

Air strike kills 23 fleeing bandits after Kano attack

Troops of the Joint Task Force (JTF), supported by the Air Component of Operation Fansan Yamma, have neutralised no fewer than 23 bandits fleeing Kano State after coordinated attacks on Shanono and Tsanyawa Local Government Areas.

A statement issued on Sunday in Kano by the Assistant Director, Army Public Relations, 3 Brigade, Nigerian Army, Maj. Zubairu Babatunde, said the bandits

launched the attacks on the night of Thursday extending into the early hours of Friday.

He said the ground troops successfully contained the attacks and inflicted heavy casualties on the assailants before tracking the fleeing bandits to Karaduwa village in Matazu Local Government Area of neighbouring Katsina State.

According to him, intelligence reports revealed that the bandits had gathered at Dan

Marke in Matazu LGA to bury some of their members killed during the encounter with troops.

"The Air Component Sector 2 Operation Fansan Yamma located the bandits and trailed their movement until their motorcycles converged after crossing a dry river bed.

"A precision air strike was thereafter conducted, resulting in the neutralization of at least 23 terrorists, while several others

were believed to have sustained injuries," Babatunde said.

He added that the operation, supported by aerial Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) missions, also led to the destruction of several weapons and equipment belonging to the bandits.

The spokesperson said the Commander, 3 Brigade, Nigerian Army, had commended the Air Component and ground troops for their bravery and re-

silience during the operation.

"Their bravery and resilience in the face of adversity are commendable," the commander was quoted as saying.

Babatunde said that the security situation in Kano State remained calm, with troops sustaining robust patrols and monitoring across the affected areas.

He said troop morale and fighting efficiency were very satisfactory.

The Nigerian Army, he added, appreciated the support of members of the public in the fight against banditry and terrorism, and urged citizens to continue to provide timely information to security agencies.

According to him, the military, in collaboration with other security agencies, remains committed to protecting lives and property and will continue to take necessary measures to ensure national security.

The Nigerian Observer



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Edo road contractors risk revocation over delays —Okpebholo

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has warned road contractors handling projects across Edo South Senatorial District that their contracts are at risk of revocation if they fail to improve the quality and pace of work.

The governor issued the warning on Sunday during an inspection of ongoing road

projects, declaring that his administration would no longer tolerate delays, substandard execution or failure to meet agreed specifications.

Okpebholo said the inspection was aimed at identifying contractors committed to delivery and separating them from those undermining government efforts through poor performance.

He expressed dissatisfaction with work at Upper Ekenwan (Church) Road, saying the

contractor handling the project had failed to meet expectations and would be closely monitored ahead of possible termination of the contract.

"We were not happy with what we saw. We have made our observations clear. If by the time we return and nothing has changed in line with specifications, the job will be revoked," the governor said.

However, he commended contractors delivering quality

work at other locations, including Ogheghe Road and the Sapele Road project, describing their performance as satisfactory.

"We have gone to other sites and the work is going well. I am happy with the contractors handling the Ogheghe Road and the Sapele Road. They are doing very good jobs," he said.

The governor stressed that road infrastructure remains a top priority for his administration, particularly with the rainy

season approaching, warning that delays could stall progress and waste public funds.

"We will continue to monitor these projects closely, including weekends. There is no time to waste. The rainy season is almost here, and if we are not working, nothing will be achieved," he added.

Okpebholo linked the inspection drive to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, noting that road construction remains

a key tool for restoring public confidence in governance.

Projects inspected included the 1.4-kilometre Charismatic (Church) Road, off Ekhena Road; the Old Sapele Road linking Agip, Ohogbohi and Ogheghe communities; Ogheghe Road off Sapele Road; and the Sapele Road Bypass.

The governor was accompanied by top government officials, including the state APC Deputy Chairman, Sylvester Aigbabor, and other senior officials.



INSPECTING FLYOVER PROJECT:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo inspecting the flyover at Ramat Park in Benin City.

NDLEA arrests 22 Indians, seizes 31.5kg cocaine, other drugs

ABUJA

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has arrested 22 Indian crew members of the merchant vessel, MV Aruna Hulya, after seizing 31.5 kilograms of cocaine hidden in the ship's hatch at Apapa Port, Lagos.

NDLEA's Director of Media and Advocacy, Mr Femi Babafemi, said the vessel, which originated from the Marshall Islands, was intercepted on Friday, January 2.

The Master of the vessel and 21 other crew members were taken into custody in connection with the shipment.

Earlier, NDLEA operatives

in Lagos uncovered Ketamine, Ecstasy, and Tramadol pills concealed in coffee sachets and book parcels bound for Zambia and the United Kingdom.

The seizures at a courier company on December 24 and 29 showcased the sophisticated methods used by traffickers.

In Oyo State, a major drug distributor, 65-year-old Fatima Ilori, popularly known as Mama Kerosine, was arrested along with Olusanya Abosede, 35, in Ibadan after 238.4 kilograms of skunk cannabis were recovered.

Borno State also recorded major drug busts. Operatives intercepted 9,150 ampoules

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Copyright Commission reaffirms commitment to fair, balance copyright system

ABUJA

The Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) has restated its commitment to fair, balanced and humane copyright systems where authors would be protected and rights respected.

Dr John Asein, Director-General of the commission gave the assurance in a statement by the commission's Director, Public Affairs, Mrs Ijeoma Egbunike in commemoration of the 2026 World Braille Day, on Sunday in Abuja.

The World Braille Day is a day dedicated to celebrate Braille as one of humanity's most transformative innovations for literacy, independence and dignity.

According to Asein, NCC's commemoration is framed by a simple but powerful call to action of "Let the Blind Read."

He added that for centuries, the braille had enabled blind and visually impaired persons to access knowledge, participate meaningfully in education

and live with dignity.

"Learning materials are accessible to a growing number of blind and print-disabled persons" he added.

The director general noted that this year's focus on inclusion, bridging of digital divides, as well as advancement of accessibility in education, resonated deeply with the commission's long-standing under the banner "Let the Blind Read."

"We reaffirm our belief that the copyright system must serve not only creators and markets, but also learners, students and readers with print disabilities.

"As we have consistently emphasised, access to knowledge is a right, not a privilege. Yet the reality in Nigeria remains deeply troubling. "Available studies indicate that less than one percent of published materials in the country are available in accessible formats such as braille, audio, or digital texts, compatible with screen-reading technologies," he said.

The NCC boss further noted

that such acute 'book famine' mirrored broader challenges across much of the developing world and exposed the systemic barriers confronting blind and visually impaired persons.

He stressed that the commission was drawing attention to the fact that the cost of inaccessibility was not merely social exclusion, but a long-term harm to education, employment prospects and inclusion of the print disabled in the broader national development agenda.

"It is against this backdrop that the Copyright Act, 2022 assumes

particular significance. The Act marks a decisive transition from charity-based access, to a rights-based framework for inclusion.

"Through section 26, Nigeria has domesticated the Marrakech Treaty, expressly permitting the reproduction, distribution and cross-border exchange of works in accessible formats for persons with print disabilities.

"Importantly, the Act also establishes safe-harbour protections for 'authorised entities', recognising that access must be enabled lawfully, responsibly and in a manner that builds trust

throughout the book value chain.

"In furtherance of this statutory mandate, the commission has issued new guidelines to strengthen the safe-harbour regime," he added.

According to him, these guidelines provide much-needed clarity, transparency and safeguards for the production and dissemination of accessible-format copies.

He reassured of the confidence of NCC to encourage broader institutional participation, rebuild confidence among rights holders and in-

termediaries, as well as substantially increase the availability of books in braille and other accessible formats.

"This regulatory effort will be complemented by sustained advocacy, awareness-raising and capacity-building initiatives, targeting publishers, libraries, educational institutions and other concerned stakeholders," he stated.

The World Braille Day ultimately reminded citizens that inclusion was not an act of generosity; it was a legal obligation, a moral imperative and a development necessity on this year's celebration

Medical and Health Workers Union of Nigeria debunks strike rumours in Kaduna

KADUNA

The Medical and Health Workers Union of Nigeria (MHWUN), Kaduna State Council, has denied reports circulating on social media that it plans to embark on a state-wide strike.

The union made the clarification in a statement addressed to the Head of Service of Kaduna State and signed by Sani Yusuf Saulawa on behalf of the Chairman.

According to the statement, the attention of the union was drawn to unverified reports alleging an impending industrial action by MHWUN in the state.

"The Medical and Health Workers Union of Nigeria, Kaduna State Council, has no plan whatsoever to embark on any strike action in the state," the statement said.

The union commended the Kaduna State Government under Governor Uba Sani for what it described as proactive policies and interventions aimed at improving the health sector.

It listed some of the achievements to include the approval and implementation of the Consolidated Health Salary Structure (CONHESS/CONMESS) for health workers across the state and within the State Primary Health Care Board (SPHCB).

Other achievements highlighted include the promotion and implementation of three years' outstanding promotions, the upgrading and renovation of 255 health facilities and general hospitals, as well as the supply of essential medical equipment to primary health care centres and general hospitals.

The statement also said the provision of ambulances to general hospitals to enhance referral services across the state and the on-going recruitment of 1,800 health professionals under the SPHCB.

According to the union, more than 90 per cent of the workforce under the SPHCB are members of MHWUN, stressing that there is no justification or intention to disrupt industrial harmony through any form of strike.

NDLEA arrests 22 Indians, seizes...

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of Tramadol along Maiduguri-Gamboru Ngala Road and 34,000 capsules at Biu Market on the same day, disrupting supply lines to insurgents.

Other seizures across the country included 400 kilograms of skunk recovered in Lagos, 140.8 kilograms of compressed skunk in Hadejia, Jigawa State, 238.5 kilograms of skunk in Ilorin, Kwara State, and 32,000 Tramadol and Diazepam pills

seized in Moro LGA, Kwara State.

NDLEA commands nationwide continue to run War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) campaigns in schools, worship centres, workplaces, and communities, including in Katsina, Lagos, and Niger States.

The agency's Chairman, retired Brig.-Gen. Buba Marwa, commended officers for the arrests and seizures and urged all commands to intensify efforts in the fight against drug trafficking and abuse.



ELEVATION OF CANONS:

Primate, The African Church, His Eminence, Julius Abbe, (M); Archdeacons: Philip Ojumude (L); Titus Akinwale (2nd L); Benjamin Apata (3rd L), Olabunmi Ijalana (R); Martins Oki (2nd R); Sunday Omilana (3rd R) and others, during the elevation of Canons to Archdeacons of the Church in Lagos on Sunday.

Kwara Education Ministry leverages radio-based learning for new term

ILORIN

The Kwara Ministry of Education and Human Capital Development has introduced a radio-based learning initiative aimed at expanding learning access beyond the conventional classroom.

This is contained in a statement by the Ministry's Press Secretary, Mr Peter Amogbonjaye, on Sunday in Ilorin.

He said that the initiative which will commence on January 5, underscores the creativity of the Kwara government.

According to him, it is supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as well as the Nigeria Learning Passport.

He said that the Commissioner, Dr Lawal Olohunbebe, had said that the radio programme will run in 99.1 Midland FM at 11 a.m. on Mondays

and Tuesdays.

"Then it will run at 1p.m. on Wednesdays and at 2.30p.m. on Fridays.

"Additional radio stations will soon be added to widen access across the state," he said.

The statement also said that the commissioner has ordered the reopening of schools in the state, on Monday, January 5, with exception of areas undergoing special security measures.

"We welcome our children and teachers back to school across the state.

"Learning activities are to resume immediately in all but areas earlier identified to be under special security surveillance.

"This structured school resumption is designed to keep our children from harm's way amid renewed security operations.

"Normal school activities will resume in such places very soon," he said.

Promoting culture 'll foster unity, peace, nat'l devt —Association

NASSARAWA EGGON

The Eggon Cultural Development Association (ECDA) Galle branch, Nasarawa said that promotion of culture would foster unity and peace among Nigerians.

Chairman of the association, Alhaji Umar Abdullahi Galle, stated this on Sunday at the 5th Galle Day 2026 celebration in Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area.

The theme of the ceremony is, "Harnessing Galle Hill's Mineral Wealth; Preserving Culture, Promoting Peace and Powering Development."

Abdullahi-Galle, who is also the General Secretary of ECDA

worldwide, stated that Galle was a community globally recognised for promoting unity and cultural diversity.

The chairman said that the Galle cultural day served as a platform for celebrating unity, shared values and communal bonds, bringing together sons, daughters, friends and neighbouring communities.

"Our ability to sustain this event for five consecutive years, reflects the successes recorded in cultural revitalisation and community cohesion," he added.

He commended all that supported and graced the occasion and prayed to God to bless them abundantly.

Also speaking, Mr Labaran

Magaji, the Special Guest of honour and the Secretary to the Government of Nasarawa State, stressed the importance of preserving and promoting cultural values for societal development.

Magaji, represented by Mr Abdullahi Loko, Special Adviser to Governor Abdullahi Sule on Inter-Governmental Matters, commended Galle community for organising the cultural festival.

He described it as a platform for sustaining Eggon cultural heritage among the younger generation.

Magaji called on the people of Galle, the state and Nigerians at large, to promote their cultural traditions for national

development.

On his part, the President, ECDA, worldwide, Mr David Abuluya, lauded the Galle community for sustaining the cultural day, which according to him, promotes unity, peace and harmony among the Eggon people and other ethnic groups.

"I want to use this medium to call on the people of Eggon nation and others to continue to embrace culture in order to promote unity and peace," he said.

Also speaking, the Executive Chairman, Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area, Alhaji Iliya Ibn Aliyu, said the cultural day would promote unity and peace among the Eggon nation and others.

NEWS

Tax Reforms: Strategy, timing, trust 'll determine success —CPPE

LAGOS

Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise (CPPE) has said that the success of the ongoing tax reform will depend largely on implementation strategy, timing and public trust, rather than the strength of its legislative provisions.

Dr Muda Yusuf, Founder and

Chief Executive Officer of CPPE, stated this in Lagos on Sunday via a statement while assessing the tax reform framework.

Yusuf described the reforms as sound, progressive and among the most ambitious fiscal restructuring efforts in recent decades, but warned that good policy design does not automatically translate into positive outcomes.

He, however, noted history had shown that poorly sequenced and rigid implementation could undermine even well-intentioned reforms.

According to him, the ultimate success or failure of the tax reform will depend far more on how it is implemented than on the laws themselves.

“Without careful sequencing, political sensitivity and economic realism, even well-intentioned reforms can trigger resistance, disrupt livelihoods and further erode public trust,” Yusuf said.

He stressed that tax reform should be seen as a process rather than a one-off event, noting that it must evolve with implementation feedback, economic conditions and social realities.

Yusuf observed that the reform was unfolding under particularly delicate circumstances, as the economy was still grappling with elevated inflation, weakened purchasing power and the adjustment costs of fuel subsidy removal and foreign exchange reforms.

He added that households

and businesses were experiencing reform fatigue, with a politically sensitive pre-election period approaching.

“In this context, expecting full and simultaneous compliance across all sectors of the economy is unrealistic.

“A rigid, enforcement-heavy approach risks undermining reform credibility before its benefits have time to materialise,” he said.

Yusuf acknowledged that the tax reform framework contained several pro-welfare provisions, including exemption of low-income earners from personal income tax and VAT relief on basic goods and essential services such as education, healthcare and agriculture.

He noted that small business-

es were also granted relief from company income tax and VAT obligations, while incentives for priority and job-creating sectors aligned tax policy with Nigeria's diversification agenda.

According to him, the rationalisation of multiple taxes, repeal of obsolete laws and improved coherence of the tax system address long-standing private sector concerns and could enhance investor confidence if properly implemented.

However, Yusuf said public resistance to the reform was rooted in lived experience, as many Nigerians associated past reforms with rising living costs and declining welfare, without corresponding improvements in public services.



OFFICIAL HANDOVER:

L-R: Councillor Aku Ward III, Igbo Eititi Local Government Area of Enugu State, Comrade Emmanuel Ezemagu; Executive Director, Rural Engagement and Development Foundation (REDFoundation), Mazi Ozor Kingsley; Igwe of Aku Community, Igwe Charles Ochi; representative of Enugu State Governor, Ms Chika Mba; Chairman, Ugwunani General Assembly, Chief Sylvanus Okara and Aku elders' representative, Chief Ezekiel Ezemagu during the official handover of Bottle Toilet Project by REDFoundation in Ugwunani Community of Igbo Eititi LGA on Sunday.

New book reopens Benin–Onicha–Olona history, calls for restoration of ancient Monarchy

A new historical work, *The History of An African Community (Ikhnmioto): The History of Onicha-Olona Kingdom*, has revived debate over the origins, kingship structure and succession crisis of Onicha-Olona in Delta State, tracing the community's roots to the ancient Benin Empire and calling for the restoration of what it describes as the rightful royal lineage.

The 399-page book, authored by Prince Engr. Ephraim Odiakosa Nwabuokei, was unveiled in Benin City by the Iyase of Benin Kingdom, Chief Sam Igbe

Speaking at the launch, Chief Igbe commended the

author for documenting the history of his people and urged the public to engage with the work, describing it as a valuable contribution to the preservation of indigenous history.

Prince Nwabuokei said the book was written to expose “hidden truths” about Onicha-Olona's past, lamenting that the absence of documented history had allowed distorted narratives to thrive over the years.

According to him, the work seeks to reclaim lost history and restore historical accuracy.

The book was reviewed by sociologist and public affairs analyst, Tony Abolo, who said the book goes beyond conventional story-

telling to interrogate the causes and consequences of disruptions in the Onicha-Olona monarchy since the early 20th century.

He noted that the book establishes Onicha-Olona, also known by its ancient names Ikhnmioto or Okhnmiina as an offshoot of the Benin Empire, citing political, cultural and administrative similarities with old Benin.

Abolo explained that the author traces the disruption of royal succession to British colonial intervention during and after the Ekumeku War, when traditional authority weakened and warrant chiefs, referred to as “Obis,” replaced the original Benin-style Obaship.

“The book is essentially about setting the record straight,” Abolo said.

“It argues that the House of Ugbe, descended from Benin royalty, was unjustly displaced from the throne around 1900, and that the distortion of succession has continued to undermine peace and development in Onicha-Olona.”

Drawing parallels with Benin history, the book reviewer noted that while Benin restored its monarchy after colonial disruption from the Oba Ovoranmwon to the present Oba Ewuare II, Onicha-Olona has remained trapped in a succession crisis for over a century.

Gunmen kidnap medical doctor, brother in Edo

BENIN CITY

Suspected gunmen have abducted a medical doctor, Dr. Abu Ibrahim Babatunde, and his brother, Abu Tahir, in Auch, Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State.

The incident occurred on Thursday along City Pride Road, Igbira Camp, Auch. Babatunde, who is undergoing housemanship at the Edo State Teaching Hospital, Auch, was said to be returning home from work with his brother when the assailants struck.

Sources said the brothers arrived at their residence at about 7:30 p.m. and Tahir had stepped out of their vehicle to open the gate when the gunmen emerged from hiding.

The attackers reportedly abducted the two brothers at

gunpoint and dragged them into a nearby bush.

Confirming the incident on Saturday, the Edo State Police Public Relations Officer, ASP Eno Ikoedem, said the command received a distress call on Friday.

She said operatives were immediately deployed to the area, while a coordinated manhunt involving the police, local vigilantes, forest guards and Community Safety Partnership Volunteers familiar with the terrain was launched.

According to her, intensive search-and-rescue operations have been ongoing in the surrounding forests to secure the victims' release and apprehend the perpetrators.

Ikoedem assured that the command would leave no stone unturned to ensure the safe rescue of the abducted brothers.

2026: NIPR Edo urges stronger governance, security, inclusive growth

The Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), Edo State Chapter, has called for strengthened governance, sustained security measures and inclusive development as Edo State begins the 2026 calendar year.

In a New Year statement, the Chairman, Dr James-Wisdom Abbulimen, commended Governor Monday Okpebholo for what he described as early gains in institutional rebuilding, economic revitalisation, infrastructure renewal and people-centred governance, saying the steps were restoring public confidence and laying a foundation for long-term growth.

The Institute also praised the state government's actions against insecurity and cultism, stressing that security remains central to sustainable development.

“Continued investment in professional policing, intelligence-led operations and rural safety is essential to protecting

lives, boosting productivity and attracting investment,” Abbulimen said.

NIPR urged the government to deepen social protection and inclusive development programmes, particularly in skills development, entrepreneurship, healthcare access and farmer support, noting that such interventions would improve livelihoods, enhance food security and accelerate rural development.

Reaffirming its professional role, the Institute said it remained ready to support the government through ethical public relations practice, strategic communication and constructive engagement.

The body also called on residents to support development efforts by protecting public assets, promoting peace and fostering social cohesion, expressing optimism that 2026 would deliver inclusive growth, stronger public trust and sustainable development for Edo State.

Tinubu saves N10trn annually from oil subsidy removal —Sen. Adeola

ILARO (OGUN)

Sen. Solomon Adeola (APC–Ogun West) has revealed that Nigeria now saves approximately N10 trillion annually following President Bola Tinubu's removal of fuel subsidy.

Adeola, Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriation, stated this on Saturday during his new year thanksgiving service held at the Cathedral

Church of Christ, Ona-Nla, Ilaro.

The senator noted that within two years in office, the President had succeeded in removing a major cankerworm that had undermined the nation's economy and finances.

According to him, before the removal, few Nigerians were benefiting from the fuel subsidy at the detriment of the overall population of the nation.

Adeola, popularly known as

Yayi, noted that prior to the removal of fuel subsidy, Nigeria borrowed an estimated N6 trillion to N7 trillion each year to finance the subsidy.

“I am a living testimony to what the president has done. Within his two years of assumption of office, he succeeded in removing the cankerworm in our economy that has affected our finances over the years.

“That is, the fuel subsidy; which benefited very few Ni-

gerians at the detriment of the overall population of this nation.

“With that singular action, the president is saving the country over N10 trillion on annual basis.

“I used to be the chairman, senate committee on finance during the last senate and I know on a yearly basis, what we go to bank to borrow to fund the subsidy is in the region of N6 trillion to N7 trillion on an annual basis,” he said.

25 dead, 14 missing in Yobe boat mishap

DAMATURU

No fewer than 25 persons lost their lives, while 14 others are missing after a boat capsized along Yobe River in Garbi town, Nguru Local Government Area of Yobe State.

Dr Mohammad Goje, Executive Secretary of Yobe State Emergency Management Agency (YOSEMA), disclosed this in a statement in Damaturu on Sunday.

He said the incident occurred at about 7:48 p.m. on January 3, after the victims, mainly farmers and traders, boarded the boat in Adiyani town in neighbouring Jigawa State.

"The victims were reportedly returning from Adiyani town, where they were engaged in fishing, farming, and other local business activities, when the canoe overturned mid-journey," Goje said.

The executive secretary added that 13 passengers were rescued from the disaster and were receiving treatment in a hospital.

"Search and rescue operations are ongoing, with security agencies, emergency responders, and local community volunteers working tirelessly to locate the missing passengers and recover bodies. SEMA Search and Rescue Teams from Bade and Nguru have been dispatched to support the team on the ground," he said.

Goje said Governor Mai Mala Buni had extended his condolences to the families of the victims and directed YOSEMA to provide medical and logistical support to the rescued victims.

He added that the governor emphasized that referral services must be expedited without delay to save lives.

New tax act 'll plug revenue leakages in oil, gas sector — expert

LAGOS: An oil and gas expert, Prof. Ken Ife, has said that Nigeria's newly implemented Tax Act would curb revenue leakages in the oil and gas sector.

Ife, an Energy Development Economist, said the tax would also free regulatory agencies to concentrate on oversight, performance monitoring, and enforcement.

He spoke in an interview with newsmen on Sunday in Lagos, as the Nigeria Tax Act (NTA) 2025 officially took effect on January 1.

The NTA 2025, signed into law in June 2025, represents one of the most sweeping fiscal reforms in Nigeria's petroleum industry in decades.

Ife said the law consolidates legacy statutes such as the Petroleum Profits Tax Act (PPTA) and fully integrates the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021 into a single, unified tax code.

According to him, the Act repeals much of the fragmented tax regime, replacing it with a streamlined fiscal framework designed to improve transparency, efficiency, and investor confidence.

"For the oil and gas industry, upstream companies will still face a split tax structure, consisting of Hydrocarbon Tax (HT) on profits from crude oil production and Companies Income Tax (CIT) on general corporate profits," he explained.

The hydrocarbon tax remains between 15 and 30 percent, depending on licence type, while the standard CIT for large companies is set at 30 per cent, with a planned reduction to 25 per cent in subsequent years.

"The drop from 30 to 25 per cent CIT is very encouraging to prospective investors and improves retained earnings for existing operators," he said.

Ife identified the introduction of a 15 percent Minimum Effective Tax Rate (ETR) as one of the most consequential changes for International Oil Companies (IOCs) and large indigenous firms.

"This aligns Nigeria with the OECD's 'Pillar Two' framework where a company's effective tax rate falling below 15 percent due to incentives or deductions

will be topped up to meet the threshold.

This effectively blocks tax leakage and guarantees a minimum contribution from multinational groups," he said.

He also highlighted the introduction of a consolidated 4 percent Development Levy on assessable profits, replacing

several smaller levies, including the Tertiary Education Tax, NITDA Levy, NASENI Levy, and Police Trust Fund Levy.

"The 4 percent levy applies only to profits subject to CIT and not to profits calculated for Hydrocarbon Tax purposes, offering some relief for core upstream operations," he said.

On energy transition measures, Ife noted that a five percent surcharge has been introduced on fossil fuel products such as petrol and diesel at the point of sale. Clean energy products, including Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), and household kerosene, are exempt from the

surcharge.

He added that under the Upstream Petroleum Operations (Cost Efficiency Incentives) Order 2025, companies that reduce operating costs below regulatory benchmarks can claim tax credits, allowing them to retain up to 50 percent of the savings achieved.



ACTIVITIES RESUME:

Business activities resume at Agbara Market enroute Badagry express road after the New Year Celebration in Lagos.

Fire service confirms 8 dead in Lagos inferno, demolition underway

LAGOS

The Lagos State Fire and Rescue Service has confirmed eight deaths from a fire incident that occurred on December 24 at the 25-storey Great Nigeria Insurance House on Lagos Island.

The Controller General of the agency, Mrs Margaret Adeseye, disclosed this in a statement on Saturday, providing a comprehensive update on the incident.

Adeseye said the Lagos State Government moved to begin a controlled demolition of the damaged structure.

"Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, following a second

on-site assessment on January 2, approved the constitution of a Technical Recovery and Demolition Committee.

The committee, chaired by the Honourable Commissioner for Special Duties and Inter-Governmental Relations, is responsible for developing and implementing a safe demolition plan for the affected building and its immediate surroundings, prioritizing public and responder safety," she said.

She added that emergency responders remain fully deployed at the scene alongside sister agencies.

"The site is highly sensitive, with substantial rubble still in

place and intermittent pocket fires burning within the debris.

"These fires are caused by combustible materials such as textiles and clothing, rather than structural components. Although the fires do not pose immediate danger to surrounding areas, rushed debris removal could destabilize the already weakened structure," Adeseye said.

The building's foundation has been severely compromised by the fire, rendering it structurally unsafe and unfit for use, while some rubble may currently provide unintended structural support.

As part of public safety measures, the affected market and surrounding areas remain

closed, with only authorized first responders allowed within the cordoned zone.

Adeseye confirmed that eight fatalities had been recorded, with five victims identified and three yet to be identified.

Thirteen persons were successfully rescued, and search operations continued in safer sections of the debris.

She warned that serious fire safety violations, including overstocking combustible materials and absence of proper fire safety infrastructure, contributed to the incident.

Adeseye thanked Lagos residents for their patience and cooperation, reiterating that safe rescue operations ensure safe outcomes.

Police probe alleged arson in Ilorin

ILORIN

The Police Command in Kwara State has commenced investigation into a suspected arson attack at Isale Koko area of Ilorin.

This was disclosed in a statement issued over the weekend by the Police Public Relations Officer, SP Adetoun Ejire-Adeyemi.

Ejire-Adeyemi said no life was lost as no one was inside the building at the time of the fire.

The value of the property destroyed is yet to be determined.

The incident was reported on January 2 at about 10:00 p.m. at the C Division Police Station, Oja Oba, Ilorin.

"The complainant, Mrs T. A. Olorisha, alleged that her house was set ablaze by un-

known persons on January 1, 2026, at about 7:00 p.m., while she was away.

"She further alleged that she had received threats in November 2025 due to religious differences, as she is a traditional worshipper," Ejire-Adeyemi said.

Three suspects have been detained and are assisting with the ongoing investigation.

The command assures the public that efforts are ongoing to apprehend other suspected perpetrators and all allegations are being diligently investigated.

The Kwara State Police Command reiterated its commitment to protecting lives, property, and fundamental rights, urging residents to remain calm and provide any useful information.

Resident doctors to resume suspended strike Jan 12

ABUJA

The Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) has announced plans to resume its previously suspended total, indefinite, and comprehensive strike from January 12, citing the Federal Government's failure to fully implement agreed resolutions.

The decision was taken at an emergency virtual meeting of the association's National Executive Council (E-NEC) on Friday and conveyed in a statement obtained from NARD's official X handle "@nard_nigeria."

The National Officers' Com-

mittee (NOC) said the resumption, tagged "TICS 2.0: No Implementation, No Going Back," would commence at 12:00 a.m. on January 12.

The NEC directs all centre presidents across the association's 91 accredited centres to convene congress meetings and address the media to saturate public spaces with information on the planned industrial action within seven days.

The strike will be accompanied by centre-based demonstrations from January 12 to January 16, followed by regional protests and a nationwide protest organized by the NOC.

NARD stated that suspen-

sion of the renewed strike would only occur after full implementation of its minimum demands, including the reinstatement of five resident doctors disengaged from the Federal Teaching Hospital, Lokoja, payment of outstanding promotion and salary arrears, implementation of the professional allowance table in the 2026 budget, and clarification on skipping and entry-level placement issues.

Other demands include the re-introduction of specialist allowance, resolution of house officers' salary delays and arrears, re-categorization of membership certificates,

commencement of locum and work-hours regulation committees, and timely conclusion of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) process.

The NOC explained that the one-week window before resumption allows centres to conduct congress meetings, engage the media, and carry out statutory notifications of planned protests.

The association had suspended a 29-day nationwide strike on November 29, 2025, granting a four-week window for government compliance. Failure to meet the demands triggered the planned resumption.

NEWS

NHIA reviews progress on health insurance coverage

ABUJA

The National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) reports significant progress in expanding coverage and protecting Nigerians from catastrophic health costs through strengthened

nationwide implementation of mandatory health insurance.

This was contained in the Authority's year-end review, made available to reporters on Sunday in Abuja.

The review highlighted key milestones achieved under ongoing reforms aimed at im-

proving enrolment, service delivery, and financial protection in the health sector.

According to the report, enforcement of mandatory health insurance has shifted more Nigerians from out-of-pocket payments for healthcare to organised prepayment through insurance.

"By the third quarter of 2025, more than 21 million Nigerians had been enrolled into health insurance through collaboration between NHIA, State Social Health Insurance Agencies, and Health Maintenance Organisations."

The Authority said a major

turning point came with the Presidential directive mandating health insurance for all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies and requiring valid NHIA insurance certification for participation in public procurement and renewal of federal licences.

"The measure is accelerating coverage among the formal sector, organised private sector, and micro, small, and medium-scale enterprises," it said.

The report also highlighted equity programmes such as the NHIA Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care initiative, which ensures zero out-of-pocket payment for emergency maternal and newborn care, and the Fistula-Free Programme providing treatment for women with obstetric fistula.

These initiatives support the enrolment of vulnerable women and children into health insurance.

NHIA further disclosed that the completion of a comprehen-

sive actuarial evaluation in 2025 provided a scientific basis for reviewing provider payments, leading to a 93 percent increase in capitation rates and a 378 percent rise in fee-for-service tariffs, aimed at improving service quality and sustainability.

The report noted governance structures were strengthened with the inauguration of the NHIA Governing Council in 2025 to provide oversight and ensure alignment with national Universal Health Coverage objectives.

It added that a national policy dialogue on healthcare financing was convened with key stakeholders to explore sustainable financing options and expand domestic funding for health.

NHIA stated that the reforms aligned with the Federal Government's broader health sector agenda aimed at reducing out-of-pocket spending, protecting citizens from financial hardship, and improving access to quality healthcare.



PRESENTING AWARD:

Pastor, Grace Baptist Church, Rev Jeremiah Moses (R) presenting an award to a Kaduna based philanthropist, Dauda John and his wife, Blessing during the 2026 Malaria Control programme in Kaduna on Sunday.

Health minister confirms mass vaccination against measles, yellow fever

ABUJA

The Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Professor Muhammad Pate, has said that the Federal Government has administered over 25 million doses of measles vaccine and 22 million yellow fever vaccinations.

Pate disclosed this on Sunday in a broadcast on his official X handle, @muhammadpate, highlighting significant gains recorded in immunisation coverage and preventive healthcare delivery nationwide.

"Under this administration, over 25 million measles doses and 22 million yellow fever

vaccinations have been administered, alongside Africa's first Mpox vaccine rollout," Pate said.

Pate said beyond measles and yellow fever, five million children had received the pentavalent vaccine, while over 10 million Nigerians were vaccinated with the tetanus diphtheria vaccine through the nationwide diphtheria response.

He added that more than one million vaccine doses from the Gavi-funded global stockpile were deployed to support meningitis outbreak control in northern regions.

The minister said Nigeria had also taken a historic step in malaria control with the introduction of its first-ever malaria

vaccine.

"As the country bearing the world's highest malaria burden, accounting for approximately 39.3 percent of malaria-related deaths among children under five, deployment of the R21 Matrix-M vaccine marks a major public health milestone," he said.

Pate explained that the malaria vaccine rollout commenced in Bayelsa and Kebbi states, with Kebbi alone targeting 179,542 children aged five to 15 months.

He said Nigeria received one million doses of the malaria vaccine, including 846,200 doses from Gavi and 153,800 financed by the Federal Government, with plans for further scale-up.

According to the minister, Nigeria is increasingly being defined not only by its disease burden but also by leadership in domestic resource mobilisation and global disease control efforts.

He said that in 2025, the Federal Government committed 54 million dollars in domestic resources to the global fight against tuberculosis and emerged as the largest African contributor to the Global Fund, as announced at the most recent G20 meeting in Johannesburg.

"These gains are substantive," Pate said, noting sustained increases in health sector financing across all levels of government, covering primary healthcare infrastructure, workforce development, and vaccination campaigns.

Media partnership crucial for awareness, compliance, says LASTMA boss

LAGOS

The Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA), has described its media relations as crucial for enhancing public awareness and enlightenment on traffic management and control in Lagos State.

The General Manager of LASTMA, Mr Olalekan Bakare-Oki, made this known in a statement on Sunday in Lagos.

He commended media practitioners for their unwavering commitment to projecting the agency's image, statutory responsibilities and wide-range operational activities in 2025.

Bakare-Oki noted that jour-

nalists in print, broadcast and digital platforms, had consistently demonstrated professionalism, objectivity and civic responsibility in their coverage of LASTMA's activities.

He said that feedback transmitted through the media, encapsulates public opinion, commentary and stakeholders insights, which had been largely positive and constructively critical.

He added that it provided the agency with strategic intelligence that had supported policy refinement, strengthened operational frameworks and informed evidence-based decision-making.

"The media has remained an

indispensable partner in our public enlightenment and behavioural reorientation mandate.

"Beyond the transmission of information, the analytical depth, constructive critiques and commendations articulated through media practitioners have significantly elevated our institutional thinking, policy discourse and reform processes," he said.

He also acknowledged the inauguration of media practitioners as 'LASTMA Media Mayors,' describing the initiative as a visionary and progressive engagement mechanism.

Besides, he noted that it had integrated journalists into

the practical dynamics of traffic management and control across the state, thereby enriching reportage with firsthand insight, accuracy and contextual clarity.

He noted that as the agency enters a new operational year, the complexities of urban mobility in a rapidly expanding megacity like Lagos, demands a more resilient partnership with the media.

Meanwhile, recalling some of its achievements, he disclosed that over 1,800 LASTMA personnel were deployed under the 'LASTMA 24-hour Night Gangs' initiative, to regulate vehicular movement during 'Detty December'.

Foundation commits to devt of education sector in Nigeria

LAGOS

A Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), Regalo Hope Foundation (RHF) said on Sunday that its 2026 EduStake Conference will advance professional development and innovation in Nigeria's education sector.

Founder of RHF, Dr. Chinenye Onuorah, told reporters that the conference, billed for January 26 in Lagos, will graduate the first set of educators from the Teachers' Leadership Academy (TLA).

She noted that the conference will feature presentation of the Legends' and Heroes' Award to honour long-standing educators. According to her, TLA equips educators not only with skills but also with the mindset to transform class-

rooms and communities.

"The Legends' and Heroes' Awards highlight the importance of recognising excellence at all stages of an educator's journey and underscore our commitment to rewarding leadership and service," she said.

She noted that the conference will unite education and inclusion stakeholders in panel discussions, which will offer practical insights into the future of learning.

Students will also be engaged in current affairs and quiz competitions aimed at promoting national values.

She expressed optimism that the 2026 edition will strengthen the commitment of educators, students, and stakeholders towards reshaping the future of education in Nigeria.

Kebbi govt orders resumption of urban schools today

BIRNIN-KEBBI

The Kebbi Government has directed all public and private schools in the state to resume academic activities today.

The state Commissioner for Basic and Secondary Education, Dr. Halima Muhammad-Bande, made the announcement while briefing newsmen in Birnin Kebbi on Sunday.

She said the directive applied strictly to schools situated within urban centres, adding that schools located on the outskirts of towns and in remote areas were exempted from the resumption order.

"The state government has put in place adequate security measures to ensure the safety

of pupils, students, and teachers in the affected schools. We are appealing to parents and guardians to release their wards to resume school as scheduled. The government is doing everything humanly possible to secure all schools that are reopening," Muhammad-Bande said.

The commissioner reiterated that only schools within cities and major towns were covered by the directive, stressing that no school in remote or vulnerable areas should resume until further notice.

If you want, I can also convert all of these into concise front-page newspaper style summaries with punchy leads, keeping all details, which is perfect for national newspaper publication. Do you want me to do that next?

US-based APC chieftain urges active diaspora participation in governance

ABUJA

Achieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Alhaja Khairat Animashaun-Ajiboye, has

called for active participation of Nigerians in the diaspora in governance to enhance their contribution to national development.

Animashaun-Ajiboye, a for-

mer Lagos State governorship aspirant based in the United States, made the call in an interview with journalists on Sunday in Abuja.

She noted that many Nigerians living abroad possessed diverse skills and experiences

which, if brought home, could significantly advance national development.

She prayed that the hopes and aspirations of Nigerians in the diaspora would be renewed in 2026, to enable them to have opportunities to contribute di-

rectly to governance in their motherland.

The APC chieftain also commended the resilience of Nigerians in 2025 and called for sustained support for the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and his vision

of building a better society for all.

Animashaun-Ajiboye wished the APC leadership, members of the diaspora and Nigerians at large a prosperous, peaceful and inclusive 2026.

INEC disowns fake 2027 election timetable

ABUJA

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has urged the public and the media to disregard a purported timetable for the 2027 General Election currently circulating online.

The Chairman's Chief Press Secretary, Mr Adedayo Oketola, in a statement issued in Abuja, described the circulating timetable and schedule of activities as fake.

Oketola said the commission was yet to release any timetable, stressing that the document circulating in some quarters did not emanate from INEC.

"The commission wishes to state clearly that this information is false and misleading. INEC has not released any timetable or schedule of activities for the 2027 General Election," he said.

He explained that the commission operates strictly with-

in the provisions of the law governing electoral processes in Nigeria.

Citing Section 28(1) of the Electoral Act, 2022, Oketola noted that INEC is mandated to publish a Notice of Election not later than 360 days before polling day.

"Any timetable or schedule issued outside this statutory framework cannot emanate from INEC," he said.

He assured Nigerians that the official timetable for the 2027 General Election would be released in due course and would fully comply with the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, as amended, and the Electoral Act, 2022.

Oketola added that the timetable, when released, would be communicated through INEC's established and verified channels, urging the public and the media to rely solely on these platforms for accurate and authoritative information.



PRESENTING CERTIFICATE:

The traditional ruler of Ngurunwenko autonomous community, Aboh Mbase in Imo State, Eze Damian Njoku (2nd R), assisted by his wife Ugoeze Francisca Njoku (R) while presenting Certificate to Nze Emmanuel Igbolekwu (3rd R) and his wife, Chief Chisaa Igbolekwu after conferment of a traditional title at the Eze's Palace at Ngurunwenko in Aboh Mbase Local Government Area on Sunday (4/1/2026). With them are their children.

Army sustains operational gains across theatres, kills scores of terrorists

ABUJA

The Nigerian Army has sustained operational momentum across multiple theatres of operation, killing scores of terrorists and disrupting criminal networks nationwide through coordinated, intelligence-led operations conducted in the last 24 hours.

A credible source at Army Headquarters disclosed that troops operating under various joint task forces maintained sustained pressure on terrorists and other criminal elements, denying them freedom of action.

According to the source, troops under Operation Hadin Kai in the North-East continued offensive actions under Operation Desert Sanity V,

intercepting and neutralising several suicide bombers based on credible intelligence.

The operations reportedly prevented planned attacks on civilian populations and military targets, leading to the recovery of suicide vests, arms, ammunition and other improvised explosive device materials, while fleeing terrorists were forced into difficult terrain.

In the North-West, troops under Operation Fansan Yamma also recorded successes by foiling planned attacks on communities in parts of Zamfara, Katsina, Kebbi and Kaduna States.

"Acting on timely intelligence and distress calls from residents, troops engaged armed elements at identified staging areas, forcing them to

abandon their missions and flee," the source said.

The Nigerian Air Force, providing close air support to ground troops, carried out precision air interdiction missions against armed groups moving in convoys.

The strikes resulted in the neutralisation of several terrorists and the destruction of their motorcycles and weapons, significantly degrading their operational capacity.

The source further confirmed the arrest of several suspects linked to terrorist networks, including logistics couriers and informants, adding that investigations were ongoing to dismantle wider networks and prevent future attacks.

Elsewhere, troops recovered rustled livestock during patrols,

intercepted ammunition at snap checkpoints and destroyed criminal hideouts linked to kidnapping and banditry.

In the North-Central and South-South regions, assorted arms, including rifles and locally fabricated weapons, were recovered following intelligence-led operations and tip-offs from members of the public.

The source reiterated that troop welfare remained a priority, noting that scheduled welfare flights to rotate personnel in and out of operational theatres were conducted seamlessly.

He reaffirmed the commitment of the Nigerian Army to sustaining offensive operations against terrorists, bandits and other criminal elements, and called on citizens to continue providing timely and credible information to support ongoing security efforts nationwide.

Abia royal father honours staff, 22 others with chieftaincy titles

ABA

No fewer than 23 prominent indigenes of Ikwoorie Ohanku Community in Abia State were on Saturday honoured with various chieftaincy titles.

The conferment was performed by the traditional ruler of the autonomous community in Ukwa East Local Government Area, Apostle Chibuzor Chinyere of Omega Power Ministries, at his palace.

Among the honourees was Mr Kenneth Nwachi of the Audit Department in Abuja, who was conferred with the title of Chimeremma I (God bestowed His grace on me) of Ikwoorie Ancient Kingdom.

Addressing the recipients, Chinyere advised them to uphold good conduct and contribute meaningfully to the growth and development of the community, warning those with negative tendencies to turn a new leaf.

He assured the community of his continued sponsorship of WAEC and JAMB examinations, as well as education and medical care for indigent indigenes, other Nigerians and Africans.

The monarch said he had also established skill acquisition centres for youths within Nigeria and

across the African continent.

"All these free education, medical services and skill acquisition programmes started from Ohanku Community. They are not for self-enrichment but to positively touch lives," he said.

As part of his education initiatives, Chinyere disclosed that he employed and paid the salaries of seven teachers at Ikwoorie Comprehensive Secondary School, one of the beneficiaries of his free education programme.

He donated ₦1 million to the school's students' delegation present at the ceremony and promised them a brighter future.

Speaking on behalf of other royal fathers, the Chairman of the Ukwa East Traditional Rulers Council, Eze Obinna Nwagbara, the Imereanyi I of Ohuru, commended Chinyere for his extensive community development efforts.

"Your Majesty, we have seen what you have done and what you still plan to do. May God grant you the grace to continue your good works in our communities," Nwagbara said.

In a goodwill message, the President of the Ndoki Council of Chiefs, Chief Nkem Onwo, described Chinyere's humanitarian efforts as self-evident, pledging continued support for his leadership.

Cleric urges sustenance of peace, security in Nigeria

IBADAN

The Secretary of the Oyo State chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Reverend Samuel Owolabi, has urged government at all levels to prioritise the security and welfare of citizens in the new year.

Owolabi made the call on Sunday in Ibadan while delivering his New Year message.

He stressed the need for decisive actions to address the

rising wave of insecurity and crime in society, and urged government to make adequate plans for the resettlement of displaced communities.

Quoting Proverbs 11:14, the cleric encouraged governments to remain responsive to the needs of their citizens.

He commended President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for recent efforts aimed at tackling insecurity and called for intensified measures to stem the tide.

"I also appreciate Governor

Seyi Makinde of Oyo State for his vision and commitment to the growth and peaceful co-existence of the people of the state," he said.

However, he urged governments at the national, state and grassroots levels to continue prioritising security, justice and the welfare of citizens.

The cleric further enjoined Christians to arise and shine in the new year, citing Isaiah 60:1.

"In these trying times, let us stand firm in our faith, speak

truth with wisdom, promote peace and resist despair. Let us be known for love that heals divisions, hope that uplifts communities and faith expressed through selfless service," he said.

Owolabi also commended the Bishop of the Methodist Diocese of Elekuro, Rt. Rev. David Adekoya, for his selfless service to the growth of the diocese, and prayed that 2026 would usher in peace and prosperity for all Nigerians.

NEWS

Court admits Bauchi Finance Commissioner to N500m bail with 2 sureties

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja has admitted Yakubu Adamu, Commissioner of Finance, Bauchi State, to a N500 million bail, with two sureties in like sum.

Justice Emeka Nwite, who ordered that the two sureties

must be land owners within Maitama, Asokoro or Gwarimpa District of Abuja, said the property documents shall be verified by the court registry.

He directed that the sureties must depose to an affidavit of means.

The judge said that the defendant and the sureties shall

deposit their international passports with the court registrar and must not travel out of the country except with the leave of the court.

He also held that they shall deposit two passport photographs with the court registrar.

Justice Nwite, who ordered that Adamu should be remanded in Kuje Correctional Centre pending the perfection of his bail conditions, adjourned the matter until Jan. 20 for com-

mencement of trial.

The judge, in a ruling, held that the court was minded to exercise its discretionary power in favour of Adamu since the prosecution had no strong reason that the defendant would jump bail or interfere with the trial.

Justice Nwite held that the power to grant bail must be exercised judicially and judiciously, hence, the need for the defendant to be admitted

to bail.

The EFCC had, in the charge marked: FHC/ABJ/CR/694/2025, named Adamu and a firm, Ayab Agro Products and Freight Company Ltd, as 1st and 2nd defendants in the money laundering case involving about N4.6 billion.

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

They were alleged to have facilitated and agreed to the conversion, transfer, concealment

and use of funds in the sum of about N4,650,000,000.00 (Four Billion, Six Hundred and Fifty Million Naira) availed by Polaris Bank under the guise of financing the supply of motorcycles to Bauchi State Government through Emmanuel Asomugha General Enterprises.

"The motorcycles were not supplied, and you thereby committed an offence contrary to Section 21(a) and punishable under Section 21 of the Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Act, 2022," the court read in part.



PRESENTING BEST TEACHER AWARD:

President, Enyioyogu Secondary School, Mbaise (ESSM), Old Students Association, Class of '96, Mr Callistus Ewelike (R) presenting Best Teacher Award to Mrs Agnes Osuagwu during their AGM and presentation of awards to deserving students and teachers of their Alma Mater in Enyioyogu, Aboh Mbaise Imo State on Sunday

Court issues interim order suspending Suleiman-Dungurawa as Kano NNPP Chairman

KANO

Kano State High Court has issued an interim order, suspending Hashimu Suleiman-Dungurawa, as State' chairman of the New Nigerian People's Party (NNPP), pending determination of the suit.

Suleiman-Dungurawa is from the Gargari ward, in Dawakin-Tofa Local Government Area area of Kano State.

Justice Zuwaira Yusuf issued the interim order, following a motion exparte by one Mr Shuaibu Hassan and nine oth-

er applicants, all members of Gargari Ward in Dawakin-Tofa Local Government Area.

The respondents in the suit are Suleiman-Dungurawa and NNPP

Recall that Suleiman-Dungurawa was on December 30, suspended as the state chairman of NNPP, following resolution by 27 executive members of the party endorsing the move.

The applicants had through their counsel Mr K Njidda and S. A. Muhammad, brought an exparte motion, asking the court to uphold the disciplinary process and subsequent

suspension of the respondent.

They based their application on allegations that Suleiman-Dungurawa had denigrated the office of Governor Abba Kabir-Yusuf, creating division within the party, and failed to pay party dues.

The applicants had also asked the court to determine whether its action against Dungurawa was in accordance with the provision of the NNPP's constitution.

Ruling on the exparte application as moved, Justice Yusuf, issued an interim order, restraining the respondent from

parading himself as Chairman of NNPP in Kano, pending determination of the substantive suit.

"It is hereby ordered that the suspension of the first respondent on December 30, 2025 shall be maintained pending the hearing and determination of the motion on notice.

"The applicants are hereby ordered that the process be served on the respondents," he said

The court also ordered parties to maintain status quo and adjourned the case until January 19, for hearing of the substantive suit.

Kano Justice Ministry disposed 614 cases in 2025- A-G

KANO

The Kano State Ministry of Justice said it disposed of a total of 614 out of 1,627 criminal cases filed between January and December 2025.

The State's Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Mr Abdulkarim Kabiru-Maude, SAN, disclosed this in a statement by his Special Assistant on Media, Abubakar Tijjani-Ibrahim in Kano.

He said the ministry re-

corded significant progress in strengthening the administration of justice, upholding the rule of law and protecting the fundamental human rights of the people of Kano State.

Kabiru-Maude said, "Out of the 1,627 cases filed, 614 were completed, while 1,013 are still pending before the Courts."

He explained that out of the cases filed, armed robbery and rape accounted for the highest number with 246 and 219 cases, respectively, stating that this demonstrated the govern-

ment's resolve to tackle serious crimes.

According to him, upon assumption of office, he embarked on a comprehensive inspection tour of courts and correctional facilities across the state to assess compliance with constitutional and statutory provisions and ensure speedy dispensation of justice.

The attorney-general said the exercise led to the establishment of a Committee to Investigate Human Rights Violations and the Prolonged

Detention of Awaiting-Trial Inmates in correctional facilities across the state.

He explained that the committee was mandated to identify cases of unlawful or excessive detention, examine systemic challenges within the criminal justice system and make practical recommendations.

Kabiru-Maude added that a Task Force Committee was subsequently constituted to ensure the full implementation of the committee's recommendations.

Expert cautions against AI, telemedicine in healthcare

OFFA (KWARA)

Prof. Kabir Durowade, a consultant epidemiologist, has urged careful application of Artificial Intelligence and telemedicine within Nigeria's healthcare system.

Durowade spoke on Sunday at the 6th Annual General Meeting and Scientific Conference of Offa Doctors, held in Offa Local Government Area, Kwara State.

He described Artificial Intelligence as an interdisciplinary field spanning computer science, mathematics, neuroscience and linguistics, designed to create human-like intelligence artificially.

"Artificial Intelligence systems can generate novel text, images, videos or other outputs, and have potential to solve some of the world's most complex problems.

"AI stands poised to redefine patient care, improve outcomes and alleviate burdens on healthcare professionals,"

Durowade said.

He noted that AI was rapidly transforming many sectors, stressing that healthcare was no exception.

Durowade explained that telemedicine enables remote access to medical care through technology-driven platforms.

He said telemedicine involved video calls, messaging and mobile applications, adding that it was gaining momentum across Nigeria.

However, he lamented persistent shortages of health workers and the "Japa syndrome," which had worsened Nigeria's doctor-to-population ratio.

According to him, high disease burden and low doctor-patient ratios provided opportunities for leveraging AI and telemedicine in healthcare delivery.

Earlier, Offa Doctors President, Dr Rasheed Odunola, highlighted the importance of the conference, marking the forum's seventh year and its first scientific conference.

US-Nigeria airstrikes disrupt terror networks in Sokoto —Expert

LAGOS

A security expert, Seyi Babaeko has said that Christmas Day airstrikes by United States and Nigerian forces disrupted criminal group operations in Sokoto State.

Babaeko, Managing Director of Absolute Security and Advance Protocol Ltd., Lagos, said this in an interview with newsmen on Sunday.

He said the operation targeted terrorist camps in the Bauni Forest linked to criminal networks operating across north-west Nigeria.

According to him, intelligence support and long-range strike capabilities enabled a focused mission against key hubs moving criminals along Sahelian routes into Nigeria.

"The strikes destroyed critical militant infrastructure, dismantled operational nodes, and weakened leadership structures," Babaeko said.

He added that supply chains were disrupted, communica-

tions degraded, and the groups' ability to coordinate attacks was sharply reduced.

Babaeko said the immediate impact was substantial, throwing previously mobile terrorist cells operating across border areas into disarray.

"Entrenched terror networks are no longer beyond reach, marking a serious setback for militant capacity in the region," he said.

He noted that sustained pressure forced some fighters to flee Sokoto in search of new hideouts.

"Several attempting to relocate to parts of the South West were apprehended by local security outfits," Babaeko said.

According to him, the operation signalled deeper Nigeria-United States counterterrorism cooperation, particularly in intelligence sharing, surveillance and precision targeting.

He said such partnerships expanded Nigeria's operational reach without overstressing forces already deployed across multiple security theatres.

Trump's action could set precedent for authoritarian powers across globe

JEREMY BOWEN

Trump's action in Venezuela may point to months of global turbulence

With the seizure of Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro, Donald Trump has demonstrated more powerfully than ever his belief in the power of his will, backed by raw US military force. On his orders the US has Maduro behind bars and now will "run" Venezuela.

The US president made the announcement in a remarkable news conference with enormous implications for US foreign policy worldwide at his Florida club and residence, Mar-a-Lago. Trump said the US would be in charge in Venezuela "until such time as we can do a safe, proper and judi-

icious transition".

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, he said, had spoken to the Venezuelan Vice-President Delcy Rodríguez, who had told him "we'll do whatever you need... She, I think, was quite gracious, but she really doesn't have a choice".

Trump was light on detail. He said that "we're not afraid of boots on the ground if we have to have [them]".

But does he believe that he can govern Venezuela by remote control? Will this demonstration that he will back words with military action, praised lavishly at Mar-a-Lago by both Marco Rubio and the US Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth, be enough to reshape Venezuela and browbeat Latin American leaders into compliance?

It sounded as if he believes something like that.

The evidence is that it will not be easy or smooth.

The respected think tank, the International Crisis Group, warned in October that the fall of Maduro could lead to violence and instability in Venezuela.

The same month The New York Times reported that defence and diplomatic officials in the first Trump administration had war-gamed what might happen if Maduro fell. Their conclusion was the prospect of violent chaos as armed factions competed for power.

The removal and incarceration of Nicolás Maduro is a remarkable assertion of American military power.

The US assembled a massive armada and achieved its goal

without losing a single American life.

Trump wants Venezuela's oil. Will his plan work?

Maduro had ignored the will of the Venezuelan people by sweeping aside his own electoral defeat and, without question, his departure will be welcomed by many of its citizens.

But the implications of the US action will reverberate forward, way beyond Venezuela's borders.

The mood at the Mar-a-Lago news conference was triumphalist, as they celebrated what was undoubtedly a textbook operation carried out by highly professional US forces.

The military operation is only the first stage.

America's record of achieving regime change by force in the last 30 years is disastrous.

The political follow-up is what makes or breaks the process.

Iraq descended into a bloody catastrophe after the US invasion in 2003. In Afghanistan two decades and billions of dollars' worth of attempted nation-building were swept away in days after the US pulled out in 2021.

Neither country was in America's backyard.

Yet the ghosts of interventions past in Latin America - and the threat of others yet to come - are scarcely more promising.

Trump tried out a new nickname, the Donroe Doctrine, for the declaration made by President James Monroe in 1823 warning other powers not to meddle in America's sphere of influence in the Western hemisphere.

"The Monroe Doctrine is a big deal, but we've superseded it by a lot," Trump said at Mar-a-Lago. "Under our new

national security strategy, American dominance in the Western hemisphere will never be questioned again."

He said that the President of Colombia, Gustavo Petro, had to "watch his ass".

Later he told Fox News that "something's going to have to be done with Mexico".

Cuba is undoubtedly also on the US agenda, which is being driven by Rubio, whose parents are Cuban-Americans.

The US has a long record of armed intervention in Latin America.

I was in Haiti in 1994 when President Bill Clinton sent in 25,000 troops and two aircraft carriers to enforce regime change. Then, the Haitian regime crumbled without a shot being fired. Far from ushering in a better future, the 30 years since then have been a period of almost unbroken misery for the Haitian people. Haiti is now a failed state dominated by armed gangs.



WATCHING A LIVE STREAM:

Trump watched a live stream of the operation from his Florida estate.

Spies, drones and blowtorches: How the US captured Maduro

For months, US spies had been monitoring Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's every move.

A small team, including one source within the Venezuelan government, had been observing where the 63-year-old slept, what he ate, what he wore and even, according to top military officials, "his pets".

Then, in early December, a planned mission dubbed "Operation Absolute Resolve" was finalised. It was the result of months of meticulous planning and rehearsals, which even included elite US troops creating an exact full-size replica of Maduro's Caracas safe house to practise their entry routes.

The plan - which amounted to an extraordinary US military intervention in Latin America not seen since the Cold War - was closely

guarded. Congress was not informed or consulted ahead of time. With the precise details set, top military officials simply had to wait for the optimal conditions to launch.

They wanted to maximise the element of surprise, officials said on Saturday. There was a false start four days earlier when US President Donald Trump gave approval, but they opted to wait for better weather and less cloud cover.

"Over the weeks through Christmas and New Year, the men and women of the United States military sat ready, patiently waiting for the right triggers to be met and the president to order us into action," General Dan Caine, the nation's highest-ranking military officer, told a news conference on Saturday morning.

'Good luck and godspeed'
The order from the presi-

dent to begin the mission finally came at 22:46 EST on Friday (03:46 GMT on Saturday).

"We were going to do this four days ago, three days ago, two days ago, and then all of a sudden it opened up. And we said: go," Trump himself told Fox & Friends on Saturday, hours after the overnight raid.

"He said to us, and we appreciate it... good luck and godspeed," Gen Caine said. Trump's order came shortly before midnight in Caracas, giving the military most of the night to operate in darkness.

What followed was a two-hour-and-twenty-minute mission by air, land and sea that stunned many in Washington and around the world.

In terms of scale and precision, it was virtually unprecedented. And it drew immediate condemnation from several regional powers, with

Brazil's President Lula da Silva saying the violent capture of Venezuela's leader set "yet another extremely dangerous precedent for the entire international community".

Trump did not follow the mission from the White House situation room. Instead, he was surrounded by his advisers at his Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Florida, where he watched a live stream of the operation flanked by CIA Director John Ratcliffe and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

"It was an incredible thing to see," Trump said on Saturday. "If you would have seen what happened, I mean, I watched it literally like I was watching a television show. And if you would've seen the speed, the violence... it's just, it was an amazing thing, an amazing job that these people did."

Thousands stranded across Europe as Greece airspace disrupted

Thousands of passengers are stranded across Europe after a communications failure forced Greece to close its airspace, causing widespread cancellations and delays.

Officials are working to understand why radio communications were disrupted on Sunday morning, prompting the temporary suspension of arrivals and departures.

Some departures have since been allowed to resume - though inbound flights are still being told to divert or return to their point of origin. Athens' main airport is among the worst affected, while Thessaloniki airport has closed entirely.

The timing of the disruption has raised fears that travellers will not be able to get home before the start of the working week.

"I was supposed to fly to London, via Stockholm, with SAS," one passenger at Athens International Airport told Greek broadcaster Mega TV. "I'm working on Newport Hospital tomorrow morning. I'm not going to be there on time, I don't know what else to say."

"Who is going to pay for the additional cost this travel will cost me? We still don't know if and when we're going to leave, no one is telling us anything."

More than 90 flights have been affected in and out of Athens airport alone - though some flights have since been able to resume.

A member of staff in the airport told the BBC that 35 aircraft an hour were now being allowed to take off, but it was still unable to take inbound flights.

Flights departing from Dublin, Barcelona and Paris were earlier ordered to return to their airports of origin, while services from Copenhagen and Malta

were cancelled altogether.

Other arrivals into Athens were placed on standby, while flights in and out of other Greek airports have also been affected. Three flights out of Heraklion airport on the island of Crete, including one to Munich, have been delayed, according to public broadcaster ERT.

Most inbound flights are being diverted to Turkey if not cancelled outright, it reports.

The disruption comes at a busy time for air travel in and out of Athens, which typically sees more than 600 scheduled flights per day, as people return from winter holidays.

In the chaos, some passengers have complained of a lack of information.

One told news site Flash: "We have no updates. They told us that we will be able to leave but I don't think this is true. On the departures board I can't see my flight, and I'm supposed to leave shortly."

Another, who had been on a flight to Rhodes when it turned around and headed back to Athens, told news agency Reuters: "From that moment until now we have no information whatsoever."

Domestic travellers may have the option of getting home on Greece's rail network, but this would take significantly longer.

The issue that caused the disruption is thought to concern the radio system used by air traffic controllers to communicate with planes in their airspace.

Panagiotis Psarros, chair of the Association of Greek Air Traffic Controllers, told ERT that all frequencies were "suddenly lost", adding: "We could not communicate with aircraft in the sky."

NEWS**Foreign****At least 30 killed in market attack in Nigeria's Niger State**

At least 30 people have been killed and several others abducted after gunmen attacked a market in Nigeria's Niger State, according to police. The attackers stormed Kasuwan Daji market in Demo village on Saturday afternoon, setting stalls on fire and looting food.

Police say the gunmen, locally known as bandits, arrived on motorcycles and opened fire indiscriminately. Witnesses describe scenes of panic, saying women and children were not spared, and bodies were still being recovered hours later.

The attack is part of a wave of raids that began Friday in

nearby communities, including Agwarra and Borgu. Residents say there has been no visible security presence since the violence began.

Police say efforts are underway to rescue those kidnapped, while the military has yet to comment.

The assault comes weeks after more than 300 schoolchildren and staff were abducted in the same state and held for nearly a month.

Bandit attacks and mass kidnappings continue to escalate across northwestern and central Nigeria, as security forces struggle to contain the growing violence.

AU, South Africa raise alarm over U.S. attacks on Venezuela

New York: The African Union says it is following with grave concern developments in Venezuela, including reports of President Nicolás Maduro's abduction during U.S. military attacks.

South Africa has also taken the matter to the UN Security Council, urging it "to urgently convene to address" the situation in Venezuela.

The AU's position was outlined in a communiqué on the Situation in Venezuela issued on Saturday.

"The African Union reaffirms its steadfast commitment to international law, including respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, and peoples' right to self-determination," it stated.

The AU stressed "dialogue, peaceful settlement of disputes, and respect for constitutional and institutional frameworks" as essential to peaceful coexistence among nations.

It emphasised that Venezuela's complex internal challenges can only be resolved through inclusive political dialogue among Venezuelans themselves.

The AU expressed solidarity with the Venezuelan people and reiterated its commitment to peace, stability, and mutual respect among nations and regions.

It called on all parties to exercise restraint, responsibility, and respect for international

law to prevent escalation and preserve regional peace.

Meanwhile, South Africa said U.S. actions constituted a "manifest violation of the UN Charter".

The Charter, it noted, requires states to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

South Africa added that the Charter does not authorise external military intervention in matters within a sovereign nation's domestic jurisdiction.

"History has repeatedly demonstrated that military invasions yield only instability and deepening crisis," the statement said.

"Unlawful, unilateral force undermines the international order and the principle of equality among nations," it added.

South Africa urged the UN Security Council "to urgently convene to address this situation".

U.S. President Donald Trump announced the operation on Truth Social, claiming Maduro and his wife had been captured and flown out of Venezuela.

"The United States has successfully carried out a large-scale strike against Venezuela and its leader," Trump posted.

U.S. Attorney-General Pam Bondi said the pair would face "the full wrath of American justice on American soil, in American courts."

**NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING:**

A national day of mourning has been announced in Switzerland for 9 January.

Police identify 16 more victims of Swiss bar fire

The bodies of 16 more victims of a bar fire in the Swiss ski resort of Crans-Montana have been identified by police.

The youngest person was a Swiss girl aged 14, with nine aged under 18. The group includes people of Swiss, Italian, Romanian, Turkish and French nationalities, police said.

This brings the number of people who have been identified as killed in the fire to 24. Among them is 16-year-old Swiss national Arthur Brodard, his mother has said.

A criminal investigation into the people who ran Le Constellation bar is under way, while victim's families are enduring an agonising wait for information about loved ones who are still considered missing.

What images and videos tell us about why Swiss bar fire spread so quickly

Police said no further details will be released about the victims they had identified out of respect for their relatives.

However, Arthur Brodard's mother took to Facebook on Saturday night to announce that he "has left to party in paradise".

"We can start our mourning, knowing that he is in peace and in the light," she said as she appeared visibly upset in a video message.

While Arthur was still presumed missing and information on his whereabouts was scarce, Ms Brodard-Sitre told local newspaper Le Temps that she had been "living a nightmare".

Some of his friends had been found with burns covering nearly half their bodies, she told the newspaper. "There are no words - they went through hell."

Sparklers on bottles being

carried too close to the ceiling are the likely cause of the fire during New Year's celebrations at the bar, a preliminary investigation has found.

The devastating fire killed at least 40 people and injured 119 others.

Many of the dead and missing are teenagers. Le Constellation was a venue known to be popular with a younger crowd in the ski resort town, where the drinking age is 16.

The eight identified and returned to their families on Saturday were all aged between 16 and 24, Swiss authorities said.

On Saturday, the Italian ambassador to Switzerland, Gian Lorenzo Cornado, said the identification process was

slow because of the severity of the burns many victims had suffered.

The French couple who own the bar - named by the media as Jacques and Jessica Moretti - are suspected of manslaughter by negligence, bodily harm by negligence, and arson by negligence, the prosecutors' office for the Valais region said.

Beatrice Pilloud, Valais canton lead prosecutor, said in a statement that investigators were looking into whether the acoustic foam on the venue's ceiling was "the cause of the problem", as well as "whether it complies with regulations".

A teenager who went to two schools in the UK is be-

lieved to be among the people missing. Charlotte Niddam previously attended Immanuel College in Hertfordshire and the Jewish Free School in north-west London, according to reports.

Italian media named junior golfer Emanuele Galeppi, 16, as the first identified victim of the fire following a statement from the Italian Golf Federation paying tribute to the "young athlete who carried with him passion and authentic values".

His father is quoted as saying his son was at Le Constellation. A spokesperson for the Italian foreign ministry previously told the BBC it would not confirm the death.

Four people trapped after Nairobi building collapses, rescue operations ongoing

Rescue operations are ongoing in Nairobi, after the Friday collapse of a multi-storey building under construction left at least four people trapped, according to Kenyan authorities.

The building was in an area of the capital known as South C, according to the Kenya Red Cross, which said in a statement that a multi-agency response team was at the scene "managing the situation".

Geoffrey Ruku, the cabinet secretary for the ministry of public service, told local media that two watchmen and two pedestrians remain under the rubble.

He also said that a taxi driver who survived the collapse was admitted to a nearby hospital and provided authorities with critical information.

"The taxi driver was waiting to get a customer and there

were two pedestrians who were standing there, and he saw them getting trapped when this building was coming down," he said.

Safia Ali Aden, the sister of one of the trapped watchmen, said her brother made a phone call to her from inside the collapsed building.

"Since last night from 4:30 a.m., he is trapped there and the county government is taking this thing slowly and as a family, we are worried. So we need this thing to be hurried so that we can have our family, our family member back," she said.

Ruku said President William Ruto has been briefed on the incident. Authorities are investigating the cause of the incident.

Ruku said the building had been approved for a maximum of 12 floors but had already

reached 14 floors at the time of collapse. "At the preliminary investigations, it is expected that the building has collapsed because of column overload," Ruku explained.

The Kenya Red Cross said a building adjacent to the scene of Friday's event was under inspection "after showing signs of potential collapse."

Building collapses are common in Nairobi, where housing is in high demand and unscrupulous developers often bypass regulations or simply violate building codes.

After eight buildings collapsed and killed 15 people in Kenya in 2015, the presidency ordered an audit of buildings across the country to see if they were up to code.

The National Construction Authority found that 58% of the buildings in Nairobi were unfit for habitation.



PRESIDENT NICOLÁS MADURO'S

Feature

How Gov Okpebholo's transport reforms are rewriting businesses in Edo

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

The roar of engines at the New Edo Line terminals signals more than just a return to the roads—it marks a monumental shift in the economic trajectory of Edo State.

Under the leadership of Governor Monday Okpebholo, the state is experiencing a strategic transport reform that goes beyond mobility. It is about reclaiming a lost heritage to drive a modern commercial revival.

For a state that serves as Nigeria's vital "gateway," connecting the South-West, South-East, and the North, transportation is the heartbeat of survival. By prioritizing this sector, the Okpebholo administration is directly strengthening the primary artery of Edo's economic life.

The centerpiece of this transformation is the revival of the New Edo Line. After nearly fifteen years of dormancy, the administration has reinvigorated the institution with 100 brand-new buses. This is a calculated economic intervention rather than a cosmetic upgrade.

By reopening key inter-state and intra-state routes, Governor Okpebholo has directly addressed the "logistics premium" that previously hindered local traders. These reforms drive the SHINE agenda—Security, Health, Infrastructure, Natural Resources, and Education, ensuring that goods and people move safely and affordably across the state's strategic corridors.

To appreciate the significance of this revival, one must recall the foundation



GOVERNOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO WITH THE CONTRACTOR OF THE NEW EDO LINE

that once made Edo a national leader.

The original Edo Line was established in 1968 as the Midwest Line by the late visionary Dr. Samuel Osaigbovo Ogbemudia. For decades, it was the gold standard of public service in Nigeria, a nationally recognized brand that served as the lifeline for students, civil servants, and the legendary traders of Edo State. Its collapse over a decade ago created a void, spiking travel costs and stifling the movement of goods.

Governor Okpebholo's reforms do more than revive history; they honor it by adapting Ogbemudia's pioneering spirit to the demands of the 21st-century marketplace.

The impact on Edo's business environment is already visible. Improved logistics efficiency and reduced trans-



port costs are boosting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), providing more predictable supply chains and faster access to regional markets.

Affordable public transport also reduces the overall cost of living. When fares drop, disposable income rises,

directly stimulating local demand for products and services. Beyond commuters, the revival has reactivated a massive employment ecosystem, supporting mechanics, spare-parts vendors, and terminal-based small businesses that had long been displaced.

After nearly 15 years of dormancy, the administration has reinvigorated the institution with 100 brand-new buses. This is a calculated economic intervention rather than a cosmetic upgrade

Infrastructure is a language investors understand. By reviving a brand as prestigious as Edo Line, the Okpebholo administration has sent a clear message: Edo State is open for business. No longer a mere bypass for travelers, the state is becoming a functional, mobile hub where the cost of doing business is actively driven down by smart governance.

The rebirth of Edo Line proves that under Governor Monday Okpebholo, Edo State is no longer stagnant. Markets are reopening, routes are active, and the economy is back in motion, bridging the gap between a glorious past and an innovative future.

LASTMA battling to tame Lagos traffic chaos

CHIAZO OGBOLU (NAN)

Managing traffic is a huge challenge to modern cities, where growing populations and rising vehicle numbers continue to overstretch road infrastructure and economy of a state.

A state such as Lagos which experiences daily gridlock and road accidents has its residents' productivity, safety and quality of life being negatively affected if the issues are not well tackled.

Lasting solutions will require sound policies, application of technology, effective law enforcement and public support and cooperation.

In an effort to improve traffic management, Lagos State Government, on July 15, 2000, under Chief Bola Tinubu as the Governor, established the Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) to manage traffic flow and enforce traffic rules and regulations.

This is aimed at transforming the state's transport system.

Some Lagos residents are convinced that LASTMA, currently headed by the General Manager, Mr Olalekan Bakare-Oki, is doing much to meet public expectations but some others feel that the authority still has much to do.

At various fora, Bakare-Oki gave the assurance that the authority had put some mechanisms in place for checks and balances to reduce gridlock and associated problems.

According to him, LASTMA now monitors its traffic managers through its surveillance unit, and this has improved its operations.

Bakare-Oki said that, in 2025, the authority was able to improve in its traffic management strategy, especially on major routes in the state.

"We had to rejig our system to ensure that we improve travel time for Lagos residents.

"We did a massive human capacity building for our staff so that we are able to get the best out of them," he said.

Bakare-Oki said that the authority was able to train over 3,700 out of 4,700 staff in 2025, and this yielded results.

He said that the agency equally improved in getting feedback from the public especially with its toll-free line, which received over 4,000 calls on information about traffic congestion, emergencies and accidents as well as complaints and praises about the conducts of LASTMA officers.

He gave the assurance that 87 per cent of all the calls were promptly attended to and issues resolved.

"We have been able to improve in technology application; that is, the use of Traffic Management Solutions (TMS) machines to capture traffic infractions.

"We have captured over 120,000 offences, and the agency was able to apprehend about 17,000 vehicles in 2025.

"The agency recorded 1,227 accidents and for vehicles that broke

down, 5,000 were recorded.

"The larger percentage (61 percent) happened to be trucks and the reason is not far-fetched. It is due to many activities and movements of cargoes from seaports in the state," he said.

According to Bakare-Oki, in September 2025, the authority had an Ember Months programme during which stakeholders – transport unions, haulage companies, garages workers and government officials participated in a lecture on safety.

"Part of the plan and programme for the Ember months had to do with ensuring that we place 24-hour surveillance on major markets within Lagos, which are Mile 12, Alabara, Apogbon and others. "We equally concentrated on major shopping malls around the city, as well as inter-state motor parks," he said.

Some residents applauded Lagos State Government efforts in traffic management in 2025, lauding LASTMA's commitment.

A banker, Mr Fabian Ugochukwu, said that LASTMA made noticeable efforts in managing road traffic especially across high-risk corridors such as Lagos Island, Oshodi, Ikeja and Lekki-Ajah axis.

Ugochukwu said that increased presence of LASTMA officers at peak hours, quicker deployment during breakdowns and minor crashes, as well as the authority's collaboration with other emergency responders helped to reduce gridlock.

He added that intensified public sen-

sitization campaigns and enforcement of traffic rules and regulations helped to improve compliance in some locations.

He, however, alleged some gaps in the operations of the agency.

"Reports of inconsistent enforcement, inadequate officer training, occasional unprofessional conduct, and weak crowd control during major incidents affected public confidence.

"Response in some emergencies, particularly during evening hours and weekends, remains slow.

"Technology adoption for traffic monitoring is still limited, and coordination with road users, especially commercial transport operators is often reactive rather than preventive," he said.

He said that cases of alleged extortion and overzealous law enforcers continued to create friction between LASTMA officers and motorists.

He urged LASTMA management to plan better during major events, at construction zones and festive periods, instead of reactive deployment.

"They should prioritise continuous training on traffic psychology, emergency management, ethics, conflict resolution and first aid alongside improved welfare packages for officers to discourage misconduct," he advised.

Mr Foster Obi, the Publisher/Editor-in-Chief of DFC News, an online news platform, said that LASTMA had justified its establishment to a great extent.

He said that in the past, LASTMA was

organising training for drivers, which helped some of them to imbibe certain driving cultures such as use of seat belts, speeding within approved limits, and avoidance of drinking while driving.

According to Obi, gains recorded over the years from the training seem to be disappearing due to bad eggs in the agency.

"Some LASTMA officers appear more interested in collecting bribes from offenders than in controlling traffic.

"This has compromised the system, as drivers no longer follow the rules but prefer to bribe some officials while breaking traffic rules.

This is why Lagos still experiences some avoidable traffic congestion.


"While one may not condemn the organisation because of its usefulness, there is a need for the government to put LASTMA back on track to achieve its aim and objectives," he said.

Mrs Comfort Okoye, a businesswoman, urged Lagos State Government to see the agency first as a traffic manager and not a revenue-generating organisation.

"Government must emphasise training and re-training to equip the officers with adequate knowledge about traffic management in the digital age.

"Any LASTMA officer found compromising his job ethics must be sacked to promote discipline in the agency.

"Targets for recruitment must be people with the right mindset," she said. (NAN Feature)

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10 X 4	309,500	397,213	295,600	317,770	206,938	222,458	443,500	476,763	369,550	397,266
10 X 4	340,000	365,500	273,500	294,013	177,400	190,705	370,000	397,750	295,600	317,770
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10 X 3	221,700	238,328	147,800	158,885	118,300	127,173	266,000	285,950	251,300	270,148
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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
FP 3X2	64,870	69,735	73,000	78,475	3 X 2	30,900	33,218	26,600	28,595
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NPFL players deserve ₦1m minimum salary — Elegbeleye

Hon. Gbenga Elegbeleye, Chairman of the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL), has outlined his ambitious vision for the future of the domestic top flight, while strongly advocating a N1 million minimum monthly salary for players as part of broader reforms aimed at professionalising the league.

Elegbeleye said his long-term goal is to transform the NPFL into a more competitive, credible, and commercially viable league capable of retaining top local talents, attracting private investors, and standing among Africa's elite domestic competitions.

According to the NPFL chairman, key areas of focus include improving the standard of refereeing, enforcing stricter discipline, increasing live television broadcasts, and aligning the league calendar with international football schedules. He believes these measures will enhance the league's image, boost fan confidence, and make it more appealing to sponsors and commercial partners.

Central to his reform agenda is the proposal for a N1 million minimum salary for NPFL players. Elegbeleye argues that professional footballers in Nigeria deserve wages that reflect their status and contribution to the game.

He noted that improved remuneration would significantly enhance players' welfare and quality of life, while also reducing the growing trend of Nigerian footballers leaving the country for lower-tier foreign leagues in search of better financial rewards.

"Better pay will not only improve player welfare but also strengthen the credibility, competitiveness, and marketability of the NPFL," Elegbeleye stated, adding that improved salaries would help clubs retain talent and raise the overall standard of the league.

However, the NPFL chairman acknowledged that several challenges must be addressed before these ambitions can be fully realised. Chief among them is the financial limitation faced by many clubs, most of which are state government-owned and struggle with inadequate funding.

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However, the NPFL chairman acknowledged that several challenges must be addressed before these ambitions can be fully realised. Chief among them is the financial limitation faced by many clubs, most of which are state government-owned and struggle with inadequate funding.



HON. GBENGA ELEGBELEYE

Abuja 21km marathon winner, wins Owan race, as Ghanians display talents

The 5th edition of the annual 10 Kilo Metre Owan Marathon held on Saturday with Michael Adetiba from Kwara, who won the 2025 21km Abuja marathon race in September came first in a record time of 50:13, after a strong challenge from Ghanaian Freepong Kwabena.

The race which held in Sabongida-Ora, Owan West Local Government Area, saw the Ghanaian athletes presenting a dominance force in the male and female category of the event.

Despite the hot chase by the Ghanaian, the 26 years old Michael Adetiba from Kwara, who won the 2025 21km Abuja marathon race in September came first in a record time of 50:13,

Freepong Kwabena, from Ghana came second in a record time of 50:37, while Yusuf Baa-ije from Plateau came third in a record time of 51:46.

Similarly, the Ghanaians dominated the female category with their athletes Joyce Ayaaba, 25, and Christiana Mumuni, picking first and third positions in a record time of 57:44 and 58:54, respectively, while Charity Agofure, from Delta, came second.

The male winner, Adetiba, described his feat as God's destined one and hoped to better his timing next time.

On her part, Joyce Ayaaba, said she only hoped for the best when her coach who prepared her for the race told her about the event.

Meanwhile, Blessing Agbebaku, Speaker of the Edo House of Assembly, while commending the organisers for placing the Owan nation in the map of the world, pledged support for the annual event.

"It is very commendable and a welcome initiative, because right now, our community is being shown to the world.

"I think those of us who are political leaders want to also collaborate with him, to support him because everybody would want his community or locality

to be in the global space.

"So I commend him and as-

sure him that by next year, we will do more," he assured.



ABUJA 21KM MARATHON WINNER

Renovated Kwara indoor Sports hall set for competitions, Badminton President says

The President, Badminton Federation of Nigeria (BFN), Francis Orbih, on Saturday, said that Kwara was set to host national and international sports events in its newly renovated Indoor Sports Hall.

Orbih said this after a guided tour of the facility by the Director of Sports, Kwara Sports Commission, Ibrahim Bako and the Technical Director of Badminton Federation of Nigeria, Tunde Kazeem.

The BFN president said that the Indoor Sports Hall met the basic requirements for hosting top-level badminton and other indoor sporting competitions.

According to Orbih, the renovation reflects the Kwara Government's commitment to sports development and positions the state as a viable destination for major sporting events.

"What we have seen here today is impressive, because the hall is well renovated, spacious, and fit for competitions.

"From what I have seen, Kwara is ready to host national and even international events," he stated.

In his remarks, the Director of Sports, Bako reaffirmed the state government's commitment to sports development.

He pledged the state government's continued support for sports federations and assured of the maintenance and effective utilisation of the facility.

Bako explained that the renovation of the Indoor Sports Hall was part of the broader agenda of the state government to revive sports infrastructure and provide a conducive environment for athletes to train and compete.

Also present during the inspection, former international athlete and sports administrator, Hameed Adio, commended the Kwara State government for investing in sports infrastructure.

He described the renovated hall as a major boost to sports development in the state and a clear demonstration of purposeful leadership.

Bendel Insurance FC resumes after 5-day midseason break

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Bendel Insurance Football Club, weekend, returned to the field after a short midseason break to begin preparation for the second round of the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL26), scheduled to kick off on January 14, 2026.

Players and members of the technical crew led by coach Kennedy Boboye were seen at the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium on Saturday at about 4pm, having their first training exercise on return from new year celebration.

The 5-day holidays which began on Monday, December 29, 2025

ended on Friday, January 2, 2026. The few players who are yet to resume are expected to return to camp on Sunday, January 4, 2026.

Bendel Insurance FC will be heading to Ilorin for the revised fixture against Kwara Utd on January 14 when the second stanza of the premier league begins.

Insurance FC defeated the Harmony Boys 2-0 on Saturday, December 27 in the Match Day. 19 and last match of the first round in Benin.

According to the technical manager Kennedy Boboye, work will begin in full scale on Monday as he expects some new face to fortify his team.



PAPE GUEYE

AFCON 2025: Gueye double powers Senegal into last eight

A Pape Gueye brace powered Senegal to a 3-1 comeback victory over Sudan in Tangier on Saturday, securing a quarter-final place at the 2025 AFCON in Morocco.

Gueye struck twice in the first half as the former champions overturned an early setback, before substitute Ibrahima Mbaye sealed the win with a late goal.

Sudan stunned Senegal in the sixth minute when Aamir Abdallah finished a swift counter-attack with a superb curling effort to give the underdogs an early lead.

The Lions of Teranga responded with composure and drew level in the 29th minute,

Gueye finishing calmly after Mané dispossessed an opponent and played him through.

Senegal completed the turnaround deep into first-half stoppage time as Gueye curled home his second, converting a well-timed cut-back from Nicolas Jackson.

Sudan threatened briefly after the restart, but goalkeeper Edouard Mendy produced a sharp reflex save to deny Sheddy Barglan from close range.

Sadio Mané further enhanced his AFCON legacy by providing two assists, moving clear as the tournament's all-time leading assist provider with nine.

CAF names Cameroonian referee for Nigeria, Mozambique clash



EAGLES PLAYERS CELEBRATE AFTER SCORING A GOAL

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) has appointed a predominantly Cameroonian officiating team for Nigeria's Round of 16 encounter against Mozambique at the ongoing Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) 2025 in Morocco.

29 years old Abdou Abdel Mefire is the youngest referee at the ongoing African Cup of Nations,

CAF confirmed Abdou Ab-

del Mefire of Cameroon as the centre referee for the crucial knockout fixture.

He will be assisted by compatriots Elvis Guy Nouppe Nguougou and Carine Atezebong Fomo as Assistant Referees 1 and 2, respectively.

The match, scheduled to hold in Fès, will see the Super Eagles battle the Mambas for a place in the quarter-finals as Nigeria continues its quest for continental glory on Monday.

Morocco 2025: Super Eagles' exploits as fourth AFCON beckons

DOUGLAS BAYE-OSAGIE

It is safe to say that after watching the first-round fixtures in the ongoing 35th Africa Cup of Nations in Morocco, Nigerian fans can start dreaming. Eric Chelle's team has not only put their opponents to the sword, they have been swashbuckling and full of variety in tactics and execution.

Firstly, we had a seemingly typical Nigerian type of preparation. The squad list was announced quite late after the disappointment of missing the 2026 World Cup to be staged in United States of America, Canada and Mexico. Some key players like Benjamin Fredericks and Ola Aina were missing due to injuries, while the standing skipper William Troost-Ekong had called time on his international career. A list with a defensive crack was not a potential champion in the making.

A friendly 2-1 loss to record champions Egypt in Cairo didn't provide enough proof about the true strength, though it gave the coach an opportunity to try out some of his new invitees.

The tournament, which has had some of the best organisational qualities in recent times, has kicked off, and we can all see that the Super Eagles, after victories over Tanzania, Tunisia, and Uganda, are in Morocco with the intent to play 7 games and return home with the trophy. With the exception of Senegal, no team has looked like a potential champion like the Super Eagles of Nigeria.

But recent history suggests that Nigeria must tread with caution after a similar perfect first-round display in Cameroon 2021 AFCON which resulted in a second round exit.

Tunisia humbled the Super Eagles and sent them home with a lone strike that has still defined the career of Maduka Okoye. Winning your first three games is not a free ticket to the quarter finals because in recent AFCON history, some teams won all their group stage matches and were eliminated in the Round of 16. In 2019 for example, Egypt (eliminated by South Africa) and Morocco (eliminated by Benin Republic) while in 2021, Nigeria (eliminated by Tunisia). And in 2023: Senegal (eliminated by Cote d'Ivoire). These teams were elim-



SUPER EAGLES CELEBRATING AFTER QUALIFY FOR THE ROUND 16

inated by best loser teams.

Talking about tactics, the Super Eagles have benefited from the avalanche of technically brilliant attacking options. A team that houses the two top goal-scorers in Turkish football, two former African footballers of the year, and has the luxury of not even playing the top goalscorer in the European Conference League is a threat to the rest of the continent.

The Super Eagles have used the extra training time, which they have benefited from since the coach took the job, to provide the attacking verve to torment their opponents.

Against Tunisia in the second group game, the Super Eagles showed amazing coordination with a cagey and fluid midfield, which was the catalyst to blow open the North Africans. Going three goals up against a

team that didn't concede throughout the World Cup qualification shows how dominant the Super Eagles have become under Chelle.

For the record, the Coach has not lost a match in 90 minutes since taking over as Super Eagles manager.

The players have stayed true to the course by taking each game as it comes. The only snag so far has been game management towards the end of the group matches. Conceding goals in the last quarter of each game has dented the three victories recorded so far in the competition and remains the only concern. This should be the first correction the technical crew has to make in the later stages of the competition, particularly against the mambas of Mozambique in the round of sixteen on Monday and the same mentality must be used to approach this fixture in what will be our last game in Fez, a rainy venue that has seen three sweet victories with showers of rain

throughout the competition. The Super Eagles won't take this game lightly and will look to add to the memory bank of the fans. A convincing victory against the Mambas should be enough to instill fear in the favourites when they travel to Casablanca for the quarter-finals against Algeria or the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In terms of deployment, there has been a little stability in goal, and Stanley Nwabali should start for the team. His mental state of mind is still debated after the loss of both parents within a year ago, but he has carried on with the pain, as we see from his recent interviews. He needs to reduce his antics and distribute the balls quicker than normal.

The defence has not been tested much, but after the rest given to most of the starters in the last game, we should see the first-team back four of Osayi, Calvin, Ajayi, and Bruno. They've all earned their places in the team and should attempt to keep their first clean sheet of the competition.

The midfield gets a bit interesting. Will Eric Chelle opt for an Iwobi-Ndidi pivot, as seen in the opening game against Tanzania, or choose a more combative midfield with an extra leg in Frank Onyeka, or likely give Rapael Onyedika a chance to play ahead of Onyeka? I would be bold and start Onyeka in this game if I were Chelle, because of the goal threat he poses when the team is attacking.

Mozambique, with all due respect, should be denied the ball with a midfield of Ndidi, Onyedika, and Iwobi. This will give our attacking players a lot of movement in the box and possibly lead to plenty of goal-scoring opportunities. Onyedika's man-of-the-match performance against Uganda has shown he is much quality to sit on the Super Eagles bench.

The attack has become the beauty and strength of the Super Eagles in this competition. While Osimhen brings the biggest threat and distraction to opponents, the rest of the attack and teammates have scored goals and created chances for the team.

In Akor Adams, we have a glimpse of the 90s version of Daniel Amokachi and possibly Samson Siasia. His diagonal runs around the attack and bursts of speed have brought midfielders into the game and created chances for Victor Osimhen. An old-fashioned supporting striker who can flow with the main striker is rare in modern football.

In Ademola Lookman, Nigeria has a potential player of the tournament in this AFCON. He has been direct and precise, and his shooting range has been the deadliest weapon in the team.

Chelle must deploy him more from the left rather than through the middle, as a running Lookman attracts defenders and split the opposition defence.

Osimhen should be told to put less pressure on himself. He has the qualities, and he is definitely proving himself. His desire and intentions are applauded, but he can do with a calmer head in front of goal. Mozambique should not prove too much of a problem, but the team must take their chances and give opportunities to a hungry bench to help close the game.

Paul Onuachu has shown he can keep the ball on his feet and help the attacking players with that virtuosi performance against Uganda. His first AFCON goal has blended him into the competition, and I expect Eric Chelle to bring him on at some point.

Tactically, I'm expecting a lineup that will not only seize possession but also score an average of 3 goals and finally keep a clean sheet for the first time in the competition.



ERIC CHELLE

the Super Eagles have benefited from the avalanche of technically brilliant attacking options. A team that houses the two top goal-scorers in Turkish football, two former African footballers of the year

SPORTS

AFCON: Super Eagles target record 18th AFCON quarter-final against Mozambique

Nigeria will chase a place in the quarter-finals of the Africa Cup of Nations Morocco 2025 for a record 18th time when the Super Eagles face Mozambique in Monday night's Round of 16 clash at the Complexe Sportif de Fès.

The three-time champions arrive in Fez buoyed by history and form. Nigeria boast the richest overall medal haul in the 69-year history of Africa's flagship football competition, with three titles, five runner-up finishes and eight bronze medals.

Only three times have the Super Eagles failed to reach the quarter-finals — on their debut in Ghana in 1963, in Libya in 1982, and at the last edition in Cameroon four years ago.

Notably, Ghana 2008 remains the only occasion Nigeria exited at the quarter-final stage. Every other time they have progressed beyond the first knockout round, a medal has followed — a statistic that underlines the weight of expectation surrounding Monday's tie.

Yet caution is the watchword inside the Nigerian camp. Mozambique qualified for the knockout phase for the first time in their history, and third-placed finishers have previously sprung surprises at this stage — most memorably when Tunisia eliminated Nigeria in Garoua four years ago.

The Mambas announced themselves in Group F with a headline-grabbing victory over Gabon, sandwiched between defeats to holders Côte d'Ivoire and

five-time champions Cameroon. Under coach Chiquinho Conde, they have shown resilience, structure and a willingness to disrupt more fancied opponents.

Nigeria, however, swept through the group phase with three wins from three matches, scoring eight goals and conceding four. Their commanding displays earned head coach Eric Chelle the accolade of Coach of the Group Phase, reflecting a side that has blended defensive discipline with attacking fluency.



MOZAMBIQUE

Rice's double powers Arsenal comeback, extends EPL lead at Bournemouth

Declan Rice scored twice as Premier League leaders Arsenal came from behind to secure a 3-2 victory over Bournemouth and strengthen their grip on top spot.

Arsenal fell behind early after defender Gabriel misjudged a blind pass across his box, allowing Evanilson to capitalise and fire Bournemouth into the lead in the 10th minute.

Gabriel redeemed himself six minutes later, rifling in the equaliser after Gabriel Martinelli's effort was blocked, restoring parity for Mikel Arteta's side.

Bournemouth threatened again, but Arsenal took control after the break when Rice struck from the edge of the area following a clever lay-off by captain Martin Odegaard in the 54th minute.

The England midfielder, returning from a knee injury, added his second after coming onto a Bukayo Saka cutback to extend Arsenal's advantage in the 71st minute.

Teenager Eli Junior Kroupi briefly reignited Bournemouth's hopes with a superb long-range strike, five minutes later, but the hosts could not find an equaliser.

The win made it five consecutive league victories for Arsenal, who moved six points clear of second-placed Aston Villa at the top of the table.

Arteta was encouraged by the result after rotating his squad, with regular starters Bukayo Saka and Leandro Trossard beginning the match on the bench.

Despite an uneven first-half display, Arsenal showed resilience, with Rice's brace proving decisive in his first Premier League double.

Declan Rice celebrated with his teammates after scoring his second goal for Arsenal.



DECLAN RICE CELEBRATE WITH TEAM MATE

AFCON 2025: Diarra stars as Mali outlast Tunisia on penalties to reach quarter-finals

Mali have secured a quarter-final place at the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) after edging Tunisia 3-2 on penalties following a tense 1-1 draw after extra time on Saturday.

The Round of 16 contest was decided by spot kicks after Lassine Sinayoko's stoppage-time penalty cancelled Firat Chaouat's late opener.

Tunisia struck first in the 88th minute when Chaouat powered home a header from Elias Saad's cross to spark celebrations.

Mali, however, forced extra time in dramatic fashion as Sinayoko calmly converted from

the spot in the 90+6th minute.

Earlier, Tunisia suffered an injury setback as defender Dylan Bronn was forced off in the opening stages of the match.

Mali's task grew tougher in the 27th minute when Wayo Coulibaly was sent off for a mistimed challenge on Hannibal Mejbri.

In spite of their numerical advantage, Tunisia failed to dominate before the break, with both sides heading into halftime scoreless.

After the interval, Tunisia pressed forward but were repeatedly denied by Mali's disciplined defence and goalkeeper, Djigui Diarra.

Extra time yielded few clear chances, as fatigue set in and both teams approached the contest cautiously.

The match was eventually settled in a penalty shoot-out, where Mali showed greater composure from the spot.

Diarra emerged as the hero, making crucial saves as Mali converted three penalties to Tunisia's two.

Reacting after the match, Diarra said resilience and belief carried Mali through the contest.

"We knew it would be difficult, especially after the red card," Diarra said.

Joshua breaks silence after crash that killed two close friends

Former world heavyweight boxing champion Anthony Joshua has broken his silence following a fatal car accident in Nigeria that claimed the lives of two of his closest friends and team members.

The 36-year-old made his first public comment since the crash in a brief but emotional social media post on Sunday, sharing a photograph of himself with the families of the deceased, Sina Ghami and Latif "Latz" Ayodele.

The post marked Joshua's first acknowledgement of the tragedy, offering a quiet show of support and solidarity rather than a detailed statement.

The accident occurred on Monday, December 29, on the

Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, when the SUV carrying Joshua and three others collided with a stationary truck, reportedly due to brake failure. Ghami and Ayodele died at the scene.

Joshua narrowly escaped death after switching from the front passenger seat to the back shortly before the impact, a decision said to have been prompted by concerns that his size was obstructing the driver's view.

He sustained a leg fracture but was reported to be in stable condition and did not require emergency medical intervention. Joshua was discharged from hospital on New Year's Eve and returned to the United Kingdom on Saturday.



ANTHONY JOSHUA AT THE ACCIDENT SCENE

AFCON 2025: Chelle, Lookman lead Eagles' push for AFCON quarter-finals



Coach Eric Chelle says the Super Eagles are focused and grounded ahead of Monday's Round of 16 clash with Mozambique, targeting a record 18th Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) quarter-final appearance.

The encounter holds at the Complexe Sportif de Fès in Morocco, with kickoff fixed for 8 p.m. (Nigerian time).

Chelle described the knock-

out phase as a fresh test, warning that Nigeria's flawless group-stage performance would offer no guarantees against a determined Mozambican side.

"The Round of 16 is a new competition. Past performances will not win matches at this stage," Chelle said during a pre-match press conference on Sunday in Fès.

He stressed that discipline, intensity and humility would be vital

as the Eagles seek to avoid complacency in knockout football.

"We must show hunger from the first minute. Knockout matches punish complacency and reward focus," Chelle said.

The coach said players had been reminded of Nigeria's painful Round of 16 exit at the 2022 AFCON.

"That experience is fresh. We have learned, and we must ap-

ply those lessons now," he said. Chelle added that squad depth and tactical flexibility would help Nigeria balance defensive solidity with attacking ambition.

"We have quality across the squad. Every player understands his role and responsibility," he said.

Ademola Lookman said the Eagles were mentally prepared for a physically demanding contest against Mozambique.