

Gov Okpebholo's 13th-month salary to workers sparks excitement in Edo

BENIN CITY

Public and civil servants in Edo State have expressed gratitude to Governor Monday Okpebholo after receiving their 13th-month salary, describing the gesture as timely and 'morale boosting'.

Newsmen who visited different ministries at the Secretariat on Tuesday in Benin

City reported that the payment brought significant relief to workers.

The Director of Orientation in the Ministry of Information and Strategy, Mrs. Rose Imonikhe, said that the alert came in as a pleasant surprise.

"I woke up this morning, it was the alert that woke me up; the 13th-month salary, I am grateful to the governor for

what he has done.

"You can see me smiling and that's how other officers in the state civil service are smiling," she said.

Imonikhe noted that the payment would ease financial pressure on workers during the festive season and beyond.

At the Ministry of Lands and Housing, Beatrice Ihulde, Precious Abu, Bridget Igbino-

via and Onyinyechi Florence, all described the payment as a clear demonstration of the state government's commitment to worker's welfare.

Similarly, at the Ministry of Environment and Sustainability, the Director of Administration, Mrs. Egbe Jocy, also commended the government, saying that the initiative would strengthen morale and pro-

ductivity across the service.

The workers pledged to be more committed to their duties.

Other civil servants echoed similar sentiments, praising the government's concern for workers' welfare.

The governor had implemented payment of the 13th-month salary, shortly after assuming office on November

12, 2024.

The move had boosted the confidence and productivity of workers across the state's civil service.

The gesture has renewed confidence in the state's people-centred approach to governance, with many civil servants pledging to be more committed to their duties.

The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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New tax laws to commence tomorrow as planned —Tinubu

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu has said that the new tax laws, including those that took effect on June 26, and others scheduled to commence on January 1, 2026, will be implemented as planned.

The president disclosed this in a statement on Tuesday.

Tinubu described the reforms as a once-in-a-genera-

tion opportunity to build a fair, competitive and robust fiscal foundation for the country.

"The reforms are a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a fair, competitive, and robust fiscal foundation for our country," Tinubu said.

He clarified that the tax laws were not designed to increase the tax burden on Nigerians but to reset the fiscal system, promote harmonization and

strengthen the social contract.

Tinubu said, "The tax laws are not designed to raise taxes, but rather, to support a structural reset, drive harmonization, and protect dignity while strengthening the social contract."

The president urged the stakeholders to support the implementation phase, noting that the reforms had now moved firmly into the delivery stage.

"I urge all stakeholders to

support the implementation phase, which is now firmly in the delivery stage," he said.

Tinubu acknowledged ongoing public discourse surrounding the alleged changes to some provisions of the recently enacted tax laws.

He said no substantial issue had been identified to justify halting or disrupting the reform process.

"No substantial issue has

been established that warrants a disruption of the reform process," Tinubu maintained.

The president emphasised his administration's commitment to due process and the integrity of laws duly enacted by the National Assembly.

"Absolute trust is built over time through making the right decisions, not through premature, reactive measures," Tinu-

bu said.

He assured Nigerians that the Presidency would continue to work with the National Assembly to address any issues that may arise during implementation.

"I assure all Nigerians that the Federal Government will continue to act in the overriding public interest to ensure a tax system that supports prosperity and shared responsibility," he said.



PLENARY:

L-R: Senator Joseph Ikpea, Senator Titus Zam, Senator Emmanuel Udende, Senator Shuaibu Salisu; Senate President, Senator Godswill Akpabio; Senate Leader, Senator Opeyemi Bamidele and Deputy Senate President, Senator Jibrin Barau, after plenary at the National Assembly Abuja.

PHOTO BY OMOYE AMINU

2027: Yiaga survey flags security, trust deficit as threats to credible elections

ABUJA

A new National Voting Intentions Survey by Yiaga Africa has raised concerns that persistent insecurity and declining public trust in electoral institutions could threaten the credibility of the 2027 general elections.

The survey, released ahead of the polls, revealed that although a majority of Nigerians remain willing to participate in elections, widespread fears over election-related violence and doubts about the integrity of the electoral process pose serious risks to free, fair and inclusive polls.

Yiaga Africa warned that unless these concerns are urgently addressed by relevant

authorities, voter confidence could erode further, potentially affecting turnout and the overall legitimacy of the 2027 elections.

According to the organisation, insecurity before, during and after elections continues to shape citizens' perceptions, while weak trust in institutions responsible for managing elections undermines public faith in democratic outcomes.

The statement noted that issues such as inadequate election security, allegations of manipulation and poor enforcement of electoral laws have contributed to growing scepticism among voters.

Yiaga Africa called on the

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AFCON 2025: Super Eagles thrash Uganda to maintain perfect Group record
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Health Insurance Scheme: EDOHIC partners philanthropists to enrol 800 beneficiaries in Edo Central

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Health Insurance Commission (EDOHIC) has partnered philanthropists and public-spirited individuals to enrol 800 vulnerable residents of Edo Central Senatorial District into the Edo State Health Insurance Scheme.

The initiative, known as the Philanthropist Health Initiative, was rolled out during the yuletide season as part of the commission's efforts to expand access to affordable and quality healthcare and accelerate the attainment of Universal Health Coverage in Edo State.

The programme is designed to mobilise support from philanthropists, corporate organisations, community groups, faith-based bodies and other stakeholders to sponsor health insurance coverage for vulnerable citizens across the state.

Beneficiaries enrolled under the scheme are entitled to a comprehensive healthcare package, including medical consultations, maternal and child healthcare services, paediatric care, access to essential drugs and a wide range of laboratory investigations.

Services can be accessed at accredited public and private healthcare facilities within Edo Central Senatorial District.

The enrolment exercise, conducted in phases, began on December 22 in Irrua, Esan Central Local Government Area.

It continued on December 23 in Igueben Local Government Area, moved to Ewatto in Esan South East Local Government Area on December 29 and concluded on December 30 in Uromi, Esan North East Local Government Area.

A total of 200 beneficiaries were enrolled in each of the four local government areas,

bringing the total number of enrollees to 800. With their enrolment completed, beneficiaries are now protected from out-of-pocket healthcare spending and catastrophic medical costs.

The initiative aligns with the directive of Governor Monday Okpebholo to ensure equitable access to quality healthcare for all residents of Edo State, particularly the most vulnerable.

The exercise was made possible through the support of public-spirited sons and daughters of the state, including Chief (Dr.) Leemon Ikpea, General Cecil Esekhaigbe (Rtd), Engineer Tony Ikpea, Mr. Ewalefoh O. Jobson, Mr. Richard Inegbedion, Honourable Festus Ebea, Distinguished Senator Joseph I. Ikpea and Honourable Dr. Jerry Uwangu.

Speaking on the programme, the Director-General of EDOHIC, Dr. Mrs. Augusta Ikpea-Enaholo, said the Philanthropist Health Initiative reflects the commission's commitment to inclusive and innovative partnerships in expanding health insurance coverage. She noted that the initiative provides an open platform for individuals, politicians,

public servants, corporate organisations through their Corporate Social Responsibility programmes and faith-based organisations to sponsor health insurance for vulnerable residents.

She added that personal milestones such as birthdays, anniversaries and memorials could also be leveraged to give back to society by enrolling beneficiaries into the scheme.

FG reaffirms commitment to rule of law, debunks allegation of suppressing opposition

ABUJA

The Federal Government has reaffirmed its commitment to the rule of law and debunked allegations of harbouring plans to unlawfully arrest, detain, and prosecute opposition figures in the country.

This was contained in a statement signed by the Minister of Information and National Orientation, Alhaji Mohammed Idris, on Tuesday in Abuja.

Idris said that the clarification was necessitated by a fabricated document in circulation alleging the establishment of a nonexistent multi-agency task force for a purported programme tagged, "Arrest, Detain, Prosecute for Very Important Persons" (ADP4VIP).

"The document falsely claims that a task force comprising the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), and the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU), coordinated by the Office of the National Security Adviser, aimed to aggressively target prominent opposition figures without due process.

"The authors of this deliberate disinformation imprudently cite "multiple credible sources" to the alleged planned "systematic weakening and neutralization of opposition political activity,"

particularly within the African Democratic Congress (ADC).

"The Federal Government wishes to state emphatically that there is no such programme as "ADP4VIP."

"The administration of President Bola Tinubu is firmly and successfully focused on its core agenda: implementing measurable economic reforms, defeating insecurity, expanding trade opportunities, and restoring investor confidence.

"The attempt by some opposition elements to frame lawful accountability as political targeting is a dangerous red herring designed to shield so-called VIPs from answering to our national laws and anti-corruption agencies," he said.

Idris underscored government's foundational principles as enshrined in Section 40 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) which guarantees every Nigerian the right to freely associate and assemble.

He further said that Tinubu swore an oath to uphold the Constitution and its provisions, including the freedoms of association and religion.

The minister said "President Tinubu is a democrat with considerable and positive footprints.

"Under Tinubu's leadership, the federal government remains committed to the rule of law, due process, and the independence of institutions."

2027: Yiaga survey flags security,...

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Federal Government, security agencies and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to take proactive measures to guarantee the safety of voters, election officials and materials, while also

strengthening transparency and accountability in the electoral process.

It stressed that restoring trust in electoral institutions is critical to safeguarding Nigeria's democracy and ensuring that the 2027 general elections reflect the will of the people.



CHRISTMAS CAROL:

Pupils of Redeem Primary and Secondary School, performing during their Christmas Carol in Yenagoa recently.

Go through Wike to get support in Rivers, APC chairman tells Fubara

PORT HARCOURT

Chief Victor Giadom has advised Gov. Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers to go through the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, to win any election in Rivers.

Giadom, the National Vice Chairman of the All Progressive Congress (APC), South South, gave the advice on Tuesday, during Wike's 'thank you' visit to the people of Gokana Local Government Area of Rivers.

Describing Wike as a depend-

able leader in Rivers politics, Giadom assured the minister that there would be no political force in Gokana other than Wike.

"I guarantee, on behalf of my brothers, that the Gokana people are for Wike and Tinubu and nobody will challenge Wike's influence in Gokana.

"Gokana is a no-go-area for anybody, even Governor Fubara. For him to win anything in Gokana, he must pass through Wike," he said.

Also, Sen. Magnus Abe, who represented Rivers South East at the Senate, said that the people

of Gokana had already chosen their friends - Wike and Tinubu.

"Wike is a leader that unites and that is why we are united. If you follow Wike, you will not go home empty-handed.

"The Ogoni people are with you and we will not go home empty-handed. Please tell Tinubu not to bother coming to Gokana to campaign. We are for him," he said.

On his part, the Deputy Speaker, Rivers State House of Assembly, Dumle Maol, assured Wike that the people of Gokana would be with him every step of the way.

"Anywhere you go we will go," he said.

Earlier, the Chairman of

Gokana Local Council, Mr Confidence Deko, pledged total support to the minister, saying "wherever you go we will go."

"This local government is for you because of what you have done for us. Please tell Tinubu that the people of Bokana are appreciative of him.

"The time for payback is near and we will do the needful," he said.

Responding, Wike explained that the visit was to thank Gokana people for their good deeds and support over the years.

He commended the people for the display of unity of purpose for Tinubu saying, "when you are united good things will come."

Carnival Calabar 2025 ends with celebrating 20yrs of African street culture

CALABAR

The 2025 Carnival Calabar has ended, with colourful parades, rhythmic dances and massive street celebrations as the Cross River State capital marked two decades of Africa's biggest street party.

The 20th anniversary edition brought together thousands of revellers, performers and visitors from across Nigeria and beyond, with participating bands rolling out elaborate costumes, choreographed displays and thematic performances that traced the festival's evolution over the past

two decades.

At the official flag-off of the 20th anniversary on Monday, Governor Bassey Otu of Cross River State called on all stakeholders to uphold premium standards and sustainability, describing Carnival Calabar as one of the most significant events on the nation's tourism calendar.

He described Carnival Calabar as a symbol of two decades of ingenuity, resilience, continuity and sustainability.

The governor traced the festival's growth across successive administrations over the years.

Otu noted that though former governor Dr Don-

ald Duke, birthed the vision, others, such as Liyel Imoke sustained it, while Ben Ayade showed immense resilience in spite of the COVID-19.

The governor said the 2025 edition would unveil some very explosive art forms, featuring outstanding and very rhythmic dances.

He urged participating bands to strictly interpret the theme, 'Traces of Time.'

"The traces of time captures everything. So, we want to see it practicalized and come in a perfect art form in a manner that the world is going to remember for so long," he said.

Emphasising quality control and competitiveness, the governor warned that not all aspiring groups would qualify for top billing.

"I've seen a number of want-to-be bands; your performances today will show whether you'll be promoted to that party. It's not very easy," he said.

He emphasised that only a quintessential performance would earn elevation, reinforcing the state's resolve to keep standards high.

Otu said the carnival's benefits extended beyond entertainment to tourism growth, cultural exchange and global visibility.

Insecurity: Group cautions against over reliance on military action

KADUNA

The Kaduna State chapter of the Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) Network, has cautioned against relying solely on military action to address insecurity, saying such an approach is inadequate to end violent extremism.

PAVE Coordinator in Kaduna, Mr. Eric John, other officials of the network during the press briefing in Kaduna on Tuesday. The group, known as the PAVE Network, made the call on Tuesday during a press briefing in Kaduna, where it reviewed the security situation in the state and the wider North-West region.

The Coordinator of the net-

work, Mr Eric John, said sustainable peace could only be achieved through evidence-based, community-led and inclusive interventions that address the root causes of violent extremism.

John described the security situation in Kaduna as complex, attributing it to the state's strategic location, long-standing communal tensions, recur-

ring herder-farmer conflicts and the spillover of armed banditry from neighbouring states.

According to him, extremist and criminal groups had continued to exploit forested areas, porous borders and socio-economic challenges, particularly youth unemployment, to sustain violence and insecurity.

While acknowledging the

efforts of security agencies and ongoing military operations, John stressed that violent extremism could not be defeated by force alone.

He said kinetic approaches, if not complemented by prevention, dialogue and development-focused strategies, risk addressing symptoms rather than the underlying causes of insecurity.

"Our focus is on what works in the long term, including early warning, early response, community trust and inclusive development," he said.

John explained that the network had prioritised capacity building and dialogue across Kaduna State and the North-West, engaging government institutions, security agencies, traditional rulers, women groups and youths organisations.

He said the engagements had resulted in the co-creation of State and Local Action Plans on preventing and countering violent extremism, enabling communities to identify their vulnerabilities and set prevention priorities.

The coordinator also highlighted community resilience campaigns conducted in several local government areas, adding that the initiatives had strengthened peace education,

tolerance messaging and grassroots networks that counter extremist narratives.

Responding to questions on reported foreign military involvement and alleged airstrikes in parts of the region, John urged caution, warning that speculation and misinformation could heighten tensions and erode public trust.

He said peace and security were collective responsibilities and called on the residents to remain vigilant, share credible information with relevant authorities and resist narratives that promote violence or division.

John also urged the Kaduna State Government to deepen ownership of PCVE processes by integrating them into state planning and budgeting frameworks.

He added that security agencies should strengthen community engagement and ensure that counter insurgency operations uphold human rights and build public confidence.

According to him, lasting peace in Kaduna State and the North-West would depend not only on military strength, but on effective community empowerment, institutional coordination and inclusive participation.



UNVEILING:

L-R: Guest of honour, Toluwani Odukoya; former Executive Director, Nigerian Television Authority, Prof. Peter Igbo; Chief Executive Officer, Greensprings School, Mrs Lai Koiki; Chairman, Parent Teacher Association of the School, Femi Omotayo and Dr Tony Akposheri during the unveiling of the Model Creative Art Center by Greensprings School in Lagos recently

Katsina NSCDC secured arrest of 2,088 suspects in 2025

KATSINA

The Katsina Command of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), says it arrested about 2,088 criminal suspects, and recovered more than N56.6 million in 2025.

The State's Commandant, Mr Abbas Moriki, disclosed this while briefing newsmen in Katsina on Tuesday, on their activities for the year 2025.

He said that the suspects

were arrested from 4,230 cases handled across the state, adding that 93 suspects were arrested for vandalism.

According to him, 942 suspects were arrested for theft, 272 for possession of illicit drugs and related substances, while 26 for assault.

"In addition, 755 suspects were arrested for sundry offences, including breach of trust and thuggery," he said.

He also disclosed that 4,767 disputes were successfully resolved through Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), while 1,158 were currently un-

dergoing ADR processes.

"A total of 43 cases are at various stages of prosecution in courts, with 577 judgments secured by the Command during the year under review.

"The Command also recorded financial recoveries amounting to N56,630,800, alongside the recovery of various exhibits," he said

According to him, these include vandalised properties, bales of insecticide-treated mosquito nets, vehicles, motorcycles, bags of cannabis, and assorted illicit drugs and substances.

He attributed the success to

the commitment of the personnel, as well as robust collaboration with relevant stakeholders and other security agencies.

Moriki also commended the state government for supporting the command, and journalists for their consistent support in ensuring timely and accurate dissemination of security-related information to the public.

The Commandant urged members of the public to remain vigilant and promptly report suspicious movements of persons or items, to the NSCDC for action.

Kalu urges Gov Otti to join APC, promises support

AGBAMUZU (ABIA)

The Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives, Mr Benjamin Kalu, has called on Governor Alex Otti of Abia to join the All Progressives Congress (APC), assuring him of full support if he defects.

Kalu made the call during an annual Christmas Food Distribution/Town Hall Meeting he organised in his country home in Agbamuzu, Bende Local Government Area.

He said, "Let me tell you, I want to use this opportunity again, publicly, to invite Governor Alex Otti to join our party.

"If he comes to our party, we will support him."

He stressed that the APC remained open to leaders willing to work collectively to strengthen the party and advance its political objectives in Abia.

Kalu said that it was always an honour to return home, noting that the legislature, the President Bola Tinubu-led administration were working for Nigerians.

He said that he remained accountable to his constituents and was driven by the belief that Nigeria's best days were ahead.

Kalu urged Nigerians to support the President, the APC, and its Renewed Hope Agenda, stressing that the Tinubu-led administration was building a lasting legacy for future generations.

He said that the rice distribution initiative began in 2003 as a humanitarian effort, long before he held public office or contemplated any political ambition.

He noted that in spite of the 23 years of consistent service, the programme was now being politicised, adding that he had not declared any intention to contest the governorship.

Kalu dismissed social media attacks, recalling that similar predictions were made before his House of Representatives election, which he won decisively.

He said that consultations were ongoing within the party and that he was awaiting direction from the APC leadership.

The Deputy Speaker encouraged party members interested in contesting elections in 2027 to be bold, assuring them of the President's support for APC candidates.

He also called for sustained grassroots mobilisation in the state to further advance the party's objectives.

On empowerment, Kalu announced a N1 billion intervention to support 2,000 small and medium-scale businesses across all local government areas of the state.

He said that each beneficiary would receive about N500,000 initially, with agencies such as the Bank of Industry, Bank of Agriculture, and SMEDAN expected to partner to expand the programme.

2027: We 'll correct leadership mistake in Rivers —Wike

PORT HARCOURT

Minister of Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Mr Nyesom Wike, says the 'leadership mistake' in Rivers will be corrected in 2027.

Wike stated this during a 'thank you' visit to the people of Khana in Bori, Khana Local Government Area of Rivers.

According to him, leaders are elected to represent the will of the people, and not for their personal agenda.

"We will not make the same mistake again at the state level in 2027, but we will talk about it later when the time comes.

"Just follow your leaders. Anywhere you see them going, that is where we are going," he said.

He stated that he was not in the community for politics but to thank the people for stand-

ing with him and President Bola Tinubu.

Wike noted that the people of Khana took a risk and supported Tinubu in 2023 when others were afraid to do so.

"During the turbulent period, Khana stood with us and now you have benefitted, from good roads to university or environment, among others, because of the love of Mr President.

"So many appointments have come to Ogoniland and more are still coming," he said.

The minister pointed out that the Rivers people would no longer vote based on party, but based on 'family' for the development of the state under Tinubu's 'Renewed Hope Agenda.'

Earlier, Rep. Dumnamene Dekor (APC - Khana) commended Wike and Tinubu for making Ogoniland the pride of the nation.

Dekor thanked the former governor for visiting communities in Rivers, stressing that people were ready to do what he asked and go where he wanted them to go.

"We are proud to be associated with you, and whatever you asked us to do, we shall do and wherever you ask us to go, we shall go," he said.

He assured Wike that the lawmakers from Rivers had surrendered their mandate to Tinubu.

Also, Mrs Barile Nwakoh (APC Khana I State Constituency), who spoke on behalf of women in the area, thanked Wike for remembering the people of Khana.

Nwakoh said that the minister was receiving enormous support in Rivers because of his goodwill, sincerity and love for the people.

She said that the women of Khana were ready to vote for

Tinubu if he decided to contest for second tenure.

"We are ready to work for Tinubu. Please tell Mr President that we are here for him and ready to work for his re-election," she said.

Similarly, Chairman of Khana Local Council, Dr Thomas Bariere, commended Wike for being there for the people of the area, adding that when the right people occupied offices, good things happen.

"Since our support for President Tinubu, things have become better for the people of Khana.

"You have supported everything good for the people of Khana and we are very grateful for this," Bariere said.

He assured Wike of the continued support of the people of the council area.

NEWS

Christian Pilgrims Commission airlifts first batch of intending pilgrims

ABUJA

The Nigerian Christian Pilgrim Commission (NCPC) has airlifted the first batch of 2025 main pilgrims to Israel and Jordan.

The Executive Secretary of NCPC, Mr Stephen Adegbite, disclosed this in a statement signed by the Head of Media and Public Relations of the Commission, Mr Celestine Toruka, on Tuesday in Abuja.

Adegbite said the pilgrims were airlifted from the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport,

Abuja, using the highest seating-capacity aircraft currently operated in Nigeria.

He noted that the Commission was able to secure such a high-capacity aircraft for the first time to airlift Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land.

"The aircraft, a Boeing 777-300, has a seating capacity of about 525. It is the biggest aircraft, which allows for mass movement of pilgrims to be airlifted and completed within a short period of time.

"This feat would not have been possible without the sup-

port of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, members of the Board of the Commission and the air carrier.

"Without the President's avowed support, the Commission would not have been able to conduct the 2024 main pilgrimage exercise, the 2025 Easter pilgrimage exercise and, of course, the 2025 main pil-

grimage exercise," he said.

Adegbite also commended Nigeria's First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu; the Vice President, Senator Kashim Shettima; and the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Senator George Akume, for their efforts in advancing the cause of Christian pilgrimage.

He further thanked the Gov-

ernor of Bauchi State, Senator Bala Mohammed, for his support and consistency in sponsoring Christian pilgrims from the state, describing him as one of the most Christian pilgrimage-friendly governors in the North-East.

Adegbite assured the intending pilgrims that all arrangements had been made

for a successful pilgrimage and urged them to be good ambassadors of Christ and Nigeria while in the Holy Land.

Meanwhile, the NCPC boss admonished pilgrims not to contemplate absconding during the exercise, stressing that the Commission had put mechanisms in place to discourage such acts.

Court orders temporary forfeiture of N1.1bn allegedly linked to Kano govt

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja, on Tuesday, ordered the interim forfeiture of over N1.1 billion allegedly moved illegally from the Kano State Federation Account domiciled with United Bank for Africa (UBA).

Justice Emeka Nwite made the order after counsel for the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Ms Oluwafunke Bada, moved an ex parte motion to that effect.

The judge held that the application was meritorious and granted it, ordering that the forfeiture be published in a national daily to enable interested parties show cause why the funds should not be permanently forfeited to the Federal Government.

He adjourned the matter until January 21, 2026, for a report of compliance.

In the suit marked FHC/ABJ/CS/2634/2025, the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the

sum of N1,109,230,000 domiciled in the ICPC Recovery Account were listed.

The ICPC sought an interim forfeiture order, stating that the funds were recovered during investigation of a petition dated August 19, 2024, and were reasonably suspected to be proceeds of unlawful activities.

An affidavit deposed to by an ICPC Anti-Corruption Assistant, Mr David Nelson, alleged that the Accountant-General of Kano State, Abdulkadir Abdulsalam, authorised payment of the funds to two Bureau de Change companies under false pretences.

According to him, investigation revealed that no supplies of diesel or alum were made as claimed, while the money was allegedly converted to foreign currency and delivered in cash to officials linked to the Kano State Government.

He said the ICPC recovered N1,109,230,000 in two instalments and urged the court to preserve the funds pending final determination.

Rivers monarch hails Wike as 'dependable ally'

PORT HARCOURT

The paramount ruler of Emohua Kingdom in Rivers State, Eze Ohna Awuse, has described the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Mr Nyesom Wike, as a dependable ally and a leader worthy of emulation.

Awuse, who is also Chairman of the South-South Monarchs Forum, spoke during Wike's special Christmas visit to Rumuche, Emohua Local Government Area.

He said Emohua people would continue to follow Wike wherever he goes, adding that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu had done well and deserves the support of Rivers people.

According to him, Tinubu has improved the economy, stabilised the naira and increased Nigeria's external reserves to over 47 billion dollars.

Awuse commended Wike for transforming Abuja under Tinubu's administration and urged him not to be distracted by criticism.

In his remarks, Wike said the visit was to thank the people for their continuous support, particularly for President Tinubu, and urged them to sustain their support for the administration's success.

If you want, I can tighten the leads, reduce quotes, or reshape any of the stories for front-page national newspaper style.



ARRAIGNMENT:

Former Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami (M), during his arraignment for alleged money laundering offences at the Federal High Court in Abuja on Tuesday.

Ministry seeks public vigilance, support in combating bridge vandalism in Lagos

LAGOS

The Federal Ministry of Works has condemned the continued vandalism of bridge rails in Lagos State, despite efforts to curb the menace by casting iron rails with concrete.

The Federal Controller of Works in Lagos State, Mr Olufemi Dare, made this known while speaking with journalists at some vandalised bridge rails.

He expressed concern that hoodlums still break the concrete rails to remove the iron rods embedded inside them.

According to him, the min-

istry would again write to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and other security agencies to intensify surveillance on bridges across the state.

Dare said the EFCC had recently arrested some suspects involved in vandalism and brought them, alongside the stolen items, to the ministry.

He advised Nigerians to protect public infrastructure the same way they would protect their personal assets, noting that such facilities were meant for public benefit.

According to him, government spends huge sums of

money repairing vandalised bridges and other infrastructure, urging residents to desist from unpatriotic acts.

The controller appealed to Nigerians to take responsibility for public infrastructure and report anyone found damaging such facilities to security agencies, warning residents not to take the law into their own hands.

Reacting, the President of the Association of Scrap and Waste Pickers of Lagos, Mr Friday Oku, said the association condemned vandalism in its entirety.

However, he urged govern-

ment to formalise the scrap and waste picking sector by creating a database of all operators and issuing identity cards to genuine members.

Oku said the association had commenced in-house registration and issuance of identity cards to members who paid a token, to aid proper identification.

According to him, proper documentation would help distinguish genuine operators from criminals disguising as scrap and waste pickers, thereby assisting security agencies to tackle vandalism more effectively.

Fire razes 8 shops, destroys properties at Sango, Ibadan

IBADAN

The Oyo State Fire Services Agency has confirmed that fire razed eight shops and destroyed properties worth millions of naira in an incident beside the Sango Police Divisional Headquarters in Ibadan.

The Chairman of the agency,

Mr Moroof Akinwande, disclosed this in a statement issued in Ibadan on Tuesday.

Akinwande said the fire, which occurred on Monday, destroyed eight out of the 84 shops located in the area.

He said the agency received a distress call at exactly 12:43 p.m. through a telephone call from one Mr Akanni and im-

mediately deployed personnel led by Assistant Chief Fire Superintendent Bamidele Samudeen to the scene.

"Upon arrival, we met eight out of the 84 shops engulfed by fire.

"Firefighters promptly launched a coordinated attack on the blaze and prevented it from spreading to other shops,"

he said.

He added that the firefighting operation was carried out in conjunction with officers of the Federal Fire Service, Ibadan Command.

Akinwande said no casualty was recorded, while the cause of the fire was yet to be ascertained, noting that investigation was ongoing.

Troops apprehend suspected suicide bomber, IEDs dealer in Borno

ABUJA

Troops of Operation Hadin Kai, have apprehended a suspected su-

icide bomber and a fertiliser dealer during coordinated security operations in Bama Local Government Area of Borno.

The Media Information Officer, OPHK, Lt.-Col. Sani Uba, in a statement on Tuesday, identified the suspect as Abubakar Mustapha.

Uba said the suspect was apprehended on Sunday evening at the Banki Central Mosque

CONTINUES ON PG 7

Stakeholders review health sector, call for improvement

IBADAN

Health sector stakeholders have reviewed the performance of the sector in 2025, urging governments at all levels to prioritise improved healthcare delivery in 2026.

They spoke on Tuesday in separate interviews with journalists in Ibadan.

Dr Obitade Obimakinde, former National Public Relations Officer of the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), said the 2025 health budget increased by nearly 60 per cent compared to 2024.

He added that the Basic Healthcare Provision Fund (BHCPF) more than doubled

within the same period.

According to him, total allocation to the health sector stood at about N2.48 trillion, representing approximately 5.18 per cent of the national budget.

Obimakinde said the figure still fell far below the 15 per cent target set by African leaders in the 2000 Abuja Declaration.

"It is worthy of note that Nigeria has persistently fallen short of the Abuja Declaration over the years.

"Although there is increased health service utilisation across the primary healthcare system nationwide compared to 2024, health insurance coverage remains abysmally poor.

"From the foregoing, there

is a substantial funding gap for optimal health system strengthening, with several overriding challenges," he said.

He identified the 'japa syndrome', the mass migration of healthcare workers abroad, as a major concern driven by poor remuneration and weak welfare packages.

Obimakinde also expressed concern over high operational costs faced by healthcare facilities, particularly energy expenses and exchange rate volatility, which have placed financial pressure on both public and private hospitals.

He added that challenges with budget implementation, including the rollover of capital

projects, reflected administrative inefficiencies across sectors.

He urged government to improve welfare packages for health workers, whom he described as the driving force behind policy implementation.

"There is also a need to increase access to healthcare by expanding the scope and operationalisation of the National Health Insurance Authority," he said.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of the Oyo State chapter of the Nigerian Medical Association, Dr Happy Adedapo, described the state's health sector performance in 2025 as unimpressive.

Adedapo said the 'japa syndrome' persisted, while several general hospitals and secondary

healthcare centres lacked doctors.

"Most primary healthcare centres are still functioning below expectations, and there are many quackery outlets in the state.

"This is in spite of NMA's efforts to engage government agencies responsible for curbing the menace, beyond mere closure of illegal facilities, to ensure offenders are prosecuted," he said.

He said that, in fairness, he would score the Oyo State health sector 45 per cent, which he described as below average.

On budgetary allocation, Adedapo said the N70 billion allocated to health out of the state's N892 billion budget amounted to less than eight per cent.

He noted that this fell short of the 15 per cent benchmark recommended by the World Health Organization.

Adedapo said the 2026 budget should prioritise upgrading existing infrastructure, procuring modern diagnostic equipment, and improving welfare, training and retention of healthcare workers.

"The budget reflects stagnation, and any health allocation that is not in double digits is nothing to celebrate.

"Currently, there is no state government facility with a Magnetic Resonance Imaging or Computer Tomography scan machine that should ordi-

narily be available in state specialist hospitals," he said.

He stressed that Oyo doctors were among the least paid in the South-West, calling for improved remuneration and incentives such as car and housing loans.

He also urged timely payment of residency training funds and domestication of nationally approved salary structures, while advocating a dedicated fund for continuous training and retraining of doctors.

Similarly, the Medical Director of Insignia Health, Dr Olumuyiwa Olusanya, underscored the need for a well-equipped primary healthcare system as the foundation for efficient healthcare delivery.

Olusanya called for the integration of private and general practitioners into the primary healthcare system, with adequate financial support.

"Once we get it right at the primary healthcare level, the entire health sector will be repositioned.

"Tertiary healthcare facilities are overcrowded because people cannot access adequate care at the primary level.

"The government should focus on equipping existing teaching hospitals like University College Hospital rather than creating new ones," he said.



TRAVELLING FOR NEW YEAR:

People travelling for New Year celebration at Abali Park in Port Harcourt on Tuesday.

Information Minister mourns Gombe journalists

ABUJA

The Minister of Information and National Orientation, Alhaji Mohammed Idris, has expressed deep shock and sorrow over the death of seven journalists in a lone road crash in Gombe State.

This was contained in a statement issued by his Special Assistant on Media, Malam Rabi Ibrahim, on Tuesday in Abuja.

The incident occurred on Monday evening as the journalists were returning from a wedding ceremony in the Gombe South Senatorial District.

They were said to have travelled in solidarity with a colleague from the Nigerian Television Authority who was getting married.

The minister described the tragedy as a heartbreaking loss to the media community and

the nation, noting that the journalists were committed professionals who informed the public with courage and integrity.

"This is a harrowing moment. Nigeria has lost dedicated voices who informed, educated and stood for truth. Their passing is a heavy blow to us all.

"I extend my condolences to the Gombe State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists,

and especially to the families, friends and colleagues of the deceased.

"I pray that God grants them the strength to bear this painful loss," he said.

Idris said the Federal Government stood with the bereaved families and the media community during the moment of grief, praying that the souls of the departed rest in perfect peace.

Yuletide: Special emissary provides free medical care to Benue community

MAKURDI

Dr Patrick Onogwu, a special emissary, in collaboration with the International Society of Diplomats and MEG Cancer Foundation, has provided free medical care to hundreds of residents of Otukpa in Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State.

The medical services included blood pressure checks, malaria parasite tests, Widal tests, hepatitis screening, random blood sugar tests and red blood cell checks.

Counselling services, treat-

ment of various ailments, surgeries and referrals for complicated cases were also provided.

Onogwu said the initiative was conceived as a way of giving back to his community during the festive season.

He explained that as an indigene of Ogbadibo Local Government Area, born in Otukpa, he found it necessary to provide free medical services to residents who could not easily access healthcare.

He said the outreach aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals on health, particularly the 2030 and 2063 targets, which em-

phasise preventive healthcare and access to basic medical services.

Onogwu noted that Otukpa was deliberately chosen due to the severe deficit in healthcare delivery in the area, with many residents suffering preventable and treatable illnesses.

He described the General Hospital, Ijadoga, as an old colonial-era facility that had become largely inactive due to industrial actions and poor staffing.

According to him, although the outreach initially targeted 200 people, turnout exceeded expectations, with about 340

patients attended to on the first day and over 300 on the second.

He said five surgical cases were identified on the first day, with three surgeries already carried out, including two major ones.

Some patients requiring specialised care were referred to the Federal Medical Centre and the Benue State University Teaching Hospital in Makurdi.

Onogwu appealed to the Benue State Government, led by Governor Hyacinth Alia, and the Ogbadibo Local Government Council to prioritise grassroots healthcare.

FG to position dairy business into competitive sector —Official

MAIDUGURI

The Federal Government has moved to position small-scale dairy farmers, who contribute more than 80 per cent of Nigeria's milk supply, into a competitive, inclusive and self-reliant sector.

Dr Chinyere Akujobi, Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development, disclosed this at a training on improved dairy farming for small-scale farmers in Maiduguri.

She said the training was

part of efforts to modernise Nigeria's dairy industry, bridge milk production gaps and increase output.

Akujobi noted that the average Nigerian cow produces only one to two litres of milk per day, compared to 20 to 30 litres globally under improved management systems.

She said the dairy policy prioritised improved animal productivity, access to quality feed and veterinary services, structured market linkages, and capacity building for smallholder farmers.

Police apprehend 14 suspected traffic robbers in Lagos

LAGOS

Ms Motunrayo Gbadebo-Alogba, the Chairman of Ijeda Local Council Development Area (LCDA) of Lagos State, has empowered some vulnerable residents in the area with N50,000 cash grant each.

The vulnerable residents, which include petty traders, people liv

The Police Command in Lagos State has apprehended 14 suspected traffic robbers at different locations along the Lekki-Epe Expressway within the last two weeks.

The command's spokesperson, Superintendent of Police Abimbola Adebisi, confirmed

this on Tuesday.

She said the suspects were apprehended by the command's Tactical Squad, Elemoro, during sustained patrols and intelligence-led operations.

According to her, the arrests underscore the command's commitment to improving security and ensuring the safety of motorists and other road users along the busy corridor.

Adebisi urged members of the public to remain vigilant and report suspicious activities, stressing that security is a collective responsibility.

She reassured residents and commuters of sustained patrols to ensure the safety of lives and property across the area.

NEWS

Industry experts call for stronger governance in oil sector

LAGOS

Experts in the oil and gas industry have said Nigeria could still secure a more sustainable oil and gas future if it gets governance right, enforces existing laws and restores confidence in regulation.

The experts, in separate interviews with reporters on Tuesday in Lagos, said the country's biggest challenge was no longer the availability of oil and gas, but how the sector is managed.

They warned that weak institutions, policy inconsistency and poor execution continue to erode value in Africa's largest energy producer, despite its vast hydrocarbon reserves.

According to them, 2026 will be a decisive year, as Nigeria faces a clear choice between strengthening institutional discipline or sliding back into discretionary, personality-driven governance.

Prof. Wumi Iledare, Professor Emeritus of Petroleum Economics at Louisiana State University, said the outlook for the sector in 2026 would depend more on governance quality and regulatory discipline than on geology.

"Nigeria is richly endowed with petroleum resources, but sustainable value creation depends on faithful implementa-

tion of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), regulatory neutrality and credible leadership," Iledare said.

He stressed that the industry does not need new laws or emergency interventions, but consistent enforcement of existing regulations.

"What the sector needs in 2026 is predictable regulation, institutional restraint and strict adherence to the PIA," he said.

Iledare pointed to the absence of fully constituted governing boards for petroleum regulatory agencies as a major weakness in the current framework.

He explained that the PIA deliberately created boards for the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission and the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority to ensure accountability, strategic oversight and protection against regulatory capture.

Without such boards, he warned, regulators risk becoming overly personalised and exposed to political and commercial pressure.

On upstream operations, Iledare called for urgent steps to halt declining production, including improved asset security, faster project approvals and transparent fiscal administration.

He said divestments by in-

ternational oil companies must be closely monitored to ensure technical competence, financial strength and environmental responsibility.

On the downstream sector, he said Nigeria is undergoing a structural market transition rather than a market failure, urging regulators to enforce competition rules and remain neutral among dominant players.

He also advised the Federal Government to step back from refinery operations and focus on creating a stable and predictable commercial environment.

"Refining is a business, not a sovereign obligation. It will only thrive if private investors operate on a level playing field," he said.

Iledare added that the commercialisation of the Nigerian

National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd.) would remain incomplete if balance-sheet discipline is replaced by repeated fiscal bail-outs.

"Institutions, not improvisation, must guide the sector in 2026," he said.

In a similar view, Dr Ayodele Oni, Partner and Chair of the Energy and Natural Resources Practice Group at Bloomfield

Law Practice, said 2026 should be defined by policy stability and effective implementation.

He said crude oil production could rise towards the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission's target of 2.5 million barrels per day from the current range of 1.7 million to 1.83 million barrels per day, but only with coordinated action across regulatory, operational and security fronts.



CORONATION OF CHIEF UCHENNA:

Chief Executive Officer, Green Enterprises Development Limited, Chief Uchenna Amaku (2nd L); Igwe of Ifite-Ogwari Community of Ayamelum Local Government Area of Anambra State, Igwe Alphonsus Ofuebe and others, during the coronation of Chief Uchenna as 'Udemba Ifite Ogwari' in Ifite-Ogwari Community of Anambra state on Tuesday.

Amotekun arrests 39 suspects fleeing Sokoto in Ondo forest

AKURE

The Ondo State Security Network Agency, Amotekun Corps, has arrested 39 suspects who allegedly fled Sokoto State and relocated into forest reserves in Ondo State.

The State Commander of Amotekun, Mr Adetunji Adeleye, disclosed this on Tuesday in Akure while parading the suspects alongside 22 others arrested for various criminal offences.

Adeleye said the suspects were fleeing following a recent United States-backed military

strike against ISIS terrorists in Northern Nigeria.

He said the suspects were apprehended at the Elegbeka axis in Ose Local Government Area, a known security flash-point.

According to him, the suspects were found hibernating inside the forest with their vehicles parked far from their hideout.

He said those found with incriminating materials would be prosecuted, adding that the arrests were part of the agency's ember-month security operations across the state.

U.S.-based Igbo group donates N1bn plaza to Imo community

AMAIGBO (IMO)

A United States-based Igbo group, Amaigbo Town Union USA, has donated a plaza worth N1 billion to Amaigbo Community in Nwangele Local Government Area of Imo State.

The plaza, inaugurated on Tuesday at the Ekeukwu Amaigbo Market, consists of 176 lock-up shops.

Speaking at the event, the President of ATU-USA, Mr Kingsley Nmezi, said the project symbolises collective effort, economic vision and community development.

He said the plaza would stimulate trade, create jobs and empower local entrepreneurs.

The traditional ruler of Amaigbo, Eze Nelson Nwosu, expressed gratitude to ATU-USA and urged unity among community members.

The President-General of Amaigbo, Mr Frank Madumere, thanked the group and appealed to other diaspora branches to emulate the gesture.

If you want, I can tighten further for front-page fit, trim word count, or refine any single story headline for national prominence.

Kebbi explosion: Govt, Police deny bandits, airstrike involvement

BIRNIN KEBBI

The Kebbi State Government and the state Police Command have debunked rumours suggesting that the explosion at Bagudo General Hospital involved a bomb or a helicopter airstrike.

They clarified that the explosion was caused by a fire outbreak involving gas cylinders.

It would be recalled that an early morning explosion occurred at Bagudo General Hospital in Bagudo Local Government Area of Kebbi State.

However, there was no casualty following the incident, as confirmed by the police.

Clarifying the matter on Tuesday in Birnin Kebbi, the Secretary to the State Government, Alhaji Yakubu Bala-Tafida, said preliminary findings from security agencies indicated that the explosion occurred at the hospital staff quarters as a result of a fire incident, not an explosive device.

Bala-Tafida said the state government was working closely with the police and other security agencies, which had since taken full control of the situation.

He added that no life was lost in the incident, noting that although a building was affected, occupants had already evacuated safely before the ex-

plosion.

"We commend the swift response of the Police Command and other security operatives for promptly securing the area and ensuring public safety.

"We reaffirm our commitment to the protection of lives and property across the state," Bala-Tafida said.

Corroborating the government's position, the Police Command said investigations and expert assessments confirmed that the explosion was caused by an inferno that overheated air-conditioning and refrigerator gas cylinders.

A statement by the Police Public Relations Officer, SP

Bashir Usman, said the command conducted an assessment by Explosive Ordnance Disposal-Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear experts, alongside the Commissioner of Police Tactical Team.

"The assessment confirmed that no explosives or aerial activity were involved.

"No injuries or loss of life were recorded, as verified by on-site expert teams.

"We urge the public and the media to remain calm and disregard unverified reports suggesting a bomb blast or helicopter involvement, as such reports could cause unnecessary panic," Usman said.

Money laundering: Court remands Bauchi Commissioner for Finance

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja, on Tuesday, ordered the remand of Yakubu Adamu, Bauchi State Commissioner for Finance, pending a ruling on his bail application.

Justice Emeka Nwite gave the order after Chief Gordy Uche, SAN, who appeared for Adamu and a firm, Ayab Agro Products and Freight Company Limited, moved the bail application, which was opposed by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission lawyer, Mr Samuel Chime.

The development occurred shortly after Adamu and Ayab Agro Products were arraigned on a six-count charge bordering on alleged money laundering to the tune of N4.6 billion. The charge, marked FHC/ABJ/CR/694/2025, named Adamu and the company as the first and second defendants.

The charge was dated and filed on December 19, 2025, by Chime of the EFCC's Legal and Prosecution Department.

In count one, Adamu, while acting as Branch Manager of Polaris Bank Limited, Bauchi, alongside Ishaku Aliyu, Managing Director of Makayye

Investment Resources Limited, and Muntaka Mohammed Duguri, both currently at large, was alleged to have conspired between June and December 2023 to convert, transfer, conceal and use funds amounting to N4.65 billion.

The funds were allegedly availed by Polaris Bank under the guise of financing the supply of motorcycles to the Bauchi State Government through Emmanuel Asomugha General Enterprises.

"The motorcycles were not supplied, and you thereby committed an offence contrary to Section 21(a) and pun-

ishable under Section 21 of the Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Act, 2022," the charge stated.

Count six accused Adamu and others of retaining and transferring proceeds of unlawful activities through nominees and third-party accounts, including a transfer of N165.9 million to Ayab Agro Products and Freight Company Limited.

After the defendants pleaded not guilty, Justice Nwite ordered Adamu's remand in Kuje Correctional Centre and adjourned the matter until January 2, 2026, for ruling on the bail application.

JUDICIARY

NEWS

Court remands Malami, co-defendants in Kuje Correctional Centre as ex-minister, others plead not guilty

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja, on Tuesday, ordered the remand of Mr Abubakar Malami, SAN, former Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF); his son, Abubakar Abdulaziz Malami; and a co-defendant, Hajia Bashir Asabe, at the Kuje Correctional Centre pending the

hearing of their bail applications.

Justice Emeka Nwite, ruling on an oral bail application made by defence counsel, Mr Joseph Daudu, SAN, held that it would be in the interest of justice and fair hearing to allow the prosecution respond to the bail application earlier filed by the defence.

"I have listened to the sub-

missions of the learned counsel on both sides and also gone through the relevant laws.

"It is not in dispute that an application for bail has been filed by the defendants.

"It is also not in dispute that the bail application has been served on the prosecution.

"It is not in dispute that the application cannot be withdrawn by the defendants," the

judge said.

Justice Nwite noted that although the court had the discretion to grant bail, such discretion must be exercised after the prosecution had responded to the bail application already filed.

According to him, granting bail without hearing from the prosecution would amount to ambush and breach the prosecution's right to fair hearing.

"This will breach the right to fair hearing of the prosecution.

"I am of the view that the interest of justice will be met by allowing the prosecution to respond to the bail application filed," he said.

The judge consequently ordered that the defendants be remanded at the Kuje Correctional Centre pending the hearing of their bail applications and adjourned the matter until January 2 for hearing.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), in the charge marked FHC/ABJ/CR/700/2025, listed the former Attorney-General of the Federation, Hajia Bashir Asabe, and Abubakar Abdulaziz Malami as the first, second and third defendants respectively. Malami, his son, Abubakar Abdulaziz, and Asabe, an employee of Rahamaniyya Properties Ltd, a firm linked to the former minister, all pleaded not guilty to the 16-count charge bordering on money launder-

ing when they were arraigned before Justice Emeka Nwite.

The anti-graft agency alleged that the defendants carried out various suspicious transactions and attempted to conceal the unlawful origin of billions of naira through bank accounts and property acquisitions across Abuja, Kano and Kebbi states.

The alleged offences were said to have been committed between 2015 and 2025, a period which includes the eight years Malami served as Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice during the administration of late former President Muhammadu Buhari.

The EFCC further alleged that the defendants conspired to disguise the origin of funds, indirectly acquire properties, and retain sums they allegedly knew were proceeds of unlawful activity, contrary to the provisions of the Money Laundering (Prohibition and Prevention) Acts of 2011 (as amended) and 2022.



SPECIAL PRAYER:

Members of Police Retirees Association of Nigeria, Kaduna State Chapter, during a Special Prayer and Thanksgiving over the Contributory Scheme Exits in Kaduna on Tuesday.

Respect Justice Kawu's order granting Malami bail, group urges EFCC

ABUJA

A civil society group, Arewa Youth for Good Governance, has called on the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to respect the court order granting bail to the former Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami.

Justice Bello Kawu of the FCT High Court, Abuja, had on December 23 granted Malami bail while he was in the custody of the EFCC over allegations of money laundering and suspicious wealth accumulation.

The President of the group,

Yusuf Abdullahi, made the call in a statement issued in Abuja on Tuesday, stressing that court orders are sacrosanct and must be obeyed irrespective of personal beliefs or disagreements.

"It is imperative to note that court orders are sacrosanct all over the world, Nigeria inclusive, irrespective of belief or disagreement.

"Nigeria is not a banana republic operating in a manner different from the rest of the world. It is a shame and an insult to the good people of Nigeria the way and manner the system keeps disobeying court orders for political witch-hunt," Abdullahi said.

He warned that disobedi-

ence of court orders undermines democracy and could lead to anarchy.

"The judiciary all over the world stands as the engine for systems to thrive. A situation where court orders are disobeyed automatically leads the system towards collapse. We cannot continue on this path," he added.

The group urged the EFCC and other relevant authorities to honour and obey the bail order granted by Justice Bello Kawu.

Abdullahi also appealed to the EFCC Chairman, Mr Olanipekun Olukoyede, to demonstrate professionalism by ensuring compliance with the court order.

He recalled that Malami had been in EFCC custody since

December 8, 2025, following an invitation by the commission.

According to him, the EFCC had earlier obtained a 14-day remand order from the FCT High Court, presided over by Justice S.C. Oriji, to detain Malami pending further investigation.

Despite this, Malami's lawyers filed an ex-parte bail application before Justice Bello Kawu, who granted bail on December 23 on the grounds that Malami was lawfully detained.

The EFCC has filed 16 counts against Malami, his son, Abubakar Abdulaziz Malami, and Bashir Asabe, an employee of Rahamaniyya Properties Ltd, bordering on money laundering, concealment, and unlawful acquisition of proceeds of illegal activity.

Police arrest 3,081 suspects for various crimes in Kano in 2025

KANO

The Kano State Police Command has arrested no fewer than 3,081 suspects for various crimes in 2025, including armed robbery, kidnapping, drug trafficking and thuggery across different parts of the state.

The Commissioner of Police, Ibrahim Bakori, disclosed this during an end-of-year press briefing held at the command's headquarters in Kano on Tuesday.

Bakori highlighted the command's achievements in crime prevention and peacebuilding since he assumed office on March 17, 2025.

He said the command recovered several firearms, including AK-47 rifles, pistols and locally made guns, as well as ammunition, illicit drugs, stolen vehicles, motorcycles, tricycles and mobile phones.

According to him, those arrested included 146 armed robbery suspects, 50 kidnapping

suspects, 112 suspected drug dealers and over 2,300 suspected thugs. Fourteen kidnap victims were also successfully rescued during various operations.

The commissioner attributed the successes to intelligence-led policing, community engagement, capacity building for officers and joint border patrols with sister security agencies.

He added that the launch of "Operation Kukan Kura" significantly contributed to the decline in crime, leading to improved peace and security across the state.

Bakori urged residents to continue partnering with the police by reporting suspicious activities and providing timely information.

"We are unwaveringly committed to maintaining peace and security in the state," he assured.

If you want, I can now tighten them further for front-page national newspaper style, or harmonise tone and structure across all four stories.

Troops apprehend suspected suicide...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 4

following sustained joint operations and intelligence gathering by troops of 152 Task Force Battalion, in collaboration with other security agencies.

He said the suspect was found in possession of primed improvised explosive device (IED) materials, adding that preliminary investigations revealed that he hails from Bama and had additional incriminating items linked to terrorist activity.

According to him, the suspect is currently undergoing further interrogation to determine the extent of his involvement and possible links with

terrorist cells operating in the area.

Uba also revealed that troops deployed to the Cameroon-Nigeria border gate intercepted a Peugeot vehicle conveying six bags of urea fertiliser, a critical component used in the manufacture of IEDs.

According to him, further investigation led to the arrest of the fertiliser dealer and the recovery of an additional six bags of urea, all of which are now in military custody.

He said that troops had continued to dominate their area of responsibility through aggressive patrols to deny JAS/ISWAP terrorists freedom of action.

Man, 32, arraigned for allegedly stealing motorcycle worth N400,000

SANGO-OTA

A 32-year-old man, Sodiq Oyerinde, was on Tuesday arraigned before

an Ota Magistrates' Court in Ogun State for allegedly stealing a motorcycle valued at N400,000.

Oyerinde, whose address was not provided, is standing trial on a one-count charge of stealing. He pleaded not guilty to the charge.

The prosecutor, ASP E.O. Adaraloye, told the court that the defendant committed the offence on August 16 at about 8:15 p.m. along Hosmark

Road, Iloye, in Ota.

He alleged that the defendant stole a Bajaj motorcycle with registration number LAR 948 UX, valued at N400,000, belonging to one Shaheed Tijani.

According to the prosecutor, the defendant fled with the motorcycle but was eventually arrested following police investigation and subsequently charged to court.

He said the offence contravenes Section 390 of the Crim-

inal Law of Ogun State, 2006.

The Magistrate, Mrs O.O. Fadairo, granted the defendant bail in the sum of N100,000 with two sureties in like sum.

She ruled that the sureties must reside within the court's jurisdiction and be gainfully employed, with evidence of tax payment to the Ogun State Government.

The case was adjourned until February 19, 2026 for hearing.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as MISS EHIMEN BECKY ONOMHEN now wish to be known as MRS. BECKY EHIMEN ISAAC. former documents remain valid, concerned authorities and general public should please take note.

NEWS

Foreign

Trump hopes to reach phase two of Gaza ceasefire 'very quickly'

Donald Trump said he hoped to reach phase two of the Gaza peace plan "very quickly", as he warned Hamas would have "hell to pay" if it did not disarm soon.

The US president, whose 20-point peace plan requires the militant group to disarm, made the comments as he met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Florida for talks on Monday.

During a press conference with Netanyahu after their meeting, Trump said Israel had "lived up to the plan 100%", despite continuing attacks by its military in Gaza.

The US president also said his country could support another major strike on Iran were it to resume rebuilding its ballistic missile or nuclear weapons programmes.

In response to Trump's threat, Iran's supreme leader's top po-

litical adviser, Ali Shamkhani, said on X that any aggression towards Iran would be met with an "immediate harsh response".

Asked how quickly Hamas and Israel should move to phase two of the peace plan, Trump said: "As quickly as we can. But there has to be disarmament."

Speaking about Hamas, he said: "If they don't disarm as, as they agreed to do, they agreed to it, and then there will be hell to pay for them."

"They have to disarm in a fairly short period of time".

Trump also said reconstruction in Gaza could "begin pretty soon".

The Gaza peace plan came into effect in October. Under the second phase, a technocratic government would be established in the devastated territory, Hamas would disarm and Israeli troops would withdraw. The reconstruction of

Gaza would then begin.

But critics have suggested Netanyahu could seek to delay the process of the plan and instead push for Hamas to disarm before Israeli troops withdraw.

The Israeli prime minister has been accused of not wanting to engage seriously with the issue of a political future for Palestinians.

Hamas officials have said a full disarmament should take place alongside progress towards an independent Palestinian state.

Asked if he was concerned Israel was not moving fast enough to phase two of the plan, Trump said it had "lived up to the plan".

"I'm not concerned about anything that Israel's doing, I'm concerned about what other people are doing or maybe aren't doing," he added.

Since the ceasefire came into

effect, at least 414 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli military in Gaza, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

The Israeli military, which controls more than half of Gaza, has said it has only opened fire in response to ceasefire violations. It has blamed Hamas for the killings of three Israeli soldiers over the same period.

During the press briefing, Trump also warned that the US would launch further attacks on Iran if it was found to be using different sites to develop nuclear weapons.

In June, Trump claimed US air and missile strikes "obliterated" Iran's nuclear facilities. Iran has denied seeking to develop nuclear weapons.

"I hope they're not trying to build up again, because if they are we're going to have no choice but to eradicate that build up," he said.

Eurostar disruption to continue after power outage in Channel Tunnel

Eurostar is resuming some services after all trains from London towards Paris, Amsterdam and Brussels were cancelled due to a power outage in the Channel Tunnel.

Trains that have not been cancelled will be subject to "severe delays and possible last-minute cancellations" and passengers are advised to postpone their travel to a different date, Eurostar said.

The Channel Tunnel has partially reopened after a Le Shuttle train - which carries road vehicles and passengers through the tunnel between Folkestone and Calais - broke down.

Eurotunnel Le Shuttle services are also starting to resume, the operator said.

Eurostar says the overhead power supply issue, which started last night in parts of the Channel Tunnel, remains.

National Rail has advised passengers not to come to London St Pancras International if their Eurostar train is cancelled.

Follow the latest updates in our live coverage

By midday on Tuesday, at least a dozen Eurostar services between the UK, France, Belgium and the Netherlands had been cancelled leaving passengers stranded and holidays disrupted.

Earlier Eurostar said services to and from London were suspended until further notice due to overhead power supply issues in the Channel Tunnel, followed

by a failed Le Shuttle train.

The rail operator apologised and said passengers could rearrange their plans free of charge or can cancel their booking and get a refund or an e-voucher.

The broken Le Shuttle train was moved out of the Channel Tunnel.

On its website, Le Shuttle apologised and warned of delays at check-in and departures.

Ben Clark, from Bedfordshire, told the BBC he has been stuck on-board Le Shuttle in Calais with his wife and three daughters since 10:00 local time (09:00 GMT).

"The first two-and-a-half hours weren't too bad but the girls have got restless in the last half an hour so we've let them run around the boarding carriage to burn off some energy," he said.

"Some people are getting angry but there's nothing that can be done, others are sleeping in their cars. We have used up our snacks and now have no plan B or C."

Eurostar passengers booked to travel on Tuesday have been told to reschedule their travel if they can

On the UK side at Folkestone, Le Shuttle said there is a delay of around three-and-a-half hours to the booked departure time.

Matthew Webber, from Suffolk, said he has been stuck for hours and is unclear whether he and his group will be able to continue their journey.



MEETING:
Trump and Netanyahu during their meeting on Tuesday.

Russia's losses in Ukraine rise faster than ever as US pushes for peace deal

BBC News Russian counts Moscow's war losses using official reports, newspapers, social media, and new memorials and graves.

Over the past 10 months, Russian losses in the war with Ukraine have been growing faster than any time since the start of the full-scale invasion in 2022, BBC analysis suggests.

As peace efforts intensified in 2025 under pressure from US President Donald Trump's administration, 40% more obituaries of soldiers were published in Russian sources compared with the previous year.

Overall, the BBC has confirmed the names of almost 160,000 people killed fighting

on Russia's side in Ukraine.

The real death toll is believed to be much higher, and military experts we have consulted believe our analysis of cemeteries, war memorials and obituaries might represent 45-65% of the total.

That would put the number of Russian deaths at between 243,000 and 352,000.

The number of obituaries for any given period is a preliminary estimate of the confirmed losses, as some need additional verification and will eventually be discarded. But it can indicate how the intensity of fighting is changing over time.

2025 starts with a relatively low number of published obituaries

in January, compared with the previous months. Then the number rises in February, when Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin talked directly for the first time about ending the war in Ukraine.

The next peak in August coincides with the two presidents meeting each other in Alaska, a diplomatic coup for Putin that was widely seen as an end to his international isolation.

In October, when a planned second Russia-US summit was eventually shelved, and then in November, when the US presented a 28-point peace proposal, an average of 322 obituaries were published per day - twice the average in 2024.

It is difficult to put increased Russian losses down to any one factor, but the Kremlin sees territorial gains as a way of influencing negotiations with the US in its favour: Putin aide Yuri Ushakov stressed recently that "recent successes" had had a positive impact.

Murat Mukashev was among those who gambled on a quick peace deal, and it cost him his life.

Over the years, he had taken part in demonstrations against police violence and torture, and joined rallies for LGBT rights and the release of Alexei Navalny, the Kremlin's main opponent who died in prison in 2024.

Protests spread across Iran for third day after currency hits record low

Protests and strikes in Iran over inflation and currency devaluation have spread from the capital, Tehran, to several other cities on a third day of unrest.

The protests began on Sunday after shopkeepers in Tehran's Grand Bazaar staged a strike when the Iranian rial hit a record low against the US dollar on the open market.

Since then, videos verified by BBC Persian have shown demonstrations in the cities of Karaj, Hamedan, Qeshm, Malard, Isfahan, Kermanshah, Shiraz and Yazd. Police were also seen using tear gas in an attempt to disperse demonstrators.

The Iranian government said it "recognises the protests" and would listen "with patience, even if it is confronted with harsh voices".

President Masoud Pezeshkian wrote on X late on Monday that he had instructed the interior minister to hold talks with what he described as "representatives" of the protesters so that measures could be taken "to resolve the problems and act responsibly".

He also accepted the resignation of Iran's central bank governor, Mohammadreza Farzin, and named former economy and finance minister Abdolnasser Hemmati to replace him.

University students have also joined the protests, chanting anti-government slogans including "Death to the dictator" - a

reference to the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who holds ultimate power in Iran.

Some protesters were also heard chanting slogans in support of the son of the late Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was overthrown in the 1979 Islamic Revolution, including "Long live the Shah".

In response, Reza Pahlavi, who lives in exile in the United States, wrote on X: "I am with you. Victory is ours because our cause is just and because we are united."

"As long as this regime remains in power, the country's economic situation will continue to deteriorate," he added.

The US state department's Persian-language account on X also expressed support for the protests.

It said the US "praises their courage" and stands with those seeking "dignity and a better future" after years of failed policies and economic mismanagement.

Iran was reportedly high on the agenda of a meeting between US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Florida on Monday.

At a joint news conference afterwards, Trump declined to say whether he supported regime change in Iran, but said: "They've got a lot of problems: tremendous inflation, their economy is bust, their economy is no good, and I know people aren't so happy."

Foreign

NEWS

Bangladesh's first female prime minister Khaleda Zia dies aged 80

Khaleda Zia, Bangladesh's first female prime minister and an arch-rival of ousted leader Sheikh Hasina, has died from a prolonged illness. She was 80 years old.

Zia intended to run for parliament in February, when the country will vote for the first time since a popular revolution in late 2024 unseated Hasina.

Thrust into the political limelight following the assassination of her husband, then-president Ziaur Rahman, she went on to become Bangladesh's first female PM in 1991.

Her career, which included spells in prison and house arrest, was defined by a bitter feud with Hasina. She was acquitted of corruption and allowed to travel to London for treatment only after Hasina lost power.

Physicians said on Monday that Zia's condition was "extremely critical". She was put on life support, but it was not possible to provide multiple treatments at the same time given her age and overall poor health, they added.

"Our favourite leader is no longer with us. She left us at 6am this morning," Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) announced on Facebook on Tuesday.

When news of her death broke, crowds gathered outside Evercare Hospital in Dhaka where Zia had been admitted.

As the wife of Bangladesh's former president Rahman, Zia was a reserved presence alongside her famous husband. When he was killed in a military coup in 1981, Zia entered politics and went on to lead the BNP in the country's first elections in 20 years.

Known as an "uncompromising leader" after refusing to take part in a controversial election under military ruler General Hussain Muhammad Ershad in the 1980s, Zia broke through a male-dominated

political landscape and transformed into one of Bangladesh's most formidable political leaders.

Her first term was widely praised for efforts to improve women's education and social development, with her government bringing back parliamentary democracy by amending the constitution with bipartisan support.

Her second term in 1996, which lasted only weeks, drew criticism for staging a one-sided election despite opposition demands for a neutral caretaker authority — a measure parliament approved before dissolving.

Zia returned as prime minister in 2001, stepping down in October 2006 ahead of a general election. Her administration faced sharp criticism over allegations of corruption.

Over the past 16 years, under the Awami League government, Zia became the most prominent symbol of resistance to Hasina's rule many saw as increasingly autocratic.

She boycotted the 2014 election after her rival Hasina scrapped the caretaker government system — a provision meant to ensure neutrality during national polls. Later, Zia was convicted on corruption charges and jailed. She denied wrongdoing and said the charges were politically motivated.

She was released in January 2025, soon after mass anti-government protests in Bangladesh toppled Hasina, forcing her into exile in India. She has since been convicted and sentenced to death for crimes against humanity over her crackdown of the protests.

The BNP had said in November that Zia would campaign in the upcoming general elections. The party is eyeing a return to power, and if that happens, Zia's son Tarique Rahman is expected to become the country's new leader.



GUINEA'S JUNTA LEADER:

Gen Mamady Doumbouya has reneged on his promise not to run for office.

Guinea junta chief takes lead in controversial election as social media restricted

Guinea's junta leader Gen Mamady Doumbouya has taken a huge lead in a presidential election, his main challengers were barred from contesting, initial results show.

Gen Doumbouya is hoping to legitimise his rule after seizing power in a coup four years ago.

A civil society group campaigning for the return of civilian rule condemned the election as a "charade", while opposition candidates said the poll was marred by irregularities.

On Monday, internet monitoring organisation NetBlocks reported that access to social media platforms TikTok, YouTube and Facebook had been

restricted as Guineans waited for the full results.

There has been no official comment on the restrictions, but opponents see it as an attempt by the junta to stifle criticism of the results.

Gen Doumbouya, 41, won more than 80% of the vote in numerous districts in capital city Conakry, according to official partial results read out on television by Djenabou Toure, head of the General Directorate of Elections.

Gen Doumbouya had a big lead in several other areas as well, including Boffa and Fria in the west, Gaoual in the north-west, northern Koundara and Labe, and Nzerekore in

the south-east.

After overthrowing then-83-year-old President Alpha Condé in 2021, he promised not to seek election and to hand power to a civilian.

"Neither I nor any member of this transition will be a candidate for anything... As soldiers, we value our word very much," he said at the time.

Gen Doumbouya broke his promise by putting his name on the ballot after a new constitution, implemented in September, permitted him to run for office.

Eight other candidates took part in Sunday's election, but with the exclusion of main opposition parties RPG Arc en Ciel and UFDG, none of the

participants have a solid political footing.

Although he is popular with many of Guinea's youth, Gen Doumbouya has been criticised for restricting opposition activities, banning protests and stifling press freedom in the run-up to the elections.

The general justified deposing Condé on similar charges - including rampant corruption, disregard for human rights and economic mismanagement.

Guinea has the world's largest bauxite reserves and some of its richest iron ore. Last month, authorities launched the gigantic Simandou iron-ore mine to widespread anticipation.

Saudi Arabia backs call for UAE to leave Yemen after strike on separatist-held port

The UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council (STC) seeks independence for southern Yemen

Saudi Arabia has backed a demand from Yemen's presidential council for the United Arab Emirates to withdraw within 24 hours, after a Saudi-led coalition bombed what it said was a weapons shipment for UAE-backed separatists at the port of Mukalla.

The Saudi foreign ministry accused the UAE of "pressuring" the Southern Transitional Council (STC), which seeks independence for southern Yemen, to launch recent offensives in the eastern provinces of Hadramawt and al-Mahra.

The kingdom would take measures to confront what it considered such "highly dangerous" actions, it warned.

The UAE's foreign ministry denied that the shipment contained

weapons and expressed "deep regret" at the Saudi statement.

It strongly condemned "the allegations that it exerted pressure on, or directed, any Yemeni party to carry out military operations that would undermine the security of the sisterly kingdom of Saudi Arabia or target its borders".

The STC's leaders also said the ultimatum for the withdrawal of the UAE's forces had no legal basis, and insisted it would remain a "main partner" in the battle against the Iran-backed Houthi movement, which controls much of north-western Yemen.

Earlier on Monday, the head of the eight-member presidential council - which includes STC representatives - announced that he was cancelling a joint defence pact with the UAE and ordering its forces to leave "in the interest of safe-

guarding the security of all citizens, affirming commitment to Yemen's unity, sovereignty, stability, and territorial integrity".

Rashad al-Alimi also declared a state of emergency for a period of 90 days, which he said was necessary to confront the Houthis and what he described as "the internal strife led by mutinous military elements that received orders from the United Arab Emirates".

The Saudi-led coalition air strike on Mukalla destroyed a number of military vehicles and pick-up trucks

Alimi's announcement came after the spokesman of the Saudi-led coalition - which includes the UAE - said it had carried out a "limited" air strike on weapons and military vehicles for the STC's forces in the southern Yemeni port of Mukalla which arrived on two ships from the UAE.

Turkey detains 357 suspected IS members in nationwide raids

More than 350 suspected Islamic State group (IS) members have been detained as part of nationwide police operations in Turkey.

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said 357 suspects were apprehended across 21 provinces in coordinated raids on Tuesday morning.

It comes just a day after three police officers and six alleged militants were killed during an eight hour siege in the northwestern town of Yalova. Another eight police officers and a security force member were injured.

Less than a week ago, authorities arrested another 115 suspects who prosecutors said had been planning attacks targeting non-Muslims during Christmas and New Year's.

In a post on X, Yerlikaya said

Tuesday's operations took place across the country, including in Ankara, Istanbul and Yalova.

"Just as we have never given an opportunity to those who try to bring this country to its knees with terrorism, we will never give them an opportunity in the future either," he added.

The interior minister also shared a video appearing to show dozens of counter-terrorism officers taking part in the operations and detaining several people.

Turkey detains 115 IS suspects 'planning New Year's attacks'

Raids on addresses in Istanbul and two other provinces - where 110 people were detained, according to the prosecutor's office - saw officers seize documents and digital materials, while pictures on local media also showed a number of weapons, including knives and bullets.

A statement from the Istanbul chief prosecutor's office said intelligence had suggested the suspects might attempt an attack on New Year's Day.

It also noted 41 of those detained had suspected links to the clash in Yalova on Monday.

Interior minister Yerlikaya said another 16 individuals had been detained in Yalova for making "provocative posts" on social media.

The funerals of the three officers killed in Yalova - named as İlker Pehlivan, Turgut Külünk, and Yasin Koçyiğit - were held on Tuesday.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan offered his condolences to their families, and said Turkey would continue its fight against "bloodthirsty criminals who threaten the peace of our nation and the security of our state".

FEATURES

Strengthening Nigeria's disaster response amid epidemics

ABIEMWENSE MORU (NAN)

On a rainy evening on a Nigerian highway, a tanker overturned, blocking the road.

As a result, some victims died immediately, while others later died in crowded hospitals, leaving families in grief and confusion.

Such incidents therefore reveal why Nigeria is reassessing its disaster and epidemic preparedness.

Moreover, recurring emergencies continue to expose gaps in coordination, response capacity, and the humane management of mass fatalities.

Across the country, floods, explosions, road crashes, and disease outbreaks have repeatedly tested emergency systems.

Consequently, families are often left struggling with loss and unanswered questions.

Questions such as who identifies the dead, ensures bodies are handled with dignity, and supports survivors who have long exposed weaknesses in Nigeria's response framework.

Data further highlights the scale of these challenges.

Between 2020 and 2024, Nigeria recorded over 150 infectious disease outbreaks, including cholera, Lassa fever, and measles, revealing gaps in rapid response, according to the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

In addition, the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) reports that Lagos, Kano, and Rivers states account for nearly 35 per cent of road fatalities, with unsafe practices such as fuel scooping and overloading contributing heavily.

Similarly, surveys by the West African Society of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (WASPEN) indicate that malnutrition affects up to 45 per cent of patients in surgical and paediatric wards in northern tertiary hospitals, increasing recovery times, infections, and readmissions.

Albeit these challenges, authorities say the gaps are now being addressed.

In Abuja, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) inaugurated Nigeria's first National Mass Fatality Response Plan.

The framework is designed to improve coordination, clarify responsibilities, and ensure dignified handling of victims during large-scale disasters.

According to NEMA's Director-General, Mrs Zubaida Umar, the plan was developed in response to lessons drawn from previous emergencies.

"This document is a response to what we saw in past disasters.

"We now have clear procedures, defined responsibilities, and the right tools to manage mass fatalities with compassion and professionalism," Umar said.

She noted that mass fatality incidents, ranging from explosions and floods to building collapses and epidemics, have become increasingly common across the country.

Umar attributed the trend to climate change-induced flooding, rapid urbanization, strained infrastructure, and rising insecurity.

She added that each incident leaves



behind not only casualties, but families searching for answers and closure.

Moreover, she explained that the new response plan prioritises coordinated action across federal, state, and local governments to address past challenges of fragmented responses and overlapping mandates.

"In the past, overlapping mandates and unclear chains of command often resulted in confusion, duplication of efforts or neglect," Umar said.

Unlike previous emergency responses, where bodies were sometimes mishandled, poorly documented, or left unaccounted for, she said NEMA now has standard operating procedures, trained personnel, and essential resources, including body bags.

According to her, the plan establishes clear protocols for identification, documentation, storage, and burial or release of remains, while taking cultural and religious sensitivities into account.

"The goal is dignity for the dead and hope for survivors," Umar said, saying the initiative was a shift from reactive to proactive disaster management.

Developed through stakeholder consultations and evidence-based processes, the framework assigns responsibilities across all tiers of government and relevant agencies.

Running from 2025 to 2029, Umar said the plan is designed as a living document that will be periodically reviewed and adapted as new risks and lessons emerge.

Beyond policy formulation, she stressed that the document must guide training, simulations, and real-time operations to restore public confidence and improve outcomes during emergencies.

While natural disasters and epidemics often dominate public attention, officials say road traffic crashes remain Nigeria's most persistent source of mass fatalities.

Mr Hyginus Omeje, Assistant Corps Marshal of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), said Nigerian roads have effectively become the country's most consistent disaster zone.

"In 2024 alone, more than 5,400 people were killed on Nigerian roads, a seven per cent increase from the

previous year.

"This is in spite of a reduction in the total number of crashes and injuries," Omeje said.

He added that tanker explosions, highway collisions, and urban road accidents occur daily, overwhelming emergency responders and devastating families.

Omeje also identified fuel scooping from fallen tankers as one of the most dangerous practices, noting that poverty and desperation continue to drive the activity.

According to him, more than 400 people died in 2024 alone while attempting to scoop fuel from overturned tankers.

Human factors, he said, remain central to the crisis.

"Reckless driving, speeding, overloading, fatigue and poor road discipline continue to fuel Nigeria's high fatality rates," Omeje said.

In spite of the progress in reducing crash numbers, he noted that Nigeria

remains among countries with the highest road accident rates globally, contributing nearly 10 per cent of road fatalities worldwide.

Omeje called for the declaration of a state of emergency on Nigerian roads, warning that without sustained intervention, road traffic deaths would continue to overshadow other disasters.

"Daily on Nigerian roads, lives are lost. We don't need to wait for another tragedy before identifying that there are gaps," he said.

He added that road crashes are one of the most frequent sources of mass fatalities, reinforcing the need for a comprehensive national response framework.

Nigeria's renewed commitment to humane disaster response has drawn support from international partners.

Dr Latifa Arfaoui, Field Coordinator for Health Emergencies at the World Health Organisation (WHO), noted that the National Mass Fatality Response Plan was a "critical milestone" in strengthening Nigeria's emergency preparedness.

She emphasised that managing the dead with dignity is not merely a technical issue, but a deeply human one.

According to her, respectful handling of remains supports family grieving, community healing, and reduces the long-term psychological toll of disasters.

Furthermore, Arfaoui added that the plan adequately addresses cultural and religious considerations, ensuring that emergency responses do not deepen trauma.

She reaffirmed WHO's commitment to providing continued technical support to strengthen readiness at national and sub-national levels.

Similarly, Ms Nourane Houas, Protection Coordinator at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), stressed that implementation would determine the success of the plan.

"The impact of this document lies specifically in execution.

"We stand ready to play our part to ensure it achieves the purpose for which it was created," Houas said.

She emphasised the importance of wide dissemination to ensure that all

agencies and stakeholders understand and apply the framework consistently.

According to her, the ICRC will support training, systems, and tools that improve coordination and uphold the dignity of human remains during mass casualty incidents.

Emergency response, experts say, extends beyond disaster sites to hospitals and military medical facilities.

In Kaduna, the Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Hasan Abubakar, underscored the role of healthcare professionals while addressing Nigerian Air Force nurses during a Mandatory Continuing Professional Development Programme.

"In an era marked by epidemics, disasters and tumultuous conflicts, the role of healthcare professionals, especially nurses, has never been more critical.

"Your expertise forms the backbone of our medical response capabilities," Abubakar said.

He added that nurses play a vital role in caring for the injured, maintaining operational continuity, and supporting humanitarian and disaster relief operations.

The training, organised in collaboration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria, focused on emergency preparedness and disaster response within the Nigerian Air Force.

According to Abubakar, such programmes help build resilience, encourage innovation, and strengthen collaboration among healthcare workers.

Even when disaster victims survive and reach health facilities, another challenge often threatens recovery.

Dr Teresa Pounds, President of WASPEN, described hospital malnutrition as a "silent epidemic."

Speaking during the 2025 Malnutrition Awareness Week, Pounds said that globally, between 20 and 50 per cent of hospitalised patients suffer from malnutrition.

She added that emerging studies from tertiary hospitals in Nigeria suggest inpatient malnutrition rates of 30 to 45 per cent, especially among surgical, paediatric, oncology, and elderly patients.

Pounds cited findings from Nasarawa, Borno, and Enugu states, noting high levels of malnutrition among hospitalised children and elderly patients.

"Malnutrition in the community and in hospitals are two sides of the same coin," she said.

She called for the integration of clinical nutrition into national health strategies, stressing that addressing malnutrition is essential for improving patient outcomes, reducing healthcare costs, and strengthening resilience during emergencies.

Stakeholders say initiatives such as the National Mass Fatality Response Plan, road safety advocacy, military healthcare training, and increased attention to hospital nutrition reflect a growing recognition that preparedness saves lives and preserves dignity.

For NEMA, the focus is ensuring the new plan does not remain a document on the shelf; it must become "a living tool," guiding daily operations, inter-agency collaboration, and training.

This document is a response to what we saw in past disasters. "We now have clear procedures, defined responsibilities, and the right tools to manage mass fatalities with compassion and professionalism.

FEATURE

Rising with purpose: Dr. Success Aghogho Eferavware and the discipline of scholarly excellence

ANDY EGBON

In an era where academic achievements are often measured by speed, rather than substance, some scholarly journeys stand out for the depth of discipline and clarity of purpose that define them. Such paths are forged not in spectacle, but in quiet resolve, long hours of study and an unwavering belief in education as a transformative force. The academic rise of Dr. Success Aghogho Eferavware, a lecturer at Benson Idahosa University (BIU), Benin City, belongs firmly in this category.*

Call her Dr. Success, call her Dr. Eferavware; either way, her journey is defined by courage, discipline and triumph.

Dr. Success story is not one of inherited privilege or instant acclaim, but of deliberate growth shaped by perseverance, humility and faith. From modest beginnings, she embraced education as both a personal calling and a tool for societal contribution. Each academic milestone strengthened her belief that excellence is attained through consistency, rather than convenience.

Affectionately addressed by colleagues and friends as Success, Dr. Eferavware's name appears almost prophetic. Yet her achievements are neither accidental nor symbolic; they are the result of focus, discipline and sustained effort. Every challenge was met with resolve, and every milestone earned through determination.

She completed her doctoral studies in the Department of Human Anatomy at the University of Benin (UNI-BEN), successfully defending her thesis before an external examiner and a panel of senior academics.

The defence marked the culmination of an intellectually demanding phase characterised by rigorous laboratory investigations, meticulous data analysis and strict adherence to scientific and ethical standards.

Dr. Success Aghogho Eferavware's academic progression reflects clarity of vision and disciplined focus. From



DR. SUCCESS AGHOGHO EFERAVWARE

her undergraduate training through successive postgraduate qualifications in health-related disciplines, she steadily built the scholarly foundation that culminated in the award of a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), the highest level of academic attainment.

Gender notwithstanding, Dr. Success distinguished herself early by excelling in traditionally male-dominated subjects, such as mathematics, physics and chemistry. At stages where many are deterred by the rigours of the core sciences, she demonstrated academic courage and intellectual confidence, laying a strong foundation for her eventual specialisation in the biomedical sciences. Her success in these demanding fields underscores her capacity to challenge stereotypes and redefine possibilities for women pursuing science-based careers.

Within academic circles, Dr. Success is regarded as a researcher defined by diligence, patience and intellectual curiosity. These attributes were evident throughout her doctoral work, which required sustained focus,

methodological precision and an uncompromising commitment to scientific integrity — qualities she continues to transmit in her role as a lecturer at Benson Idahosa University.

Central to her doctoral research was the growing public health challenge of substance abuse, with specific focus on 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), a synthetic psychoactive drug commonly known as molly. The rising prevalence of MDMA use, particularly among young people, has generated concern within medical and public health communities regarding its long-term physiological and reproductive consequences.

Her study examined the reproductive and oxidative effects of MDMA, employing structured experimental techniques to generate empirical data. Through controlled laboratory investigations, the research provided valuable insights into how exposure to the substance affects biological systems. Members of the examining panel commended the work for its originality, analytical depth and relevance

to contemporary health challenges, noting its potential to inform future biomedical research, public health education and evidence-based intervention strategies.

Beyond its scientific contribution, the research reflects a broader sense of academic responsibility. By aligning her doctoral inquiry with a pressing societal concern, Dr. Success demonstrated a vision of scholarship that extends beyond academic recognition to practical relevance and social impact.

Despite the demands of a busy academic schedule and deep professional commitments, she has remained steadfast in the pursuit of excellence. Her ability to balance lecturing responsibilities with advanced research, and community services, highlights the discipline, resilience and focus that define her scholarly journey.

Her success is also rooted in a solid educational foundation. Her late father, who attained a Master's degree (MSc), valued learning and intellectual development, providing encouragement and inspiration that shaped her

academic aspirations. Building upon this foundation, Dr. Eferavware relied on personal discipline, dedication and hard work to rise to the peak of scholarly achievement.

The attainment of a PhD places her among the most highly educated individuals within her family and community, establishing a new academic benchmark. In Efrun-Otor and Agbarho Kingdoms, her achievement has been received with collective pride, standing as a testament to what sustained effort, discipline and commitment to learning can produce. Like a golden fish, she has brought honour to her roots, and her excellence is celebrated with admiration and vigour.

Educators and community leaders increasingly view Dr. Eferavware's Success as a motivating reference point for young people, particularly women pursuing careers in science and health-related disciplines, where mentorship, representation and perseverance remain essential.

Within Nigeria's academic landscape, Dr. Success represents a new generation of scholars strengthening the nation's contribution to global scientific discourse. Her work reinforces the relevance of human anatomy and biomedical research in addressing emerging public health challenges.

For Dr. Success, the PhD is not a conclusion, but a foundation. With her scholarly grounding, research training and teaching experience at Benson Idahosa University, she is well positioned for continued contribution through teaching, advanced research and collaborative initiatives within the health sciences.

Her journey affirms that meaningful academic success is achieved through consistency, rather than spectacle, and purpose, rather than haste. A torchbearer of excellence, humility and service, Dr. Success Aghogho Eferavware stands as a compelling example of what disciplined scholarship can achieve, a testament to perseverance, resilience and the power of education to transform individuals, communities and society at large.

The looming shadow: Nigeria's insecurity crisis

RAWLINGS SHAMMAH

Nigeria, a nation blessed with abundant natural resources and a rich cultural heritage, is facing a growing crisis that threatens to undermine its very existence. Insecurity has become a pervasive issue, affecting every facet of life in the country. From the kidnappings and banditry in the north to the militancy in the south, the nation is grappling with a complex web of threats that seem to be spiraling out of control.

The statistics are alarming. According to recent reports, over 30,000 people have been killed in the past decade due to insecurity in Nigeria. The kidnappings, which have become a lucrative business for the perpetrators, have seen innocent civilians, including schoolchildren, women, and men, being abducted and held for ransom. The case of the Chibok girls, who were kidnapped from their school in Borno

State in 2014, is still fresh in the minds of Nigerians. Despite the government's promise to rescue them, many of the girls remain in captivity, a grim reminder of the government's inability to protect its citizens.

The situation in the northwest is equally dire, with bandits terrorizing communities, killing, and maiming innocent people. The bandits, who are well-armed and seemingly well-funded, have been attacking villages, towns, and even highways, leaving a trail of destruction in their wake. The government has deployed soldiers to the region, but the attacks continue unabated. The people are beginning to lose hope, wondering if the government is capable of protecting them from these marauding gangs.

The situation in the south is no better, with militants and cultists wreaking havoc in many communities. The Niger Delta region, which is the lifeblood of Nigeria's economy, has been plagued by militancy and pipeline

vandalism. The militants, who are demanding a greater share of the oil revenue and better living conditions, have been attacking oil installations, disrupting production and causing huge losses to the government. The government has tried to negotiate with the militants, but the talks have yielded little results, and the attacks continue.

The insecurity in Nigeria is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted solution. The government needs to take a holistic approach, addressing the root causes of the problem, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to education. The security agencies need to be equipped and trained to tackle the various security challenges facing the nation. The government also needs to work with international partners to share intelligence and best practices in combating terrorism and banditry. Above all, the government needs to demonstrate a commitment to protecting its citizens

and holding those responsible for the insecurity accountable.

What Needs to be Done

To address the rising insecurity in Nigeria, the government needs to take their steps

-Improve Security Infrastructure: The government needs to invest in modern security infrastructure, including surveillance systems, drones, and other technologies that can help track and apprehend criminals.

- Provide Support to Security Agencies: The government needs to provide the security agencies with the necessary resources, including funding, equipment, and training, to enable them to effectively tackle the security challenges facing the nation.

- Address Poverty and Unemployment: The government needs to address the root causes of poverty and unemployment, which are fuelling the insecurity. This can be done through job creation programs, vocational

training, and other initiatives that can help to empower young people.

- Promote Community Policing*: The government needs to promote community policing, where local communities are empowered to take ownership of their security. This can be done through the establishment of community police forums and other initiatives that bring together security agencies and local communities.

- Hold Perpetrators Accountable*: The government needs to demonstrate a commitment to holding those responsible for the insecurity accountable. This can be done through investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of those found guilty of perpetrating violence and other security related issues.

CONCLUSION

By working together, Nigerians can overcome the current security challenges and build a safer, more prosperous future for all.

Trump, Dangote and Nigeria's 2025: A year in review

KAYODE ADEBIYI (NAN)

Many key events defined the outgoing year for Nigeria, affecting individuals, groups, and the nation at large.

Looking back, some Nigerians recall 2025 with mixed memories, as the high cost of living persisted, largely due to major economic reforms.

Others, however, noted glimmers of hope, suggesting that the worst of the economic pressures may be easing.

On the domestic front, Nigeria experienced cautious economic recovery, with macroeconomic indicators showing modest improvement.

Industrial developments, most notably the ongoing impact of the Dangote Refinery, reshaped energy markets and fuel supply chains.

At the same time, the global stage remained turbulent, with trade tensions, geopolitical shifts, and international events influencing domestic policy and public sentiment.

'Cautious economic recovery', resurgence of insurgency

If 2024 was the year Nigeria had to swallow the bitter pill of economic reforms, some say 2025 was a year of "cautious economic recovery," characterised by stabilising macroeconomic indicators.

Statistics show that the economy grew by 3.98 percent in Q3 2025, a slight increase from 2024 but still below the government's 4.6 per cent target.

Also, headline inflation saw a significant decline. By June 2025, it dropped to 22.22 percent (down from over 34 percent in 2024), according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

However, food inflation remained a primary concern for many households, as over 33 million people were projected to face "crisis-level" food insecurity during the 2025 lean season, a 32 per cent increase from 2024. Mass kidnappings and insurgency saw many killed by terrorists and bandits, including in Kwara.

November 2025 saw over 200 students and teachers taken from a school in Niger, leading to the temporary closure of thousands of schools across the North-West.

Between June and October, flash floods affected 115 local governments, displacing 129,000 people and destroying roughly 761,000 hectares of cropland.

DANGOTE'S MANY BATTLES WITH OIL MARKETERS, REGULATORS

After beginning operations in 2024, the Dangote Refinery was initially forced to source crude from international markets following the dispute with the NNPC over a crude supply deal.

For the first time in decades, Nigeria saw a dramatic collapse in its reliance on foreign fuel, but after the supply disagreement was resolved, another crisis regarding marketing and retail arose.

2025 was defined by a public and often heated "tug-of-war" over fuel pricing between the refinery, the NN-



DONALD TRUMP

ALIKO DANGOTE

BOLA TINUBU

PCL, and independent marketers.

A landmark agreement was reached for the refinery to supply PMS directly to the Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria (IPMAN), which controls 80 percent of retail outlets

The battle consumed the Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), Farouk Ahmed.

It has also led to a "positive price war", which has seen both Dangote and the NNPC slash petroleum prices.

Mass defection to the ruling party: One-party state?

In 2025, the Nigerian political landscape saw a significant "tsunami" of defections as the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) aggressively expanded its control.

As of December, five sitting governors had officially decamped to the APC from opposition parties. This wave has shifted the balance of power, giving the APC control over 27 out of the 36 states.

The "gale of defections" also swept through the legislative arm, as 12 senators and 32 members of the House of Representatives decamped officially to the APC.

This migration primarily depleted the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the Labour Party (LP), shifting the senate's power balance from a simple majority to a "super-majority."

While some say the action could lead Nigeria to becoming a one-party state and endanger democracy, others argue that it was the ruling party merely consolidating its popularity.

EAGLES' WORLD CUP DREAM SHATTERED SPECTACULARLY!

Nigeria's senior men's football team, the Super Eagles, failed to qualify for the FIFA 2026 World Cup to be hosted by the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

After a dodgy and unconvincing qualifying campaign, the team man-

aged to make it to the African playoff stage, having finished second in Group C behind South Africa.

Four teams - Cameroon, Gabon, Nigeria, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo - slugged it out to decide which nation would progress to the FIFA intercontinental playoff tournament in March 2026.

Having defeated Gabon 4-1 in their first playoff game in Morocco, the Super Eagles fell to the DRC on penalties after playing an uninspiring 1-1 draw in regulation time.

The result meant that Nigeria is to wait for its next World Cup participation since Russia 2018 continues.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NEW TAX LAWS

On June 26, 2025, President Bola Tinubu signed four landmark tax reform bills into law. The laws are expected to take effect from January 1, 2026.

For many reasons, the laws have been one of the most controversial talking points of 2025.

Some companies, businesses, and individuals worry that it would lead to indiscriminate access to their bank accounts and finances.

However, the government said the laws aim to overhaul the Nigerian tax system to improve efficiency, streamline administration, and boost revenue.

On the continent of Africa, there was a surge in military takeovers, with notable coups in Guinea-Bissau and Madagascar.

Benin Republic thwarted an attempted coup in December, highlighting a broader trend of democratic erosion, insecurity, and political instability, especially in West Africa and the Sahel region.

It wasn't all gloom and doom for the continent, though, as 2025 saw the continent host its first-ever G20 Summit, a heavy election calendar, and major steps towards continental integration.

TRUMP'S GLOBAL TRADE WAR, NIGERIA'S REDESIGNATION AS CPC

In one of the most consequential turns of events in 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump kicked off his second coming with an unprecedented signing spree of executive orders.

Trump signed 46 documents, listed on the White House website, including 26 executive orders, 12 memoranda, and four proclamations on his first day in office.

He has since signed a total of 141 executive orders since returning to the presidency in January, including enacting steep tariffs, ending birth-right citizenship, curbing DEI and "gender radicalism," and pardoning January 6 rioters.

His orders on trade and the imposition of additional trade tariffs on friends and foes alike sparked a global trade war, which has not been completely resolved.

The American president sparked a bitter debate when he announced that he was redesignating Nigeria

as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) as a result of what he called serious violations of religious freedom.

A few days later, he threatened that he would consider potential military action to protect Nigeria's perceived embattled Christians.

Trump might consider himself a dealmaker, and even promised to end the Russia-Ukraine conflict within 24 hours of his presidency.

However, he is yet to resolve both that and the Middle East conflict, which at various stages involved Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, and Iran.

In other parts of the world, following the death of Pope Francis, Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost was elected as Pope Leo XIV in May, becoming the first American to lead the Roman Catholic Church.

2025 also saw massive "Gen Z"-led protests across the globe, most notably in Nepal, where Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli was ousted.

One of the most tragic and significant global events of late 2025 was the Bondi Beach mass shooting in Sydney, Australia, on December 14.

Two gunmen, identified as Sajid Akram (50) and his son Naveed Akram (24), initiated the assault, killing 15 people and injuring over 40 others.

The 2025 UN Climate Change Conference (COP30) in Belém, Brazil, attracted one of the largest turnouts in COP history, with over 56,000 registered delegates.

While the United States did not send an official federal delegation for the first time, state-level representatives attended in alternative capacities.

China, contrary to some reports, was represented by a sizeable, high-profile delegation, actively participating in negotiations and side events.

Observers noted that, albeit strong attendance, some political commitments; especially on fossil fuel phase-outs and climate finance, fell short of expectations.

Statistics show that the economy grew by 3.98 percent in Q3 2025, a slight increase from 2024 but still below the government's 4.6 per cent target

Sports

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

AFCON 2025: Super Eagles thrash Uganda to maintain perfect Group Record

Nigeria's Super Eagles completed a flawless Group C campaign at the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations with a convincing 3-1 victory over Uganda.

The three-time African champions finished the group with the maximum nine points from three matches, underlining their status as

one of the tournament's early frontrunners.

Trabzonspor striker Paul Onuachu opened the scoring in the 28th minute, capitalising on sustained pressure from the Super Eagles to give Nigeria a deserved first-half lead.

Nigeria tightened their grip on the encounter in the sec-

ond half as Club Brugge midfielder Ralph Onyedika struck twice in quick succession.

Onyedika doubled the advantage in the 62nd minute before adding a third just five minutes later to put the game beyond Uganda's reach.

The Cranes managed a late response when Rogers Mayor pulled one back, but it proved

to be little more than a consolation as Nigeria comfortably saw out the contest.

With the result, the Super Eagles top Group C with a perfect record and head into the knockout stages full of confidence, while Uganda exit the group stage after failing to secure a positive result in their final outing.



MALAM SHEHU DIKKO

Nigeria's handball men's team in camp for African Handball Nations Cup in Rwanda

Nigeria's Senior Men's National Handball Team, the Golden Arrows, has opened camp in Abuja as preparations continue for the Africa Men's Handball Nations Cup, scheduled to hold in Kigali, Rwanda, from January 21 to 31, 2026.

The Continental Nations Cup will also serve as Africa's qualifying tournament for the 2027 World Men's Handball Championship, with the top five nations earning automatic qualification to the global showpiece.

In Group B, Nigeria will face the host nation, Rwanda, seven-time African champions Algeria, and Zambia in what promises to be a highly competitive group.

Nigeria has featured in the Africa Handball Nations Cup 15 times since first qualifying for the championship in Tunisia in 1974, with the best performance being a 4th-place finish in 1998 in South Africa.

As of Friday, December 27, 2025, 17 players from the 24 invited players had already reported to camp at the Sports Hall, Package B of the MKO Abiola National Stadium, Abuja, and commenced intensive training sessions.

The list of invited players reflects a blend of home-based talents and foreign-based professionals, a move expected to boost the team's competitiveness in Kigali. Among the notable foreign-based invitees is

back-right player Farouk Yusuf, who plies his trade in France.

He is joined by Rotimi Gbenga and Akeem Salami, both based in Morocco, as well as Daniel Bello, a pivot player currently playing in Turkey.

The goalkeeping department also boasts international exposure with top goalkeeper Olatunde Adams, who plies his trade in Qatar, Michael Ogbaji, and Mohammed Abbas, who play in Cotonou, Benin Republic, alongside Okwor Obinna, who plays for COAS Shooters of the Nigeria Army.



NIGERIA'S MEN'S HANDBALL TEAM

AFCON 2025: Egypt fans send message to Liverpool boss Arne Slot

Egyptian football fans delivered a strong message of support for Mohamed Salah during the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations, directing their words to Liverpool manager Arne Slot.

During Egypt's group-stage clash against Angola on Monday, supporters at the stadium

raised a banner clearly addressed to the Liverpool boss, reading:

The message was widely interpreted as a show of loyalty to Salah, affectionately known as "The Egyptian King," amid ongoing discussions about his importance to the Premier League club.

Salah, who remains a central figure for both country and club, has once again been pivotal for the Pharaohs at AFCON 2025, inspiring the team with his leadership and performances on the continental stage.

The banner quickly gained attention across social media platforms, with many Egyptian fans echoing the sentiment and reaffirming Salah's status as a national icon and one of Africa's most influential footballers.

Egypt are among the favourites at AFCON 2025, and the show of support from the stands underlined the strong bond between the national team, its talisman, and the supporters as the tournament progresses.



XX



NSC introduces new measures in sports as Nigeria regains clean doping status

Chairman of the National Sports Commission (NSC) Malam Shehu Dikko, says the Federal Government is determined to protect the integrity of Nigerian sports by enforcing strict measures on athletes' real age verification and anti-doping compliance.

Dikko made this known on Monday in Abuja at the opening of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Nigeria Olympic Committee (NOC) organised to review the committee's activities for 2025.

"Age falsification and doping violations will no longer be tolerated under the ongoing sports reforms," he said.

According to him, Nigeria has cleared all outstanding anti-doping issues and is now globally recognised as a clean sporting nation.

"This followed the signing of the Anti-Doping Bill and the clearance granted by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). "Everything required to make Nigeria a clean country in sports has been done.

"We have resolved the issues that took us to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, and today Nigeria is recognised globally as a clean country in terms of doping," Dikko said.

He disclosed that a fully operational Anti-Doping Agency would soon be in place, adding that funds had already been provided in the national budget for the construction of an anti-dop-

ing laboratory in the country.

On age integrity, the NSC chairman said the commission had established an Integrity Unit to address age discrepancies across sports federations.

He noted that sanctions had been approved for anyone found guilty of breaching age regulations.

"Some of the age-related issues are cumulative and dates back many years.

"While some discrepancies may be due to poor data entry, accuracy matters, we will police federations, coaches and athletes to ensure compliance," he said.

Earlier, the President of the Nigeria Olympic Committee (NOC) Habu Gumel, described the AGM as a statutory obligation and a vital platform to review the activities of the Olympic and Commonwealth Games Fund.

Gumel commended the close collaboration between the NOC and the NSC, saying it had contributed to improved performances by Nigerian athletes at international competitions.

He disclosed that about 54 national teams across various sports federations participated in international competitions in 2025, with only four returning without medals.

The Director-General of the National Sports Commission, Bukola Olopade, who corroborated this, said the medal haul recorded by Nigerian teams reflected improved planning, stronger partnerships with federations.

AFCON 2025: Dikko tasks Eagles to win title to compensate for World Cup miss

The Chairman of the National Sports Commission (NSC) Malam Shehu Dikko, has charged the Super Eagles to win the Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) in Morocco as compensation to Nigerians for the team's failure to qualify for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Dikko gave the charge on Monday in Abuja while addressing sports stakeholders on the sidelines of the Annual General

Meeting (AGM) of the Nigeria Olympic Committee (NOC).

He said President Bola Tinubu had directed that the Super Eagles must channel the disappointment of missing the World Cup into a renewed determination to lift the continental title.

"The message from Mr President is very clear. The Super Eagles must do everything possible to win the AFCON and compensate Nigerians for not qualifying for the 2026 World

Cup," Dikko said.

The NSC chairman cautioned against complacency, stressing that strong performances in the group stage must not distract the team from its ultimate objective.

"We have seen this happen before; you can play very well in the group stage and lose focus in the knockout rounds.

"That lesson must guide us this time," he said.

Dikko noted that the team

was currently well placed and understood the task ahead, adding that finishing second would not be considered success.

"The only way we can say we are successful this time is if we do better than last time.

"The target is to lift the trophy," he said.

He commended the Super Eagles for their recent performances, describing their last outing as one of their best displays in a long time.



SUPER EAGLES CELEBRATING AFTER SCORING A GOAL

SPORTS

Bendel Insurance FC embarks on midseason break after convincing 2-0 victory over Kwara Utd



BENDEL INSURANCE FC

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Bendel Insurance Football Club, Monday proceeded on midseason break to allow the players and members of the technical crew spend the remaining part of the yuletide period with their families after a convincing 2-0 victory against Kwara Utd on Saturday December 27 in Benin.

The 5-day holidays which began on Monday, December 29, 2025 is ending on Friday, January 2, 2026 as all the players are expected to return to camp Fri-

day evening and begin training on Saturday, January 3, 2026.

The management wishes the players, officials, and all Stakeholders a happy and prosperous New Year.

The management, according to the General Manager Charles Ihimekpen, appeals to the players to remain disciplined and ensure they return refreshed and ready to continue with the impressive performances that have taken the club out of danger zone when the second round of the season resumes on January 14, 2026.

The management also appreciates the players and technical crew for their discipline and hard work evident in the turnaround witnessed recently, particularly since Kennedy Boboye took over as the head coach and technical manager of the Benin Arsenals on October 13, 2025.

The loyal supporters and fans are not left out in the message of appreciation. The management says thank you for your support and for believing in our ability to bounce back to winning ways.

He described the federations as key operational partners in the sports development process

The NOC president also highlighted ongoing reforms, including the success of the Elite Athlete Development Board, plans to establish a Diaspora Athletes Board by 2026, and efforts to institutionalise integrity, infrastructure development and dispute resolution mechanisms in sports.

Gumel further said that Nigeria's bid to host the Commonwealth Games had been adjudged credible, with discussions ongoing towards a possible hosting opportunity in 2034.

"Nigeria remains one of the leading bidders for the African Games."

He lauded President Tinubu for approving the prioritisation of sports funding in the national budget, directing that funds allocated to sports be released immediately after budget passage.

Gumel also commended Tinubu for consolidating sports-related allocations into a central sports development pool.

According to him, the decisions would guarantee pre-

dictable funding for preparations for the Commonwealth Games, Olympic Games and elite athlete programmes, as well as improved welfare for retired athletes.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the AGM was attended by officials of international sports federations, representatives of the Association of National Olympic and Commit-

tees of Africa (ANOCA).

Others in attendance were presidents of national sports federations and other stakeholders in the Nigerian sports sector

Uganda make AFCON history with Red Card and three goalkeepers in one match

Uganda exited the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations after a dramatic group-stage defeat to Nigeria's Super Eagles, setting two unwanted records in the process — becoming the first team in the tournament to receive a straight red card and the first to field three goalkeepers in a

single match.

The unusual sequence of events unfolded during Tuesday's final Group C fixture. Uganda captain and first-choice goalkeeper Denis Onyango was forced off with an injury after colliding with the goalpost while attempting to prevent the ball from going out

for a corner kick. He was replaced by second-choice goalkeeper Nafian Alionzi.

However, Alionzi's time on the pitch was short-lived. Minutes after coming on, he was shown a straight red card after rushing out of his penalty area to deny Victor Osimhen a clear goalscoring opportunity. The incident was judged as a foul outside the 18-yard box, prompting referee Djindo Louis of Benin Republic to dismiss the goalkeeper.

With no alternative, Uganda's technical crew sacrificed an outfield player to introduce their third-choice goalkeeper, marking the first time a team has deployed three different goalkeepers in a single match at the ongoing tournament.



UGANDA CAPTAIN GOALKEEPER DENIS ONYANGO



COACH OGUNDEJI ALADE

Coach Ogundeji Alade appointed interim head coach of ABS Ilorin FC

In a significant development, Coach Ogundeji Alade is set to take the reins as interim head coach of ABS Ilorin FC, following the mutual decision of Coach Yusuf Salihu to step aside*.

The team management has accepted Coach Salihu's decision, paving the way for Coach Alade's appointment

Coach Alade, a seasoned coach with a wealth of experience, previously worked with

Coach Toney Encho to stabilize ABS Ilorin FC last season, Fomer Ogbomoso united head coach.

His expertise and leadership skills are expected to benefit ABS Ilorin FC in this new role

We wish Coach Ogundeji Alade all the best in his new position and congratulate him on this appointment

May his tenure be marked with success and many wins for ABS Ilorin FC!

Former Rivers Utd Chairman Barr. Christopher Green gets new portfolio in Rivers State cabinet reshuffle

Rivers State Governor, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, has approved a minor reshuffle in the State Executive Council.

Under the new arrangement, Barrister Christopher Green, a former Chairman of Rivers United Football Club and until now Commissioner for Sports, has been redeployed to the Ministry of Justice as the Honourable Attorney-General and

Commissioner for Justice.

The development was announced in an official statement signed by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Information and Communications, Dr Honour Sirawoo.

According to the statement, Barrister Green will also continue to coordinate the activities of the Ministry of Sports pending the appointment of a substantive commissioner to

head the ministry.

The redeployment takes immediate effect and was approved at the last State Executive Council meeting for the year 2025.

The statement said the move reflects Governor Fubara's commitment to strengthening governance, ensuring continuity in service delivery and improving the performance of key ministries in the state.



FORMER RIVERS UTD CHAIRMAN BARR. CHRISTOPHER GREEN