

NARD to review strike suspension in 2 weeks

CALABAR

The National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) said it will review issues surrounding the suspension of its proposed strike within two weeks.

President-Elect, Dr Emmanuel Idoko, made the statement

in an interview with the newsmen in Calabar on Monday.

It would be recalled that NARD declared an indefinite nationwide strike that began on November 1, 2025 following alleged Federal Government's failure to implement a 19-point pact with the association.

The association however

suspended the strike after 29 days, following negotiations with the government and an agreement that addressed some of the demands.

It would be further recalled that NARD later announced new plans to resume another strike effective January 12, over alleged non-fulfilment of

agreement by the Federal Government.

Idoko, former Cross River Chairman of NARD, told newsmen that the decision to suspend the strike followed a meeting with Vice President Kashim Shettima.

He said that Shettima appealed to the association to

suspend further strike, and engage the Federal Government in further discussions.

"The strike is not called off yet, it was merely kept in abeyance. We shall reassess developments at our next meeting and decide on the next steps.

"Doctors do not embark on strikes for pleasure, we do so

in reaction to poor working conditions, inadequate facilities and unfavourable policies that affect healthcare delivery," he said.

The NARD official said that poor remuneration and weak health policies had led to the relocation of many medical doctors from the country.

The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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SHINE
agenda 'll
reposition
Cooperatives
in Edo
—Anabor

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—Pg 4

Cracks emerge as Rivers lawmakers seek leniency in Fubara impeachment

PORT HARCOURT

Amid rising political tension in Rivers State, two members of the House of Assembly have appealed for restraint over the planned impeachment of Governor Siminalayi Fubara and his deputy,

Prof. Nma Odu, urging their colleagues to halt the process and explore dialogue as a means of resolving the crisis.

The appeal was made on Monday in Port Harcourt by the House Majority Leader, Sylvanus Nwankwo, and the lawmaker representing Dege-

ma Constituency, Peter Abbey, during a joint briefing with journalists.

Both lawmakers are among the 26 legislators who unanimously endorsed the impeachment notice against the governor and his deputy.

Nwankwo called on fellow lawmakers to temper justice with mercy, explaining that sustained interventions from political leaders, community

stakeholders and constituents had prompted a reassessment of the situation.

While acknowledging that the impeachment notice was collectively issued, he argued that the prevailing circumstances now required patience and engagement rather than further escalation.

According to him, the differences that led to the impeachment move could still be ad-

ressed through dialogue, and he appealed to the Assembly to suspend further action in the interest of peace and stability in the state.

Abbey similarly appealed for calm, stressing the need to prioritise harmonious governance.

Although he acknowledged that the governor and his deputy were accused of constitutional infractions, he main-

tained that discontinuing the impeachment process would create room for reconciliation and improved adherence to the rule of law.

Both lawmakers urged their colleagues to consider the broader implications of the impeachment and to embrace leniency as a pathway to restoring cooperation between the executive and legislative arms of government in Rivers State.

Govt postpones school's resumption in Edo

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government on Monday postponed resumption of all public and private schools in Edo Central Senatorial District to a later date.

Schools were billed to reopen on Monday, for the second term, in the 2025/2026 academic calendar.

In a public statement in Benin City, the State Commissioner for Education, Dr Paddy Iyamu, said that the postpone-

ment became necessary to address emerging concerns affecting the welfare of students.

According to him, it is aimed at resolving 'exigencies' that would enhance the safety and well-being of children in the district.

Iyamu urged parents, guardians, school owners, and administrators within the district, to note the development, and comply accordingly.

He said that a new date for resumption, would be communicated to the public in due course.



IYAMU



COAS MAIDEN OPERATIONAL VISIT:

Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt.-Gen. Waidi Shaibu (7th R); GOC 6 Division, Nigerian Army Port Harcourt, Maj.-Gen. Eric Emekah and other officers, during the COAS maiden operational visit to the division recently.

Kidnapping protest:
Police arraign AAU students, others in Edo

—Pg 2

NDIC declares N24.3bn second liquidation dividend for Heritage Bank depositors

—Pg 5

Ghana settles \$1.47 billion energy sector debt to restore power stability

—Pg 9

AFCON: History, hosts and high stakes as Nigeria face Morocco in AFCON 2025 semi-final

—Pg 13

Kidnapping protest: Police arraign AAU students, others in Edo

IDAHOSA MUSA

BENIN CITY

Some students of Ambrose Alli University (AAU), Ekpoma, were on Monday among 52 persons arraigned by the Edo State Police Command over their alleged involvement in the violent protest that erupted in Ekpoma, headquarters of Esan West Local Government Area of the state.

The protest, which initially started as a demonstration against the rising incidents of kidnappings

and killings in the area, later degenerated into violence, resulting in the looting of shops and the vandalism of the palace of the Onojie of Ekpoma.

Residents had taken to the streets following repeated cases of abduction within the community, with several victims reportedly kidnapped from their homes.

Security operatives subsequently moved in and arrested suspects at various locations across Ekpoma. Some of the arrested AAU students alleged that they were picked up from

their hostels at about 3 a.m. while asleep and had no involvement in the protest.

According to them, they were conveyed in a police "Black Maria" to Benin City, where they were detained pending their arraignment in court.

Tension and anxiety were palpable at the court premises as relatives of the suspects loitered around, seeking information about the whereabouts and condition of their loved ones.

One of the parents, Abdul-salam, whose two sons were

among those arraigned, maintained that his children did not participate in the protest.

Emotions ran high as some relatives wept openly while the suspects were led back into a waiting police van after the court session.

The suspects were arraigned through an ex parte motion filed by the police counsel, P. O. Odion.

However, the presiding judge, Justice William Aziegbemi, ruled that the court lacked jurisdiction to entertain the matter

and advised the defence counsel to approach the Ubiaya High Court with bail applications.

Justice Aziegbemi thereafter ordered that the suspects be remanded at the Ubiaya Correctional Centre and adjourned the case to February 26, 2026, for hearing.

Reacting to the development, the Edo State Police Public Relations Officer, CSP Eno Ikoedem, said the suspects were arrested for their alleged roles in the violent protest, which led to the destruction of public and private property.

However, lawyers representing some of the defendants faulted the charges, describing them as "bogus."

Barrister Wisdom Isaac alleged that offences such as malicious damage and armed robbery were wrongly preferred against the suspects, noting that no formal complaints had been lodged against many of them.

Another defence counsel, Ejemi Etinbowei, insisted that the students neither organised nor led the protest, arguing that it was initiated by family members of a kidnap victim who was later found dead.

The arraignment has continued to stir public debate, amid growing concerns over worsening insecurity in Edo State and the authorities' handling of public protests.



NYSC 2026 CONFERENCE:

Director General of NYSC, Brig.-Gen. Olakunle Nafiu (R), presenting NYSC souvenir to the representative of the Plateau State Governor, Josephine Pio, during the NYSC 2026 Annual Management Conference in Jos on Monday

Oba of Benin urges youths to shun actions that create unrest

BENIN CITY

The Oba of Benin, Omo N' Oba N' Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, has enjoined Nigerian youths to avoid actions that could put the nation in a state of unrest.

This was contained in a statement on Monday, signed by Osaigbovo Iguobaro, Chief Press Secretary to the Oba.

Osaigbovo said that Oba Ewuare II gave the advice in Benin City, while addressing leaders of the Benin Christian Community, whose 2026 Universal Week of Prayers ended on Sunday.

According to him, the traditional ruler specifically urged youths in Edo, to exercise restraint, apply wisdom, and preserve their heritage for future generations.

"To all our youths across Edo State, we use this opportunity to plead with you: do not use

violence to destroy Nigeria and cause confusion in this Country.

"Allow this government in Edo State to work; support and keep praying for leaders in this Country," he said.

Oba Ewuare II read from the Bible book of Psalm 23 and prayed to Almighty God and his Royal ancestors, to strengthen Nigerian leaders and imbue them with divine wisdom, to discharge their responsibilities.

He recounted his experience since ascending the throne almost 10 years ago, as well as the challenges.

The Oba consequently, enjoined Christians of various denominations, to unite and support the growth of one another as exemplified by Christ.

Both lawmakers were among the 26 members who unanimously endorsed the impeachment notice against Fubara and his deputy.

A'ibom Assembly refutes viral claim of Bill criminalising sexual relationships with married men

UYO

The Akwa Ibom House of Assembly has dismissed as false and misleading, a viral social media report alleging plans to pass a bill criminalising sexual relationships with married men.

The rebuttal is contained in a statement issued on Monday in Uyo and signed by the Chairman, House Committee

on Information, Mr Jerry Otu. Otu, in the statement, described the report circulating widely on social media as a "fabrication with no legislative basis."

According to him, the claim, reportedly shared via a Facebook post by one Obiavel Albert Abigo, alleged that a bill sponsored by the Deputy Governor, Sen. Akon Eyakenyi, sought to impose a 10-year jail term on women involved in such rela-

tionships, while prescribing a ₦2 million fine for men.

"The attention of the Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly has been drawn to a fabricated report circulating on social media, alleging that the House is set to pass a bill criminalising sexual relationships with married men.

"The Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly wishes to categorically state that this re-

port is entirely false and has no basis in fact.

"The Assembly has not received or considered any such bill, and the Deputy Governor has not sponsored it.

"We condemn this malicious attempt to tarnish the image of the Deputy Governor and the Assembly, and urge the public to disregard this fake news and any associated commentaries," Otu said

Agbakoba demands immediate overhaul of Nigeria's healthcare system

LAGOS

Dr Olisa Agbakoba (SAN), Senior Partner at Olisa Agbakoba Legal has said that there is an urgent need to overhaul Nigeria's healthcare system to forestall preventable deaths resulting from negligence.

Agbakoba made the call in a statement on Monday in Lagos.

Agbakoba's call came on the backdrop of public outcry over alleged medical negligence that results in preventable deaths of some Nigerians.

"As a medical negligence legal specialist, I must express grave concern about the recurring incidents of absolutely preventable deaths resulting from medical negligence by health practitioners across Nigeria.

"The recent tragic loss of Nkanu Nnamdi, one of the twin sons of renowned author, Chimamanda Adichie and her husband, Dr Ivara Esege, has once again brought this critical national crisis to the forefront of public consciousness.

"As my professional focus over the last 20 years had been medical malpractice, having been involved in over 50 cases, this unfortunate

incident is yet another example of the unacceptable state of incompetence in some Nigerian hospitals.

"I am, quite honestly, not shocked that such a simple procedure at an acclaimed, reputable hospital has ended so terribly.

"Propofol, which was reportedly administered to Nkanu, requires exceptional care due to its potential for cardio-respiratory failure.

"An overdose can be fatal, and there appears to be a strong possibility of overdose in this case," the legal icon stated.

He commended the Lagos State government for its prompt commitment to investigate the Adichie matter.

"I equally commend the hospital, Euracare, for agreeing to cooperate with investigators.

"However, I must emphasise that such investigations must be genuinely independent and transparent. I have witnessed instances where medical records are altered to avoid culpability.

"This issue is deeply personal to me. I was misdiagnosed for an ailment that could have had serious consequences. My brother almost died due to an operation performed by a physician who presented himself as a surgeon."

Police repel bandits' attack, neutralise 2 in Kaduna

KADUNA

The Police Command in Kaduna State said that its operatives have repelled a bandits' attack in the state, neutralising two suspects and recovering firearms.

The Command's Public Relations Officer, DSP Mansir Hassan, confirmed the development in a statement issued on Monday in Kaduna.

Hassan said that on January 11, at about 9:30 a.m., the command received credible intelligence that a syndicate of armed bandits, led by one Kachalla Sanusi Bajira, was mobilising to

attack residents of Idissu Village.

According to him, the bandit leader had imposed an illegal levy on the community, which residents failed to pay.

He said that following the community's inability to comply, Bajira threatened to unleash violence on the villagers.

"Upon receipt of the information, the Commissioner of Police immediately directed the Officer-in-Charge (OC) of the Anti-Kidnapping Unit to move to the area," Hassan said.

He added that the OC promptly led a team of operatives, in conjunction with members of the Civilian Joint Task

Force (CJTF), to Idissu Village, Idissu Ward, Bayan Kogi axis of Giwa Local Government Area.

Hassan said that on arrival, the operatives discovered that the bandits had laid an ambush.

"Upon sighting the police, the bandits engaged the team in a gun duel. However, the attackers were overpowered by the superior firepower of the police operatives.

"This resulted in the neutralization of two bandits, while others fled into the surrounding bushes," he said.

He disclosed that during the operation, two firearms and

five rounds of live ammunition were recovered from the fleeing bandits.

Hassan said the Commissioner of Police, Rabiu Muhammad, commended the gallantry and professionalism of the operatives involved in repelling the attack.

He added that the CP reassured the public of the command's unwavering commitment to sustaining aggressive and intelligence-driven operations against banditry, kidnapping and other violent crimes.

He warned criminals that Kaduna State would not be a safe haven for them.



GOVERNMENT OF EDO STATE

PUBLIC SERVICE RECRUITMENT

P.M.B. 1066, BENIN CITY, NIGERIA

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SERVICE JOB VACANCIES (RECRUITMENT OF PROFESSIONALS)

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS:

Applicants applying must possess the minimum academic and professional requirements for each role as stated below. Unless otherwise stated, a minimum of a second-class lower Bachelor's degree and Applicants must have completed the mandatory NYSC program (where applicable), Additional educational or professional qualifications may be an added advantage. Applicants must also be computer literate, technology savvy, possess good interpersonal and leadership skills and be able to work effectively in teams.

Applicants applying for GL. 09 jobs must not have been more than 35 years of age by 15th December, 2025.

Successful Applicants will work in an Agency that offers a robust, challenging, diverse working culture that values teamwork and leverages technology in delivering high quality services to the people of Edo State.

HOW TO APPLY:

Interested Applicants may apply by visiting the Edo State Recruitment Portal at: <https://jobs.edostate.gov.ng/index.php?form=public-service-recruitment> and complete the online application form within two weeks of advertisement.

NOTE:

- Read carefully the instructions and find the competency test link to take the online test attached after you have filled all the necessary details and uploaded all the required documents.
- Applicants may only apply for 1 position on this advert. Multiple applications will result in disqualification.
- EDSG does not require Applicants to make any payments to any person or organization in respect of this recruitment exercise.
- We are an equal opportunity employer and each Applicants shall stand the same chance of gaining employment.

AVAILABLE VACANCIES

Mechanical Engineer I, GL 09

JobCode: MEI09

- Applicants must possess a degree in Mechanical Engineering from a recognized University registrable with the Council of Registered Engineers of Nigeria (COREN);
- Plus, two (2) years post qualification cognate experience;
- Applicants must not be more than 35 years of age by 15th December, 2025

Electrical Engineer I, GL 09

JobCode: EEI09

- Applicants must possess a degree in Electrical Engineering from a recognized University registrable with the Council of Registered Engineers of Nigeria (COREN);
- Plus, two (2) years post qualification cognate experience
- Applicants must not be more than 35 years of age by 15th December, 2025

Civil Engineer I, GL 09

JobCode: CEI09

- Applicants must possess a degree in Civil Engineering from a recognized University registrable with the Council of Registered Engineers of Nigeria (COREN);
- Plus, two (2) years post qualification cognate experience;
- Applicants must not be more than 35 years of age by 15th December, 2025

Architect II, GL 08

JobCode: AII08

Applicants must possess ANY of the following OR equivalent qualifications:

- A Bachelor of Science degree obtained from a recognized University in Architecture;
- Applicants must not be more than 35 years of age by 15th December, 2025

Building Officer II, GL 08

JobCode: BOII08

Applicants must possess any of the following qualifications registrable with the Council of Registered Builders of Nigeria (CORBON):

- A degree in Building or Building Technology from a recognized University;
- A pass in the Final Part II Examination of the Nigerian Institute of Builders;
- Applicants must not be more than 30 years of age by 15th December, 2025

Town Planning Officer II, GL. 08

JobCode: TPOII08

Applicants must possess any of the following qualifications registrable with the Town Planning Registration Council of Nigeria (TOPREC);

- A degree in Urban and Regional Planning or Town Planning from a

recognized Institution;

- A pass in the Final Examination of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners;
- A Professional Diploma in Urban and Regional Planning or Town Planning from a recognized University (NOT EQUIVALENT TO HND CERTIFICATE)
- Applicants must not be more than 30 years of age by 15th December, 2025

Administrative Officer II, GL 08

JobCode: AOII08

Applicants must possess any of the following qualifications

- A degree in any of the disciplines of Social Science or Humanities
- Applicants must not be more than 30 years of age by 15th December, 2025

Higher Technical Officer (Town Planning), GL. 08

JobCode: HTO (TP)II08

Applicants must possess any of the following qualifications;

- A Higher National Diploma in Town Planning from a recognized Institution;
- Applicants must not be more than 30 years of age by 15th December, 2025

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SERVICE JOB VACANCIES (RECRUITMENT OF TECHNICIANS AND JUNIOR STAFF)

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS:

Applicants applying for technician and junior staff position must possess the minimum academic and professional requirements for the role as stated below. Applicants must also be computer literate, with good interpersonal and leadership skills and be able to work effectively in teams.

Applicants applying for GL. 06 and GL. 04 jobs must not have been more than 30 years of age by 15th December, 2025.

Successful Applicants will work in an Agency that offers a robust, challenging, diverse working culture that values teamwork and leverages technology in delivering high quality services to the people of Edo State.

HOW TO APPLY:

Interested Applicants may apply by visiting the Edo State Recruitment Portal at: <https://jobs.edostate.gov.ng/index.php?form=public-service-recruitment> and complete the online application form within two weeks of advertisement

- Note: Applicants may only apply for 1 position on this advert. Multiple applications will result in disqualification.
- EDSG does not require Applicants to make any payments to any person or organization in respect of this recruitment exercise.
- We are an equal opportunity employer and each Applicants shall stand the same chance of gaining employment.

ASSISTANT TECHNICAL OFFICER (TOWN PLANNING) GL 06

JobCode: ATO(TP)06

Applicants must possess any of the following qualifications:

- Ordinary National Diploma (OND) in Town Planning from a recognized Institution;
- A pass in the preliminary examination of Nigerian Institute of Town Planners;
- Applicants must not be more than 30 years of age by 15th December, 2025

TOWN PLANNING ASSISTANT I, GL. 04

JobCode: TPA04

Applicants must possess any of the following qualifications:

- Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSCE), West African School Certificate (WAEC) or General Certificate of Education (GCE) (Ordinary Level) with five (5) including at least two of the following – Mathematics, Geography, Economics, Fine Arts, Physics, Technical Drawings;
- Applicants must not be more than 30 years of age by 15th December, 2025

CLERICAL OFFICER II, GL. 04

JobCode: C004

Applicants must possess any of the following qualifications:

- Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSCE), West African School Certificate (WAEC) or General Certificate of Education (GCE) (Ordinary Level) with five (5) including at least two of the following – Mathematics, English, Economics, Government;
- Applicants must not be more than 30 years of age by 15th December, 2025

Signed:

IGABALI IMOISILI DARLINGTON

Managing Director,

Edo State Building Control and Development Agency

NEWS

NDLEA seizes 134.483kg illicit drugs, arrests 157 suspects in Ebonyi

ABAKALIKI

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in Ebonyi said its operatives arrested 157 suspects and seized a total of 134.483kg of illicit drugs in the state.

Mr Jude Ahamefule, the state NDLEA Commander, told newsmen on Monday in Abakaliki that the arrests and

the seizures were made between October and December 2025.

He said the arrest included 123 males and 34 females out of which six were convicted.

Ahamefule said that the various drugs seized include cannabis sativa, heroin, methamphetamine, tramadol, diazepam and psychotropic substances.

He identified the seizures

as Cannabis sativa, 106.978kg, tramadol (100mg) 2619 capsules, 1.407kg methamphetamine (303 pinches), 0.0589kg of diazepam (700 tablets), and 0.161kg phenobarbitone syrup, 480ml aside others.

"We rehabilitated and discharged four clients, and admitted six within the period under review.

"Currently, a total of 12 clients are receiving rehabilita-

tion in our facility.

"Forty-four suspects were referred to the counselling unit of the command in the period under review," Ahamefule said.

He pledged the command's commitment to the fight against drug abuse and trafficking in the state.

He urged those involved in such illegal trade to desist both in the state and country at large.



NYAN GETS NEW SPEAKER:

Newly elected Speaker of the Fifth Northern Youth Assembly of Nigeria (NYAN), Malam Faruq Dangi (M); flanked by the outgoing Speaker of NYAN, Malam Ibrahim Mohammed-Lawal (R) and Chairman of the Electoral Committee, Mr Daniel Sunday (L), after the new speaker emerged winner of the election in Keffi, Nasarawa State.

SHINE agenda 'll reposition Cooperatives in Edo —Anabor

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has said that cooperative societies across the state will be revitalised and fully integrated into its development framework under the SHINE Agenda of the State government

The Commissioner for Business, Trade and Investment, Mr Omoh Anabor, gave the assurance while receiving members of the Edo Cooperatives Federation (ECF) in his office in Benin City.

He said the SHINE Agenda is comprehensive in scope and designed to stimulate inclusive economic growth, saying that cooperative societies must play a central role in the state's economic transformation.

Anabor said that part of his mandate is to revive, reposition and strengthen cooperative societies to ensure they deliver tangible benefits to members and contribute meaningfully to wealth creation and job generation in Edo State.

He expressed concern over cases where cooperative members make consistent and sacrificial savings, but are unable to access their funds when need-

ed, describing such practices as unacceptable and inhumane.

The Commissioner warned that any cooperative executive found guilty of mismanaging members' funds would face the full weight of the law.

He called for closer collaboration between the Edo Cooperatives Federation and the Ministry, emphasising that the integrity of the cooperative system must be protected at all times.

According to him, elections within cooperatives must be credible, transparent and fair to ensure accountability and trust.

Anabor further assured the Federation of the state government's commitment to ensuring the viability, sustainability and growth of cooperatives across Edo State, noting that the Okpebholo administration is determined to strengthen grassroots economic institutions.

Earlier, President of the Edo Cooperatives Federation, Mr Ojo Filani, commended the Commissioner for his humility and open-door policy.

Filani outlined several challenges confronting cooperative societies in the state, lamenting

that many have been left to struggle, contrary to the original vision of cooperatives as vehicles for collective economic advancement.

He noted, however, that cooperatives in Edo State have continued to contribute to social and economic development, albeit quietly.

He also observed that cooperative societies in states such as Lagos, Ogun and Osun benefit from access to loans and grants provided by their state governments, and questioned why similar support has been lacking in Edo State.

Also speaking, Secretary of the Edo Cooperatives Federation and Secretary of the Ore-do Local Government Council Cooperative Society, Lady Phil Ukhueigbe, decried the non-remittance of cooperative dues.

She said that although a court judgment had ordered the remittance of such dues without fail, political interference had hindered sustained compliance, adversely affecting the operations of cooperative societies.

In his response, Anabor assured the delegation that all issues raised would be thorough-

ly examined and addressed.

He reiterated that the SHINE Agenda of Governor Okpebholo was already gaining momentum across the state, as reflected in ongoing developmental initiatives.

Delta Police arrest 5, recover firearm, drugs, weapons

BETTY IDIALU

WARRI

The Delta State Police Command has arrested five suspects and recovered a locally fabricated firearm, live ammunition, illicit drugs and other offensive weapons in a series of intelligence-led operations across the state.

The Command said the arrests followed the assumption of duty of the Commissioner of Police, CP Aina Adesola, and are part of renewed efforts to curb criminal activities and reassure residents of enhanced security.

In one operation, officers of the Ekpan Division arrested a 30-year-old man, Gift Ojulo, suspected to be a cultist and armed robber, during a routine patrol along Hausa Market, Ubeji, at about 1:20 a.m. on 10 January 2026.

The suspect reportedly at-

Police restore calm in Ekpoma after protest turns violent

● Debunk social media reports of station fire in Ekpoma

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Police Command has restored normalcy in Ekpoma, Esan West Local Government Area, following a protest that degenerated into violence, leading to vandalism, looting and the shooting of a protester.

The Commissioner of Police, Mr Monday Agbonika, fdc, personally led reinforcement operations to the area after the protest was reportedly hijacked by hoodlums, resulting in a breakdown of law and order.

According to the police, intelligence reports had earlier indicated plans for a protest in the university town, prompting the Commissioner of Police to visit Ekpoma on Sunday, January 4, 2026, as part of preventive policing measures.

During the visit, Agbonika, alongside the Area Commander and Divisional Police Officer, held a stakeholders' meeting with community leaders, student representatives and other interest groups to address grievances and encourage peaceful conduct.

However, when the protest commenced on Friday, the situation reportedly escalated despite the immediate deployment of police personnel in collaboration with other security agencies.

The command said the protest was hijacked, leading to acts of vandalism, destruction of property and looting of shops. During the unrest, a military personnel allegedly discharged a firearm, injuring a protester.

In response, Agbonika led additional tactical teams from the state command headquarters in Benin City to Ekpoma to restore order.

The police said coordinated deployments and crowd control measures quickly brought

the situation under control, with normal activities resuming in affected areas.

The Commissioner of Police also visited the injured protester, identified as 32-year-old Osagie Abraham, who is currently receiving treatment at Eromolele Medical Centre, Ekpoma.

He ordered an immediate investigation into the shooting incident, while confirming that the military personnel involved had been identified and reported to the appropriate military authorities for disciplinary action.

The police said several individuals suspected to have engaged in violence, vandalism and looting had been arrested, with investigations ongoing to ensure all those responsible are prosecuted.

Reaffirming citizens' constitutional right to peaceful protest, Agbonika warned that such actions must be carried out lawfully and without infringing on the rights and safety of others.

He also addressed residents' concerns over kidnapping in the area, assuring that the command has intensified intelligence-led operations, patrols and targeted interventions to curb criminal activities across Edo State, including Ekpoma.

Residents have been urged to remain calm and continue their lawful activities, as the police insist that peace has been fully restored.

The command also appealed for continued cooperation between the public and security agencies to sustain peace and security in the state.

Meanwhile, the Police Command has dismissed as false and misleading reports circulating on social media claiming that a police station was gutted by fire in Ekpoma, Esan West Local Government Area of the state.

tempted to flee with accomplices on sighting the police but was apprehended after a brief chase. A search conducted on him led to the recovery of a locally fabricated gun and two live cartridges concealed in his trousers. Police said the suspect confessed to being a member of the Aye Confraternity, adding that efforts are ongoing to arrest other members of the gang who escaped.

In a separate operation, operatives of the Command's Raiders Unit arrested one Obi Onuigbi Nduboso, 43, on 8 January 2026, following credible intelligence on the circulation of illicit drugs.

A total of 36 bottles of nitrous oxide, popularly known as "laughing gas," were recovered from the suspect.

Investigations are ongoing to trace the source of the drugs and dismantle the distribution network.

Similarly, two suspected armed robbers, identified as Owakwe Chuks, 37, and Bright Moses, 32, were arrested in Agbor on 4 January 2026 in connection with a series of motorcycle snatching incidents. Items recovered from them included a hammer, a short knife, a brown face mask, a mobile phone and a face cap.

Police said the suspects were tracked through discreet investigations into a robbery reported on 24 December 2025.

In another incident, a 20-year-old man, Aliyu Haman, was arrested in Ogwashi-Uku for the alleged murder of his younger brother, also aged 20.

The victim was reportedly stabbed while asleep along Poly Road, near Adaiabo Filling Station. The weapon used in the attack was recovered, while the deceased's body has been deposited at the Odua Mortuary for autopsy.

NDIC declares N24.3bn second liquidation dividend for Heritage Bank depositors

LAGOS

The Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC) has declared a second liquidation dividend of N24.3 billion for depositors of the defunct Heritage Bank Ltd., following continued recovery of the bank's assets.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) had revoked the banking licence of Heritage Bank on June 3, 2024, after which the NDIC was appointed liquidator in line with Section 12(2) of the Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act (BOFIA) 2020 and Sections 55(1 and 2) of the NDIC Act 2023.

Upon its appointment, the corporation began payment of insured deposits of up to N5 million per depositor from the Deposit Insurance Fund, while also initiating the disposal of physical assets, recovery of debts and realisation of investments of the failed bank.

As a result, the NDIC declared a first liquidation dividend of N46.6 billion in April 2025, paid at a rate of 9.2 kobo per N1 to depositors whose balances exceeded the insured limit of N5 million, on a pro-rata basis.

The corporation said the newly declared second liquidation dividend of N24.3 billion

was generated from further debt recovery, sale of assets and investment realisation, and would be applied to uninsured deposits

above the N5 million threshold.

According to the NDIC, the second dividend is payable at a rate of 5.2 kobo per N1 on outstanding balances, in line with Section 72 of the NDIC Act 2023, bringing the cumulative liquidation dividend paid so

far to 14.4 kobo per N1.

Payments, the corporation said, would be made using depositors' details already in its records, with eligible depositors automatically credited through their alternative bank accounts using their Bank Ver-

ification Numbers (BVN).

The NDIC advised depositors without alternative bank accounts or BVNs, as well as those who are yet to claim their insured deposits or the first liquidation dividend, to visit the nearest NDIC office for assistance.

Accord receives defectors from 5 parties in Lagos

LAGOS

The Accord Party in Lagos State on Monday received a group of politicians and professionals, who recently defected to the party from five political parties.

The political parties are Labour Party (LP), Action Alliance (AA), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP).

The defectors said they joined Accord to be part of a "people-led mass coalition" to challenge the dominance of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) in the state.

The defectors were led by Mr Robert Sowore of the Labour Party (LP), a retired banker and financial consultant.

Speaking at the reception ceremony in Alimosho area of the state, Sowore, who said he moved into Accord with over 1,000 followers, described the party as the most credible platform for building a broad-based political movement in the state.

He said: "Accord is the ideal platform for a people-led coalition that will drive a political tsunami in Lagos State."

"The numbers are there. The will of the people is there."

"We are starting from Alimosho, which is the political capital of Lagos, to take back the state for the people."

He argued that dislodging the APC in the state required

what he called "a mass coalition of Lagosians rather than a coalition of elites."

The politician added that Accord remained the only political space capable of midwifing such a movement.

Also speaking, Mr Olatunde Ibrahim, a former APC senatorial aspirant and tax consultant, said he was ready to deploy his professional experience in support of the coalition.

"I have consulted for the six state governments in the South-West. I am prepared to bring my skills, knowledge and expertise to this project."

"I already advised the party to set up a Research and Social Development Committee. This will help to drive evidence-based policy and people-centred programmes," Ibrahim said.

Mr Mayowa Odeyingbo, a technology specialist and consultant, who also defected from the APC, said his decision was driven by what he described as Accord's clear ideological positioning.

Odeyingbo said, "I have been in the PDP and later the APC. I have discovered that most parties in Nigeria are left-leaning."

"Accord is the only centre-right party with a people-centred ideology. It takes care of the rich and the poor, the literate and the illiterate, the connected and the common man."



INTERFAITH SERVICES:

L-R: Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State (L) and Head of Service Oyo State, Mrs Bunmi Oni at the interfaith services to usher the New Year by Oyo State government in Ibadan on Monday.

Defence minister reaffirms commitment to stronger, self-reliant armed forces

ABUJA

The Minister of Defence, retired Gen Christopher Musa, has reaffirmed the Federal Government's commitment to building a capable, professional and resilient Armed Forces to safeguard Nigeria's sovereignty and support national development.

Musa said this on Monday at the Opening of the National Symposium /Lecture Series organised in commemoration of the 2026 Armed Forces Celebration and Remembrance Day, in Abuja.

He said the Ministry of Defence, under the current administration, was prioritising

troop welfare, enhanced training, doctrinal refinement and the expansion of indigenous defence production to ensure sustainable long-term security capabilities.

According to him, ongoing policy and legislative reforms are revitalising local defence industries, encouraging private sector participation, creating jobs and deepening local content while reducing dependence on foreign suppliers.

Musa noted that Nigeria was harnessing the expertise of skilled professionals at home and in the diaspora to strengthen defence innovation and capacity building.

He said locally manufac-

ture defence platforms now reflected the growing strength of Nigeria's defence industrial base and its contribution to regional security and economic growth.

On operations, the minister disclosed that improved training of special forces and stronger collaboration with regional and international partners had enhanced intelligence sharing and operational effectiveness against transnational threats.

He added that sustained military offensives across various theatres had recorded notable successes, while improved naval operations and maritime domain awareness had curtailed criminal activities and protected critical national assets.

Musa stressed that security was a shared responsibility,

calling on communities, traditional rulers, religious leaders and local governments to support efforts to disrupt criminal networks.

He urged participants at the symposium to produce practical recommendations to further strengthen Nigeria's defence architecture and national cohesion.

The minister commended the Chief of Defence Staff, Service Chiefs and personnel of the Armed Forces for their resilience and dedication, assuring Nigerians that the military had the resolve and capacity to defeat enemies of the state.

"Nigeria is a great nation. United and resilient, we will overcome our challenges and secure a prosperous future," he said.

UCH did not discharge patients over NARD strike, ARD President

IBADAN

The University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan, did not discharge patients on admission over the Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors (NARD)'s proposed strike on January 12, the ARD President, Dr Uthman Adedeji, has said.

NARD had threatened to resume its suspended strike on January 12, over alleged failure of the federal government to meet its demands on welfare of its members.

The demands by the association included welfare, promotion, allowance, and issues of working

condition, among others.

The intervention of the Vice President, Kashim Shettima led to the latest suspension of the proposed strike by NARD for two weeks.

A visit to the hospital on Monday by our correspondent showed that doctors were at their duty posts attending to patients.

In an interview, Adedeji said that patients on admission were not discharged as the strike had not commenced at the hospital.

He said that the interventions of Vice President Shettima led to resolutions on key issues.

According to him, NARD suspended its November 2,

2025, strike on November 29, 2025, giving the government 30-day ultimatum to meet MoU commitments on welfare and healthcare infrastructure.

Adedeji added that NARD suspended the planned strike again, opting for dialogue to secure better working conditions, salaries and healthcare funding.

"Doctors nationwide have returned to work, reposing confidence in the leadership of Dr Mohammed Sulaiman and the NOC."

"NARD reiterates its appeal to Nigerians and stakeholders to support the implementation of the MoU."

"The association appreciates

the intervention of the Vice President, which led to the suspension of the planned industrial action," he said.

Adedeji urged the doctors to remain committed and trust the process, while encouraging patients to amplify their support for the doctors' legitimate demands for improved healthcare services.

"NARD is hopeful the MoU issues will be resolved by January 25, 2026, when progress is reviewed at the National Executive Council."

"We remain committed to better healthcare for Nigerians and urge government to keep its commitments," Adedeji said.

ADDITION OF NAME

This is to inform the general public that **AIFUWA JESSICA** and **AIFUWA JESSICA OSAWONAMEN** is one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known as **AIFUWA JESSICA OSAWONAMEN**. All former documents remain valid. Auchi Polytechnic, concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME

I formerly known as **ALEXANDER DAVID**, now wish to be known and called **ALEXANDER DAVID AGHAHAWA**. Former documents remain valid, general public please take note.

RECONCILIATION OF NAME

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

CORRECTION OF NAME

I formerly known as **OSHIOMHOLE ESTHER SEID**, now wish to be known as **OSHIOMHOLE-SEID ESTHER**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

NEWS

Troops rescue 18 passengers from sea pirates off Cameroon coast

ABUJA

Troops of the Nigerian Army have rescued 18 passengers, including two infants, abducted by sus-

pected sea pirates during an attack on a passenger boat travelling from Nigeria to Cameroon.

A credible Army Headquarters source revealed that the rescue operation was conduct-

ed on Sunday.

According to the source, the rescue followed a distress call, after pirates operating in two speedboats and a wooden boat hijacked the vessel near Kom-

bo 4 Fishing Port, Cameroon.

The source said that the troops responded swiftly and pursued the assailants, leading to an exchange of fire.

"One pirate speedboat pow-

ered by a Horsepower engine capsized during the encounter, forcing the attackers to abandon their captives and flee into nearby creeks.

"All victims were rescued unharmed, while troops continued to dominate the waterways to prevent further criminal activity.

"A total of five rounds of

7.62mm NATO and four rounds of 7.62mm Special ammunition were expended during the operation.

"Security operations in the area are ongoing," the source said.

The source reaffirmed the commitment of the Nigerian army to sustaining operations across theatres nationwide.



INAUGURATION OF CCTV CENTER:

L-R: Special Adviser to the President on Community Engagement, Moremi Ojudu; Controller, Federal Ministry of Works, Lagos, Mr Olufemi Dare; Minister of Works, David Umahi; Director, Highway Bridges and Design, Ministry Works, Mr Musa Saidu and Project Manager, CCECC in Charge of the Project, Jason Chen, during the inauguration of Third Mainland Bridge CCTV Monitoring Center in Lagos.

Anesthetists Society seeks involvement in Lagos govt probe of alleged medical negligence

LAGOS

The Nigerian Society of Anesthetists (NSA) has called for its involvement in the Lagos State Government's investigation of alleged medical negligence surrounding the death of the son of renowned author, Chimamanda Adichie.

Its National President, Prof. Alhassan Mohammed, made the call in a statement obtained on Monday.

Mohammed commended the decision taken by the government to investigate the incident, expressing delight that the Health Facility Monitoring and Accreditation Agency (HEFAMAA) has begun the investigation in line with the

directives of Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu.

"The alleged medical negligence appears to have centred around the Physician Anaesthetist who is a member of the team that carried out the procedure to facilitate MRI.

"In this regard, the NSA recommends very strongly that a senior and experienced Physician Anaesthetist should be co-opted into the investigative panel for a comprehensive review of the incident.

"This incident is a sad one indeed but we have an opportunity to reflect on the practice of Anaesthesia in Lagos State and Nigeria by diligently implementing the recommendations of the investigative panel."

The president assured of

NSA's commitment to continue to be guided by its motto: 'Safety First.'

21-month-old Nkanu Nnamdi, whom the novelist had with her husband, Dr Ivara Esege, died on January 7 after a brief illness.

A statement issued by Omawumi Ogbe of GLG Communications, said, "The family is devastated by this profound loss, and we request that their privacy be respected during this incredibly difficult time."

Thereafter, Adiche in a write-up that went viral across social media platforms on Saturday accused Euracare Multispecialist Hospital in Lagos of negligence leading to her son's death.

According to her, Nkanu, who

was billed to be flown abroad for treatment, had developed what was initially thought to be a cold, but later turned into "a very serious infection."

She explained that upon arrival at the hospital on Tuesday, they were told her son would need to be sedated to prevent movement during the MRI and central line procedures.

However, she alleged that her son was not properly monitored after being administered an "excessive dose of propofol" by the hospital's anaesthesiologist.

According to her, the situation quickly deteriorated, leading to loss of responsiveness, seizures, and cardiac arrest, which eventually resulted in his death on Wednesday.

Face-off: We're behind Gov Yusuf —NNPP

LAGOS

The New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) has said that it is totally in support of any political action that Governor Abba Yusuf of Kano State may wish to take in the face-off between him and its 2023 presidential candidate, Sen. Rabiu Kwankwaso.

In a statement by its National Chairman, Dr Agbo Major, the party stated that as its sole governor and leader, Yusuf needed the party's support to succeed in Kano state.

"Kwankwaso may have been instrumental in nominating Yusuf to power but as governor, he has to be allowed to excel rather than being distracted by unnecessary politics of personal interest.

"Kano state is not only very vital in the 2027 general elections but very important to the NNPP and so, we cannot allow Kwankwaso and the Kwankwasiya Movement to continue to meddle to destroy what the party gained.

"Kwankwaso was our 2023 presidential candidate who was later expelled for anti-party activities. His personal relationship with the governor should not interfere with governance in Kano state or which political party the governor wishes to join.

"The NNPP finds it unbelievable that the same Kwankwaso who betrayed its founder, Dr Boniface Aniebonam is lament-

ing about alleged betrayal of trust by the Kano governor."

Major pointed out that Kwankwaso betrayed the trust of the NNPP by trying to hijack the party after the 2023 elections, when the Memorandum of Understanding with him and his Kwankwasiya Movement ended.

"It was the various litigations by Kwankwaso that led to the mass defection of our members in Kano state to other political parties.

"We won't sit and watch Kwankwaso continue to pull down the Kano governor through his utterances and blackmail

"Kwankwaso should take a cue from the ruling APC that supports President Bola Tinubu to excel without dictating to him as President.

"His escalation of litigations in the NNPP was responsible for his lost grip on his followership in Kano state and the Kwankwasiya movement."

According to Major, the NNPP has lost electoral grounds and had not participated in some past elections due to the ill actions of Kwankwaso.

"Under the circumstances, it's apparent that the desire of the executive governor of kano state to decamp to APC is reasonable and responsible.

"However, the position of our great party is that Yusuf should not leave the NNPP but take responsibility as the leader of our great party and propel it to greater opportunities."

Defection: Jang denies calling for Mutfwang's resignation

JOS

Senator Jonah Jang, the former Governor of Plateau has denied calling for the resignation of Governor Caleb Mutfwang over his recent defection from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the All Progressives Congress (APC).

Jang denied the allegation in a statement by Clinton Garuba, his Media Consultant, on Monday in Jos.

The media aide said that the former governor described the reports making the rounds in some sections of the media as misleading.

Garuba particularly said that Jang was quoted out of context. "The attention of Sen. Jonah

David Jang has been drawn to a misleading report in some print and online media outlets.

"The report attempts to portray him as calling on Governor Caleb Mutfwang to resign following his defection from the PDP to the APC.

"For clarity, Jang was quoted out of context; At no time during the PDP stakeholders' meeting did he call for Mutfwang's resignation.

"Rather, he criticised politicians for leaving their parties to join others," Garuba said.

Garuba said that the former governor called on the residents of Plateau to disregard such reports and continue to support the governor to succeed.

Imo community calls for accountability over oil revenue

OWERRI

The Achi Mbieri Community in Mbaitoli Local Government Area of Imo State, has called for accountability from its leaders over the handling of the oil revenue accruing to the community.

A group of concerned members of the community, under the aegis of Achi Stakeholders Forum, made the call at a news briefing in Owerri.

In line with the Petroleum Industry Act, some part of the revenue accruable to the oil-

rich community had been paid by Seplat Energy, an oil exploration company in the area.

The group alleged that the money was "inequitably disbursed" by the community's President-General (PG), Mr Victor Iwuagwu, to the component villages, without due supervision by the community's executive council.

The community's Financial Secretary, Mr Richard Durunna, said that in the community's meeting on Saturday, he clearly denied involvement in the said disbursement.

Durunna also said that Iwuag-

wu had unilaterally run the affairs of the community without input from other members of the executive, including himself.

He, however, said that rising from the meeting, the stakeholders and community members agreed that a 48-hour ultimatum be issued to the P-G to convene an emergency meeting and explain his financial dealing to the community.

"I am completely unaware that Seplat Energy already paid us, I only got wind of it when the various villages confirmed receiving money from the P-G.

"When I asked him about

the sharing formula, he said he shared it according to the instruction by his late mother in a dream.

"I find this bizarrely disturbing and call for accountability so that records can be set straight," he said.

Another member of the group, Mr Charles Opara, described the discovery of oil in the community as a "supposed blessing rather than a reason for chaos."

Opara, therefore, called on Iwuagwu to desist from personalising the gains from oil and give a proper account of his stewardship.

Army slams misleading report on COAS' Port Harcourt visit

ABUJA

The Nigerian Army has dismissed as misleading and malicious, a report alleging that the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt.-Gen. Waidi Shaibu, raised alarm over rising cases of pipeline vandalism during his recent visit to 6 Division, Port Harcourt.

The Acting Director, Army Public Relations, Col. Appolonia Anele, made this known in a statement in Abuja.

Anele said the report, published by an online medium, was a misrepresentation of facts and should be disregarded.

She clarified that during the COAS' address to troops at the 6 Division Nigerian Army, Port Harcourt, on January 9, he did not express concern nor raise any alarm over alleged rising pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta.

According to her, the COAS emphasised the importance of the Division's mandate to protect critical national infrastructure, noting that effective execution of the task would have a positive impact on the

nation's economy.

She quoted COAS as saying, "Your job here is very key to protecting critical national infrastructure, and once you do that job very well, it will impact positively on the economy of the country."

"He urged troops to remain disciplined, committed and dedicated, assuring them that their welfare remained a top priority under his Command Philosophy," she said.

Anele said the army chief also approved immediate measures to address some challenges raised by commanders, including the construction of additional accommodation, renovation of existing quarters and completion of ongoing projects to ease accommodation challenges.

According to her, Shaibu further assured troops that issues relating to quality education for their children were being addressed, while urging personnel to carry out their duties conscientiously.

"Fielding questions from journalists, the COAS said his visit was part of routine operational tours to interact with

officers and men, assess their combat readiness and identify challenges for prompt solutions.

Anele stressed that security parameters on ground showed commendable efforts by troops

and other security agencies in checking oil theft and pipeline vandalism, leading to improved stability and sustained exploration activities in the oil and gas sector.

She urged media organisations to verify facts before publication and called on members of the public to disregard reports aimed at downplaying security efforts in the region.

She also appealed to residents of the Niger Delta to continue to provide credible intelligence on the activities of economic saboteurs to security agencies for prompt response.



INSPECTION OF ON-GOING RECONSTRUCTION:

Minister of Works, David Umahi (3rd R); Project Supervisor, Abuja-Kaduna Highway, Federal Ministry of Works, Chukwuma Kalu (3rd L); Senior Project Manager, Infioest Construction Ltd, Robert Turner (L); Senior Special Assistant to the President on Community Engagement, North-Central, Essiet Abiodun (2nd L) and other dignitaries, during the inspection of the on-going reconstruction of Abuja-Kaduna Expressway recently.

Ondo Assembly Speaker lauds Ayedatiwa's leadership stance at 61

AKURE

The Speaker, Ondo State House of Assembly, Chief Olamide Oladiji, has described the leadership of Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa as remarkable.

Oladiji, in a birthday message at the governor's 61st birthday on Monday in Akure, said the governor's democratic value was unique.

"Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa, as a visionary and unique leader, whose dedication to good governance and democratic ideals, has continued to yield positive results.

"I laud his remarkable strides, particularly in the areas of security, health, education and infrastructure.

"We celebrate you today

(Monday) on this special day. You remain a shining example of exemplary leadership for future generations.

"Your administration has brought serenity, significant growth and development to our Sunshine state," he said.

The speaker asked God to grant the governor divine wisdom and grace to continue to pilot the affairs of the state.

"As you mark your birthday today, we pray that Almighty God sufficiently grants you good health, renewed strength, and many more fruitful years of service to Ondo State and humanity," Oladiji said.

He promised that the house would continue to collaborate with the executive arm in advancing collective interest of the people of the state.

12 die in Yangoji–Abaji multiple crashes

ABUJA

No fewer than 12 people were confirmed dead in a multiple fatal vehicle accident on the Yangoji–Abaji corridor of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja on Sunday.

Mr Felix Theman, the Commander, of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), FCT Sector Command, confirmed the incident in a statement issued by the command Public Education Officer, Mrs Helen Nnaji.

Theman said that the crash occurred at about 11:45am at Gada Biyu, with the first distress call received at 11:47am.

He said that a patrol team from Zebra 6 Unit, Yangoji, arrived at the scene within seven minutes at about 11:54am.

According to him, four vehicles were involved in the crash.

"Two Volkswagen Golf cars with registration numbers GWA 162 KZ and ABJ 111 NW, a Ford Sharon bus with registration number AFN 325 YL, and a Volvo Randon trailer with registration number ANC 665 XA," he said.

Theman said that preliminary investigations indicated that speed limit violation and loss of control led to a chain collision involving the vehicles.

He said that eyewitness accounts revealed that the trailer, belonging to African Natural Resources and Mines Ltd and coming from Gujeni in Kagarko Local Government Area of Kaduna State with a consignment of coal, lost control.

"It however, rammed into an illegal roadside motor park,

triggering the multiple crash.

"A total of 18 persons were involved in the incident, comprising eight adult males, four adult females, two male children and four female children.

"The casualty figure stood at 12 fatalities, including four adult males, two adult females, two male children and four female children.

"Three persons which are two adult males and one adult female sustained injuries, while three others escaped unhurt," he said.

Theman said that the FRSC personnel administered first aid at the scene, recovered items found in the vehicles and secured them in safe custody.

He added that the injured victims were evacuated to Abaji General Hospital for urgent

medical attention, while the deceased were released to their families for burial in line with religious and cultural practices.

He said that the Motor Traffic Division (MTD) of the Nigerian Police, Kwali Division, had taken over the investigation to determine additional factors responsible for the crash.

Theman however, expressed deep condolences to the families of the victims and prayed for the speedy recovery of those injured.

He warned motorists, particularly commercial drivers, against the practice of creating illegal roadside loading and off-loading points along highways.

He also described it as a major risk that exposed passengers, hawkers and pedestrians to avoidable danger.

Ex-NUC boss calls for Africa-led research to reduce foreign dependence

SANGO-OTA

Former Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission (NUC), Prof. Peter Okebukola, has called on African leaders to establish and fund institutions that support Africa-led research.

Okebukola made the call in an interview with newsmen on Monday in Ota, Ogun state.

He said the initiative would reduce the African continent's heavy dependence on developed countries for research.

He highlighted the need for African leaders to invest in areas such as history, medicine,

agriculture, and environmental science.

"When Africans produce knowledge and solutions to their own problems, it combats the perception that outside expertise is always needed.

"In addition, African leaders can help shape the global narrative by providing an authentic perspective on the continent's history and challenges," he said.

The don added that the ability of African leaders to implement such policies or programmes would help eliminate the internalised inferiority complex in developing countries.

Gov Alia to clear outstanding pension, gratuities in January

MAKURDI

Governor Hyacinth Alia of Benue State has promised to clear outstanding pensions and gratuities of retired civil servants in the state accrued between 2023 and 2025.

This was contained in a press statement signed by his Chief Press Secretary, Mr Tersoo Kula and made available to newsmen in Makurdi.

According to the statement, the governor promised that this will be done before the end of January 2026.

Alia said his administration has treated the welfare of civil servants with utmost serious-

ness, stressing that salaries, pensions and gratuities have been paid consistently since he assumed office.

"We've been paying gratuities because I have taken the welfare of my staff and all civil servants very seriously. In the last two and a half years, I have never missed the payment of salaries and pensions, including gratuities," he said.

He explained that while priority was initially given to clearing approved arrears, deliberate steps are now being taken to ensure that all retirees within the period of his administration received their entitlements.

"For those within the last two and a half years who have

not received their gratuities, they will receive them in a matter of days. All gratuities within this period will be paid," he assured.

He noted that payment of other outstanding pension and salary arrears would continue based on available financial inflows.

Alia said that his government was determined to maintain a healthy financial flow while meeting its obligations to workers.

"I have no reason not to pay civil servants. They work for the state, and this is the only livelihood they know. That is why we do this very deliberately and diligently," he said.

On the ongoing national strike by resident doctors, the governor urged dialogue and negotiation, describing conflict resolution as the best path to resolving labour disputes.

He acknowledged that there may be genuine reasons for their agitation, including outstanding commitments by previous administrations, which he said, must be honoured, as government was a continuum.

The governor expressed confidence that resident doctors in Benue State would not have joined the strike but for its nationwide nature, noting that the disruption of medical services posed grave risks to families and communities.

NEWS

How Kebbi justice sector fared in 2025 —DPP

BIRNIN KEBBI

The Kebbi State Ministry of Justice said it recorded significant progress in the administration of criminal justice in 2025, with improved conviction rates, faster case disposal and stronger collaboration with law enforcement agencies.

The Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) in the ministry, Mr Lawal Hudu-Garba, SAN, made this known to newsmen in Birnin Kebbi on Monday.

Hudu-Garba said that the achievements were recorded from January to December, 2025, under the leadership

of the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Dr Junaidu Bello-Marshall.

He said that the ministry handled more than 800 distinct legal matters within the year, covering a broad spectrum of activities.

“These activities range from advisory services at the pre-prosecution stage to high-profile litigation before the Supreme Court.

“Also, the Public Prosecution Department received 84 case files for legal advice and processed 383 bail applications during the period.

“The department filed 135 criminal cases at the High

Court, handled 50 appeals at the same court, prosecuted 19 cases at the Court of Appeal in Sokoto, and represented the state in 25 matters before the Supreme Court.

“The department also conducted 17 cases at the Federal High Court in Birnin Kebbi,” he said.

Hudu-Garba noted that the final number of judgments secured across all court levels was still being compiled.

He said, “The office of the director of public prosecution is currently collating the exact number of judgments delivered, as reports are still being received from our zonal offices

across the state.”

In a related development, the ministry’s Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Unit also recorded an active year, particularly in the prosecution of sexual and related offences.

The Head of the unit, Zainab Muhammad-Jabbo, said the unit initiated 40 prosecutions at the High Court in 2025, involving offences such as rape and defilement.

She added that the unit had also handled 10 appeal cases, four matters at the Supreme Court, and processed 35 bail applications connected to its prosecutions.

Muhammad-Jabbo said the unit was awaiting final judg-

ment reports from GBV desk officers across the local government areas of the state.

She reaffirmed the ministry’s

commitment to protecting vulnerable persons and ensuring diligent prosecution of gender-based violence cases.

Man, 27, docked for allegedly stealing building materials worth N1.1m

IKORODU

A 27-year-old man, Ismail Sulaimon, on Monday appeared before an Ikorodu Chief Magistrates’ Court in Lagos for allegedly stealing building materials valued at N1.1 million from a fishery company.

The defendant, whose address was not provided, is standing trial on a two-count charge of stealing and conduct likely to cause breach of peace.

He, however, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The Prosecutor, ASP Aminu Isaac, told the court that the defendant committed the offence on December 24, 2025 at No

7, Adeniran Ogunsanya Road, Sabo Market area of Ikorodu.

Isaac alleged that, the defendant forcefully entered into the premises of a company and stole a cable wire valued N300,000, iron pipe valued N100,000, iron rod worth N300,000 and aluminium valued N400,000 all totaling N1.1 million, properties of Kolinton Fisheries.

The prosecutor added that at the same time and date, the defendant allegedly conducted himself in a manner likely to cause breach of peace by demonstrating an ugly act thereby causing havoc, unrest and fear to members of the public.

He said that the offences contravened the provisions of Section 287 and 168(D) of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015.

Pastor docked over alleged negligence, death of girl

IBADAN

A cleric, Olatunde Alao, 63, on Monday, appeared before an Iyaganku Chief Magistrates’ Court, Ibadan, charged with negligence leading to the death of a 6-year-old girl within his church premises.

The defendant, whose residential address was not provided, is facing a charge of negligence, to which he pleaded not guilty.

The prosecutor, Insp Sikiru Opaleye alleged that the incident happened on December 27, 2025, at the defendant’s church premises at Adogba area of Ibadan.

Opaleye said that the cler-

ic negligently failed to cover a well in the church premises and one Ademide Adewale, aged six years, fell into it.

He said that the offence contravened the provisions of Section 344 of the Criminal Code Laws of Oyo State 2000.

The Defence Counsel, Mr Femi Kasumu, applied for bail on liberal terms for his client.

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

She said one of the sureties must be a blood relative to the defendant.

Ogunkanmi, thereafter, adjourned the matter until March 11, for hearing.



PANEL SESSION:

L-R: Executive Officer, Center for Promotion of Private Enterprise (CPPE); Dr Muda Yusuf, Chief Executive Officer, Finance With Muktar, Mr Muktar Mohammed; Moderator, Ini John-Mekwa; Director General of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), Segun Ajayi Kadir; and the Partner at KPMG, Mrs Elizabeth Olaghere, during a panel session at the 14th Anniversary Lecture of the January 9 Collective (J9C), in Lagos State.

Nasarawa female lawmaker frees 2 inmates to mark 54th birthday

NASARAWA

Dr Hajarat Danyaro, member representing Nasarawa Central Constituency in the Nasarawa State House of Assembly, has secured the release of two inmates from the Nasarawa Custodial Centre to mark her 54th birthday.

Danyaro, the only female lawmaker in the State Assembly, disclosed this on Sunday during her birthday celebra-

tion at her residence in Nasarawa Local Government Area.

She explained that she paid the fines of the inmates; Mustapha Abubakar and Peace Musa, both indigenes of Nasarawa Local Government Area to facilitate their release.

The lawmaker, who is also the Chairman, House Committee on Women Affairs and Social Development, said the freed inmates would be reunited with their families immediately after the celebration.

“As you can see, officials of the Nasarawa Correctional Centre are here with the inmates.

“I have paid their fines and secured their release. They are now free to return to society and reunite with their families,” she said.

Danyaro advised the beneficiaries to be good ambassadors of their families and the society, urging them not to return to actions that could land them back in custody.

“Please do not go back to what took you to prison,” she

admonished.

The lawmaker thanked God for His protection and guidance over her life and prayed for sound health and greater achievements in the years ahead.

She also expressed appreciation to friends, associates and well-wishers who celebrated with her, praying God to bless them abundantly.

The celebrant’s mother, Maryam Danyaro, offered prayers for her daughter and symbolically fed her with the birthday cake.

Man docked for allegedly stealing N180,000 Bajaj Boxer motorcycle

ILE-IFE

A 30-year-old man, Ademola Segun, on Monday, appeared before an Ile-Ife Magistrates’ Court over the alleged theft of a Bajaj Boxer motorcycle valued at N180,000.

The defendant, whose address was not provided, pleaded not guilty to the charge of stealing.

The Prosecutor, Insp Sun-

day Osanyintuyi, told the court that the defendant committed the offence on January 9, at 10:00 am at Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), in Ile-Ife.

He alleged that the defendant stole a Bajaj Boxer motorcycle marked EKY477QN, Engine No: DUZWD31494, Chassis No: MD2A18Y5KWM17158 valued N180,000, property of one Adebawale Oluwale.

Osanyintuyi said that the offence contravened the pro-

visions of sections 383 and 390(9) of the Crime Laws of Osun, 2002.

The Defence Counsel, Mr Conscience Mume, applied for the bail of his client on liberal terms, pledging that the defendant would not abscond.

The Magistrate, Mrs Abo-sede Sarumi granted the defendant bail in the sum of N500,000 with two sureties in like amount.

Among other conditions, the

court ordered that the sureties must be land owners, and should provide evidence of tax payment for the three previous years.

Also, the sureties must provide their last utility bill, three recent passport photographs and a valid means of identification.

The magistrate further directed the defendant to deposit N400,000 into the court’s account.

The case was adjourned until January 28, for hearing.

Court orders divorce-seeking woman to present her parents

KADUNA

The Shari’a Court I sitting at Magajin Gari, Kaduna, on Monday, ordered a divorce-seeking woman, Rubayya Muhammad, to present her parents in court over dowry controversy.

Muhammad, who is also a nursing mother, had prayed court to dissolve her marriage with her husband, Isiya Baba, through Khul’i, saying she is ready to return the N150,000 dowry she received in exchange for divorce.

Khul’i refers to a divorce procedure under Islamic law where a woman can initiate a separation from her husband by returning her dowry to the

husband.

She, therefore, said she would use the dowry money to feed their two months old baby.

However, the defendant said he paid N350,000 dowry and not N150,000 as claimed by the woman.

The witnesses from the defendant also told the court that they took the dowry to the complainant’s parents, confirming it was N350,000 and not N150,000.

Thereafter, the Judge, Mu’awiyah Shehu, asked the complainant who received the dowry and she said her father did.

He then ordered her to present her parents on February 3 for confirmation.

Foreign

NEWS

Thousands of tourists stranded in Lapland as cold grounds flights

Thousands of tourists have been stranded in Finland's Lapland as a severe cold spell has grounded flights out of one of its airports.

Departures from Lapland's Kittila airport that would have ferried winter travellers back to places like London, Bristol, Manchester, Paris and Amsterdam were all cancelled on Sunday as temperatures did not go above -35C on Sunday.

The issue is expected to continue on Monday as a low of -39C is forecast by Finland's meteorological agency. The

first flight out of Kittila has already been cancelled.

The extreme cold makes it hard to de-ice planes, while maintenance and refuelling equipment on the ground can freeze.

Airport operator Finavia told public broadcaster Yle that moisture in the air was making the situation worse as it was creating slippery frost.

While Lapland - which spans northern Norway, Sweden and Finland - is known for the cold and snow, Finnish Lapland usually has a winter average temperature of -14C,

with occasional dips to -30C, according to the nation's tourism board.

Kittila airport predominantly serves people wishing to travel to nearby ski resorts and to see the Northern Lights, while Rovaniemi airport further south is the "official" destination for visitors to Santa Claus's folkloric home.

On Monday, the first local flight set to arrive in Kittila was cancelled, with international flights delayed.

The cold weather has also made the roads particularly hazardous, with Fintraffic

warning of icy conditions in the region.

A bus full of Ukrainian passengers drove into a ditch on Sunday morning, Yle reported, citing local police. It said no serious injuries were reported.

The unusual cold in Lapland comes as a storm passing over northern Europe has brought wintry conditions and travel disruption to the UK, France and Germany.

A man was killed after a tree fell on his caravan in England, while around 100,000 homes were without power in France on Saturday.



COLD GROUNDS:

Thousands of tourists stranded in Finland's Lapland as severe cold spell ground flights.

Ghana settles \$1.47 billion energy sector debt to restore power stability

The Government of Ghana has announced it paid US \$1.47 billion in 2025 to clear long-standing debts in the energy sector, a move officials say restores stability and international credibility to the country's power system.

According to the Ministry of Finance, the payments included \$597.15 million to fully reinstate a World Bank partial risk guarantee that had been exhausted under the previous administration. That guarantee was crucial in unlocking nearly \$8 billion in private investment for the Off-shore Cape Three Points gas field and the Sankofa Gas Project.

Ghana also settled all outstanding gas invoices owed to energy partners ENI and Vitol, paying around \$480 million, and cleared

about \$393 million in legacy debts to Independent Power Producers, including major suppliers such as Karpowership and Cenpower.

Officials say the comprehensive settlement, completed within President John Dramani Mahama's first year in office, marks a decisive reset of the power sector after years of arrears that threatened electricity reliability and investor confidence. Budget provisions and renegotiated agreements with upstream partners aim to keep future payments current and improve domestic gas output.

The government says the debt clearance ends an era of unchecked accumulation and lays the groundwork for more stable energy delivery and economic growth.

Ugandan opposition candidate Bobi Wine rallies in Kampala slum where he grew up

Ugandan opposition candidate Bobi Wine brought his presidential campaign to the Kampala slum where he grew up ahead of Thursday's elections.

Wine is challenging incumbent Yoweri Museveni, for a second time. In 2021, he took 35 percent of the vote to Museveni's 58 percent, establishing Wine as a serious contender for the power.

The 43-year-old singer turned politician has a strong following among working class people in urban areas. But his rallies have seen violent crackdowns by security forces using tear gas and beatings against his supporters.

FILE - A supporter holds a flag

of Uganda's long-time President Yoweri Museveni at an election rally at Kololo Airstrip in Kampala, Uganda Tuesday, Feb. 16, 2016.

Museveni has been in office since 1986. Term and age limits have been scrapped to allow him to run for a seventh time.

Wine, the most prominent of seven opposition candidates, has urged supporters to show courage before the security forces, although he has not called outright for protests. He said he wants his supporters to cast "protest votes" in large numbers against Museveni's party on election day.

The general elections on 15 January will elect the president and parliament.

Trump mulls 'very strong' military options as hundreds killed in Iran protests

President Donald Trump says the US military is considering "very strong options" in Iran, as anti-government protests which have reportedly killed hundreds enter a third week.

The US-based Human Rights Activist News Agency (HRANA) says it has verified the deaths of nearly 500 protesters and 48 security personnel in Iran, while sources tell the BBC the death toll could be much higher.

Trump has threatened to intervene, and said on Sunday that Iranian officials had called him "to negotiate" - but added "we may have to act before a meeting".

Iranian leaders have described the demonstrators as a "bunch of vandals", and called on their supporters to take part in pro-government marches on Monday.

The government has also announced three days of mourning for what it called "martyrs" killed in a "national battle against the US and Isra-

el" - two countries that Tehran says are fomenting unrest.

Anger over the plummeting value of the Iranian currency sparked protests in late December, which have grown into a crisis of legitimacy for Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Trump has not yet elaborated on what the US is considering in terms of military options, nor on the proposed negotiations, despite saying that a "meeting is being set up" with Iranian officials.

He added that Iranian leaders "want to negotiate", because "they are tired of being beat up by the United States".

A US official told the BBC's US news partner CBS that Trump has been briefed on options for military strikes on Iran.

Other approaches could include boosting anti-government sources online, using cyber-weapons against Iran's military, or imposing more sanctions, officials told the Wall Street Journal.

"There wasn't even time for

CPR: Iran medics describe hospitals overwhelmed with dead and injured protesters

Reza Pahlavi, the exiled son of Iran's last shah at centre of protest chants

Iran protests: 'People are more angry and determined now' Trump's warning looms over Iran protests response

Sources told the BBC that protests continued on Sunday night, but at a reduced level compared to previous days, as fears grow of an escalating crackdown by the Iranian government.

At least 10,600 people have been detained over the fortnight of unrest, according to HRANA.

The BBC counted 180 body bags in footage from a morgue near the Iranian capital, with one source saying on Sunday that the streets of Tehran were "full of blood".

"They're taking away bodies in trucks," the source added.

In one video from the site near Tehran, about 180 shrouded or wrapped figures

can be seen, the majority lying out in the open. Shouts and cries of distress can be heard from people who appear to be looking for their loved ones.

Footage has been blurred to protect the identities of the living, who could face further persecution from the authorities.

Sources said large numbers of bodies had accumulated at hospitals and forensic facilities, while some bodies were reportedly buried urgently before dawn by the authorities, limiting the chance for identification.

City workers have also removed debris, burned cars and bloodstains from the streets during the night, a source told the BBC.

Video verified by the BBC shows rows of body bags in Kahrizak, south of Tehran

Multiple sources in Iran also said that they had seen drones flying persistently over crowds and residential neighbourhoods to identify and track protesters.

The BBC and most other in-

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

Some witnesses are relying on Starlink proxy connections or satellite television for information, but fear that these could be used by the authorities to trace them.

"We cannot even send text messages," one source in southern Iran told the BBC, as a blanket internet outage continued. "Only the government is sending threatening messages to people."

Trump said on Sunday that he would speak to Elon Musk, owner of company SpaceX which operates Starlink, about restoring internet access to Iran.

"He's very good at that kind of thing, he's got a very good company," Trump said.

The protests are the largest in Iran since an uprising in 2022, triggered by the death in custody of Mahsa Amini,

a young Kurdish woman who was detained by morality police for allegedly not wearing her hijab properly.

Watch: Fires burn in Iran protests

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

Iran's parliament speaker warned the US should not make a "miscalculation", adding that if the US attacked Iran, both Israeli and US military and shipping centres in the region would become legitimate targets.

Meanwhile, Reza Pahlavi, the exiled son of Iran's last shah, said in a post on X that the protests had "shaken the foundations" of the Iranian government.

He added: "The increase in gunfire against the people is not a sign of strength, but of fear - fear of collapse and an accelerated downfall."

NEWS**Foreign****Hungary grants asylum to Polish ex-justice minister**

Hungary has granted political asylum to Poland's former Justice Minister Zbigniew Ziobro who is facing charges of embezzlement.

Ziobro is facing 26 charges related to embezzling money from a fund meant to be spent on crime victims and rehabilitating criminals.

Instead, he is accused of authorising the purchase of spyware that was allegedly used to hack political opponents' phones. He says he is a victim of political persecution.

Granting asylum to a citizen of a fellow EU member state goes against the spirit of EU standards.

But in the case of Hungary it is neither new nor surprising.

Ziobro is the second politician of the former Law and Justice-led government to be granted this status - last year it was his former deputy Marcin Romanowski who fled to Budapest to seek protection.

Both are accused of corruption and misusing their power - most notably by using the money of the state-controlled Justice Fund which was under their oversight in order to fund their party and its cronies.

Ziobro was justice minister between 2015 and 2023 under the previous right-wing PiS-led government, which is politically aligned to Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban.

If found guilty he could face up to 25 years in prison.

Writing on X, Ziobro said: "I have decided to accept the asylum granted to me by the government of Hungary due

to the political persecution in Poland."

"I have chosen to fight against political banditry and lawlessness. I stand in opposition to a creeping dictatorship," Ziobro added, accusing Prime Minister Donald Tusk of waging a "vendetta" against him.

Ziobro is accused of authorising a 25m zloty (\$7m; £5.15m) purchase of Israeli-made Pegasus spyware, which Poland's current coalition government and a European Parliament investigative team found was used to secretly hack the phones of political opponents.

Current Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski said his phone was hacked and Tusk said his wife's and daughter's phones were also hacked.

Ziobro is also accused of awarding Justice Fund grants to fire stations and women's associations without proper competition to bolster support for the government.

As minister of justice from 2015 to 2023, Ziobro was the author of judiciary reforms which provoked a major conflict with Brussels.

The issue led to a freeze of EU money for Poland as well as to verdicts of the European Court of Justice, which deemed them as violating fundamental EU rules and standards including the principle of judicial independence.

Orban, who faced similar criticism, and the PiS rejected and ignored those rulings, saying they violated Poland's sovereignty and constituted an overreach of Brussels's powers.

**SPEAKING TO MEDIA:**

Ghana's President John Mahama speaks to the media at the Jubilee House in Accra, Ghana, Sept. 10, 2025.

ICJ hears opening statements in genocide case against Myanmar

Myanmar heard accusations that it is responsible for genocide against the Rohingya ethnic minority at the top court of the United Nations, as long-awaited hearings began on Monday.

The West African country of The Gambia first filed the case at the International Court of Justice in 2019, arguing a so-called "clearance operation" by Myanmar's military in 2017 violated the 1948 Genocide Convention.

The Southeast Asian country, which has since been taken over by the military, has denied the allegations.

In his opening statements, Gambian Justice Minister Dawda Jallow said his country brought the case after its own experience with a military government.

"Nobody has been held responsible for the crimes against the Rohingya. The military that perpetrated the genocide actually felt emboldened to overthrow the civilian authorities again," he said, addressing a full courtroom in The Hague.

Philippe Sands, the lawyer representing the Gambia, later said that the evidence of genocidal intent was "compelling and persuasive."

"It is perfectly possible for there to have been a counter-terror motive behind some of Myanmar's actions, but at the same time, in the course of those operations, a genocidal intent also existed and prevailed and in some form propelled the actions that were taken," he told the court.

'Unfortunate result'
Myanmar launched the cam-

paign in Rakhine state in 2017 after an attack by a Rohingya insurgent group. Security forces were accused of mass rapes, killings and torching thousands of homes as more than 700,000 Rohingya fled into neighbouring Bangladesh.

Now, some 1.2 million members of this persecuted minority are languishing in chaotic, overcrowded camps, where armed groups recruit children and girls as young as 12 are forced into prostitution.

The sudden and severe foreign aid cuts imposed last year by US President Donald Trump shuttered thousands of the camps' schools and have caused children to starve to death.

Myanmar was initially represented at the court by Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, who denied her

country's armed forces committed genocide, telling the ICJ in 2019 that the mass exodus of Rohingya people from the country she led was the unfortunate result of a battle with insurgents.

The pro-democracy icon is now in prison after being convicted of what her supporters call trumped-up charges after a military takeover of power.

Jallow told the court that Suu kyi had been "deprived of her liberty since she was swept from power by the same generals who continued to rule the country."

As well as denying the allegations, Myanmar contested the court's jurisdiction, saying The Gambia was not directly involved in the conflict and therefore could not initiate a case.



ZBIGNIEW ZIOBRO

Five decapitated heads displayed on Ecuador beach

Bathers found five decapitated heads displayed on a beach in Ecuador in what appears to be a warning to gang members who have been threatening local fishermen.

The gruesome discovery was made on Sunday on the beachfront in Puerto López, a town which has been wracked by gang violence.

Next to the body parts, locals found a sign threatening those stealing from and extorting fishermen with the same fate.

Ports and towns by the Pacific Ocean are among those worst hit by gangs which smuggle cocaine from Ecuador to the US and Europe.

Police have identified the remains as those of five men who

had been reported missing days earlier. They ranged between 20 and 34 years in age.

Officials told local media one of them had a criminal record for gun possession.

Their bodies have not yet been located.

According to figures released by the interior ministry, 2025 was the most violent on record in Ecuador, with homicide rates reaching an all-time high at 9,176 murders.

Ecuador - which is located between Colombia and the Peru, the world's two largest producers of cocaine - has become a key transit country for illegal drugs.

Local gangs have forged alliances with powerful Mexican and Colombian drug cartels, counternarcotics experts say.

As well as smuggling drugs, the criminal gangs force local businesses to pay "protection

money" and attack those who refuse.

On 28 December, six people - including a two-year-old child - were killed and another three injured when gunmen opened fire at a group of people standing on the beachfront in Puerto López.

Police said the shooting and another the previous day, in which another three people were killed, were triggered by a battle for control of the town between two rival factions of the Los Choneros gang.

Los Choneros is one of the main drivers of the deadly gang violence which has rocked Ecuador.

In September, the US state department added the group to its list of Foreign Terrorist Organisations.

Its leader, known as Fito, was extradited to the United States in July of last year.

Cuba faces growing pressure from the United States after Maduro capture

Cuba is facing growing threats from the United States, after the toppling of Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro, a key ally for the island nation.

US President Donald Trump over the weekend pledged to cut off all oil and money flowing to Cuba and urged the nation to "make a deal" with the US.

"Cuba lived, for many years, on large amounts of OIL and

MONEY from Venezuela. In return, Cuba provided 'Security Services' for the last two Venezuelan dictators, BUT NOT ANYMORE!" he said in a Truth Social post on Sunday.

The threatening social media post drew an angry retort from Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel, who said "no one" would tell his country what to do.

"I can assure you: Trump is not going to touch Cuba," said

65-year-old retiree Mercedes Simon, who lives in Havana.


Marcos Sanchez, a 21-year-old working in the restaurant business, said "an agreement should be reached without resorting to violence or any kind of negative action toward the country."

A week ago, Trump stated that "Cuba is ready to fall," noting that the island's economic crisis was worsening and it would be difficult for Havana to "hold out"

without receiving heavily subsidized Venezuelan oil.

Trump's provocative language on Cuba comes as the emboldened American leader has hinted he has other countries in his sights after capturing Maduro.

Trump, who had openly sought last year's Nobel Peace Prize, has recently threatened Colombia, Mexico, Iran and Greenland.

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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 5X2	81,100	87,183	97,300	104,598	5 X 2	51,950	55,846	42,120	45,279
FP 4X2	73,000	78,475	80,700	86,753	4 X 2	45,260	48,655	34,400	36,980
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2026 FIFA U17 Women's World Cup: Flamingos draw bye to second round

Nigeria's U17 women's team, the Flamingos, will begin their quest for qualification to the 2026 FIFA U17 Women's World Cup finals when they enter the African qualifiers at the second

round stage. The Flamingos are set to face the winner of the preliminary round tie between Niger Republic and Guinea.

The first leg of the second round is scheduled to take place between 22nd - 24th

May, with the return leg billed for 29th - 31st May. The winner on aggregate over the two legs will advance to the third and final qualifying round. In the third round, the first leg matches will be played between 3rd -

5th July 3, while the second legs are fixed for 10th - 12th July.

Successful teams at the end of the qualifiers will secure their places at the 2026 FIFA U17 Women's World Cup, which will be hosted by Morocco in October. Nigeria remain one of Africa's most consistent performers at U17 level and will be aiming to return strongly to the global stage after their last outing ended in disappointment.

The Flamingos were eliminated in the Round of 16 following a 4-0 defeat to Italy - a result that brought their campaign to an abrupt halt in the tournament. That exit has placed added focus on the upcoming qualifiers, as the Flamingos look to rebuild momentum and reassert their status as one of the continent's traditional powerhouses in women's youth football.



NIGERIA FLAMINGOS



WILFRED NDIIDI

AFCON 2025: Ndidi walks pain-free as Eagles Nurse knocks concerns

The Super Eagles received a cautious fitness boost on Monday as captain Wilfred Ndidi was confirmed to be walking pain-free following the hamstring strain he sustained at the AFCON 2025 quarter-final.

Promise Efoghe, the Super Eagles Media Officer, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that the early signs around Ndidi's injury were encouraging, although further checks would still be carried out.

"Wilfred Ndidi is now walking without pain, which is a positive sign for us," Efoghe said.

According to the media officer, the medical team will evaluate him again tomorrow to decide if a scan is necessary, but the initial indications suggest the injury may not be serious.

Efoghe, however, clarified that Ndidi will miss Nigeria's semi-final clash against hosts Morocco regardless, due to suspension after picking

up yellow cards in the Round of 16 and quarter-final matches.

He said, "Even with the improvement we are seeing, Ndidi is unavailable for the semi-final because of suspension."

"Our focus is on ensuring he recovers fully and is available for the remainder of the tournament."

Efoghe also provided an update on defender Ryan Alebiosu, who has been battling fitness concerns.

"Ryan Alebiosu continues to improve steadily and is responding well to treatment."

"The technical and medical crews are monitoring his progress closely," he said.

NAN also reports that the Super Eagles returned to their base in Fès at about 3:30 p.m. on Sunday from Marrakech, where they defeated Algeria 2-0 at the Stade de Marrakech on Saturday.

Soaring Eagles, ruthless hosts: On collision course to explosive AFCON semi-final

Nigeria and Morocco step onto a footballing tightrope in Rabat, where soaring Super Eagles meet ruthless hosts in a blockbuster AFCON 2025 semi-final with history, pride and continental supremacy at stake.

The semi-final holds on Wednesday at the 70,000-capacity Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium, kicking off at 8 p.m. (Nigerian time), as Africa's football heartbeat quickens.

Nigeria chase a fourth AFCON crown, while hosts Morocco hunger for a first title since their lone triumph in 1976, achieved fittingly at Nigeria's expense.

Both teams arrive unbeaten. Nigeria have won all five matches, while Morocco boast four wins and a draw, setting the stage for an explosive duel.

It is their sixth AFCON meeting, the first in 22 years, and only the second time both nations collide in a semi-final.

Morocco won both 1976 group encounters en route to glory, but Nigeria claimed the more iconic semi-final victory in 1980 through Felix Owolabi's early strike.

Overall, Morocco lead the rivalry with six wins to Nigeria's three, though AFCON meetings remain finely balanced and fiercely contested.

Seven of the 11 AFCON goals between them came after halftime, underlining a rivalry defined by patience, tension and late drama.

Nigeria are enjoying a historic tournament, scoring at least two goals in all five matches for the first time ever at AFCON.

Their 14 goals already mark Nigeria's highest tally at a single edition, last matched by Cameroon in 2021.

Only Egypt and Nigeria have achieved scoring two goals in each of their first five AFCON matches, highlighting the Eagles' ruthless consistency.



VICTOR OSIMHEN

AFCON 2025: Odegbami tips Super Eagles to scale Atlas mountains

Former Super Eagles captain Segun Odegbami has expressed strong optimism ahead of Nigeria's AFCON 2025 semi-final clash against hosts Morocco in Rabat.

Super Eagles face hosts Morocco in a blockbuster AFCON 2025 on Wednesday at the 70,000-capacity Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium, from 8 p.m. (Nigerian time).



SUPER EAGLES CELEBRATING

Odegbami, a 1980 AFCON winner, said Nigeria's commanding 2-0 quarter-final victory over Algeria rekindled memories of the Eagles' historic dominance four decades ago.

"It felt like March 22, 1980 all over again. History was echoing loudly in my head," Odegbami said.

He recalled how Nigeria dis-

mantled Algeria 3-0 in 1980, then regarded as Africa's strongest team, through intensity, discipline and fearless attacking football.

"Algeria were stunned then, just as they looked helpless again two days ago," he noted.

The former winger praised the current Super Eagles for their authority, speed and total control against Algeria.

"They came out flying, dominating every department. Algeria did not threaten Nigeria's goal until almost 80 minutes," he said.

Odegbami who won 46 caps and scored 23 goals for the Nigeria national team, described Nigeria's display as a masterclass that drained Algeria physically and mentally.

"They were left confused, frustrated and searching for answers that never came," he added.

NBF plan open trials for commonwealth games selection

The Nigeria Boxing Federation (NBF) will conduct an open trial for boxers in readiness for the Commonwealth Games selection in February.

The screening process will be open to pugilists in all the weight categories, while a date and venue will be communicated as soon as all arrangements are finalized.

The vice president of the Nigeria Boxing Federation Hon. Omonlele Imadu said the trial process will be transparent and credible, and the boxers will be given equal opportunity to prove themselves.

"I make bold to say the days of impunity in boxers selection for any international event is over, we have put machineries in place to ensure every athlete gets an equal opportunity to make the final shortlist, the

current NBF board is doing all in its space to change the trajectory of the squared ropes sports in the country and this is another opportunity to uphold utmost credibility".

Imadu further urged the boxers to be on high alert as they intensified their preparation ahead of the trial.

"Our aim is to select only those who are truly ready, boxers with the skills and mentality that will bring glory to the nation are those we are looking out for, so, I will urge the respective coaches to ensure that the pugilists under their tutelage are in perfect shape ahead of the screening process". The VP stated.

The 23rd edition of the Commonwealth Games in (Glasgow, Scotland, will be held from July 23rd to 2nd August 2026

Algeria set to lodge protest to CAF against Nigeria, referee

Algeria are set to formally submit a protest to the Confederation of African Football (CAF) following their quarterfinal defeat to Nigeria at the ongoing

2025 Africa Cup of Nations in Morocco.

According to reports, the Algerian Football Federation (FAF) is unhappy with the officiating during the encounter

and has compiled a series of complaints against Senegalese referee Issa Sy, who was in charge of the match.

The Algerian FA claim that a clear penalty was denied to their team, while several decisions taken during the game were questionable and allegedly favoured Nigeria.

They further accused the referee of showing bias against the Desert Foxes throughout the contest.

In addition to the on-field decisions, Algeria also alleged that referee Issa Sy failed to shake hands with their players at full time, an action they described as unprofessional.

The FAF also claimed that Nigerian players provoked Algerian officials and players after the final whistle.

The controversy reportedly extended beyond the pitch, with Algerian journalists and media professionals allegedly attacked in the tunnel area after the match.

As a result of these incidents, Algeria are expected to ask CAF to ban Issa Sy from the tournament and remove him from further officiating duties with immediate effect.

CAF is now expected to review the reports and available evidence before taking a decision on the matter



XX



ROVERS FC

Rovers FC dissolves technical crew after poor run

The management of Rovers Football Club, Calabar, has dissolved its technical crew with immediate effect following the team's poor performances in recent matches.

The decision was disclosed in a statement signed by Etim Okon, chairman of the club's management committee, and released in Calabar on Monday.

Rovers lost their Week Nine Nigerian National League match 2-0 to Akwa United, deepening concerns over the club's inconsistent form.

The defeat left Rovers ninth in Conference B, second from

bottom among the 10 clubs competing in the group.

Okon said the decision was taken to halt declining results and restore competitiveness ahead of forthcoming league fixtures.

"This action is aimed at addressing our poor run and repositioning the team for improved performances," the chairman said.

He stated that management had approved a new technical structure, which would soon be implemented to strengthen the squad.

"The restructuring will enhance tactics, leadership and overall team effectiveness," Okon stated.

AFCON: History, hosts and high stakes as Nigeria face Morocco in AFCON 2025 semi-final

An aerial contest for the ball as Nigeria's Godwin Odiye challenges Morocco's skipper, Ahmed Faras at the 10th Africa Cup of Nations in Addis Ababa Ethiopia in 1976.

When Nigeria and Morocco walk onto the pitch at the elegant Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium on Wednesday, the semi-final of the Africa Cup of Nations 2025 will be more than a contest for a place in the final. It will be a collision of history, ambition and unfinished business.

The Super Eagles will arrive in Rabat chasing a fourth continental crown, having swept aside every opponent so far with five wins from five matches.

Morocco, buoyed by home support and an unbroken run of four victories and a draw, are seeking to end a long wait for a second AFCON title — their only triumph coming nearly half a century ago.

Coincidentally, both teams' path crossed twice at the history-making 1976 AFCON, the first and only one ever played on league basis throughout.

It was at Ethiopia 1986 that Nigeria first made impression at the competition and ended up as the third-place team, a position that was celebrated as if Nigeria won the actual trophy.

Morocco on the other hand went on to win the trophy, the only success so far in the Africa Cup of Nations.

Beyond the two encounters of 1976, clashes of Nigeria and Morocco are rare and far in between.

Despite the rarity of their recent meetings, familiarity runs deep. This will be the sixth time both nations clash at the Africa Cup of Nations, and notably, every previous AFCON encounter between them has produced a winner.



AFCON 2025: Lookman, Osimhen lead goal contribution chart as Diaz, Salah remain...

After three weeks of pulsating football and 48 matches played, the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations has delivered goals, drama and standout individual performances.

A total of 119 goals have been scored so far, with 20 teams eliminated across the group stage, Round of 16 and quarter-final rounds.

Read Also: IBRO-PECKHAM Marlian Cup: Mama

of Africa FC Edge Integrity FC on Penalties To Reach Semi-Finals

The tournament has now reached the semi-final stage, with only four teams left standing — Nigeria, Morocco, Senegal and Egypt — all former AFCON champions, setting the stage for a thrilling climax.

At the heart of the competition have been a number of exceptional individual displays, particularly in attack, where goals and assists have shaped team progress and defined key moments.

Nigeria's duo of Ademola Lookman and Victor Osimhen have emerged as the tournament's most productive contributors so far.

Lookman currently tops the goal contribution chart with seven contributions (three goals and four assists), combining creativity with decisive finishing to drive Nigeria's impressive run.

Close behind him is Osimhen, whose six contributions (four goals and two assists) underline his importance as the Super Eagles' focal point in attack.

Hot on their heels are two of Africa's biggest stars. Morocco's Brahim Diaz has registered five goal contributions, all goals, playing a pivotal role for the host nation, while Egypt captain Mohamed Salah has also recorded five contributions (four goals and one



SUPER EAGLES

Owolabi recalls 1980 Semi-final strike as Nigeria prepare to face Morocco again

As Nigeria and Morocco renew their Africa Cup of Nations rivalry, memories of one of Nigeria's most defining football nights have resurfaced — the 1980 semi-final in Lagos, settled by a thunderous strike from left-back Felix Owolabi.

Forty-six years ago, the then Green Eagles edged Morocco 1-0 in a titanic semi-final clash at the 12th Africa Cup of Nations, booking a place in the final and

setting Nigeria on course for their first continental title.

Speaking in reflection, Owolabi recalled the heavy odds Nigeria faced against a Moroccan side widely regarded as one of the strongest teams in the tournament.

"Many sports lovers didn't believe in us beating Morocco because they were a strong force in the championship," he said. "They came all the way from Group B in Ibadan, and

the expectation was that they would overpower us."

For Owolabi and his teammates, however, the semi-final was about more than a single match. It was driven by years of near-misses and unfinished ambition.

"All the players of our era were bent on making history for ourselves and the nation, having lost out in 1976 and 1978," he explained. "For us, it was either the Cup or nothing more."

Super Eagles' defeat of Algeria excites Abuja football fans

Football fans in Abuja have lauded the Super Eagles' impressive 2-0 victory over Algeria at the ongoing Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) in Morocco, describing the performance as dominant, disciplined and full of belief.

Nigeria secured the quarter-final win on Saturday at the Grand Stade de Marrakech, with goals from Victor Osimhen in the 47th minute and Akor Adam's in the 57th minute, to seal a deserved passage into the semi-finals.

The victory had since strengthened public confidence in Head Coach, Eric Chelle, who recently marked one year in charge.

Chelle had been commended for transforming the Super Eagles into a cohesive, attacking, fearless and entertaining side.

Speaking in separate interviews with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Sunday

in Abuja, fans and coaches in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) said Chelle had restored belief, identity and confidence to the national team.

Coach Abba Mohammed of Crown Step Football Academy, said Algeria posed little threat throughout the encounter.

"Algeria had no guts in this match at all. The Eagles played fantastically well and fully deserved the win. We dominated the game.

"I am proud of the Super Eagles. May Allah grant us victory in our next match with a convincing margin," he said.

Coach Chinedu Kalu of Democrat Football Club, congratulated the team but called for caution ahead of the semi-final clash against hosts Morocco on Wednesday.

"We need to be careful of their counter-attacks, fast breaks, simulation in the 18-yard box and psychological tactics through provocation," he warned.



FEATURE

U.S. invasion of Venezuela raises global sovereignty questions

MARK LONGYEN (NAN)

The United States' military incursion into Venezuela on January 3, involving elite Delta Force operatives, has sent shockwaves through the international community, triggering far-reaching diplomatic and legal repercussions.

More controversially, the seizure and subsequent extradition of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife to the United States to face alleged drug trafficking charges has opened what many observers describe as a Pandora's box in international diplomacy.

Codenamed 'Operation Absolute Resolve', the U.S. action marks a sharp departure from conventional extradition procedures and established norms of international legal cooperation.

As a result, world leaders and international relations experts are sharply divided over whether the operation aligns with international law.

At the heart of the debate are core principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, especially state sovereignty, territorial integrity and the limits of extraterritorial jurisdiction.

Maduro's transfer to stand trial before the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York has, analysts argue, raised questions about the future of the contemporary rules-based international system.

Some legal scholars contend that, since the founding of the United Nations in 1945, few developments have posed such a direct challenge to the norm of sovereign equality among states.

Although unprecedented in recent decades, the incident is not without historical parallel.

In 1989, U.S. forces invaded Panama, arrested its then leader, General Manuel Noriega, and extradited him to the United States on drug trafficking charges.

Noriega was later convicted and imprisoned for 20 years.

While Washington has framed the latest operation as a necessary law-enforcement measure against what it describes as a "narco-terrorist" regime, much of the international community has reacted with unease, if not outright condemnation.

The scale of the operation; reportedly involving more than 150 aircraft and coordinated strikes across northern Venezuela and the capital, Caracas, has further intensified concerns.

Analysts warn that the action signals a potential shift in the global security architecture, reinforcing perceptions that power, rather than law, increasingly determines outcomes in international relations.

Critics argue that the use of domestic criminal law as a tool to effect regime change undermines the foundational prohibition on the use of



PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, DONALD TRUMP, DURING A STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS IN WHITE HOUSE

force under international law, thereby weakening long-standing safeguards against unilateral military action.

Reactions, however, have been mixed.

While U.S. rivals have denounced the operation, some allies and regional neighbours have openly welcomed it.

Argentina's President, Javier Milei, for instance, described Maduro's capture and extradition as a "decisive step against narco-terrorism."

Similarly, Guyana's President, Irfaan Ali, characterised the action as a "reaffirmation of regional security."

María Machado, Venezuela's opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, praised the U.S. intervention as an act of "firmness and determination to liberate Venezuelans from the dictatorial rule of a criminal cartel."

In contrast, traditional U.S. adversaries have condemned the move as a return to "gunboat diplomacy."

Russia labelled the operation an "act of armed aggression" and expressed concern over the precedent it sets.

China also criticised the incursion, warning that "no country should act as the world's police" and cautioning that such unilateralism undermines the collective global security framework established after World War II.

Across Latin America, left-leaning governments in countries such as Chile, Colombia and Mexico reiterated that territorial integrity and non-intervention remain inviolable principles of international law.

They stressed that these red lines should not be crossed, irrespective of the nature of any regime in power.

Caught between these opposing views is the Organisation of American

States (OAS).

Its Secretary-General, Luis Almagro, while calling for restraint to prevent further escalation, acknowledged the sharply divergent perspectives across the hemisphere.

Experts warn that the absence of a unified regional or global response risks returning Latin America to Cold War-era dynamics, where external interventions fuelled fragmentation rather than cooperation.

In spite of the growing uproar, the U.S. government has remained resolute in defending its actions.

The Trump administration has sought to justify the operation through court filings submitted by the U.S. Attorney-General Pam Bondi against Maduro and his co-defendants.

Central to the U.S. legal strategy is an attempt to strip Maduro of sovereign immunity.

According to the court documents, Washington argues that it has never recognised Maduro as Venezuela's legitimate president; a position that, by implication, seeks to deny him immunity *ratione personae*, which ordinarily shields sitting heads of state from foreign criminal jurisdiction.

The U.S. further claims that Venezuela's leadership does not constitute a sovereign government but rather a "state-enabled criminal enterprise" designed to enrich political and military elites through narco-terrorism.

According to the indictment, the Venezuelan state allegedly corrupted its institutions for over 25 years to facilitate the trafficking of thousands of tonnes of cocaine into the United States.

Prosecutors accuse Maduro, his wife, his son and senior official Dios-

dado Cabello of participating in narcotics conspiracies, weapons offences and acts of narco-terrorism.

The charges allege that Maduro collaborated with armed groups such as Colombia's Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN) and Mexican drug cartels, enabling the shipment of up to 250 tonnes of cocaine annually into the U.S. via container ships, aircraft and speedboats.

The indictment also details specific incidents, including a 2006 episode at Maiquetia Airport, where Maduro allegedly ordered changes to drug routes following a major seizure in Mexico.

It further claims that Venezuelan diplomatic passports were sold to traffickers between 2006 and 2008 to facilitate money laundering under the guise of official state missions.

"The defendants' actions were performed in a private capacity for personal enrichment," the indictment states.

However, international law experts remain unconvinced.

For instance, Dr Abiodun Obadare argues that the U.S. operation fails to meet the criteria set out in the UN Charter governing the use of force.

According to him, the action violates Article 2(4) of the Charter, which prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

He notes that this provision is widely regarded as the cornerstone of the modern international legal order.

"There are only two recognised exceptions: self-defence under Article 51 and action authorised by the UN Security Council under Chapter VII.

"In this case, there was no Security

Council authorisation, and drug trafficking does not constitute an armed attack capable of triggering self-defence," he said.

Obadare also rejects the U.S. characterisation of narcotics trafficking as a form of aggression, arguing that, however harmful, it does not meet the threshold of armed attack under international law.

George Acheampong, a foreign policy analyst, similarly describes Maduro's capture as a critical moment for the rules-based international order.

He argues that the operation exposes the limitations of the UN Charter when confronted by a determined superpower acting on perceived national security interests.

While Washington insists it is enforcing the law, Acheampong contends that the episode risks reinstating a "law of the jungle," where powerful states bypass global norms with impunity.

He further warns that eroding the principle of sovereign equality could ultimately backfire on the U.S. itself.

By setting a precedent for unilateral abductions, he says, other powers could justify similar actions against American officials abroad.

"As an example, China or Russia could claim symmetrical authority to apprehend U.S. officials for alleged violations of their domestic laws, exposing American personnel overseas to greater risk," he said.

Ultimately, analysts agree that the U.S. action represents a fundamental shift in how international law is applied, particularly in the enforcement of domestic indictments beyond national borders.

The UN Security Council's structural limitations; especially the veto power of permanent members such as the U.S., have effectively paralysed any collective response, reinforcing perceptions that international law is largely symbolic when powerful states are involved.

As proceedings unfold in New York, observers argue that it is not only Maduro who is on trial, but the credibility of the international legal order itself.

Many expect the prosecution to rely heavily on the precedent set by Noriega's 1989 capture.

In that case, U.S. courts ruled that the manner in which a defendant is brought before a court, even through forcible abduction in violation of international law, does not negate jurisdiction.

The moral and legal consequences of the Maduro case, analysts say, will therefore reverberate far beyond the courtroom, shaping the future relevance of the UN Charter; either as the bedrock of global security or, as critics fear, a law without teeth.

(NAN Feature)