

Yuletide: Nigerians brave high fares, security concerns to travel

BWARI (ABUJA)

Some residents of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) have continued to brave rising transport fares and security concerns to travel home for the Christmas celebration.

The travellers told the newsmen on Monday in Bwari, Abuja, that Christmas represented family identity and was a non-negotiable tradition.

At the Peace Mass Transit Park, Mr Mathew Okah, said that in spite of financial pressure and security fears, he

would still travel to celebrate with his family in the South-East.

"I go home for Christmas every year because my family is in the East and I have been working in Abuja throughout the year.

"I travel not just to see them,

but also to rest. There is no place like home.

"Family time is sacred for some of us; you get to see your aged parents, take home something to celebrate with them, and reunite with extended family members," he said.

Okah added that travelling

home also gave him the opportunity to fulfil cultural and communal obligations.

Another traveller, Mrs Victoria Jacob, who was travelling with her children, described Christmas travel as a necessity.

"I always feel like I am missing a part of life if I stay back

in Abuja during the festivities," she said.

Although she described the cost of transportation as painful, Jacob said people accepted the doubling or tripling of fares because it was a yearly sacrifice.

CONTINUES ON PG 2 >>

The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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Edo Assembly moves to reclaim MOWAA, Radisson Blu assets

—Pg 3

Edo police rescue 377 kidnap victims, arrest 821 suspects

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Police Command has arrested 821 suspects and rescued 377 victims of kidnapping between January and December 2025, the Commis-

sioner of Police, Mr Monday Agbonika, has said.

Agbonika disclosed this on Monday while briefing journalists on security arrangements put in place to ensure peaceful Christmas and New Year celebrations across the

state.

He said the command recorded major successes in the fight against violent crimes, including armed robbery, kidnapping, murder, rape, cultism and illegal possession of firearms.

According to him, the police also recovered several arms and ammunition, as well as stolen vehicles, during the period under review.

The commissioner said a key component of the security op-

erations was a forest clearance exercise in Edo North, which he personally led to deny criminal elements access to ungoverned spaces.

He explained that the operation, which took place between December 14 and 20, was carried out with the approval of the Inspector-General of Police, Mr Kayode Egbetokun, who authorised the deployment of police helicopters and drones, alongside other logistical support provided by Govern-

nor Monday Okpebholo.

"The operation featured a coordinated deployment of ground troops and aerial assets to ensure comprehensive coverage, and it will be sustained," Agbonika said.

He added that the exercise was executed through inter-agency collaboration involving the Nigerian Army's 4 Brigade, the Nigerian Air Force, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, forest guards, vigilantes and local

hunters.

The police commissioner urged residents to remain vigilant and law-abiding during the festive season, stressing that public cooperation was critical to sustaining the security gains recorded so far.

Agbonika also warned against reports of corpses disappearing from some private mortuaries in the state, describing such acts as criminal,

CONTINUES ON PG 2 >>

NELFUND: FG spends over N150bn on 788,000 students

ABUJA

The Federal Government has spent over N150 billion naira on 788,000 students in the Nigeria Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) initiative.

The Minister of Information and National Orientation, Alhaji Mohammed Idris, stated this at the end of year news conference on Monday in Abuja.

Idris said that President Bola Tinubu's administration had recorded significant achievement in different sectors, especially education.

According to him, 2025 has been a bumper year in targeted and catalytic policy making and implementation, especially for young Nigerians.

"NELFUND has now supported over 788,000 Nigerian students with interest-free loans and stipends amounting to over 150 billion Naira and still counting.

"Similarly, the Federal Government's Investment in Digital and Creative Enterprises

(iDICE) programme officially kicked off during the year.

"It is an anchor investment in a new multi-million-dollar venture fund that will support the creative and digital entrepreneurship aspirations of young Nigerians.

"In 2025 the Federal Government launched the Student Venture Capital Grant (S-VCG)," Idris said.

According to him, the S-VCG is offering equity-free financing of up to ₦50 million for undergraduate innovators in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine (STEMM) disciplines, across accredited tertiary institutions.

He further explained that "with this new intervention, the country is nurturing the seeds of entrepreneurship in its campuses and turning brightest minds into job creators, not just job seekers."

He added that, the Three Million Technical Talent (3MTT) programme made significant progress during the year, as it builds Africa's largest digital army.



VISIT TO FUBARA:

L-T: Minister for Environment, Mr Balarabe Lawal; Minister for Work, Engr. David Umahi; Governor Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers State and National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu, after a visit to Governor Fubara at the Rivers State Government House, Port Harcourt on Monday.

Tinubu directs security agencies to end students' kidnapping —Pg 2
—Information Minister

Nigeria-U.S. relation stronger —FG

—Pg 5

Sudan calls for RSF to be classified as terrorist group at Russia-Africa partnership forum —Pg 9

FIFA ranking: Super Eagles end 2025 in 38th position —Pg 13

Tinubu directs security agencies to end students' kidnapping

—Information Minister

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu has directed security agencies to ensure that the kidnapping of students in schools is brought to an end. The Minister of Informa-

tion and National Orientation, Alhaji Mohammed Idris, disclosed this on Monday at the End-of-Year Media Conference in Abuja.

Idris commended the President and security agencies for the recent rescue of the re-

maining 130 pupils and staff of St. Mary's Catholic School, Papi, Niger State.

He also recalled that abducted church members in Kwara State had been reunited with their families, adding that those kidnapped in Kebbi State had

equally regained their freedom.

"Let me reassure you that President Bola Tinubu has given a clear charge to the security agencies to ensure that this does not happen again," the minister said.

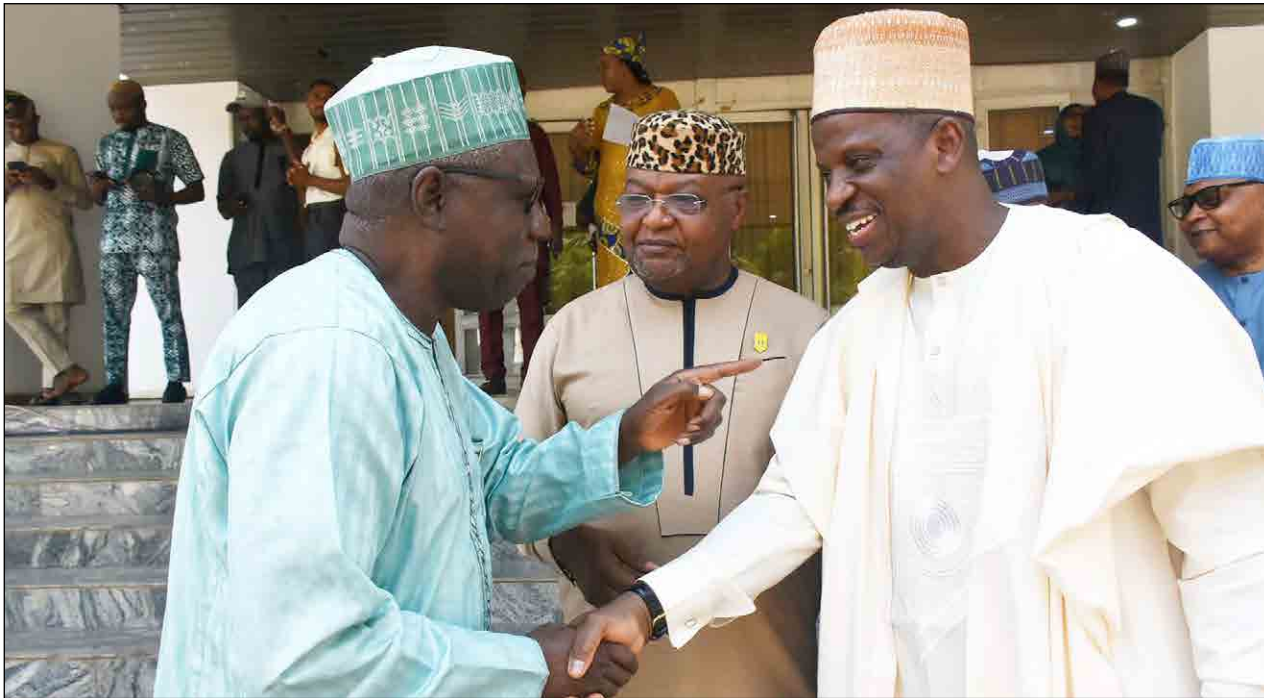
"And where it unfortunately happens, there will be full disclosure and a swift response to ensure that no one gets away

with kidnapping any member of Nigerian society."

Idris said the Federal Government empathised with the parents of the pupils over the trauma caused by the abductions, especially during the fes-

tive season.

He wished the rescued victims a peaceful reunion with their families, a smooth healing process, and extended compliments of the season and Christmas greetings to them.



NEWS CONFERENCE:

Former Commissioner for Information, Adamawa State, Ahmed Sajoh; Executive Director, Development Specs Academy Abuja, Prof. Okey Ikechukwu and Managing Director, *News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)*, Malam Ali Ali, during an End of the Year News Conference in Abuja on Monday.

Blackout protest shuts Benin highway, strands travellers

IDAHOSA MUSA

BENIN CITY

Human and vehicular movements were grounded on Monday as residents of Idokpa Community in the Aduduwawa area of Benin City staged a protest over prolonged power outage, blocking a major highway linking the state capital to other parts of Edo State and the North.

The protesters barricaded the busy Benin bypass, triggering hours-long gridlock and leaving hundreds of motorists and commuters stranded under the scorching sun.

Residents said the protest was sparked by weeks of total blackout, which they claimed had crippled businesses and worsened living conditions in the community.

A resident, Doris, said traders, artisans and small business owners had suffered heavy economic losses due to the persistent power outage.

She expressed frustration that neighbouring communities continued to enjoy electricity supply while Idokpa remained in darkness, accusing the Benin Electricity Distribution Company (BEDC) of diverting power meant for the area.

"This power outage has cri-

pled our businesses and made life unbearable. It is painful that the next community has light while we are in darkness," she said.

Another resident, Gideon, said the protesters were demanding immediate intervention by government authorities, insisting that the road would remain blocked until their complaints were addressed.

Meanwhile, stranded travellers expressed frustration over the blockade.

A motorist travelling to Kaduna, Hassan, described the protest as ill-timed, noting that the highway is a major transport route.

"This is not the right way to protest. People are travelling long distances and have been stranded for hours," he said.

Reacting to the allegations, a BEDC official denied claims of deliberate power diversion, explaining that the outage was caused by gas shortages affecting power generation.

"The outage is not deliberate. It is due to challenges beyond our control, including gas supply shortages," the official said.

As of press time, the highway remained blocked, with security agencies monitoring the situation amid calls for urgent government intervention to restore calm and electricity supply.

Edo police rescue 377 kidnap victims...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

inhuman and a gross violation of the sensitivity of bereaved families.

"Anyone found culpable will face the full weight of the law without exception," he said, advising families to patronise government-owned mortuaries where proper oversight and accountability were guaranteed.

He reaffirmed the command's commitment to maintaining peace and security across Edo State and encouraged residents to make use of the police emergency lines, which he said remained active round the clock.

"As we celebrate Christmas and prepare for the New Year, I wish the good people of Edo State a peaceful, safe and prosperous festive period," the commissioner said.

Agbonika added that the festive security plan was anchored on proactive and intelligence-driven policing, including intensified patrols, stop-and-search operations, strategic deployments and sustained community engagement to deter crime and reassure residents.

If you want, I can also tighten this further for front-page space or reshape the lead to emphasise kidnappings and rescues first.

N/Delta Youth Council pledge collaboration with PINL in securing oil assets

YENAGOA

The Leadership of the Niger Delta Youth Council Worldwide (NDYC-W) at a stakeholders' engagement meeting on Monday pledged to collaborate with Pipeline Infrastructure Nigeria Limited in safeguarding oil assets.

The meeting focused on enhancing security in the Niger Delta region.

In a communique, signed

and issued by Engr. Jator Abido, National Coordinator of NDYC-W, the group commended the leadership of Niger Delta Development Commission and the board, led by Hon Chiedu Ebie and Dr Samuel Ogbuku, for their efforts in regional development.

He said that the meeting is focusing on enhancing security in the Niger Delta region.

The communique also commended President Bola Tinubu, for appointing a new Min-

ister of Defence.

They said, "We call on all youths to support security agencies in safeguarding the region.

"We as a Council equally condole with the Bayelsa State Government on the passing of the Deputy Governor.

"The NDYC-W commended Pipeline Infrastructure Nigeria Limited for community engagement programs and pledged partnership to protect critical oil infrastructure."

Abido warned non-indigenous groups perpetuating violence (herdsmen, bandits, cult groups) that their activities won't be tolerated in the region.

The council urged all groups to embrace peace and coexist with Niger Delta communities in this Yuletide season.

Also, NDYC-W launched its maiden edition of the Niger Delta Chronicle newspaper, a monthly publication aimed at being the leading voice of the Region's media.

Yuletide: Nigerians brave high fares...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

On security concerns, she said: "We have survived worse situations. God will protect us. We just have to avoid night travel and unsafe routes while we pray and trust God for safety."

Meanwhile, a resident of Bwari, Mr Kelechi John, said travelling home every Christmas was not a necessity for him.

He cited insecurity, financial strain, and work commitments as reasons for staying back, adding that some people travelled due to cultural pressure or fear of being judged for "forgetting home."

This, he said, often led people to travel even when they could not afford it, resulting in avoidable discomfort.

"We'll stay back this year.

Let's stay alive first; the village will still be there. We will plan when fares drop and the rush is less," he said.

It was observed that commercial bus fares from Bwari to the southern and eastern parts of the country ranged from N60,000 to N80,000 per passenger.

Meanwhile fares to Kaduna and other neighbouring northern towns ranged between N8,000 and N10,000.

In Benin City, passengers travelling to different parts of the country from the different motor parks visited, far outnumbered the available vehicle, even with the over 60 percent rise in fares.

Drivers interviewed attributed the rise in fares to the forces of demand and supply

CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **PATRICK NWAOKORO IWERINWA** and **NWAKORO PATRICK IWERIAWA** are one and the same person henceforth I now wish to be known as **NWAKORO PATRICK IWERINWA**. All former documents remain valid and all concerned authorities and general public should please take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **IZEKOR IKPONWONSA OSAKPOAMWAN** and **IZEKOR OSAKPAMWAN IKPONWONSA** are one and the same person henceforth I now wish to be known as **IZEKOR OSAKPAMWAN IKPONWONSA**. All former documents remain valid and all concerned authorities and general public should please take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **OSARIEMEN GIFT ESEME** and **OSARIEMEN GIFT ESENE** are one and the same person henceforth I now wish to be known as **OSARIEMEN GIFT ESENE**. All former documents remain valid and all concerned authorities and general public should please take note.

RECONCILIATION OF NAME /DATE OF BIRTH

I, **OMOREGIE UYIOGHOSA FAVOUR** am the same person as **OMOREGIE FAVOUR UYIOGHOSA** and I now wish to be known and addressed as **OMOREGIE UYIOGHOSA FAVOUR**. Also my correct date of Birth is **25/8/2003** not **25/8/2002** as wrongly written in my BVN. All former documents remain valid, concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

Okpebholo inaugurates Governing Council of Edo College of Nursing Sciences

BENIN CITY

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State on Monday, inaugurated the Governing Council of the Edo State College of Nursing Sciences, Benin City

The newly inaugurated Council is chaired by Ikenria Johnbull, while Sedenu Igielumeh, Idubor Imuetinyan, Adesua Isegohi, Muhammed Abdullah, Monica Igbadumhe, and Paul Nobore are to serve as members.

The governor charged the members to reposition the institution for excellence in line with his administration's development agenda.

Okpebholo congratulated the members on their appointments, describing it as well-deserved.

He said the state was embarking on a new direction focused on sustainable development, particularly in the education and health sectors.

"Let me congratulate all of you on your well-deserved appointments. As you all know, Edo State is taking a new turn, and we are focused on developing every aspect of the state, including the educational sector.

"Choosing you means I am

choosing the best hands, and I know you will go there to make us proud. I congratulate you once more, and God bless you," he said

Responding on behalf of the Council, the Chairman, Johnbull, thanked the governor for the confidence reposed in

them.

Meanwhile, the governor also received in the audience Mr Eighemhenrio Ikhuemosa, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health, who recently graduated from the Senior Executive Course 47 (2025) of the National Institute

for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru, Jos.

The governor congratulated Ikhuemosa on the feat, describing NIPSS as Nigeria's foremost policy think tank and expressed confidence that the knowledge acquired would further strengthen policy for-

mulation and implementation in the state's health sector.

Dignitaries present at the event included the Secretary to the State Government, Umar Ikhilor, the Head of Service, Anthony Okhungbowa and the Chief of Staff, Mallam Gani Audu

Edo Assembly moves to reclaim MOWAA, Radisson Blu assets

IDAHOUSA MUSA

BENIN CITY

The Edo State House of Assembly has moved towards the possible repossession of the Museum of West African Art (MOWAA) and the Radisson Blu Hotel, following recommendations by two ad-hoc committees of the legislature.

The committees, which investigated the MOWAA project and the Radisson Blu Hotel separately, submitted reports to the Assembly recommending that the Edo State Government repossess both properties.

According to the findings, land titles and funding for the projects are vested in the Edo State Government, raising concerns over the ownership structure, management framework and overall control of the assets.

The committees noted that the processes surrounding the acquisition, development and administration of the projects were unclear and required urgent government intervention to protect public interest and state resources.

Sources within the Assembly said the reports would be subjected to further legislative debate and scrutiny before formal resolutions are transmitted to the executive arm of government for implementation.

The recommendations are expected to spark intense deliberations within the Assembly and shape the state government's next line of action on the high-profile projects.

The development has generated widespread public interest, with stakeholders awaiting the government's response to the Assembly's position.

UBTH inaugurates Japanese-donated 160-slice CT scan machine

BENIN CITY

The University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH) on Monday inaugurated a state-of-the-art 160-slice CT scan machine donated by the Japanese government to boost its diagnostic capacity.

Speaking at the inauguration in Benin City, the Chief Medical Director, Prof. Idia Ize-Iyamu, described the equipment as a major step toward faster, more accurate and life-saving diagnoses.

She said the advanced CT scanner would reduce patient waiting time and enhance early detection of cancers and other complex medical conditions.

According to her, the commissioning reflects a deliberate shift toward earlier diagnosis, improved clinical

decision-making and better patient outcomes.

Ize-Iyamu noted that the cutting-edge technology would enable timely medical interventions, especially in emergencies, with the potential to save lives and improve quality of care.

She commended the Federal Government under President Bola Tinubu for prioritising healthcare through the Renewed Hope Agenda.

She also acknowledged support from the Federal Ministry of Health and the Coordinating Minister for Health and Social Welfare, Prof. Muhammad Pate, for sustaining reforms in tertiary healthcare.

Dignitaries at the event included Edo Commissioners for Women Affairs, Science and Technology, and Health, among others.



SIGNING OF 2026 APPROPRIATION BILL:

L-R: Deputy Governor of Oyo State, Bayo Lawal; Alafia of Oyo, Oba Akeem Owode; Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State; Olubadan of Ibadanland, Oba Rashidi Ladoja and Speaker, Oyo State House of Assembly, Debo Ogundoyin at the signing of 2026 Appropriation Bill into law in Ibadan on Monday.

Tanker fire: Edo govt moves to prevent recurrence, EdoSEMA assesses Auchi incident

AUCHI

The Edo State Government has begun strategic measures to prevent a recurrence of tanker fire incidents following last week's petrol tanker explosion in Auchi, Etsako West Local Government Area.

As part of the response, the Edo State Emergency Management Agency (EdoSEMA) conducted an on-the-spot assessment of the incident during a visit by a high-powered state delegation led by the Chief of Staff to the Governor, Gani Audu.

The delegation inspected the scene of the inferno and visited hospitals where victims of the incident are receiving treatment.

Audu said the delegation was

mandated by Governor Monday Okpebholo, who was on official assignment in Abuja, to sympathise with the Auchi community and submit a detailed report that would guide government intervention and long-term preventive measures.

He stressed that the visit underscored the governor's responsiveness and concern for the people, noting that the governor would have visited personally if not for the engagement outside the state.

The Commissioner for Public Safety and Security, Festus Ebea, attributed the incident partly to the poor condition of the Auchi-Okene Expressway, particularly the Jattu Junction, which he described as accident-prone.

"The undulating nature of this road is dangerous and requires urgent attention to avert similar incidents. Records show that several heavy-duty vehicles have had accidents in this area," he said.

Ebea assured that the state government would take responsibility for survivors receiving medical care and warned residents against scooping fuel from fallen tankers, noting that Premium Motor Spirit is highly flammable and could ignite within seconds.

The Chief Whip of the Edo State House of Assembly, Hussein Mustafa Lecky, appealed to both the state and federal governments to urgently rehabilitate the Auchi-Okene Expressway, describing Jattu

Junction as a major gateway to several communities in Etsako.

The Executive Secretary of EdoSEMA, Jerry Idahosa, disclosed that 25 persons were affected by the incident, with 16 victims still receiving treatment at the Auchi General Hospital and Amazing Grace Hospital.

He said several shops were destroyed, four trucks were affected, and a number of motorcycles were burnt, adding that the agency's assessment would inform the governor's response on emergency gaps and preventive strategies.

The Director-General of the Edo State Fire Service, Anthony Ojo, revealed that the governor has approved the establishment of a fully equipped fire station with fire trucks in Auchi by January 2026.

Edo GBV c'ttee unveils 2026 work plan, seeks stronger collaboration

BENIN CITY

The Coordinator, Office of the Edo State First Lady and Chairman, Gender-Based Violence Management Committee (GBVMC), Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo Anani, has called for stronger multi-sectoral collaboration to effectively combat gender-based violence in the state.

Anani made the call on Monday during the 15th quarterly meeting of the GBVMC, held at the New Festival Hall, Government House, Benin City, where the committee unveiled its 2026 work plan.

She expressed concern over the persistent and evolving nature of gender-based violence, describing it as a violation of human rights and a threat to public health, social cohesion and sustainable development.

"The fact that we are meeting for the 15th time reflects both the gravity of the challenge and our collective resolve to confront it through coordinated action," she said.

Anani noted improvements in sexual assault referral centres and community engagement but identified stigma, underreporting and emerging forms of violence as ongoing challenges.

The Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Professor Roland Oturu (SAN), said the major challenge in tackling GBV was ensuring effective prosecution of offenders, despite existing laws.

He called for increased collaboration among stakeholders and advocated the domestication of the Cybercrime Act in Edo State to address online violence and abuse.

The Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Mrs. Eugenia Abdallah, reviewed progress on action points from the previous meeting and empha-

sised sustained collaboration to strengthen GBV prevention and response.

The meeting featured reports from ministries, agencies, departments, security agencies and non-governmental organisations, and served as a platform to assess progress and develop actionable strategies.

A major highlight was the presentation of the 2026 work plan, which adopts a coordinated, survivor-centred approach focused on prevention, response, accountability and partnerships in addressing gender-based violence across Edo State.

NEWS

Troops neutralise scores of terrorists, nab 61 suspects, rescue 69 victims —DHQ

ABUJA

The Defence Headquarters has said that the troops of the armed forces have in the last one week, neutralised scores of terrorists, apprehended 61 suspects and rescued 69 kidnapped victims.

The Director, Defence Media Operations, Maj.-Gen. Michael Onoja, disclosed this in an operational update on Monday in Abuja.

Onoja said the troops conducted series of successful

coordinated operations across the North East, North West, North Central, South-South and South East Theatres.

In the North-East, he said the troops of Operation HADIN KAI sustained pressure on Boko Haram, ISWAP and JAS terrorists, repelling an ISWAP attack on a Forward Operating Base in Mairari.

According to him, two Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs) deployed by the terrorists were detected and neutralised, leading to multiple

terrorist casualties and the recovery of arms, ammunition, motorcycles, communication equipment and medical supplies.

He said the troops also discovered and safely detonated an IED along the Damboa-Komala axis, arrested nine collaborators and logistics suspects, and rescued three kidnapped victims, further degrading terrorist networks and enabling the resettlement of displaced persons.

In the North-West, Onoja said the troops of Operation FANSAN YAMMA conducted

sustained offensive operations across Zamfara, Kaduna, Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina and Niger, neutralising several terrorists.

According to him, eight suspects were arrested and four kidnapped victims rescued, while weapons, vehicles and other items were recovered during the period.

He added that troops intercepted N9 million at Kadage in Igabi Local Government Area of Kaduna State, traced to ransom payment for abducted children, with efforts ongoing to apprehend the perpetrators.

"Similarly, in the North-Central, troops of Operation ENDURING PEACE neutralised

some terrorists, arrested 16 criminals and rescued 19 kidnapped victims during operations across Plateau and parts of Kaduna State.

"Troops of Operation WHIRL STROKE also recorded major successes in Benue, Nasarawa, Taraba, Kogi and Kwara, where eight suspected kidnappers were arrested and 43 kidnapped victims rescued from various hideouts.

"In a related development, troops arrested two persons in Edo State for impersonating the Chief of Army Staff, Lt.-Gen. Waidi Shaibu," he said.

In the South-South, Onoja said the troops of Operation DELTA SAFE foiled oil theft valued at over N15.6 million, apprehended 14 suspects, includ-

ing gunrunners, and destroyed illegal refining sites across Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers States.

In the South-East, he said the troops of Operation UDO KA apprehended four suspected criminals linked to IPOB/ESN activities in Anambra.

Onoja reaffirmed the military's resolve to sustain operational momentum, protect civilians and adapt to evolving security threats, while commending troops for their bravery and professionalism, particularly in the successful rescue of abducted students in Niger.

He called on Nigerians to continue supporting security agencies, stressing that collective responsibility remained critical to restoring lasting peace and stability nationwide.



PETROL TANKER FIRE INCIDENT:

The Executive Secretary of EdoSEMA, Mr. Jerry Idahosa (right); with a survivor of the petrol tanker fire incident which occurred at Auchu in Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State.

Indigenous cocoa processing firm to employ 100 youths in Calabar

CALABAR

An indigenous cocoa processing firm, Ifere Manufacturing Company, said it will employ no fewer than 100 youths when it commences operations.

The Chief Executive Officer of the company, Mr. Kebesobase Onen-Ifere, disclosed this at a news conference in Calabar on Monday, noting that the firm

would soon begin production.

Onen-Ifere said the company had entered into a partnership agreement with a United Kingdom-based firm, Palm & Oak, to strengthen its supply chain and access international markets.

According to him, the partnership was sealed at the Cross River Investment Summit held recently in London and facilitated through collaboration

with the Cross River Diaspora Commission.

"In the agreement, Palm & Oak will support supply and provide international market access. The factory will create no fewer than 100 jobs for Nigerian youths as part of our contribution to skills development and employment in the agro-industrial sector," he said.

He added that the factory would focus on innovation, product diversification and the development of proprietary

products.

"The company's product portfolio will include finished and semi-finished cocoa products such as organic cocoa body butter, cocoa drinks and organic cocoa soap, among others," he said.

Onen-Ifere stated that the firm was targeting expanded trade across the West and Southern African sub-regions by leveraging growing regional demand for processed cocoa products.

Oba of Benin leads Ugie Emobo rite to ward off evil

BENIN CITY

The Oba of Benin, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo Ewuare II, has led a spiritual purification ceremony to ward off evil forces during the Ugie Emobo rite.

The ceremony formed part of activities marking the annual Igue festival, according to a statement issued in Benin City.

The statement, signed by the Chief Press Secretary to the

Oba, Mr. Osaigbovo Iguobaro, described Ugie Emobo as one of the most significant traditional rites of the Igue celebration.

Iguobaro said the ancient rite symbolises the defeat of the Benin giant, Prince Idubor, popularly known as Aruan, who dwelt in Udo, now in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State.

According to him, Aruan was defeated by Prince Osawe, who later ascended the throne

as Oba Esigie, centuries ago.

"The Oba's dance steps to soul-stirring songs and the drums of the Ogbelaka group spoke to nature and humanity," Iguobaro said.

Spectators watched in awe as they captured moments of Benin's rich cultural heritage with electronic devices.

The rite, held at the palace entrance, began with a royal procession following ancestral salutations at the Ugha-Ozolua

axis.

Oba Ewuare offered prayers to God and the royal ancestors, while traditional warriors and Ifiento groups added colour to the ceremony.

The Oba's striking of the royal drums and ivory gong drew loud praises from the crowd.

The outdoor rite concluded with special prayers to ward off evil spirits, followed by a dramatic return procession to the palace courtyard.

Rescue of Papiri students reaffirms Nigeria's resolve to protect citizens —Minister

ABUJA

The Minister of Information and National Orientation, Alhaji Mohammed Idris, said that the rescue of the remaining 130 pupils and staff of St. Mary's Catholic School, Papiri, Niger State, reaffirms Nigeria's resolve to protect its people.

This is contained in a statement issued by the minister in Abuja

Idris said the Federal Government could confirm that all 230 abducted pupils of the Catholic school had been freed, noting that none re-

mained in captivity.

"The just-released 130 pupils are being handed over to the Niger State Government, after which they will be reunited with their families.

"This courageous effort by our security forces reaffirms our nation's resolve to protect its people," he said.

The minister added that the Federal Government empathized with the parents and guardians of the pupils over the agony caused by the abduction.

He wished them a pleasant family reunion, a good healing process, compliments of the season and a Merry Christmas.

NMA commends C'River govt for arrest of unlicensed tradition medicine practitioners

CALABAR

The Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), Cross River State Branch, has commended the state government for the arrest and prosecution of ten unlicensed traditional medicine practitioners, describing the action as necessary to safeguard public health.

The association made the commendation in a statement issued on Monday and signed by its Chairman, Dr. Ezoke Epoke.

Epoke hailed the administration of Governor Bassey Otu for taking decisive steps against unsafe medical practices across the state.

He recalled that the association had earlier petitioned the government over unlicensed traditional medicine practitioners operating openly at a trade fair within Calabar Municipality.

According to him, the vendors offered medical treatments and sold unapproved herbal products to unsuspecting members of the public, expos-

ing them to serious health risks.

"The action demonstrates the government's commitment to safeguarding public health across the state," he said.

Epoke warned that unlicensed practitioners posed dangers through contaminated, adulterated and unregulated products, many of which were not approved by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control.

He also expressed concern over false medical claims and impersonation of health professionals.

The NMA chairman commended the Commissioner for Health, the Police and the Anti-Quackery Task Force for their roles in the operation, while urging sustained regulation of traditional medicine practices statewide.

The statement added that the arrested practitioners, nine males and one female, were remanded at the Aforkang Correctional Centre pending the fulfillment of their bail conditions as ordered by the court.

ABUJA

The Federal Government says, the relationship between Nigeria and the United States (U.S.) is stronger and will continue to wax stronger and beneficial to both countries.

The Minister of Information and National Orientation, Alhaji Mohammed Idris, made this known at the End of Year Media briefing on Monday in Abuja.

Nigeria-U.S. relation stronger —FG

He explained that in 2025, Nigeria navigated complex international diplomacy with maturity and principle.

He added that the recent diplomatic spat with the U.S. has been resolved through firm, respectful engagement, culminating in a strengthened partnership.

“Just last week, the Federal Government of Nigeria signed a five-year, \$5.1 billion dollar bilateral health cooperation Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the government of the United States.

“In the agreement, the U.S. will provide \$2.1 billion dollars in grant funding, while Nigeria will commit \$3 billion dollars.

“This has been described as the largest co-investment by any country to date under the America First Global Health Strategy.

“It will strengthen Nigeria’s healthcare system, save lives,

and attract investment.

“Those that thought Nigeria’s relationships with U.S. was going down due to the recent misunderstanding can now see that the ties is even stronger than before,” Idris said.

According to him, Nigeria is no longer on the sidelines, adding that it is a confident and strategic partner on the global stage, defending its national interests and attracting beneficial partnerships.

“Just last month, we regained our Category C seat on the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Council

for the 2026–2027 biennium; a celebrated comeback following 14 years of absence”

Still on the international scene in 2025, Idris stated that various Nigerians assumed significant international positions across various sectors, including Chairperson of the Council of the World Customs Organisation,

Others are the Executive Director of the World Health Organisation’s Health Emergencies Programme, Vice Chair of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Council, and Vice President of the Inter-

national Association for Ports and Harbours in Tokyo.

“Additionally, this year, we secured hosting rights for the Creative Africa Nexus (CANEX) 2026, and the Intra-African Trade Fair (IATF) 2027, one of the largest trade gatherings on the African continent.

“In 2026, our newly appointed Ambassadors will take up their posts in their countries of assignment, strengthening our bilateral relations and advancing our visibility and strategic engagements in the global community,” Idris said.

CNG initiative requires policy, infrastructure push, expert says

ABUJA

Material engineering expert and researcher, Dr Kazeem Abubakar, says the potential and opportunities existing in Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) can be harnessed if the government provides policy support and required infrastructure.

Abubakar, also Assistant Director of Research at the National Centre for Technology Management (NACETEM), said this in an interview with newsmen in Abuja on Monday.

He said that with infrastructure development and public engagement, CNG had the potential to not only reduce transport costs and emissions, but also to contribute meaningfully to Nigeria’s progress towards SDGs.

He said it was important to note that delivering cleaner air, new jobs, economic growth, and a more sustainable future for Nigerians was not negotiable.

“Nigeria’s pivot toward CNG, backed by renewed policy focus and private investment, represents a strategic and timely effort to harness the country’s abundant natural gas for sustainable mobility and

energy security.

“Although the current adoption is still small relative to potential, the gain, to date, is that over 100,000 vehicles have been converted, hundreds of conversion centers and refuelling points, rising investment flows.

“This demonstrates that CNG can become a cornerstone of Nigeria’s clean-energy transition,” he said.

Abubakar argued that to scale and deliver on the potentials and opportunities in converting gasoline/diesel cars to CNG, coordinated action is needed on multiple fronts.

He said those to include accelerating infrastructure deployment, expanding refuelling stations, compression hubs, and certified conversion centres nationwide.

He further advocated scaling up conversion incentives, which could come through subsidies or support for conversion kits, especially for low-income vehicle owners and commercial operators.

“Awareness and safety campaigns, policy consistency and regulation, linking CNG with broader gas utilisation policy are important in the project,” he said.

Court remands 2 siblings over alleged kidnapping of 23-year-old woman

ILE-IFE (OSUN STATE)

An Ile-Ife Magistrate’s Court on Monday remanded one Carlos Awar (32) and Fortune Awar (30) for allegedly kidnapping one Bisola Olanrewaju (23).

The Prosecutor, Insp. Kehinde Ojugbele, told the court that the defendants committed the offence on Dec. 4, at No. 39, Ifedapo Line 11, Ile-Ife.

Ojugbele said that the defendants conspired with each other to commit felony to wit kidnapping.

According to him, the defendants unlawfully confined Olanrewaju in a location known only to them, against her will, with the intent of preventing others from finding her.

The prosecutor stated that the offence was contrary to and punishable under sections 364(2), 365 and 516 of the Criminal Code, Laws of Osun,

2002.

The defendants, however, pleaded not guilty to a three-count charge of conspiracy, kidnapping and illegal prevention.

The Defence Counsel, Samuel Obi, applied for the bail of the defendants on the most liberal terms, adding that his clients would not jump bail, and would provide responsible sureties.

The Presiding Magistrate, Abosede Sarumi, refused to grant their bails, but ordered for their remands at the Ile-Ife Nigerian Correctional Service, pending the consideration of their bail.

Sarumi adjourned the case until Jan. 12, 2026.

CORRECTION OF NAME

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



CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS MATERIALS:

Christmas decorations materials for sale at Rumeuji Market Obi/Akpo Local Government Area of Rivers State on Monday.

Nine die in Gombe auto crash —FRSC

GOMBE

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) has confirmed the death of nine persons in an auto crash on the Kaltungo-Cham Road in Kaluwa community in Kaltungo Local Government Area of Gombe State.

The Sector Commander of the FRSC, Gombe Command, Samson Kaura, confirmed the accident in an interview with

newsmen on Monday.

Kaura said that 18 persons were involved in the crash, which left five persons sustaining varying degrees of injuries, while four other persons were unhurt.

He said that the victims were rushed to the General Hospital in Kaltungo for treatment, while the bodies of the deceased were deposited at the hospital’s mortuary.

According to him, the pre-

liminary investigation showed that the crash was caused by a loss of control resulting from excessive speed and brake failure.

Kaura said that the crash which occurred on Monday around 8.33am involved a trailer and a Sharon bus.

“The trailer was on speed on a sloppy road and as a result, lost control and hit the Sharon bus from behind which led to the bus somersaulting.

“We have been advising motorists to avoid speed especially looking at the nature of the environment of the road which is sloppy.

“Drivers must drive on a speed they can control to avoid such crashes and loss of lives and property,” he said.

The sector commander further urged motorists to always check their vehicles before embarking on any journey especially during the yuletide.

Analysts call for realistic revenues, disciplined budget implementation

LAGOS

Capital market analysts have called on the Federal Government to base the proposed budget on more cautious revenue expectations and put stronger systems in place to ensure it is fully implemented.

The analysts, who spoke in separate interviews with our reporters, said that while the budget reflects the government’s development ambitions, its success will depend largely on realistic projections, disciplined spending and timely execution.

Mr David Adonri, Vice President of Highcap Securi-

ties, said an annual budget is a short-term fiscal instrument designed to address immediate economic challenges while supporting broader development goals.

According to Adonri, despite the Federal Government’s medium- and long-term structural plans, the revenue projections in the proposal may be difficult to realise.

He identified a weakening global crude oil market and rising insecurity as major threats to achieving the projected revenue targets.

Adonri also expressed doubts about the capacity of the revised tax law to significantly raise rev-

enue amid high inflation and weak economic activity.

“I see the budget as exuberant rather than conservative. The huge deficit could further fuel inflation,” he said.

He added that the proposal appeared inadequate in terms of allocating sufficient resources to ending insecurity within a short and measurable timeframe.

Similarly, Mr Sola Oni, a Chartered Stockbroker and Chief Executive Officer of Sofunix Investment and Communications, said the budget aligned with the government’s medium- and long-term aspirations at a conceptual level.

Oni noted that the proposal emphasised macroeconomic stability, revenue reforms, human capital development and infrastructure investment.

“However, in practice, execution will determine the actual outcomes,” he said.

He described the projected deficit of 4.28 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as relatively high, warning that heavy reliance on oil revenue exposed the budget to external shocks.

Oni further cautioned that delays in budget approval and weak project execution could undermine investor confidence and hinder the achievement of key fiscal objectives.

NEWS

Yuletide: Kogi govt. others battle to ease Lokoja —Abuja gridlock

LOKOJA

The Kogi Government, Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) and other security agencies, including the military are battling to ease the huge gridlock that engulfed the Lokoja-Abuja road since Friday evening.

Officials of government, FRSC, military, and police manned the road from the Murtala Mohammed bridge through Koton Karfa to Ozi community near Gegu, controlling traffic to

loose the gridlock.

The FRSC Sector Commander in Kogi, Mr Tenimu Etuku said that more strategies were being deployed to overcome the gridlock and ease the plight of travellers.

"We have pulled out four fallen articulated vehicles from the road yet the traffic persisted due to impatience by motorists. They hardly listen or wait for clearance of a route.

"The drivers are the problem. Truck drivers can deliberately block the highway on the slight-

est provocation, not minding the consequences, particularly on travellers and other motorists.

"We had two of such incidences on Sunday, even after we opened the gridlock on Saturday night. We are trying our best to ease the built up traffic," he said.

Retired Commodore Jerry Omodara, Kogi State Security Adviser, described the situation as "very unfortunate" and "uncalled for" at such a critical festive season.

Omodara said that critical sections of the road requiring im-

mediate attention had been identified and taken care of to ensure smooth vehicular movement.

He said the state is collaborating with the FRSC, military, police and others to ensure safe and seamless travel for commuters during the Christmas and New Year celebrations.

"Some travellers spent hours, even the night on the Lokoja-Abuja-Lokoja highway before continuing their journeys to either the Southern or Northern parts of the country.

"The gridlocks were also

caused by ongoing road constructions across the state.

"There had been repeated assurances by the Federal Ministry of Works that traffic will not be an obstacle to intending road users, yet the situation had worsened."

He, however, assured travellers of freeing the highway and other roads in Kogi by Monday, to ensure smooth movement.

"We are trusting God to help us restore

normal traffic flow along the expressway. this Monday."

Mrs Soludo urges Nigerians to visit, emotionally support welfare homes

AWKA

Wife of Anambra Governor, Dr Nonye Soludo, has called on individuals and organisations to regularly visit orphanages and welfare homes to support vulnerable groups, listen to their struggles and attend to their physical and emotional needs.

Soludo made the call on Monday while hosting a Christmas party for children and adults in orphanages and welfare homes across the state.

She emphasised that beyond material donations, personal presence and interaction with residents of such homes were critical in giving them a sense of belonging, love and hope.

According to her, many children and adults in orphanages and welfare centres face emotional trauma, neglect and social isolation.

She said these challenges could only be addressed through consistent human connection, encouragement and understanding.

"Visiting orphanages and welfare homes should not be limited to festive periods alone.

"We must make it a habit to visit, listen to their stories, understand their challenges and respond to their needs both physically and emotionally

"While the party is going on, I will be having a one-on-one conversation with the teenagers in the orphanage homes to better understand their struggles and explore ways we can support them," she said.

Soludo said that emotional support, counselling and reassurance were as important as providing food, clothing and other essentials.

She noted that such gestures could positively shape the outlook and future of the beneficiaries.

She, however, urged well-meaning individuals to complement government efforts by adopting homes and sponsoring healthcare and education.

She also encouraged engaging the vulnerable in meaningful conversations and activities that promote dignity and self-worth.

The governor's wife reaffirmed the commitment of her Healthy Living Initiative to promoting the welfare, protection and holistic development of vulnerable persons across the state.



OPENING CEREMONY:

L-R: President Women Support Women Community Network (WOSCONET), Comrade Uche-Odo Ezeaku; representative of Enugu State Government, Prof. Chidiebere Onyia; Founder, WOSCONET, Mrs Amaka Nweke and Chairman All Progressive Congress, Enugu Caretaker Committee, Dr Ben Nwoye, during WOSCONET opening ceremony of Christmas Week Activities and celebrations in Enugu on Monday.

Christmas: Zulum distributes foodstuffs to widows, vulnerable Christians in Borno

MAIDUGURI

Gov. Babagana Zulum of Borno on Monday distributed food items to some widows and vulnerable members of the Christian community, ahead of Christmas celebrations.

More than 6,000 people, including 1,605 internally-displaced persons (IDPs), benefited from the food items.

Each beneficiary received a bag of rice, a carton of spaghetti and a gallon of cooking oil.

The initiative was part of the Zulum's support for the Christian community across the state since his assumption of office in 2019.

Another similar initiative by the state government was provision of free transportation for the Christians resident in the state but who are non-indigenes, to travel to their respective ancestral communities.

While overseeing the distribution of the items in Maiduguri, the governor emphasised the importance of peace, unity

and shared prosperity among all citizens of the state, regardless of their religious or ethnic background.

"It is my sincere hope that the long-standing relationship between Muslims and Christians in Borno State will continue to thrive.

I pray that Almighty Allah, in His infinite mercy, bless our communities and ensure peaceful co-existence between the two religions," he said.

According to him, Islamic teachings encourage simple

co-existence with non-Muslims, mirroring the spirit of goodwill promoted in the Bible.

Chairman of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in the state, Most Rev. John Bakani, expressed profound gratitude to the governor for his sustained support and empathy.

"Your Excellency has once again demonstrated your values and qualities of inclusion; you have given hope to the Christian community to celebrate Christmas with joy," he said.

Foreign affairs ministry, NUJ mourn ADBN reporter

ABUJA

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), FCT Council, have expressed shock and deep sorrow over the death of Mr Sunday Olatuyi, a photojournalist with Advocate Broadcasting Network (ADBN TV).

The reactions were contained in separate statements issued on Monday by the ministry's spokesperson, Mr Kimiebi Ebienna, and the Sec-

retary of the NUJ FCT Council, Mr Jide Oyekunle.

Olatuyi, 40, an indigene of Odo-Oro Ekiti in Ikole Local Government Area of Ekiti State, was reportedly knocked down by a reckless Toyota Corolla with registration number ABUJA RBC 128 AM.

The incident occurred on Saturday night, Dec. 20, 2025, at the Lugbe Bus Stop, Abuja, while he was returning home from work.

He later died from injuries sustained in the accident.

Ebienna said the ministry received the news with profound sadness, describing Olatuyi as a dedicated and jovial journalist accredited to cover the ministry's activities.

He extended the ministry's condolences to Olatuyi's family, colleagues, the Diplomatic Correspondents Association of Nigeria (DICAN), and the management and staff of ADBN TV.

Similarly, Oyekunle described Olatuyi's death as shocking and painful, noting

that he was a committed member of the NUJ FCT Council and an active union man.

He condemned the circumstances surrounding the incident and called for a thorough and transparent investigation, urging the Nigeria Police Force to ensure the prosecution of the driver involved.

Oyekunle also expressed concern over rising cases of reckless driving within the FCT, stressing that justice must be served to deter similar incidents.

Yuletide: FCTA security combs motor parks, others to flush out criminals

ABUJA

Operation Sweep, a special security task force of the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) on Monday, combed motor parks and other strategic locations in the FCT to flush out criminal elements.

Mr Adamu Gwary, Director, Security Services Department, FCTA told journalists after the operation in Abuja on Monday that the move was to ensure a safe and secured yuletide season.

Gwary, who was represented by Dr Peter Olumuji, Secretary, Command and Control Centre, said that the ongoing operation would strengthen security throughout the festive season.

He explained that the FCT Minister, Mr Nyesom Wike, has given a marching order to the security agencies under the Operation Sweep to rid the territory of every form of criminality.

He noted that the operation had been very successful, adding that it was being sustained through continued monitoring of motor parks.

The director also said that illegal motor parks being used by "one chance" criminal elements to abduct people were being dismantled.

"Also, any place harbouring criminal elements, including shanties, was being destroyed.

"We want to tell all miscreants and criminal elements in the FCT, that the territory will be too hot for them to operate.

"We don't have a safe haven for criminals in FCT anymore and they should take note of that," he said.

He added that a lot of arrests have been made, a lot of shanties dismantled, and criminal elements operating as taxi drivers dislodged.

The goal, according to him, is to ensure the safety of lives and property of every resident in the FCT during the festive season and beyond.

He said that the administration, in partnership with security agencies had also deployed men and officers to suspected blackspots across the city to provide tight security during the festive period.

Tinubu committed to efficient, accountable justice sector —Fagbemi

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu is committed to a justice sector that will deliver timely outcomes to Nigerians.

The Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Lateef Fagbemi (SAN), made this known at the launch of the Enterprise Content Management System (ECMS) by the Federal Ministry of Justice in Abuja.

This is contained in a statement issued by Mr Kamarudeen Ogundele,

Senior Adviser, Media to the minister.

The ECMS is a digital platform that enables the ministry to create, process, approve, store and retrieve official doc-

uments electronically.

Fagbemi said the launch marked the ministry's departure from the era of manual, unstructured information management into a digital era. "By digitalising our correspondences, emails, and legal documents, we are dismantling the bureaucratic bottlenecks that have historically slowed the wheels of justice.

"This transition to a paperless environment is a cornerstone of our digital transformation strategy, specifically aligned with Pillar 5 of the Federal Civil Service Strategy and Implementation Plan (FCSSIP25).

"The initiative is also firmly situated within the Renewed Hope Agenda of the President and the National Policy on Jus-

stice."

He reiterated that these frameworks are unequivocal as justice institutions must be efficient, accountable, digitally enabled, and capable of delivering timely outcomes to Nigerians.

"The ECMS is therefore not merely a technological in-

tervention; it is a governance reform that strengthens institutional memory, improves decision-making, secures records, and enforces discipline in workflow and accountability.

"This is the standard expected of a modern justice sector and our goal is clear: to build

a justice sector that is modern, efficient, and above all, citizen-driven."

He noted that the ministry under his leadership has prioritised staff welfare and workplace modernization to create an environment where excellence can thrive, mirroring the ser-

vice-wide reforms spearheaded by the office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation.

He, thereafter, thanked Aig-Imoukhede Foundation, Prof Koyinsola Ajayi of Olaniwun Ajayi and co., staff, sister ministries and partners for their support.



NEWS CONFERENCE:

L-R: Minister of Information and National Orientation, Alhaji Mohammed Idris; Director-General of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), Dr Mohammed Bulama and Managing Director of News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Malam Ali Ali, during the end of the year news conference in Abuja on Monday.

Herder, 52, docked over alleged destruction of N10m maize farm

IBADAN

A 52-year-old herder, Abdulkareem Dio, on Monday appeared before an Iyaganku Chief Magistrates' Court, Ibadan, for allegedly grazing cattle on a 48-acre maize farm valued at N10 million.

The defendant, whose address was unknown, is standing trial on a five-count charge of conspiracy, open herding, grazing on farmland, malicious damage and breach of peace.

He, however, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The prosecutor, Insp Sikiru Opaleye, told the court that the defendant, along with others now at large, committed the offences on Dec. 16 at about 5.00 p.m. at Adetayo Farm Settlement, Ado Awaye, via Iseyin, Oyo State.

Opaleye said the defendant and others unlawfully engaged in open rearing and grazing of cattle on the farmland, destroying

crops valued at N10 million and belonging to Adetayo Farms.

He alleged that the defendant unlawfully moved his cattle on foot from his personal ranch into the 48-acre maize farm and conducted himself in a manner likely to cause a breach of the peace.

According to the prosecutor, the offences contravened Sections 16(1)(2)(a) and 17(1) of the Oyo State Open Rearing and Grazing Regulation Law, 2019.

He added that the offences also contravened Sections 249(d), 451 and 516 of the Criminal Code Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

The Chief Magistrate, Mrs Olabisi Ogunkanmi, admitted the defendant to bail in the sum of N1 million, with two sureties in like sum.

Ogunkanmi ruled that one of the sureties must be a blood relative of the defendant, while the other must own a building with a valid plan.

Court grants FG's plea to reopen terrorism case against suspects link to Bello Turji

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja has granted an application filed by the Federal Government to reopen a terrorism charge filed against five suspects linked to the notorious terrorist kingpin, Bello Turji.

Justice Emeka Nwite granted the application in a ruling on the motion on notice filed by the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF) seeking an order re-listing the charge, marked: FHC/ABJ/CR/633/2024, in the cause list of the court.

Justice Nwite held that the motion, moved by the AGF's lawyer, David Kaswe, was meri-

torious and accordingly granted.

The charge was struck out on July 8 by the judge after the defence counsel moved an oral application to the effect for lack of diligent prosecution.

The Federal Government, through the AGF, had preferred an 11-count terrorism charge against eight defendants, including Bello Turji, who is still at large.

In the charge filed on Dec. 16, 2024 by M.B. Abubakar, the Director of the Department of Public Prosecutions of the Federation, Musa Muhammed Kamarawa, Abubakar Hashimu, a.k.a. Doctor; Bashir Abdullahi; Samuel Chinedu and Lucky Chukwuma were sued as 1st to 5th defendants.

Legal Aid Council secures acquittal, discharge for 3 indigent defendants

YENAGOA

The Legal Aid Council, on Monday secured the discharge and acquittal of three indigent suspects being tried by the Bayelsa government.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the defendants who were offered free legal services by the Legal Aid Council in Bayelsa have been facing trial since 2023.

They were arraigned before Justice Iniekadi Eradiri at Bayelsa State High Court, Judiciary Headquarters, Ovom, Yenagoa Bayelsa capital.

The defendants are James Peter, Esueya Ikeloti, Somikien Precious and Pereowe Moses.

They were charged with being members of a secret cult known as Bobos and unlawful possession of firearms.

The charge also included conspiracy and act capable of

causing breach of peace.

The judge discharged and acquitted the three defendants of all the charges filed against them by the prosecution and subsequently freed.

Eddy Inenevwo, Coordinator of the Legal Aid Council in Bayelsa represented the defendants.

Reacting to the court's decision shortly after the judgement, Inenevwo told a NAN Correspondent that the Legal Aid Council remained committed to making justice accessible to all by providing free legal services

to the indigent Nigerians.

He said that the trial judge, having noticed that the defendants had no legal representation, assigned the case on March 18, 2024 to the Legal Aid Council which took up and closed out the case

Inenevwo explained that in addition to having cases assigned by judges, the Council visits Correctional Centres to identify assist detainees who cannot afford legal services while its offices remain open to members of the public.

Two arraigned in Badagry over alleged N6.5m travel scam

BADAGRY

A man, Djorboah Abraham, and a woman, Betty Amenbley, on Monday appeared before a Badagry Chief Magistrates' Court, Lagos, for allegedly obtaining N6.5 million under the pretext of procuring travel documents.

The defendants, Amenbley, 28, and Abraham, 33, whose addresses were not provided,

are being charged with felony and fraud.

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

The prosecutor, ASP Edet Ekpo, told the court that the defendants committed the offences on different occasions at Atinporomoh, Badagry, Lagos.

Ekpo alleged that the defendants fraudulently obtained the sum of C52,000, Ghanaian currency, equivalent to N6,576,720,

from Prosper Donkor and Priscilla Dufit, the complainants, under the pretence of taking them to Poland in Europe.

He said the defendants also promised to offer the complainants employment but failed to do so; instead, they converted the money to their personal use.

He said the defendants were arrested and handed over to the police for prosecution.

"The offences contravened

Sections 411 and 314 of the Criminal Laws of Lagos State, 2015," Ekpo said.

The Chief Magistrate, Mr A.J. Aina, granted the defendants bail in the sum of N1 million each, with two sureties each in the like sum.

He added that one of the sureties must be gainfully employed.

Aina adjourned the case until Jan. 27, 2026, for mention.

Thrift collector arraigned for allegedly stealing N4.8m

BADAGRY

The Police on Monday, dragged a 30-year-old woman, Mary Towolawi, before a Badagry Chief Magistrates' Court in Lagos, for allegedly stealing N4.8 million.

The defendant, a thrift collector, is standing trial on

charges bordering on stealing and conversion.

She, however, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The prosecutor, ASP. Edet Ekpo told the court that the defendant committed the offences between January 2022 and October 2025, at LAPO Microfinance Bank, in Badagry, Lagos.

He alleged that while working as a thrift collector for the bank, the defendant stole money kept under her care, and converted same to her personal use.

"She was arrested and handed over to police for prosecution," he said.

The offences contravenes the provisions of section 287 of the

Criminal Law of Lagos State 2015.

The Chief Magistrate, Mr A J Aina, granted the defendant bail in the sum N500,000 with two sureties in the like sum.

He held that one of the sureties must be a community leader.

Layeni adjourned the case until Jan.26, 2026 for mention.

NEWS

Foreign

New Trump envoy says he will serve to make Greenland part of US

Donald Trump has sparked a fresh row with Denmark after appointing a special envoy to Greenland, the vast Arctic island he has said he would like to annex.

Trump announced on Sunday that Jeff Landry, the Republican governor of Louisiana, would become the US's special envoy to Greenland, a semi-autonomous part of the Kingdom of Denmark.

Gov Landry said in a post on X it was an honour to serve in a "volunteer position to make Greenland a part of the US".

The move has angered Copenhagen, which said it would call the US ambassador for "an explanation". Greenland's prime minister said the island must "decide our own future"

and its "territorial integrity must be respected".

Since returning to the White House in January, Trump has revived his long-standing interest in Greenland, citing its strategic location and mineral wealth.

He has refused to rule out using force to secure control of the island, a stance that has shocked Denmark, a Nato ally that has traditionally enjoyed close relations with Washington.

Greenland, home to about 57,000 people, has had extensive self-government since 1979, though defence and foreign policy remain in Danish hands. While most Greenlanders favour eventual independence from Denmark, opinion polls show overwhelming op-

position to becoming part of the US.

Denmark's Foreign Minister, Lars Lokke Rasmussen, described the appointment of Landry as "deeply upsetting" and warned Washington to respect Danish sovereignty.

He told Danish broadcaster TV2: "As long as we have a kingdom consisting of Denmark, the Faroe Islands and Greenland, we cannot accept actions that undermine our territorial integrity."

Greenland's Prime Minister, Jens-Frederik Nielsen, said the territory was willing to cooperate with the US and other countries, but only on the basis of mutual respect.

He said: "The appointment of a special envoy does not change anything for us. We decide our

own future. Greenland belongs to Greenlanders, and territorial integrity must be respected."

Writing on social media, the US president said Landry understood how "essential Greenland is to our national security" and would advance US interests.

The significance of this appointment is both the US presumption that Greenland is separate to Denmark and the new appointee's assertion that he will help the island become part of the US.

Envoys are informal appointments and unlike official diplomats, do not have to be approved by the host country.

What this appointment shows is that Trump's ambition to control Greenland remains undimmed.

Russian general killed by car bomb in Moscow, officials say

A Russian general has been killed in a car bombing in Moscow, officials have said.

Russia's Investigative Committee said Lt Gen Fasil Sarvarov died on Monday morning after an explosive device planted under a car detonated.

He is the third military official to have been killed in bomb attacks in the Russian capital over the last year.

Sarvarov, 56, was the head of the armed forces' operational training department, the committee said.

It added one theory being investigated was that the bomb was planted with the involvement of Ukrainian intelligence services. Ukraine has not commented.

Sarvarov died in hospital as a result of his injuries, the committee said, adding it had opened an investigation into murder and illegal trafficking of explosives.

Investigators have been sent to the scene, in a car park near an apartment block in the south of Moscow.

Images from the area show a badly damaged white Kia Sorento with the doors blown out, surrounded by other vehicles.

According to Russian media, Sarvarov previously took part in

combat operations during the Ossetian-Ingush conflict and the Chechen wars in the 1990s and early 2000s, and also led operations in Syria between 2015-2016.

Investigators could be seen working at the scene on Monday morning

Vladimir Putin was informed of Sarvarov's death immediately, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, a number of military officials and high-profile individuals have been targeted in the Russian capital.

Darya Dugina, the 29-year-old daughter of a prominent nationalist figure and Putin close ally, was killed in a suspected car bombing in 2022.

Gen Yaroslav Moskalik was killed in a car bomb attack last April, while Gen Igor Kirillov died in December 2024 when a device hidden in a scooter was detonated remotely.

A Ukrainian source later told the BBC that Kirillov was killed by Ukraine's security service, though this was never confirmed on the record. As a matter of policy, Ukraine never officially admits or claims responsibility for targeted attacks.



RUSSIA'S INVESTIGATOR:

Investigators could be seen working at the scene on Monday morning.

Thailand, Cambodia agree to talks in bid to end deadly conflict – Minister

Officials from Thailand and Cambodia will meet next week to discuss the possibility of reviving a ceasefire, Thailand's foreign minister said, as deadly border clashes entered a third week.

Both countries had signed a ceasefire earlier in July, brokered by US President Donald Trump. But fighting broke out again earlier this month - which both countries have blamed each other for.

On Monday, top officials from both countries met at a summit in Malaysia, their first face-to-face meeting since fighting resumed.

Speaking afterwards, Thailand's Foreign Minister said the July ceasefire was "rushed", saying it was because the US "wanted the declaration signed in time for Trump's [visit]".

"We were sometimes in a rush

because the US wanted it signed by the visit of President Trump," said Sihasak Phuanketkeow.

"But sometimes we really just [need to] sit down, trash things [out]... make sure that the ceasefire reflects... the situation on the ground. And the ceasefire is one that really holds."

Mr Phuanketkeow said a meeting between military officials from both Thailand and Cambodia would take place on 24 December, and that this would need to happen before any ceasefire agreement could be reached.

Cambodia has yet to comment on the matter.

At least 41 people have been killed and almost one million displaced since the renewed fighting this month.

Both countries have blamed each other for the fresh hostilities.

The most recent fighting has seen the exchange of artillery fire along the 800km (500-mile) border. Thailand has also launched air strikes targeting Cambodian positions.

At the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) meeting on Monday, Malaysia's foreign minister had asked both sides and other Asean members to give the matter "our most urgent attention".

"We must consider the wider ramifications of the continued escalation of the situation for the people we serve," Mohamad Hasan told his counterparts, according to news agency AFP.

The conflict has been the worst between Asean member states since the association was founded in 1967. The failure to contain it represents a serious blow to the bloc's credibility.

The US and China have also

been attempting to mediate a new ceasefire.

China's special envoy for Asian affairs, Deng Xijun, visited Phnom Penh last week. A statement from Beijing said he reaffirmed that China would continue to play a constructive role in facilitating dialogue between Cambodia and Thailand.

On Monday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said at the daily press briefing that China had been mediating the conflict in its own way since fighting restarted this month. He added that Beijing would release information on the mediation conducted by Deng "in due course".

The argument between Thailand and Cambodia dates back more than a century, and there have been sporadic clashes, with soldiers and civilians killed on both sides over the years.

US and Ukraine call Miami talks productive despite no breakthrough

US and Ukrainian envoys said talks in Miami aimed at ending the war with Russia had been "productive and constructive" - but no major breakthrough that could bring Moscow and Kyiv closer to peace seems forthcoming.

US President Donald Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, issued a joint statement with the top Ukrainian negotiator, Rustem Umerov, after three days of talks alongside European officials.

The pair said the meeting focused on aligning positions on a 20-point plan, a "multilateral security guarantee framework", a "US security guarantee framework for Ukraine" and an "economic & prosperity plan".

Separate talks also took place in Miami between the US and the Russian envoy, Kirill Dmitriev.

"Our shared priority is to stop the killing, ensure guaranteed security, and create conditions for Ukraine's recovery, stability, and long-term prosperity," Witkoff and Umerov said in a statement.

The meetings are the latest step in weeks of diplomatic activity, sparked by the leaking of a 28-point US peace plan last month. That plan shocked Ukraine and its European allies for appearing to favour Russia, which launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine nearly four years ago.

Witkoff said representatives from Russia had met himself and other US officials in south-

ern Florida, including Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner.

The meetings with Russian envoy Dmitriev were also "productive and constructive", Witkoff said, adding that "Russia remains fully committed to achieving peace in Ukraine".

On Monday the Kremlin said Dmitriev would travel back to Moscow to debrief Vladimir Putin on US proposals for a potential settlement.

Suggestions that a three-way meeting between the US, Russia and Ukraine could be on the cards were brushed off by Moscow.

Trump has been pushing Ukraine and Russia to come to an agreement on ending the war, but so far the two countries have been unable to agree on major issues, including Moscow's demand to be handed sections of the Donbas regions it has not managed to seize militarily.

US intelligence reports continue to warn that Russian President Vladimir Putin still wants to capture all of Ukraine and reclaim parts of Europe that belonged to the former Soviet empire, six sources familiar with US intelligence told the Reuters news agency.

"This absolutely does not correspond to reality," said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Monday.

The comments came after Putin told the BBC's Steve Rosenberg that there will be no more wars after Ukraine, if Russia is treated with respect.

Foreign

NEWS

Ghana official rejects 'Detty December' label

Party-goers descend on Ghana each December for a packed calendar of parties, festivals and concerts

Detty December, a popular term for Ghana and Nigeria's end-of-year party season, can have "negative connotations", Ghana's official for diaspora affairs has said, adding that he does not want the label linked with his country.

"On a personal level I don't want the word 'detty' to be associated with anything Ghana... that's something I'm not very comfortable with," Kofi Okyere-Darko said.

"Detty", West African Pidgin for "dirty", is used to express unrestricted fun when it comes to seeing the year out.

The celebrations are thought to be a huge boost to Ghana's economy. Last December more than 125,000 international visitors, many of whom were diasporans, flocked to Ghana.

It was a notable increase from the number of people arriving during any other month - and the same can be said for the three years before that.

Government branding avoids the term Detty December instead choosing to push a tourism initiative named December in Ghana,

Mr Okyere-Darko, who oversees his country's relationship with its sizeable diaspora, told the BBC at the Ghana Diaspora Summit in capital city, Accra.

"The young people somehow prefer 'Detty December', but officially, that's not the name," he said.

"I don't think December is what attracts people to Ghana. People started coming to Ghana a long time ago. I remember December in Ghana at the turn of the millennium, with initiatives like Akwaaba UK.

Mr Okyere-Darko responded positively to suggestions that the season could be re-branded in a way that still appeals to younger audiences, saying that December in Ghana could be shortened to the initials "D.I.G.. Let's dig it!"

The phrase Detty December gained popularity roughly eight years ago, after Nigerian musician Mr Eazi launched his Detty Rave festival in Accra.

This December, festivals, parties and concerts have Accra teeming with diasporans and other tourists. They are mostly from the US and Europe, with ages ranging from early 20s and mid-40s, and are out socialising seven days a week.

Bondi gunmen 'meticulously' planned attack for months, police allege

The suspected gunmen in the Bondi Beach attack threw explosives at the start of the deadly incident and had practised shooting weeks before, according to new court documents.

They allege the pair "meticulously" planned the attack for months and, two days prior to the shooting, visited Bondi for reconnaissance.

Fifteen people were killed and dozens more injured when two gunmen opened fire on a Hanukkah celebration on 14 December. Explosives, including a "tennis ball bomb", failed to detonate, the documents said.

Naveed Akram, 24, has been charged with 59 offences, including 15 counts of murder and one of terror. A second gunman - his father, Sajid Akram - was shot dead by police at the scene.

Last week, a temporary suppression order was made on the release of the police fact sheet to protect the identities of the survivors. It was revoked on Monday and the documents were published with some redactions.

Included in the new court documents are the details of several videos tracing the movements of the alleged gunmen in the months, days and hours before the attack.

One video - taken on one of their mobile phones in October - is described as showing the men sitting in front of an image of an Islamic State group (IS) flag.

They are heard making statements about their motivations for the attack and condemn "the acts of 'Zionists'", police say.

Naveed Akram is also "recorded appearing to recite, in Arabic, a passage from the Quran".

Police said separate footage from October shows the father and son "conducting firearms training in a countryside location", believed to be in New South Wales. They are seen "firing shotguns and moving in a tactical manner", officials added.

CCTV footage from the evening of 12 December is said to show two males "believed to be the accused and his father" in their car next to Bondi Beach.



FASHION WEEK CELEBRATION:

Fashion week marked in the troubled Kivu, Goma region of the Democratic Republic of Congo for peace, solidarity and resilience

Baby Siwar back in hospital in Gaza after returning from treatment in Jordan

A one-year-old Palestinian girl evacuated from Gaza with severe nutritional problems is back in hospital in the territory after being returned there from Jordan. Siwar Ashour, whose story the BBC has followed for several months, was repatriated to Gaza on 3 December after completing her medical treatment in Amman.

She'd spent six months in hospital there under a medical evacuation programme run by the Kingdom of Jordan. Her grandmother, Sahar Ashour, said she became ill three days after coming back.

"She started having diarrhoea and vomiting and her situation keeps getting worse. The diarrhoea won't go away," she told a freelance journalist working for the BBC in Gaza.

International journalists have been banned by Israel from entering Gaza independently since the start of the war nearly two years ago.

Siwar is being treated at al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the central Gaza Strip where Dr Khalil al-Daqran told the BBC she is "receiving the necessary treatment, but the situation is still bad for her". The doctor said Siwar was suffering from a gastro-intestinal infection. She has an immune system deficiency which makes it hard for her to fight bacteria. She also struggles to absorb nutrition, meaning she requires specialised baby formula.

Dr Khalil al-Daqran said poor hygiene conditions had disease to spread

Dr Daqran said that hospitals in Gaza - many of which

were badly damaged by Israeli bombing and fighting nearby with Hamas before a ceasefire took effect in October - were seeing an increase in child admissions. Poor hygiene conditions caused by the destruction of vital infrastructure have led to the spread of infections and disease.

"Since the ceasefire was announced, the number of child patients arriving at Gaza Strip hospitals is three times the capacity... The situation at al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital is no different from other hospitals in the Gaza Strip.

"It suffers from a severe shortage of medicines and medical supplies, and a major shortage regarding electric generators, which are the main artery to keep a hospital going."

The World Health Organi-

zation (WHO) described humanitarian needs in Gaza as "staggering, with current assistance addressing only the most basic survival requirements".

Siwar was evacuated to Jordan in June after the BBC reported on her case and raised it directly with the Jordanian authorities.

Jordan's Minister of Communications, Dr Mohammed al-Momani, told us that Siwar was among 45 children returned to Gaza after completing their treatment. Under the evacuation scheme all patients are sent back after medical attention.

I put it to Dr al-Momani that people might find it hard to accept that a child in such a vulnerable condition could be sent back to Gaza in the current conditions.

Sudan calls for RSF to be classified as terrorist group at Russia-Africa partnership forum

Sudan has called for the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) to be classified as a terrorist group and held accountable for its actions against Sudanese citizens. Khartoum pointed the finger at the United Arab Emirates (UAE), accusing the Gulf nation of providing funding and weapons to the group.

Sudan made the appeal at the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum on Saturday. Ministers from more than 50 African

countries met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Cairo at the forum's second Ministerial Conference.

Representatives from several African and regional organizations were also in attendance, according to a statement by the Egyptian Foreign Ministry.

Sudan's Minister of Cabinet Affairs took the opportunity to call for support in isolating the RSF, who have been fighting the Sudanese Armed Forces for more than two years.

"Sudan calls for this group (the Rapid Support Forces) to be classified as a terrorist group and held accountable for the crimes it has committed," Dr. Lamia Abdel Ghaffar told the Forum. "And for its well-known regional sponsor (the UAE) to be held accountable for funding it with money and weapons, and providing it with political, diplomatic and media support, thus becoming complicit in all the crimes committed against Sudanese citizens."

Earlier this month, the Unit-

ed Kingdom sanctioned four RSF commanders it accused of having committed mass killings, sexual violence, and deliberate attacks on civilians in the Darfur city of El Fasher. But the UK did not issue sanctions against the United Arab Emirates, which has long been accused of providing support to the RSF.

The United Nations and United States have also accused the group of committing serious human rights violations during its takeover of El Fasher earlier this year.

A power struggle between the military and the RSF erupted into war in April 2023. The conflict has killed 40,000 people - though some rights groups say the death toll is significantly higher - and has created the world's worst humanitarian crisis with over 14 million displaced. Many areas have experienced famine and disease.

In Goma, Kivu Fashion Week celebrates solidarity, hope and resilience

Models, designers and fashion enthusiasts gathered in Goma's prestigious Serena Hotel on Sunday for the fourth edition of Kivu Fashion Week.

The runway featured diverse pieces of clothing, from formal evening gowns to modern twists on traditional garments.

Founded in 2022, the event has become a landmark celebration of style and culture in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

This year, the show promoted solidarity, hope and resilience in a region scarred by violence.

"The aim of this fourth edition was to bring together com-

munities," said Kivu Fashion Week founder Voyance Batinda.

"That is why we invited several guests from the East [of the DRC], and from Rwanda, Uganda and so many other countries. We just wanted to share the message that we want peace, we wanted this peaceful and international cohab-

itation," he explained.

Conflict has plagued mineral-rich eastern Congo for decades. In January, the Rwanda-backed M23 rebels took control of Goma, the capital of the North Kivu province.

But for participants to Kivu Fashion Week, continuing the show

in the city is a way to keep populations united in the face of war.

"This is done in the spirit of reuniting all these peoples who have long been scarred by the war. We wanted to bring them together in resilience, in hope and in solidarity," said designer Vainqueur Akilimali.

FEATURES

THE LIFEBLOOD OF OUR WORLD

Why water remains humanity's most precious resource

OLOTU EKUNDAYO

Water is the quiet hero of our everyday lives — flowing through our taps, nourishing our crops, shaping our landscapes, and sustaining every living organism on earth. Yet, despite its undeniable importance, it is often the most undervalued resource. As global populations rise and environmental pressures intensify, understanding the true worth of water has never been more crucial.

A RESOURCE AT THE HEART OF HUMAN SURVIVAL

Scientists estimate that the human body is composed of about 60 percent water, but its value goes beyond anatomy. Water regulates temperature, aids digestion, lubricates joints, transports nutrients, and removes waste. Without water, even the healthiest human cannot survive more than a few days.

But beyond hydration, water is central to hygiene and disease prevention. Communities with access to clean water experience fewer outbreaks of cholera, typhoid, diarrhea, and other water-borne illnesses. Hospitals, schools, and markets depend on reliable water systems to keep their environments safe. In many rural communities across Africa and Asia, however, access to clean water is still a major struggle; women and children walk several kilometers daily to fetch water, often from contaminated streams. This daily journey affects health, productivity, and education — particularly for young girls who miss school because of water chores.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL BACKBONE OF THE PLANET

Water shapes the natural world in ways we often take for granted. Rivers carve valleys, rains feed forests, and oceans regulate global temperatures. Wetlands act as natural water filters, removing pollutants and providing habitats for birds, fish, and plant species. When these systems thrive, biodiversity flourishes.

Agriculture — responsible for feeding billions — depends heavily on water availability. Crops like rice, maize, and vegetables require consistent irrigation, and livestock need water to survive. In regions where rains fail or rivers dry up, food shortages and economic hardship follow. Farmers in places like Nigeria's northern states or East Africa know too well the devastating effects of droughts on harvests and livelihoods.

WATER AND THE ECONOMY: AN INSEPARABLE CONNECTION

Beyond nature and survival, water significantly impacts the global economy. Industries such as manufacturing, textiles, mining, food processing, and power generation all rely heavily on water. Hydroelectric dams convert flowing water into electricity, supplying millions of homes with power. Tourism — from beach resorts to waterfalls — also thrives be-

cause of water.

When water resources are well-managed, countries experience greater economic stability. But when they are mismanaged, polluted, or depleted, the consequences are severe: increased production costs, unemployment, migration, and conflicts over shared water sources. The United Nations has repeatedly warned that future global tensions may arise not from oil, but from water shortages.

A RESOURCE UNDER THREAT

Despite its importance, water scarcity is becoming a global crisis. Climate change is altering rainfall patterns, leading to more severe floods in some places and extreme droughts in others. Rivers like the Niger, the Murray-Darling in Australia, and the Colorado in the United States are shrinking under pressure from overuse and rising temperatures.

Pollution compounds the crisis. Industrial waste, untreated sewage, oil spills, and plastic pollution contaminate water bodies, making them hazardous for both humans and wildlife. Urbanization has created a huge demand for water that many cities cannot meet. Rural communities, meanwhile, suffer from degraded streams, drying wells, and encroaching desertification.

SOLUTIONS WITHIN REACH

Despite the challenges, hope is not lost. Governments, private organizations, and individuals can all play important roles in protecting water resources. Investing in modern water infrastructure — such as treatment plants, pipelines, and rainwater harvesting systems — ensures safe and reliable access. Energy-efficient irrigation technology can help farmers use less water while growing more food.



At the community level, education is key. Simple practices like fixing leaking taps, recycling water where possible, avoiding the dumping of garbage into drains, and planting trees can make a substantial difference. Schools and local leaders can promote awareness campaigns that help people understand the value of conservation.

Globally, scientists and innovators are developing promising solutions such as desalination technology, wastewater recycling, and smart water monitoring systems. But these solutions require political will, funding, and public participation to become widespread.

A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FUTURE

Water is more than a resource; it is a unifying thread that connects health, environment, economy, and human dignity. To protect it and safeguard the future of our planet. As populations continue to grow and climate uncertainty increases, the responsibility to conserve water rests on all of us — governments, industries, and individuals alike.



SUMMARY PROGRESS 2024: SDG 6 INDICATORS

6.1.1 DRINKING WATER

2.2 billion people (nearly 1 in 4 people around the world) lacked safely managed drinking water in 2022.

6.2.1a SANITATION

3.5 billion people lacked safely managed sanitation services, and 419 million people practised open defecation, in 2022.

43% of the world's population

6.2.1b HYGIENE

2 billion people lacked a basic handwashing facility with soap and water at home in 2022.

29% of the world's population

6.3.1 WASTEWATER

Only **27%** of industrial wastewater is safely treated (based on limited data from 22 countries).

42% of household wastewater is not safely treated.

6.3.2 WATER QUALITY

56% of monitored water bodies in 120 countries were classified as having 'good ambient water quality.'

By 2030, the health and livelihoods of **4.8** billion people could be at risk if current water quality monitoring is not improved.

6.4.1 WATER-USE EFFICIENCY

From 2015 to 2021 water-use efficiency has increased by **19.3%** globally.

Approximately **58%** of the countries still exhibit low water-use efficiency, with less than 20 USD added value for each m3 of water used from all economic activities over time.

6.4.2 WATER STRESS

Approximately **10%** of the global population lived in countries with high and critical water stress levels in 2021.

6.5.1 INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The world will not achieve sustainable water management until 2049.

40% of countries are being left behind, having limited capacity to balance competing demands across sectors and cope with increasing pressures.

6.5.2 TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION

Only **43** out of 153 UN Member States sharing transboundary waters have operational arrangements covering 90% or more of their shared rivers, lakes and aquifers.

At least 20 countries lack any arrangements for sharing transboundary waters.

6.6.1 ECOSYSTEMS

More than **90** out of 185 countries have one or more water-related ecosystem types in a state of degradation.

River flow has significantly decreased in **402** river basins worldwide, where approximately **107.5** million people live.

6.a.1 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Aid disbursements to the water sector decreased by **5%** between 2015 and 2022.

1/3 of countries reported that donor funds are poorly aligned with national water sector plans, overwhelmingly in low-income countries.

6.b.1 PARTICIPATION

Less than **1/3** of 116 responding countries indicated having high levels of participation by local communities in water and sanitation decision-making.

FEATURE

The hidden price of survival: How inflation reshapes the nigerian household

OLOTU EKUNDAYO

Inflation is no longer just an economic term in Nigeria—it is a daily companion, a quiet intruder that walks into homes uninvited and rearranges lives. From food to transport to electricity, the surge in prices has forced families to rewrite their lifestyles, rethink priorities, and re-evaluate what survival truly means.

A NEW NORMAL OF TOUGH CHOICES

At dawn in many Nigerian cities, the day begins not with breakfast, but with calculation. What can the family afford today? For years, a N1,000 note could buy breakfast essentials; today, it barely stretches across a small bag of pepper, a few tomatoes, and maybe a cube of seasoning. In households across the country, parents have become mathematicians—splitting budgets, rationing meals, and negotiating with reality.

Many families now alternate meals: rice today, garri tomorrow, beans the next day. Protein, once a standard part of the Nigerian diet, has turned into a luxury item. A mother in Kaduna said she buys meat “only when visitors are expected”—a quiet admission shared by thousands.

CHILDREN GROWING UP IN A CLIMATE OF SACRIFICE

For children, inflation is an invisible teacher. They are learning the language of scarcity too early. Pocket money has shrunk. School supplies that were once replaced freely are now repaired, taped, and reused. After-school snacks? A memory.

Some families have withdrawn children from private schools to public ones, not because of preference but necessity. Others rely on relatives to share responsibilities, forming new bonds of survival that stretch beyond the nuclear family.

Transport Costs: The Silent Drain

The rise in transportation fares has quietly reshaped how Nigerians move. Many workers now wake earlier to trek part of the journey or



wait for cheaper commercial buses. Ride-hailing apps, once popular among young professionals, have become an occasional treat rather than a daily convenience.

For market women and traders, the cost of getting goods from farms and depots to city centers has soared—pushing prices even higher. Inflation becomes a cycle: transport affects food costs, food affects livelihoods, and livelihoods affect stability.

POWER SUPPLY AND THE BATTLE TO STAY IN BUSINESS

In homes and small businesses, the irregular power supply combined with rising fuel prices for generators has led to a new kind of darkness—one that affects both income and comfort.

Tailors run machines less often, barbers shorten their working hours, cold-room operators struggle to pre-

serve goods, and tech workers fight to keep laptops charged. Every hour of blackout is a reminder that Nigeria's inflation is not only about numbers but survival.

THE EMOTIONAL COST NOBODY TALKS ABOUT

Behind every economic statistic lies a story of stress and silent struggle. Couples argue more about money. Parents feel guilty for not providing as before. Young adults delay marriage, postpone dreams, and rethink the future.

Inflation has reshaped not just the wallet, but the mind. Anxiety has become a constant shadow. Even celebrations—birthdays, weddings, naming ceremonies—are now simplified, not by choice but by necessity.

HOW NIGERIANS ARE INNOVATING TO COPE

Still, amid the hardship, Nigerians are rewriting the script of resilience:

- Bulk buying and food sharing groups: Neighbours now pool resources to purchase cheaper wholesale goods.

- Home gardens: Small vegetable gardens behind houses or in buckets help cut costs.

- Side hustles: From baking to drop-shipping to tutoring, households rely on additional income streams.

- Skill exchange: People now trade services—hair braiding for tailoring, tutoring for groceries.

- Digital thrift markets: Online communities for buying fairly used items have exploded in popularity.

These coping strategies reveal a nation that bends but does not break.

A FUTURE BALANCED ON HOPE AND POLICY

Experts warn that inflation cannot be solved by household sacrifice alone. Sustainable solutions rest on government interventions—boosting local production, stabilizing fuel supply, improving transportation infrastructure, and reducing dependency on imports.

But while policymakers debate, families endure.

REDEFINING SURVIVAL

The hidden price of survival in Nigeria today is not just higher bills—it is the quiet sacrifices made inside homes, the adjustments in daily routines, the dreams paused, and the resilience forged through adversity.

Inflation has reshaped the Nigerian household, but it has also revealed something deeper: a remarkable capacity to adapt, to innovate, and to hope—even when the economy gives little reason to.

Lessons in patriotism

One thing I have never done, and will never do in my life, is throw my country, Nigeria, under the bus and start writing hateful things about Nigeria just because my favourite politician did not win an election and is not the president of Nigeria.

Their candidate lost an election; since then, Nigeria has been in trouble in their hands. Every post, every article all over social media is aimed at de-marketing Nigeria. They share every negative piece of news about Nigeria, blog it, repost it, and spread it like wildfire.

Quote me, there is nothing going on in Nigeria with all our problems that other countries are not going through same or even worse. But guess what, they are not shouting at the roof top and de-marketing their

country about it like our own people do about Nigeria.

They forget that we now live in a global village, where the moment you press the send button on your phone, someone in the US, UK, Qatar, South Africa, and everywhere else in the world can read and see it.

They also forget that international observers and government functionaries of other nations use all this negative rhetoric about Nigeria to form opinions, which indirectly inform how they curate diplomatic and foreign policies toward other countries.

A Ugandan colleague asked me some time ago why Nigerians are so toxic toward their country. He said you would hardly read Nigerians saying anything good about their country on social media.

Also, this colleague attends a Re-

deemed Church in London, which has a majority Nigerian congregation and a Nigerian pastor. He said it is very hard to hear them say anything good about Nigeria including the Pastor. Meanwhile, he said, what do they want him to say—that a dictator has been ruling his country for over 40 years and no one can challenge him?

But he said one thing he would not do is run down Uganda, because Uganda is bigger than Yoweri Museveni, and Museveni does not define them as Ugandans. He said I am the first Nigerian he has met who always showcases and speaks highly of Nigeria.

What is funny is that these Nigerians who are now crying about the visa ban against Nigerians do not realise that their online activities are part of why we are where we are today, es-

pecially with an American president who does not have any filter.

In fact, the greatest culprits in all of this are Nigerians in the diaspora, especially those living in the US, UK, and Europe. Living abroad is their claim to fame; they think they have arrived, and that everything about Nigeria is hell on earth, and those living back home is beneath them.

I encounter some of them often, and I never fail to put them in their place and remind them that living abroad does not make them better than those at home. It is usually when they return home after some years that they realise some of their friends and classmates did not remain where they left them.

For those of you back at home, tell me, who will feel the effect of the ban now? Is it Tinubu? His daughters

even live in the US and are probably citizens. But you are the one looking for a visa to japa. Guess what: diplomatic passport holders are exempted from the ban.

Go to the US Embassy and show them your social media handles with all the negative and fake news about Nigeria trending on your timeline. Maybe they will exempt you and give you a visa for it. Olodo, oponu apoda gbgobo.

What you guys do not know is that most of the things you are doing by badmouthing this country online, spreading fake news, and negativity are the same things that will affect you the most.

Papa n para e, Olóhun p'Aja.

Selah!

--Kay Lord

 <p>The Nigerian Observer ...That the people may know</p>	<h2 style="margin:0;">ADVERTISEMENT RATES (PRINT)</h2>
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FULL PAGE	517,344	556,145	369,500	397,213	325,150	349,536	665,156	715,043	443,440	476,698
13 X 4	369,500	397,213	295,600	317,770	206,938	222,458	443,500	476,763	369,550	397,266
10 X 4	340,000	365,500	273,500	294,013	177,400	190,705	370,000	397,750	295,600	317,770
HALF PAGE	295,600	317,770	236,500	254,238	147,800	158,885	340,000	365,500	273,450	293,959
10 X 3	221,700	238,328	147,800	158,885	118,300	127,173	266,000	285,950	251,300	270,148
13 X 2	206,900	222,418	133,000	142,925	103,500	111,263	221,800	238,435	147,810	158,896
QUARTER PAGE	192,150	206,561	118,250	127,119	88,690	95,342	236,500	254,238	133,000	142,975
CENTER SPREAD	1,356,968	1,466,992						B/W	1,148,181	1,241,276
HALF CENTER	991,590	1,071,989						B/W	887,272	959,212

FRONT PAGE POSITIONS					OTHER SIZES				
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FP 6X2	89,800	96,535	105,450	113,359	6 X 2	60,640	65,188	49,140	52,826
FP 5X2	81,100	87,183	97,300	104,598	5 X 2	51,950	55,846	42,120	45,279
FP 4X2	73,000	78,475	80,700	86,753	4 X 2	45,260	48,655	34,400	36,980
FP 3X2	64,870	69,735	73,000	78,475	3 X 2	30,900	33,218	26,600	28,595
FP 2X2	59,000	63,425	64,900	69,768	2 X 2	18,680	20,081	15,600	16,770
					2 X 1	12,400	13,330	7,415	7,971
					CAC	38,000	40,850		

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

FIFA ranking: Super Eagles end 2025 in 38th position



SUPER EAGLES OF NIGERIA

The Super Eagles will end 2025 ranked 38th in the world, according to the latest FIFA rankings released on Monday.

Nigeria's position remains unchanged from the Nov. 19 ranking, after the team climbed three places from 41st.

The Super Eagles also retained sixth position on the African rankings.

Overall, 2025 proved mixed for Nigeria, but the team finished the year six places higher than its opening ranking of

44th.

The first ranking of the year in April saw Nigeria rise to 43rd. Subsequent updates dropped the Eagles to 44th in July and 45th in Sept.

October marked a turnaround as Nigeria surged to 41st, recording their biggest rise since Feb. 2024, following their AFCON silver-medal finish.

The November ranking lifted the Eagles three more places to 38th, a position they maintain heading into 2026.

In Africa, Morocco led the

continent at 11th globally, followed by Senegal in 19th place. Algeria climbed to 34th, while Egypt dropped to 35th, ranking fifth in Africa.

Globally, Spain topped the rankings ahead of Argentina and France. England is fourth, Brazil fifth, followed by Portugal and the Netherlands.

Belgium, Germany and Croatia complete the top 10.

The next FIFA rankings will be released on Jan. 19, 2026, a day after the AFCON final in Morocco

Edo State Cricket Association round off 2025 season with Veterans Games, rewards athletes, supporters

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Edo State Cricket Association, Sunday, December 21 closed their 2025 calendar year with veterans match (T10 Red Ball and White Jerseys) between Okonobo XI and Edebiri XI which the later won by 18 runs.

Edebiri XI scored 88 runs for the loss of 4 wickets in 10 overs while Okonobo XI scored 70 runs for the loss of 8 wickets in 10 overs. Edebiri XI won by 18 runs.

The closing ceremony which had the Edo State Commissioner for Communication and Digital Economy Hon. OHIMAI EHIJIMETOR, performing school principals, Edo cricket festival teams and other Stakeholders in attendance saw the leadership of the Sport Association distributing gift box of different sizes including foot items to over 200 active and performing school principals, coaches, game master and others in acknowledgement of their contributions to the growth of Cricket in Edo State.

The Christmas gifts, 'Chairman's Christmas Package', according to the vice chairman of Edo State Cricket Association Abraham Oviawe Esq. is a benevolent practice introduced by the Chairman, Edo State Cricket Association and President Nigeria Cricket Federation Dr Uyi Akpata.

"It is a commitment our chairman has taken upon himself and we have been doing this for over decade. It is a platform we have created for veter-

ans; those that have played the game of cricket for Edo State and the country to exercise themselves and to be remembered. It is also an opportunity for us to share the joy of Christmas festival with critical Stakeholders. We believe that players, coaches and all those that have laboured throughout the year should be rewarded, hence the practice of chairman's Christmas package."

"This year, we listed 200 persons for the chairman's package and it is meant to appreciate all Stakeholders and to keep the partnership for ever." Oviawe said.

Meanwhile, the 2025 Edo Cricket League ended on Sun-

day, November 30, 2025 with Invictus Cricket Club as champions after a dominant and fine run in the men T20 tournament.

The new Edo Cricket champions finished as best team

with 12 points after losing just a match in the seven matches played.

In the female league which ended earlier, Ekpoma Supernova emerged champions.



EDO STATE CRICKET

Muted mood as Super Eagles begin AFCON campaign

SAMMY ETUK

Nigerian football fans appear noticeably unenthusiastic about the Super Eagles' participation in the current Africa Cup of Nations, a mood largely influenced by the painful failure to qualify for the FIFA World Cup. The disappointment has lingered longer than expected, affecting how many supporters now view the national team's involvement in major competitions.

That setback has cast a long shadow, draining the usual excitement and emotional investment that traditionally follow the Super Eagles into continental tournaments. For many Nigerians, the Nations Cup currently feels less like a cele-

bration of football and more like a routine obligation.

Super Eagles head coach Éric Sékou Chelle has consistently assured Nigerians that he has assembled a balanced and competitive squad capable of going deep into the tournament. He has spoken about structure, discipline, and rebuilding confidence within the team. However, these assurances have so far struggled to resonate with fans who remain weighed down by recent frustrations and unmet expectations.

Across the country, this Africa Cup of Nations has generated little spark or widespread interest. Even strong individual performances from key players have failed to ignite public enthusiasm in the way they normally would.

Victor Osimhen, Nigeria's leading scorer and one of Africa's most recognizable football figures, has shown effort and commitment, yet his presence alone has not stirred the excitement or national conversation usually associated with his performances at this level.

Nigeria will face Tanzania on Tuesday, December 23, a fixture that now feels less like a marquee contest and more like a test of emotional reconnection. Beyond tactics and results, the match offers the Super Eagles a chance to rekindle belief among a disillusioned fan base. What appears to be going on is not a lack of talent, but a nation still searching for healing and renewed trust after a deeply bruising footballing setback.

Daka landing on his neck while celebrating late equaliser at AFCON

Patson Daka appears to have avoided serious injury despite making a wince-inducing landing on his neck while celebrating.

The Leicester City forward, 27, made an awkward fall as he wheeled off towards the corner flag after nabbing a 92nd-minute equaliser for Zambia in their Africa Cup of Nations opener against Mali.

In what was a match full of drama, Mali's El Bilal Touré saw his first-half penalty saved by Willard Mwanza before Auxerre striker eventually opened the scoring for Les Aigles in the 61st-minute.

But Zambia, who also boast former Rangers man Fashion Sakala in their ranks, continued to push for an equaliser and got their just rewards when Daka latched on to a sumptuous cross and nodded a diving header into the back of the net.

Sparking pandemonium in Morocco's 67,000-seater Stade Mohamed, Daka attempted to burst into an acrobatic backflip as his team-mates darted towards him in joy.

But the former Premier League man got it all wrong and made an awkward, painful-look-

ing landing on his neck in the process, much to the concern of many both on and off the pitch.

However, it appears that Daka got off lightly, after being pulled up by his team-mates and continuing for the remaining minutes of the tie as Zambia held on to a valuable point.

Daka was hot property when he made a move to the King Power in 2021, joining a side fresh off an FA Cup win under the management of Brendan Rodgers.

But he has struggled to hit the heights that saw him earn that move to the Premier League, scoring just 24 times and assisting 16 goals in 143 appearances for the Foxes.

Those club toils do not matter for Zambia boss Moses Sichone, though, with Daka having scored 21 times in 44 appearances for his national side, who are in an AFCON group alongside Morocco.

Before they face the competition favourites, however, Zambia have the chance to get three points on the board when they play Comoros on Friday - with Sichone hoping Daka will be available for selection.



PATSON DAKA

FIFA acknowledges Nigeria's petition against DR Congo, promises fair hearing



SUPER EAGLES AND DR CONGO

FIFA has formally received and acknowledged Nigeria's petition challenging DR Congo over the alleged fielding of ineligible players during the World Cup playoff.

The matter is currently under review by FIFA's relevant disciplinary and legal bodies, with a decision expected in the

coming days.

Nigerian football fans and stakeholders are now anxiously awaiting a favorable verdict that could have major implications for the qualification process.

I'll keep you informed with verified updates as soon as there are any new developments, stay tuned.

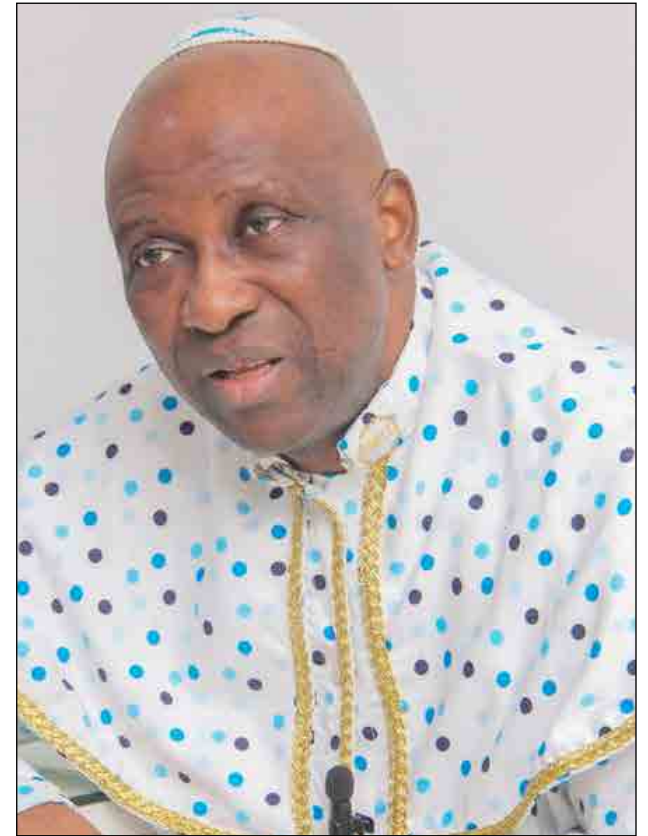
OPINION



EL-RUFAI



ONANUGA



AYODELE

El-Rufai, Ayodele and Nigeria blames the Igbo because the truth terrifies them!

AKIOYAMEN JOSEPHINE

There is a rhythm in the Nigerian public space that never changes. Whenever the nation begins to collapse under the weight of its own failures, someone emerges from a pulpit or a podium searching for a convenient scapegoat. Today it is the rumour around Primate Ayodele. Tomorrow it is a commentator in Beijing. The day after, it is a presidential adviser performing linguistic acrobatics on television. And now, even Nasir El Rufai has joined the procession. The names shift like shadows on a cracked wall, yet the target remains unchanged. The Igbo.

This is not analysis. It is Nigeria's oldest political reflex. A habit older than our democracy. A familiar escape hatch for those who cannot bear to face the truth of this country's decay.

Before we allow this recycled blame to replace thinking, we must invite history into the room. Not the gentle, edited history that drips from politicians. The real one. The one carved in wounds.

Few peoples on this continent have walked through condensed suffering the way the Igbo did. They survived the pogroms of 1966 when thousands were butchered for the crime of existing. They survived a civil war that buried their children in hunger and grief. They survived the decree that reduced every bank account to

twenty pounds, an erasure disguised as economic policy. They survived the silence of a federal government that told them to rebuild a civilisation from rubble without compensation or acknowledgment.

And rebuild they did. Not because Nigeria helped them but because they refused to kneel before despair. Markets rose again from ashes. Industries revived from dust. Towns scarred by war glowed with commerce and invention. Their resilience became so bright it unsettled those who relied on privilege instead of effort.

And there is another truth Nigeria fears to say aloud because it exposes too much. The Igbo stand among the most educated communities in the federation, rivalled only by the Yoruba in the breadth of their learning and achievement. They are also among the most enterprising and industrious populations in West Africa, shaped by a culture where apprenticeship is an institution, where innovation is instinct and where commerce is almost a second language.

Yet in one of the greatest acts of national self harm, this same population is kept far from the Wuthering Heights of Nigerian policy making. The Igbo build the markets that keep the country alive but are denied entry into the chambers where the country decides its destiny. They drive the private economy with their sweat but are locked out of the public institutions that steer the national future. It

is Nigeria turning its back on the very people who refuse to let the nation collapse under its own lethargy.

This is not a wound inflicted on the Igbo. They have rebuilt themselves before from nothing but grief and dust. The wound is on Nigeria. A country cannot sideline one of its most educated and most industrious populations without crippling its own chances of rising. If Nigeria ever hopes to escape mediocrity, it is Nigeria that needs the Igbo, not the other way around. The Igbo do not need Nigeria to dream. Nigeria needs the Igbo to finally wake up.

And now, as if on cue, Nasir El Rufai has entered the arena with a fresh coat of old blame. Yesterday, he took to Twitter and published a long essay dressed in the garments of geopolitical wisdom. He invoked Iraq, Libya and Syria. He spoke of Washington's shadows and congressional narratives. But beneath the global metaphors sits the same old strategy. Turn the nation's failures into an Igbo conspiracy.

In his telling, Nigeria's problem is not the mass graves in Plateau. It is not the villages swallowed in Benue. It is not the forests in Kaduna ruled by terror. It is not the kidnapping factories in Zamfara. It is not the unending funerals across the Middle Belt. The problem, he claims, is that IPOB once hired lobbyists in Washington. The problem is that Nnamdi Kanu was convicted. The problem is that American lawmakers see persecution where

the Nigerian state insists on denial.

This is not insight. It is rhetorical sleight of hand. A polished deflection crafted to lead the reader away from the blood on Nigerian soil and toward the same scapegoat Nigeria has leaned on for generations.

Rather than confront the truth, he reaches for the same escape route. The Igbo did it.

This is exactly the reflex we saw from Daniel Bwala, who blamed the Igbo for the United States naming Nigeria a Country of Particular Concern. Faced with undeniable massacres, faced with reports too detailed to deny, he chose the familiar shortcut. The Igbo. And he is not alone. A northern commentator in China echoed the same logic, blaming the Igbo instead of addressing the forces that spill blood across the nation.

So how does a people with so little power suddenly become the problem of Nigeria. The accusation collapses the moment you examine the geography of power. Where are the Igbo in the command structure. Not in the office of the National Security Adviser. Not among the Chiefs of Defence Staff. Not among the Inspectors General of Police. For more than fifty years they have been the least represented major ethnic group in Nigeria's highest security architecture. A people locked out of the control room cannot be blamed for the direction of the ship.

Where are they in the presiden-

cy since nineteen ninety nine. Every region has tasted executive power except the South East. They do not command the armed forces. They do not supervise defence spending. They do not control the ministries that direct the nation's fate. How then can a people who hold so little in the engine room of the federation be blamed for the malfunction of the machine.

Even in the economy the accusation fails. Yes, they excel in trade. Yes, their entrepreneurs turn empty land into markets. But the national economy revolves around oil, ports, customs, foreign exchange and federal contracts. None are in Igbo hands. Their success is a triumph of effort, not privilege.

Nigeria does not lack problems. Nigeria lacks honesty. The Igbo are not the obstacle blocking the country from greatness. They are the evidence of what Nigerians can achieve when discipline replaces entitlement and when work replaces inherited arrogance. To accuse such a people of being the nation's problem is not only dishonest. It is a confession of fear. It is the cry of a leadership terrified of its own reflection.

Blame the Igbo if you must. It will not change a single thing. Not the graves. Not the hunger. Not the fear on the highways. Blame is the opium of a dying republic. But truth is stubborn. Nigeria will rise only when it stops fearing its best minds and starts confronting its worst leaders.