

Edo "The Big Catch Up" vaccination campaign begins Jan 6

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Primary Healthcare Development Agency (EDPHC-DA) will commence an accelerated vaccination campaign, tagged "The Big Catch Up," on Monday, January 6, 2025.

The initiative aims to immunize un-immunized and under-immunized children aged 0-59 months across 14 Local Government Areas in the state.

The exercise, scheduled to run until Saturday, January 11, 2025, will take place at Primary Healthcare Centers, targeting

an improved childhood immunization rate.

Dr. Esegbe Efeoma, Director of Disease Control and Immunization at EDPHCDA, reaffirmed the state government's commitment to enhancing healthcare services for children.

Speaking at a stakeholders' meeting, he urged parents and caregivers to bring their wards for the free and safe vaccinations, emphasizing their importance for children's health and well-being.

He dismissed rumors about unsafe vaccinations and called

on stakeholders, including the media, civil society groups, religious leaders, and social commentators, to help raise awareness about the campaign.

Dr. Efeoma also appealed for increased efforts to reach remote riverine communities, ensuring all eligible children

benefit from the exercise.

Dr. Joel Osidewe, representing the National Primary Health Development Agency, pledged the federal government's support in eradicating childhood diseases in Edo State through robust immunization efforts.

The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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2025 Hajj:
Edo govt sensitises intending pilgrims in Edo South
—Pg 2

PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968

VOL. 46, NO. 916

THURSDAY 2ND JANUARY, 2025.

₦200

Tinubu targets over 50% reduction in inflation

OLUWATUNMISE OMOSEYIN

President Bola Tinubu has unveiled an ambitious plan to cut Nigeria's inflation rate from 34.6% to 15% by the end of 2025, aiming to ease the economic burden on millions of Nigerians.

In his New Year's address on Wednesday, Tinubu acknowledged the severe impact of in-

flation on households in 2024 and outlined his administration's strategy to stabilize the economy. Central to this effort is a focus on improving food production and expanding local manufacturing of essential goods.

"To combat rising costs, we will boost agricultural output, enhance food supply chains, and prioritize the local pro-

duction of essential drugs and medical supplies," Tinubu said. "This is not just an economic goal—it is a commitment to improving the lives of our people."

The President also announced the establishment of the National Credit Guarantee Company to enhance access to credit for individuals and businesses, particularly in critical

sectors of the economy.

This initiative is expected to stimulate economic activity and help curb inflationary pressures.

Tinubu expressed confidence that his administration's policies would yield significant results. "With hard work and strategic action, we will achieve our target and bring relief to Nigerians struggling

with high costs," he stated.

As his government works toward the 15% inflation target, Tinubu assured citizens that

stabilizing prices and improving living standards remain at the heart of his economic agenda.

Oluremi Tinubu welcomes Abuja's First 'Baby of the Year' at Asokoro Hospital

The First Lady of Nigeria, Oluremi Tinubu, welcomed Abuja's first baby of the year on Wednesday at the Asokoro District Hospital.

The baby girl, Favour Stephen-Odion, was born to Odion Oyinbo and Chioma Odion at exactly 12:27 a.m. on January 1, weighing 3.6kg.

Mrs. Tinubu, represented by the wife of the Vice-President, Nana Shettima, also celebrated other babies born at the hospital, including the first baby boy of the year, Zimchikachim Ejiofor. He was born to Ejiofor and Delight Nworie at 7:14 a.m., weighing 3kg.

The First Lady presented baby gifts, including postnatal care products, nutritional supplies, and cash gifts, to the families of the newborns. She prayed for God's protection and blessings upon the children, wishing them good health and prosperity.

"So, I'm presenting this token and a beautiful package to our dear daughter. I want to wish her well, long life, prosperity, and good health," Mrs.

Tinubu said. "Insha Allah, these children represent the next generation to take over from us. Please take good care of them."

Mrs. Tinubu also advised the mothers on the importance of exclusive breastfeeding, immunization, and timely postnatal care. Birth certificates were presented to Favour and Zimchikachim during the event.

The First Lady was taken on a tour of the hospital's maternity ward, where she congratulated other parents of newborns.

Welcoming the First Lady, the acting Chief Medical Director of Asokoro District Hospital, Dr. Rosemary Nworie, praised President Bola Tinubu's administration for its commitment to transforming the nation's healthcare system.

Dr. Nworie also commended the First Lady and the wife of the Vice-President for their intervention initiatives, particularly the Renewed Hope Initiative, which supports vulnerable Nigerians, especially women and children.



ABUJA'S FIRST BABY:

First Lady, Oluremi Tinubu, welcoming Abuja's first baby of the year 2025 at the Asokoro District Hospital on Wednesday.

Butchers union demands revocation of newly registered parallel union
—Pg 2

Pope calls for commitment to protect life in New Year message
—Pg 3

5 killed, 200 injured in German Christmas market attack
—Pg 4

Anthony Joshua to light torch of Nat'l Sports Festival in May
—Pg 5

Stop producing unemployable graduates, Akande tells universities

Former Osun State Governor and National Leader of the All Progressives Congress, Chief Adebisi Akande, has urged Nigerian universities to adopt modern approaches in their educational systems to remain globally competitive.

Akande called on universities to avoid producing graduates who cannot contribute to the economy, stressing the need for a curriculum that emphasizes skills relevant to national growth and development.

Speaking at his Ila-Orangun residence in Osun State while hosting the Vice Chancellor of Ekiti State University (EKSU), Prof. Babatola Ayodele, and other principal officers, Akande said: "For global competitiveness, universities must stop

awarding degrees without equipping students with skills necessary for economic development. Going to school is just the beginning of learning how to work."

He commended EKSU's leadership for the institution's recent recognition as the best state university in Nigeria by Times Higher Education, describing it as "a product of knowledgeable leadership."

Prof. Ayodele, in his remarks, expressed gratitude for the elder statesman's advice and assured him of EKSU's commitment to producing skilled graduates. "No student graduates from EKSU without acquiring relevant vocational skills, preparing them for profitable engagements post-graduation instead of merely seeking white-collar jobs," he added.

Fadahunsi advocates local rice production to strengthen Naira

Senator Adenigba Fadahunsi, representing Osun East, has called on federal and state governments to prioritize large-scale rice cultivation to strengthen the naira and reduce reliance on imports.

Speaking in Ilase-Ijesa during the distribution of 3,000 bags of rice across 10 local government areas in his district, Fadahunsi highlighted the economic benefits of boosting local rice production.

He stated, "Meeting the nation's rice consumption demand locally will significantly cut foreign exchange expenditure and shield the naira from further depreciation. This requires urgent action at all levels of government."

Fadahunsi also commended the large turnout at the event and urged beneficiaries to remain hopeful for better economic prospects by 2025.

According to a statement by his media adviser, Sam Segun-Progress, the senator's gesture was part of his efforts to alleviate economic hardship in his district. The event included visits from market women leaders who expressed gratitude for the senator's support and requested additional assistance.

The senator reaffirmed his commitment to improving his constituents' welfare and urged stakeholders to collaborate on enhancing local food production for economic stability.

Oborewori urges Journalists to combat fake news with fact-checking

Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborewori, has urged journalists to combat fake news and misinformation by prioritizing fact-checking before publication. Governor Oborewori made this call on Monday during the Press Week organized by the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Delta State Council, in Asaba. The theme of the event was "Imperative of Proper Leadership Recruitment Process for Good Governance."

Represented by his Deputy, Sir Monday Onyeme, the Governor emphasized his administration's commitment to addressing the state's developmental challenges through the MORE Agenda. He praised journalists in Delta State for maintaining a cordial relationship with his administration and acknowledged the Press Week as an opportunity for journalists to gain critical knowledge to enhance their professional performance.

According to Oborewori, "It is my joy to be in the midst of the cream of journalism practitioners in Delta State at this year's Press Week. How nice it is to devote time to meet and cross-fertilize ideas both among yourselves and with critical members of society!"

"This way, you arm yourselves with greater knowledge to impact your performances for the good of your profession and society in general."

He urged journalists to prioritize truth and accuracy in their reports, especially given the propensity of the public to consume and spread negative stories without verifying their authenticity.

The Governor commended the NUJ for organizing the event and bringing in notable personalities to provide valuable insights. He assured them of his administration's open-door policy to ensure transparency in fulfilling its objectives under the MORE Agenda.

2025 Hajj: Edo govt sensitises intending pilgrims in Edo South

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board has organized a sensitization programme in Benin City for intending pilgrims from Edo South Senatorial District, reiterating its commitment to ensuring a seamless and successful Hajj in 2025.

The event, held yesterday in Benin City brought together key Islamic organizations, including the Edo South League of Imams, the Federation of Muslim Wom-

en's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), and the Edo State Council for Islamic Affairs.

It served as a platform to educate prospective pilgrims on the requirements and processes for the upcoming pilgrimage.

Alhaji Eranga Muhammad-kabir Abdulkabir, the Executive Secretary of the Board, announced that the Hajj payment process has commenced, with a required deposit of ₦8.4 million due by January 31, 2025. He also introduced an installment payment option, allowing intending pilgrims to pay in smaller increments starting from ₦1 million.

Addressing concerns from past Hajj exercises, Abdulkabir confirmed that refunds for the 2023 Hajj are being processed.

He urged beneficiaries who have not yet provided their account details to do so promptly to facilitate payments.

Mallam Musa Muhammad Udumoh, Chairman of the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, called for cooperation from all stakeholders to ensure a smooth pilgrimage experience. He assured intending pilgrims of maximum support throughout the preparation and the Hajj journey itself.

Prominent speakers, including the Chief Imam of Benin Central Mosque, Alhaji Abdulfatah Enabulele, and the Chairman of the Edo State Council for Islamic Affairs, Mallam Abdulazeez Igbinidu, highlighted the importance of collaboration, spiritual preparation, and adherence to guidelines for a fulfilling pilgrimage.

The Board reaffirmed its commitment to supporting all intending pilgrims, emphasizing that every effort is being made to provide a hitch-free and spiritually enriching Hajj experience in 2025.



SENSITIZATION:

A cross section of participants at the sensitization programme organized in Benin City by the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board for intending pilgrims from Edo South Senatorial districts for the 2025 hajj.

Butchers union demands revocation of newly registered parallel union

The National Union of Butchery Workers of Nigeria (NUBWN)/ National Butchers Union of Nigeria, has urged the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment to revoke the registration of a newly formed parallel union to avoid internal

conflicts among members.

Speaking at a national executive meeting in Benin City, Edo State, the union's National President, Chief John Osamede Adun, described the new "National Union of Butchery Employees of Nigeria" as illegal and

called for immediate intervention by the Minister of Labour and Employment, Muhammad Dingyadi.

Chief Adun emphasized the union's commitment to peace and urged caution to prevent a potential crisis.

National Secretary Ahmed

Muhammed Borgu highlighted that the original union, registered in 1988, was disrupted by a faction forming the parallel union.

He appealed to the ministry and judiciary to restore unity by revoking the registration of the newly formed body.

NPC registers over 10m children nationwide

CAROLINE AMEH

The National Population Commission (NPC) has registered and issued birth certificates to over 10 million children across Nigeria, marking a significant milestone in its efforts to improve civil registration and vital statistics in the country.

This achievement was celebrated during a ceremony at the Asokoro General Hospital in Abuja, where the First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, presented a birth certificate to the "Baby of the Year."

Representing the First Lady at the event was the wife of the Vice President, Hajiya Nana

Shettima.

The NPC Chairman, Alhaji Nasir Isa Kwara, also commended the Commission's efforts. His remarks were delivered by the Federal Commissioner from Katsina, Mr. Bala Banya, who reiterated the Commission's resolve to ensure that every child born in Nigeria is duly registered and issued a birth certificate.

Alhaji Kwara highlighted the introduction of a digitized registration system and collaboration with the Primary Health Care Agency to streamline the process, ensuring accessibility for families in all locations.

He urged parents and

guardians to take advantage of the free registration services to secure the legal identity of their children.

Dr. Telson Ojegan, Director General of the NPC, disclosed plans to establish over 4,000 registration centers nationwide to bring services closer to underserved communities.

He emphasized the use of advanced technology to create tamper-proof and unique identities for all registered children, ensuring the credibility of the system.

Dr. Ojegan also expressed gratitude to the First Lady for her support, praising her involvement in raising awareness about birth registration.

He encouraged Nigerians to report deaths to the NPC to ensure accurate and comprehensive population records.

This initiative underscores the NPC's commitment to improving Nigeria's population data and facilitating access to essential services for its citizens.



NEWS

Foreign

Pope calls for commitment to protect life in New Year message

ROME

Pope Francis ushered in the New Year with a renewed appeal for the faithful to reject abortion, calling for a "firm commitment" to protect and respect life from conception to natural death.

Francis, 88, celebrated a New Year's Day Mass in St.

Peter's Basilica on Wednesday that was dedicated to Mary, the mother of Jesus.

In his homily, he prayed that everyone learns to care for "every child born of a woman" and to protect "the precious gift of life: life in the womb, the lives of children, the lives of the suffering, the poor, the elderly, the lonely and the dying."

"I ask for a firm commit-

ment to respect the dignity of human life from conception to natural death, so that each person may cherish his or her own life and all may look with hope to the future," he said, using the terminology of the church's opposition to abortion and euthanasia.

In recent years, the Argentine Jesuit has been speaking out more emphatically about

abortion than he did at the start of his pontificate. After two doctrinaire popes, Francis complained in the first months of his papacy in 2013 that the church had become obsessed by "small-minded rules" about hot-button issues like abortion.

Francis now regularly refers to procuring an abortion as "hiring a hitman to solve a problem." He recently sparked

outrage in Belgium when he criticized its abortion law as "homicidal" and announced he wanted to beatify Belgium's late king who abdicated for a day rather than approve legislation legalizing the procedure. The Vatican recently announced that the beatification process is under way for King Baudouin, who died in 1993.

The morning Mass marked the final big event of Francis' busy Christmas schedule. For the pope, who suffers from recurrent respiratory problems, this year's season was even more challenging with the start

of the Vatican's big Holy Year, a once-every-quarter-century celebration of the faith that is expected to bring 32 million pilgrims to Rome during 2025.

Speaking to pilgrims who gathered in a sun-filled St. Peter's Square, Francis recalled the Jubilee's central message of the need to forgive debts. He again called for world leaders from wealthy countries to eliminate or reduce the debts owed by poorer countries.

Francis urged Christian leaders, in particular, "to provide a good example" by taking the lead to forgive debts.



NEW YEAR'S DAY:

Pope calls for commitment to protect life as he doubles down on abortion in New Year's Day message.

Russia launches 111 drones at Ukraine in deadly New Year's attack, Kyiv says

LONDON

One person was killed and at least six others, including a pregnant woman, were injured in Kyiv as Russia launched more than 100 drones in an overnight strike into New Year's Day, Ukrainian military and civilian officials said.

"In war, there are no holidays, and for Russia, nothing is sacred or inviolable," Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

"It spares no one, killing people even amidst New Year celebrations, starting a deadly countdown from the very first day. The world must not allow tyranny and dictatorship to go unpunished or endorsed in the new year."

Ukraine's air force said at least 111 attack drones were

launched toward 10 regions throughout Ukraine, including the capital. Ukraine shot down 63 of the drones and another 46 failed to strike a target, the military said.

"As the world marks the first day of the New Year, Russia launched 111 drones at the people of Ukraine," U.S. Ambassador Ambassador Bridget A. Brink said on social media. "We are thankful for the air defenders and first responders whose tireless heroism protects us all."

Ukraine began the new year under "another massive air attack," said Ruslan Stefanchuk, the chair of Ukraine's parliament.

"These inhumans decided to give us a hot start to the year and, like real weaklings and cowards, continued to hit civilians," Stefanchuk said on social

media. "I wish the victims a speedy recovery."

Smoke from a residential building damaged during a Russian drone strike rises over the city, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kyiv, Ukraine, on January 1, 2025.

Valentyn Ogirenko/Reuters
Air raid sirens began blaring before sunrise in Kyiv, urging people to make their way to shelters, the Kyiv City State Administration said.

Most of the injured were in the city's central Pecherskyi neighborhood, where the strike started a fire in an apartment building, Vitali Klitschko, Kyiv's mayor, said in a post in Ukrainian on the Telegram messaging app.

Firefighters work at a site of a building damaged during a Russian drone strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in

central Kyiv, Ukraine, January 1, 2025.

"Two of them were hospitalized. Two were treated on the spot by doctors," Klitschko said. A pregnant woman was among the injured, the city administration said in a statement.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said one person had been killed in that strike on a residential building.

Falling debris also broke windows, started a fire in a garage and damaged trams in the western Sviatoshynskyi neighborhood, Klitschko added.

"The air attack was repelled by aviation, anti-aircraft missile troops, electronic warfare units, mobile fire groups of the Air Force and the Defense Forces of Ukraine," the air force said.

Survivor speaks out after deadly plane crash in South Korea

The survivor, who was only identified by his surname Lee, told doctors he had "already been rescued" when he regained consciousness following Sunday's fiery crash at the Muan International Airport, Ju Woong, director of the Ewha Womans University Seoul Hospital, said during a news conference on Monday.

Lee and another flight attendant on Jeju Air Flight 7C2216, who was identified by her surname Koo, were the only ones aboard the aircraft to live through what authorities said was South Korea's deadliest plane crash in decades and one of the worst in aviation history.

Firefighters and rescue personnel work near the wreckage of a Jeju Air Boeing 737-800 series aircraft after the plane crashed and burst into flames at Muan International Airport in South Jeolla Province, Dec. 29, 2024.

The 25-year-old Koo is reportedly in stable condition at a different hospital than the one where Lee is being treated. Koo suffered injuries to her ankle and head, medical staff at the hospital told the Yonhap News Agency. The medical staff treating her declined to answer further questions about her condition.

Ju said Lee is being treated in the intensive care unit for multiple fractures.

He said Lee is "fully able to communicate."

"There's no indication yet of memory loss or such," Ju said.

The wreckage of the Jeju Air aircraft that went off the runway and crashed lies at Muan International Airport, in Muan, South Korea, December 30, 2024.

The hospital director said Lee is under special care due to the possibility of total paralysis.

Ju said he did not question Lee about the details of the

crash, saying he didn't believe it would be helpful with the patient's recovery.

MORE: Survivors of Azerbaijan Airlines plane crash report hearing bangs, explosions during flight

Lee was initially taken to a hospital in Mokpo before being transferred to the Ewha Womans University Seoul Hospital.

The crash unfolded just before 9 a.m. local time on Sunday at the Muan International Airport after the air traffic control tower gave the flight crew permission to land on a south-to-north runway, according to an official timeline by the Korean Ministry of Land Infrastructure and Transport.

Workers operate at the site of an aircraft that crashed after it went off the runway at Muan International Airport, in Muan, South Korea, December 30, 2024.

Three minutes later, the flight control tower issued a warning of a possible bird strike, the transport ministry said. About two minutes after that warning, a pilot sent a distress signal, saying, "Mayday, mayday, mayday, bird strike, bird strike, going around," the ministry said.

The plane ascended and made a 180-degree turn before descending from the north side, crash-landing and slamming into a wall at 9:03 a.m., the ministry said.

The aircraft, a Boeing 737-800, skidded along a runway, crashed into a wall and burst into flames, officials said. A total of 181 people were onboard.

The flight had originated before dawn Sunday at the Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport in Thailand, according to Flightradar24, a flight tracker.

An official cause of the crash is under investigation by South Korea's Aviation and Railway Accident Investigation Board.

German govt condemns New Year's eve violence after hundreds of arrests

BERLIN

The German government on Wednesday condemned a series of incidents on New Year's Eve in which police officers and firefighters were attacked and injured, mostly with fireworks.

Revellers across the country traditionally ring in the new year by setting off large numbers

of fireworks in public places. But the latest celebrations were marred by the use of fireworks against emergency officials.

In Berlin, 30 police officers and one firefighter were injured in confrontations or attacks during New Year's Eve, leading to 400 arrests, city officials said. Hundreds of police officers from across the country were deployed to the capital to help

prevent further violence.

Five people were killed and hundreds injured after being hit accidentally by fireworks, German news agency dpa reported.

German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said: "The deployment of strong police forces from the federal states and the federal police and an early and consistent crackdown are

the right means against perpetrators of violence and chaos. However, the many arrests in Berlin alone and the renewed attacks on police officers also show that this crackdown was absolutely necessary."

She wished all injured officers a speedy recovery and vowed that all perpetrators will be "prosecuted and punished with the utmost severity."



Foreign

NEWS

5 killed, 200 injured in German Christmas market attack

LONDON

At least five people, including a 9-year-old, are now known to have been killed in the vehicle-ramming attack on a Christmas market in the German city of Magdeburg on Friday, German officials said Saturday. The four other victims killed in the attack were adults, according to police.

At least 200 more people were injured when a car plowed into festive market-goers in the eastern German city, around 75 miles west of the capital Berlin, according to Minister President of Saxony-Anhalt Reiner Haseloff.

The Magdeburg Christmas market will be closed for the remainder of the season, police told reporters Saturday.

At least 41 of those injured in the attack are in serious condition, according to police. Their lives are still thought to be in danger, according to Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

A suspect -- a doctor from Saudi Arabia aged around 50 -- was arrested, Haselhoff said. The man has lived in Germany since 2006. A rental car was used in the attack, the minister said.

He will be charged with 5 counts of murder and grievous bodily harm, according to police.

The first emergency call came in at 7:02 p.m. local time and the driver was stopped within three minutes of the attack, according to a police official. Police believe the suspect entered via the space left open for emergency vehicles to access the area.

Police believe the suspect acted alone. The prosecutor said they are still clarifying the motive behind the attack, but said that it's possibly linked to "dissatisfaction with the treatment of refugees from Saudi Arabia and how they've been treated in Germany," but they will "need more time" to determine this.

Police said the suspect has undergone physical and psychological exams but police do not yet have the results.

At Magdeburg Cathedral, a huge crowd gathered on Saturday inside and outside for a memorial service to the victims. Attendees included the mayor, Scholz and first responders.

Elsewhere in the city, a smaller crowd held an anti-immigrant protest with a sign that

said "Remigration" and waved German flags, as well as flags of Imperial Germany and ones reading "Homeland."

U.S. law enforcement sources told ABC News that German authorities are treating the attack as a terrorist incident.

"We send our deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of those killed and injured and to all those affected by this terrible incident," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said in a statement.

"We stand in solidarity with

the people of Germany in grieving the loss of life. The United States is ready to provide assistance as recovery efforts continue and authorities investigate this horrible incident," Miller's statement continued.

Scholz offered his con-

dolences to those affected. "My thoughts are with the victims and their families," Scholz said in a statement. "We stand by their side and by the side of the people of Magdeburg. My thanks go to the dedicated rescue workers in these anxious hours."



CHRISTMAS MARKET:

Security personnel stand guard at the entrance of a Christmas market where a car crashed into a crowd in Magdeburg, Germany.

10 killed on Bourbon Street in New Orleans after suspect intentionally slams truck into crowd

New Orleans Police Department Superintendent Anne Kirkpatrick said the man drove around barricades and hurtled down Bourbon Street in "very intentional behavior" before opening fire on officers. Mayor LaToya Cantrell referred to it as a likely "terrorist attack," and the FBI said in a news release that they are investigating it "as an act of terrorism."

The driver died after exchanging gunfire with responding police officers, the FBI said. The suspect was struck by police fire and declared dead at the scene, the New Orleans Police Department said.

"This man was trying to

run over as many people as he could," said Kirkpatrick, adding that two police officers were hit by gunfire but were in a stable condition. A long gun was recovered from the scene, law enforcement sources told CBS News. The long gun had a "suppressive device" on it that acted as a silencer, according to sources on the scene. Two sources familiar with the investigation told CBS News the suspect was wearing body armor. Potential explosive devices recovered at or near the scene are also being analyzed, the sources said.

Investigators are probing whether the suspect was connected to or inspired by a foreign terror organization, law enforce-

ment and city official sources told CBS News.

The truck appeared to be flying a large black flag from its rear bumper, according to a CBS News review of images of the vehicle. Law enforcement sources told CBS News that investigators are probing whether or not the flag is an ISIS flag or if it is tied to another foreign terror organization. It remains unclear if the suspect was acting alone or with others. A person familiar with the investigation told CBS News that at this point, neither ISIS nor any other foreign terror organization has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry called it "a horrific act of vio-

lence" and said he and his wife were "praying for all the victims and first responders on scene." He urged people to avoid the area.

The popular tourist district was full of New Year's Day revelers at the time of the apparent attack.

"He was hellbent on creating the carnage and the damage that he did," Kirkpatrick said.

Witnesses told CBS News reporter Kati Weis that a white truck crashed into people on Bourbon Street at high speed, and the driver then started firing a weapon from inside the vehicle, with police returning fire. Weis saw multiple people on the ground being treated for injuries

near the intersection of Bourbon and Canal Streets.

The City of New Orleans said in a statement posted online that 30 people were transported to area hospitals with injuries and 10 people were confirmed dead. Kirkpatrick later said that at least 35 people were hospitalized.

Duncan said the FBI will be leading the investigation. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Justice Department's National Security Division and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Louisiana will work with the FBI and local officials to support the investigation, Attorney General Merrick Garland said. President Biden was briefed about the attack, the White House said, and his administration has been in touch with Cantrell to offer support.

Biden said in a statement he has directed his administration to "ensure every resource is available as federal, state, and local law enforcement work assiduously to get to the bottom of what happened as quickly as possible and to ensure that there is no remaining threat of any kind."

"My heart goes out to the victims and their families who were simply trying to celebrate the holiday," Biden said. "There is no justification for violence of any kind, and we will not tolerate any attack on any of our nation's communities."

"Our hearts are with all of the innocent victims and their loved ones, including the brave officers of the New Orleans Police Department," Trump said, in part.

The Sugar Bowl college football playoff game is scheduled to be played at the nearby Superdome later in the day. Kirkpatrick said police officers would work to ensure safety at the event, indicating that the game would go on as planned.

Jeff Hundley, the Chief Executive Officer of the Sugar Bowl, said the he is "devastated by the terrible events from early this morning," and said that event organizers are in ongoing discussions with authorities.

Jim and Nicole Mowrer were in New Orleans visiting from Iowa and witnessed the incident. The couple told CBS News they had watched the city's fireworks display and were enjoying the New Year's Day atmosphere in the French Quarter when they heard crashing noises coming from down the street. They said they then saw a white truck slam through a barricade "at a high rate of speed," followed by gunfire and police. The couple said the truck hit people about a block away from where they had been walking.

"Once the gunfire stopped, we stayed in the alcove until the gunfire stopped, came out into the street, and came across a lot of — several people who had been hit, [we] wanted to see what we could do to help," Nicole Mowrer said. She said the couple found the victims had died.

The Mowrers said the victims they saw had injuries from the truck impact, and they did not see any apparent gunshot wounds. They said they left the area once emergency responders started arriving.



CAR CRASH:

Police investigators surround a white truck that has been crashed into a work lift in the French Quarter of New Orleans, Louisiana, on January 1, 2025.

Sports

● Football ● Athletics ● Gulf ● Basketball ● Tennis ● Boxing

Anthony Joshua to light torch of Nat'l Sports Festival in May

Ogun State Governor, Prince Dapo Abiodun, has announced plans by his administration to construct a brand new Anthony Joshua Indoor Boxing Ring in the state.

Governor Abiodun also announced that the two-time former world heavyweight boxing champion would be lighting

the Gateway Games National Sports Festival torch, which has been postponed to May next year.

The Governor made this known on Monday when he hosted the two-time world heavyweight boxing champion in his office.

"I want to openly request that, besides the fact that today

we are going to officially confirm you as our sports ambassador, we want to request that you come back to light up the Gateway Sports Festival torch; you will be the one lighting it up.

"We are going to construct a brand new Anthony Joshua Indoor Boxing Ring, and that boxing ring will be in a stadium here in Abeokuta to ensure that you come home more frequently. Besides the fact that you are now our official sports ambassador, we have decided that we will give you a brand new house in Sagamu," he said.

The Governor urged Anthony Joshua to find ways of supporting the state in the area of sports development by

working alongside the Director General of the National Sports Commission and the state Commissioner for Sports Development to host a boxing championship in the state.

"We want to plead that you also find ways to support us back home. We believe that we should have tournaments planned leading to the sports festival, and you were expressing how you will participate and what you can do to mentor.

"We leave you to work with our Director General of the National Sports Commission and the Commissioner for Sports Development on what we can do to ensure that we have activities leading to the sports festival in your boxing arena.

"Proudly, we bid for the National Sports Festival for this year, and we won that bid. The festival was supposed to be in January; however, for some technical reasons, it's been postponed to sometime in May.

"In preparation for the sports festival, we are spending a lot of money; we are totally refurbishing, rehabilitating, and reconstructing our sporting facilities. As you know, sports is a universal language; it brings people from different

parts of the world together," he said.

The Governor noted that the state is blessed with many talents spread across music, arts, and sports who are doing very well and, at the same time, placing the state on the world map.

Prince Abiodun added that the state is extremely proud of the achievements of Anthony Joshua on the world stage, saying that his administration would support his career in every way it can.

"Your coming back home will be a source of motivation and inspiration for many young men who are aspiring sportsmen, and we have quite a lot of them in Ogun State.

"I want to congratulate you on what you have achieved in such a short span of time. You've made a short story of your life and your career.

"Whatever we can do to encourage you to continue to win more laurels for yourself, your family, for the state, and Nigeria, be assured that we will be more than happy to do that. We watch your career grow, and we are going to support your career in every way we can," he said.

Earlier in his remarks, Anthony Joshua noted that he would work towards promot-



Nigeria Basketball Federation begins preparations for make or mar last window of Men's Afrobasket 2025 qualifiers

The Nigeria Basketball Federation (NBBF), says it has tipped off preparations and build up for the last and crucial Qualifying Window for the 2025 Men's Afrobasket Championship.

FIBA Men's AfroBasket 2025 will be the 31st edition of Africa's most prestigious continental men's basketball championship. The tournament will take place in Luanda, the Angolan capital between the 12th and 24th of August, 2025, for the fourth time after they hosted the event in 1989, 1999 and 2007.

Former AfroBasket champions and four-time continental silver medalists, Nigeria, will journey to Lybia to compete in the last and final window of the 2025 FIBA Men's AfroBasket Qualifiers.

Your authoritative and award-winning news channel FIRST ZEALMEDIACAST BLOG, gathered that the NBBF

has started linking up with players they hope to invite and some have been formally invited to be part of D'Tigers who are expected roar and secure one of the two tickets still up for grab from Group B.

The President of Nigeria Basketball Federation (NBBF), Engineer Musa Kida, said the team to Lybia will be a mixture of home based players and players plying their trade outside the shores of Nigeria.

Similarly, the NBBF Vice President who also doubles as Technical Director, Babatunde Ogunade, explained that the Federation will do it very best so that country can present a strong team that can fight for the ticket to Angola.

"We can only work with the players available during this window, but more importantly the National Sports Commission (NSC), should provide the much needed funds on time," Ogunade stated.

FIFA lures Nigeria, others with increased funding in women football

Women football development in Nigeria is set to enjoy a massive boost, courtesy world soccer ruling body, FIFA.

The global football governing body urged Member Associations to apply for funding to continue with reforms for the growth of the women's game.

In a circular sent out earlier this month to all 211 Football Associations, including the Nigeria Football Federation NFF, FIFA advised its members to help take the women's game to a new level.

Back in 2021, FIFA launched the Women's Football Strategy 2024-2027 with the aim of increasing opportunities for girls

and women.

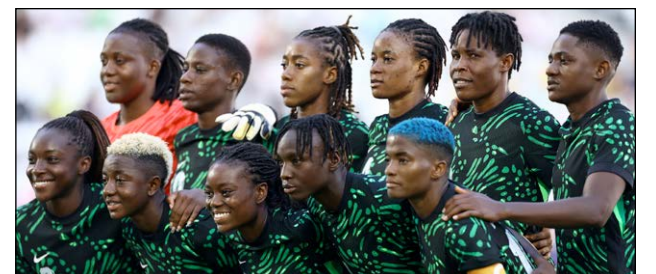
"To deliver on the ambitious objectives set out in the FIFA Women's Football Strategy: 2024-2027, FIFA aims to increase the number of opportunities for girls and women both on and off the pitch. To further support our member associations, we have refreshed and renewed the FIFA Women's Development Programme, which offers tailored initiatives for all 211 member associations, focusing on key aspects of women's football development," said FIFA in the circular.

There are 13 development programmes available for member associations to benefit from, and these include, among others;

Global Benchmarking of Women's Leagues, Women's Football Campaign, League Development, Commercial Strategy, Women in Football Leadership, Coach Education Scholarships, Elite Performance - Women's National Team Preparation.

"All member associations

are eligible to apply for and benefit from these women's development programmes and may submit an application for more than one programme within the same year provided that they are aligned with their overall strategic goals and/or women's football strategy," said the statement.



Edo SWAN wins Fair Play award at UBTH inter-professional football tournament

The Edo State Chapter of the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN) has won the Fair Play Team Award at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH) Inter-Professional Football Tournament.

Despite exiting the competition at the group stage without

a victory, the team, coached by Joseph Isokpehi, earned praise for their professionalism and sportsmanship on and off the field.

Led by Captain Dr. Salihu Ibrahim, the team made a significant impression with their composed behavior, intervention in potential disputes, and

friendly demeanor throughout the tournament.

Kitted in Celtic FC-inspired green and white jerseys by Owu Sports, the team was also recognized as the Best Dressed Team of the Year by spectators.

Though they lost both group-stage matches, the team showcased notable players including

Dr. Salihu Ibrahim, Ugiagbe Joseph, Kolawole Samuel, Precious Okwueze, and others.

Reacting to the award, Captain Dr. Ibrahim expressed optimism for future tournaments, stating, "This award is well deserved. We played by the rules, and we aim to win the title next year."

FEATURE

Okpebholo: Opportunities for growth and transformation in 2025

FRED ITUA

The start of a new year is a time for reflection and renewed determination. It is an opportunity to set fresh goals, leave behind past challenges, and chart a course for personal and collective growth. For leaders, it represents a clean slate to implement transformative policies that uplift the lives of their people.

Governor Monday Okpebholo captures this spirit of renewal in his New Year message, "2025: Okpebholo Poised to Elevate Good Governance in Edo." His message underscores the immense opportunities that lie ahead and the administration's resolve to confront challenges with bold vision and pragmatic action.

Throughout history, transformative leaders have emerged during moments of crisis, steering their nations toward recovery and progress. Franklin D. Roosevelt, for instance, assumed office during the Great Depression, a time when the U.S. economy was in shambles. His New Deal initiatives, such as the Civilian Conservation Corps and Public Works Administration, created millions of jobs and revitalized the nation's infrastructure. Programs like Social Security provided safety nets for the vulnerable, laying the foundation for modern welfare systems.

Similarly, Nelson Mandela's leadership during apartheid in South Africa epitomized resilience and hope. Despite enduring decades of imprisonment, Mandela led his nation toward reconciliation, dismantling institutionalized racial segregation and fostering unity. His emphasis on collaboration and justice reshaped South Africa's destiny.



OKPEBHOLO

These examples remind us that bold, decisive leadership can turn adversity into opportunity. In Edo State, Governor Okpebholo demonstrates similar courage and determination as he tackles the challenges facing the State.

Governor Okpebholo assumed office at a critical juncture when insecurity plagued Edo State. Under his predecessor, the State witnessed a disturbing rise in cult-related violence, with marauding groups claiming innocent lives in their deadly clashes. Communities were also gripped by fear due to a spate of

thefts and robberies.

Recognizing the urgent need to restore peace, the Governor mobilized security agencies with precision and speed. Through strategic planning and resource allocation, the administration dismantled notorious cult networks and curbed the spate of robberies. Today, residents of Edo State enjoy a safer environment, paving the way for economic activities to thrive and fostering confidence among investors.

Understanding the transformative power of infrastructure, Governor

Okpebholo has prioritized key projects aimed at enhancing mobility and improving living standards. Ongoing construction of roads, including the Ramat Park Flyover, Upper Mission Road Extension, and Uteh Palace Road, demonstrates the administration's commitment to bridging development gaps. Collaboration with the federal government to rehabilitate the Benin-Auchi Expressway further underscores this proactive approach. These projects are more than mere construction efforts—they are investments in the State's economic future, reducing travel times, boosting trade, and improving access to vital services.

Education remains central to Governor Okpebholo's vision for Edo State. His approval of a N500 million monthly subvention for Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, is a testament to his commitment to revitalizing higher education. By reconstituting the institution's governing council, the administration has set the stage for sustainable reforms that will enhance academic excellence.

Additionally, the ongoing renovation of public schools reflects the administration's focus on foundational education. These efforts ensure that young people are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to compete in an increasingly globalized world.

As the year unfolds, Governor Okpebholo's agenda aligns with the Nigerian Constitution's mandate to prioritize the welfare and security of citizens. His administration is focused on expanding opportunities for entrepreneurship, agriculture, and industrial growth to create jobs and boost livelihoods. Strengthening health infrastructure and ensuring affordable, accessible medical

services across the State are also high on the agenda.

Programs to equip young people with vocational and entrepreneurial skills will continue to empower Edo youth, while ongoing and new infrastructure projects will benefit urban and rural communities alike. Upholding accountability and transparency remain a cornerstone of the administration's governance approach, fostering trust and efficient resource management.

As Governor Okpebholo emphasized in his New Year message, the success of his administration depends on the collective effort of Edo people. Just as Roosevelt relied on the resilience of the American people and Mandela inspired South Africans to unite, so must Edo citizens actively support the Government's agenda while holding it accountable.

With unity, resilience, and visionary leadership, Edo State stands poised to achieve unprecedented heights of prosperity in 2025. Governor Okpebholo's bold initiatives in security, infrastructure, and education have laid a solid foundation for transformation. It is now imperative for every Edo citizen to contribute to this vision, ensuring that the State becomes a model of good governance and sustainable development in Nigeria.

This year holds immense promise for Edo State. Together, under Governor Okpebholo's dynamic leadership, the opportunities for growth and progress are boundless. Let us seize them.

Fred Itua is the Chief Press Secretary to Edo State Governor

Culture as a symbol of unity in Nigeria

IMEVBORE JOHN

Culture encompasses the beliefs, norms, and way of life of a people. It reflects their value system and unites them under shared principles. More than just a set of traditions, culture binds its adherents through collective practices, with sanctions often imposed on those who deviate from its norms.

Culture, however, is not static. It evolves with time and circumstances. Broadly classified into material (tangible) and non-material (intangible), it includes practices tied to specific seasons or events. For example, the month of December is significant for Christian communities across Nigeria, as they celebrate Christmas.

Despite the geographical and ethnic diversity in Nigeria, cultural similarities exist among various tribes, creating bonds of shared identity.

THE ROLE OF FAMILY IN CULTURAL TRANSMISSION

The family serves as the cornerstone of cultural preservation. It is where children first encounter practices that shape their identity. Language, as a vital component of culture, is often introduced within the family setting, alongside norms such as modes of greeting and respect for elders.

Through family teachings, children learn to embrace values that promote unity, cooperation, and integration within the larger society. A child raised with a strong cultural foundation becomes an asset to their family, community, and nation. Conversely, the absence of such grounding often results in societal challenges, as evidenced by the rise in social vices.

CULTURAL PRACTICES: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IMPACTS

Cultural practices can either uplift or hinder societal progress. Positive cultural elements, such as the "culture of peace" or "culture of excellence," foster development and unity. On the

other hand, negative practices can lead to division and discord. This article focuses on how culture can be a unifying force, particularly in Nigeria.

NIGERIAN CULTURE: A BEACON OF UNITY

Nigerians are renowned for their hospitality and communal spirit. Unlike the individualistic tendencies of some cultures, Nigerian communities prioritize collective well-being. For example, the birth of a child is celebrated not just by the immediate family but by the entire community. Child-rearing is a shared responsibility, with all elders contributing to the moral upbringing of children.

Cultural practices like greetings are deeply ingrained in Nigerian society. Each ethnic group has unique greetings that foster connections and mutual respect. Greeting an elder is seen as a sign of respect, and children are promptly corrected if they neglect this cultural norm. This practice helps maintain unity and mutual respect

across generations and communities.

DRESSING AS A SYMBOL OF UNITY

Traditional attire is another significant cultural element that fosters unity. In Nigeria, every ethnic group has its unique dress code, which serves as a marker of identity and pride. Whether it is the agbada of the Yoruba, the isagu of the Igbo, or the babanriga of the Hausa, these outfits create a sense of belonging and shared heritage.

When Nigerians wear their traditional attire, they express their cultural identity while building bridges of connection with others who share similar roots. This sense of unity is mirrored in other countries, such as India, where national dress codes serve as a unifying force.

FESTIVALS: CELEBRATING TOGETHERNESS

Cultural festivals are powerful tools for fostering national integration. The Igue Festival in Benin Kingdom

attracts indigenes from across the world, providing a platform for unity and collective problem-solving. Similarly, the Osun-Osogbo Festival in Southwest Nigeria brings Yoruba people together, while the Argungu Fishing Festival in Kebbi State unites participants and spectators alike.

These festivals celebrate shared history and heritage, reinforcing bonds of love, unity, and cooperation among Nigerians.

PRESERVING NIGERIAN CULTURE FOR NATIONAL UNITY

Nigerian culture continues to play a crucial role in promoting unity and integration. To ensure its continued relevance, efforts must be made to preserve and promote cultural practices, particularly among the youth, who are the future custodians of a united Nigeria.

By embracing and celebrating our diverse yet interconnected cultural heritage, Nigerians can build a stronger, more unified nation.