

Contractors resume protest over N4trn unpaid debts

ABUJA

Indigenous contractors on Monday resumed protests in Abuja over an alleged N4 trillion debt owed by the Federal Government for completed capital projects.

The protest, organised by the All Indigenous Contractors

Association of Nigeria (AICAN), took place at the Federal Ministry of Finance, with the association warning that it could escalate its action if the outstanding payments were not settled.

Speaking with journalists, AICAN President, Mr Jackson Nwosu, said the capital

projects were executed mainly with funds borrowed from commercial banks, leaving contractors under severe financial pressure.

According to him, only about 40 per cent of the outstanding debt was paid after the association's protest in December 2025, stressing that

members would not vacate the ministry's premises until the balance was released.

"We are talking about over N4 trillion in unpaid capital projects executed for the Federal Government in 2024. These projects have been completed, yet contractors are still unpaid," Nwosu said.

He warned that continued delay in settling the debt could have grave consequences for the economy, noting that many contractors had already defaulted on bank loans.

Nwosu said several members had lost properties to banks, while some contractors had reportedly died as a result

of the financial strain caused by the unpaid debts.

"Most of our members borrowed heavily from banks to execute these projects and are now unable to repay. Some banks have seized their properties, and some contractors have even died," he said.

He said the Federal Government had yet to fully imple-

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The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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Army dismisses mutiny claims, reaffirms welfare drive

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Nigeria's non-oil exports hit record \$6.1bn in 2025 • NEPC targets sustained growth in 2026

ABUJA

Nigeria's non-oil exports climbed to an all-time high of \$6.1 billion in 2025, reflecting improved diversification, higher export

volumes and wider market penetration, the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) said on Monday.

The Executive Director of NEPC, Mrs Nonye Ayeni, disclosed this at a news con-

ference on the 2025 Non-Oil Export Performance and 2026 Outlook held in Abuja.

Ayeni said the council, working with the National Bureau of Statistics, the Central Bank of Nigeria and other stakeholders, was intensifying efforts to mainstream informal trade in order to improve export data, policy formulation and sector planning.

According to records obtained from Pre-shipment Inspection Agencies, she said Nigeria's non-oil export perfor-

mance in 2025 represented the highest value recorded since the establishment of the council.

"Non-oil export value rose to approximately \$6.1 billion, representing a year-on-year increase of about 11.5 percent over the \$5.46 billion recorded in 2024.

"This is the highest non-oil export value achieved for formal, documented trade in Nigeria and underscores the growing resilience and relevance of the sector to the national economy," Ayeni said, adding that a

substantial volume of exports still exited the country informally through land borders.

She said total non-oil export volume stood at 8.02 million metric tonnes, reflecting a 10 percent increase over the 7.29 million metric tonnes recorded in the previous year.

According to her, the simultaneous growth in export value and volume pointed to improved performance across multiple value chains and export destinations.

Ayeni said Nigeria exported a total of 281 non-oil products in 2025, cutting across agricultural commodities, processed and semi-processed goods, industrial inputs and solid minerals, a development she described as gradual progress towards value addition and broader product representation in global markets.

She said Nigerian non-oil exports reached markets in 120 countries, with the Netherlands

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EIRS pledges stronger MDA collaboration to boost Edo revenue drive

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS) has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening collaboration with Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to advance the SHINE agenda of Governor Monday Okpebholo and meet the state's revenue targets.

The Executive Chairman of EIRS, Otunba Oladele Bankole-Balogun, gave the assurance while receiving the Commissioner for Business, Trade and Investment, Hon. Omo Anabor, during a courtesy visit to the Service's headquarters in Benin City.

Bankole-Balogun said effective revenue administration depends on seamless inter-agency cooperation, stressing that EIRS' recent gains were driven by improved synergy across the government.

He disclosed that within one year of the current board's inauguration, internally generated revenue rose to N110 billion in 2025, up from N85 billion previously.

According to him, the board has prioritised staff training and institutional reforms to sustain revenue growth and efficiency.

He appealed for continued support from the Ministry of Business, Trade and Investment to achieve and exceed the N162 billion IGR target for 2026 and to strengthen the operation of the Treasury Single Account.

Earlier, Anabor said his visit formed part of a broader engagement with key stakeholder agencies within his first two months in office, aimed at aligning operations with his ministry's mandate. He called for sustained partnership with EIRS to drive investment, trade and revenue expansion in the state.

In a related engagement, the EIRS chairman also hosted the Director-General of the Edo State Fire Service, Hon. Anthony Ojo, and members of the agency's board. Bankole-Balogun commended the Fire Service for its efforts in reducing fire incidents and pledged collaboration to further improve safety outcomes.



AMBASSADOR VISITS NAF:

Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Sunday Aneke (L), with the Polish Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr Michał Cygan, during the visit of the Ambassador to the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) Headquarters in Abuja recently.

CITAD calls on men to lead fight against gender-based violence

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Sanwo-Olu signs Lagos N4.44trn 2026 budget into law

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More than 160 churchgoers kidnapped in twin Nigeria attacks —Clergy

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AFCON 2025: Nwabali credits collective effort for Eagles' third-place finish

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CITAD calls on men to lead fight against gender-based violence

KANO

The Centre for Information Technology and Development (CIT-

AD) has urged men to take a leading role in combating gender-based violence (GBV) and promoting gender equality within their communities.

The call was made on Monday at a one-day training for Male Feminist Network (MFN) champions held at the Christian Association of

Nigeria (CAN) headquarters in Kano. The training, which drew 70 participants, was organised for CAN members in the state with support from the

Ford Foundation through the African Centre for Leadership, Strategy and Development.

Speaking at the event, MFN Project Officer at CITAD, Mr Sani Sa'idu, said the initiative was designed to equip men with the knowledge and skills to challenge GBV and foster inclusive, respectful communities. Presenting a paper titled "Gender, Feminism, Masculinities and GBV Awareness", he said the programme aimed to build a movement of men committed to equality, challenging harmful stereotypes and ending gender-based violence.

ence.

The Chairman of CAN Youth Wing in Kano, Mr Samaila Asake, commended CITAD for extending the initiative to faith-based organisations, noting that engaging men within religious institutions was crucial to promoting positive masculinity and addressing GBV. Similarly, the state CAN Secretary, Rev. Ayuba Sabo, praised the initiative and called for sustained collaboration, stressing the church's role in promoting respect, justice and the protection of women and girls.



HANDING OVER CEREMONY:

Outgoing President, Bukuru Old Students Association Technical (BOSAT) Raphael Rume (L), decorating the incoming President, Solomon Kyemut, during the official inauguration and handing over ceremony of executives in Jos on Tuesday (13/1/26).

Gov Mohammed urges neutral policing, stronger community ties

BAUCHI

Bauchi State Governor, Bala Mohammed, has called on security agencies to uphold fairness and neutrality in the discharge of their duties, while strengthening collaboration with traditional institutions to sustain peace.

The governor made the call

on Monday during an expanded meeting of the State Security Council in Bauchi, reaffirming his administration's commitment to proactive security management and conflict prevention.

Although the state remains relatively peaceful, Mohammed warned that emerging threats such as kidnapping, cross-border crimes, misinformation

and urban criminality require heightened vigilance and coordinated responses.

He emphasised the need for intelligence-sharing among security agencies and community leaders, particularly in forest reserves, markets and densely populated areas, cautioning that minor crimes could escalate if not promptly addressed.

The governor urged traditional rulers to play active roles

in mediation, early warning and community mobilisation, while cautioning against land-related abuses that could undermine security efforts.

The meeting focused on forest surveillance, seasonal movements, protection of public spaces and improved grassroots reporting systems, with security chiefs, traditional rulers and senior government officials in attendance.

Nigeria's non-oil exports hit record \$6.1bn...

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accounting for 17.53 percent, Brazil 10.35 per cent and India 7.63 percent of total export value.

According to her, exports to the Netherlands rose by 32.46 percent, driven largely by cocoa beans, cocoa butter, sesame seeds and other agricultural products, while exports to Brazil increased by 19.07 percent during the year.

Ayeni attributed the strong performance to sustained economic diversification efforts under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, noting that the strategy had delivered tangible results in job creation, poverty reduction and Nigeria's positioning in global trade.

She said supportive policies of the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, alongside NEPC initiatives in capacity building, market access, certification support and improved compliance across export value chains, also contributed significantly to the improved outcomes.

Commending Nigerian exporters for their resilience despite logistics constraints, regulatory

pressures and global market uncertainties, Ayeni said collaboration among government agencies, private sector operators and development partners strengthened implementation of the council's "Double Your Export" initiative.

She listed cocoa beans, urea, cashew, sesame seed, gold dore, aluminium ingots, rubber and copper ingots among the top-performing non-oil export products in 2025.

Ayeni noted a slight decline in exports to ECOWAS countries, which she attributed to the exit of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger from the regional bloc, a development that affected intra-African trade figures.

She, however, stressed that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) remained critical to expanding intra-African trade and positioning Nigeria as a regional export hub under continental market integration.

Looking ahead, Ayeni said NEPC was targeting sustained and more effective growth in non-oil exports in 2026, building on reforms, market expansion and strengthened exporter development initiatives.

She said the sector experienced consolidation and structural adjustments in 2025, with increasing contributions from processed agricultural goods, semi-manufactured products and solid minerals, signalling gradual movement towards industrial exports.

According to her, the council would deepen value addition across agriculture, manufacturing and solid minerals through targeted incentives, improved infrastructure and stronger governance frameworks, particularly in the solid minerals sector, including enhanced traceability, quality control and beneficiation.

Ayeni said NEPC would also reduce over-reliance on large exporters by supporting small and medium-scale enterprises through tailored programmes and improved access to markets.

She noted Nigeria's recognition at the Intra-African Trade Fair (IATF) in Algiers, where the country won the Best Pavilion for Transacting Business, and said Nigeria's selection to host the 2027 IATF further affirmed its leadership role un-

der the AfCFTA.

Ayeni said partnerships with the International Trade Centre, UK trade missions and other international partners expanded market access for Nigerian exporters during the year.

She added that NEPC registered 1,129 new exporters in 2025 to ease documentation and improve business formalisation, while engagement with financial institutions also improved, with 30 banks participating and 19,975 Nigerian Export Proceeds (NXP) forms processed, led by Zenith Bank, GTBank and First Bank.

According to her, about 94 per cent of non-oil exports exited through seaports, supported by airports and land borders, while efforts continued to mainstream informal trade to strengthen data accuracy and policymaking.

Ayeni identified the Nigeria-United Arab Emirates Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) as a critical driver of future growth, noting that the agreement provided tariff elimination on over 7,300 Nigerian products.

Police officer allegedly shoots colleague dead in Rivers

PORT HARCOURT

The Rivers State Police Command has arrested an inspector, Victor Okus, for allegedly shooting and killing his colleague, Insp. Ibrahim Sani, while injuring another officer.

The command's spokesperson, CSP Grace Iringe-Koko, said in a statement on Monday that Okus, attached to 17 Police Mobile Force (PMF) and on special duty at Intels Logistics Company, Onne, was in custody.

The incident occurred on January 18 at about 1:20 p.m. at Next Cash and Carry Supermarket in the Trans Amadi area of Port Harcourt.

According to preliminary investigations, Okus allegedly opened fire on colleagues attached to 14 PMF, Yola, who were on joint guard duty with military personnel, inflicting gunshot wounds to the head and neck.

Sani later died in hospital, while the second officer is receiving treatment for multiple

gunshot injuries.

The remains of the deceased have been deposited at the Military Hospital Mortuary for autopsy. Iringe-Koko said the suspect would face an orderly room trial to determine the motive behind the shooting and would be charged to court if found culpable.

Reacting, the Commissioner of Police in Rivers, CP Olugbenga Adepoju, ordered a comprehensive and transparent investigation and urged officers handling firearms to exercise utmost responsibility, stressing professionalism and discipline to prevent avoidable tragedies.



IGP EGBETOKUN

Contractors resume protest over...

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ment agreements reached with the association, adding that AICAN had submitted a comprehensive list of contractors who completed projects without receiving any payment.

Nwosu also quoted the Minister of State for Finance, Dr Doris Uzoka-Anite, as assuring that payment warrants would be released once the list of eligible contractors was verified, but said no funds had been disbursed since the submission.

He added that members were yet to receive any payment alerts, despite President Bola Tinubu's directive for the settlement of the outstanding debt.

Also speaking, AICAN Vice President, Mr Ode Agada, appealed to the Federal Government to honour its commitments, describing the plight of indigenous contractors as unfortunate.

Agada said local contractors had contributed significantly to the country's economic development and deserved better treatment.

"We have contributed to the

growth of the economy of this country. We are indigenous people who supported the government, yet we are being treated this way," he said.

He further called on the international community to intervene, describing the situation facing contractors as dire since June 2025.

In a related development, the FCT Chairman of Indigenous Contractors, Mr Adebola Benson, appealed to the FCT Minister, Mr Nyesom Wike, to ensure the clearance of outstanding payments owed to contractors in the territory.

Benson said many contractors in the Federal Capital Territory also relied on bank loans to execute projects and were now facing threats of arrest over unpaid debts.

He urged the minister to discount allegations that FCT administration civil servants executed the contracts.

As at the time of filing this report, representatives of the protesting contractors were in a meeting with the Minister of State for Finance, Dr Uzoka-Anite, to resolve the impasse.

NEWS

Oborevori flags off N59.7bn Uromi Junction flyover in Agbor

ASABA

Delta State Governor, Sheriff Oborevori, on Monday commissioned the Uromi Junction Flyover Bridge in Agbor, Ika South Local Government Area, for construction at a cost of N59.7 billion.

Speaking at the ceremony, Oborevori described the project as a critical intervention aimed at improving road safety, preserving lives and boosting economic activities across the state and beyond.

He said the flyover was con-

ceived to address persistent traffic congestion and frequent accidents at the busy Agbor-Uromi Junction, which had resulted in loss of lives and property over the years.

According to the governor, the dangerous interaction among vehicles, motorcycles and pedestrians on the federal highway, coupled with poor traffic management, made a permanent solution inevitable.

Oborevori disclosed that the contract for the design and construction of the flyover was awarded to Julius Berger Ni-

geria Plc, with a completion timeline of 14 months.

He said the project comprises a 1.3-kilometre flyover on the Uromi-Agbor Highway, dual carriageways with two lanes in each direction, ramps, roundabouts, concrete drainage systems, kerbs and solar-powered streetlights to enhance safety and sustainability.

The governor also revealed that the state government had set aside N100 billion as a special intervention fund, allocating N4 billion to each of the 25 local government areas for infrastructure development, in addition to

other sectoral investments.

He added that Ika South Local Government Area was also benefiting from a N15.4 billion contract for 13.3 kilometres of concrete drainage and five kilometres of road construction to tackle flooding and erosion, as well as the planned N12 billion, 15-kilometre Okpe-Abavo-Ekuku-Agbor Road.

"As a government, we award contracts strictly on merit and competence, and excellence will always attract further patronage," Oborevori said.

Accompanied by his deputy,

Sir Monday Onyeme, and other top government officials, the governor expressed confidence that the flyover would be completed within record time.

Earlier, former Governor Ifeanyi Okowa described the flyover as monumental and impactful, commending Oborevori for sustaining continuity and translating plans into tangible development.

Okowa said the scale and spread of infrastructure projects across the state reflected purposeful and people-oriented governance, while also commending President Bola Tinubu's economic reforms.

The Commissioner for Works (Highways and Urban Roads), Mr Reuben Izeze,

urged the Ika people to continue supporting the Oborevori administration, noting the numerous infrastructure projects already delivered in the area.

Speaking for Julius Berger Nigeria Plc, Mr Frederick Weiser thanked the state government for the confidence reposed in the company and pledged timely delivery of the project to the highest standards.

Chairman of the Niger Delta Development Commission, Mr Chiedu Ebie, said the commission was ready to collaborate with the state government on the Abraka-Obiaruku-Abavo-Agbor Road, describing it as a

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INSPECTION OF CONSTRUCTION:

Minister of Works, Senator David Umahi (L) and others, during the inspection of the ongoing construction of Ibadan-Ife-Ilesa road in Osun State recently.

Nigeria House in Davos signals renewed global economic push —Shettima

ABUJA

Vice-President Kashim Shettima says the inauguration of Nigeria's first-ever House in Davos reflects renewed seriousness, readiness and resolve to shape global economic conversations.

Shettima spoke on Monday at the formal opening of Nigeria House during the 2026 World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, describing it as a historic milestone in Nigeria's global economic engagement.

He said nations do not prosper in isolation, stressing that Nigeria's future growth depends on deliberate and structured global economic engagement.

"For the first time in our nation's history, Nigeria stands at Davos with a sovereign pavilion of its own," the Vice-President said.

According to him, Nigeria House responds to past economic lapses and signals the country's intention to take a front-line seat in the global economy as a purposeful participant.

Shettima explained that the

platform was conceived as a whole-of-government initiative led by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, bringing together senior leaders across investment, energy, infrastructure, technology, climate and culture.

He stressed, however, that the true success of the House would be driven by the private sector.

"The dividends of difficult but inevitable reforms are beginning to show," he said, noting that Nigeria's economy grew by about 3.9 per cent in 2025, the fastest in over a decade.

He added that the non-oil sector accounted for about 96 per cent of GDP, while non-oil revenues now formed nearly three-quarters of government income.

Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr Jumoke Oduwale, said the project showcased national pride and a shift in how Nigeria engages the international business community.

Lead Execution Partner, Nigeria House Davos, Ms Omowunmi Imoukhuede, said the platform offered a unique opportunity to showcase Nigeria's investment potential.

Kogi deploys combat drones to boost war against banditry, kidnapping

LOKOJA

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt.-Gen. Waidi Shaibu, has inaugurated two PH-20 Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) and other security assets procured by the Kogi State Government to strengthen military and security operations.

The inauguration, held on Monday at Chari Maigumeri Barracks, Lokoja, was witnessed by top military officers, heads of security agencies, traditional rulers, and religious and community leaders.

Represented by the Chief of Transformation and Innovation at Army Headquarters,

Maj.-Gen. Olusegun Abai, the COAS said the drones would significantly enhance intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations in the state.

Shaibu thanked Governor Ahmed Ododo for his support, noting that the deployment of the 21 Battalion alongside the new drones reflected a strategic, technology-driven approach to tackling banditry and terrorism.

He linked the initiative to President Bola Tinubu's national security agenda, stressing that effective collaboration between federal and state governments remained key to achieving lasting peace in the North-Central region.

The COAS also urged residents

to provide timely intelligence and reaffirmed the Nigerian Army's loyalty to the Constitution.

In his remarks, Governor Ododo described the initiative as a clear demonstration that the safety of residents remained the government's top priority.

Warning criminal groups, he said their days were numbered, adding that Kogi's position as a strategic North-South gateway made security a national responsibility.

Ododo highlighted security gains recorded in the last two years, including the absorption of 2,752 vigilantes, recruitment of hunters across the 21 local government areas, and the establishment of a Quick Response Unit equipped with vehicles, motorcycles and communication gadgets.

"These drones give us eyes in

the sky to deny criminals any hiding place," the governor said.

He thanked President Tinubu and the nation's security chiefs for their support, while commending the State Security Adviser, retired Commodore Jerry Omodara, for strengthening the state's security architecture.

The Commander, 12 Brigade, Brig.-Gen. Kasim Sidi, and the Commissioner of Police, Mr Naziru Kankarofi, described the initiative as a major boost to the state's security capabilities and technological advancement.

Earlier, Omodara said the drones would provide real-time aerial surveillance, terrain mapping and rapid intelligence across forest corridors and border routes, serving as force multipliers and reducing risks to personnel.

FG ramps up housing reforms to tackle deficit, urban challenges

ILORIN

The Federal Government has intensified efforts to address Nigeria's growing housing deficit through a new national housing strategy focused on land reforms, urban renewal and public-private partnerships.

Minister of Housing and

Urban Development, Ahmed Musa Dangiwa, disclosed this on Monday while declaring open the 14th meeting of the National Council on Lands, Housing and Urban Development in Ilorin.

Represented by the Director of Planning, Research and Statistics, Alhaji Mukhtar Ilyasu, Dangiwa said the strategy placed effective land adminis-

tration at the centre of housing delivery nationwide.

He said urban renewal had been adopted as a key policy tool to modernise Nigerian cities, curb uncontrolled expansion and respond to population growth and climate challenges.

The minister also said the government was prioritising the use of locally sourced building

materials to reduce construction costs, improve affordability and strengthen domestic industries.

Kwara State Commissioner for Housing and Urban Development, Dr Segun Ogunshola, said the state was implementing measures to address land and housing shortages, citing the ongoing 20,000-unit Kwara Smart City Project.

Osun guber: INEC rolls out voter enrolment devices for CVR

OSOGBO

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has deployed the INEC Voter Enrolment Device (IVED) to communities across Osun State for the second phase of the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) ahead of the 2026 governorship election.

The Resident Electoral Commissioner in the state, Dr Mutiu Agboke, disclosed this on Monday at an extended

stakeholders' meeting on the second phase of the CVR in Osogbo.

Agboke said the exercise, which commenced on January 5, is scheduled to run until April 17.

According to him, the second phase of the CVR comes with a 50-day rotational deployment of IVEDs to scattered communities in each local government area, subject to stakeholders' endorsement.

He said the initiative would deepen grassroots participa-

tion by bringing voter registration closer to eligible citizens, particularly those in remote and underserved areas.

The REC noted that the deployment would enhance accessibility, reduce transportation costs for prospective registrants

and decongest registration centres, thereby improving efficiency and service delivery.

Agboke added that anchoring the process on stakeholders' endorsement at the local government level had strengthened transparency,

local ownership and collective responsibility for the success of the exercise.

He stressed that the CVR exercise remained free of charge and urged members of the public to report any form of extortion or misconduct through

established INEC channels.

Agboke reminded political parties and their supporters that voter registration was a civic duty, not a partisan contest, and called for peace before, during and after the exercise.

Sanwo-Olu signs Lagos N4.44trn 2026 budget into law

LAGOS

Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu has signed the N4.44 trillion 2026 Appropriation Bill into law, describing it as a "Budget of Shared Prosperity" aimed at inclusive growth and improved quality of life for residents.

The governor assented to the bill on Monday at the State House in Ikeja, with the Deputy Governor, Dr Obafemi Hamzat, and members of the Lagos State House of Assembly in attendance.

Sanwo-Olu commended the House of Assembly for its thorough scrutiny and oversight, which resulted in a marginal upward review of the budget size.

He said the 2026 budget was designed to carry every resident

along through investments in infrastructure, healthcare, education, security, housing and economic interventions.

Earlier, the Commissioner for Economic Planning and Budget, Mr Ope George, said the budget was reviewed from about N4.2 trillion to N4.44 trillion after legislative engagement with ministries, departments and agencies.

He said the expenditure framework comprised N2.3 trillion for capital expenditure and N2.1 trillion for recurrent expenditure.

Speaker of the House, Hon. Mudashiru Obasa, represented by the Majority Leader, Mr Nojim Bello, commended the administration for its commitment to the THEMES Plus agenda and pledged continued legislative support.

Obasanjo backs child advocacy, urges paediatricians to stay committed

ABEOKUTA

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo has pledged support for child advocacy efforts and urged paediatricians to remain compassionate and committed to the wellbeing of children.

Obasanjo made the call on Monday in Abeokuta while receiving members of the executive council of the Paediatric Association of Nigeria (PAN), led by its President, Dr Ekanem Ekure.

He said paediatricians occupied a unique position due

to their responsibility for the lives and wellbeing of children, noting that the profession required both medical expertise and deep empathy.

The former president said he readily accepted the advocacy role assigned to him by PAN, stressing that his responsibility to children would never end.

Earlier, Ekure appealed to Obasanjo to lend his voice as an advocate for Nigerian children, describing children and adolescents as critical national assets facing preventable health and social challenges.



ANA READING/WRITERS DIALOGUE:

Canada based Nigerian-Canadian Film maker, Lucky Ejim (11th L); Chairman, Abuja Chapter of Association of Nigeria Authors (ANA), Arc. Chukwudi Eze (M); One of the panellists, Jerry Adesewo (7th R); Special Guest, the Nwama II of Umunwama Community Izombe, Oguta LGA, Imo State, Eze Chijioke Egwuagu (12th L); other dignitaries and students, during the ANA January Reading/Writers dialogue in Abuja recently.

FG inaugurates emergency, special intervention road projects in Kaduna

KADUNA

The Federal Government (FG), has commissioned several emergency and special intervention road projects across Kaduna state.

This followed inspection activities aimed at assessing progress on key federal highways.

The projects inaugurated included; the 4.3 kilometers repaired Taban Sani road in Makarfi LGA, Mahuta NNPC Pipeline Road to Nigerian Army Post Service Housing in Chikun LGA and Sabo Rail Bridge road to Command Junction.

The inspection began on the Abuja-Kaduna Highway, where contractors were found fully mobilised and work progressing satisfactorily, with assess-

ment reports already prepared.

From there, the delegation moved into the Eastern Bypass through the Kachia Interchange, covering about 34 kilometres already executed before stopping at Chikaji Bridge, identified as the corridor's major challenge.

Speaking at the Chikaji bridge section, Yunus Salihu, Project Manager of Exciogullari Construction Company Nigeria Limited, said the bridge being constructed is about 324 metres long, with all pillars already cast.

Salihu explained that the entire Kaduna Eastern Bypass is a virgin construction, which requires rigorous engineering processes, especially in connecting the bridges to the main carriageway.

He lamented that irregular funding and security challeng-

es had slowed down progress on the project.

He appealed to the Minister of Works and President Bola Tinubu to urgently intervene to ensure the completion of the Chikaji Bridge so the Eastern Bypass can function optimally.

The road project was awarded in 2002, and has since witnessed a series of challenges ranging from funding and insecurity, among others.

At the inauguration of the Mahuta NNPC Pipeline Road to the Nigerian Army Post Service Housing in Chikun LGA, Sadiq Maccido, explain that asphalt could not be laid on some sections due to pipeline safety restrictions, though 1.2 kilometres were completed inward.

Another road inaugurated was the Sabo Rail Bridge Road to Command Junction, described as a major relief to

residents after years of traffic congestion and road failure.

The delegation proceeded to the Western Bypass where about 19.57 kilometres of full carriageway have been completed, while other outstanding works continue.

Speaking on the Western Bypass project, Jonathan Obrusu, representative of Dangote Group, said the company remained committed to delivering the road in line with federal standards and timelines.

Obrusu explained that the Western Bypass is a strategic corridor designed to decongest Kaduna metropolis and improve regional traffic flow for both commercial and private users.

He said about 19.57 kilometres of full carriageway had already been completed, while other outstanding sections and auxiliary works were progressing steadily.

Lagos defends demolition of distressed buildings, cites public safety

LAGOS

The Lagos State Government has justified the demolition of distressed structures across the state, describing it as necessary to safeguard lives, property and the environment.

Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu said on Monday that the demolitions followed comprehensive safety assessments by relevant agencies, stressing that public safety remained a top priority.

He said the government would not hesitate to order evac-

uation or demolition of buildings that posed risks, particularly in densely populated areas.

Sanwo-Olu urged residents to cooperate with government officials and comply with safety directives, noting that such actions were taken in the collective interest of the public.

He added that the exercise was part of a broader environmental management strategy aimed at addressing structural failures, urban congestion and environmental risks, while assuring residents of continued enforcement of building regulations and environmental monitoring.

CHANGE OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **EMINA FAITH** and **OBAYAGBONA FAITH** are one and the same person. Henceforth, I now wish to be known and address as **EMINA FAITH**. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

ADDITION OF MIDDLE NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **ANSTEY MONDAY ESEBAMEN** and **ANSTEY ESEBAMEN** are one and the same person. Henceforth, I now wish to be known and called **ANSTEY MONDAY ESEBAMEN**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **MISS GRACE OSEMWOYEMWEN ERHUNMWUNSE** now wish to be known as **MRS. GRACE OSEMWOYEMWEN ODOZI**. Former documents remain valid. General public should please take note.

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Oborewori flags off N59.7bn Uromi Junction flyover...

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vital feeder route to the flyover.

Also speaking, Chairman of Ika South Local Government Area, Mr Jerry Ehiwarior, described the flyover as "a project of destiny" and thanked the

governor for restoring electricity to communities that had been without power for over 14 years.

The event attracted prominent politicians, including the lawmaker representing Ika Federal Constituency, Mr Victor Nwoko-
lo, and APC National Publicity

Secretary, Mr Felix Morka.

Earlier, the Commissioner for Works (Rural Roads) and Public Information, Mr Charles Aniagwu, said the project exemplified the governor's commitment to people-centred governance and infrastructure delivery.

He noted that the Uromi flyover, alongside those at Otovwodo Junction in Ughelli, PTI Junction, DSC Roundabout and Enerhen Junction, underscored the administration's resolve to ease traffic congestion and enhance urban mobility across Delta State.

Army dismisses mutiny claims, reaffirms welfare drive

ABUJA

The Nigerian Army has dismissed as false and misleading an online report alleging threats of mutiny by soldiers over salaries and allowances, describing the claims as sensational and harmful to national security.

In a statement issued on Monday in Abuja, the Acting

Director of Army Public Relations, Col. Appolonia Anele, said there was no threat of mutiny within the force, stressing that such conduct was alien to its ethos, discipline and professionalism.

She noted that mutiny remained a grave offence under military law and was incompatible with the loyalty of Nigerian Army personnel to the

Constitution and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

Anele explained that the report relied on anonymous and unverifiable claims circulated through non-official channels, which did not reflect the views of officers and soldiers trained to address grievances through established procedures.

She clarified that promo-

tion increments were only one component of military pay and should not be misrepresented as total earnings, adding that remuneration also covered consolidated salaries, rank-based allowances, operational, field and hardship allowances, and other entitlements based on deployment and responsibilities.

According to her, the Army,

in collaboration with the Armed Forces of Nigeria and relevant authorities, was implementing structured welfare reforms, including periodic salary reviews, enhanced incentives, improved accommodation, medical care and insurance for troops and their families.

She added that the Chief of Army Staff, Lt.-Gen. Waidi

Shaibu, had initiated constructive engagements on troop welfare since assuming office, with positive outcomes already emerging, and reaffirmed the Federal Government's commitment to the Armed Forces.

Anele urged the public to disregard unfounded reports and rely on official communication channels for accurate information.



INAUGURATION OF TRAINING:

Director Corporate Services, ANAMMCO Motors and Parts Limited (AMPL), Mr Uche Okeke (L) and Executive Secretary, Nigerian Police Trust Fund (NPTF), during the official inauguration of training of Nigerian Police Technical Officers by AMPL in Enugu on Monday.

Inflation data: CPPE calls for stronger CPI methodology

LAGOS

The Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise (CPPE) has called for stronger policy focus on improving the technical capacity and analytical rigour of Consumer Price Index (CPI) computations to restore confidence in official inflation data.

CPPE Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Muda Yusuf, made the call on Monday in Lagos while reacting to the National Bureau of Statistics' December inflation figure of 15.15 per cent.

Yusuf said the continued disinflation trend over the past 12 months was largely driven by falling food prices, which had provided some relief to households.

However, he expressed concern that recent changes in CPI computation methodology had

weakened the credibility of inflation data, creating confidence gaps among investors, analysts and policymakers.

While noting that inflation was moderating and macroeconomic stabilisation efforts appeared to be yielding results, Yusuf warned that structural cost drivers, energy, transportation, logistics and insecurity remained entrenched.

He said food inflation fell sharply to 10.84 per cent, providing the biggest relief to households, but described the rise in core inflation to 18.63 percent as troubling despite exchange-rate stability.

Yusuf called for a review and strengthening of CPI methodology, targeted cost reductions in food, housing, utilities, fuel and transport, and improved data quality assurance by the NBS to rebuild public and investor confidence.

Ohanaeze honours Anyaoku at 93

ENUGU

Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide has congratulated former Commonwealth Secretary-General and elder statesman, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, on his 93rd birthday.

In a congratulatory message signed by its National Publicity Secretary, Dr. Ezechi Chukwu, the group hailed Anyaoku's outstanding qualities and contributions to national and global service.

The organisation described his life of integrity, service and states-

manship as a towering testament to the excellence and leadership values of the Igbo people.

Quoting the President-General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide, Sen. Azuta Mbata, the statement said Anyaoku symbolised patriotism, national unity, disciplined leadership

and global relevance.

"His life affirms the boundless capacity of the Igbo spirit to serve humanity with honour, wisdom and distinction," Mbata said, adding prayers for continued good health, peace and strength for the elder statesman.

Okpebholo commends Army for sustained security in Edo

MIKE OSAROGIAGBON

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo, has praised the Nigerian Army for its proactive operations that ensured the safety of lives and property during the Christmas and New Year festivities.

The commendation was given at the 2025 West African Social Activities (WASA) organised by the 4 Brigade of the Nigerian Army at the Ekehuan Army Cantonment, Benin City.

Represented by the Commissioner for Finance, Mr Emmanuel Okoebor, the governor described the Army's collaboration with other security agencies as key to the relative peace recorded in the state during the Yuletide.

A statement by the Assistant Director, Army Public Relations, 4 Brigade, Capt. Kennedy Anyanwu, said Edo witnessed comparatively low incidents of violence and criminality due to sustained operations and inter-agency synergy. Okpebholo also commended the Brigade's successes against kidnappers, internet fraudsters and illegal oil bunkerers, noting that the efforts boosted public confidence.

He lauded the colourful WASA celebration, describing it as a reflection of Nigeria's rich cultural heritage and in line with Edo State's cultural identity.

Earlier, the Commander, 4 Brigade, Brig.-Gen. Ahmed Balogun, said WASA was a long-standing tradition aimed at fostering unity and strengthening relations between soldiers, their families and host communities.

He said the Brigade met its 2025 training objectives on professionalism and operational excellence.

The event featured cultural dances from various ethnic groups, military drills, competitions, award presentations, the beating of the retreat and the lighting of a bonfire.



OKPEBHOLO

Workers shut FCTA gates as indefinite strike begins

ABUJA

Activities at the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) were paralysed on Monday as workers shut the secretariat gates and commenced an indefinite strike over unresolved welfare issues.

The workers, under the Joint Union Action Congress (JUAC), said the action followed prolonged appeals for

intervention on matters affecting morale and productivity.

JUAC President, Mrs. Rifkatu Iortyer, told journalists that grievances included non-remittance of pension and National Housing Fund deductions, lack of overhead payments, and the centralisation of salary preparation and payment.

She also cited non-payment of officers of the Abuja Environmental Protection Board and the Social Development

Secretariat, absence of financial thresholds for Permanent Secretaries and Heads of SDAs, and the elongation of tenure for some retired directors and permanent secretaries.

Other concerns listed were unpaid wage awards, promotion arrears, poor working conditions, staff intimidation, lack of training and the mass failure recorded in the 2024 promotion examination, which the union demanded be reversed.

Iortyer said the issues had lingered for too long, causing hardship for workers, and warned that the gates would remain locked until concrete steps were taken.

She added that although management had invited the union for talks, workers would not attend until key decision-makers were present.

The union had staged a similar action in June 2025 to draw attention to the same concerns.

NHRC records 3,019 rights complaints in Kano in 2025

KANO

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) received 3,019 complaints in Kano State between January and December 2025, the commission has said.

The State Coordinator, Shehu Abdullahi, disclosed this on

Monday, noting that 2,276 cases had been concluded while 743 were still ongoing.

He said most complaints related to child abandonment, child rights violations, domestic violence, right to life issues, as well as cultural, economic and social rights.

Other cases involved law en-

forcement abuses, sexual and gender-based violence, and neglect of parental responsibilities.

Abdullahi said the commission also conducted a statewide data collection exercise in 2025 to assess security concerns and migrant influx, recording over 2,000 persons including asylum seekers, refugees, returnees and

internally displaced persons.

He added that the NHRC would intensify awareness campaigns, especially in rural areas, engage traditional rulers, organise town hall meetings and strengthen collaboration with stakeholders to promote and protect human rights in the state.

NEWS

2027: Group vows 72m-strong grassroots push for Tinubu

ABUJA

The Network Capacity Building for Nigeria (NECABN) said it will mobilise grassroots support nationwide to strengthen President Bola Tinubu's re-election bid ahead of the 2027 polls.

The group said it would deploy its more than 72 million registered members across the country once the President formally declares his intention to run.

President of NECABN, Dr Hussena Oturu, disclosed this at a news conference on Monday in Abuja, describing the endorsement as a vote of confidence in President Tinubu's leadership style and ongoing economic and institutional reforms.

Oturu said the organisation was committed to rallying Nigerians at the community level

in support of the President's vision for national development, noting that NECABN's nationwide structure and expansive membership would be leveraged to boost voter engagement ahead of 2027.

"Our network cuts across the six geo-political zones, with over 72 million Nigerians under NECABN, alongside 419 registered NGOs directly impacting lives nationwide," she said.

She recalled that the group supported Tinubu during the 2023 elections through the "Renewed Hope for Nigeria" platform, adding that NECABN, formerly registered as Nigerian Women and Youth Empowerment, had a history of mobilising support for progressive democratic causes.

Oturu said the organisation contributed significantly to votes garnered by past

leaders, including the late Muhammadu Buhari, and described President Tinubu as a reform-minded leader with strong pro-democracy credentials.

She urged Nigerians to exercise patience with the admin-

istration, noting that decades of structural challenges could not be resolved within a single term.

Highlighting achievements of the administration, Oturu cited reforms in investment inflows, regulatory transpar-

ency, energy diversification, education financing, tax administration, fiscal discipline and local government financial autonomy.

She said over N150 billion had been invested through the Nigeria Education Loan Fund,

benefiting about 788,000 students nationwide.

According to her, a second term for President Tinubu would ensure continuity, stability and consolidation of reforms, rather than a return to partisan politics.

NNPP disowns planned protest against INEC

ABUJA

The New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) has disassociated itself from a planned protest against the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) scheduled for Tuesday.

In a statement on Monday, the party's National Publicity Secretary, Mr Ladipo Johnson, said reports of a planned protest at INEC headquarters in Abuja and across states did not emanate from the party.

"The NNPP wishes to dissociate itself from the illegal demonstration called by an illegal body claiming to speak on behalf of

the party," Johnson said.

He stated that those behind the protest were not members of the NNPP, citing a Federal High Court judgment delivered on April 18, 2024, which affirmed that the individuals had ceased to be party members following their expulsion.

Johnson said the judgment had not been appealed, accusing the group of engaging in forum shopping and misleading the courts.

He reiterated that the NNPP was not involved in any protest and described the organisers as impostors, urging party members to remain calm and focused on the party's objectives.

Emir of Ilorin mourns Chief Imam

ILORIN

The Emir of Ilorin and Chairman of the Kwara State Traditional Rulers Council, Alhaji Ibrahim Sulu-Gambari, has expressed deep sorrow over the death of the Chief Imam of Ilorin, Shaykh Muhammad Bashir Imam-Solih.

The condolence message, issued by the emir's Press Secretary, Dr Abdulazeez Arowona, described the cleric's passing as a colossal loss to the Ilorin Emirate, the Muslim Ummah and humanity at large.

"With total submission to

the will of Almighty Allah, we accept the death of the Chief Imam of Ilorin," the emir said, describing Imam-Solih as a man of intelligence, honesty, dedication and tolerance.

He said the late cleric was widely respected for his wisdom and commitment to unity among Muslim scholars, as well as for promoting inter-religious harmony in Kwara State.

The emir announced that the Janazah would take place at the Emir's Palace Square at 4 p.m. on Monday and prayed for Allah's forgiveness and mercy for the deceased.



NEWS CONFERENCE:

L-R: Vice President, Mayflower Old Student Association (MOSA), Dr Olajumoke Oyeyunuga; President of MOSA, Mr Wale Abdul; Vice Chairman, Planning Committee of the 70th Anniversary of the Mayflower School Ikenne, Odutayo Matuluko; Principal, Mayflower Junior School Ikenne, Mr Oronti Adekunle; Principal, Mayflower Senior School Ikenne, Mrs Onasanya Omolara and others, during a news conference and presentation of 70th Anniversary Exercise Books and ringing of the 70th Anniversary Bell of the Mayflower School Ikenne, in Ogun State on Monday.

Tech entrepreneur urges youths to embrace digital skills

KADUNA

A 21-year-old technology entrepreneur, Khalifa Yunusa, has urged Nigerian youths to embrace digital skills as a pathway to self-reliance in a rapidly technology-driven economy.

Yunusa, a full-stack and mobile app developer, told journalists on Monday in Kaduna that he began his journey into technology in 2019 through mentorship, self-learning and scholarship-supported training. He advised young people

not to be discouraged by challenges, describing the technology sector as fast-growing with vast opportunities.

"As the world becomes more digital, it is important for young people to position themselves with relevant skills," he said.

Yunusa said he was introduced to the tech industry by a friend who taught him basic cybersecurity and frontend development, before he advanced into backend programming using tools such as Python and PHP.

By 2022, he said, he had started building websites pro-

fessionally and later acquired additional skills in WordPress, graphic design and branding.

He explained that his early entry into technology challenged the belief that formal education must be completed before securing meaningful employment.

According to him, his skills have enabled him to become self-reliant through services such as website development, branding, logo creation, social media management and digital advertising.

Yunusa said he established

his tech company in 2022 and had since trained over 20 individuals in digital skills through home-based and group training sessions.

He disclosed plans to launch a tech initiative to equip youths and women in Northern Nigeria with basic computer and digital skills, noting a significant gap in digital literacy in the region.

He also revealed that he received an \$800 grant from a local initiative partnered with an international organisation after a skills verification process.

ABU convocation: Ex-Archbishop of Canterbury to lecture on unity

ZARIA

Former Archbishop of Canterbury, the Right Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby, will deliver a public lecture on inter-ethnic and religious harmony at the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria.

The lecture, titled Building Inter-Ethnic and Religious Harmony in Nigeria: Pathways to National Unity, will hold on January 29 as part of activities marking the university's 45th Convocation Ceremony.

According to a statement by the university's Director of Public Affairs, Malam Auwa-

lu Umar, the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Governing Council, Malam Mahmud Yayale-Ahmed, will chair the event.

Umar said dignitaries expected at the lecture include former Nigerian leaders, ministers, governors, traditional rulers, religious leaders and

representatives of socio-cultural organisations.

Welby, who served as the 105th Archbishop of Canterbury from 2013 until his resignation in 2024, accepted the invitation as part of his commitment to promoting dialogue on peacebuilding and national cohesion, the statement said.

Oyetola charges Shippers' Council Board on port reforms

LAGOS

Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Dr Adegboye-ga Oyetola, has inaugurated the Governing Board of the Nigerian Shippers' Council, tasking members with driving port reforms, accountability and efficiency.

A statement by the minister's Special Adviser, Dr Bolaji Akinola, said the inauguration marked a milestone in strengthening governance within the marine and blue economy sector, in line with President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda.

Oyetola noted that the Shippers' Council, as Port Econom-

ic Regulator, plays a critical role in promoting fairness, transparency and efficiency in port pricing and service delivery.

He stressed that effective regulation was essential to reducing the cost of doing business at Nigerian ports, facilitating trade and enhancing competitiveness.

He charged the board to provide strategic direction, policy guidance and vigilant oversight, while working harmoniously with management and upholding professionalism. The board is chaired by former Katsina State Governor, Dr Ibrahim Shehu Shema, with members drawn from government, industry and profession-

al bodies.

Responding, Shema thanked President Tinubu and the minister for the opportunity to serve, assuring that the board would discharge its duties with dedication, integrity and professionalism to strengthen regulatory efficiency and improve port performance.



OYETOLA

Appeal Court holds special sitting, hears 360 cases in Lagos

LAGOS

The Court of Appeal in Lagos on Monday commenced a special sitting, listing 360 cases for hearing in a bid to improve efficiency and reduce the growing backlog of cases across its divisions.

The President of the Court of Appeal (PCA), Justice Monica Dongban-Mensem, said the special session was part of activities marking the 50th anniversary of the appellate court.

She explained that the initiative underscored the judiciary's commitment to timely justice delivery and enhanced institutional efficiency, noting

that it was a deliberate effort to address docket congestion, particularly at the Lagos Division.

According to her, Lagos, being the nation's commercial hub, generates heavy litigation, making it necessary for the court to adopt innovative measures to decongest its dockets and ensure timely dispensation of justice.

Dongban-Mensem said the special sitting also afforded justices from other divisions the opportunity to gain exposure to the wide range of cases typically handled by the Lagos Division.

She disclosed that 16 panels comprising 40 justices drawn

from various divisions of the Court of Appeal were constituted for the exercise.

The PCA added that the panels would sit for one week, with some sessions holding at the Lagos Division of the Court of Appeal, while others would take place at the National Industrial Court Complex.

She noted that the arrangement was designed to ensure optimal utilisation of available judicial facilities and resources, while maximising the court's capacity to dispense justice efficiently.

Dongban-Mensem thanked the Lagos Division for accommodating the visiting justices

with court facilities and housing, describing the gesture as a reflection of collective goodwill and cooperation within the Court of Appeal.

"We are grateful for the benevolence extended to us, and we hope the court will soon be able to extend similar goodwill to other institutions," she said.

The PCA further disclosed that a total of 26 appeals had been listed for hearing before the 16 panels, stressing that all the appeals were ripe for hearing.

She urged counsel and litigants to fully utilise the exercise by ensuring that their processes were properly prepared and free of defects that could

delay proceedings.

"We expect counsel to carefully review their processes before coming to court. If an-

thing in your process could delay the hearing of an appeal, please take steps to remove it," she advised.

3 friends jailed 6 months for stealing N900,000

JOS

An Area Court in Jos on Monday sentenced three friends to six months' imprisonment each for stealing N900,000 belonging to a complainant.

The convicts, Rito Yakubu, Byes Choji and Surama Dauda, were charged with stealing and abetment and pleaded guilty to the offences.

The presiding judge, Mrs Irene Pati, sentenced them accordingly and ordered them to pay N918,000 as compensa-

tion.

The prosecutor, Insp. Ibrahim Gokwat, told the court that the case was reported on November 3, 2025, by the complainant, Mr Raphael Chukwuma.

He said Yakubu broke into the complainant's shop and stole the money before meeting with his friends to squander it.

The defendants reportedly confessed during investigation. The offence contravenes the Plateau State Penal Law of Northern Nigeria, 2017.

Police arraign mechanic over alleged N734,000 fraud

IBADAN

Police on Monday arraigned a 28-year-old mechanic, Mayowa Stephen, before an Iyaganku Magistrates' Court in Ibadan over an alleged N734,000 fraud.

Stephen was charged with fraudulent trick, obtaining money under false pretence and malicious damage.

He pleaded not guilty.

The prosecutor, Insp. Adeshina Folaranmi, told the court that the defendant committed the offences in 2024 at

the Alesinloye area of Ibadan.

He alleged that Stephen collected the money from a customer, Mr Joe Ehiawi, under the guise of repairing his Ford vehicle but instead damaged it and failed to repair it.

The offences contravene Sections 419, 421 and 451 of the Criminal Law of Oyo State, 2000.

The Magistrate, Mrs Oluwabusayo Osho, granted the defendant bail in the sum of N500,000 with two sureties and adjourned the case until March 10 for hearing.

Woman arraigned for alleged N355,000 fraud in Ikorodu

IKORODU

A 43-year-old woman, Edet Bassey, on Monday appeared before an Ikorodu Chief Magistrates' Court in Lagos for allegedly obtaining N355,000 under false pretence.

Bassey was charged with obtaining money by false pretence and unlawful conversion but pleaded not guilty.

The prosecutor, ASP Aminu Isaac, said the offence was committed between Septem-

ber 25 and November 15, 2025.

He alleged that the defendant collected the money from Mrs Susan Olowoporoku under the guise of saving it for her but failed to refund it and converted it to personal use.

The offences contravene Sections 287 and 314 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015.

The Magistrate, Mr B.A. Sonuga, granted the defendant bail in the sum of N200,000 with a surety and adjourned the case until February 5, 2026.

Fuel attendant arraigned for allegedly stealing N700,000

IBADAN

A 28-year-old fuel attendant, Segun Fasunlade, on Monday appeared before an Iyaganku Magistrates' Court in Ibadan for allegedly stealing N700,000 from his employer.

Fasunlade pleaded not guilty to the charge of stealing.

The prosecutor, Insp. Femi Omilana, told the court that the offence was committed on

June 6, 2025, at Abaolaw Filling Station in Ido.

He alleged that the defendant stole the money while working at the station, owned by Mr Busayo Adeniji.

The offence contravenes Section 390(9) of the Criminal Law of Oyo State, 2000.

The Magistrate, Mrs Adebola Adeola, granted the defendant bail in the sum of N800,000 with two sureties and adjourned the case until March 17 for hearing.



JOINT RETREAT:

L-R: Chairman, House of Representatives Press Corps (HoRPC), Gboyega Onadiran; Spokesperson of the House of Representatives, Rep. Akin Rotimi Jr.; Resource Person/Executive Director, Paradigm Initiative, Mr Gbenga Sesan; Chairman, Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) FCT Council, Ms Grace Ike; Executive Secretary, National Assembly Trust Fund, Rep. Henry Nwawuba and the Vice Chairman of HoRPC, Ms Christiana Ekpa, during the joint retreat of the House Representatives Press Corps and Media Aides, "Themed: 'Digital Governance and Legislative Reporting'" at the National Assembly Library Complex in Abuja on Monday.

False claim against Tinubu: court fixes Jan 22 for Sowore's trial

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja has fixed January 22 for the commencement of trial of Omoyele Sowore, publisher of Sahara Reporters, over an alleged false claim against President Bola Tinubu.

Justice Mohammed Umar fixed the date after Sowore was arraigned on a two-count amended charge filed by the Department of State Services (DSS) and pleaded not guilty.

The amended charge, marked FHC/ABJ/CR/484/2025 and filed on December 5, listed Sowore as the sole defendant.

In the earlier charge, Sowore, X Inc. (formerly Twitter) and Meta (Facebook) Inc. were named as first, second and third defendants, respectively, but the names of X and Meta were dropped in the amended charge.

In count one, the DSS alleged that Sowore, on or about August 25, 2025, knowingly sent a message through a computer system via his verified X handle, @YeleSowore.

The message allegedly read: "This criminal @officialABAT actually went to Brazil to state that there is no more corruption under his regime in Nigeria. What audacity to lie

shamelessly!"

The prosecution alleged that Sowore knew the statement to be false and posted it with the intent to cause a breakdown of law and order, posing a threat to life.

He was accused of committing the offence of cyberstalking, contrary to Section 24(1) (b) and 24(2)(a), (b) and (c) of the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) (Amendment) Act, 2024.

The prosecution counsel applied for the removal of X and Facebook from the charge, which Justice Umar granted.

Sowore's counsel, Marshal Abubakar, did not oppose the application for the charge to be read, after which Sowore pleaded not guilty.

Abubakar prayed the court

to allow his client to continue enjoying the earlier bail granted to him, which the court approved.

The DSS lawyer informed the court that the prosecution witness was present and ready to testify, but the defence objected, arguing that the proof of evidence did not contain the names or depositions of witnesses.

Abubakar contended that this violated Section 36(6) of the 1999 Constitution and deprived the defence of adequate time and facilities to prepare.

The prosecution disagreed, describing the defence argument as a ploy to delay the trial.

After hearing arguments from both sides, Justice Umar adjourned the matter until January 22 for definite hearing.

Court remands 2 men over alleged kidnap, murder of 14-yr-old

KANO

Kano State High Court on Monday remanded two men, Isma'il Adamu, 22, and Isma'il Rabi'u, 24, in a correctional centre for allegedly kidnapping and killing a

14-year-old boy, Abdullahi Sani.

The defendants were arraigned on a three-count charge of conspiracy, kidnapping and culpable homicide.

Justice Musa Ahmad ordered their remand and adjourned the case until January

30 for hearing.

Earlier, the prosecution, led by the Kano State Solicitor-General, Mr Salisu Muhammad-Tahir, told the court that the defendants kidnapped the deceased on February 8, 2024, and demanded N3 million ransom.

He alleged that when the ransom was not paid, the defendants stabbed the boy in the neck, chest and shoulder, leading to his death.

The defendants pleaded not guilty. The offences contravene Sections 97, 274 and 221 of the Penal Code Law.

NEWS

Foreign

'Europe is at a total loss': Russia gloats over Greenland tensions

Listen to Donald Trump and you would think Moscow and Beijing were lying in wait off the coast of Greenland, ready to pounce to boost their power in the Arctic. "There are Russian destroyers, there are Chinese destroyers and, bigger, there are Russian submarines all over the place," President Trump said recently.

That is why, according to America's president, US control of Greenland is essential.

So how do you think Moscow has reacted to its alleged plot being uncovered and potentially thwarted by a US takeover of Greenland?

The Russians can't be pleased. Right?

Wrong.

In an astonishing article, the Russian government paper is full of praise for Trump and critical of European leaders who oppose a US annexation of Greenland.

"Standing in the way of the US president's historic breakthrough is the stubbornness of Copenhagen and the mock solidarity of intransigent European countries, including so-called friends of America, Britain and France," writes Rossiyskaya Gazeta.

"Europe does not need the American greatness that Trump is promoting. Brussels is counting on 'drowning' the US president in the midterm congressional elections, on preventing him from concluding the greatest deal of his life."

"Greatest deal"? The reporter explains what he means. I have to keep reminding myself I am reading the Russian government newspaper, not a pro-Trump publication in America.

"If Trump annexes Greenland by July 4 2026, when America celebrates the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, he will go down in history as a figure who asserted the greatness of the United States," writes Rossiyskaya Gazeta.

"With Greenland, the US becomes the second largest country in the world after Russia, surpassing Canada in area. For Americans, that's on par with such planetary events as the abolition of slavery by Abraham Lincoln in 1862 or

the territorial conquests of the Napoleonic Wars.

"If, thanks to Trump, Greenland becomes part of America...for sure the American people will not forget such an achievement."

And the Russian reporter has this message for America's president: don't U-turn.

"It is dangerous for the American president to back down over Greenland. This would weaken the position of the Republican Party in the midterm elections and likely result in a Democrat majority on Capitol Hill with the ensuing consequences for Trump. Whereas a rapid annexation of Greenland before the elections can change this political trend."

Ghana arrests Nigerians accused of running cyber-crime networks

Ghana's security forces have arrested nine Nigerians suspected of co-ordinating a host of cyber-crime activities from makeshift offices in and around the capital, Accra.

Forty-four others, believed to be victims brought to Ghana from Nigeria under false pretences, have also been detained and handed over to the immigration authority.

During the two-day intelligence-led operation, raids uncovered 62 laptops, 52 mobile phones and two pump-action guns, the authorities have said.

There is a growing trend of foreigners being lured to Ghana under the pretext of lucrative work. They are then put in gated compounds, have their documents confiscated and are compelled to engage in cyber-crime.

They often work on romance scams, where a victim is encouraged to send money to a fictitious partner who they believe is real, or business email compromise, where someone poses as an employer and gets people to send funds or sensitive data.

The weekend's operation was jointly co-ordinated by a host of agencies, including the Cyber Security Authority (CSA).

"All the arrested individuals have been duly profiled and handed over to the Ghana Immigration Service for safekeeping and further investigations," Communications Minister Sam George said in a post on X.

"We caution foreign nationals invited to Ghana to verify claims made by their fellow nationals to lure them here."

George also indicated that suspects arrested in previous recent operations have been handed over to Nigerian law enforcement or are facing prosecution.

The CSA and other agencies have been making efforts to flush out cyber-criminals, including working with the US authorities to arrest high-profile suspects.

Among recent operations was the arrest of a popular Ghanaian social media influencer known as Abu Trica, whose real name is Frederick Kumi, who allegedly stole \$8m (£5.9m) from vulnerable Americans through a romance scam. He has not yet commented on the allegations.

Another successful operation was the dismantling of a syndicate that defrauded over 200 victims of \$400,000 (£300,000).



CRASH SITE:

The foyer of the hospital close to the crash site, Caseta Municipal in Adamuz, filled with affected passengers.

Trump ties Greenland demands to Nobel Prize in message to Norway leader

US President Donald Trump has said he no longer feels obliged to think only of peace after he did not receive the Nobel Peace Prize, as he again repeated his demand for control of Greenland.

In a message to Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, Trump blamed the country for not giving him the prize.

In his reply to Trump, Støre explained that an independent committee, not the government of Norway, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in October to Venezuela's opposition leader María Corina Machado.

CBS News, the BBC's US partner, confirmed the message and its contents.

"Considering your Country decided not to give me the Nobel Peace Prize for having stopped 8 Wars PLUS, I no longer feel an obligation to think purely of Peace, although it will always be predominant, but can now think about what

is good and proper' for the US", Trump said in the message obtained by US media.

"The World is not secure unless we have Complete and Total Control of Greenland," he added.

Prime Minister Støre said he had received the text message on Sunday in response to a text he and Finland's president Alexander Stubb had sent to Trump.

Støre said they had conveyed opposition to proposed tariff increases over the Greenland dispute, and pointed to the need to de-escalate, proposing a three-way phone call the same day.

Trump has made no secret of his desire to be awarded the annual prize. He has increasingly insisted that the US needs to take over Greenland for national security reasons.

The sparsely-populated but resource-rich Arctic island is well placed for early warning systems in the event of missile attacks and for monitoring vessels in the region.

Trump has repeated that he wants the US to buy Greenland and has not ruled out using military force against a member of the Nato security alliance to take it.

Over the weekend, he said he would impose a 10% tariff on goods from eight Nato allies starting in February if they oppose his proposed takeover, and threatened to raise it to 25% by June.

In his message to Støre, Trump said Denmark cannot protect Greenland from Russia or China, and questioned "why do they have a 'right of ownership' anyway? There are no written documents, it's only that a boat landed there hundreds of years ago, but we had boats landing there, also".

"I have done more for NATO than any other person since its founding, and now, NATO should do something for the United States," he concluded.

UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer said on Monday that

any decision about the future status of Greenland "belongs to the people of Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark alone", and called the use of tariffs against allies "wrong".

Danish Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen and Greenlandic Foreign Affairs Minister Vivian Motzfeldt are due to meet on Monday with Nato Secretary General Mark Rutte.

Last week, the Danish and Greenlandic governments, together with Nato allies, decided to increase military presence and exercise activity in the Arctic and the North Atlantic.

Several European states sent small numbers of military personnel to Greenland in a so-called reconnaissance mission.

How many wars has President Trump really ended?

As Trump's recent message said, he has claimed to have ended eight wars since his second term as president began last year.

US believes its power matters more than international law, UN chief says

The US is acting with impunity and believes its power matters more than international law, the head of the UN has told the BBC.

Speaking to BBC Radio 4's Today programme, António Guterres said Washington's "clear conviction" was that multilateral solutions were irrelevant.

What mattered, he continued, was the "exercise of the power and influence of the United States and sometimes in this respect by the norms of international law".

His comments come weeks after the US struck Venezuela and seized its president - and in the context of Donald Trump's repeated threats to annex Greenland.

Guterres said he believed the founding principles of the UN - including the equality of member states - were now under threat.

President Trump has previously been scathing in his criticism of the United Nations.

He used his address at last September's General Assembly to question its very purpose, claiming he had "ended seven unendable wars" on his own and the UN "did not even try to help in any of them".

"Later I realised that the UN wasn't there for us," he said.

Presented with this damning assessment, Guterres admitted his organisation was struggling to make members abide by the international laws laid out in the UN Charter.

The UN was "extremely engaged" in solving major global conflicts, he insisted. "But the UN has no leverage - the big powers have stronger leverage."

He questioned whether that extra leverage was being used to produce real and enduring solutions to those conflicts, or just quick fixes. "There is a big difference between the two things," he noted.

Guterres also said his organisation needed reform to tackle "dramatic problems and challenges" facing its 193 members.

"There are those that believe the power of law should be replaced by the law of power," the UN chief said.

"Indeed, when one sees the present policy of the United States, there is a clear conviction that multilateral solutions are not relevant and that what matters is the exercise of the power and the influence of the United States and sometimes in this respect by the norms of international law".

He suggested the UN Security Council - designed to maintain international peace and security - no longer represented the world and was "ineffective".

Any one of the council's permanent members - France, China, Russia, the UK or US - can currently veto resolutions. Both Russia and the US have used this power to frustrate global efforts to end the wars in Ukraine and Gaza.

Foreign

NEWS

High-speed train crash in Spain kills at least 39

At least 39 people have died in a train collision in southern Spain and dozens more have been injured in the country's worst rail crash in more than a decade, Spain's Civil Guard has said.

Carriages on a Madrid-bound train derailed and crossed over to the opposite tracks, colliding with an oncoming train in Adamuz on Sunday evening.

Four hundred passengers and staff were onboard both trains, the rail networks said. Emergency services treated 122 people, with 43, including four children, still in hospital. Of those, 12 adults and one child are in intensive care.

Spanish Transport Minister Óscar Puente said the death toll "is not yet final", as officials launched an investigation.

Puente described the incident as "extremely strange". All the railway experts consulted by the government "are extremely baffled by the accident", he told reporters in Madrid.

Rail network operator Adif said the collision happened at 19:45 local time (18:45 GMT), about an hour after the train left Málaga heading north to Madrid, when it derailed on a straight stretch of track near the city of Córdoba.

The force of the crash pushed the carriages of the second train into an embankment, Puente said. He added that most of those killed and injured were in the front carriages of the second train, which was travelling south from Madrid to Huelva.

The type of train involved in the crash was a Freccia 1000, which can reach top speeds of 400 km/h (250 mph), a spokesperson for the Italian rail company Ferrovie dello Stato told Reuters news agency.

Rescue teams said the twisted wreckage of the trains made it difficult to recover people trapped inside the carriages.

Córdoba fire chief Francisco Carmona told Spanish public broadcaster RTVE: "We have even had to remove a dead person to be able to reach someone alive. It is hard, tricky work."

Salvador Jimenez, a journalist with RTVE who was on one of the trains, said the impact felt like an "earthquake".

"I was in the first carriage. There was a moment when it felt like an earthquake and the train had indeed derailed," Jimenez said.

Footage from the scene appears to show some train carriages had tipped over on their sides. Rescue workers can be seen scaling the train to pull people out of the lopsided train doors and windows.

A Madrid-bound passenger, José, told public broadcaster Canal Sur: "There were people and screaming, calling for doctors."

All rail services between Madrid and Andalusia were suspended following the accident

and are expected to remain closed all day on Monday.

Iryo, a private rail company that operated the journey from Málaga, said around 300 passengers were on board the train that first derailed, while the other train - operated by the state-funded firm Renfe - had around 100 passengers.

The official cause is not yet known. An investigation is not expected to determine what happened for at least a month, according to the transport minister.

Spain's Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez, said the country will endure a "night of deep pain".

The mayor of Adamuz, Rafael Moreno, was one of the first people on the scene of the accident, describing it as "a nightmare".

King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia said they were following news of the disaster "with great concern".

"We extend our most heartfelt condolences to the relatives and loved ones of the dead, as well as our love and wishes for a swift recovery to the injured," the royal palace said on X.

The emergency agency in the region of Andalusia urged any crash survivors to contact their families or post on social media that they are alive.

Friends and relatives have been seeking information about their loved ones on board either train.

Advanced medical posts were set up for impacted passengers to be treated for injuries and transferred to hospital. Adif said it set up spaces for relatives of the victims at Atocha, Seville, Córdoba, Málaga and Huelva stations.

The Spanish Red Cross has deployed emergency support services to the scene, while also offering counselling to families nearby.

Miguel Ángel Rodríguez from the Red Cross told RNE radio: "The families are going through a situation of great anxiety due to the lack of information. These are very distressing moments."

Reuters A patient in a hospital stretcher and dozens of others are draped in blankets, given water, and helped by medical workers at the Caseta Municipal. Reuters

The foyer of the hospital close to the crash site, Caseta Municipal in Adamuz, filled with affected passengers.

French President Emmanuel Macron, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen have published statements offering condolences.

"My thoughts are with the victims, their families and the entire Spanish people. France stands by your side," Macron wrote on social media.

In 2013, Spain suffered its worst high-speed train derailment in Galicia, north-west Spain, which left 80 people dead and 140 others injured.



SCHOOLCHILDREN KILLED:

13 children killed after a truck collided with a school minibus in South Africa's Gauteng province on Monday.

Thirteen schoolchildren killed after bus collides with lorry in South Africa

Thirteen school pupils have died in South Africa after the minibus they were travelling in collided with a lorry south of the city of Johannesburg.

The crash happened on Monday morning at around 07:00 local time (05:00 GMT) in Vanderbijlpark, the local education authority said.

Eleven students died at the scene, while two succumbed

to their injuries later on. Two other pupils remains in critical condition.

The minibus driver crashed into the lorry after attempting to overtake two vehicles, police spokesperson Mavela Masondo said.

Masondo added that a case of culpable homicide would be opened.

The minibus driver was "reportedly" being treated in

hospital, Gauteng province's department of education said, while the details of what happened to the lorry driver were "uncertain".

Fatal road collisions are common in South Africa, due to factors such as rampant speeding, reckless driving and poorly maintained vehicles.

In 2025, 11,418 people died in crashes - about 6% lower than a year earlier but still

equivalent to an average of 31 deaths a day.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa called Monday's crash "distressing".

"Our children are the nation's most precious assets and we must do all we can - from observing the rules of the road to the quality of service providers appointed to transport scholars - to protect learners," the president added.

More than 160 churchgoers kidnapped in twin Nigeria attacks —Clergy

Armed gangs have kidnapped dozens of people attending two churches in Nigeria's Kaduna state, according to local police.

A senior church leader said more than 160 worshippers were abducted by gunmen during Sunday service.

It is the latest mass kidnapping in Nigeria, where both Christians and Muslims have been targeted. Gangs, known locally as "bandits", frequently carry out such attacks in northern and central parts of the country to get ransom payments.

Describing Sunday's attack, local police said gunmen

armed with "sophisticated weapons" burst into the two churches in Kurmin Wali, a forest community in Afogo ward, at about 11:25 local time.

"The attackers came in numbers and blocked the entrance of the churches and forced the worshippers out into the bush," Rev Joseph Hayab, head of the Christian Association of Nigeria for the country's north, told the AFP news agency on Monday.

Speaking to Reuters, Hayab added: "Information came to me from the elders of the churches that 172 worshippers were abducted while nine escaped."

In November, more than

300 students and teachers were seized from a Catholic school. They were later released in two successive groups. It was among a spate of kidnappings that made international headlines.

Nigeria is facing numerous security challenges - including kidnappings for ransom by criminal gangs, an Islamist insurgency in the north-east, separatist violence in the south-east, and a battle between herders and farmers in the centre over access to land and water.

Experts say corruption, poor intelligence sharing and underfunded local policing have

hampered efforts to tackle the various crises.

Nigeria's defence minister resigned last month at the height of the kidnapping crisis, officially for health reasons, according to the president's office.

The US has recently become militarily involved in Nigeria - launching airstrikes on Christmas Day on two camps run by an Islamist militant group in north-western Nigeria.

Earlier this month, US President Donald Trump warned of more strikes if Christians continued to be killed in the West African nation.

There are more than 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria, which is roughly divided into a mainly Muslim north, a largely Christian south, with intermingling in the middle - and the government says people of all faiths have been victims of attacks.

A Nigerian foreign ministry spokesman responded to Trump's warning by saying that Nigeria would continue to engage constructively with partners such as the US.

"Nigeria remains committed to protecting all citizens, Christians and Muslims alike, without discrimination," Alkasim Abdulkadir said.

Sierra Leone marks first National Day of Remembrance in honour of victims of civil war

Sierra Leone marked its first National Day of Remembrance on Sunday in honour of the victims of the country's ten year civil war.

The conflict killed some 120,000 people and left thousands more injured or maimed before officially ending on January 18th, 2002.

"For the first time in our history, we gather on a single day to remember our civil war and the heavy price our coun-

try paid for peace," President Julius Maada Bio said in an address to the nation.

"From this day forward, January 18th belongs to every Sierra Leonean. To every victim and every survivor, I cannot ask you to forget. I ask only that, in your own time and in your own way, our nation may find the grace to heal fully, restore dignity, and move forward together."

The war is considered one

of the most brutal in recent history. It began in 1991 when fighting spilled over from neighboring Liberia and rebel fighters clashed with Sierra Leone armed forces.

In 2002, a United Nations tribunal indicted 23 people for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other violations of international law, including former Liberian president Charles Taylor who was sentenced to 50 years in prison.

FEATURES

The audacity of Cybercrimes in Nigeria

PROF. VIOLET AIGBOKHAEVBO

Nigeria's exposure to technological development and the digitalisation of every aspect of the lives and livelihood of the citizens has come with socio-economic benefits and a cocktail of challenges that is defying regulatory interventions, effective oversight management and generating anxiety about technological advancement outpacing human control mechanisms. This is more so as criminal activities using digital platforms is becoming problematic due to its ability to evade early detection and defy borders. Such crimes are classified as 'cybercrimes.'

Cybercrimes are a genre of crimes that involve the use of computer devices, networks and/or internet services. Government, corporations, institutions, organisations and individuals, are often the targets of cybercriminals. Common cybercrimes in Nigeria include fraudulent electronic transactions, hacking, identity theft, cyber harassment, software piracy, malware, spamming, pornography and dissemination of fake

news online. The attention of law enforcement agents appears to be primarily focused on internet fraudsters known as 'yahoo boys' while other cybercrimes are being perpetuated with audacity.

The most audacious cybercrime that is festering and enjoying condonation which is becoming widespread is disguised as 'content creation.' This involves the production and distribution of information like videos, blogs, podcasts and other information sharing with a target audience usually for the purpose of enhancing a brand, improving visibility, rating or increasing followers. Private conversations and video recordings are shared on social media without authorization or proper verification of facts or circumstances. Celebrities, politicians, clergymen and their families have unflattering photographs, information and even sex tapes distributed in the cyberspace without sufficient enforcement of sanctions for privacy breaches, cyber stalking and bullying.

Fraudulent advertisement of goods online and supply of goods that are at variance with their description is condoned with online display of 'what I or-

dered versus what I got' often embedded in humour. Materials with pornographic content are shared with impunity online without advance notification and without affording people the right or opportunity to opt out of viewing. Insufficient digital literature is rendering consumers hapless and helpless.

Nigerians are dealing with scammers mimicking bank officials harvesting their personal information to defraud them. It is estimated that over 80,000 customers in the financial sector were defrauded with a loss of over eight billion naira to electronic transfer fraud in 2022. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Financial Stability Report, 2024 indicates a 45 percent increase in financial fraud with unregulated virtual asset platforms mostly accounting for the 70 percent losses attributed to digital channels. According to Emomoti Agama, the Director General of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the transformation of the financial system in Nigeria has increased virtual asset fraud. More sophisticated investment scams are rendering investors more vulnerable to financial ex-

ploitation with undermining of market integrity, erosion of public trust and diversion of resources, thereby compromising sustainable development.

Scam syndicates are thriving using social media and other online platforms to access victims and swindle them under the guise of romance. Sextortion is becoming common place with devastating consequences including psychological stress, financial stress and even death.

Transnational collaboration of scammers has led to international collaboration between law enforcement agencies. This is evidenced by sharing of databases and communication, which has led to the successful extradition and arraignment of Nigerian scammers in response to hacking, fraud, identity theft and other scam cases. There has also been domestic prosecution of cybercrimes especially internet fraud. However, insufficient funding, availability of the requisite skills and expertise, transnational nature of cybercrimes, the time and expense of litigation, the novelty of presenting digital evidence and the stigmatisation of victims especially in cases

of sextortion are daunting hurdles in the quest to reduce cybercrimes while promoting audacity.

The Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc) (Amendment) Act, 2024 is the most comprehensive legislation regulating cybercrimes in Nigeria. It was enacted due to the perceived gaps in the Cybercrimes Act, 2015 and disillusionment with its effectiveness as a tool for cybercrimes regulation. Despite the laudable attempt to identify, prohibit and penalise a broad spectrum of cybercrimes, the Cybercrimes Act, 2024 needs to be shored up with intensive digital education on the hidden threats posed by social media and other digital platforms and the corresponding consequences of breaching the provisions of the Act.

Dealing with the precipitating or underlying factors of cybercrime like poverty, unemployment, peer pressure and poor enforcement of regulatory laws have no quick fix. In the interim, tracking and swift prosecution of offenders is the most effective way of communicating zero tolerance for cybercrimes and the audacity of its proliferation in Nigeria.

Nigeria's illegal drug pandemic

PROF. VIOLET AIGBOKHAEVBO

From recreational drugs use to drug dependence, Nigeria has degenerated into a drug abusing country with errant and aggressive behaviour becoming the new normal. The brutality with which conflicts and criminal enterprises are executed and managed even by law enforcement agents has been attributed to the use of opioids like tramadol and cannabis.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) World Drug Report, 2025, indicates that drug use in Nigeria is pervasive with nearly three times the global average and over three million living with drug use disorders. 20 to 40 percent of youths and 20.9 percent of students in Nigeria are battling addiction. There are however indications that the statistics may be higher due to the clandestine manner drugs are mostly circulated and the nature of drug abuse by most consumers. This is without prejudice to the comparatively few incidents of drug use and sale along the streets and deserted market stalls by street urchins.

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) posits that Tobacco, Cannabis, Cocaine, Diazepam, Codeine, and Amphetamines are drugs most abused by youths in Nigeria. Cookies, cakes, biscuits, chin-chin, smoothies and drinks are laced with drugs to remove inhibitions under the guise of promoting fun at parties. Sniffing of septic tanks, gum, rubber latex, crude oil derivatives, shoe polish, and compost are emerging as cheap options of getting high.

CAUSES OF ILLEGAL DRUG USE IN NIGERIA

The causes of illegal drug use are as diverse as the illegal drugs. They range from socio-cultural to environmental factors. Drug availability and peer influence is a strong factor in illegal drug use. Proliferation of street gangs and cult groups are conduits for proliferation of illegal drug experimentation.

Sexual performance enhancement

and quest to remove inhibitions also leads to illegal drug use in Nigeria. Cannabis or cocaine are natural aphrodisiacs while methamphetamines are synthetic drugs that are widely used for the purpose.

Heroin, fentanyl and other synthetic opioids are misused due to their sale by unauthorised agents as analgesics and painkillers while prescription opioids like pentazocine, codeine, morphine, hydrocodone and oxycodone remain inadequately regulated. Due to the prevalent abuse of codeine-based cough syrups, Nigeria banned it and in 2018 recalled not less than 2.5 million bottles. The use of Tramadol which is rated in United Nations as been at the heart of Nigeria's opioid crisis was also restricted. Instead of combating the escalating dependence on the drugs, the black market experienced a boost with product prices tripling. In 2020, a new drug known as 'Tafrodo' with the same active ingredients as tramadol was introduced as a substitute to circumvent the ban on tramadol. Collaborations between pharmaceutical companies and criminal gangs to keep the illegal drug market thriving poses endemic challenges in Nigeria due to the huge profits guaranteed for corrupt government officials and regulatory agencies.

The deplorable health care facilities and health care availability with a ratio of one doctor to between 8,000 to 10,000 patients according to the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) estimates are driving opioid use by patients with limited choices. The migration (Japa) syndrome is significantly depleting the health care sector in Nigeria. The government has not been able to influence the legitimate aspirations of medical health workers for better career opportunities, better life and working environment for themselves and their families in foreign countries through better pay and improved welfare for healthcare workers.

Social media promotes illegal drug use with movies, actors and skits where drugs are showcased, and users

are hyped in the name of content creation. With a social media exposure of approximately 38.7 million in 2025, it is difficult to regulate the proliferation of illegal drug use in Nigeria especially among the youth population who are mostly susceptible to copying celebrities' habits hook, line and sinker.

Illegal drug use by street urchins, drivers, itinerant workers, political thugs, commercial sex workers and even law enforcement agents have been given tacit approval in most communities who instead of calling out the habit and ensuring that it is penalised, laugh it off with the expression 'E go soon Kolo' meaning the drug use will soon end in aggressive outburst or mental disorder.

Drugs are available as part of the entertainment at weddings, birthdays and burial ceremonies in Nigeria. Many people are indoctrinated into drug use on such occasions to join in the fun. Dealing with insecurity, trauma, emotional stress may lead to people taking solace in drug use as part of their coping device or obtaining reprieve from their pain and suffering. Illegal drugs are also used as energy boosters by people who work long hours or multitask or are expected to deliver results on short notices.

The prevalence of drug use in vulnerable communities with scant socio-economic interventions by government and the high rate of unemployment is justifying the assertion that there is synergy between poverty and drug abuse. Illegal drug use provides temporary relief from their misery albeit euphoric.

Poor enforcement of illegal drug regulatory laws like the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) Act, National Drug Control Master Plan (2021-2025), Dangerous Drug Act, and Indian Hemp Act account for the impunity with which illegal drug use remains prevalent in Nigeria. This is more so as law enforcement agents are complicit in drug abuse. Some of them are patrons of illegal drug markets, offer drug dealers protection and even smoke cannabis while dressed in uniform and in their patrol vans. Ac-

cepting illegal drugs as bribe to prevent arrest is not uncommon in Nigeria.

EFFECTS OF ILLEGAL DRUG USE

Illegal drug use can result in physical, psychological and mental impairment which could be long term or short-term depending on the variants of illegal drug abused, the duration and scope of the abuse.

Exposure to illegal drugs can lead to drug dependence which fuel anti-social behaviour. Delinquent behaviour among the teenage population in Nigeria has been attributed largely to exposure to Crystal Methamphetamine (Crystal Meth or Ice).

Drug abuse can also lead to unhinged behaviour, violent crimes and untimely death. The steady rise in the consumption of alcohol and illegal drugs in Nigeria has been linked to violent crimes like killing and dismembering of victims, kidnapping, organ harvesting and overall public disorder.

Psychoactive substances remove inhibition and could lead to unnecessary sexual exposure with contacting of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and vulnerability to Gender Based Violence (GBV) as probable consequences.

Discontinuation or reduction in illegal drug use can lead to withdrawal syndrome which could be mild with flu-like symptoms or life-threatening and resulting in complications which require hospitalisation depending on the type of drug and the duration of the exposure.

Drug abuse can lead to medical issues like tooth decay, liver cirrhosis, lung and throat cancer, dementia, increased risk of schizophrenia, stroke, nervous system impairment, suicide as well as sociopathic and psychopathic behaviours.

Driving and operating machines under the influence of drugs can lead to fatal accidents, workplace injury, destruction of lives, property and other unintended consequences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Illegal drug use in Nigeria is perva-

sive and defying regulations. Attempts by government like Edo State to regulate it include deploying 24 hours police surveillance as drug haunts in notorious areas. The effect of this has been to drive the sale of drugs underground while drug mules have relocated to adjoining streets. Illegal drug abuse and its consequential injury and death is often underrated and usually dismissed as personal tragedy which does not generate as much interest as offences of human trafficking, organ harvesting, armed robbery, kidnapping, rape and murder.

In view of the wider societal implication of illegal drug abuse, the following are recommended:

Aggressive drug use enlightenment translated into various Nigerian languages using social media, schools, markets, churches, mosques and other available platforms using drug addiction survivors as ambassadors and mirroring life struggles of those who died especially from hard drug overdose as wakeup call or deterrent to potential illegal drug users.

Demolition of buildings and shanties used for sale of illegal drugs as well as arresting and prosecution of operators with stiff penalties for liability.


Conducting regular drug testing for political office holders as a condition for entering and remaining in office.

Zero drug tolerance in educational institutions and recreational facilities with naming and shaming institutions for breaches in addition to prosecution and operation licence review.

Banning of distribution of illegal drugs and derivatives at political rallies, ceremonies, parties and other gatherings.

Restriction of drug use in movies, musical videos and skits to minimise the lure of illegal drug use.

Stricter regulation of the influx of illegal drugs into Nigeria through enhanced product inspection and tracking of banned substances. Regular raiding, seizing and destruction of illegal drugs and their holding facilities is an effective way of winning the war against illegal drugs.

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10 X 4	340,000	365,500	273,500	294,013	177,400	190,705	370,000	397,750	295,600	317,770
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10 X 3	221,700	238,328	147,800	158,885	118,300	127,173	266,000	285,950	251,300	270,148
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FP 5X2	81,100	87,183	97,300	104,598	5 X 2	51,950	55,846	42,120	45,279
FP 4X2	73,000	78,475	80,700	86,753	4 X 2	45,260	48,655	34,400	36,980
FP 3X2	64,870	69,735	73,000	78,475	3 X 2	30,900	33,218	26,600	28,595
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Sports

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AFCON 2025 delivers goals, drama, officiating concerns

VICTOR OKOYE

The 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON), hosted by Morocco, combined high-scoring football, strong organisation and intense controversy, as the continent's flagship tournament unfolded across four weeks.



AFCON 2025 CHAMPION

The competition, which opened on Dec. 21 in Rabat, featured modern infrastructure, large crowds and strong fan engagement, reinforcing Morocco's credentials as a major football host.

The opening ceremony in Rabat set the tone. Against the backdrop of Morocco's historic architecture, performers

blended tradition with modernity, celebrating Africa's diversity while underscoring the host nation's growing stature in world football.

Matches were played across nine venues in six cities of Rabat, Casablanca, Marrakech and Tangier, Agadir and Fès with the tournament producing a mix of shocks, standout performances and recurring debates over officiating.

Due to FIFA expanding its Club World Cup competition to 32 teams and having it scheduled for June and July 2025, this edition of the tournament was played between Dec. 21 2025 and Jan. 18 2026.

It was the first time that the tournament was played over the Christmas and New Year period. The situation was further complicated by the addition of two extra match

days scheduled for the last two weeks of January in the expanded 2025/2026 UEFA Champions League season.

This edition of the tournament was scheduled to be the second after 2019 to take place during the northern hemisphere's summer (June-July), in order to reduce scheduling conflicts with European club teams and competitions; the previous 2023 edition was moved to January and February 2024 owing to the adverse summer weather conditions in Ivory Coast.

Guinea was originally set as hosts for this edition of the tournament, but had its hosting rights stripped after affirming its inadequacy of hosting preparations. After a second bidding process, Morocco was named as the new hosts on Sept. 27, 2023.



RAHIM DÍAZ WITH FIFA PRESIDENT

AFCON 2025: Morocco's Díaz clinches golden boot award

Morocco forward Brahim Díaz has won the Puma Golden Boot at the CAF Africa Cup of Nations Morocco 2025.

Playing before home fans, the Atlas Lions attacker topped the scoring chart, underlining his influence after also finishing top scorer in the AFCON 2025 qualifiers.

Díaz ended the tournament with five goals, a tally unmatched by any other player despite Morocco's eventual defeat in the final.

He scored in every phase, opening against Comoros, netting versus Mali, and striking twice against Zambia during the group stage.

The Real Madrid forward continued his run in the knockouts, scoring against Tanzania in the Round of 16 and Cameroon in the quarter-finals.

By scoring in five matches, Díaz joined an elite AFCON list and set a new Moroccan benchmark for consistency at the continental finals

My priority is to revive grassroots sports – Ag. GM Ondo Sports Council

The Acting General Manager of Ondo State Sports Council (OSSC), Evelyn Lebi, says reviving grassroots sports will be her top priority.

Lebi stated this in an interview with sports writers on Monday in Akure after resuming as the new head of the council.

Lebi's appointment was announced through a letter signed by the Head of Service, Mr Bayo Philip on Jan. 5.

The acting general manager was welcomed by the management and staff of the council amid funfair.

Lebi said the only way to revive sports was to have more athletes, especially the younger ones, from the nooks and crannies of the state and also ensure that zonal offices were more involved.

She also reiterated the importance of having more equipment for the discovery and nurturing of the athletes discovered, and assured of posting more hands to the zonal offices.

"Sports is a global business now. It's more than in the past that it used to be entertainment. Most of these youths have these talents.

"But, if we don't go there to discover and tap them, how do we build on them? So I'm ready to revive all those things, because when I was discovered, they do bring me to Akure for weekend camping.

"We cannot be doing competition for those in the Akure alone, but by sending people

to the zonal offices, and we empower them.

"We make sure that all these things that we encourage them to stay in the zonal offices, their welfare and at least welfare too will be looked into.

"By the time we do this, staff welfare too will be looked into. By the time we encourage the coaches, they will be ready to go to schools and communities to train and discover athletes," she said.



EVELYN LEBI

Oyedeji elected first African Secretary General of World Olympians Association

Nigeria's Olumide Oyedeji has been elected Secretary General of the World Olympians Association after polling 55 votes out of the 106 valid votes cast. He secured 51.89 per cent of the votes to defeat Salvador Salguero of El Salvador and Liston Bochette of Puerto Rico to emerge

as the first ever African to attain that position. He takes over from Anthony Ledgard (OLY) of Peru.

Oyedeji, who is the current President of the Nigeria Olympians Association (NOA) and Third Vice President of the Nigeria Olympic Committee (NOC), will serve on the board for the next four years

alongside President Pernilla Wiberg of Sweden and Treasurer Wei-Tsu Thomas of Chinese Taipei.

The current Chairman of the Nigeria Athletes Commission expressed gratitude to the former Executive Committee, led by Joel Bouzou (OLY), noting that their contributions to Olympians worldwide will remain part of the association's history. He promised that integrity would guide every decision, transparency would define their actions and inclusive leadership would be the standard. He stressed that every continent, every National Olympians Association and every Olympian matters, adding that they will listen, engage and act together.

Oyedeji also announced that, under his leadership, the secretariat will work closely and constructively with the International Olympic Committee as a key partner in the Olympic Movement through open dialogue, mutual respect and shared purpose.



OLUMIDE OYEDEJI

Super Eagles rank among Africa's top three after AFCON exploits

Nigeria's Super Eagles have climbed to third place in Africa but retained 38th position globally in the latest FIFA Men's World Rankings released on Monday.

Eagles moved up from fifth to third in Africa after an impressive performance at the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) in Morocco, where they finished third overall.

Nigeria now ranks behind AFCON finalists Senegal and Morocco, who are placed 19th and 11th respectively in the global standings.

In spite of the continental rise, Nigeria remained 38th worldwide in the January 2026 FIFA rankings, reflecting stability rather than global progress.

Algeria and Egypt occupy fourth and fifth places in Africa,

while DR Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa, Mali and Tunisia complete the continent's top 10.

Morocco retained Africa's highest-ranked side globally, with Senegal second, followed by Algeria, Egypt and Nigeria in the continental pecking order.

Other African teams in the top 10 include Tunisia, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, DR Congo and Cameroon, all ranked between 41st and 57th globally.

Globally, Spain retained top spot, followed by Argentina and France, while England, Brazil, Portugal, Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Croatia complete the top 10.

Nigeria's rise in Africa reflects a strong AFCON showing, including a 4-2 victory over Egypt in the third-place match on Saturday.

MEN'S FIFA RANKING		
AR	TEAMS	WR
1	Morocco	12
2	Senegal	17
3	Nigeria	28
4	Egypt	36
5	Ivory coast	39

AFCON 2025: Nwabali credits collective effort for Eagles' third-place finish

Super Eagles goalkeeper Stanley Nwabali, has described Nigeria's AFCON 2025 bronze medal win, as a product of collective effort after his penalty saves sealed victory over Egypt. Nwabali was named Man

of the Match, after saving two penalties in Nigeria's 4-2 shootout win over Egypt.

NAN reports that the AFCON 2025 third-place play-off ended goalless in regulation time, before penalties decided the bronze medal.

Nwabali described the encounter as tense, with both teams determined to avoid costly errors.

"It was a very difficult match against a great Egyptian team; Nobody wanted to make a mistake," he said.

The goalkeeper said that composure was key during the shootout.

"I stayed calm, read the takers and trusted my instincts; Thankfully, it worked for us," he said.

He credited teamwork and defensive discipline for Nigeria's success.

"This victory came from collective effort. The defenders were incredible, and everyone stayed united," he noted.

Nwabali said that individual recognition was secondary to the team's achievement.

"Being Man of the Match feels good, but winning the bronze medal for Nigeria matters more," he said.

The goalkeeper praised the team's resilience after earlier disappointment in the tournament.

"We had setbacks, but we stayed focused and believed in ourselves until the end," Nwabali added.

Nigeria finished AFCON Morocco 2025, on the podium, with Nwabali's heroics proving decisive.



The Nigerian Super Eagles in one of the games in AFCON 2025.

CAF Names AFCON 2025 Best XI as Senegal dominate, Nigeria claim three Spots

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) has unveiled its official Team of the Tournament for the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations, recognising standout performers from a competition that concluded with Senegal's 1-0 extra-time victory over hosts Morocco in the final on Sunday, January 18, 2026.

Tournament champions Senegal dominated the selection, contributing the highest number of players to the Best XI after an impressive campaign that culminated in their second AFCON title. Nigeria were also represented, with three Super Eagles players earning places following strong individual performances.

Forwards Victor Osimhen and Ademola Lookman were included after playing key roles in Nigeria's third-place finish. Osimhen registered four goals and two assists during the tournament, while Lookman contributed three goals and four assists, underlining their attacking influence throughout the competition.

Defender Bruno Onyemaechi completed Nigeria's representation in the team, earning selection at left-back. However, the omission of Calvin Bassey drew some surprise, particularly given his solid displays in the knockout stages, including the semi-final encounter against Morocco.

CAF's defensive selections were largely drawn from the finalist nations, with Senegal and Morocco dominating the back-line. The midfield was similarly influenced by Senegal's presence, reflecting their consistency and control across the tournament.

Senegal goalkeeper Édouard Mendy was named between the posts, while teammates Krépin

Diatta, Mamadou Sangare and Idrissa Gueye were included in defensive and midfield roles. Star forward Sadio Mané was named Player of the Tournament after leading the Teranga Lions to glory.

Egypt's Mohamed Salah and Rami Rabia also made the Best XI, while Morocco's Noussair Mazraoui earned selection despite the hosts' defeat in the final. Morocco, however, claimed several individual honours, with Brahim Díaz finishing as top scorer to win the Golden Boot, Yassine Bounou named Best Goalkeeper, and the hosts receiving the Fair Play Award.



1st Benin City U-25 Rapid Chess Tournament ends in Benin as Okemakinde emerged Champion

KEHINDE OSAGIEDÉ

Edo Chess athlete Okemakinde Toluwanimi, weekend, emerged as the champion of the maiden Benin U-25 Rapid Chess Tournament after scoring 8.5 points.

Okemakinde Toluwanimi clinched overall best position ahead of second placed Nyui-

ma, Tersee Ferdinand who also scored the same 8.5 points.

Another Edo athlete Emmanuel Joy Idara also scored 8.5 points to settle for the third position in the 2-day tournament which held between Friday 16-17, January 2026 at the Media Center of the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium in Benin.

The U-25 Rapid Chess

Tournament, sponsored by Cynthia Madu and Thomas Oparaugo's organisation Cyntoco Service Ltd had N2m total cash prize splashed on the winners.

Speaking on the final day of the event, the secretary of the Edo State Chess Association Ms Irene Ajibola commended the sponsors of the competition Cyntoco Service Ltd for considering Benin for the competition. She said that tournaments like this is good for the athletes as it keeps them active and enhances their skills.

The Edo Chess Association secretary called on well-meaning Edo people, particularly those in the diaspora to support the Association which yearns for regular competition for the athletes which is only possible through sponsorship of tournaments to sharpen the skills of the athletes



1ST BENIN CITY U-25 RAPID CHESS TOURNAMENT

2025/26 NPFL SEASON
MATCH DAY 21
DATES AND TIME OF FIXTURES COULD BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

16TH JANUARY 2026

BENDEL INSURANCE	3-2	EL KANEMI
IKORODU CITY FC	1-0	KWARA UNITED FC
NASARAWA UNITED	2-1	NIGER TORNAOES
ENYIMBA FC	0-0	BARAU FC
KANO PILLARS FC	0-1	ABIA WARRIORS FC
RIVERS UNITED FC	1-0	REMO STARS FC
BAYELSA UNITED	2-0	SHOOTING STARS SC
PLATEAU UNITED FC	1-0	WIKKI TOURISTS FC

19TH JANUARY 2026

WARRI WOLVES FC	2-0	KATSINA UNITED FC
KUN KHALIFAT FC	1-2	RANGERS INT'L FC

NPFL NEWS

FIFA president slams AFCON final chaos

FIFA President Gianni Infantino condemned "some Senegal players" for the "unacceptable scenes" which overshadowed their victory in Sunday's Africa Cup of Nations final when they walked off the pitch in protest at a penalty awarded to Morocco.

"It is unacceptable to leave the field of play in this manner, and equally, violence cannot be tolerated in our sport; it is simply not right."

African football's showpiece event was marred by most of the Senegalese players walking off the pitch when deep into injury time of normal play, with the match all square at 0-0, Morocco were awarded a spot-kick following a VAR check for a challenge on Brahim Diaz.

Senegal's former Liverpool star Sadio Mane remained on the pitch and urged his teammates to come back onto the pitch for the penalty.

They were already furious at having a goal disallowed at the other end for a soft-looking foul minutes earlier.

Meanwhile, trouble broke out in the stands as some Senegalese fans tried to enter the field of play and became involved in fighting with security personnel.

The game was held up for almost 20 minutes before Diaz

could take the penalty, and his weak 'panenka' kick was saved by Senegal goalkeeper Édouard Mendy.

Pape Gueye then went on to score a brilliant goal in the fourth minute of extra time to give his team a 1-0 win.

Infantino, while congratulating Morocco on "a fantastic tournament, both as runners-up and exceptional hosts" — a boost ahead of them co-hosting the men's 2030 World Cup — said teams have to abide by the match officials' decisions.

"We must always respect the decisions taken by the match officials on and off the field of play," he said.

"Teams must compete on the pitch and within the Laws of the Game, because anything less puts the very essence of football at risk."

Infantino, who will be hoping there are no such scenes in this year's World Cup finals being co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico, said images such as those on Sunday sent the wrong message to supporters round the world.

"It is also the responsibility of teams and players to act responsibly and set the right example for fans in the stadiums and millions watching around the world," he said.

"The ugly scenes witnessed today must be condemned and never repeated. I reiterated that they have no place in football and I expect that the relevant disciplinary bodies at CAF will take the appropriate measures."

FEATURES

Unlocking Nigeria's blue economy for national growth

DIANA OMUEZA (NAN)

Nigeria's oceans, rivers, and lakes hold enormous economic promise.

However, for many citizens, the term Blue Economy remains unfamiliar, distant, and poorly understood, in spite of its growing national attention.

According to the World Bank, the Blue Economy is the sustainable use of ocean and water resources for economic growth, livelihoods, and jobs, while preserving aquatic ecosystems for future generations.

In Nigeria, this concept spans shipping, fisheries, aquaculture, inland waterways, marine tourism, coastal infrastructure, and renewable energy.

Indeed, the blue economy represents an untapped economic frontier capable of supporting the livelihoods of millions if properly developed and understood.

Recognising this potential, President Bola Tinubu established the Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy in 2023 to coordinate maritime development and diversify the economy beyond oil.

Moreover, the Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Adegboye Oyetola, asserts that the sector can greatly boost non-oil revenue, reduce unemployment, and support national development if harnessed effectively.

He adds that Nigerians must understand how the blue economy affects their daily lives; from food prices

to jobs and transportation.

With an extensive coastline of about 853 kilometres, alongside vast rivers and lakes, the country is strategically positioned to benefit from fisheries, coastal tourism, shipping logistics, and renewable marine energy.

Experts also note that the sector can strengthen food security through improved fisheries and aquaculture, reducing dependence on imported fish and seafood products.

Nevertheless, many Nigerians continue to overlook the riches beneath their waters, failing to see the marine sector as a pathway to shared prosperity due to lack of knowledge.

Dr Chika Eze, a maritime analyst, explains that limited public understanding remains a major obstacle.

"Many Nigerians still associate the sea only with fishing, ignoring its wider economic value.

"Consequently, Nigeria's waters hold vast economic promise, yet many citizens remain unaware of how the blue economy can drive jobs, food security, and diversification," he said.

Globally, the United Nations estimates that the blue economy contributes over \$1.5 trillion annually, with developing countries harnessing marine resources to drive inclusive economic growth and strengthen climate resilience.

In this context, Nigeria, with its vast coastline and extensive inland waterways, is well positioned to tap into these opportunities, especially in

job creation, food security, and sustainable livelihoods across coastal and riverine communities.

Fisheries and aquaculture experts emphasise that better management and investment in the sector could greatly reduce Nigeria's reliance on fish imports while creating employment opportunities for youths and women along the value chain.

However, despite these potential benefits, awareness gaps have slowed community participation, private investment, and youth interest in maritime careers, even as policy attention grows at the federal level.

A vox pop conducted in Abuja revealed a striking knowledge gap among ordinary Nigerians, especially young people expected to drive future economic growth.

For instance, Amina Yusuf, a 300-level sociology student at the University of Abuja, says she has heard about the blue economy but lacks in-depth knowledge of the sector and its operations.

Similarly, Samuel Okorie, a final-year economics student, described the concept as abstract.

"We study diversification, but no one really explains how the sea or rivers fit into Nigeria's economy," he said.

Meanwhile, a youth corps member, Blessing Danjuma, admitted she associated marine activities strictly with coastal states but lacked knowledge of Nigeria's inland waterways, careers, and job opportunities related to the

blue economy.

On a slightly brighter note, Ibrahim Sadiq, a geography undergraduate, showed some awareness.

"I think it has something to do with fishing, ships, cargos, and using water resources to boost the country's economy," he said.

Experts argue that this limited understanding reflects weak public education and minimal integration of maritime studies into mainstream academic and civic discourse.

Dr Emeka Akabogu, a maritime economist, notes that awareness gaps reduce youth interest, private investment, and community participation across maritime value chains.

"When people don't understand opportunities, they can't prepare for them or demand accountability. Therefore, awareness is as important as infrastructure," he said.

Meanwhile, environmental analyst Dr Funke Adebayo warns that ignorance also fuels environmental abuse.

According to her, people protect what they understand.

"Without proper knowledge of the blue economy and the benefits of Nigeria's waters, they continue to be dumping grounds for waste, especially plastics."

To address this, Adebayo recommends media campaigns, simplified storytelling, documentaries, and human-interest features linking marine resources to everyday Nigerian experiences.

She also advocates for integrating blue economy studies into secondary and tertiary curricula, especially in coastal and riverine states, alongside campus seminars, debates, and innovation challenges to build early understanding and skills.

Furthermore, community outreach, town hall meetings, and partnerships with traditional institutions can help Nigerians see marine resources as assets for development rather than neglected spaces.

In addition, the supervising ministry should partner with the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA), and Nigerian Port Authority (NPA) to ensure unified messaging and visible grassroots engagement nationwide.

Ultimately, as Nigeria seeks economic diversification, unlocking the wealth beneath its waters will depend not only on policy but also on how well citizens understand, embrace, and participate in the blue economy.

Until awareness deepens, many Nigerians may continue walking past rivers and coastlines without realising the opportunities flowing quietly beneath their waters.

Nevertheless, analysts emphasise that economic gains must align with environmental sustainability to prevent pollution, overfishing, and ecosystem degradation.

(NAN Feature)

How struggles and triumphs shape life, rhythm in Agege market

MORONKE BOBOYE (NAN)

With a population of over about 700,000, Agege is centrally located in Lagos, with Abule Egba to the north, Ikeja to the south, Iyana Ipaja to the west, and Ogba to the east.

One of the strongest features of Agege is its market, which is more than a trading hub. It is located at Pen Cinema.

Agege market is the heartbeat of the Agege community, where traders' daily struggles and triumphs shape the rhythm of life and sustain families across the local government area.

The bustling market is a community where commerce, culture and survival intersect daily.

From dawn till dusk, traders navigate challenges while sustaining their families and shaping the rhythm of local life.

At 5.00 a.m., the first sounds of activity echo through the narrow alleys.

Women carrying baskets of vegetables arrive from nearby farms, while men unload trucks filled with food-stuffs.

The market awakens with a familiar

chorus of greetings, bargaining and prayers.

A vegetable seller, Mrs Yetunde Lawal fondly called "Mama Risi," describes the Agege market as her second home.

"This is our second home, we spend more time here than in our houses.

"It is where we earn, where we meet people, and where our children grow up.

I have traded here in Agege for over 20 years," she says.

The traders' residences are often modest homes in Agege and neighbouring communities.

Many live within walking distances, making the market both a workplace and social centre.

For Mr Ayodeji Adegbite, a young shoe trader, Agege market represents opportunities.

"I started with a small table. Now, I have rented a shop. It is not easy, but if you are patient, you can grow," he says.

He identifies inadequate infrastructure, irregular electricity supply and waste management issues as some challenges in the market.

According to him, during the rainy season, flooding often disrupts busi-

nesses and damages goods.

Mrs Kehinde Ojo, a fabrics seller in the market, calls for a better drainage system and cleaner surroundings.

"Customers hesitate when the environment is dirty. It affects our sales," she says.

She identifies security as a concern, saying that petty theft and night-time risks make traders anxious.

Ojo is hopeful that a recent street lighting project by the local council will bring relief.

Mr Ibrahim Abdulrahman, a meat seller, says the street lights have helped the traders to buy and sell at night without fear.

"Before, thieves would hide in dark corners; now, at least, we feel safer closing late."

Beyond commerce, Agege market is a cultural melting pot, many traders believe.

Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa and other ethnic groups co-exist peacefully in the market, each bringing unique products and traditions, and the diversity enriching the market's character.

Mrs Chinelo Okafor, who sells household items, describes the market as a big family.

"We are like one family here, even if we quarrel over prices and customers, we settle quickly because we depend on each other," she says.

The market's women leader known as Iyaloja of Orile Agege, Mrs Bola Orelaru, emphasises the importance of unity.

"Our strength is in cooperation, We organise ourselves, resolve disputes and support members in times of need," she says.

Orelaru highlights the role of women in sustaining the market.

"Women are the backbone here - from food to fabrics. We drive the daily economy, our resilience keeps the market alive," she says.

At Agege market, traders balance business with family responsibilities as mothers bring their children to do homework behind stalls or help with sales.

This makes the market an informal classroom of life skills.

According to Mrs Mariam Ilesami, a trader, her daughter learned calculation in the market.

In spite of challenges, Agege market traders remain optimistic.

They see the market as a place of

dignity, where hard work translates into survival and progress.

"We don't wait for the government alone," says Mr Gbenga Rotimi, who sells food stuff.

"We contribute to repairs, we clean our areas, we help one another. That is how we survive."

Some of the traders insist on consistent engagement as Agege Local Government's urban renewal agenda promises improvements.

"We want the government to listen to us directly, we know the problems because we live with them daily," Mrs Bukunmi Olayinka, a boutique owner, says.

For Agege residents, the market is more than commerce. It is a social hub where news spreads, friendships form and community bonds strengthen.

As the sun sets and stalls close daily, traders return to their homes carrying the day's earnings and hopes for tomorrow.

Voices in Agege market remain resilient, diverse and determined, echoing the enduring spirit of a community where commerce and survival walk hand-in-hand.

(NAN Feature)