

2026 hajj: Edo Pilgrims Welfare Board sets Jan 18 deadline for passport submission

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

The Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board has fixed 18 January 2026 as the deadline for submission of international passports by intending pilgrims for the 2026 Hajj exercise, as preparations for the pilgrimage intensify across the state.

The directive was disclosed in a statement issued after a meeting at the Board's office

recently, where the Executive Secretary, Alhaji Muhammad-kabir Abdulkabir Eranga, revealed that arrangements for the 2026 Hajj visa process are already in progress.

He stressed that early and timely submission of passports is crucial to avoid last-minute challenges that could jeopardize participation in the holy pilgrimage.

According to him, the National Hajj Commission of Nige-

ria (NAHCON) has informed all state pilgrims' boards that, in line with guidelines from the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Hajj, data capturing for all 2026 intending pilgrims must be completed on or before 8 February 2026.

Failure to meet this requirement, he warned, may result in disqualification.

Speaking further on the importance of the deadline, the Chairman of the Board, Alhaji Musah Muhammad Uduimoh,

reiterated that the January 18 passport submission cutoff is non-negotiable.

He urged pilgrims who are yet to submit their documents to do so without delay, noting that proper documentation remains a fundamental requirement for Hajj participation.

Alhaji Uduimoh also explained that the 2026 Hajj visa process will be fully integrated with pilgrims' medical certification and the Nusuk platform,

in strict compliance with Saudi Arabian Hajj regulations.

He said this development makes accuracy, compliance, and early completion of all requirements more critical than ever.

In the spirit of inclusiveness and transparency, the Board advised all intending pilgrims to visit its office promptly to complete their data capturing within the stipulated timeline, assuring them of a smooth and well-coordinated process.

Meanwhile, Alhaji Eranga encouraged pilgrims to actively participate in the Board's enlightenment programmes, which are aimed at educating intending pilgrims on Hajj rites, regulations, and appropriate conduct while in the Holy Land.

He reaffirmed the Board's commitment to ensuring a seamless and successful 2026 Hajj operation for Edo State pilgrims and urged full cooperation from all intending participants.

The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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Security:
Okpembho reassures Edo residents, vows total crackdown on kidnapping, crime

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Tinubu has right to sack me if he wishes, says Wike

PORT HARCOURT

Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, has said it is entirely within the powers of President Bola Tinubu to remove him from office, insisting that such a decision rests solely with his

"appointor and not with critics calling for his sack."

Wike spoke on Sunday during a "thank you" visit to Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, his political base, amid growing calls by some politicians and interest groups for his removal over the lingering political crisis in the state.

He dismissed the agitation for his sack, stressing that politics is driven by interests rather than sentiments or emotions. According to him, if President Tinubu feels he no longer has anything to contribute to the administration, the President has the constitutional right to take any decision he deems fit.

"Don't bother about people who say 'sack him'. If my appointor believes that I cannot offer anything again, he has the right to do so. It is not in your place to tell him what to do," Wike said.

The former Rivers State governor added that President Tinubu understands his value and does not require external

pressure or advice to make decisions about his cabinet.

Reaffirming his political influence, Wike declared that Obio/Akpor remains the political heartbeat of Rivers State, boasting the capacity to determine electoral outcomes. He said no governor or senator has emerged from the state without the endorsement of the local government area.

"For the people of Obio/Akpor, we have the power to

dictate who becomes governor in Rivers. Nobody has become governor or senator in Rivers East without Obio/Akpor making a pronouncement," he said.

Wike warned political opponents against underestimating the voting strength of the area, noting that those who insult or attack its people would be punished at the polls.

He also praised President

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PRESENTING AWARD:

Commissioner for Local Government Service Commission in Enugu State, Mrs Amaka Nweke (L) presenting the International World Resources Association World Water Congress Award received in Morocco to Governor Peter Mba of Enugu State at the weekend.

Armed Forces Remembrance Day: Military, Soludo honour fallen Heroes, reaffirm support for troops

KADUNA/AWKA

The Nigerian military and state governments have reaffirmed their commitment to honouring the sacrifices of fallen heroes and supporting serving personnel as activities marking the 2026 Armed Forces Remembrance Day commenced across the country.

In Kaduna, the General Officer Commanding (GOC) 1 Division, Nigerian Army, Maj.-Gen. Abubakar Wase, assured that the sacrifices of fallen military personnel would never be forgotten. Wase, who

also serves as Commander, Sector 1, Joint Task Force, Operation Fansan Yamma, gave the assurance on Sunday during an interdenominational church service held in commemoration of the Armed Forces Remembrance Day.

"We will ensure their families remain part of our military family, honour our veterans, and stand as a bulwark against those who threaten us," the GOC said.

The service, held at Saint Peter's Catholic Military Church, Ribadu Cantonment, Kaduna,

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Criminals flee Edo as Police drone operation rescues 9 kidnap victims, dismantles gangs —Pg 4

Lekki waterfront dispute: Rights group backs court intervention, condemns attacks on judiciary —Pg 7

Sudan's government returns to capital after nearly 3 years of war —Pg 9

AFCON 2025: Osimhen downplays records as Eagles soar into AFCON semis —Pg 12

Security: Okpebholo reassures Edo residents, vows total crackdown on kidnapping, crime

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has reassured residents of its unwavering commitment to the protection of lives and property, declaring that intensified security

measures are already recording gains in the fight against kidnapping, cultism and other criminal activities across the state.

Governor Monday Okpebholo gave the assurance amid rising public concerns over se-

curity, stressing that his administration has invested heavily in modern security equipment, improved intelligence gathering and strengthened inter-agency collaboration to confront criminal elements decisively.

According to the governor, the challenge of kidnapping is being tackled strategically, with coordinated security operations currently ongoing in

different parts of the state. He noted that while government understands the anxiety of residents, security matters are delicate and not always suitable for public discussion, as premature disclosure of operational details could compromise efforts on the ground.

Governor Okpebholo reaffirmed the administration's respect for the constitutional

right of citizens to peaceful protest, but warned that attempts by unscrupulous individuals or groups to exploit public sentiments to undermine peace and stability would not be tolerated.

"This administration will not allow criminals or their sponsors to take Edo State hostage. Anyone involved in kidnapping, cultism or any form of criminality will be tracked down and brought to justice. There will be no hiding place for perpetrators," he said.

He urged residents to remain calm, vigilant and law-abiding, and to go about their lawful activities without fear, assuring them that the government remains firmly in control of the security situation.

The governor also called on citizens to support security agencies by volunteering credible information and refusing to harbour or shield criminals within their communities, reiterating his determination to restore lasting peace and safety across Edo State.

Delta Police detain officers, remove Jesse DPO over alleged ₦2.5m extortion

AJUWA VICTOR

The Delta State Police Command has detained two officers and redeployed the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of Jesse Division following allegations of extortion involving the sum of ₦2.5 million.

In a statement issued by the Police Public Relations Officer, SP Bright Edeaf, the command confirmed awareness of a viral video in which a woman alleged that two officers identified as Bright and Usman, alongside the Jesse DPO, extorted money from her with the promise of securing the release of her brother from custody.

According to the police, the incident dates back to January 1, 2026, when some suspects were arrested by the youth leader of Jesse community and handed over to the police. Among them was Israel Onojeru, aged 20, who was arrested following a confession by another suspect, Okoro Desmond, alleging that

he sold a firearm to him.

The suspects were later transferred to the State Anti-Cult Unit (SACU) for further investigation.

Reacting to the extortion allegation, the Commissioner of Police, CP Aina Adesola, ordered an immediate investigation by the Anti-Corruption (X-Squad) unit. The constable identified as Bright has been detained at the command headquarters, while the DPO has been removed from the division and redeployed to the headquarters pending the outcome of the investigation.

The police said the redeployment followed a series of complaints bordering on extortion and unprofessional conduct against the DPO from various quarters.

The commissioner assured members of the public that any officer found culpable would be dealt with decisively in line with the Police Act and regulations, stressing that the command would not tolerate extortion, intimidation or unprofessional behaviour.

Armed Forces Remembrance Day: Military...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

was organised in recognition of the selfless service of officers and men of the Armed Forces. Maj.-Gen. Wase was represented at the event by the Chief of Staff, 1 Division, Brig.-Gen. Timothy Oporum, who described the service as a significant moment to further acknowledge the sacrifices of troops on the frontline.

Oporum noted that the event also served to reassure the families of fallen heroes that their loved ones were remembered and celebrated by the nation.

Kaduna State Governor, Uba Sani, represented by the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Dr James Kanyip, said the state government stood with the Armed Forces in appreciating the sacrifices of military personnel, particularly those who paid the supreme price so that others could live in peace.

Also speaking, the representative of the Chief of Defence Staff, Maj.-Gen. Oladele Arogundade, who is the Commander, Engineering Depot, commended military veterans for their service to the nation and charged serving personnel to remain professional in the discharge of their duties.

In his sermon, the officiating chaplain, Lt.-Col. Martins Awoyinka, emphasised the need for continuous remembrance and prayers for military personnel who laid down their lives in the line of duty to ensure peace and security across the country.

Dignitaries at the Kaduna event included the Air Officer Commanding, Air Training Command of the Nigerian Air Force, principal staff officers and formation commanders of the division, heads of paramilitary agencies, members of the Nigerian Legion, as well as representatives of the Nigerian Army Officers' Wives Association (NAOWA) and the Nigerian Air Force Officers' Wives Association (NAFOWA).

Similarly, in Awka, Anambra State Governor, Prof. Chukwuma Soludo, lauded the bravery and sacrifices of Nigerian servicemen and women in preserving national unity, peace and security.

Soludo spoke during a thanksgiving service held to kick off the 2026 Armed Forces Remembrance Day commemoration in the state, where he reaffirmed his administration's support for the military and paid tribute to the courage and professionalism of the Armed Forces.



INCEPTION WORKSHOP:

L-R: Representative of the Director-General, Security and Exchange Commission (SEC), Lady Grace Ayóó; Chairman, Ore Reserve Development Forum (ORDF), Mr Malami Saidu; representative of the Executive Secretary, Solid Minerals Development Fund (SMDF), Dr Martina Ananaba; Founder/Director, Montt Capital Investment Bank, Jon O'Callaghan, and the Head of Corporate Communications, SMDF, Ms Idowu Jokpeyibo during the Inception Workshop on Building a Sustainable Mining Finance Framework for Nigeria, at Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Centre in Abuja.

Oba market traders laud Okpebholo over reconstruction works

BENIN CITY

Traders, business owners and residents around the Oba Market axis in Benin City have commended Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, for the pace and quality of work on the ongoing reconstruction of the Oba Market in Oredo Local Government Area.

The stakeholders described the project as timely and reassuring, noting that the governor's hands-on approach and regular inspection visits have restored confidence among traders who were displaced following the destruction of the market.

The reconstruction project, being executed under the Okpebholo administration, is progressing steadily, with the governor personally monitoring the quality and speed of work to ensure compliance with modern standards and timely delivery.

Speaking with journalists, a trader, Mrs Faith Edos, said the market had been in a deplorable condition before the intervention of the current administration, adding that the reconstruction has rekindled hope among traders and business owners.

"Before Governor Okpebholo came in, this market was in

a very bad state. Today, we are happy because he has rescued the situation by rebuilding a market that will have modern facilities," she said.

Another trader, Mrs Itohan Idamudia, described the governor as a promise keeper, noting that previous assurances to rebuild the market were not fulfilled by the immediate past administration.

"The Obaseki-led administration made several promises to rebuild this market, but nothing was done. Governor Okpebholo has shown seriousness. Gradually, the market is taking shape, and we are grateful," she said.

Oba Market, one of the major commercial hubs in Benin City, was gutted by fire in June 2020,

with several shops and goods worth millions of naira destroyed. The inferno was reportedly triggered by a faulty solar panel in one of the shops, which spread rapidly to other sections.

With reconstruction now underway, displaced traders expressed optimism that the project would restore their livelihoods and significantly boost commercial activities within the area and across the state.

On completion, the rebuilt Oba Market is expected to feature modern facilities such as a 24-hour electricity supply, internet connectivity, a Primary Health Centre and other amenities aimed at improving safety, efficiency and convenience for traders and customers.

Tinubu has right to sack me if he wishes...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

Tinubu for what he described as the benefits Rivers people have enjoyed under his administration, assuring that the support would be reciprocated in the 2027 general election.

Addressing his critics, Wike said he deliberately chose to be a politician and should be allowed to practise politics without interference. "I did not choose to be a pastor, trader, public commentator or journalist. Allow me to play my

politics," he said.

Earlier, Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, Mr Kingsley Chinda, said Obio/Akpor has over 684,000 voters out of Rivers State's 3.5 million registered voters, describing the area as an unrivalled political force in the state.

"With this voting strength, nobody can challenge the political power of Obio/Akpor in Rivers State," Chinda said, pledging the continued support of the people for the minister.

Chairman of Obio/Akpor

Local Government Council, Dr Gift Worlu, described Wike as a "gift" to the local government area, Rivers State and Nigeria, citing his record of service at the local, state and national levels.

Worlu said the council's support for Tinubu in the 2023 presidential election had yielded significant benefits for the people, assuring that the area already knows where it stands ahead of the 2027 presidential polls.

On the governorship election, he added, "We do not

know where to go yet, but we know where not to go."

Also speaking, Speaker of the Rivers State House of Assembly, Mr Martin Amaehule, reaffirmed the support of the people of Obio/Akpor for Wike, assuring him of prayers and backing from lawmakers.

Amaehule said the state assembly would continue to support Wike's call for the re-election of President Tinubu, adding: "Tell Mr President what we did for him in 2023; we will do even better in 2027."

NEWS

Edo govt defends security strategy, cautions against road-blocking protests in Ekpoma

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has cautioned residents against protests that disrupt public order, insisting that such actions could undermine ongoing security operations and expose communities to greater risks.

The government's position followed a protest that dis-

rupted vehicular movement in Ekpoma on Saturday, over concerns about security in the area.

In a statement in Benin City, the Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Prince Kassim Afegbua, said the protest had necessitated further clarification to address public perception of the state's security situation.

While acknowledging the constitutional right of citi-

zens to express grievances, the government stressed that security matters require calm, coordination and constructive engagement, rather than unstructured actions.

According to the statement, blocking roads and obstructing movement in the name of protest does not support security efforts and may be exploited by criminal elements.

The government warned residents against being drawn into what it described as dangerous tendencies, noting that uncoordinated protests could inadvertently worsen insecurity, instead of addressing it.

Prince Afegbua said Governor Monday Okpebholo has remained responsive to genuine security concerns since assuming office, adding that the

administration is committed to protecting lives and property across the state.

However, he emphasised that sustainable security solutions are best achieved through intelligence sharing, community collaboration and sustained engagement with relevant security agencies.

He outlined the governor's security strategy as being anchored on proactive measures, including the strengthening of the Edo Security Corps, the promotion of neighbourhood watch initiatives and continuous engagement with community leaders, traditional institutions and neighbouring states.

These channels, he said, are designed to enable residents to report concerns, share useful

information and contribute meaningfully to safeguarding their communities.

The government further noted that protests centred on security issues, when not properly coordinated, could distract security agencies from ongoing operations and complicate efforts to tackle criminal activities.

Residents were therefore urged to remain law-abiding, calm and supportive of security operatives working across the state.

Reassuring the people of Ekpoma and other parts of Edo State, the government said it remains open to dialogue and is continually reviewing and strengthening its security strategies in line with Governor Okpebholo's commitment to making the state safer for all.



EXPRESSWAY INSPECTION:

On-going reconstruction of Abuja-Kaduna Expressway being inspected by the Minister of Works and others.

Criminals flee Edo as Police drone operation rescues 9 kidnap victims, dismantles gangs

BENIN CITY

Criminal elements operating in Edo State have been thrown into disarray following the successful deployment of the police's maiden drone-led operation, which led to the rescue of nine kidnapped victims and the dismantling of several criminal syndicates within one week.

The Edo State Police Command said the breakthrough followed the deployment of the newly established Eagle Combat Drone Unit, which provided real-time aerial intelligence that enabled operatives to outmanoeuvre kidnapers and armed

robbery gangs across the state.

In a statement, the Command's spokesperson, ASP Eno lkoedem, disclosed that one of the major successes was recorded at Egbojo Ikabigbo Community in Jattu, where police operatives, acting on a kidnapping report, stormed a criminal hideout with the support of local vigilantes and hunters.

According to her, the drone unit played a decisive role by tracking the kidnapers' camp in the early hours of January 9, 2026, forcing the suspects to flee on sighting security forces.

"The Command received a report of a kidnapping incident at Egbojo Ikabigbo Community in

Jattu, and the Divisional Police Officer of Jattu Division was immediately mobilised with his men in collaboration with vigilantes and hunters," lkoedem said.

She added that the Commissioner of Police, CP Monday Agbonika, ordered the deployment of the Eagle Combat Drone Unit, which had been recently trained and equipped by the Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, marking its first-ever rescue mission.

"At about 4:25 a.m., the kidnapers' camp was located through real-time aerial intelligence. Ground troops stormed the camp, forcing the kidnapers to flee and abandon two lo-

cally fabricated AK-49 rifles. The victims, one adult male, three adult females, and five children, were rescued unhurt," she stated.

The police also recorded other significant breakthroughs during the period, including the recovery of a black Toyota Yaris with registration number BEN 952 CL, which was snatched at gunpoint along Ugbowo, Benin City. A suspect, Oluwashegun Ajayi, was arrested, and the vehicle has since been returned to its owner.

In another operation, operatives of the Eagle Raiders Squad dismantled a seven-man armed robbery gang linked to the killing of a Point-of-Sale (POS) operator along MM Way off Sapele Road.

Traders hail pace of Oba Market reconstruction, laud Gov Okpebholo

BENIN CITY

Traders, business owners, and residents around the Oba Market axis in Benin City have commended Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, for the impressive pace and quality of work on the ongoing reconstruction of Oba Market in Oredo Local Government Area.

The stakeholders described the project as timely and re-

assuring, noting that the governor's hands-on supervision and regular inspection visits to the site have restored confidence among traders who were displaced after the market was gutted by fire.

The reconstruction, being executed under the Okpebholo-led administration, is progressing steadily, with assurances that the market will be completed to modern standards within record time.

Speaking with journalists at the site, a trader, Mrs Faith Edos, said that the market had been in a deplorable condition before the intervention of the present administration.

"Before Governor Okpebholo came in, this market was in a very bad condition. Today, we are happy because he has rescued the situation by rebuilding a market that will have modern facilities," she said.

Another trader, Mrs Ito-

han Idamudia, described the governor as a promise keeper, lamenting that the market was abandoned for years despite repeated assurances by the immediate past administration.

"The Obaseki-led administration made several promises to rebuild this market but nothing was done. Governor Okpebholo has shown seriousness. Gradually, the market is taking shape, and we are grateful," she added.

Okpebholo mourns Special Adviser on Arewa Matters, Danjuma Garba

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has expressed deep sorrow over the death of his Special Adviser on Arewa Matters, Alhaji Danjuma Garba, who passed away on Saturday after a brief illness.

In a condolence message, the governor described the late Garba as a dedicated public servant and a critical link between the state government and the Arewa community in Edo State.

He said the deceased played a vital role in promoting peace, unity, and mutual understanding among the diverse residents of the state, adding that his counsel and commitment

were invaluable to the administration.

"The news of Alhaji Danjuma Garba's passing is a heavy blow to this administration and the entire Edo State family. He was more than a political appointee; he was a peacemaker who worked tirelessly to ensure harmony among our people," the governor said.

Governor Okpebholo, on behalf of the government and people of Edo State, extended heartfelt condolences to the family of the deceased and the Arewa community, praying for strength and fortitude to bear the loss.

He also directed that prayers be offered for the repose of the soul of the late adviser, praying that Allah (SWT) grants him Aljannatul Firdaus.

Residents alarmed by recurrent suspicious coffin dumping in Benin community

BENIN CITY

Residents of Izevbigie Street, Oluku, in Benin City, Edo State, have been thrown into fear and anxiety following the repeated dumping of an empty coffin at the residence of a landlord, Mr. Godwin Ozemijie.

The incident, which has reportedly occurred every January for the past four consecutive years, involves the placement of a coffin wrapped in white, red, and black cloth and allegedly soaked with blood. According to local vigilante sources, the coffin is usually deposited late at night by a group of more than 20 men, some of whom are said to be armed.

A resident, who spoke on condition of anonymity, disclosed that the community is often compelled to conduct a full burial ritual for the empty coffin. The source explained that there is a prevailing belief that failure to properly bury the coffin could result in the deaths of landlords and landladies in the area.

"It is considered a taboo to place an empty coffin in a compound, whether the owner of the house is alive or dead," the resident said.

The most recent incident occurred on Friday, January 9, 2026.

Following the development, residents promptly reported the matter to the police and traditional authorities, expressing fears that the situation could escalate if a corpse is eventually found in the coffin. Community members also cited growing concerns over insecurity and violent crimes within Benin metropolis.

The recurring incident has reportedly led to social stigma, with prospective tenants becoming reluctant to rent houses in the area due to fear and suspicion.

Residents further disclosed that the coffin bore markings of three fingers, a curved symbol, and the inscription: "Godwin, rest in peace." This development has heightened speculation, with some community members expressing shock that Mr. Ozemijie, described as an otherwise ordinary individual, could be linked to an alleged secret cult group.

Community leaders, however, cautioned against generalising the incident, stressing that the actions of one individual should not be used to stigmatise the entire neighbourhood.

Meanwhile, the police have taken custody of the coffin and confirmed that investigations into the matter are ongoing.

FG, ASUU to formalise agreement on strengthening varsity system

ABUJA

The Federal Government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) are set to formalise a landmark agreement earlier signed to strengthen industrial harmony and improve teaching and learning conditions.

The agreement is also aimed at advancing sustainable development in the Nigerian university system.

This is contained in a statement made available to news-

men in Abuja on Sunday, by Folasade Boriowo, Director, Press and Public Relations, Federal Ministry of Education.

Boriowo said that the unveiling of the agreement would be held on Wednesday, January 14, in Abuja.

According to her, the ceremony will be presided over by the Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa, alongside the Minister of State for Education, Prof. Suwaiba Ahmad.

"The event represents a significant milestone in the feder-

al government's ongoing efforts to foster a stable, productive, and globally competitive higher education sector.

"The agreement underscores the federal government's unwavering commitment to constructive engagement with critical stakeholders, and the resolution of industrial issues, through sus-

tained dialogue, mutual understanding, and cooperation.

"It is expected to further enhance industrial peace across Nigerian universities, create a more conducive academic environment, and reinforce confidence among students, staff, and the wider public," she said.

The director said that the de-

velopment aligned with President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, which recognises education as a strategic driver of national development, human capital growth, and socio-economic transformation.

She added that the ceremony would bring together senior government officials, represent-

atives of ASUU, heads of tertiary institutions, development partners, and members of the media.

She reiterated the federal government's dedication to sustaining reforms that would strengthen the university system and ensure the delivery of quality, accessible, and globally relevant education for all Nigerians.

Cult initiation: Police nab 25 cultists, recover vehicle in Ondo

AKURE

The Police Command in Ondo State has arrested 25 suspected cultists, and recovered a vehicle and motorcycle during a cult initiation in Uso, Owo Local Government Area of the state.

DSP Abayomi Jimoh, the command's Spokesperson, made this known in a statement on Sunday in Akure, saying the arrested cultists were members of the Neo Black Movement (NBM) group.

Jimoh explained that the arrest was made on Thursday, January 8 after the command received credible intelligence from a concerned citizen that the group was planning to initiate new members.

"Acting swiftly on the information, operatives of the command were mobilised and deployed using intelligence-led tactics to disrupt the planned initiation.

"The operation resulted in the arrest of 25 suspects, drawn from Ondo, Osun, Edo and Lagos States, at the scene of the initiation.

"During the operation, one Toyota Highlander SUV and one unregistered Daylong motorcycle were recovered from the suspects.

"The arrested suspects are currently in police custody and have confessed to their involvement in cult-related activities. They will be charged to court upon the conclusion of investigations," he said.

The spokesperson also said the Commissioner of Police (CP), Adebowale Lawal, commended the swift response, professionalism, and dedication of the operatives involved.

According to him, the CP said the command will leave no stone unturned in its sustained fight against cultism across the state.

He said the CP appreciated the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Kayode Egbetokun, for his strategic leadership and continuous support in providing operational guidance and resources.

According to him, this has significantly enhanced the command's anti-cultism operations.

Gov Abiodun hails Tinubu's commitment to nat'l security

ABEOKUTA

Governor Dapo Abiodun of Ogun State on Sunday, commended President Bola Tinubu for his commitment to safeguarding lives and property under the Renewed Hope Agenda.

Abiodun gave the commendation, during a Special Church Service to mark the 2026 Armed Forces Remembrance Day celebration at the Cathedral Church of St. Peter, Ake, in Abeokuta.

The governor, who was represented by his Deputy, Mrs Noimot Salako-Oyedede, said that the Federal Government had taken decisive steps to strengthen Nigeria's security architecture, improve intelligence coordination and enhance inter-agency collaboration.

He added that the Federal Government had also boosted welfare and provided modern equipment for the armed

forces, adding that the efforts were already yielding positive results.

Abiodun urged citizens to support the government's initiatives aimed at promoting peace and unity in the country.

"Marking the Armed Forces Remembrance Day celebration has placed a responsibility on all of us, not just to remember our fallen heroes, but to renew our duty to uphold the values they defended.

"It is a moment of thanksgiving, remembrance, reflection and renewed national responsibility," he said.

He reaffirmed his administration's commitment to the welfare of serving officers, veterans and families of fallen heroes.

"This administration will continue to support our service men and families of our fallen heroes; supporting them is not charity, but a duty we owe as a nation," he said.



INDUCTION AND RETREAT:

L-R: National Commissioner, Independent Electoral Commission of Nigeria (INEC), May Agbamuche-Mbu; INEC Chairman, Prof. Joash Amupitan and Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), Lagos, Prof. Ayobami Salami, during the induction and retreat for newly appointed RECs and National Commissioners in Lagos.

N3.69bn Ondo Park project misplaced priority —PDP

AKURE

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Ondo State has described the N3.69 billion Chief Reuben Fasaranti Park project by the state government as misplaced and insensitive to the economic plight of the people.

The state Chairman of PDP, Mr Modupe Aisida, made the views known in an interview with newsmen on Sunday in Akure.

The state government had in April, 2025 approved N3.69 billion for the upgrade and vertical enhancement of the park, located directly opposite the Governor's Office Complex, Alagbaka, Akure.

Aisida argued that there were many pressing issues that should be focused on by the government and not a park that would gulp one per cent of the total capital expenditure of the state's 2026 budget.

"They said that the Chief Reuben Fasaranti Park project opposite Governor's Office is being done at the cost of N3.69 billion.

"That means that one per cent of the capital expenditure of the state's budget in 2026 with people of six million is being spent on a park in front of Governor's Office.

"And if you want to build a park, should it be opposite government secretariat where they are doing serious work, a power house of government.

"Park should be a place of relaxation where people think they can be on their own. It's really laughable.

"This is a state where you have countless dilapidated school buildings; there are some health centres where you go and cry for the state. So, we need this money for serious things and not for a park," he stated.

He decried the neglect of critical projects by the state government, saying that life's impactful projects should have been the focus of Gov. Aiyedatwa-led administration is not "a mere relaxation centre."

"We have a housing deficit in the state except we want to deceive ourselves; that is why many companies are running

around.

"They want to create estates because the government is not being proactive. The government used to do this in the past.

"What the state government is busy doing is chasing away civil servants living in Alagbaka and talking about building houses for political office holders.

"I won't criticise the government because I am the chairman of the opposition party. For me as a person, if I want to rate the state governor, it's a straight F.

"I will always be objective in analysing issues and I will say which areas Gover Lucky Aiyedatwa has done much, but I'm trying to find the area and I'm yet to really pick it out," he said.

FG inaugurates N40bn CCTV Centre on Third Mainland Bridge

LAGOS

The Federal Government on Sunday inaugurated the N40 billion Close Circuit Television Camera (CCTV) Centre of the Third Mainland Bridge in Lagos State.

The CCTV centre was built by the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC).

Inaugurating the centre, the Minister of Works, Sen. Dave Umahi, said that the current administration met a 'very terrible Third Mainland Bridge.'

"When we came on board in 2023, we met a very terrible Third Mainland Bridge, Carter Bridge and Iddo Bridge both on the

pavement, surface, infrastructure above the water and even infrastructure below the water.

"The president, therefore, directed total re-evaluation and rehabilitation of the surfaces of the Third mainland Bridge and changing the expansion joints.

"Lagosians were very happy with the President for that beautiful work, and that work completed and commissioned is still succeeding because of the quality," he said.

He thanked the CCECC for a job well done.

He said the ministry would be handing over a boat and two Hilux vans, which were part of the contract, to the police for

monitoring of the bridge.

"If they need to incorporate other security agencies, they can do that, but the idea of this project is that we have a lay-by on the bridge, so we view everything going on on this bridge."

Umahi expressed worry at speeding by motorists on the bridge, urging adherence to traffic rules and regulations.

Earlier, the Federal Controller of Works in Lagos, Mr Olufemi Dare, said that the centre was the first of its kind in Nigeria.

"I doubt if there is any bridge in Nigeria that has what we have deployed here today, where you have CCTV to monitor both the underwater

and even the bridge itself.

"We have a boat that has been bought for surveillance of the bridge. There are two Hilux vans, too.

"We have 240 solar panels in this environment, and that is not enough. The whole place is fully air-conditioned. We have 10 inverters inside the building.

"We have the powering units. We have a transformer, a 300KVA transformer. We have a standby generating plant and monitoring screens," he said.

He expressed gratitude to President Bola Tinubu for the provision and thanked Umahi for ensuring that due process was followed in establishing the centre.

NEWS

2027: We 'll not allow Kwankwaso contest on our platform —NNPP

LAGOS

Mr Oguni Olaposi, National Secretary, New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) has said that its 2023 presidential candidate, Sen.

Rabiu Kwankwaso will not be allowed to contest the party's ticket for the 2027 presidential election.

Olaposi said this in a statement on Sunday in Lagos.

The NNPP national secretary reiterated that the NNPP 2027 presidential ticket would be open to only bonafide members wishing to contest the presidential and other elections.

He noted that Kwankwaso, who flew the NNPP ticket in 2023, would not be allowed to do so in 2027 due to disagreements with the NNPP and the Kwankwaso Movement.

According to Olaposi, the NNPP entered into a Memorandum of Association with the Kwankwaso Movement in 2022 which expired after the polls.

'Anti party activities by some members of the Kwankwaso movement after the presidential elections, led to the expulsion of the top members, including Kwankwaso, Elder Buba Galadima and others, which had not been reversed.

'The NNPP ticket for 2027 is open to all members, unlike in 2023 when it was solely given to Kwankwaso.

'Already, we have intending presidential aspirants, including two from the NNPP diaspora, and we are open to more including alliances.

'The NNPP is open to collaborations with sister political parties that have similar ideologies in 2027,' Olaposi stated.

According to Olaposi, it is laughable that Kwankwaso is saying that if he must decamp to any political party, including the APC, they must offer him their presidential tickets.

'Kwankwaso do not have

the selling capacity like President Bola Tinubu nationwide, with his alleged one million votes in Kano state.

'Kwankwaso's influence in Kano state is over rated at the moment because many strategic members of the Kwankwaso movement have already defected to the APC.

'President Tinubu and the APC selling point for 2027 is based on performance as the ruling party and not undue influence.

'Kwankwaso's influence as a former governor of Kano state is long gone and cannot affect Tinubu's votes in Kano state in 2027.'

Olaposi urged political parties wishing to enter into alliance with the NNPP in 2027 to do so, using the party's credible National Working Committee, endorsed by the Courts.

'Kwankwaso and his group remain expelled and cannot negotiate for the NNPP. The NNPP National Working Committee will decide all alliances in 2027,' he added.



DEPARTURE FROM PAP ORIENTATION:

Administrator, Presidential Amnesty Program (PAP), Dr Dennis Otuaro (M), with a cross-section 34 foreign post graduate scholarship students deployed to Universities in the United Kingdom, during their departure from the Orientation at Presidential Amnesty Program Headquarters in Abuja on Thursday.

Doctor advises on daily habit to guard against non-communicable diseases

ABUJA

A Nigerian doctor, Omolara Olagunju, has advised Nigerians on daily habit to guard against Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).

Olagunju, who is also a paediatrician, gave the advice in Abuja at the weekend during the inauguration of her foundation tagged "Nuparadigm Health Foundation".

She described NCDs as the most killer diseases in the country.

According to her, the growing threat of NCDs such as hypertension, diabetes, cancers and other cardiovascular diseases requires everyone to have the right information on how to guide against them.

She said that she was motivated to create the foundation based on her interaction with

people, saying that most Nigerians do not know much about essential health information.

"Our mission is simple, we want to go into the community to teach people.

"We want to let everybody know there is something called essential health information. This health information is what we all have right to.

"This essential health information is all about information you need to know to maintain your health.

"The essence of this foundation is to make sure that we publicise this health information as much as possible," she said.

She said that the growing prevalence of NCDs is compounded by urbanization, unhealthy lifestyles, and limited access to healthcare.

"It is critical to implement

a multi-level preventive strategy to address this issue and prevent further economic and social consequences," she said.

She said that the information bulletin accompanied with the launch of the foundation outlined the escalating threat posed by NCDs, and the need to target interventions.

Olagunju said that the bulletin also recommended actions for the Nigerian government and relevant stakeholders to take in order to reduce NCD-related mortality and improve public health.

The doctor said that only 29 percent of hypertensive individuals were aware of their condition, with only three percent achieving adequate blood pressure control.

"The prevalence of diabetes has also risen from 2.5 percent

in the 1990s to seven percent in 2024, and this is largely due to urbanization, sedentary lifestyles.

"Cardiovascular diseases, including strokes and heart attacks account for 38 percent of premature NCD-related deaths in Nigeria. 26 percent of women and 20 percent of men are obese," she said.

She harped on the need for Nigerians to win the battle.

She said that her foundation aimed to work hard, spend a lot of energy to explain to people on how to take care of their health.

The Keynote Speaker, Dr Iseko Iseko, a Physician and Interventional Cardiologist, spoke on Cardiovascular health and preventive health in Nigeria.

Iseko said that prevention was divided into Primary, secondary, and tertiary.

"In the primary prevention, it is all about preventing things from happening."

Police nab suspect over alleged murder of girlfriend

AWKA

The Police Command in Anambra has arrested a 26-year-old suspect, Chibuikwe Anike, over alleged murder of his girlfriend, Ogochukwu Mmadubugwu, (35), in Ekwulobia, Aguata Local Government Area (LGA) of the State.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) in the state, SP Tochukwu Ikenga, disclosed this in a statement on Sunday in Awka.

Ikenga said that the arrest was carried out by operatives attached to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), Awka, on January 7.

He described as false the rumours circulating that the crime was committed by persons the suspect owed money.

The police spokesman said that during interrogation the suspect confessed to stabbing the victim in the neck with a knife, an act that led to her death.

Ikenga said that the suspect has confessed to have committed the act over alleged suspi-

cion of infidelity.

He said that the suspect added that his huge financial investment on the victim made him bankrupt and emotionally distressed, which led to the fatal act.

He said that the suspect also confessed to dropping a fake letter claiming to have been kidnapped by creditors, in a bid to avoid suspicions.

Ikenga said that as part of ongoing investigative procedures, detectives have visited the morgue, where the deceased's body was deposited.

He noted that the tragic incident has sparked outrage and renewed conversations around domestic violence and relationship-related crimes within the community.

"The Command therefore urged the public to seek lawful and peaceful means of resolving disputes and to report early signs of domestic violence to security agencies to prevent avoidable tragedies."

He said that the suspect would be charged to court on conclusion of investigations.

2026: Kosofe residents hope for better infrastructure, economic growth

LAGOS

Residents of Kosofe Local Government Area in Lagos State have expressed hopes that 2026 will bring the much-needed improvements in economic conditions, infrastructure, and security.

Some of the residents, who spoke with correspondents on Sunday in Lagos, said they are eager to see positive changes that will enhance their quality of life.

They highlighted rising living costs, unemployment, flooding, insecurity, and poor

road networks as pressing issues they hope the government will tackle in 2026.

A Mile 12 market trader, Mrs Funke Adeyemi, called on the government to ease the pressure on low-income earners.

"Food prices are killing us, affecting families badly. We hope for relief in 2026, especially for traders and consumers," she said.

Ibrahim Sadiq, a youth leader in Ketu, advocated more youth empowerment and skills training programmes.

"Young people want to work

and contribute. We need real empowerment and access to funding for small businesses," he said.

Mrs Yetunde Ogun, a resident of Ikosi-Isheri, called for an end to the yearly flooding issue.

"We lose homes and businesses every rainy season. We need better drainage and roads. We hope for a fix in 2026," she said.

On security, residents asked for more patrols and improved street lighting to keep crime at bay.

Aisha Ahmed, a shop own-

er in Ketu, said visible security would make a big difference.

"When streets are lit and security is around, we'll feel safer," she noted.

Residents also called for improved healthcare in Kosofe.

Mr Babatunde Lawal, a civil servant, said: "We need better-equipped clinics and faster emergency responses."

He added that more government-resident interaction would boost development.

"We want leaders who listen to the people and carry the community along in decision-making," Lawal said.

Delta govt to reconstruct ECN Road

As DPM maps strategy for 2027 elections

AJUWA VICTOR

Delta State Governor, Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori, has announced plans to reconstruct the ECN Road as part of his administration's sustained drive to improve urban mobility, open up communities and stimulate economic activities across the state.

The governor said the decision was informed by per-

sistent complaints over the deplorable state of the road and the daily hardships faced by residents, commuters and businesses operating along the corridor.

He assured that the reconstruction would be executed to standard and delivered within a clearly defined timeline.

Oborevwori disclosed this at Orhuwhorun in Udu Local

CONTINUES ON PG 6 >>>

NUJ Edo Chairman secures freedom for 3 inmates at Oko Correctional Centre

BENIN CITY

The Chairman of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council, Comrade Festus Alenkhe has facilitated the release of three inmates from the Oko Correctional Service in Benin City after settling their court-imposed fines.

The beneficiaries of the gesture are Godspower Nathaniel from Nassarawa State, Francis

Joshua from Ebonyi State and Ikechukwu Udu from Imo State.

The three inmates had been arrested, investigated and subsequently charged to court for various criminal offences, including buying stolen phones and stealing of electric iron.

Following the conclusion of their trials, the court found them guilty and sentenced them to various jail terms ranging from six months to one year, with option of fines.

However, their inability to pay led to their being sent to jail at the correctional centre.

Relief came their way in the spirit of the New Year when Comrade Alenkhe extend humanitarian assistance by paying the fines of the inmates, as part of his personal commitment to easing the plight of less privileged persons.

This intervention led to the recommendation of the three inmates by the authorities of the Nigerian Correctional Service, Edo State Command.

The beneficiaries expressed profound gratitude to the

Alenkhe for the kind gesture, describing it as timely and life-changing.

Speaking after the release, Comrade Alenkhe said his action was driven purely by love for humanity and a desire to give others a fresh start.

He noted that although none

of the beneficiaries is from Edo State, Nigerians remain one people irrespective of state of origin.

In addition to securing their release, the NUJ chairman also provided the three freed inmates with cash support for their transportation to their respective states.

LSSTF donates patrol vehicle to boost airport security

LAGOS

The Lagos State Security Trust Fund (LSSTF) has donated an additional operational vehicle to the Airport Police Command to strengthen security operations within the aviation environment.

The Command's spokesperson, ASP Mohammed Adeola, disclosed this at the weekend in a statement he issued in Lagos.

Adeola said the vehicle was formally presented by the Administrative Director of the LSSTF, Mr Degbola Lewis.

"Lewis said the donation underscores the Trust Fund's sustained commitment to supporting law enforcement agencies across Lagos State," Adeola stated.

He added that Lewis described operational assets as central to improving the state's security architecture and promoting effective policing.

Adeola said CSP Daramola Kazeem and SP Oladipupo Taiwo received the vehicle on behalf of the Commissioner of Police, Airport Command, Mrs Olufunke Ogunbode.

Ogunbode thanked the Lagos State Government and the LSSTF for the continued support.

"The gesture reflects the state's commitment to enhancing security within the aviation sector and beyond.

"The vehicle would boost patrol coverage and improve rapid response to security incidents," Ogunbode said.

The commissioner said it would enhance safety for passengers, airport personnel and critical aviation infrastructure across the state.

She reaffirmed the command's commitment to effective policing, inter-agency collaboration, and sustained protection of lives and property.

FG orders April deadline for completion of 7th Axial Road sand filling

LAGOS

The Federal Government has directed the contractor handling construction of the Seventh Axial Road - from Dangote Refinery in Lagos State to Sagamu in Ogun, to complete filling with sand before the end of April.

The Minister of Works, Sen. Dave Umahi, gave the directive at the weekend in Lagos while inspecting the project.

"I want to see a situation in which we have completed all the filling with sand and then, we will start concrete structure, but not the pavement," Umahi said.

The road is one of the proposed routes for evacuating cargoes from the Lekki Deep Sea Port.

The proposed Lagos State International Airport is on that corridor.

The project is being handled by China Harbour Engineering Company.

Umahi noted that the Federal

Government had made 30 per cent counterpart funding for Lots One and Two of the project.

"The contractor is supposed to mobilise 70 per cent foreign loans in dollars" he said.

According to him, the 25km dual carriageway will be tolled when completed.

"Yes, the project is taking off but the work that is ongoing is no work as far as I am concerned. It is just clearing," Umahi said.

According to him, a major aspect of the work is the sand filling.

He directed that the right procedure must be followed.

Umahi said that concrete pavement would be expected to start from November.

"This should strictly be adhered to. I am also directing the resident engineer - within the next two weeks, I want to see 90 percent of equipment on site - the equipment in your bid document.

"We need to see where you are getting your sand dredging. Sand dredging needs to start now," he said.



FINES PAYMENT:

Chairman, Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council, Comrade Festus Alenkhe (2nd left) with the three inmates of the Oko Correctional Service after paying their fines to secure their release.

Police probe 'bandit' threat notes in Oyo community

IBADAN

The Police command in Oyo State said it has begun investigating alleged threat notes by suspected bandits targeting Ikoyi-Ile, Orire Local Government Area. Residents reportedly found

two handwritten threat notes on Friday, dropped at the front and rear of a building in Ikoyi-Ile.

The notes warned residents of an impending attack, allegedly scheduled for Tuesday, according to information gathered by the News Agency of Nigeria.

Ikoyi-Ile is among Orire communities previously attacked, where suspected bandits killed five forest guards of Old Oyo National Park.

Police spokesperson DSP Ayanlade Olayinka confirmed the incident, saying, "The individual who discovered the note

is undergoing debriefing."

He added, "The command has launched a full-scale investigation to determine the origin and intent of the note."

Olayinka thanked residents for their cooperation and urged continued vigilance while investigations continue.

APC-e-registration: Administrator urges residents to register

AKUN (NASARAWA)

Administrator of Akun Area Administrative Council, Nasarawa State, Dr Garba Adigizi, has urged the people to embrace the ongoing All Progressives Congress (APC) membership e-registration in the State.

Adigizi made the call at the weekend during the APC stakeholders meeting of Wakama electoral ward in Akpata, Akun

Area Administrative Council.

He said that registering with the APC would enable them become bonafide members of the party.

"I want to urge APC members and those who want to register with our party to do so in their interest and for the development of your ward and the state at large.

"The e-registration is to strengthen the party's structure and improve its data base.

"It is also designed to produce a credible and error-free APC membership register," he said.

Adigizi called on the people of the State to continue to support Governor Abdullahi Sule's administration.

"Supporting Governor Sule will enable us enjoy more dividends of democracy," he said.

The Administrator reiterated his determination to continue to initiate peoples oriented

projects that will have direct bearing on their lives.

Earlier, Mr Usman Gboble, the APC Chairman, Wakama Ward and Mr Akolo David, Special Assistant to Sule on Youth and Sports also called on the people of the area to support the governor.

They also called on the people of the area to come out en masse and register with APC to enable them enjoy more dividends of democracy.

Delta govt to reconstruct ECN...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 3

Government Area during the 50th and 19th memorial celebration of late Chief and Madam Palama Akporhierayen, parents of an All Progressives Congress (APC) chieftain in the area, Sir Sheba Kris Palama.

He explained that the project aligns with his administration's MORE Agenda, which places premium on quality infrastructure as a driver of secu-

rency, commerce and improved quality of life.

The governor also highlighted recent achievements, noting that the Udu Harbour Market, first awarded about 18 years ago, would soon be inaugurated.

Charging political office holders and community leaders to embrace servant leadership, Oborevwo stressed that leadership must be anchored on humility, accountability and loyalty to the people.

"No leader is above the people. You must be loyal to your people because we are only serving them," he said.

The governor commended Sir Sheba Palama for honouring his parents through the memorial, describing the gesture as a worthy preservation of family values and legacy.

He also emphasised the need for unity among the people of Udu, noting that meaningful development can only be achieved through collective effort.

Meanwhile, in Asaba, the Delta Progressives Movement (DPM) has begun strategic consultations ahead of the 2027 general elections, following a high-level meeting of its members at the Delta State capital.

The meeting, hosted by the Delta North Coordinator, Hon. Victor Ucheka, brought together key members of the organisation to deliberate on its future direction, internal strengthening and strategies for effective participation in the 2027 polls.

NEWS

Lekki waterfront dispute: Rights group backs court intervention, condemns attacks on judiciary

ABUJA

A group operating under the auspices of the Human Rights and Grassroots Development Society (HRGDS), has expressed support for the court's intervention in the ongoing Lekki waterfront property dispute.

HRGDS Executive Secretary, Mr Femi Akanbi, made this known in a statement in Abuja.

Akanbi condemned the escalating campaign of misinformation, alleged intimidation and unwarranted attacks di-

rected at the Nigerian judiciary in respect of the case.

He said the decision of Justice Uthman Musa of the FCT High Court directing all parties to maintain the status quo and for the police to preserve the subject matter of investigation "was taken judicially, lawfully and in accordance with settled legal principles."

According to him, direct assaults on judicial independence represents a dangerous attempt to pressure the courts through media manipulation and orchestrated public agitation.

For clarity and public enlightenment, Akanbi explained that Mr Henry Orabuchi, who instituted the case, merely exercised his constitutionally guaranteed right to seek redress before a court of competent jurisdiction.

"The ruling was issued solely to preserve the subject matter of the dispute and prevent further illegality pending the determination of the substantive suit.

"It is reckless, misleading and legally indefensible for any individual or organisation to suggest that the court acted outside its powers or targeted

innocent parties," he added.

He stated that courts exist "precisely to intervene" where disputes, alleged irregularities and competing claims threaten to degenerate into disorder or cause irreparable harm.

Akanbi expressed disappointment over alleged coordinated attacks on the judiciary when "lawful court orders" failed to align with certain private interests.

"This, according to him, has resulted in an emerging pattern in which media organisations reporting factual developments on the matter have

allegedly been threatened.

"Such conduct raises grave concerns regarding contempt of court and deliberate attempts to undermine public confidence in the justice system," he said.

Akanbi explained that disagreement with a court order does not confer a licence to malign judges, incite public sentiment or orchestrate smear campaigns against the judiciary.

"Such actions strike at the very heart of democracy and the rule of law," he said.

Akanbi, therefore, advised parties to ensure that justice is pursued and defended strictly through lawful processes.

He stressed that while judicial independence must be protected, Nigeria cannot afford a precedent in which litigants attempt to secure favourable outcomes through propaganda, coercion or mob pressure.

Justice Musa had directed all parties to maintain a status quo in respect of the entire property known as Plot A, Block 12, Lekki Peninsula Scheme, including the reclaimed land measuring 3,000 square metres, pending the determination of the case.



INAUGURATION:

Chief of Army Staff LT.-Gen. Waidi Shaibu (M); Governor Douye Diri of Bayelsa State and others guests during the inauguration of accommodation donated by the Governor at Camp Buratai, Nigerian Army, 16 Brigade, Elebele Yenagoa in Bayelsa State recently.

Motorcyclist bags 5-day community service for obstructing traffic flow

IBADAN

Grade A Customary Court sitting at Mapo in Ibadan has sentenced a motorcyclist, Usman Oladele, to five days of com-

munity service for obstructing free movement of vehicles.

Delivering judgment, the court's President, Mrs O.E. Owoseni, said that she convicted and sentenced Oladele based on the evidence tendered against him by the prosecution.

Owoseni warned the convict

to desist from flouting traffic regulations, otherwise stiffer punishment would be applied against him if caught again.

"Oladele is hereby given a five-day community service or a fine of N4,000," he said.

Earlier, the Prosecutor, Insp Ayodele Ayeni, had told the

court that the convict committed the offence on January 6 at Mapo area of Ibadan.

Ayeni said that Oladele was arrested by officers of Oyo State Traffic Management Agency (OYTMA) after blocking the road with his TVS motorcycle with registration number: AMA 834 UC.

One-Chance: Ex-NBA Chairman seeks synergy among security agencies

ABUJA

Mr Afam Okeke, the former Chairman, NBA Abuja, Unity Bar Branch has called for synergy and intelligence-sharing among security agencies, to curb the menace of 'one chance' syndicates in Abuja.

Okeke made the call during the press conference organised by International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Nigeria, Abuja Branch.

The press conference by FIDA was to condemn and draw the attention of relevant authorities to the gruesome murder of their colleague Princess Mediatrix

Chigbo by suspected one chance criminal operators.

The victim, a legal practitioner and rights advocate, was said to have been abducted and killed, with her body dumped on a roadside in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

Okeke urged security agencies, including the Nigeria Police Force, the DSS and the NSCDC to intensify intelligence-driven patrols, arrests, and to prosecute offenders.

"Synergy and cooperation among security agencies will deal a heavy blow on 'one chance' operators and other forms of criminality in Nigeria.

He also called for improved in-

stitutional capacity of the Nigeria Police, and position it to realise its inherent mandate as the frontline agency in internal security.

He added that there's need for effective and proactive policing in the FCT as these people are wasting precious lives, and that this has got to stop.

"I call on the Nigeria Police to deploy all necessary resources to ensure that the perpetrators of this dastardly act are brought to justice, to forestall any future occurrence.

"All necessary machinery should be set in motion to improve the security architecture in the FCT, particularly as it relates to the 'one chance' menace.

"Residents of FCT deserve to go about their legitimate businesses without fear, and to sleep with both eyes closed.

"While I commend the FCTA for the good job it is doing in the area of infrastructure, I implore them not to forget to secure the city. More street lights and CCTV must be installed all over the city."

He further called for the upgrade of the transportation system of the FCT to meet modern, safe, and efficient standards.

He equally called for firm and decisive action by authorities concerned to secure the lives and property of Nigerian citizens.

Siblings docked over alleged theft of gold valued N20.4m

IBADAN

Two siblings, Ajuwon Babawale and Ajuwon Samiat have arraigned before an Iyaganku Chief Magistrate's Court, Ibadan, over alleged stealing of gold jewelries worth over N20 million.

Babawale, 37, and Samiat, 32, who reside at Ibadan are being charged with conspiracy, stealing and breach of public peace, to which they pleaded not guilty.

The Prosecutor, Sgt. Akeem Akinloye told the court that the defendants committed the offences at about 9.00a.m. on January 1, at 34 Stargate, Oluyole Estate, Ibadan.

Akinloye further said that Babawale and Samiat stole 24 carat hand chain valued N11.8 million, and 18 carat necklace

worth N8.6 million, belonging to the complainant, Emeka Eze.

The prosecutor stated that the defendants conducted themselves in a manner likely to caused breach of public peace.

"They entered the complainant's apartment and made video recordings without his knowledge," he said.

The prosecutor said that the offences contravened Sections 249 (6), 390 (9) and 516 of the Criminal Code Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

The Chief Magistrate, Mrs Olabisi Ogunkanmi admitted the first defendant to N5 million bail and two sureties in like sum.

She granted the second defendant bail on self recognition, and adjourned the matter until April 21, for hearing.

Man, 29, docked for allegedly stealing \$7,500

IBADAN

A 29-year-old man, Quadri Wasuu, who allegedly stole his business partner's 7,500 dollars (N11 billion), has appeared before an Iyaganku Magistrate's Court in Ibadan.

Wasuu, whose address was not provided, is facing a three-count charge bordering on conspiracy, stealing and assault.

He, however, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The prosecutor, Insp. Olagoke Adegbenro, told the court that the defendant committed the offences alongside others who are now at large, on January 8 at about 5.10 p.m. at Akala Express, Ibadan.

He alleged that the defendant collected the sum of 7,500 dollars from a complainant,

one Mr Kalid Olamilekan, for a business he contracted him to do.

According to the prosecution, the defendant failed to deliver the business.

He alleged that the defendant instead, assaulted the complainant by beating him up when he asked for a refund of his money.

"After assaulting the complainant, he stole his iPhone worth N300,000," he said.

He said the offences contravene the provisions of sections 351, 390(9) and 516 of the Criminal Law of Oyo State, 2000.

The Magistrate, Mrs Olasimibo Santusi-Zubair, granted the defendant bail in the sum of one million naira, with two sureties in like sum.

She adjourned the case until March 2, for mention.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as OSHODIN CULKIN OSEKPOR, now wish to be known and addressed as, OSHODIN OSEKPOR. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

REARRANGEMENT OF NAME

I formerly known as AMADIN RAYMOND NOSA, now wish to be known and called AMADIN RAYMOND NOSAKHARE. Former documents remain valid general public please take note.

Foreign

NEWS

Iran warns it will retaliate if US attacks as protesters defy crackdown

Iran has warned it will retaliate if attacked by the US, as protesters defied a deadly government crackdown on Saturday night.

Videos verified by the BBC and eyewitness accounts appeared to show the government ramping up its response to the protests, which have spread to more than 100 cities and towns across every province in Iran.

Medics at two hospitals have told the BBC that more than 100 bodies had been brought in over a two day period. The nationwide death toll is feared to be far higher.

The US has threatened to strike Iran over the killing of protesters. Iran's parliament speaker warned that if the US attacked, Israel along with US military and shipping centres in the region would become legitimate targets.

The protests were sparked in

the capital, Tehran, by soaring inflation, and are now calling for an end to the clerical rule of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Iran's attorney general said anyone protesting would be considered an "enemy of God" - an offence that carries the death penalty - while Khamenei has dismissed demonstrators as a "bunch of vandals" seeking to "please" Trump.

US President Donald Trump said on Saturday that the US "stands ready to help" as Iran "is looking at FREEDOM".

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian blamed the US and Israel for the unrest.

"They have trained certain individuals inside the country and abroad, brought terrorists into the country from outside, set mosques on fire, and attacked markets and guilds in Rasht, set

the bazaar ablaze," he said without providing evidence.

As protests intensify, the number of deaths and injuries recorded by human rights monitors continues to rise.

Footage authenticated by BBC Persian and BBC Verify shows security officers shooting at gatherings of protesters in Tehran, in the western Kermanshah province and the southern Bushehr region.

Multiple verified videos filmed in the centre of the western city of Ilam last weekend show security forces firing shots towards Imam Khomeini Hospital, where a group of protesters had been holding a rally.

Staff at several hospitals have since told the BBC they have been overwhelmed with the injured and dead.

BBC Persian has verified that 70 bodies brought to one hospi-

tal in the city of Rasht on Friday night, while a health worker reported around 38 people dying at a Tehran hospital.

Iran's police chief said on state TV that the level of confrontation with protesters had been stepped up, with arrests on Saturday night of what he called "key figures". He blamed a "significant proportion of fatalities" on "trained and directed individuals", not security forces, but did not give specific details.

More than 2,500 people have been arrested since protests began on 28 December, according to a human rights group.

The BBC and most other international news organisations are unable to report from inside Iran, and the Iranian government has imposed an internet shutdown since Thursday, making obtaining and verifying information difficult.



Bride and groom killed by gas explosion day after Pakistan wedding

A newly married couple were killed when a gas cylinder exploded at a house in Islamabad where they were sleeping after their wedding party, police have said.

A further six people - including wedding guests and family members - who were staying there also died in the blast. More than a dozen people were injured.

The explosion took place at 07:00 local time (02:00 GMT) on Sunday, causing the roof to collapse.

Parts of the walls were blown away, leaving piles of bricks, large concrete slabs and furniture strewn across the floor. Injured people were trapped under the rubble and had to be carried out on stretchers by rescue workers.

Emergency workers said the blast happened due to gas leakage, which filled the room and then exploded. Three neighbouring houses were also damaged.

The chairman of Pakistan's Senate, Yusuf Raza Gilani, called it "a heart-wrenching incident that turned celebrations into mourning".

Hanif Masih, the father of the groom, said his son had been married the previous day, and the newlywed couple, along with family members

and guests, were sleeping in the house at the time of the explosion.

Masih said everyone went to bed around 03:00 local time on Sunday (22:00 GMT on Saturday), and woke up to the devastation.

Along with his son, his daughter-in-law, wife and sister-in-law were all killed.

Police said they had cordoned off the area and were investigating the circumstances of the blast. Forensic officers in white suits were sent to comb through the debris.

Deputy police commissioner Sahibzada Yousaf told local media that sniffer dogs and advanced technology were used to ensure everyone was rescued from the rubble.

Many Pakistani households use liquefied petroleum gas cylinders for fuel and cooking. Gas cylinders have been linked to other deadly accidents caused by gas leaks.

Gilani expressed concern about the explosion and said more needed to be done to curb the "unsafe use of gas cylinders".

"Such incidents demand that relevant departments fulfil their responsibilities seriously and ensure safety measures," he said in a statement reported by local media.



IRAN PROTESTS:

Protesters gathered in a street in Tehran on Friday, 9 January.

One person dead and 300 buildings destroyed in Australia bushfires

One person has died and 300 properties have been destroyed in bushfires that have torn across south-east Australia.

The fires have raged in dozens of locations across the country for several days, mostly in the state of Victoria, but also in New South Wales, burning through land almost twice the size of Greater London.

A state of emergency has been declared in Victoria as thousands of firefighters and more than 70 aircraft battle the blaze. Residents in more than a dozen communities have been advised to leave their homes.

Authorities fear the fires, which are being fuelled by very hot, dry and windy conditions, could burn for several weeks.

Victoria's Premier Jacinta Al-

lan said 30 active fires were burning across the state, 10 of which were of particular concern.

She said 350,000 hectares had been burnt across the state as of 08:00 local time on Sunday (23:00 GMT on Saturday).

"We will see fires continue for some time across the state and that is why we are not through the worst of this by a long way," she told Australian media.

"There are fires that are continuing right now that are threatening homes and property."

Human remains were found in the village of Gobur, near the town of Longwood, some 110km (70 sq miles) north of the state capital Melbourne, police said. The victim has not yet been identified.

Allan praised the emergency workers who worked to

retrieve the body. "This is difficult and confronting work, and it takes a heavy toll."

"The Gobur community is grieving," she said.

Bushfire smoke is impacting air quality in many areas across Victoria, including metropolitan Melbourne.

Authorities said the fires were the worst to hit the south-east of Australia since the 2019-2020 blazes that destroyed an area the size of Turkey and killed 33 people.

One of the worst-affected places is the small town of Harcourt in the central highlands of Victoria, where firefighter Tyrone Rice lost his own home in the blaze. He was out fighting one of the bushfires when he learned it was on fire.

He told Australian media it was

"like a kick in the guts, but I'm not the first person to go through it, and I won't be the last".

The destruction in Harcourt was "gut-wrenching", local fire captain Andrew Wilson said.

A reporter for Australia's 9 News, Jack Ward, told the BBC World Service he had visited the damage in several towns across Western Australia.

What he saw was "catastrophic", he said, and in many places, "all that's left of these houses is a tin roof lying on the ground".

While it is hard to link individual wildfires to climate change as how humans manage the land can play a factor, scientists say climate change is making the hot, dry weather conditions conducive to bush fires more common.

Gambian authorities intercept 780 migrants trying to reach Europe

Authorities in The Gambia said they have intercepted more than 780 migrants at three different locations, all trying to reach Europe via Spain's Canary Islands.

Among those detained were 233 people from Senegal, 197 from The Gambia, 176 from Guinea, and 148 from Mali.

The operation came just days after another boat capsized off the Gambian coast on New Year's eve, killing more than 30 people.

While it is not the closest African country to the Spanish archipelago, migrant vessels have been forced recently to leave from further south after Senegal, Mauritania, and Morocco increased maritime

patrols.

"We have observed with deep concern, the rapid increase in the number of people attempting to travel to Europe by sea using The Gambia as a launch path," the interior ministry said in a statement.

Officials said this has prompted it to activate special operations teams to respond decisively to the increase.

Tens of thousands of people, most of them young, have tried to reach Europe from west Africa in recent years, mainly via the Canary Islands.

The Atlantic Ocean migration route used by West Africans, on overcrowded and often dilapidated boats, is one of the world's deadliest.

NEWS

Foreign

Sudan's government returns to capital after nearly 3 years of war

Sudan's military-led government has returned to the country's capital after nearly three years of operating from its wartime base in the eastern city of Port Sudan.

Sudan's Prime Minister Kamil Idris told reporters on Sunday that the "government of hope" was officially back in Khartoum and would begin efforts to improve services for the city's beleaguered residents.

The military was forced out by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) when civil war erupted between the two sides in 2023. The army recaptured it in a significant breakthrough last March.

Khartoum has been recovering from years of fighting. Roughly five million fled the city at the height of the conflict, according to the UN.

Those unwilling or unable to leave described a brutal RSF occupation, which included mass looting and fighters taking over civilian homes.

Huge swathes of the city lie in ruins. In October, UN official Ugochi Daniels reported that basic services were "barely functioning".

On Sunday, Idris said the government would work on improving electricity, water, healthcare and education in Khartoum.

He also declared that 2026 would be a "year of peace" for Sudan, where at least 150,000 people have died since the war erupt.

The UN has described the situation as the world's worst humanitarian crisis and around 12 million people have been forced from their homes.

The war began after the head of the army, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan fell out with his deputy and RSF leader General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, leading to a vicious struggle for power.

Both the RSF and the Sudanese military have been accused of committing atrocities throughout the conflict.

International efforts to broker peace have failed and both sides are backed by foreign powers who have poured weapons into the country.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has come under particular scrutiny recently over allegations of supporting the RSF, which it strongly denies.

Kampala decked in colours of Ugandan president's party ahead of polls

With just days to go to Uganda's general election, streets in the capital Kampala are decked out in campaign posters for incumbent President Yoweri Museveni.

The 81-year-old leader of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) party, who has ruled the country since 1986, is seeking re-election.

Despite his age and growing concern about his government's suppression of political opponents, human rights abuses, and corruption scandals, Museveni's supporters remain steadfast.

Lydia Nansangwawo, who is vice-secretary of the NRM's national mobile task force, says the opposition's promise of "a new country" leaves a lot of unknowns.

"We don't know what kind of a new country they are talking about. But what we are sure of is this country, we enjoy our country, we enjoy what our president has done for us and we enjoy the security we have," she says.

One of Africa's oldest leaders, Museveni's government has

changed the constitution twice to remove age and term limits to allow him to stand in the polls.

A former rebel, he has been credited with stabilising Uganda, promoting economic growth, and combating HIV/AIDS.

And people like shopkeeper, Flavia Atubera, love him for it.

"He got Uganda when we were backward, but during the time he has spent here, very many things he has done for us. We have peace, we ladies were not known in the community but now we are free to do what we want," she says.

Ahead of the 15 January polls, the authorities have detained hundreds of opposition supporters.

The election will again pit Museveni against the 43-year-old pop-star-turned politician known as Bobi Wine.

Rights group, Amnesty International earlier this week accused Ugandan security forces of launching a "brutal campaign of repression" against Wine's supporters.



COURTESY VISIT:

The military's leader, Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, visited Khartoum's presidential palace hours after it was recaptured last year

South Africa's ANC party launches reform plan to win back votes in local polls

At the head of local government elections due later this year, South Africa's African National Congress has unveiled an ambitious six-point reform drive to win back votes.

The party of Nelson Mandela suffered a bruising setback in the 2024 general elections.

It lost its parliamentary majority for the first time since the country's transition to democracy 30 years earlier, forcing it into a coalition government.

But at a ceremony marking its 114th birthday on Saturday, ANC supporters and politicians were upbeat about the party's chances.

"There is no other room than the ANC. We are waiting for elections and we will rebuild ourselves and come back

stronger in the next coming elections," said supporter Naledi Moroka.

Speaking at the gathering, President Cyril Ramaphosa said the party needs to address its dismal record on providing basic services.

The ANC's performance at local elections is often worse than at national level as people vent their frustrations over challenges they face in their daily lives.

"We cannot blame our people if they question whether our democracy, our constitution, our economy and indeed the ANC and the Alliance really work for them," he said, referring to the party's long-standing coalition with trade unions.

"The renewal of the ANC and

the Alliance is the most pressing organisational task of this generation," Ramaphosa said.

"We need to act with urgency, determination and courage in making renewal more visible and irreversible. We fully understand that we either renew or perish."

The reform blueprint zeroes in on unemployment, entrenched corruption, worsening inequality, and runaway crime, critical issues for citizens.

Joblessness surged past 30 per cent during the Covid-19 pandemic and has stubbornly remained there, despite a string of government programmes aimed at spurring employment.

Africa's most industrialised nation has one of the highest murder rates in the world, with

an average of more than 60 people killed each day, according to police data.

Ramaphosa said "renewal must be both personal and organisational", adding that each ANC member "must show in our daily conduct and interaction with society that we represent the best values of our movement".

The ANC won 40 per cent of votes in 2024 national elections, a catastrophic slump from the 57.5 per cent it won in 2019.

It also suffered record losses in the 2021 municipal elections, the first time in the democratic era that its support dipped below half of ballots cast nationally.

The party will face municipal elections later this year, seen as a key test of its standing.

Thousands march and dozens arrested in Minneapolis protests against ICE

Thousands of people joined another night of protests in Minneapolis on Saturday, following the death of a woman who was shot by a US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent in the city.

Earlier, city officials said 30 people had been arrested during the weekend's protests, and one police officer was injured after a "chunk of ice was thrown at them".

Protests against immigration enforcement have been held across the US after 37-year-old Renee Nicole Good was shot in her car on Wednesday.

The Trump administration said the agent who fired the shots acted in self-defence. Local officials have insisted the woman posed no danger.

People gathered in Minneapolis on Saturday night despite bitterly cold weather, while anti-ICE protests also

took place elsewhere in the US, including in Austin, Seattle, New York and Los Angeles.

The city of Minneapolis said on Saturday that the "vast majority of community members have demonstrated peacefully".

On Friday night, Minneapolis Police declared an unlawful assembly as protesters gathered outside the Canopy Hotel in the city, where some ICE agents were believed to be staying.

The Minneapolis police department said in a statement that "several hundred people" attended and "some individuals forced entry into the hotel through an alley entrance".

Videos posted online showed protesters flashing bright lights into the area, blowing whistles and banging on drums.

Police said some threw ice, snow and rocks at officers, police vehicles and other vehicles, but no serious injuries were reported.

One law enforcement officer suffered minor injuries but did not need any medical attention, according to the BBC's US partner CBS News.

Who was Renee Nicole Good, the woman killed by ICE?

Court records suggest ICE agent in Minnesota shooting was dragged by car in June.

Officials said another hotel in the city was also targeted and had window and graffiti damage.

At a news conference on Saturday, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey applauded the majority of protesters who he said have been peaceful, but noted that individuals who cause damage to property or put others in harm's way would be arrested.

Those arrested on Friday night were later released, Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara said.

Many Minnesotans have been frustrated by the pres-

ence of ICE in the state and O'Hara said his department was getting dozens of phone calls every day about the federal agency's operations.

On Saturday, three congresswomen from Minnesota also attempted to tour an ICE facility in Minneapolis. The women said they were initially allowed to enter, but were then told they had to leave.

Democratic Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, Kelly Morrison and Angie Craig said ICE and the Department of Homeland Security were obstructing members of Congress from fulfilling their duty to oversee operations there.

"They do not care that they are violating federal law," Craig said.

"The public deserves to know what is taking place in ICE facilities," Omar posted on X.

An earlier video shows the incident from another perspective



UGANDA'S PRESIDENT YOWERI MUSEVENI

Feature

Security stands tall as the heartbeat of Governor Okpebholo's vision for Edo

DR PATRICK AKHERE EBOJELE

Security is no longer a slogan in Edo State of today; it has become the backbone of governance since Governor Monday Okpebholo assumed office.

At a time when public anxiety is high and emotions are understandably raw following recent security incidents, it is important to pause, look beyond the noise, and examine the facts, the actions, and the direction Edo State is heading under his leadership. An insider assessment shows that security remains the central pillar of Governor Okpebholo's SHINE agenda, not just in words, but in clear policy choices, massive investments, and sustained operations across the state.

From the very start of his administration, Governor Okpebholo made it clear that no meaningful development can happen in an unsafe environment. Roads, schools, hospitals, businesses and even community life collapse when fear takes over. That understanding shaped the government's priorities, especially as reflected in the state's budgets. For example, in the 2025 budget and even more boldly in the 2026 estimates, security received one of the strongest levels of attention, with billions committed to patrol vehicles, motorcycles, modern equipment, recruitment of trained personnel, intelligence gathering and inter-agency collaboration. To the discerning these are not cosmetic gestures; they are deliberate investments aimed at reclaiming forests, highways and communities from criminal elements.

The strengthening of the Edo State Security Corps, the reactivation and regulation of vigilante structures, and the expansion of Operation Rescue are part of a wider deliberate, concerted strategy to take security closer to the people. Before the last yuletide season, coordinated bush-combing



GOVERNOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLU

operations were carried out across Auchi, Agenebode, Okpella, Fugar and parts of Owan. These operations led to the discovery and destruction of kidnappers' hideouts, multiple arrests, prosecutions, and in some cases, armed confrontations that neutralised dangerous criminals. The result was a remarkably peaceful festive period, one of the calmest Edo State has witnessed in years. That outcome did not happen by chance.

The tragic abduction and killing of Dr. Abu Momoh Tahir in Auchi was a painful setback, and the government did not shy away from acknowledging the gravity of that loss. The incident is unfortunate and deeply regrettable,

not only because a precious life was lost, but because it came at a time when sustained efforts had significantly reduced kidnapping incidents across the state. The fact remains however, that isolated criminal acts, no matter how heartbreaking, do not erase the progress being made nor do they define the overall security architecture of our state. Criminality thrives on opportunism, and the fight against it is rarely linear. The real measure of leadership lies in response, resolve and consistency, and on that score, the Okpebholo administration has remained firm on this score.

Governor Okpebholo has repeat-

edly assured Edo people that his government will not allow criminals or their sponsors to take the state hostage. His message has been clear and consistent: there will be no hiding place for kidnappers, cultists or anyone threatening public peace and safety.

Security operations are ongoing, intelligence-led and strategic, even if not every detail can be discussed publicly. Security, by its nature, demands discretion, coordination and patience. Loud debates and premature disclosures may satisfy public curiosity, but they can also compromise operations and endanger lives.

This is why the government's appeal for calm and restraint is both timely and necessary. Recent protests, including the one at the university town of Ekpoma, may have been driven by genuine concerns, but blocking roads and creating disorder do not strengthen security. On the contrary, such actions can distract security agencies, expose residents to danger and create openings for criminal elements to exploit chaos.

Governor Okpebholo is clear that while the right to peaceful protest is respected, security matters require structured engagement, not uncoordinated actions that undermine public order.

Interestingly, one of the most important points often overlooked in public discourse is that security is a shared responsibility. Government can deploy vehicles, recruit personnel and fund operations, but without citizen and community cooperation, intelligence sharing and vigilance, even the best strategies will struggle.

The Okpebholo administration has consistently called on traditional rulers, community leaders, youth groups and residents to work with security agencies, report suspicious movements and refuse to shield criminals. This people-centred approach recognises that those who live in the com-

munities often see what security operatives may not immediately notice.

It is also worth noting that the Okpebholo government has not limited its response to enforcement alone. Stronger anti-cultism laws, engagement with neighbouring states, and continuous review of security strategies form part of a broader effort to address the roots of crime. These measures aim to make Edo State increasingly hostile terrain for criminal networks, reducing their ability to regroup, recruit or operate freely.

Criticism is part of democracy, and public concern over security is valid. However, it is important that such criticism be informed, balanced and constructive. Painting Edo State as lawless or portraying the government as indifferent does not reflect the reality on ground. The facts show sustained investment, continuous operations and a leadership that has placed security at the very centre of its agenda. Progress may not be instant, but it is visible and measurable.

As Edo continues this difficult journey but necessary journey toward lasting peace, what is required from citizens is not panic or division, but unity, patience and cooperation. The government has reaffirmed its commitment to building a safe, peaceful and prosperous Edo State, and that commitment has been backed with resources, action and political will. Security remains the heartbeat of Governor Monday Okpebholo's vision for Edo, and with collective resolve, the state can and will overcome the challenges it faces.

In times like these, calm is not weakness, and restraint is not silence. They are powerful tools that allow security efforts to work, justice to take its course, and progress to continue. Edo State's future depends on it.

Ebojele is Chief Press Secretary to Edo State Governor, Sen. Monday Okpebholo.

The deciding moment of an honest fellow

MIKE O. ENAHORO

Whose honesty has been undermined, underestimated and misunderstood?_

There comes a defining moment in the life of every truly honest person, a moment when integrity, long taken for weakness, is suddenly tested by circumstance. It is often at this point that society, institutions, or even close associates are forced to confront a truth they have long ignored: that honesty, though quiet and unassuming, carries a strength far greater than deceit, manipulation, or loud self-promotion.

The honest fellow is rarely celebrated in advance. In a world that rewards cunning shortcuts, aggressive ambition, and calculated compromise, sincerity is often mistaken for naivety. Such a person is seen as too gentle

to compete, too principled to survive the rough terrain of power, and too patient to demand immediate reward. Yet this very patience, rooted in conviction, is what prepares the honest individual for the decisive moment when character matters more than connections.

For years, the honest fellow may labor faithfully, keeping promises, respecting due process, and refusing to cut corners even when doing so would bring quick gains. Colleagues who thrive on manipulation may rise faster, basking in applause built on exaggeration or half-truths. Meanwhile, the honest one endures skepticism, neglect, and sometimes outright ridicule.

His words are doubted, his intentions questioned, and his restraint misinterpreted as fear or lack of vi-

sion. Still, he persists, not because he is unaware of the cost, but because he understands that integrity is not a strategy; it is a way of life.

The deciding moment often arrives unexpectedly. It may come in the form of a crisis, an exposed falsehood, a moral crossroads, or a demand for accountability. At such times, the systems built on deception begin to shake. The loud voices falter under scrutiny, alliances formed on convenience collapse, and those who once appeared powerful scramble to protect themselves. It is then that the underestimated honest fellow steps forward, not with drama, but with clarity.

What distinguishes him in this moment is credibility. Because he has been consistent, his words carry weight. Because he has nothing to hide, investigation strengthens rather

than weakens his position. Because he has not betrayed trust, people sometimes reluctantly begin to listen. The same honesty once dismissed as impractical becomes the very foundation upon which solutions are built. In that decisive moment, integrity proves itself not as an idealistic luxury, but as a practical necessity.

This moment is not about revenge or vindication. The honest fellow does not triumph by humiliating those who doubted him. Rather, his victory lies in stability, trust, and moral authority. He demonstrates that leadership grounded in truth endures longer than authority sustained by fear or deception. His calm in the storm reassures others, and his record speaks louder than any defense he could offer.

History, both personal and collec-

tive, repeatedly confirms this pattern. Individuals, institutions, and even nations eventually face moments when honesty is no longer optional but essential. When that hour comes, those who built their influence on falsehood find themselves exposed, while those who quietly upheld truth emerge as pillars of continuity. The honest fellow's reward is not sudden wealth or exaggerated praise, but something far more enduring: respect earned, trust restored, and a clear conscience preserved.

In the end, the deciding moment reveals a simple but powerful lesson. Honesty may be underestimated, delayed, and tested, but it is never defeated. It waits patiently for its appointed time. And when that time arrives, it stands firm, unshaken, undeniable, and ultimately victorious.

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13 X 4		397,213	295,600	317,770	206,938	222,458	443,500	476,763	369,550	397,266
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FP 4X2	73,000	78,475	80,700	86,753	4 X 2	45,260	48,655	34,400	36,980	
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AFCON 2025: Osimhen downplays records as Eagles soar into AFCON semis

Victor Osimhen on Saturday expressed delight after helping Nigeria defeat Algeria 2-0 to reach the semi-finals of the

2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) in Morocco.

Osimhen scored the opening goal and provided an assist, earning Man-of-the-Match

honours in a commanding Super Eagles performance.

"I am happy to help the team. This victory is about collective effort, not individual performance," Osimhen said after the match.

The striker's powerful header, his fourth goal of the tournament, opened the floodgates for Nigeria early in the second half.

"We stayed patient and focused. When the chance came, we took it, and that made the difference," he said.

Osimhen said his growing influence was shaped by lessons from previous AFCON experiences.

"It's not just about goals. It's about how you help the team control and win games," he added.

The Napoli forward now has 35 international goals, just two shy of Rashidi Yekini's record, but insisted milestones were not his focus.

"I'm not chasing records. Rashidi Yekini remains the greatest striker Nigeria has produced," Osimhen said.

He also credited former striker Odion Ighalo for inspiring his national team journey.

"I want to win something important for my country with my teammates. That is what truly matters," he added.



VICTOR OSIMHEN



VICTOR OSIMHEN

AFCON 2025: Football enthusiasts laud Chelle as Super Eagles soars in Marrakech

Football enthusiasts in Morocco have praised Super Eagles Coach Eric Chelle after Nigeria's quarter-final victory over Algeria at the ongoing AFCON in Marrakech.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the win secured Nigeria's record 16th AFCON semi-final appearance, setting up a last-four clash with hosts Morocco.

Chelle, who recently marked one year in charge, has been widely commended for turning the Super Eagles into an exciting, cohesive and disciplined side.

A cross-section of Nigerian fans told NAN in Marrakech that Chelle has restored belief, identity and confidence to the national team.

President General of the Nigeria Football Supporters Club (NFSC), Dr. Rafiu Ladipo, described the victory as a reward for patience and planning.

"This Super Eagles team now plays with purpose, courage and discipline.

"You can see organisation, teamwork and hunger. This is not accidental," he said.

According to him, the coach has earned the trust of players and fans.

"The players believe in Chelle, and Nigerians can feel that connection," Ladipo said.

Ladipo urged the Nigeria

Football Federation (NFF) to protect the project.

"If we want sustained success, Chelle must be supported and respected," he added.

Rev. Samuel Ikpea, National Chairman of the NFSC, said the team's performance brought joy to Nigerians worldwide.

"This is football that unites the nation and lifts our spirits.

"Chelle has restored confidence, discipline and mental strength to the Super Eagles," he said.



ERIC CHELLE

AFCON: PDP congratulates Super Eagles on victory over Algeria

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has congratulated the Super Eagles on their Saturday "impressive and confidence-boosting victory" over the Atlas Lions of Algeria.

The party National Chairman, Tanimu Turaki, in a statement on Sunday in Abuja, said it was truly heart-warming to see the national team soar with such authority and composure.

The Super Eagles on Friday edged Algeria 2-0 in a high-octane quarter-final match of the competition.

Turaki saluted the team for making the nation proud with the victory.

"From the blast of the opening whistle, the Super Eagles took firm control of the game, displaying remarkable tactical discipline, technical finesse, resilience, and stamina.

"The team left no doubt about its determination, cohesion, and capacity to compete at the highest level of African football.

"Of particular note is the outstanding work of the coaching crew, whose strategic depth and technical competence were evident throughout the encounter.



SUPER EAGLES CELEBRATING

AFCON 2025: Osimhen, Akor fire Eagles into semis

Victor Osimhen scored and assisted as Nigeria defeated Algeria 2-0 on Saturday, securing a semi-final place at the ongoing 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) in Morocco.

The much anticipated quarter-final encounter between the Super Eagles and the Desert Foxes was played at the Stade de Marrakech with over 32,452 spectators in attendance.

The Super Eagles faced stern resistance before the break, with Algeria compact in midfield, limiting chances in spite of the pressure from Osimhen, Akor Adams and Ademola Lookman.

Nigeria broke through after

halftime when Osimhen powered home Bruno Onyemaechi's cross in the 47th minute, his fourth goal of the tournament.

Ten minutes later, Osimhen turned provider, releasing Akor Adams, who rounded goalkeeper Luca Zidane and finished calmly to double Nigeria's lead.

Algeria pushed forward in response but lacked penetration, as Nigeria's disciplined defence protected goalkeeper Stanley Nwabali with authority.

The victory sends Nigeria into their 16th AFCON semi-final, where the Super Eagles will meet hosts Morocco in Rabat.

AFCON 2025: Tinubu hails Super Eagles semi-final ticket

President Bola Tinubu has congratulated the Super Eagles for their victory over Algeria and qualification for the semi-finals of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON).

Nigeria defeated Algeria 2-0 on Saturday to advance to the semi-finals of the tournament in Morocco.

In a post on his X handle, @officialABAT, shortly after the match, Tinubu praised the team's display and assured

them of national support.

"Brilliant performance... inspiring," the President wrote, "Go Super Eagles! You have the support of all Nigerians," he added.

Goals from Victor Osimhen and Akor Adams sealed the victory for Nigeria in Marrakech, extending the team's unbeaten run in the competition.

Nigeria will now face hosts Morocco in the semi-final on Wednesday for a place in the final scheduled for Jan. 18 in Rabat.

Faé expresses frustration over Côte d'Ivoire's 2-3 AFCON quarter-final defeat to Egypt

Côte d'Ivoire coach Émerse Faé expressed disappointment after his team's 3-2 quarter-final loss to Egypt at the 2025 CAF Africa Cup of Nations.

Mohamed Salah scored and assisted as Egypt absorbed Côte d'Ivoire pressure, with efficient finishing proving decisive against the Elephants' dominance.

"We are frustrated by tonight's result. We prepared well, but we made too many mistakes at key moments to hope to beat Egypt.

"It hurts to concede the first goal so early, and then the second. We reacted to make it 2-1, but the third goal put us in trouble," Faé said.

Faé admitted lapses in concentration cost his team dearly. "It's hard to explain these mistakes.

"We will continue to work hard as we prepare for the World Cup," he said.

The coach however praised his players' fight in spite of the result, describing the final min-

utes as intense and competitive.

"Kessié, Fofana, and Diallo pressed until Guéla Doué reduced the deficit. The team never gave up.

"We laid siege with corners, crosses, and aerial balls, but Egypt's defence, led by El Shenawy, held firm until the final whistle," Faé said.



EMERSE FAÉ

Sports



Eric Chelle hails Super Eagles' grit after Algeria win, eyes Morocco test

Super Eagles Coach Eric Chelle on Saturday praised his players' discipline and belief after Nigeria's deserved 2-0 victory over Algeria at the

quarter-final of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON). Nigeria booked a record 16th AFCON semi-final appearance with the victory in Marrakech

on Saturday and will face hosts Morocco in the last four.

Chelle said the players executed the game plan with maturity, adding that preparation and commitment were evident throughout the contest.

"I am extremely proud of the boys. They were happy, focused, and brave. We worked hard, and my vision is clearly taking shape in this team," Chelle said.

The coach described the encounter as intense, noting that Algeria tested Nigeria's patience before the breakthrough after halftime.

"For 45 minutes, we stayed calm. I told the players to trust the process. When the mo-

ment came, we struck with authority," he added.

Chelle said Victor Osimhen's opener changed the rhythm, giving Nigeria confidence and control.

"That first goal was important. It released the pressure and gave us belief to play our football," he said.

The coach commended the team's efficiency in sealing the game through Akor Adams' composed finish.

"We were ruthless when opportunities came. That is the mentality we want at this level," Chelle stated.

Chelle also applauded Nigeria's defensive organisation, which nullified Algeria's late push.



ERIC CHELLE



VLADIMIR PETKOVIC

AFCON 2025: Algeria coach admits Super Eagles' superiority

Algeria's Head Coach, Vladimir Petković, has congratulated Nigeria following the Super Eagles' 2-0 victory in their AFCON quarter-final clash.

Petković said Nigeria deserved the win, admitting his team struggled to settle into the match from the opening minutes.

According to him, the Super Eagles controlled key aspects of the game.

"Nigeria was better than us and prevented us from playing the way we wanted," he said.

The Algerian coach noted that his side lacked several elements required to compete at that level.

"They showed superior individual quality and physical strength," Petković said.

He said Algeria attempted a response in the second half but fell short in attack.

"We tried to improve, but we couldn't reach the level we wanted going forward," he said.

He described his players as disappointed by the exit.

"The players are devastated, but they performed well throughout the tournament," he said.

He urged his team to remain positive in spite of the setback.

"This competition is over and we must now look ahead with our heads held high," he said.

AFCON 2025: Morocco, Nigeria, Egypt, Senegal set for blockbuster semi-finals

The semi-final line-up for the TotalEnergies CAF Africa Cup of Nations Morocco 2025 has been confirmed after a dramatic quarter-final weekend.

Egypt, Nigeria, Morocco and Senegal emerged as the last four teams following intense quarter-final matches concluded on Saturday night.

Hosts Morocco will face Nigeria at the Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium in Rabat, while Senegal will battle Egypt at the Grand Stade de Tanger, Tanger in the two semi-final fixtures scheduled for Wednesday.

Seven-time champions Egypt sealed the final semi-final ticket after edging defending champions Cote d'Ivoire 3-2 in a thrilling encounter.

The victory ended the Elephants' title defence and set up a mouthwatering semi-final clash with Senegal.

Senegal earlier booked their place with a hard-fought 1-0 win over Mali in a tense West African derby.

Iliman Ndiaye's first-half strike proved decisive as the Teranga Lions displayed composure to protect their slim advantage.

Hosts Morocco continued their title quest with a composed 2-0 victory over Cameroon in Rabat.

Goals from Brahim Diaz

and Ismaël Saibari underlined the Atlas Lions' attacking quality and defensive balance.

Nigeria completed the semi-final quartet after defeating Algeria 2-0 in Marrakech.

Victor Osimhen opened the scoring before Akor Adams sealed the win late, setting up a blockbuster clash with Morocco.

The quarter-final results highlighted fine margins, where pedigree, composure and experience proved decisive.



SUPER EAGLES IN TRAINING

AFCON 2025: Díaz tightens grip on golden boot as semi-finals beckon

Brahim Diaz has strengthened his hold on the Golden Boot race at the 2025 TotalEnergies CAF Africa Cup of Nations, scoring again as hosts Morocco reached the semi-finals.

Diaz was on target in Morocco's 2-0 quarter-final win over

Cameroon in Rabat, following Senegal's hard-fought 1-0 victory over Mali earlier on Saturday.

The Real Madrid winger now has five goals in five matches, underlining his growing influence and remarkable consistency at the tournament.

He struck before a packed Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium, getting the decisive touch to Ayoub El Kaabi's 26th-minute header.

Although Ismael Saibari sealed the win, Diaz once again dominated attention with a perfect scoring run unmatched by any other player at the finals.

Victor Osimhen and Mohamed Salah are close behind on four goals each, after scoring in Nigeria's and Egypt's respective quarter-final victories.

Five players are tied on three goals, including Ademola Lookman, Amad Diallo, Riyad Mahrez, Ayoub El Kaabi and Lassine Sinayoko.

With the semi-finals ahead, the chasing pack will hope to close the gap on the Moroccan star.

Several players also remain on two goals apiece, reflecting the wide spread of attacking talent at AFCON 2025.

Overall, 61 players have scored once, highlighting the competition's balance and attacking variety as the tournament reaches its decisive stage.

Diaz's composure and timing, however, have clearly set him apart so far.

AFCON 2025 TOP SCORERS (AFTER QUARTER-FINALS)

- 5 goals: Brahim Diaz (Morocco)
- 4 goals: Victor Osimhen (Nigeria)
- Mohamed Salah (Egypt)
- 3 goals:



BRAHIM DIAZ

Hassan praises Pharaohs' resolve after Egypt's 3-2 win over Cote d'Ivoire

Egypt coach Hossam Hassan has praised his players' determination after their dramatic 3-2 quarter-final win over holders Cote d'Ivoire at the 2025 CAF Africa Cup of Nations.

Mohamed Salah scored and assisted as the Pharaohs resisted Ivory Coast pressure, with clinical finishing making the difference against the Elephants' territorial dominance.

Hassan said every match was treated as a final.

"Since we arrived, I've always said that every match is like a final for us. That's our approach for every opponent," he said.

He expressed pride in his players' effort and qualification.

"I'm very happy about our qualification. The players gave everything, and I'm proud of them," Hassan said.

Hassan credited preparation for the team's performance.

"We knew they were the reigning champions. We respect-

ed them and put a plan in place, which worked today," he said.

He admitted mistakes cost goals but remained confident.

"It's true we made mistakes that led to two goals, but we scored three. We will correct these shortcomings for the next matches," Hassan said.

The Pharaohs will face Senegal's Lions of Teranga on Wednesday in Tanger, while Morocco meet Nigeria in Rabat in the other semi-final.

Nigeria to host maiden African Supporters Awards in Lagos

Nigeria recorded a triple success at the just concluded Confederation of African Sports Supporters (CASS) meeting held in Casablanca, Morocco.

President General of the Nigeria Football Supporters Club (NFSC), Dr. Rafiu Ladipo, was appointed Patron of the continental supporters' body.

The meeting also selected Nigeria to host the maiden African Supporters Awards scheduled for March in Lagos.

Rev Samuel Ikpea, National Chairman of the NFSC, was named Chairman of the Local Organising Committee for the awards.

The meeting was attended by delegates from over 36 African countries, with some participating virtually.

In his acceptance speech, Ladipo thanked members for the confidence reposed in Nigeria.

"This honour reflects the hard work and consistency of Nigerian football supporters," he said.

Ladipo pledged stronger sup-

port for the continental body.

"Nigeria will continue to promote unity and collaboration among supporters across Africa," he said.

He urged supporters to embrace peace and discipline.

"Support for football must never be associated with violence or disorder," he said.

Ladipo described the meeting as productive and historic. "We reached a unanimous decision to stage the maiden awards in Lagos," he said.

According to him, Nigeria's selection was based on proven capacity.

"Our supporters are known for organisation, colour and passion."

He expressed confidence in the local organising committee. "Rev. Samuel Ikpea has the experience to deliver a successful and colourful event," he said.

He noted that CASS remains the recognised umbrella body of supporters in Africa.

"CASS is the only supporters' organisation officially recognised by CAF," he said.



NIGERIA SUPPORTERS

FEATURE



A CROSS-SECTION OF BENEFICIARIES OF THE N1BN INTEREST-FREE LOAN FOR TRADERS IN EDO STATE DURING THE UNVEILING IN BENIN CITY. INSERT IS THE EDO STATE GOVERNOR, SENATOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO

How Gov Okpebholo's ₦1bn interest-free loan is transforming Edo's economy

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

When Governor Monday Okpebholo unveiled a N1 billion interest-free loan scheme in June 2025, it was more than a policy announcement.

It was a clear statement of intent. At a time when small businesses across Nigeria are grappling with high operating costs and limited access to affordable credit, Edo State chose a different path—one that places trust, opportunity, and economic power directly in the hands of its people.

The result is a quiet but far-reaching economic intervention that is reshaping livelihoods, strengthening local commerce, and laying the foundation for inclusive growth across the state.

Unlike conventional loan programmes that often favour a few, the Okpebholo administration adopted a uniform and transparent model.

Under the scheme, ₦200,000 was disbursed to each of 5,000 beneficiaries spread across the three senatorial

districts—Edo Central, Edo South, and Edo North—ensuring balanced development and statewide impact.

Implemented through the Edo State Skills Development Agency (EdoJobs), the programme deliberately targeted those who keep the grassroots economy alive: traders, market women, farmers (including Fadama and other organised farming groups), artisans, and entrepreneurs. These are the people whose daily enterprise feeds households, supplies markets, and sustains communities.

For many beneficiaries, the ₦200,000 interest-free loan became the difference between stagnation and growth. Traders were able to restock and diversify their goods. Market women expanded their inventory and improved turnover. Farmers invested in inputs that boosted production, while artisans and entrepreneurs acquired tools and materials that increased productivity.

Because the loans are interest-free and come with flexible repayment

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The loan scheme fulfils a key campaign promise made by Governor Okpebholo to support underserved businesses that are typically excluded from formal credit systems.

terms, beneficiaries are not burdened by the pressure that often accompanies commercial lending. Instead, they are empowered to grow steadily, reinvest profits, and, in many cases, engage additional hands—contributing to job creation and improved household income.

The loan scheme fulfils a key campaign promise made by Governor Okpebholo to support underserved businesses that are typically excluded from formal credit systems.

Beyond Edo State, the initiative aligns with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, which emphasises grassroots development, economic inclusion, and sustainable livelihoods.

By insisting that beneficiaries repay only the principal over time, the administration has also ensured that the fund remains revolving and sustainable, allowing future batches of entrepreneurs to benefit.

In a clear signal of confidence in the programme's impact, another

₦1 billion has been captured in the 2026 Edo State budget to fund a second batch of beneficiaries, subject to the approval of His Excellency. If approved, the expansion will significantly deepen the programme's reach and reinforce its role as a pillar of Edo State's economic strategy.

What sets this initiative apart is not just the size of the fund, but its philosophy. Governor Okpebholo's approach recognises that true economic growth begins at the grassroots—in markets, farms, workshops, and small businesses where ordinary people turn effort into enterprise.

As the ripple effects continue to spread through stronger businesses, rising incomes, and more vibrant local economies, the ₦1 billion interest-free loan scheme stands as a compelling example of people-centred governance in action. It is a reminder that when government policies meet the real needs of the people, development becomes not just visible, but deeply felt.