

NDLEA arrests 77,792 suspects, seizes 14.8m kg of drugs in 5yrs

ABUJA

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has recorded significant operational successes over the past five years, arresting 77,792 suspects, including 128 high-profile drug barons and seizing over 14.8 million kilograms of illicit substances.

Retired Brig.-Gen. Buba

Marwa, Chairman of the agency, disclosed these figures on Tuesday at the 11th Chairman/Chief Executive Officer (CCEO) Awards and Commendation Ceremony in Abuja.

He said the agency also secured 14,225 convictions during the period, signalling that Nigeria is no longer a safe haven for drug traffickers.

“When I first resumed in 2021,

I promised to take the fight to the doorsteps of the merchants of death. Today, the numbers speak for themselves,” Marwa said. “Through our collective resilience, we have sent a clear message that Nigeria is no longer a safe haven for illicit drug enterprise.”

According to Marwa, the NDLEA’s operations disrupted both local and transnational drug supply chains, with seizures

totaling 14,847,486.34 kilograms of assorted illicit drugs.

He also highlighted the agency’s efforts in drug demand reduction through structured treatment, counselling, and rehabilitation programmes, noting that 32,442 drug users received professional intervention.

“Additionally, 13,735 War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) sensitisation activities were con-

ducted across schools, motor parks, workplaces, worship centres, and communities. These initiatives have expanded preventive awareness and citizen engagement nationwide,” he added.

Marwa acknowledged that the agency’s successes would not have been possible without support from the executive, legislature, and judiciary. He expressed profound appreciation

to President Bola Tinubu for his trust and unflinching support.

“These achievements are not accidental. They are the result of discipline, leadership, intelligence-led operations, and clear performance expectations. The successes of the past five years are merely a foundation. In this second tenure, we will escalate the war against drug abuse and trafficking to new heights,” he stated.

The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

Facebook Twitter Instagram YouTube NigerianObserver @Nigerian_Observer @NigerianObserver www.nigerianobservernews.com

PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968

VOL. 47, NO. 1,175

WEDNESDAY 21ST JANUARY 2026.

Nigeria's job-creation strategy anchored on macro-economic reform, private-sector growth —Tuggar

—Pg 2

Deliver or be dumped, Okpebholo tells contractors

● *Commissions rebuilt Oredo Girls School*

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has issued a stern warning to contractors handling government projects across the state, declaring that future jobs will be awarded strictly on the basis of performance, quality and speed of execution.

The governor made the position clear on Tuesday during a high-level stakeholders'

meeting with major contractors at the Government House, Benin City, where ongoing infrastructure projects were reviewed against agreed timelines, quality benchmarks and accountability standards.

Governor Okpebholo stressed that his administration's loyalty lies with the people of Edo State, not contractors, insisting that contract awards are meaningless without diligent supervision and

proper execution.

He noted that while work was ongoing at several sites, the pace of delivery on some projects remained unsatisfactory.

“One thing is to award a contract, another thing is to follow up, and the third is execution,” the governor said.

“I have been visiting project sites and I can see work in progress, but I am not happy with the pace of some of the pro-

jects. Projects that are seven to nine months old should show more visible progress.”

While commending companies such as CCECC and Setraco for improved performance, the governor dismissed claims that funding constraints were responsible for delays, stating categorically that contractors had been paid promptly.

“I can say it authoritatively that no contractor's payment has been delayed. Nobody lob-

bied us to get paid,” he said. “So if we are paying you quickly, you must also work fast and complete projects within the agreed time.”

Governor Okpebholo also warned against substandard work and attempts to seek contract revaluation, vowing that his administration would not entertain such requests.

“I don't delay payments because I don't want any form of revaluation. If you come to-

morrow to say I should reevaluate your contract, I will never do it,” he said. Since payment is not delayed, you must deliver as agreed.”

He further declared that contractors who meet expectations would be rewarded with additional jobs, while those who fall short would be sidelined.

“The faster and better you

CONTINUES ON PG 2



SIGNING OF 2026 APPROPRIATION BILL:

L-R: Lagos State Commissioner for Economy Planning and Budget, Mr Ope George; Chairman House Committee on Economy, Planning and Budget, Lagos State House of Assembly, Mr Lukman Olumo; Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State; Majority Leader of the State House of Assembly, Mr Noheem Adams and Commissioner for Justice/Attorney General, Lawal Pedro, during the signing of the 2026 Appropriation Bill into Law in Lagos.

Nigerian Army leverage on tech to tackle security threats

ABUJA

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt.-Gen. Waidi Shaibu has said that the Nigerian Army is gearing up to tackle 21st century security threats head-on, with technology at the forefront of its strategy.

Shaibu said this on Tuesday in Abuja while declaring open the Directorate of Inspections and Compliance Project Inspections Workshop 2026.

The army chief, represented by the Chief of Logistic Nigeria Army, Maj.-Gen. Adekunle Adeyinka, said the workshop, themed: Leveraging Technology: Panacea for Enhanced Inspection and Compliance,” was both timely and apt.

The army chief threw his weight behind a tech-driven approach to inspection and

compliance, signaling a major shift towards modernisation.

Shaibu noted that the workshop theme represented the Army's battle plan for the future.

He said that by harnessing digital inspection platforms, real-time reporting, and data analytics, the Nigerian Army aimed to boost transparency, accountability, and operational readiness.

According to him, technology-enabled inspections are instruments for performance enhancement, standardization, and institutional learning.

He said that this move was set to reinforce public confidence in the Nigerian Army as a disciplined and accountable institution.

“Inspections remain a vital command instrument for trans-

CONTINUES ON PG 2

Army steps up multi-pronged offensive against oil theft, rallies communities —GOC —Pg 4

Edo moves to reclaim abandoned industries, begins statewide asset audit —Pg 6

Colombia sentences ex-paramilitary leader Mancuso to 40 years in jail —Pg 9

Toure names Super Eagles of Nigeria best team at AFCON 2025 —Pg 11

Nigeria's job-creation strategy anchored on macro-economic reform, private-sector growth —Tuggar

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

Nigeria's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Yusuf Maitama Tuggar, has said that the Nigeria's job-creation strategy under the Tinubu administration is anchored on comprehensive macroeconomic reforms aimed at restoring stability and driving private-sector-led growth.

Tuggar made the remarks while speaking at the Africa Jobs Engine Panel on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum, according to a press release signed by Alkasim Abdulkadir, Special Assistant (Media) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The minister explained that the administration's approach to employment generation prioritises restoring macroeconomic stability and creating clear, investable pathways for the private sector, which he described as the primary engine of sustainable job creation.

He highlighted key reforms already undertaken by the federal government, including stabilising the foreign exchange regime, removing fuel subsidies, and ongoing power-sector restructuring that separates electricity generation, transmission, and distribution.

Tuggar said the reforms aim to improve transparency, reduce market distortions, and attract long-term private investment, particularly in energy-intensive and job-rich sectors of the economy.

The minister also disclosed that comprehensive tax reforms are underway to improve efficiency, enhance predictability, and strengthen Nigeria's competitiveness as a destination for business and investment.

Referencing Nigeria's recent hosting of the West Africa Economic Summit (WAES), Tuggar said the initiative was designed to bridge information gaps by equipping private-sector actors across the sub-region with practical knowledge of regional economic frameworks and opportunities.

These include the West African Power Pool and other regulatory instruments that can support cross-border investment and industrial growth.

While reaffirming the government's role in providing a stable and enabling environment, the minister stressed that the private sector remains central to job creation.

He pointed to the emergence of local production ecosystems increasingly transforming raw materials into finished goods, supported by stronger linkages between la-

bour, finance, and markets.

According to him, these developments are already expanding employment opportunities, particularly for women and young people. Tuggar further cautioned

that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) must remain focused on its core mandate of economic integration.

He said deepening intra-African trade, strength-

ening industrial linkages, and building regional value chains are critical to sustaining long-term growth and employment across the continent.

He concluded by reaffirming

Nigeria's commitment to reforms that strengthen investor confidence, unlock private capital, and position the country's economy as a platform for inclusive growth and job creation in Africa.



NDLEA 11TH AWARD AND RECOMMENDATION:

L-R: Secretary, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Mr Shadrach Haruna; Chairman of NDLEA, Mohammed Marwa and former Military Governor of Akwa Ibom, Col. Yakubu Bako (rtd), during the 11th Edition of Award and Recommendation of NDLEA in Abuja on Tuesday.

Nigerian Army leverage on tech to...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1»

lating policies, plans, and projects into tangible operational and administrative outcomes.

"Beyond its traditional oversight function, inspections serve as objective feedback mechanisms that enable commanders to identify systemic gaps, optimize resource utilization, enforce discipline and sustain operational readiness, in today's complex and dynamic operating environment.

"However, manual and fragmented inspection processes have become increasingly inadequate, necessitating the adoption of integrated, technology-driven solutions."

According to him, leveraging technology to enhance inspection and compliance processes aligns squarely with his command philosophy aims to transform the Nigerian Army into a more professional, adaptable, combat ready and resilient force capable of decisively discharging its constitutional responsibilities within a joint and multi-agency environment.

He stressed the need to interrogate how digital inspection platforms, real-time reporting systems, data analytics, and standardised compliance dashboards could be harnessed for improving transparency, accuracy, responsiveness, and decision-making across the Service.

According to him, as the security landscape evolves; the Nigerian Army is adapting, innovating, and preparing to take on modern challenges with modern solutions.

Shaibu reaffirms his commitment to entrenching a culture of transparency, accountability and excellence across all our operational and administrative concerns.

"As we embrace technology in this critical domain, we position the Nigerian Army as a forward-thinking institution capable of addressing contemporary challenges with modern solutions.

"Additionally, we demonstrate to our personnel that we are committed to employing every available tool to enhance their welfare, safety, and operational success."

He reassured Nigerians that the Army remained a responsible steward of national resources, firmly anchored on transparency and accountability.

The COAS said that the journey towards the full digital transformation will undoubtedly present challenges, including learning curves, resource demands, and the need for sustained institutional commitment.

"However, I am confident that with the professionalism, discipline, and dedication that define the Nigerian army, we will surmount these challenges and emerge stronger."

He expressed confidence that the workshop would yield tangible outcomes that will significantly enhance the army's capacity to fulfill its constitutional mandate of defending the territorial integrity of the nation

He added that it would also help in protecting the lives and property of all Nigerians.

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has announced plans to commence the distribution of Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) ahead of next month's Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Area Council elections.

The FCT Resident Electoral Commissioner, Mallam Aminu Idris, disclosed this in Abuja while briefing journal-

ists, saying the commission has put arrangements in place to ensure a smooth collection process across the territory.

Idris said PVCs would be distributed in all registration areas across the 62 political wards and the six Area Council INEC offices in the FCT. He explained that the exercise would last five days and would cover voters who registered during the last Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) exercise, as well as those who applied for relocation

within the territory.

According to him, INEC has engaged security agencies to guarantee a hitch-free exercise, and officials will also be deployed to rural areas to enable residents collect their cards without difficulty.

"The commission will continue to engage with stakeholders, including civil society organisations, to ensure that all eligible voters participate in the Area Council elections," he said.

The resident electoral commissioner emphasised that only voters in possession of

valid Permanent Voter Cards will be allowed to vote during the polls.

He also disclosed that INEC is consulting transport union leaders to ensure the timely deployment of election materials, particularly to areas with difficult terrain, to guarantee full participation of eligible voters.

Idris assured that persons with disabilities have been adequately considered in the arrangements for the February elections, in line with the commission's commitment to inclusive participation.

Deliver or be dumped, Okpebholo...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1»

perform, the faster we give you new projects. If you are not doing well, you will not get another job," the governor warned. "We want projects that will last for Edo people, so that the next governor in 10 or 20 years will focus on other priorities."

Citing recent inspections of Church Road and Ekenhuan Road in Benin City, the governor expressed concern over construction quality and inadequate drainage designs, directing that proper drainage systems must be provided on both sides of Ekenhuan Road to ensure durability and prevent premature damage.

Earlier, the Special Adviser on Projects, Phoebe-William Bello, and the Commissioner for Works, Dr Felix Akhabue, commended the governor for convening the meeting, describing it as a proactive engagement aimed at accelerating project delivery, particularly during the dry season.

Speaking on behalf of the contractors, Mr Nazil Nasr of NAFRO Nigeria Limited, handlers of the Benin Technical Road project, praised Governor Okpebholo for prompt payment of certificates, noting that although the project began under the previous administration, the present government had ensured its smooth continuation.

"The previous government delayed our payment, but since this administration came in, our payments have always been made. The government does not owe us," he said.

Other dignitaries at the meeting included retired General Cecil Esekhaigbe, APC leader for Esan Central Senatorial District, and the APC State Deputy Chairman, Mr Sylvester Aigbobo.

The meeting ended with a renewed commitment by contractors to accelerate work, strictly adhere to approved designs and quality standards, and maintain close commu-

nication with the Ministry of Works to promptly address emerging challenges.

Meanwhile, Governor Monday Okpebholo has commissioned the reconstructed Oredo Girls Secondary School, Awo Street, off First East Circular Road, Benin City, bringing to an end years of neglect and abandonment of the facility.

The governor was received by jubilant students and staff, who expressed gratitude to the Okpebholo administration for reviving what they described as a long-abandoned project and restoring hope to the school community.

Speaking at the commissioning ceremony, Okpebholo said the visible improvement in staffing and infrastructure was evidence that his administration's intervention in the education sector was yielding positive results.

"One thing that gives me joy today is the number of teachers I am seeing in this school.

"I remember that some time ago, when I visited, I saw just

two or three teachers here. Today, I am seeing over 20 teachers, and that shows that we are moving in the right direction," the governor said.

He assured the school community of government's commitment to addressing outstanding challenges, particularly power supply.

"As I have said, we are going to fix the light problem in this school. We will do our best to ensure this place is properly fixed for the betterment of our children," Okpebholo added.

Earlier, the Commissioner for Education, Hon. Paddy Iyamu, described the project as a clear example of "practical governance in action," noting that the school had previously become an eyesore and a hot-spot for undesirable activities.

"When His Excellency came into office, this place was an eyesore associated with nefarious activities. But the governor gave a clear instruction, declaring a state of emergency in our schools," Iyamu said.

'Nigeria's innovation ecosystem gaining global recognition'

ABUJA

The Federal Government has said Nigeria's innovation ecosystem is attracting growing global attention and enhancing the country's international reputation.

The Minister of Information and National Orientation, Alhaji Mohammed Idris, stated this on Tuesday at the Nigeria Reputation Summit 2026 in Abuja.

The summit, themed "Better Nigeria, Better Reputation," was organised by the Nigerian Reputation Management Group (NRMG), an initiative of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR).

Idris said the theme aligned with the findings of the Reputation Perception Index report, which placed Nigeria's reputation score at 35.2 percent.

Describing the figure as sobering, he said it provided a useful mirror for national self-assessment.

"A reputation score of 35.2 percent places Nigeria in a low-trust band and highlights the gap between our potential and global perception. This is not a verdict; it is a mirror," the minister said.

He noted that the data used for the report was gathered about seven years ago and did not fully reflect recent developments, particularly reforms

initiated under President Bola Tinubu over the last two years.

"We are not where we used to be. While perception often lags behind reality, progress is being made, and it must be communicated clearly, consistently and honestly," Idris said.

He pointed to Nigeria's growing fintech sector and rising confidence in the digital economy as evidence that the country's innovation ecosystem was boosting its global standing.

According to him, reputation is built when policy aligns with purpose and communication reflects truth, adding that government alone could not shoulder the responsibility of

rebuilding Nigeria's image.

Idris said the country had faced unfair scrutiny, including misleading reports portraying Nigeria as intolerant of religious freedom, but noted that the government was addressing such narratives through diplomacy, improved security cooperation and internal reforms.

"Redeeming Nigeria's image is a national call to duty. It requires collective effort, honest self-appraisal and confidence in projecting our progress," he said.

The minister commended the NRMG and the NIPR leadership, led by its President, Dr Ike Neliaku, for their consistency and vision, noting that

the group had delivered Nigeria's first comprehensive Reputation Perception Index within one year of its inauguration.

He also highlighted reforms in areas such as fuel subsidy

removal, education, democracy, press freedom and local government autonomy, saying they had repositioned Nigeria for growth and improved global perception.

Court adjourns trial of Anthony Joshua's driver to Feb 25

SAGAMU (OGUN)

A Magistrates' Court sitting in Sagamu, Ogun State, on Tuesday adjourned the trial of Adeniyi Kayode, the driver involved in the fatal road crash that killed two aides of former world heavyweight boxing champion, Anthony Joshua, to February 25.

Kayode, 45, is facing a four-count charge bordering on dangerous driving causing death, reckless and negligent driving, driving without due care resulting in bodily harm and damage to property, and driving without a valid driver's licence.

He had earlier been granted bail in the sum of N5 million with two sureties in like sum.

The News Agency of Nigeria reports that Kayode was arraigned on January 2 over the accident, which occurred on

December 29, 2025, along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway near Sinamo Company.

The defendant was driving a Lexus 570 jeep conveying Joshua and his aides, Latif Ayodele and Sina Ghami, when the crash occurred, leading to the death of Ayodele and Ghami. Joshua sustained minor injuries.

The prosecution counsel, Mr Richard Nijiwe, applied for an adjournment to allow the case file to be forwarded to the Ogun State Attorney-General's office through the Department of Public Prosecutions for legal advice.

Defence counsel, Mr Abiodun Olalekan, opposed the application, saying the defence was ready to proceed.

Ruling on the application, Magistrate Somefun granted the adjournment and fixed February 25 for further hearing.



1ST NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SCIENCE...

L-R: Acting Director-General, Sheda Science and Technology Complex Abuja, Dr Abayomi Orishadipe; President, African University of Science and Technology (AUST), Prof. Azikiwe Onwualu; Lead of Economy, Trade and Development, Embassy of the Czech Republic in Abuja, Ms Marie Nwanyanwu and the Keynote Speaker, Prof. Hilary Inyang, during the 1st National Conference on Science, Technology and Innovation Communication, at Raw Materials Hall, AUST in Galadimawa, Abuja.

UNODC calls for unified global action against rising synthetic drug threat

LAGOS

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has called for an urgent, coordinated and multidisciplinary global response to the growing threat posed by synthetic drugs.

Dr Justice Tettey, Chief of the Drugs, Laboratory and Scientific Services Branch of UNODC, made the call on Tuesday during the third annual open-ended intergovernmental meeting on the global synthetic drug problem, hosted in Vienna and

monitored virtually.

The meeting focused on integrated international responses across multilateral cooperation, counternarcotics interventions, early warning systems and health responses.

Tettey said the world was witnessing the emergence of new psychoactive substances at an unprecedented rate, with UNODC currently monitoring about 1,400 such substances globally.

"They are increasing at the rate of about two new substances a week," he said.

He noted that trafficking

methods had become more sophisticated, driven by the high potency and profitability of synthetic drugs, with criminal networks exploiting legitimate trade routes, supply chains and digital platforms.

"These networks continuously evolve, exploit legal loopholes and technological advancements, making traditional drug control responses increasingly inadequate," Tettey said.

He said the impact of synthetic drugs cut across public health, security, criminal justice systems, border management, financial systems and, in some cases, governance.

According to him, the UN-

ODC synthetic drug strategy was built on the need for urgent, coordinated and multilateral action.

Tettey stressed that while synthetic drugs posed a common global challenge, regional dynamics differed, requiring tailored solutions.

He emphasised the role of science in effective responses, noting that consistent application of scientific approaches would enable evidence-based policymaking and law enforcement.

He reaffirmed UNODC's commitment to supporting member states through scientific expertise, integrated programmes and international networks.

Treat terrorists as enemies of the State, Mutfwang tells Military

JOS

Governor Caleb Mutfwang of Plateau State has urged the Nigerian Armed Forces to treat terrorists and bandits as criminals and enemies of the state.

Mutfwang made the call on Tuesday in Jos during a visit by the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt.-Gen. Waidi Shuaibu.

While congratulating the COAS on his appointment, the governor said Plateau had enjoyed relative peace since the beginning of his tenure and called on the military to sustain and intensify its efforts.

"I have said it repeatedly that insurgents and terrorists must be seen as enemies of the state who threaten our sovereignty, and we must deal with them as

such," Mutfwang said.

He noted that the presence of the new army leadership had restored confidence in many communities, allowing residents to sleep peacefully.

The governor commended the General Officer Commanding (GOC), 3 Division, Maj.-Gen. Folunsho Oyinlola, for ensuring a peaceful Yuletide in the state.

In his response, the COAS praised the governor for ongoing developmental efforts and assured him of the army's commitment to improving security on the Plateau.

He said the security challenges in the state were surmountable with collective effort and informed the governor that his visit was part of an operational assessment of the 3 Division.

FG pushes review of workers' compensation framework

LAGOS

The Federal Government has called for a review of the workers' compensation framework to reflect current economic realities and provide better support for families affected by workplace accidents or deaths.

The Minister of State for Labour and Employment, Mrs Nkeiruka Onyejeocha, made the call on Tuesday in Lagos at the Safe Workplace Intervention Project (SWIP) 2025 Interactive Enlightenment Forum and Awards Ceremony.

The event was organised by the Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA) in collaboration with the Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF).

Onyejeocha described the Employees' Compensation Act 2010 as central to the shared responsibility of government and employers in protecting workers, noting that the law affirmed the value of Nigerian workers beyond mere compliance.

She said the compensation

framework required urgent review, stressing that payments to families of deceased workers were often inadequate.

"Workplace safety is both a legal and moral obligation. Prevention remains better than cure," the minister said.

She added that enforcement of the Factories Act and nationwide workplace inspections were being intensified, insisting that job creation must not come at the expense of human lives.

Also speaking, the Minister of Labour and Employment, Alhaji Muhammad Dingyadi, urged employers to prioritise safety through effective risk management and compliance with labour laws.

Dingyadi said workplace safety should be viewed as an investment in human capital rather than a cost, noting that sustained collaboration among government, employers and workers was key to safer and more productive workplaces.

He commended NECA and NSITF for promoting social partnership and congratulated organisations recognised for setting high safety standards.



ONYEJECHA

NEWS

Army steps up multi-pronged offensive against oil theft, rallies communities —GOC

PORT HARCOURT

The Nigerian Army has adopted a multi-pronged strategy anchored on sustained patrols, intelligence-led operations and community ownership to curb oil theft and illegal bunkering in the Niger Delta.

The General Officer Com-

manding (GOC), 6 Division, Nigerian Army, Maj.-Gen. Eric Emekah, disclosed this on Tuesday in Port Harcourt during a media interaction as part of the media tour of the Land Component of Operation DELTA SAFE.

Emekah said security forces were adapting to the evolving tactics of criminal elements by strengthening surveillance, im-

proving coordination with sister agencies and deepening engagement with host communities.

According to him, oil thieves often deploy sophisticated methods, including blocking waterways and laying long hoses from pipelines into remote creeks and communities, making detection difficult.

He said the Army had responded by increasing patrol frequency, revisiting cleared locations and expanding intelligence networks to deny criminals freedom of action.

"We have learnt that destroying illegal sites alone is not enough. That is why we now go back repeatedly to

those locations to ensure they are not re-established," he said.

The GOC added that the Division was also disrupting support structures sustaining illegal refining, including markets, logistics and patronage.

"If there is no market, there will be no production. We have engaged communities, businesses and service providers to stop supporting illegal activities, and this has significantly reduced their operations," he said.

Emekah stressed that community engagement remained central to the strategy, noting that host communities were being encouraged to take ownership of critical national assets.

"When communities see these facilities as their own and understand the benefits of protecting them, it becomes easier to sustain peace and security," he said.

He acknowledged manpower and equipment challenges but expressed confidence that ongoing Federal Government interventions would bridge the gaps and enhance operational effectiveness.

Reiterating the Army's professionalism, Emekah said discipline and accountability were strictly enforced, with erring personnel sanctioned in line with military regulations.

He disclosed that improved security, community cooperation and inter-agency collabo-

ration had resulted in zero incidents of pipeline vandalism in the Division's Area of Responsibility in the last one year.

According to him, the gains have also supported increased crude oil output, contributing to national economic recovery and aligning with the Federal Government's target of three million barrels per day by 2027.

The GOC assured that 6 Division would continue to refine its strategies, strengthen partnerships and remain proactive in safeguarding Nigeria's oil and gas infrastructure, while reaffirming the Army's commitment to protecting democracy and ensuring peace in Rivers State.

Police arrest bus driver over alleged killing of lover in Benin

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Police Command has arrested a 42-year-old mini-bus driver, Osabuohen Igerevba, for allegedly killing his 32-year-old lover, Joy Jerome, in Benin City.

The command's Public Relations Officer, ASP Eno Ikoedem, disclosed this to journalists on Tuesday in Benin City.

She said the incident was reported on January 10 by the Ohen, the Chief Priest of Ikpe community, who alerted the police to the discovery of a lifeless female body by the roadside near a river.

"Operatives of the Idogbo Division immediately responded. The body was moved to the hospital where she was confirmed dead and later deposited at the Stella Obasanjo Mortuary," Ikoedem said.

Investigations identified the deceased as Joy Jerome, a resident of Upper Sakponba Road, Benin City, and led to the arrest of the suspect, who resides in the same area.

According to the police spokesperson, further investi-

gations revealed that the suspect and the deceased were in a romantic relationship, with events leading to her death occurring on January 9.

She said the suspect allegedly picked up the victim that night, during which an argument ensued over allegations of infidelity and lack of communication.

"In the heat of the argument, he parked the vehicle along the road and assaulted her. She became unresponsive and was rushed to a hospital, where she was confirmed dead on arrival," Ikoedem said.

She added that the suspect later dumped the body near a river out of panic, where it was discovered the following day.

The police confirmed that the suspect was in custody and had confessed, while investigations continue.

Using the incident to caution the public, Ikoedem urged young women to be vigilant in their relationships and advised against abusive relationships and quarrels in isolated places.

"Domestic violence should never be ignored. Early reporting can save lives," she said.

C'River cuts traffic offences from 35 to four to ease transport costs

CALABAR

The Commercial Transport Regulatory Agency (CTRA) in Cross River State has reduced traffic offences from 35 to four in a bid to ease transport costs, reduce harassment and support transport operators.

The Chairman of the agency, Mr Efa Nyong, disclosed this in an interview with newsmen on Tuesday in Calabar while outlining plans for the transport sector in 2026.

Nyong said the reforms were designed to ease the cost of doing business, improve driver welfare and streamline regulation without compromising safety.

Under the new framework, commercial drivers aged 60 years and above will enjoy free registration and exemption from operational levies, while female commercial drivers will also be registered free of charge and operate without regulatory fees.

He said the remaining offences include refusal to register a vehicle, refusal to purchase daily operational toll tickets, overloading and failure to use seat belts.

"All other infractions, including broken windscreens, have been removed to minimise harassment and ensure smoother transport operations," Nyong said.

He also disclosed that the agency was finalising arrangements with Leadway Insurance to compensate the families of registered drivers in the event of death.

On enforcement, Nyong said penalties for the four offences range between N5,000 and N10,000, as stipulated in the official enforcement chart.

He acknowledged complaints of excesses by some taskforce members but assured that enforcement procedures allow flexibility for drivers genuinely unable to pay fines.



ROAD WALK:

Coordinator, 2025-2026 Rotary Day Celebration Committee, (RODAC) Plateau State, Owolabi Folaranmi (R), with other Rotary members, during a Road Walk to mark the 121 years of Rotary International in Jos on Tuesday.

NICA urges Tinubu to partner professionals for credit-driven economy

LAGOS

The National Institute of Credit Administration (NICA), chartered, has called on President Bola Tinubu to deepen collaboration with statutory professional bodies to fast-track Nigeria's transition from a cash-based to a sustainable, credit-driven economy.

The call was made on Tuesday in Lagos in a joint statement by NICA's Registrar/Chief Executive Officer, Prof. Chris Onalo, and its President and Chairman of the Govern-

ing Council, Dr Markie Idowu.

The institute said it was empowered by the NICA Act 26 of 2022 to support the Federal Government on issues of credit administration, credit management and ethical credit practices.

According to the statement, building a functional credit economy requires deliberate consultation with specialists and professional institutions, warning that inadequate engagement could slow reforms and lead to avoidable policy errors.

NICA noted that Nigeria's complex economy demands inclusive thinking and expert

input in policy formulation and implementation, adding that governments record better outcomes when they engage credible professional bodies with statutory mandates.

While acknowledging efforts to expand access to credit, the institute expressed concern over gaps in policy design and the absence of a clear implementation roadmap.

"Nigeria's economy is complex and requires inclusive thinking that embraces expert input into policy formulation and implementation," the statement said.

NICA reaffirmed its commitment to training Nigerians, raising nationwide awareness

and promoting values of honesty, integrity and trust, alongside advocating legal frameworks that support effective credit default recovery.

It stressed that professional bodies, though not government-funded, provide value-based inputs essential to policy success, noting that such partnerships are standard global practice.

The institute congratulated Nigerians and the government as the nation enters 2026, urging the Federal Government to institutionalize collaboration with key stakeholders to build a people-centred credit economy capable of creating jobs, building wealth and boosting GDP growth.

Rivers revenue service, NUJ partner on public sensitisation of new tax law

PORT HARCOURT

The Rivers State Internal Revenue Service (RIRS) has announced plans to collaborate with the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) to ensure effective public sensitisation on the new national tax law.

The Chairman of RIRS, Mr Israel Egbunefu, made this known on Tuesday in Port

Harcourt during a visit to the Rivers Council of the NUJ.

Represented by his Special Adviser on Special Duties, Dr Emmanuel Legbosi, Egbunefu said the media had a critical role to play in educating the public and easing acceptance of the new tax regime.

He explained that the visit was part of the agency's advocacy efforts to reduce public

anxiety and misconceptions surrounding the law.

According to him, the new tax law would curb exploitation by fake tax collectors and enable citizens to identify fraudulent tax documents.

"Rivers people need to know what the law is all about. We need the media to work with us to achieve this," he said.

Responding, the Rivers

Council Chairman of NUJ, Mr Paul Bazia, reaffirmed the media's commitment to public enlightenment on government policies and programmes.

Bazia said journalists play a vital role in simplifying complex government policies for public understanding and urged RIRS to partner the union in training programmes to better equip journalists for the task

11 die, 7 injured in Benin-Agbor road crash

BENIN CITY

No fewer than 11 persons were killed and seven others injured in a fatal road accident at Okhuahe community along the Benin-Agbor Road in Edo State.

The crash, which occurred on Saturday, involved an

18-seater commercial bus heading towards Lagos and a truck.

Eyewitnesses said the accident happened when the bus driver attempted to overtake another vehicle and collided head-on with an oncoming truck.

Confirming the incident, the

Edo Sector Commander of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), Mr Cyril Mathew, said 11 passengers died on the spot, while seven sustained varying degrees of injuries.

"The bus attempted a wrongful overtaking and collided head-on with an oncoming truck," Mathew said,

adding that the corpses were evacuated to the morgue while the injured were taken to nearby hospitals.

He cautioned motorists against dangerous driving habits, particularly wrongful overtaking, warning that such actions continued to claim innocent lives on Nigerian highways



TURBANING CEREMONY:

Dr Suleman Ikhuriah (2nd left) supported by Alhaji Aneru Oameh, Chief Imam, UNIBEN Mosque - Ekenwan Campus (middle) and other imams during the turbaning ceremony of Ikhuriah.

NAF destroys 131 illegal refineries, cripples oil theft in 2025

PORT HARCOURT

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF), under the Air Component of Joint Task Force Operation Delta Safe (OPDS), destroyed no fewer than 131 illegal refining sites across the Niger Delta in 2025, significantly degrading crude oil theft operations.

The disclosure was made during a briefing in Port Harcourt on the activities of the

Air Component and the NAF 115 Special Operations Group, as part of a media tour for defence correspondents.

According to the briefing presented by Flight Lieutenant Aro, the Air Component conducted 495 missions in 779 sorties, logging over 784 flight hours in support of joint operations.

It said sustained air operations denied criminals freedom of action and enabled

ground and maritime forces to consolidate gains, contributing to improved crude oil production and national revenue.

Air assets deployed included T-129 ATAK attack helicopters, EC-135 helicopters, Diamond-62 aircraft and Wing Loong II Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles, which played key roles in intelligence gathering and interdiction.

The briefing added that intelligence-driven operations led to the destruction of illegal installations, 36 wooden boats, 23 reservoirs and dugout pits,

as well as 125 storage tanks containing stolen petroleum products.

Commander of the 115 Special Operations Group, Group Capt. Abdulafeez Opaleye, said that oil theft had become more sophisticated, urging stronger community engagement to sustain gains.

The Director of Defence Media Operations, Maj.-Gen. Michael Onoja, commended the Air Component and called for stronger civil-military relations and accurate media reporting to boost public confidence.

Unity Bank upgrades Unifi app to boost security, speed

LAGOS

Unity Bank Plc has unveiled an upgraded version of its Unifi mobile banking application to enhance security, improve transaction speed and simplify digital payments.

In a statement on Tuesday, the bank said Unifi version 2.3

comes with enhanced security protocols, expanded quick-action features, improved bill payment options and an upgraded Nigeria Quick Response (NQR) function for faster QR transactions.

Speaking on the upgrade, the Divisional Head, Retail, SME, Digital Banking and Fin-tech Partnerships, Ms Adenike

Abimbola, said the improvements were driven by sustained customer feedback.

She said the upgrade reflects the bank's response to growing demand for speed, convenience and security in digital banking, assuring customers of seamless and reliable transactions anytime and anywhere.

Abimbola added that Unity

Bank would continue to invest in technology partnerships and platform enhancements to promote financial inclusion and improve customer experience.

Unifi, originally introduced to expand the bank's retail footprint among young and digitally savvy customers, has since grown into a core driver of its retail banking strategy.

Aiyedatiwa pledges expanded skills training to tackle unemployment

AKURE

Ondo State Governor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa, has pledged to expand skill acquisition programmes as part of efforts to boost job creation and reduce poverty across the state.

The governor made the

pledge on Tuesday in Akure at the graduation of the first batch of the 2025 Skill Acquisition Trainees under the O'Datiwa Skill Up a Woman Initiative.

Beneficiaries trained in tailoring, interior decoration, soap making, catering and ICT received equipment such as sewing machines, ovens, lap-

tops and start-up grants.

Represented by his deputy, Dr Laide Adelami, Aiyedatiwa said the government would intensify monitoring of training centres and strengthen partnerships for apprenticeship and job placement.

He urged beneficiaries to use the skills and resources ju-

iciously, stressing quality, ethics and customer satisfaction.

The Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Dr Seun Osamaye, said the programme had restored hope to beneficiaries, describing women as multipliers capable of driving economic growth when empowered.

Marwa honour 166 NDLEA officers, vows tougher war on drug cartels

ABUJA

The Chairman of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), retired Brig.-Gen. Buba Marwa, has honoured 166 personnel and 17 commands for outstanding service and dedication to duty.

The awards were presented at the 11th Chairman/Chief Executive Officer awards ceremony held on Tuesday in Abuja.

Marwa charged officers to brace for more tactically sophisticated operations against drug cartels, traffickers and couriers during the next phase of his second tenure.

He said the agency would sustain relentless pressure until every drug baron and trafficker is taken off the streets, stressing that there would be no room for complacency.

Marwa described the awards as part of NDLEA's internal motivation system, noting that sustained motivation had contributed to the agency's improved performance in recent years.

He also acknowledged the support of international partners, sister agencies, civil society and the media, calling for deeper collaboration to safeguard the future of Nigerian children.

7 kidnapped Edo residents freed after ransom payment

IDAHOUSA MUSA

Seven residents of Imoga Community in Akoko Edo Local Government Area of Edo State have regained their freedom after being held by suspected kidnapers, following the payment of an undisclosed ransom.

The victims were released on Monday evening, bringing an end to days of fear and uncertainty in the community.

Confirming the development, Dr. Bode Ekundayo, Coordinator of the Movement for the Advancement of Akoko Edo People, said the abducted individuals had been reunited with their families.

"Victims have now been released after the payment of a huge ransom," Ekundayo told journalists on Tuesday. He, however, declined to disclose the amount paid, saying he was not in a position to provide such details.

Ekundayo also revealed that an eighth victim, who escaped during the abduction, is receiving medical attention at an undisclosed hospital.

According to him, the community mobilised efforts that eventually led to the release of the captives.

He described the ordeal as traumatic but expressed optimism that the victims would make a full recovery.

The traditional ruler of Imoga Community, Oba Patrick Abudu, confirmed the release and described the mood in the town as jubilant.

Residents reportedly turned out in large numbers to welcome the freed victims at the boundary between Imoga and Okene after news of their release spread. "It was like a special festival. People came out en masse to rejoice. Despite the ordeal, our unity made the difference," the monarch said.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **AGHOLOR CHUKWUEMEKA** now wish to be known and address as **AGHOLOR EMEKA** and also my correct date of birth is **24/8/1984** and not **12/6/1984**, former documents remain valid concerned authorities and general public please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **INEGBENOSE VICTORY IWINOSE** and **INEGBENOSE VICTORY** are one and the same person Henceforth I now wish to be known and address as **IWINOSE VICTORY IWINOSE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **ILENOWA MONDAY**, now wish to be known and address as **ANTHONY MONDAY**. All former documents remain valid. General public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **ANIGARA BEATRICE** now wish to be known and address as **IYONMAHAN BEATRICE**. All former documents remain valid. General public please take note.

ADDITION OF MIDDLE NAME/CHANGE OF NAME

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

CHANGE OF NAME

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

REMOVAL OF SURNAME

The general public is hereby notified that **OGHENOVUN SALVATION RUKY** and **OGHENOVUN AGBAMITORTOR SALVATION RUKY** are one and the same person. Henceforth, I now wish to be known as **OGHENOVUN SALVATION RUKY**; former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public, please take note.

Classified
Advert Space
for Sale

NEWS

Edo moves to reclaim abandoned industries, begins statewide asset audit

BETTY IDIALU

The Edo State Government has commenced a comprehensive audit of abandoned and non-functional industrial facilities across the state, in a renewed push to revive moribund industries and stimulate economic growth.

The exercise, which cuts across the three senatorial districts, is being led by the Commissioner for Business, Trade and Investment, Mr Omoh Anabor, in line with the Senator Monday Okpebholo administration's SHINE Agenda on industrialisation, job creation and revenue growth.

Speaking during an inspection of the Edo State Pharmaceutical Store along Medical Stores Road,

Benin City, the commissioner expressed concern over the level of decay at the facility, attributing it to years of neglect.

"What we are seeing here is unacceptable. If properly maintained and utilised, these facilities would have provided employment for thousands of Edo youths, reduced social vices and generated substantial revenue for the state," Anabor said.

He stressed that the current administration would not allow public assets to waste away, adding that viable facilities would either be revived or integrated into a broader industrial development strategy.

"The Okpebholo administration is determined to ensure that public investments are repositioned to serve the economic

interests of the people," he said.

Anabor was accompanied by management staff of the ministry, including the Director of Policy and Statistics, Alaba Okun; Director of Media and Publicity, Betty Idialu; Mr Justice Osagie of the Department of Policy and Statistics; and the

Personal Assistant to the Commissioner, Engr Donald.

While conducting the team around the facility, the Head of Accounts, Essential Drugs Department, Mr Daniel Oshioyogie, explained that parts of the premises currently house units of the Ministry of Health, the Primary Health Care Department and the Essential Drugs Unit. He added that some sections were undergoing renovation

by the Federal Government.

Also speaking, Mr Okoloise underscored the need to safeguard abandoned public assets against vandalism and illegal occupation pending their revival.

Other facilities inspected include the Ava Cement factory in Ikpeshi; an industrial plant in Irrua, Esan Central Local Government Area; the Auchu Textile Mill in Etsako West; the Ehor Fruit Juice Processing Industry

in Uhumwonde; and the Bendel Brewery in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area.

According to the commissioner, the inspections are part of a wider plan to identify viable assets, attract strategic partnerships and strengthen Edo State's industrial base.

"Our goal is to turn abandoned structures into productive assets that work for the people of Edo State," Anabor said.

FRSC foils suspected child trafficking in Nyanya, rescues 17 children

● Redeploys senior officers

ABUJA

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) said it had intercepted a suspected child trafficking operation in Nyanya, Abuja, and rescued 17 minors.

The corps said the rescued children were handed over to the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) for further investigation.

The FRSC Corps Marshal, Malam Shehu Mohammed, disclosed this in a statement issued by the Corps Public Education Officer (CPEO), Mr Olusegun Ogungbemi, on Tuesday in Abuja.

Mohammed said that the interception occurred on Saturday, January 17, during a routine afternoon patrol by operatives of the Nyanya unit command.

He explained that the patrol team stopped a white Sharon vehicle with registration number SHD 253 YU at the Building Materials axis of the area.

He said that the vehicle, driven by one Mr Nanle John, 36, was reportedly travelling from Shendam in Plateau State to Kaiama Local Government Area of Kwara State.

According to him, the patrol team became suspicious after observing an unusually high number of passengers, comprising 17 young boys and girls, crammed inside the vehicle.

"Two of the minors were concealed in the boot of the vehicle, further raising concerns of a possible human trafficking attempt.

"The vehicle was immediately impounded and the Unit Commander briefed, while preliminary questioning of the driver produced unsatisfactory explanations.

"In line with established protocols and inter-agency collaboration, the Divisional Police Officer, Mararaba Divi-

sion, was promptly contacted.

"The driver, the vehicle and all the children were thereafter formally handed over to the Nigeria Police Force for further investigation," he said.

Mohammed said that the interception showed that the responsibility of the FRSC went beyond traffic control to the protection of lives in all ramifications.

The Corps Marshal said officers of the Corps were trained to be vigilant, humane and responsive to suspicious movements on the highways.

He noted that although the FRSC does not have the statutory mandate to investigate human trafficking, its responsibility to protect lives, identify suspicious activities and alert relevant security agencies had been professionally discharged in the incidence.

The FRSC boss commended the swift response of the NPF and reassured the public of the Corps continued commitment to vigilance, professionalism and inter-agency cooperation in safeguarding lives across the nation's highways.

He disclosed that the Commissioner of Police in Nasarawa State, CP Shetima Jauro Mohammed, subsequently ordered that the rescued children be taken into protective custody at the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) in Lafia.

He added that the Police commissioner also directed a comprehensive investigation to identify and dismantle any network linked to the suspected trafficking operation.

Meanwhile, the FRSC has announced the posting and redeployment of several senior officers across key commands and formations nationwide, in a bid to strengthen operational efficiency and leadership oversight.



ROAD WALK:

Members of Rotary Club District 9127 Nigeria, during a Road Walk to mark the 121 years of Rotary International in Jos on Tuesday.

Court session disrupted as 'Auxiliary' collapses in Ibadan

IBADAN

Proceedings at the Oyo State High Court in Ibadan were abruptly halted on Tuesday after Alhaji Mukaila Lamidi, popularly known as Auxiliary, collapsed inside the courtroom.

Lamidi reportedly slumped while seated and awaiting the hearing of his case, causing panic among court officials and observers.

A court official said the presiding judge, Justice Bayo Taiwo, immediately suspended

proceedings following the medical emergency and adjourned the sitting.

The incident occurred during the hearing of Suit No. 1/74c/2024, The State vs. Mukaila Lamidi (Auxiliary).

Lamidi, a former chairman

of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) in Oyo State, is standing trial on 17 counts bordering on alleged armed robbery, murder, attempted murder and unlawful possession of firearms, including an AK-47 rifle and two SMG rifles.

Payment delays threaten economy, contractors warn FG

ABUJA

Indigenous contractors executing Federal Government projects have warned that continued delays in payment are undermining economic development and worsening unemployment.

Members of the All Indigenous Contractors Association of Nigeria (AICAN) resumed protests in Abuja on Monday, demanding the release of about N4 trillion allegedly owed for projects executed under the 2024 Federal Government budget.

The protesters barricaded the entrance of the Federal Ministry of Finance, insisting they would not leave until their outstanding payments were settled.

Speaking on Tuesday, the second day of the protest, a National Executive Member of AICAN, Mr Johnson Akinsehinwa, said non-payment of contractors was damaging to the economy and exposing businesses to severe financial losses.

He warned that the situation could fuel unemployment and social vices such as insecurity, banditry and insurgency, particularly among idle youths.

"Nigeria's economy largely depends on government spending. Outside oil and a few agricultural products, government releases are what stimulate economic activities," Akinsehinwa said.

He added that poor budget implementation had compounded the problem, noting that the 2024 budget had re-

portedly been implemented at about 50 percent.

Another National Executive Member of the association, Mr Saidu Jega, said government remained central to resolving the crisis, as Ministries, Departments and Agencies serve as the procuring entities for capital projects that sustain jobs and livelihoods.

He urged the Federal Government to fast-track payments to contractors to prevent further economic disruption.

Protest: AbdulRazaq orders closure of Kwara Poly over NYSC Camp tension

ILORIN

Kwara State Governor, Abdulrahman Abdul-Razaq, has ordered the closure of Kwara Polytechnic following protests by students over the use of the institution as a temporary National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) orientation camp.

The directive was contained in a statement issued on Tues-

day by the Acting Registrar of the institution, AbdulHafis Amin.

According to the statement, the polytechnic was designated as a temporary NYSC camp due to prevailing security challenges in the state. While the arrangement posed no problem during earlier orientation exercises, the current batch coincided with full academic activities.

To prevent a breakdown of

law and order, management granted students a three-week break to enable the smooth conduct of the NYSC programme.

However, some students reportedly protested the decision, arguing that they had just resumed from the yuletide break, leading to heightened tension on campus.

Police intervention followed, but the statement alleged that some officers exceeded their

mandate by firing tear gas canisters into the campus, including student hostels.

Several students and staff were affected, while the Polytechnic's Chief Security Officer reportedly sustained injuries.

Management has appealed to students, staff and other stakeholders to remain calm, assuring that engagements with relevant authorities are ongoing to resolve the matter peacefully.

JUDICIARY

NEWS

Leadership crisis: Court dismisses Anyanwu's suit against INEC, PDP leaders

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Tuesday dismissed a suit filed by Senator Samuel Anyanwu, former factional National Secretary of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), seeking official recognition as the party's national scribe.

Justice Mohammed Umar dismissed the suit after it emerged that Anyanwu's tenure as PDP national secretary had expired in December 2025, thereby rendering the matter overtaken by events.

The suit, marked FHC/ABJ/CS/254/2025, was instituted against the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and a former Acting National Chairman of the PDP, Umar Damagun, as first and second defendants.

In an ex parte motion dated and filed on February 13, 2025, through his counsel, Ken Njemanze, Anyanwu sought two interim injunctions.

He asked the court to restrain INEC from accepting, acting on or giving effect to any correspondence from the PDP

not signed by him, pending the determination of a motion on notice.

He also sought an order restraining Damagun from dispatching any PDP correspondence to INEC not countersigned by him.

On February 28, 2025, the court joined the PDP and Mr Sunday Udeh-Okoye as third and fourth defendants. Justice Umar also joined Dr Ali Odela, PDP National Vice Chairman (South East), and Mr Setonji Koshodo, the party's Deputy National Secretary, as fifth and sixth defendants respectively.

When the matter was called, U.C. Njemanze-Aku, who appeared for Anyanwu, informed

the court that his client's tenure as PDP secretary had expired in December 2025. He said it would be improper to continue with a matter that had been overtaken by events and applied to withdraw the suit.

Responding, counsel to INEC, Akintayo Balogun, argued that the suit ought not to have been filed in the first place and urged the court to dismiss it with a cost of N1 million. Counsel to Damagun, M.O. Akpan, and counsel to Udeh-Okoye, Ugochukwu Okanu, aligned with the request and also sought N1 million each. Counsel to the sixth defendant, J.A. Musa, raised no objection to the withdrawal but demanded N1 million as costs.

Njemanze-Aku opposed the award of costs, arguing that the withdrawal was due to circumstances beyond the plaintiff's control and done to avoid wasting the court's time.

In his ruling, Justice Umar dismissed the suit but declined to award costs. He held that the delay was not caused by any party and that the situation warranted no penalty.

The PDP leadership crisis began when Anyanwu vacated the secretary position to contest the 2023 Imo governorship election, which he lost. Attempts to reclaim his seat triggered internal disputes, with Udeh-Okoye emerging as a rival claimant.

On December 20, 2024, the Court of Appeal in Enugu upheld a Federal High Court judgment removing Anyanwu and affirming Udeh-Okoye as the authentic secretary. Anyanwu appealed to the Supreme Court, which in March 2025 overturned the lower courts' decisions and reinstated him.

Despite the apex court ruling, factional disputes persisted, prompting Anyanwu to file a fresh enforcement suit in Abuja.

In November 2025, Justice Umar allowed an amendment of the originating summons but awarded N30,000 costs to each defendant before adjourning the case to January 20, 2026.



ROAD COMMISSIONING:

Ogun State Governor, Dapo Abiodun, during the commissioning of the Laderin-Prof. Wole Soyinka Train Station Road in Abeokuta, Ogun State as part of activities marking the state's 50th anniversary, yesterday.

EFCC arraigns Mompha's associate over alleged N206m fraud

IKEJA

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) on Tuesday arraigned a businessman, Sarumi Babafemi, before an Ikeja Special Offences Court over an alleged N206 million fraud.

Babafemi, described as an associate of social media celebrity Ismail Mustapha, popularly known as Mompha, was charged alongside three companies — 606 Autos Ltd, 606 Music Ltd and

Splash Off Entertainment Ltd.

They are facing a five-count charge bordering on conspiracy, concealment and transfer of proceeds of crime amounting to N206 million.

The EFCC alleged that Babafemi, the Managing Director of the companies, conspired with Mompha and two others, Ridwan Allison and Richard Ugbah, who are currently at large, to conceal the origin of illicit funds and transfer proceeds of unlawful activities.

According to the prosecution, the offences were com-

mitted between 2013 and 2018 in Lagos, where the defendant allegedly used his companies to conceal the origin of the funds.

The EFCC further alleged that Babafemi transferred N37.6 million to one Omojadesola Allison, knowing the money formed part of proceeds of crime.

The commission said the offences contravened Sections 332(1) and 323(2) of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2011.

The defendant pleaded not guilty to the charges. Prosecuting counsel, Ayanfe Ogunsina, urged the court to remand Ba-

bafemi pending trial.

However, defence counsel, Kunle Adegoke (SAN), told the court he only received the charge the previous day and worked overnight to prepare a bail application.

He undertook to produce the defendant in court on the next adjourned date.

Justice Rahman Oshodi granted bail and ordered that Babafemi be released to his counsel upon the filing of an affidavit of undertaking.

The case was adjourned to March 24 for trial.

Alleged N19.4bn fraud: Sirika trial stalled as EFCC fails to produce documents

ABUJA

The trial of former Minister of Aviation, Hadi Sirika, and three others was stalled on Tuesday after the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) failed to provide key documents requested by the defence.

Sirika is standing trial alongside his brother, Ahmad Abubakar, and two companies — Al-Buraq Limited and Enginos Nigeria Limited — on a

10-count charge bordering on abuse of office, criminal breach of trust and gratification.

The EFCC alleged that Sirika used his position to award contracts worth about N19.4 billion to his brother.

It alleged that Enginos Nigeria Limited, whose alter ego is Ahmad, was unfairly awarded a N1.34 billion contract for a terminal building at Katsina Airport and a N3.81 billion contract for a Fire Truck Maintenance and Refurbishment Centre at the same airport.

The commission further alleged that Ahmad and Enginos Nigeria Limited were in possession of over N2.33 billion, which they allegedly knew represented proceeds of crime.

The offences were said to contravene provisions of the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act, the EFCC Act and the Penal Code.

During proceedings, EFCC witness and Director of Compliance at the Bureau of Public Procurement, Ganiyu Yesufu,

was due for cross-examination. Defence counsel Michael Numa (SAN), holding brief for Kanu Agabi (SAN), requested Exhibit C1 and Annexure 2 — the contract approval documents.

Prosecution counsel Rotimi Jacobs (SAN) admitted he did not have the documents, despite earlier assurances.

Justice Belgore adjourned the case to March 25 and ordered the prosecution to make the documents available to enable continuation of cross-examination.

Kaduna Court orders deceased tenant's family to vacate apartment

KADUNA

An Upper Customary Court sitting on Daura Road, Kaduna, on Tuesday ordered the family of late Godwin Aleje to vacate a rented apartment by March 16.

Judge Patience Musa gave the ruling after the deceased's son, Matthew Aleje, who appeared as defence counsel,

pleaded for one month's grace to relocate the family.

The complainant, Yunusa Isiyaku, a property agent, told the court he sought recovery of the property located at No. 7 Ilorin Street, Sabon Tasha, Kaduna.

He said he was unaware the tenant had died but agreed to allow the family remain in the apartment for one month.

Falana calls for protection of citizens' rights, announces sensitisation drive

LAGOS

Senior Advocate of Nigeria, Mr Femi Falana, on Tuesday underscored the inalienable nature of citizens' constitutional rights and urged Nigerians to defend their personal liberties.

Falana spoke following the release of Dr Kenneth Nwafor, a lecturer at Abia State University, who was reportedly detained by the Department of State Services (DSS) since July 29, 2022, over alleged links to a proscribed group.

Receiving members of the Uturu Development Association of Nigeria (UDAN) worldwide, Falana described the detention as a gross violation of the Constitution and the Administration of Criminal Justice Act.

He said no citizen should be detained without access to family, legal counsel or judicial oversight, stressing that bail is free under Nigerian law.

Falana announced plans for a nationwide sensitization campaign and regular visits by lawyers to police stations to ensure respect for detainees' rights.

Court dismisses ex-Oyo worker's suit for being statute-barred

IBADAN

The National Industrial Court sitting in Ibadan on Tuesday dismissed a suit filed by Mr Ajebe Olufemi against the Oyo State Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for lack of jurisdiction.

Justice Dele Peters held that the case was statute-barred, having been filed six years after the cause of action arose, contrary to Oyo State's five-year limitation law.

The claimant had sought reinstatement, payment of entitlements and N50 million damages for wrongful dismissal.

Trader arraigned over alleged N1.2m motorcycle theft

ABUJA

A 20-year-old trader, Sura-jo Ahmed, was on Tuesday arraigned before a Life Camp Chief Magistrates' Court, Abuja, over alleged conspiracy and theft of a motorcycle valued at N1.2 million.

Police alleged that Ahmed

and an accomplice lured a commercial rider to Durumi and snatched the motorcycle. The defendant pleaded not guilty.

Chief Magistrate Musa Jobbo granted bail in the sum of N500,000 with a surety and adjourned the case to February 5 for hearing.

NEWS

Foreign

Ukraine's parliament and half of Kyiv with no heating after Russian strikes

A large Russian aerial strike on Ukraine has left the Ukrainian parliament and half of Kyiv's residential buildings without heating or power as temperatures across the country continue to hover around -10C.

Drones, ballistic and cruise missiles targeted several locations in Ukraine, including Kyiv, Dnipro in the centre and Odesa in the south.

Air raid alerts in Kyiv lasted most of the night. Sirens rang out later as Russian drones and cruise missiles approached the capital.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said a "significant number" of targets had been intercepted. But he also said that, in terms of air defence missile prices alone, repelling that attack had cost Ukraine about €80m (£69m).

Between Monday and Tuesday, at least four people died

and 33 others were injured in strikes across Ukraine.

On Tuesday morning, more than 5,600 residential buildings – each with dozens of flats – in Kyiv woke up to no heating. A large part of the capital also has no water.

Mayor Vitalii Klitschko said almost 80% of those buildings had just had their heating restored following the large-scale attack on 9 January, which knocked out power for much of the city. Since then, relentless efforts by technicians had managed to reinstate electricity and gas for thousands – only for that work to be undone overnight.

"I have no electricity and no water," Oleksandr Palii, a 29-year-old veteran, told the BBC. "I didn't sleep until 3am because of the strikes either – there were explosions all night."

Parliament speaker Ruslan Stefanchuk said that, just like

Ukrainian cities, the Verkhovna Rada was also without basic services of electricity, water and heating, and he called other parliaments not to remain silent.

The Ukrainian president had been due to travel to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on Tuesday but, in the wake of the overnight strikes, he said he had decided to stay in Kyiv.

He would travel to Davos only if documents on security guarantees with the United States and a prosperity plan were ready to be signed, he added.

Temperatures have stayed well below freezing since the start of the year.

Ukrainian media has reported instances of radiators bursting due to the water in them freezing, leading to flooding in entire buildings. There have also been reports of fires starting due to

people using gas heaters indoor.

As the power cuts continue, Kyiv residents are finding innovative solutions to carry on living. Many now use portable stoves to cook, and entire buildings chip in to buy generators. But much depends on individual financial capacities.

"I think people who are less well-off are coping much worse," says Olha Zasiadovka, who has a young child. She and other parents have bought lamps and thermal containers for their children's kindergarten "so that when the kitchen has no electricity they can cook all the meals at once and store them."

But if electricity is only available sporadically, she says, "the food doesn't keep very well. There were cases when food was cooked in the morning and by dinner the porridge had become completely solid."

Spain train crash recovery continues as investigators probe 'gap' in rail

Heavy machinery is being used to assist in the recovery following a two-train crash in southern Spain which killed at least 42 people.

Rescuers recovered three bodies they had located in a wrecked carriage on Tuesday and then found another victim.

More than 120 people were injured when carriages on a Madrid-bound train derailed and crossed over to the opposite tracks, hitting an oncoming train in Adamuz on Sunday evening.

Sabotage has been ruled out, the interior minister has said, and the initial focus of investigators is on a broken rail on the high-speed line.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has cancelled his planned trip to the World Economic Forum in Davos, pledging to get to the bottom of Spain's worst train disaster in more than a decade.

Spain's King Felipe and Queen Letizia visited the site on Tuesday, shaking hands and speaking to emergency service workers near the site of the crash on the first of three days of national mourning.

Transport Minister Óscar Puente said the death toll "is not yet final", and officials are working to identify the dead.

Puente said the investigation could take at least a month, describing the incident as "extremely strange".

Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska ruled out sabotage, telling reporters that it "was never considered", and he stressed that all hypotheses remained open.

Óscar Puente warned against speculation and said a lot of cracks had been found on the track but investigators would have to determine whether they had caused the derailment or had been caused by it.

A 30cm gap in one of the rails is the current focus of the investigation, according to Spanish reports.

Technicians told El Mundo newspaper that a "bad" or "deteriorated" weld was "more than likely" the cause for the derailment.

Ignacio Barrón, head of Spain's Commission of Investigation of Rail Accidents (CIAF), said on RTVE: "What always plays a part in a derailment is the interaction between the track and the vehicle, and that is what the commission is currently [looking into]."

On Monday, the president of state-owned railway company Renfe, Álvaro Fernández Heredia, apparently ruled out "human error", telling RNE programme Las Mañanas that, if "the driver makes a mistake, the system itself corrects it".

Heredia also told RNE that both trains were travelling under the maximum speed limit



UKRAINE NIGHT ATTACK:

Zelensky said repelling Monday night's attack had cost Ukraine about €80m (£69m) just in terms of air defence missiles.

UK defends Chagos deal after Trump calls it 'act of great stupidity'

The UK government has defended a deal to give the Chagos Islands to Mauritius and lease back a key military base, following criticism from US President Donald Trump over its handling.

In a post on social media, Trump labelled the move as an "act of great stupidity" and "total weakness", months after he and senior US officials endorsed it.

In response, the UK government said it would "never compromise on our national security", while the prime minister's official spokesperson insisted the US still supported the move.

The UK signed the £3.4bn (\$4.6bn) agreement in May, under which it would retain control of a UK-US military base on the largest of the islands, Diego Garcia.

In a post on his Truth Social platform on Tuesday morning,

Trump said: "Shockingly, our 'brilliant' NATO Ally, the United Kingdom, is currently planning to give away the Island of Diego Garcia, the site of a vital U.S. Military Base, to Mauritius, and to do so FOR NO REASON WHATSOEVER."

"There is no doubt that China and Russia have noticed this act of total weakness."

He added: "The UK giving away extremely important land is an act of GREAT STUPIDITY, and is another in a very long line of National Security reasons why Greenland has to be acquired."

Responding, the prime minister's official spokesperson said that the US supports the deal and "the president explicitly recognised its strength last year".

He added that it was also backed by the UK's Five Eyes allies, the other members of which -

besides the UK and US - are Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

Asked if he could categorically say the Chagos deal would go ahead, even though it is still going through Parliament, the spokesman said: "Yes. Categorically, our position hasn't changed."

Earlier, a UK government spokesperson said it had acted "because the base on Diego Garcia was under threat after court decisions undermined our position and would have prevented it operating as intended in future".

They added that the agreement had secured the operations of the joint US-UK military base "for generations, with robust provisions for keeping its unique capabilities intact and our adversaries out", and noted the deal had been welcomed by allies including the US.

UK Foreign Office minister Stephen Doughty later said

the government "will of course have discussions with the [Trump] administration in the coming days to remind them of the strength of this deal and how it secures the base".

Mauritius' attorney general Gavin Glover has said he still expects the agreement to go ahead.

In a statement he said it was "important to remember" that the deal was "negotiated, concluded and signed exclusively between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Mauritius".

He added: "The sovereignty of the Republic of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago is already unambiguously recognised by international law and should no longer be subject to debate."

The agreement followed a long-running dispute between the UK and Mauritius - a former British colony - about sovereignty over the Chagos Islands.

Ex-president accused of murder plot expelled from Togo to Burkina Faso

Togo has arrested and extradited Burkina Faso's former leader to his home country, after authorities in Ouagadougou accused him of plotting to kill his successor.

Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba - who came to power in a coup in 2022 before himself being overthrown by Ibrahim Traoré eight months later - is accused by the current regime of masterminding an assassination attempt against Traoré.

According to the Togolese justice ministry, Damiba was handed over to the Burkinabè authorities on Saturday.

It says as part of the deal, Burkina Faso promised to ensure "physical integrity, dignity and fair-trial rights of Mr Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, and the absence of the death penalty".

Among the charges levelled at Damiba by Burkina Faso's military government are "criminal embezzlement of public funds, illicit enrichment, corruption, aggravated receiving of stolen goods and money laundering", said Togo's justice ministry in a statement.

No comments from Damiba on the charges have been reported and neither have the BBC's calls to him been picked up.

Most serious are the murder plot allegations.

Earlier this month, Burkina Faso's Security Minister Mahamadou Sana announced on state television that security forces had foiled a planned series of targeted assassinations aimed at destabilising the state, including what he called the "neutralisation" of Traoré.

Officials in Ouagadougou have repeatedly accused Damiba of orchestrating plots from exile. In late 2024, he was again named publicly as the head of what authorities described as the "military wing" of a broader conspiracy.

Damiba first seized power in January 2022, toppling the elected government of Roch Marc Christian Kaboré amid frustration over the state's failure to curb Islamist violence.

But after just eight months, he was himself overthrown by Traoré, then a 34-year-old artillery officer who accused him of failing to deliver security improvements.

Since then, the Traoré-led junta has tightened its grip on the country, expelling French forces, adopting an assertive nationalist stance and recently reinstating the death penalty, including for crimes of high treason.

Foreign

NEWS

Europe to suspend approval of US tariffs deal

The European Parliament is planning to suspend approval of the US tariffs deal agreed in July, according to sources close to its international trade committee.

The suspension is set to be announced in Strasbourg, France on Wednesday.

The move would mark another escalation in tensions between the US and Europe, as Donald Trump ratchets up his efforts to acquire Greenland, threatening new tariffs over the issue on the weekend.

The stand-off has rattled financial markets, reviving talk of a trade war and the possibility of retaliation against the US for its trade measures.

Shares on both sides of the Atlantic were lower on Tuesday, with European stock markets seeing a second day of losses. In the US, the Dow Jones was down 1.3% in mid-day trading, while the S&P 500 dropped 1.5% and the Nasdaq was 1.7% lower.

On the currency markets, the US dollar also fell sharply. The euro climbed 0.7% against the dollar to \$1.1731 while the pound rose by 0.2% to \$1.346.

Borrowing costs also rippled higher around the world, as the biggest sell-off of long-term government debt in months drove up yields on 30-year bonds in markets including the US, UK and Germany.

Trade tensions between the US and Europe had eased since the two sides struck a deal at Trump's Turnberry golf course in Scotland in July.

That agreement set US levies on European goods at 15%, down from the 30% Trump had initially threatened as part of his "Liberation Day" wave of tariffs in April. In exchange, Europe had agreed to invest in the US and make changes at on the continent expected to boost US exports.

The deal still needs approval from the European Parliament to become official.

But on Saturday, within hours of Trump's threat of US tariffs over Greenland, Manfred Weber, an influential German member of European Parliament, said "approval is not possible at this stage".

The EU had put on hold plans to retaliate against the US tariffs with its own package targeting €93bn (\$109bn, £81bn) worth of American goods while the two sides finalised the details.

But that reprieve ends on 6 February, meaning EU levies will come into force on 7 February unless the bloc moves for an extension or approves the new deal.

French Prime Minister Emmanuel Macron was among those urging the EU to consider its retaliatory options, including the anti-coercion instrument, nicknamed a "trade bazooka".

Washington's "endless accumulation" of new tariffs is "fundamentally unacceptable, even more so when they are used as leverage against territorial sovereignty," he said in a speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

Malawi raises fuel prices by more than 40%

Malawi's energy regulator has hiked petrol and diesel prices by more than 40%, marking the second time fuel costs gone up in four months.

In a statement on Tuesday, the Malawi Energy Regulatory Authority (Mera) said the fixed pricing system of the previous government was "unsustainable" and had led to "significant" losses.

President Peter Mutharika, who returned to power last year, has been trying to revive Malawi's ailing economy.

However, local commentators said Tuesday's fuel increase could harm the president's efforts and worsen the cost-of-living crisis for many Malawians.

"Fuel is not a luxury commodity. Any increase has a cascading effect on the cost of living," the Human Rights Defenders Coalition, a Malawian civil society group, said.

In its statement, Mera said it was increasing diesel prices by 41.3% and petrol prices by 41.9%.

The hike means that since Mutharika came to power in October, the cost of petrol and diesel has gone up by 95% and 80% respectively.

Under previous President Lazarus Chakwera fuel shortages were a major source of public frustration, with motorists forming long, winding queues at depleted petrol stations. However, the supply has improved significantly over the past two months.

Mera said it is now operating under an "automatic pricing mechanism", where petrol and diesel prices change in line with the expenses involved in shipping the fuel.

In the wake of the announcement, sharp increases in transport fares have already been reported in most parts of the country. Prices of other key services and goods, such as food, are also expected to rise.

Commodity prices had already started to go up following the previous fuel hike, which was implemented in October, and this month's increase in the sales tax.

Mera's acting CEO Dad Chinthambi said the hike in fuel prices was necessary "to ensure sustainable fuel supply, electricity services, and the proper remittance of levies to support road maintenance and rural electrification projects".



MALAWI FUEL QUEUE:

Long fuel queues were a feature of Malawian life last year.

Colombia sentences ex-paramilitary leader Mancuso to 40 years in jail

A tribunal in Colombia has sentenced a former paramilitary leader, Salvatore Mancuso, to 40 years in prison for murders and forced disappearances committed at the height of the country's armed conflict.

Mancuso was a commander in the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), a right-wing paramilitary group originally created to defend landowners from attacks by Marxist guerrilla groups, which became involved in drug trafficking.

The tribunal found that under his command, AUC members committed more than 100 crimes in La Guajira province between 2002 and 2006.

Mancuso was sent back to Colombia in 2024 after serving a 15-year prison sentence in the US for drug trafficking.

The 61-year-old was sentenced on Monday by a special tribunal created to deal with cases arising from Colombia's decades-long armed conflict,

in which at least 450,000 people were killed between 1985 and 2018 according to figures compiled by a truth commission.

The tribunal said that Mancuso's 40-year-long sentence could be reduced to eight years if he agreed to work with the transitional justice and took part in reparation activities.

Mancuso's name became a byword for the atrocities committed by AUC groups in the 1990s and early 2000s.

The tribunal said that under his leadership the AUC had targeted members of the indigenous Wayuu group who live in La Guajira, in the far north of Colombia.

It documented 117 crimes, including murders, forced disappearances and gender violence, committed by the AUC in the area.

Indigenous groups were often caught in between warring factions of Colombia's armed conflict.

Marxist rebel groups forcibly recruited many indigenous children into their ranks, hold-

ing them against their will in rebel camps where they had to perform chores and were sometimes forced to fight.

The AUC and other paramilitary groups, which suspected the indigenous groups of siding with the rebels, drove them off their land and waged a campaign of terror and intimidation against them.

The AUC negotiated a peace deal with the Colombian government in 2005 but offshoots of the group refused to lay down arms and became even more heavily involved in the trafficking of drugs, which they had already been engaging in to raise funds for their fight against the guerrilla.

Mancuso was extradited to the US in 2008, where he was put on trial on drug trafficking charges.

He was sentenced in 2015, after having been found guilty of smuggling large quantities of cocaine into the US "to arm a paramilitary force of more than 30,000 fighters and cement his

control over regions of Colombia", the US justice department said at the time.

After he had served his sentence in the US, Mancuso, a dual Colombian and Italian national, asked to be allowed to move to Italy. But his request was denied and he was deported to Colombia.

There, he offered to provide testimony into how Colombian politicians, business leaders and other members of the country's establishment allegedly cooperated with the AUC.

Pleased with his offer of co-operation, the government of Colombian President Gustavo Petro named Mancuso a "promoter of peace", saying he would act as a mediator between the administration and illegal armed groups still active in the country.

The move was vehemently criticised by human rights groups who pointed to the atrocities his group carried out under his command.

Australia parliament passes gun reform and anti-hate bills after Bondi shooting

Australia's parliament has voted for sweeping gun law reforms and a crackdown on hate speech, a month after two attackers shot 15 people dead at a Jewish festival at Bondi Beach.

Both bills passed the House of Representatives and Senate at a special sitting late on Tuesday. The gun reform measures include a national gun buyback scheme and new checks on firearm licence applications.

Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke said the Bondi gunmen would not legally have had access to firearms if such a law had been in place prior to the attack, the country's worst mass shooting in decades.

Governing Labor senators were backed on the anti-hate bill by Liberal lawmakers, whose coalition partners abstained.

After last month's mass shooting, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese came under huge pressure for not having done enough to prevent the attack in the first place, amid growing fears of antisemitism in the Jewish community.

Politicians were recalled two weeks early to debate the legislation. Introducing the reforms, Burke said individuals with "hate in their hearts and guns in their hands" had carried out the 14 December attack.

The father in the father-son duo allegedly behind the attack legally owned six firearms, while his son had been on the radar of intelligence agencies.

The gun reform bill, which cleared the House of Representatives by 96 votes to 45, includes stricter firearm import controls and provisions to improve information sharing between intelligence agencies on people trying to obtain gun licences.

The buyback scheme will target "surplus and newly restricted firearms", Burke said, reducing the country's four million registered guns.

Burke added that it "comes as a shock to most Australians" to know that the country has

more firearms that it did before the 1996 Port Arthur attack, in which a gunman killed 35 people in Tasmania.

That attack, the country's worst mass shooting, had prompted the then government to introduce some of the world's strictest gun controls. The new law will bring in some of the most significant changes to Australia's guns laws since then.

The hate speech reforms had originally been included in an omnibus bill with the gun reforms but the government split the legislation last week after both the Liberal-National opposition coalition and the Greens said they would vote against.

PHOTO SPREAD

Commissioning of the reconstructed Oredo Girls Secondary School, Benin City



The renovated school complex



The School complex before Governor Monday Okpebholo took over as Governor of Edo State



Edo State Governor Monday Okpebholo with the State Commissioner for Education, Dr. Paddy Emmanuel Iyamu



Governor Monday Okpebholo in a group photograph with students of the school.



Governor Monday Okpebholo acknowledging cheers from students



Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State with a student of the school

Sports

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

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 cam-

aign 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 through-

out 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 backline. 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.

CAF's Best XI for AFCON 2025 comprises: Édouard Mendy; Noussair Mazraoui, Rami Rabia, Bruno Onyemaechi, Krépin Diatta; Mamadou Sangare, Idrissa Gueye; Mohamed Salah, Ademola Lookman, Sadio Mané; and Victor Osimhen.

The announcement brings the curtain down on a tournament marked by high drama, outstanding individual performances and Senegal's reassertion as a dominant force in African football



VICTOR OSIMHEN, INSET: COACH OKAN BURUK

Galatasaray coach Okan Buruk confirms Osimhen fit for Atletico Madrid clash

Galatasaray manager Okan Buruk has confirmed that Victor Osimhen is available for selection ahead of the Turkish giants' UEFA Champions League meeting with Atletico Madrid.

Galatasaray welcome Diego Simeone's side to RAMS Park on Wednesday night, with Osimhen returning to full training after international duty with Nigeria at the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON).

The 27-year-old forward had raised fitness concerns after limping off during Nigeria's semi-final defeat to hosts Morocco, an injury that ruled him out of the Super Eagles' third-place match against Egypt.

However, Buruk allayed fears over the striker's condition, revealing that Osimhen had already reintegrated with the squad following his return to Turkey.

"Osimhen joined the squad yesterday [Monday, January 19]. He trained with us, and it

was a good training session," Buruk said ahead of the game.

Away from the pitch, the striker has also been at the centre of conversation online following Nigeria's third-place victory over Egypt at the Stade Mohammed V. Osimhen, alongside Paul Onuachu, Wilfred Ndidi and Chidozie Awaziem, was seen leaving the mixed zone after removing their Super Eagles kits.

It later emerged that the quartet departed Morocco together on a private jet. While many expected an immediate return to club duties, reports suggested the players flew into Lagos for the birthday celebration of Tunde Perry, whose real name is Akinpelu Babatunde Adigun.

Videos from the event showed Ndidi, Osimhen and Awaziem enjoying the occasion, highlighting Perry's close relationship with the national team players. The players later departed for their respective clubs after the party

Toure names Super Eagles of Nigeria best team at AFCON 2025

Manchester City and Barcelona great Yaya Toure has named Nigeria's Super Eagles as the most impressive side he watched at the recently concluded 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) in Morocco.

Nigeria suffered a heartbreak at the semi-final stage after a tense penalty shootout defeat to the hosts, Morocco. It was a rare off day in an otherwise commanding tournament run for the Super Eagles, who had grown stronger with each outing.

Aside from that semi-final, Nigeria were widely regarded as the competition's most dominant force. They swept past strong opposition, including Tunisia, Mozambique, Algeria, and Egypt (in the third-place match) with a level of control and attacking confidence that set them apart.

Against Algeria's Fennec Foxes, the Super Eagles were so authoritative that their opponents failed to fashion a single clear-cut chance.

At the quarter-final stage, Nigeria had already scored 14 goals, more than any other team in the tournament. Their blend of tactical discipline and relentless forward play made them one of the most watchable sides at AFCON 2025.

After the final whistle in Morocco, Toure, a legend of both Manchester City and Barcelona, was asked to single out the best team he had seen. Despite giving credit to his na-

tive Ivory Coast, the former midfielder made it clear where his admiration lay.

"I was impressed with Nigeria, they played good football. When you see the stats, they've been scoring more than usual goals, full attack, very good football," Toure said.

"The most impressive for me was Nigeria. The football they were playing, the goals they were scoring, and the players were winning.



YAYA TOURE

Nigeria face Algeria again in 2025 African Handball championship in Kigali

Nigeria will on Wednesday face Algeria in their first game in the 2025 African Handball championship in Kigali.

Nigeria's senior men's handball team, popularly known as the Golden Arrows, arrived in Kigali, Rwanda, ahead of the 2025 Africa Men's Handball Nations Championship.

The Nigerian delegation

departed Lagos in the early hours of Tuesday via the Murtala Muhammed International Airport en route to Kigali, where the continental tournament will take place from January 21 to 31, 2025.

The team is led by the President of the Handball Federation of Nigeria (HFN), Mr. Jibril Saidu Ojih (FNSQ), alongside other officials of the federation,

underscoring the importance attached to the competition.

The Golden Arrows touched down in Kigali on Tuesday afternoon and are expected to begin final preparations ahead of the start of the championship.

Coached by Rafiu Salami, Nigeria will open their campaign against Algeria on Wednesday, with the match scheduled for 1:00 p.m.



NIGERIA'S SENIOR MEN'S HANDBALL TEAM

Nigeria's Golden Arrows land in Kigali for African Handball Nation's Championship

The Nigeria Senior Men's Handball team, otherwise known as the Golden Arrows, travelled out of the country early this morning via the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos to Kigali, Rwanda for the Africa Men's Handball Nations Championship which will be held from January 21 to 31, 2025.

The team was led by the President of the Handball Federation of Nigeria (HFN) Mr. Jibril Saidu Ojih (FNSQ) and other officials of the Federation.

They are expected to land around late noon today.

The Coach Rafiu Salami tutored team will play their first match against Algeria on Wednesday at 1pm.

SPORTS

NOC President congratulates Oyedeji on election as WOA Sec-Gen



OLUMIDE OYEDEJI

Habu Gumel, President, Nigeria Olympic Committee (NOC), has congratulated international basketballer, Olumide Oyedeji on his election as the Secretary-General of the World Olympians Association (WOA).

Gumel, in a statement by Tony Neziyanya, the Public Relations Officer of NOC, acknowledged the accomplishment of Oyedeji in the election, attended by over 107 delegates from National Olympians Associations (NOAs) across the globe.

"The WOA is a prestigious body under the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

"It is notably the same constituency that produced the

newly elected IOC President, Kirsty Coventry (the legendary Zimbabwean swimmer and two-time Olympic gold medalist).

"Oyedeji's ascent to this global role reinforces Nigeria's growing influence within the International Olympic Committee.

"As a former NBA star and captain of the Nigerian men's basketball team (D'Tigers), Oyedeji has long been a vocal advocate for athlete welfare," he said.

Gumel said that Oyedeji's election was at a time of "African excellence" in sports governance, following Kirsty Coventry's historic election as the first female and first African President of the IOC in 2025.

"Only recently, one of Nigeria's star table tennis prodigies, Funke Oshonaike, was nominated by the IOC president, Chirsty Coventry, to join the Athletes Commission," he declared.

Oyedeji, currently serves as the 3rd Vice President of the NOC and President of the Nigeria Olympians Association (NOA), secured the position in a landslide victory during a virtual General Assembly held in Sunday.

The new secretary general won on the first ballot with 55 votes, comfortably defeating his closest opponents, Salvador Salguero of El Salvador and Liston Brochette of Puerto Rico, who received 32 and 19 votes, respectively.

Aquatic Federation unveils 2026 swimming calendar

The Nigeria Aquatics Federation on Tuesday unveiled its 2026 programme, featuring nationwide swimming competitions and development initiatives across all age categories.

Its President, Mrs Chinonye Daphey, said the calendar underscored the federation's strong commitment to grassroots growth and long-term athlete development.

"The programmes also reflect technical excellence, athlete education and increased international competitiveness," Daphey said.

She disclosed that certification courses and international engagements would run throughout the year as part of capacity-building efforts.

According to Daphey, activities begin in January with a Coaches Training Programme in Lagos to strengthen technical capacity at grassroots and elite levels.

"In February, attention shifts to the Second Niger Delta Games, holding from Feb. 20 to Feb. 27 in Benin City," she said.

She noted that swimming would feature prominently as a key competitive sport at the regional games.

Daphey said activities intensify in March with the Swim to Future Championship for ages eight to 14 on March 7 in Abuja.

"This will be followed by the First Abuja Schools Swimming Championship for swimmers aged 15 and below, from March 25 to March 27," she said.

She added that the First Gov. AbdulRahman Abdul-Razaq Under-16 Swimming Championship would also hold in Ilorin, with dates to be announced soon.

"The month will also host the First Quarter Board Meeting in Ilorin and the South-East Regional Swimming Championship in Awka," Daphey said.

She said Abuja would host the North-Central Technical Officials and Coaches Certification Course, with dates yet to be confirmed.

"The month ends with the Abuja Swim Gala for ages 14 and below on March 28," she added.

Daphey said Lagos would host the Swim for Life National Swimming Championship for ages 16 and below from April 2 to April 4.

According to her, the April championship would assemble promising young swimmers from across the country.

She said May would feature major competitions, including Africa Aquatics Combined 2026 Swimming Championships.

"This comprises the 17th Senior and Junior Championships and the first Africa

Aquatics Inter-Zonal Championship," she said.

Daphey said the Second African Masters Swimming Championship would hold from May 5 to May 10 in Accra, Ghana.



Golden Arrows storm Kigali for Africa Handball Championship

All roads lead to Kigali, Rwanda, as Nigeria's senior men's handball team, the Golden Arrows, prepare for the 2026 Africa Hand-

ball Nations Championship.

The Handball Federation of Nigeria (HFN) confirmed the development in a statement issued on Tuesday by its Media

Coordinator, Cosmos Chukwuemeka.

Chukwuemeka said the team departed Nigeria early Tuesday via the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos.

"The championship will hold from Jan. 21 to Jan. 31," he said.

The delegation is led by HFN President Jibril Saidu Ojih, FNSQ, alongside other federation officials.

They are expected to arrive by noon, with Coach Rafiu Salami's side facing Algeria on Wednesday at 1 p.m.

The biennial tournament is dominated by North African teams, with Egypt defending nine titles and Tunisia holding a record ten.



NIGERIA'S SENIOR MEN'S HANDBALL TEAM

Arsenal prodigy Nwaneri seals loan move to Olympique Marseille

Arsenal's 18-year-old midfielder Ethan Nwaneri is set to join Ligue 1 side Olympique Marseille on a loan deal until the end of the season. The agreement, confirmed by multiple sources, marks a strategic step in the young talent's development, with Arsenal prioritizing regular first-team experience for one of their brightest prospects.

Nwaneri, who made history as the youngest player to ever feature in the Premier League at just 15 years and 181

days during his debut against Brentford in September 2022, has struggled for consistent minutes this season at Arsenal. Despite starting four games and making 12 appearances across all competitions, the Gunners' pursuit of silverware on multiple fronts has limited his opportunities. Marseille emerged as the frontrunners amid interest from clubs like Crystal Palace and others in Europe and the Premier League, with negotiations progressing swiftly over the past week.



ETHAN NWANERI