the Chess Federation of Nigeria, alongside members of the Federation's Board, for their sustained commitment to advancing chess development nationwide.

Director General of the NSC, Hon. Bukola Olopade stated that "beyond podium finishes and match results, the National Sports Commission is proud of the discipline, character, and national pride displayed by the young athletes throughout the championship."

"Their achievements is a clear indication of deliberate preparation and the continued positioning of chess as a vital grassroots sport within Nigeria's sports development framework," Hon. Olopade concluded.



2025 AFRICA YOUTH CHESS CHAMPIONS

Nigeria retains African West Africa trophy

Nigeria successfully defended their African West Africa Trophy title with a commanding 40-run victory over Rwanda in the final match played at the NCF Pitch, Abuja, on Sunday.

The triumph saw Nigeria replicate their success from the inaugural edition held in Lagos in 2023, where they also overcame Rwanda to lift the trophy.

Under the guidance of former Kenya international Steve Tikolo, the Nigerian team dominated the tournament, winning nine of their 10 matches.

Their only setback came during the group stage, when Rwanda handed them a 23-run defeat last week. In the final, Ni-

geria asserted control through disciplined bowling and sharp fielding, denying Rwanda any sustained momentum.

Ndubudem David, Isaac Okpe and Joshua Asia were instrumental, each claiming two key wickets to halt potential partnerships and maintain pressure throughout the innings.

Despite Rwanda's resilience, they were unable to recover from the steady loss of wickets and were eventually restricted to 117 for nine, falling 40 runs short of the target.

The victory underlined Nigeria's growing strength in the region and reaffirmed their status as champions of West African cricket



CRICKET TEAM CELEBRATE