

2027: Okpebholo assures President Tinubu of 100% votes in Edo

● Commissions waste mgt equipment

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo has lauded President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his love for Edo people, assuring him of continued support ahead of the 2027 Presidential polls.

Governor Okpebholo stated

this in his goodwill message during a food outreach by the Renewed Hope Initiative (RHI), through its Social Investment Programme.

At the event which held in Government House, Benin City, Edo State, Governor Ok-

pebholo said the electorate in Edo State would give the President 100 percent of their votes in the 2027 presidential election for remembering the vulnerable in the state.

The RHI food outreach began on March 8, 2024, and about

seven States, including Edo, have benefited from the initiative so far.

The other States include Kano, Benue, Nasarawa, Ekiti, Cross River, and Gombe, while States like Kwara, Kogi, and Abia are next in line.

Governor Okpebholo commended the First Lady of Nigeria and Chairperson of RHI,

Senator Oluremi Tinubu, for her love and motherly role in ensuring that the people of Nigeria enjoy the dividends of democracy.

He noted that the initiative of the First Lady would not have been successful without the support of President Tinubu, assuring that the people of Edo State will support him for a second term if

and when he decides to run.

"The entire people of Edo State are very appreciative of this kind gesture of food outreach and donations of different food items to the vulnerable in Edo State.

"We are happy in Edo State, and the people are beginning to

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The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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2025 hajj: Edo pilgrims to pay N8.8 million

The Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board has announced a fare of N8,784,085.59 for the 2025 Hajj pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia.

The amount, approved by the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) and endorsed by the Office of the Vice President, was determined after consultations with key stakeholders, including the

Presidency and State Executive Secretaries. NAHCON emphasized that the decision aimed to ensure inclusivity and fairness.

The board has urged intending pilgrims to register early and make prompt payments to avoid last-minute challenges. Pilgrims are also advised to adhere to Saudi Arabia's Hajj regulations and the set timelines for a seamless process.

Meanwhile, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Communication and Orientation, Dr. Desmond Agbama has urged staff of the ministry to uphold excellence and professionalism in the conduct of their duties.

Dr. Agbama gave this charge during a meeting with staff of the ministry as part of efforts

toward actualizing the goals and objectives of the Ministry's Development Plan for 2025.

He heads of department to further engage with staff of the ministry to fine-tuning the work plan which would ensure that the Ministry achieves its set goals.

Dr. Agbama who emphasized on the policy thrust of

the state government described it as one with a zero tolerance for acts of indiscipline and laxity, stressing that every staff of the ministry would be assessed in line with their individual performance and the value they add to the system.

He however commended the staff for their cooperation and support in the previous

year, urging them to rededicate their efforts so as to achieve maximum results in the present year.

Earlier, the Director of Shared Services, Mrs. Oghogho Omosigho expressed the need for staff to be punctuality and dedication to duty so as to avoid circumventing the Civil service rules.

Security: Reps appeal for prompt release of 2024 capital funds

JOY ODOR

The House of Representatives Committee on National Security and Intelligence has called on President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to direct the Minister of Finance to ensure the full and timely release of the 2024 capital allocations to the security and intelligence sector, stressing its importance for the nation's safety.

Chairman of the Committee, Ahmed Satomi (APC, Borno), raised concerns during the budget defense session for agencies under the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA).

He noted with regret that several intelligence agencies have either received inadequate funding or no capital releases at all for the year.

While acknowledging the President's prioritization of se-

curity through a substantial allocation in the 2025 budget, Satomi emphasized that the intelligence sector remains underfunded.

He urged increased allocations to the sector and prioritized disbursement of funds to enable critical agencies to fulfill their mandates effectively.

Agencies that defended their budgets include the Directorate of State Services, National Intelligence Agency, National Cybercrimes Coordination Centre, and others. Satomi stressed the collective responsibility of all stakeholders in equipping these agencies to address the nation's evolving security challenges.

He highlighted that frontline agencies responsible for countering violent extremism, illicit arms flow, intelligence gather-

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COMMISSIONING:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo (left), congratulating Hon. Paul Ohonbamu, one of the newly sworn in commissioners at Government House on Monday.

Nigeria, Egypt partner to strengthen security, agriculture ties
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Biden issues pre-emptive pardons for Fauci and Jan 6 riot committee
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Trump plan to deport migrants a 'disgrace', says Pope
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U-19 Cricket W/Cup: Nigeria stuns new Zealand to claim historic win in Malaysia
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Edo tribunal adjourns hearing over petitioners' witness schedule delay

The Edo State Governorship Election Petition Tribunal (EPT) on Monday postponed its hearing

to Tuesday, January 21, 2025, following a delay by the petitioners in serving their witness schedule list to the respondents.

The petition, filed by Dr. Asue Ighodalo, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) candidate, challenges the conduct

of the September 21, 2024, governorship election.

During the proceedings, counsel for the Independent

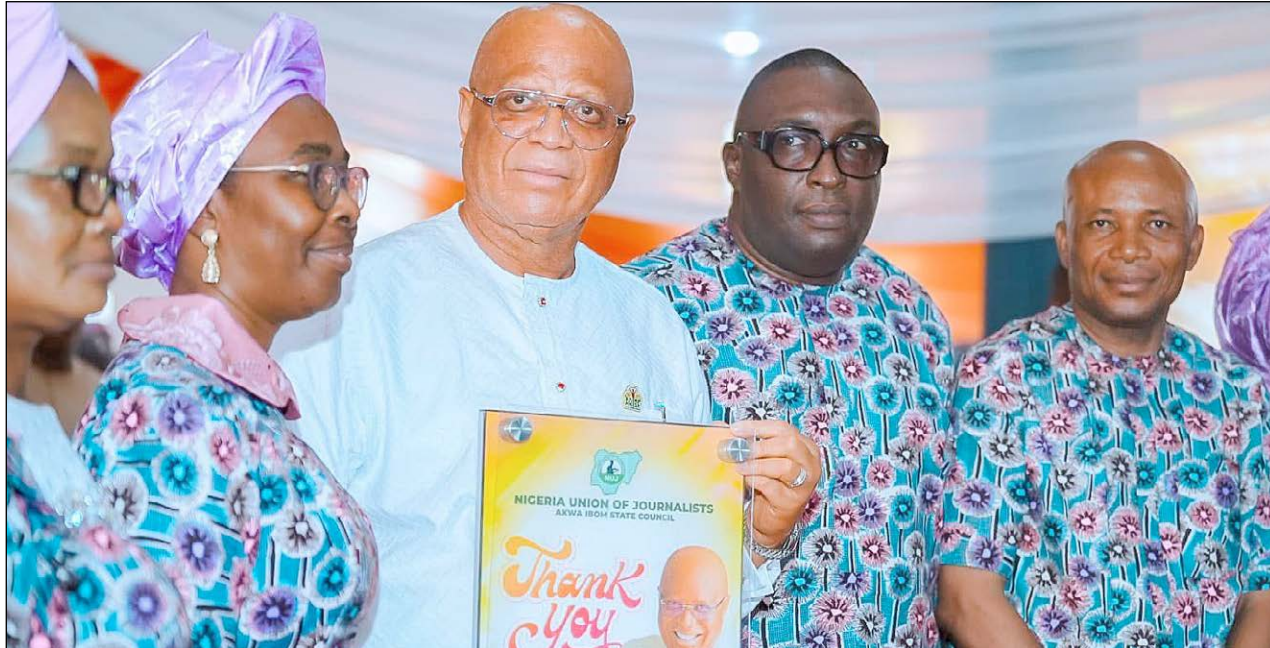
National Electoral Commission (INEC), Governor Monday Okpebholo, and the All Progressives Congress (APC) legal team, including Kanu Agabi SAN, Onyechi Ikpeazu SAN, and Emmanuel Ukala SAN, opposed the petitioners' attempt to present witnesses. They argued that the witness schedule was served on them just minutes before the session, leaving insufficient time for cross-examination preparation.

Ukala submitted that the Tribunal's directive for parties to exchange witness schedules at least a day prior to testimony was violated, stating, "The purpose of preventing any party

from being taken by surprise is defeated when the list is served minutes before hearing."

In response, petitioners' counsel, Adetunji Oyeyipo SAN, attributed the delay to alleged threats against their witnesses by the APC State Chairman, claiming a broadcast warned of arrests at the court premises. Despite this explanation, the Tribunal sided with the respondents, emphasizing the need for fairness and adequate preparation.

Justice Wilfred Kpochi, the Tribunal Chairman, adjourned the case to ensure the respondents have sufficient time to prepare for cross-examinations.



2025 THANKSGIVING SERVICE:

Akwa Ibom State Governor, Pastor Umo Eno (middle), sandwiched by members of the state's Council of Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), during the Council's 2025 Thanksgiving Service, at Ikot Ekpene Udo, Nsit Ubium.

Court declines jurisdiction in suit filed by suspended Edo LG chairmen

A Federal High sitting in Abuja has declined jurisdiction in a case filed by the suspended chairmen of the 18 Local Government Councils in Edo State.

The court, presided over by Justice Emeka Nwite, had adjourned the matter to Monday January, 20, 2025 for hearing of a Motion on Notice for an interlocutory injunction filed by the suspended chairmen.

When the matter came up on Monday, the presiding Judge in-

formed the lawyers to the parties that upon an application by the counsel for the 1st to 5th Defendants, the case file has been transferred to the Benin Division of the Federal High Court.

"The implication of the transfer is that the Federal High Court Abuja lacks the territorial jurisdiction to entertain the case, since the parties are based in Edo and the main subject matter of the suit is the interpretation of the Edo State Local Government Laws."

The Judge had ordered the

parties to maintain status quo.

The implication of the transfer of the case to Benin, it was gathered, is that the Federal High Court in Abuja lacks the jurisdiction to entertain the matter, since the parties are based in Edo and the main subject matter of the suit is the interpretation of the Edo State Local Government Law.

Aggrieved 18 LG chairmen and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had filed a motion ex parte marked FHC/ABJ/

CS/1952/V/2024.

In the motion dated December 20, 2024, but filed December 24, 2024, the chairmen and PDP sued the Speaker of Edo State House of Assembly; Governor of Edo State as 1st to 4th defendants.

Also joined in the suit are the Attorney General and Commissioner for justice, Edo state: the Attorney General of the Federation; and the Inspector General of Police, as 5th to 7th defendants respectively.

Niger tanker explosion: Death toll hits 98, 69 injured

The Director General of the Niger State Emergency Management Agency (NSEMA), Abdullahi Baba-Arah, has said that as at 12 PM on January 20, 2025, the death toll from the tragic tanker explosion that occurred in Diko, Niger State

has risen to 98, while 69 people have been injured.

The explosion also left 20 shops completely burnt, causing significant losses to business owners in the area.

In a statement issued by Baba-Arah, he described the incident as a catastrophic trag-

edy that has thrown the state into mourning.

He confirmed that rescue operations are ongoing, with emergency responders working tirelessly to ensure that the injured receive adequate medical attention and to recover the bodies of those who lost

their lives.

"We are deeply saddened by this unfortunate incident. The state government and NSEMA are committed to supporting the victims and ensuring that those injured get the care they need."

2027: Okpebholo assures President Tinubu of 100%...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

see and enjoy a new dawn. Look at food items all over the place in this hall, all thanks to the president and his wife for this great initiative that Edo people are benefitting from today.

"We are assuring you, Mr. President of our 100 percent votes in the state come 2027 presidential election, and if possible, we will give you more than 100 percent," he declared.

The First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, recalled that the food outreach commenced in March 2024.

Represented by the wife of the Vice President, Hajia Nana Shettima, the First Lady said the initiative has made significant progress in supporting women and youths for the bet-

terment of their lives.

She advised beneficiaries not to sell the food items, but to make good use of them for the benefit of their families.

"This food outreach began last year in March 2024 in Abuja to provide vulnerable households with food to support their families. We have been able to distribute food items to seven states across Nigeria.

"The RHI has made significant progress in efforts to support our people, particularly women and youths, for a better life.

"Under this initiative, there will be more activities this year that cover education, health, economic empowerment, social investments and Agriculture.

"This programme aims to further compliment the re-

newed hope agenda of the President Tinubu's administration," she said.

Coordinator of the office of the First Lady of Edo State, Mrs Edesili Anani Okpebholo, thanked the First Lady for the initiative which in less than two years has touched the lives of millions of Nigerians, assuring that the vulnerable in the state will get the food items.

She also appreciated Governor Okpebholo for his developmental strides in less than three months in office and noted that his support for the RHI programmes in the state has recorded great success.

Items distributed included noodles, semovita, and pasta, among others.

Other guests at the food outreach included the Secretary to

Edo State Government Musa Ikhilor; Deputy Chief of Staff, Pius Alile; Wife of former Deputy Governor of Edo State, Mrs Anna Shaibu; leaders of market women; serving commissioners; political women leaders across the state; heads of security agencies in the state, Permanent Secretaries and widows.

Meanwhile, the Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo has commissioned waste management equipment for the State's Waste Management Agency in line with his administration's focus on ensuring a cleaner environment.

Governor Okpebholo was accompanied by his Deputy, Hon. Dennis Idahosa; Secretary to the Edo State Government, Musa Ikhilor; and other top government officials.

Pastor Kumuyi prays at US president's inauguration event

The General Superintendent of Deeper Christian Life Ministry, Pastor William Kumuyi, participated in a special programme held ahead of the inauguration of President Donald Trump in the United States.

The event, known as the Inauguration Praise and Prayer Convocation, took place at the Greater New Hope Baptist Church and was organised by Jim Garlow's Well Versed World ministry alongside Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council.

The gathering brought together faith leaders and believers to pray for the nation and its incoming administration.

During the programme, Kumuyi delivered a prayer challenge to the American church and its leaders, urging them to pursue holiness and righteousness as essential steps toward spiritual renewal and national revival.

Kumuyi said, "Almighty God. We thank You and bless Your name," Kumuyi prayed. "What a great and glorious God you are. I want to thank You, Lord, for the church in America. You said, upon this rock, You would build Your church - not just for that generation but for every generation, and You say the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.

"Lord, we come in preparation for the celebration of Donald Trump, the president tomorrow. We're asking that You will grant him wisdom and You will grant the church the

unity, the revival, the knowledge, the vision, the forthrightness to speak the truth to power. And we pray, as You connect the church with the leader, that it will be a good unity, that You will help the President, and that the church will remain the church.

"Revive Your church, restore Your church and purge Your church that there will be the holiness and the righteousness You expect for Your church, and the church will have a meaningful ministry in the government, as well as for America."

On the eve of the inauguration, Kumuyi also offered this prayer during an SRN News interview, "Almighty God, You chose to bring President-Elect Donald Trump to Your throne and to lead at this time. We're asking that your grace will be with him through Your wisdom and Your power. And we pray You will help him remain focused on all the things he's brought out in his campaign of giving Christ the recognition and the honor that He deserves. In Jesus name we pray, Amen."

During his visit, Kumuyi met with Robert Pittenger, former representative from North Carolina, Turning Point USA Faith's Senior Director Lucas Miles and media representatives.

Today, Donald Trump will officially be sworn in as the 47th President of the United States. The oath of office will be administered by Chief Justice John Roberts during the inauguration ceremony in Washington, D.C.

Security: Reps appeal for prompt release of 2024...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

ing, and the protection of government officials face severe funding gaps. Satomi called on the President to ensure not only increased funding but also the full and prompt release of allocated resources to these agencies.

In his remarks, Mohammed Sanusi Danjuma, Permanent Secretary for Special Services in ONSA, stated that the proposed budget aims to address security

challenges, enhance agency coordination, improve infrastructure, and develop personnel capacity. He assured the Committee of the intelligence community's commitment to transparency and resource optimization, despite the constraints of the envelop system of budgeting.

Satomi reaffirmed the National Assembly's commitment to enhancing national security, assuring that budget allocations would align with Nigeria's security objectives.

NEWS

Nigeria, Egypt partner to strengthen security, agriculture ties

OLUWATUNMISE OMOSEYIN

Nigeria and Egypt have agreed to deepen their diplomatic ties and strengthen cooperation in several sectors, including security and agriculture.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs disclosed this on Sunday, January 19, in a statement issued by Alkasim Abdulkadir, Special Assistant on Media and Communications Strategy to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Yusuf Tuggar.

According to the statement, Ambassador Tuggar was in Cairo on Saturday to participate in the third round of political consultations with Egyptian

Foreign Minister Badr Abdelaty. The discussions focused on enhancing the relationship between the two nations.

"Both foreign ministers agreed to elevate the relationship between Egypt and Nigeria to a comprehensive partnership, with mutual respect for each nation's unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity," Abdulkadir stated.

The Nigerian delegation included the Minister of Water Resources, Professor Joseph Utsev, and the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Abubakar Kyari.

The two nations also pledged to work together on regional and international matters,

particularly in strengthening the African Union's role in addressing challenges on the continent. They committed to advancing democracy, good governance, and the goals of Agenda 2063.

On security, both countries

agreed to share experiences in implementing counter terrorism strategies, acknowledging the shared threat of terrorism and extremism.

Discussions also explored boosting economic ties, with plans to establish a Nige-

ria-Egypt Chamber of Commerce by the end of 2025. Areas such as energy, telecommunications, and infrastructure were highlighted as potential focus points for private and government sector collaboration.

The statement further noted that the next session of the Joint Committee at the ministerial level will be held in late 2025. These efforts are part of broader celebrations marking 65 years of diplomatic relations between the Nigeria and Egypt.

Kemi Badenoch 'denigrating' Nigeria for political hains, says Presidency

Presidential spokesman Daniel Bwala believes Kemi Badenoch's scathing comments about Nigeria are targeted at gaining acceptance from her party members.

Badenoch recently said she does not want the UK to become like Nigeria where she claimed the government has failed.

However, on Monday, Bwala, the Special Adviser to the President on Policy Communications said that the UK Conservative Party leader's comment was to gain the favour of her party.

"The only problem we have with Kemi, I think, is the rhetoric because Kemi belongs to the right base in the United Kingdom which is what you see in this populism around the world that you can deepen on your support system if you can feed off of the anger of the people," Bwala said on Channels Television's Sunrise Daily.

"And so she's building a rhetoric of denigrating Nigeria, demarketing in Nigeria, so she can probably win the acceptance or acceptance of the

rights in her party.

"And that to me is counter-productive because, if you look at Rishi Sunak, he is also of Indian origin. There has been this issue of gang rape in India.

"He has never used that as a weapon to promote what he believed to be a departure from what is likely to be believed as hereditary or history of the Indian people, but she has always denigrated Nigeria."

The presidential spokesman, however, dismissed fears that Badenoch's remarks about Nigeria will affect the country's efforts to bring investors.

"I don't think it would have any effect because she's not the government in power. Usually, these international relationships or collaborations are dealings between governments.

"Because she's not the government in power, it will not have any effect," he said.

"Secondly, because she's a Nigerian, investors will be smart enough to access what she's saying, whether it is born out of rhetoric."

NAHCON announces 2025 Hajj fare across regions

OLUWATUNMISE OMOSEYIN

The National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) has officially announced the fare for the 2025 Hajj pilgrimage, categorized by region.

The announcement, approved by the Office of the Vice President, was made by NAHCON Chairman, Professor Abdullahi Saleh Usman, through a statement issued on January 20 by Fatima Sanda Usara, Assistant Director of Information and Publication.

According to the statement, pilgrims from the Borno and Adamawa zone will pay ₦8,327,125.59, while those

from the Southern states are to pay ₦8,784,085.59. Pilgrims from the Northern zone will pay ₦8,457,685.59.

NAHCON clarified that the fares were set after extensive consultations with stakeholders to ensure inclusivity and fairness.

The Commission urged intending pilgrims to adhere to the payment and registration deadlines while complying with Saudi Arabian guidelines to avoid complications.

For more details, including the fare breakdown, intending pilgrims were encouraged to visit the NAHCON website at nahcon.gov.ng or contact their respective State Pilgrims' Welfare Boards.



JAMB BUDGET DEFENSE:

L-R: Chairman House of Representatives Committee on Tertiary Education and TETFund, Hon. Oforji Oboku; his Senate counterpart, Senator Muntari Dandutse and Osita Izunaso at joint session on budget defense of JAMB at National Assembly, Abuja.

PHOTO BY OMOYE AMINU

EFCC to auction forfeited vehicles online

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission has said it will e-auction some of the forfeited vehicles to the public.

A statement by the commission noted that the exercise will take place on Monday, January 27, 2025, from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm, as it will be con-

ducted online.

The exercise is spread across 16 lots with auctioneers in Abuja, Edo, Kwara, Sokoto, Kaduna, Lagos and Kano states.

A tweet via its X handle on Monday, the commission said the e-auction will be done according to the EFCC (Estab-

lishment) Act, 2004, Public Procurement Act, 2007 and the Proceeds of Crime (Recovery & Management) Act.

Interested persons can go through the official web addresses provided for each lot.

"The General Public is hereby notified that the @officialEFCC through its appoint-

ed Auctioneers will conduct e-Auction of the under-listed vehicles that are subject to final Forfeiture orders in accordance with the EFCC (Establishment) Act, 2004, Public Procurement Act, 2007 and the Proceeds of Crime (Recovery & Management) Act, 2022," the tweet partly read.

Over 77,495 children immunised against polio in Kogi

No fewer than 77,495 children have been immunised against polio in remote communities across the seven local government areas of Kogi State.

The state government stated that this development would help consolidate its 10-year-old polio-free status.

The state Immunisation Officer, Grace Ojofedo, made this known to newsmen on Monday following the completion

of the "Big Catch-Up" Polio Immunisation programme in the state.

Ojofedo explained that the exercises were carried out in communities that were either missed or inadequately covered in last year's immunisation programme.

"The programme was conducted in seven LGAs in the state. 80,608 vaccines were administered, and 77,495 children were immunised."

The SIO said the state recorded a 99% coverage rate, though it also experienced a 5% wastage rate in the latest programme, which took place between January 6 and January 13, 2025.

She praised UNICEF for its contribution to the programme, noting that the agency's support has been instrumental in helping the state maintain its polio-free status.

Ojofedo further assured that the state would spare no effort

in consolidating its polio-free status.

"This latest exercise helped us consolidate the achievement made in the first phase of polio immunisation last year. With this, we have extended polio immunisation to every nook and cranny of the state," she added.

She stated that the recently concluded exercises were carried out in remote communi-

Senate tasks MDAs on realistic, implementable 2025 budget

CAROLINE AMEH

The Nigerian Senate has called on Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) to present a 2025 budget that is realistic, implementable, and focused on achieving measurable outcomes for national development.

Chairman of the Senate

Committee on Finance, Senator Sani Musa, issued this directive on Monday in Abuja during a budget defense session with the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister for the Economy, Mr. Wale Edun.

The session also featured the Accountant General of the Federation, Dr. Oluwatoyin Madein, and the Chairman of

the Fiscal Responsibility Commission (FRC), Mr. Victor Muruako.

Senator Musa stressed that MDAs must ensure their budgets are purposeful and can deliver tangible benefits to the populace upon implementation.

"It is the responsibility of the legislature to ensure an efficient and transparent allocation of government resources

to drive development and meet the needs of the people.

The Ministry of Finance plays a foundational role in shaping economic policies and fiscal strategies," he said.

He further emphasized that the budget must reflect prudence, accountability, and alignment with national priorities, as its impact will be felt across all sectors.

Foreign

News

Returning back to Rafah was a big shock' —Palestinian

Waking up in Gaza this morning, many Palestinians were thinking about loved ones they have lost during the war.

Abdulrahman Riyati, who is now in Khan Younis having been displaced from Rafah, says he "didn't try to go back."

"It is hard for me. I had a 30-year-old son, he was martyred in Khan Younis. I took him with me from Rafah, and he was martyred. It's hard for me to go back to Rafah without him," he tells the

Reuters news agency.

Another man, Mohamed Gomaa, also displaced from Rafah, lost his brother and nephew.

"As for returning back to Rafah, it was a big shock, and the amount feeling shocked is countless because of what happened to their homes - it's destruction, total destruction," he says.

What do we know about the released Palestinian prisoners?

As we reported earlier, overnight 90 Palestinians were released from Ofer prison in the

occupied West Bank as part of the hostage-prisoner swap.

The BBC's US partner CBS News reports that, according to a list provided by the Palestinian Authority's Commission for Prisoners' Affairs, 69 women and 21 teenage boys from the West Bank and Jerusalem were freed last night - the youngest being 15.

We've also seen a list of some of those released - many of whom were in prison after being arrested, and had not been sentenced.

Amongst those released are:

Khalida Jarrar, leader of the political group Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Jarrar was arrested in late 2023. She reunited with her loved ones in Ramallah

Dania Hanantsheh, who tells Reuters she was in an Israeli jail for five months. She says the female prisoners are "strong" but the situation is "bad on all prisoners"

Bushra al-Tawil, a Palestinian journalist jailed in Israel in March 2024 tells AFP news agency, "the wait was extremely hard" after learning the ceasefire had been announced

Gazans tell of shock as thousands return to devastated homes on second day of ceasefire

Gazans are returning to their homes to find them reduced to rubble - a Palestinian tells our correspondent "I couldn't believe I didn't wake up startled" for the first time since the war began

Freed British-Israeli hostage Emily Damari says she "came back to life", as her mother says her daughter is "the happiest girl in the world" and doing better than expected

She and two other women were released by Hamas yesterday - they are all said to be in

a stable condition and are undergoing more medical checks in hospital

Ninety Palestinian prisoners were released overnight in exchange for the hostages - most of them women and teenage boys

Some of the freed prisoners describe "incredible joy" as they were pictured hugging their loved ones in tears

The fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas is now in its second day - but there is still uncertainty at what lies ahead.



Khalida Jarrar, a prominent figure amongst the released Palestinian detainees, arrived in Ramallah

Dramatic day ushers in a fragile Israel-Hamas ceasefire after 15 months of war

After 15 months of war that began with a brutal attack on Israel by Hamas and ended with much of the Gaza Strip levelled by Israel, a ceasefire came into effect on Sunday that saw three women hostages released from Gaza and 90 Palestinians freed from Israeli jails in return.

For two tense hours on Sunday morning, the ceasefire looked as though it might falter from the very outset. Hamas failed to provide the names of the three hostages it planned to release, prompting Israel to postpone the ceasefire and continue its air

strikes on Gaza.

In what should have been the first hours of peace, from 08:30 local time (06:30 GMT), at least 19 Palestinians were killed by the strikes and 36 more were wounded, the Hamas-run Civil Defence agency said. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said it had struck "a number of terror targets."

The three hostages' names were eventually sent by Hamas to Israel, via an intermediary, and Israeli military action in Gaza ceased for the first time since a brief, week-long ceasefire and hostage exchange back in November 2023.

At 11:19, Majed al-Ansari,

the spokesman for the foreign ministry of Qatar, which has helped broker the ceasefire deal, wrote on X that the final obstacles had been cleared "and thus the ceasefire has begun."

Six hours later, three Israeli hostages - Romi Gonen, 24, Doron Steinbrecher, 31, and Emily Damari, 28, who is a dual British citizen - were handed over by Hamas to the Red Cross in Gaza and then to the Israeli military.

TV coverage showed chaotic scenes in Gaza City's Saraya Square as crowds massed around the vehicle carrying the hostages and Hamas fighters struggled to push the people back.

There was a brief glimpse of the three women as they were taken from the van, amid the surging crowds. From the handover point in Gaza they were driven by the IDF to the nearby Re'im military base in southern Israel to be met by their mothers.

Extensive planning by the IDF had gone into the delicate handover, with military medics and psychologists readied for the first stages of the process at a reception centre designed to ease the hostages' transition.

From Re'im, they were transferred by helicopter to the Sheba Medical Centre near Tel Aviv to be reunited with their wider

Biden issues pre-emptive pardons for Fauci and Jan 6 riot committee

Joe Biden has pre-emptively pardoned a number of people including Covid response chief Anthony Fauci and the members of the 6 January riot investigation, to prevent "unjustified... politically motivated prosecutions."

Trump, who will be inaugurated later on Monday, regularly clashed with Dr Fauci during the pandemic and has suggested he would take action against those who tried to hold him accountable for the 6 January Capitol riot.

Biden also issued a pre-emptive pardon to the retired general Mark Milley, who has described Trump as "fascist to the core" and "dangerous."

The outgoing US president said: "Our nation owes these public servants a debt of gratitude for their tireless commitment."

"These public servants have served our nation with honour and distinction and do not deserve to be the targets of unjustified and politically motivated prosecutions," Biden said in his statement.

He added that the pardons should "not be mistaken as an acknowledgment" that any of those covered "engaged in any wrongdoing."

Democrats had warned the outgoing president against such action. Adam Schiff, a Senator for California, said Biden could set a "precedent" for "each president hereafter on their way out the door giving out a broad category of pardons."

Trump in December backed a call for the FBI to investigate fellow Republican Liz Cheney

over her role in leading Congress's probe of the 6 January riot.

Mr Fauci - who oversaw the US response to the Covid-19 pandemic - has been frequently criticised by Trump and his political allies.

General Milley, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the journalist Bob Woodward last year that he feared being re-called to uniform and court-martialled for "disloyalty" by Trump.

According to Woodward, he warned colleagues that Trump was a "walking, talking advertisement of what he's trying to do."

He noted that Steve Bannon, a key Trump ally, has vowed to "hold him accountable."

Biden's pardons cover members of the House Select Committee investigating the 6 January 2021 riot, as well as their staff members and the officers who testified.

Trump is set to pardon some of those convicted of crimes related to the riot.

"You're going to see something tomorrow," Trump said on Sunday, in reference to the 6 January rioters. "I think you'll be very, very happy."

On the campaign trail, Trump sometimes railed against "enemies from within" and has endorsed several figures who have vowed retribution against his foes to join his cabinet.

However, his choice for attorney general, Pam Bondi, said during her confirmation hearing last week that there would never be an enemies list and that she would not use the Justice Department to target anyone based on their politics.

More than 10,000 bodies to be recovered —Palestinian Civil Defence

The Hamas-run civil defence agency has just shared an update on the impact of the war in Gaza over the last 15 months: The Civil Defence Service's crews recovered over 38,300 dead bodies, and rescued 97,000 injured people, from areas targeted by Israel

An estimate of more than 10,000 dead bodies are still under rubble of destroyed buildings, yet

to be recovered

The agency "could not find any trace" of around 2,840 killed people. It says it's because of the extremely high temperatures produced by the Israeli army's weapons.

The crew managed to control 22,403 fires caused by strikes in targeted areas, and evacuated 42,000 from areas and homes "deemed too dangerous to remain"

Biden issues pre-emptive pardons for Fauci and Jan 6 riot c'ttee

Joe Biden has pre-emptively pardoned a number of people including Covid response chief Anthony Fauci and the members of the 6 January riot investigation, to prevent "unjustified... politically motivated prosecutions."

Trump regularly clashed with Dr Fauci during the pandemic and has suggested he would take action against those who tried to hold him accountable for the 6 January Capitol riot.

Biden also issued a pre-emptive pardon to the retired general Mark Milley, who has described Trump as "fascist to the core" and "dangerous."

The outgoing US president said: "Our nation owes these public servants a debt of gratitude for their tireless commitment"

"These public servants have served our nation with honour and distinction and do not deserve to be the targets of unjustified and politically motivated prosecutions," Biden said in his statement.

He added that the pardons should "not be mistaken as an acknowledgment" that any of those covered "engaged in any wrongdoing."

Democrats had warned the outgoing president against such action. Adam Schiff, a Senator for California, said Biden could set a "precedent" for "each president hereafter on their way out the door giving out a broad category of pardons."

Trump in December backed a call for the FBI to investigate fellow Republican Liz Cheney over her role in leading Congress's probe of the 6 January riot.

Mr Fauci - who oversaw the US response to the Covid-19 pandemic - has been frequently criticised by Trump and his political allies.

News

Foreign

Trump plan to deport migrants a 'disgrace', says Pope

Pope Francis has said that Donald Trump's plans to deport illegal migrants from the US would be a "disgrace" if they materialized.

Speaking to an Italian TV programme from his Vatican residence, Francis said that if the plans went ahead, Trump would make "poor wretches that don't have anything foot the bill."

"That's not right. That's not how you solve problems," he said.

Trump has promised to be-

gin the largest expulsion of undocumented immigrants in US history soon after he takes office.

In a message to Trump shared on Monday, Pope Francis offered him "cordial greetings" and urged him to lead a society with "no room for hatred, discrimination or exclusion" and promote "peace and reconciliation among peoples."

The Pope is known to hold the issue of migrants dear. During a public audience last August, he said that "system-

atically working by all means to drive away migrants" was "a grave sin."

In 2016, before the first presidential election won by Trump, Pope Francis said "a person who thinks only about building walls... and not of building bridges, is not Christian."

Referring to Trump's promise to build a wall on the Mexican border to keep migrants from travelling into the US, Francis said: "I say only that this man is not Christian if he

has said things like that. We must see if he said things in that way and I will give him the benefit of the doubt."

Francis and Trump later met when Trump and his family visited Rome in 2017.

Before the US presidential election in 2024, the Pope declined to say whether people should vote for Trump or for his Democratic opponent Kamala Harris, merely urging people to choose "the lesser evil" according to their conscience.

Missing US journalist's mother visits Syria to renew search

The mother of US journalist Austin Tice, abducted in Syria while on a reporting trip in 2012 and one of the longest-held American hostages, has returned to the country for the first time in a decade to renew the search for her son.

Debra Tice's visit comes in the wake of the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime in a lightning rebel offensive last month. Her son, a freelance journalist who is now 43, was taken captive as he travelled through the Damascus suburb of Darayya covering the Syrian civil war.

"We had information, but the whole world changed," she said in an interview in the Syrian capital, Damascus, referring to Assad's removal from power.

"We have no idea where he is now. It feels a little bit like square one, trying to figure that out again."

Tice was last seen in a video posted online weeks after his capture, blindfolded and in apparent distress. No government or group has claimed being behind his disappearance, although over the years, US officials said they believed Tice was being held by the Assad government.

According to recent reports in US media, investigators believe that Tice, a former US Marine, briefly escaped weeks after being seized but was recaptured by forces who answered directly to Assad.

Last month, after rebels led by the Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) toppled Assad and seized power, President Joe Biden said the US believed Tice was alive, but that his whereabouts remained unknown.

The rebels opened Syria's prisons, releasing thousands of people and giving experts access to documents that could shed a light on what happened to Tice and other disappeared people.

"I've never had a moment of doubt... I always knew that [Tice] is going to walk free. And, you know, we have a whole new way of thinking about how that's going to happen," she said. "I can hardly wait for my arms around [him]."

On Sunday, Debra Tice - who said she wore a "Free Austin Tice" badge even at home - met Ahmed al-Sharaa, the Syrian de facto leader, who has vowed to hold accountable those responsible for the most serious crimes during the Assad regime.

She said she hoped the families would continue to have access to the facilities where prisoners were held "to allow people to search and keep hope."

"I'm here to be with people that understand the longing, to be able to celebrate with people that are being reunited, and also hold the hearts of those of us that are still searching and waiting and wishing and hoping and praying."



Doron Steinbrecher, one of the Israeli hostages released on Sunday, is handed over by Hamas fighters to a Red Cross official in Gaza City

Life in jail for Indian man convicted of doctor's rape and murder

A court in India has sentenced a man to life in prison for the rape and murder of a junior doctor, in a case that sparked nationwide outrage and protests.

The judge rejected demands for the death penalty but said that Sanjay Roy, a hospital volunteer in Kolkata city who was convicted over the weekend, would spend the rest of his life in jail.

Roy has maintained he is innocent and is expected to appeal against the verdict in a higher court.

The victim's family said they wanted him to be hanged, and that they were "shocked" by the sentence.

"We will continue our fight, and won't let investigations stop... Come what may, we will fight for justice," the woman's father told AFP news agency.

Indian law prohibits revealing the identity of victims of sexual violence and that of their family members.

Immediately after the sentencing, dozens of doctors protested outside the court, saying

they were not satisfied with the investigation and the sentence.

The trainee doctor's murder last August at the state-run hospital in Kolkata in West Bengal state sent shockwaves across the country.

The 31-year-old had gone to sleep in the seminar hall of the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital after a night shift. Her half-naked, severely injured body was later discovered near a podium by a colleague.

The autopsy report indicated that the woman had been strangled and had injury marks that showed she fought back.

The crime sparked widespread protests and concerns over the safety of healthcare workers in India, especially women. In Kolkata, doctors went on strike for weeks, demanding action against the accused and officials who they said were complicit in delaying or derailing the investigation.

Roy was arrested a day after the crime. According to the charge sheet filed by federal investigators, which the BBC has seen, Roy went to the hospital

in a drunken state and found the female doctor sleeping alone.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) - India's premier crime agency that investigated the case - had demanded the death penalty for Roy.

But on Monday, the judge disagreed, saying he had considered all the evidence and did not consider the case to be a "rarest-of-rare" crime.

Before announcing the sentence, the judge also gave Roy a chance to speak in court. He claimed that he was innocent

and was being "falsely implicated" in the case.

Without taking any names, Roy alleged that there were "others involved in the crime."

The judge dismissed Roy's claims and said the court had already found him guilty of all charges.

Some politicians and social media users criticised the sentence.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said that she was not satisfied with the court's order. "We want justice. Such criminals should be hanged," she told reporter.

Man arrested over stabbing of Bollywood actor

Police in the Indian city of Mumbai have arrested a man in connection with a knife attack on Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan last week.

Khan, one of India's biggest stars, was stabbed by an intruder at his home, in an attack that shocked the country. He is recovering after surgery.

On Sunday, police said they had arrested the key suspect, Mohammad Shariful Islam Shehzad, adding that he was a

citizen of Bangladesh who was staying in India illegally.

Mr Shehzad's lawyer has denied the allegations and says he is not from Bangladesh.

Police say they arrested Mr Shehzad from Thane, a district in the outskirts of Mumbai.

Preliminary evidence suggests that he came to the city about six months ago and had been working at a housekeeping agency using a fake name and ID, Dixit Gedam, a deputy

China executes man for car rampage that killed dozens

China has executed a man found guilty of killing at least 35 people in a car attack in November, in what is thought to be the deadliest attack in the country for a decade.

Fan Weiqiu, 62, injured dozens more when he drove his car into people exercising outside a stadium in the southern city of Zhuhai.

State media said a second man was executed for a separate attack that came days later. Xu Jiajin, 21, killed eight people in a stabbing spree at his university in the eastern city of Wuxi.

Authorities said Fan was driven by "dissatisfaction" over how his property had been divided following his divorce, while Xu carried out his attack after "failing to obtain his diploma due to poor exam results."

Fan was detained at the scene on 11 November, where

police said he was found with self-inflicted wounds.

In December, he was found guilty of "endangering public safety", with the Zhuhai Intermediate People's Court describing his motive as "extremely vile" and the methods used "particularly cruel."

His execution on Monday comes less than a month after the court sentenced him to death.

In the case of Xu, police said he confessed to his crime "without hesitation" on 16 November. He was sentenced to death on 17 December, with the court hearing that the circumstances of his crime were "particularly bad" and "extremely serious."

Human rights groups believe China is the world's leading executioner, killing thousands of people every year. The country does not release details about its use of the death penalty, so reliable numbers are unavailable.

commissioner of Mumbai police, told a press conference.

Police suspect that Mr Shehzad allegedly broke into Khan's home with the intention of robbing him, Mr Gedam said.

On Sunday, a court in Mumbai sent Mr Shehzad to five-day police custody.

His lawyer, Sandeep Shikhane, told reporters that his client was being made a "scapegoat."

"There is no documenta-

ry evidence to suggest he is a Bangladeshi citizen," he said.

The attack on Khan has made national headlines and also raised questions about safety and security in Mumbai, one of India's most populated cities and its financial capital.

Khan was stabbed six times and suffered several injuries, including one on the back of his neck, in the attack at his home in an upscale neighbourhood.

Sports

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

U-19 Cricket W/Cup: Nigeria stuns new Zealand to claim historic win in Malaysia

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Nigeria's Under 19 female team, the Junior Female Yellow Greens on Monday morning shocked the Crickets world as they defeated one of the tournament's favorite New Zealand by two runs at the ongoing 2025 U-19 Women's T20 World Cup in Malaysia.

The match which was delayed as a result of heavy rainfall turned out to be Nigerian team's best outing as the match began over two hours after its scheduled time with reduced overs.

Nigeria ended their first match



of the tournament with Samoa in a stalemate on Saturday.

New Zealand elected to field first, sending the Nigerian batters into the crease.

Captain Lucky Piety, who was named player of the match, hit

Nigeria's first six at a Women's World Cup in a steadied innings as the Junior Female Yellow Greens finished with 65 runs for the loss of six wickets in 13 overs.

Sarah Bakhita's team took the second innings slow and

steady and eventually knocked off the fourth-ranked nation for 63 runs for the loss of six wickets

Nigeria now lead group C with three points ahead of South Africa who have two points.

Olopade hails Nigeria Women's Cricket team's historic win over New Zealand

The Director General of the National Sports Commission (NSC),

Hon. Bukola Olopade, has congratulated the Nigeria U-19 Cricket Team on their sensa-

tional two-run victory over New Zealand at the ICC Women's U-19 Cricket World Cup in Malaysia.

The Nigeria Junior Female Yellow Greens, as the Nigerian U-19 team is fondly called, stunned the cricketing world with the remarkable victory on Monday, after beating one of the tournament's heavyweights in a match delayed for two hours due to heavy rainfall.

Describing the victory as monumental, Olopade said, "This win will go down in history as one of the biggest upsets in sports. I am very excited for our Under-19 women's cricket team. This particular win is worthy of celebration for so many reasons. The girls displayed re-

silience, embodying the true Nigerian spirit and patriotism to upset cricket giants like New Zealand."

Olopade credited the achievement to the efforts of the Nigeria Cricket Federation under its President, Uyi Akpata, and assured continued support from the NSC, led by Mallam Shehu Dikko.

"This result is a testament to the work being done to elevate the standard of cricket in Nigeria. The NSC will remain very supportive of the federation. I urge the girls not to rest on their laurels after defeating New Zealand but to use this as a stepping stone for greater achievements," the former Ogun State sports commissioner stressed.



Shooting Stars secure Nzediegwu Charles ahead of NPFL second half

BU CHIDINMA KALU

Shooting Stars have bolstered their squad ahead of the second half of the season by signing forward Nzediegwu Charles from Nasarawa United.

Nzediegwu, 28, penned a one-and-a-half-year deal with the Oluyole Warriors, now managed by Gbenga Ogunbote. Before his move, he made five league appearances for Nasarawa United this season.

The experienced forward will now compete for a place in the starting lineup alongside Samuel Ayanrinde, Mustapha Adams, and Joshua Akpan as Shooting Stars aim to strengthen their attacking options.

Nzediegwu has previously featured for notable NPFL clubs, including Enyimba and Abia Warriors. He also boasts a Nigerian Professional Football League title, which he won with Enyimba during the 2022/2023 season.



President Federation Cup: State competitions get underway

The State preliminaries of this year's President Federation Cup competition got underway on Monday, with the final matches in the States to be played either 22nd February or 23rd February, according to the NFF Competitions Department.

"All final matches in the States are to be played on either Saturday, 22nd February or Sunday, 23rd February 2025, except in special cases approved by the NFF. Failure to adhere to

any of these dates, and without any special approval by the NFF, will result in a fine of N1million for the offending State FA.

"At the same time, any Club that fails to honour any match at the State level, after the draw has been released, will pay a fine of N500,000. If any Club should fail to honour a match during the National competition, that Club will be slammed with a fine of N1million," Ruth David, Director of Competitions, said.

Norrod Abbott Global Football Academy officially launched with generous donations, high hopes

EDWARD OSEGHE

Norrod Abbott Global Football Academy, poised to become a beacon of hope for young footballers in Edo State, and fostering a new generation of football talents ready to excel in both local and international stages, was officially launched on Saturday, January 18, in Benin City, the Edo State capital.

The birthing of the academy was marked with a nolvety match between Norrod Abbott Global Football Academy and Namo Sports Football Academy, with Namo Sports thrashing Norrod Abbott 3-0.

The first half of the game ended goalless with both teams displaying their exceptional skills. How-

ever, Valentine Nnachi of Namo Sports found the net 5mins into second half, while Abbey Olowojoba first increased the score-line to 2, and closed it at 3, as the Coach Austin Ogierakhi's side triumphed victoriously.

The event, filled with generous donations, and promises of excellence, marked a significant step in nurturing young talents and promoting football development in the state.

In his welcome address, On-

oriode Onyen, the Founder and CEO Norrod Abbott Global Football Academy, shared his motivation for establishing the initiative. Onyen, a former footballer who struggled with limited opportunities, expressed his desire to identify and nurture talents from the grassroots level, providing them with the support and exposure needed to succeed internationally.

He revealed that the academy will primarily cater to players aged 7 to 16, with plans for tournaments to accommodate older age groups in the future.

"Football is big business today, and I hope these boys understand the opportunities it presents. With focus and discipline, they can achieve great heights," Onyen said.



Fortune Football Academy has emerged winners of the fourth edition of the Cohesion Football Tournament, an annual community tournament aimed at engaging talented grassroots children in the Surulere and Mushin local government area of Lagos state.

Amas Obasogie bids farewell to former Ethiopian Side

Nigeria international, Amas Obasogie has sent a farewell message to his former Ethiopian side, Fasil Kaname.

Obasogie officially completed a move to join Tanzanian NBC Premier League Side Singida Black Stars in an undisclosed deal after bidding farewell to

Ethiopian side Fasil Kaname seven months after joining the Club

He said: "Dear FASIL KANAME, I say goodbye to a magnificent club as it is FASIL KANAME. I want to thank the club for helping me become a better footballer and for making me feel at home during my time here



Nigeria to host 2026 Commonwealth Senior and Veterans Fencing Championships

Nigeria has secured the hosting rights for the 2026 Commonwealth Senior and Veterans Fencing Championships, marking the first time an African country will host this prestigious event.

The Commonwealth Fencing Federation has conditionally approved Nigeria's bid, with certain requirements to be fulfilled for the upcoming tournament.

This accomplishment builds on Nigeria's successful hosting of the Fencing World Cup last year, which was the first event of its kind held in a Sub-Saharan African nation. More than 10 countries participated in the World Cup at Charter House Lagos, with notable performances from Egypt and Saudi



Arabia.

President of the Nigeria Fencing Federation, Adeyinka Samuel expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "We successfully

competed against Australia, a country experienced in hosting the Commonwealth Championships three times. This achievement is a testament

to the strength of our bid and signifies Nigeria's increasing recognition on the global stage.

"Our bid underwent a comprehensive evaluation over ten months, culminating in December's technical review during our successful hosting of the World Cup. The upcoming tournament is expected to be one of the largest sporting events in Nigeria's history, attracting over 600 athletes from more than 30 countries.

"This is a landmark moment for the Nigerian fencing community. Hosting such a prestigious tournament will not only allow us to engage with some of the world's top fencing nations but also inspire further growth and popularity of the sport within Nigeria.



Vitor Bruno sacked as Porto FC coach

FC Porto has terminated Vitor Bruno's contract with the club.

This development makes Bruno the third manager to be dismissed by one of Portugal's top three clubs this season.

The 42-year-old succeeded Sergio Conceição, who is now the head coach of AC Milan, during the summer transfer window. His departure follows a series of disappointing results, including consecutive league losses that have hindered Porto's title aspirations.

The club has confirmed that José Tavares, the director of Porto's academy, will assume the role of interim coach.

Porto's recent 3-1 defeat to Gil Vicente marked their third straight loss across all competitions. Prior to this, they were eliminated by Sporting Lisbon in the League Cup semi-finals on January 7.

As a result, Porto has fallen to third place in the league standings, trailing leaders Sporting by four points, while Benfica has ascended to second place following the weekend's matches.

President Federation Cup: State competitions get underway

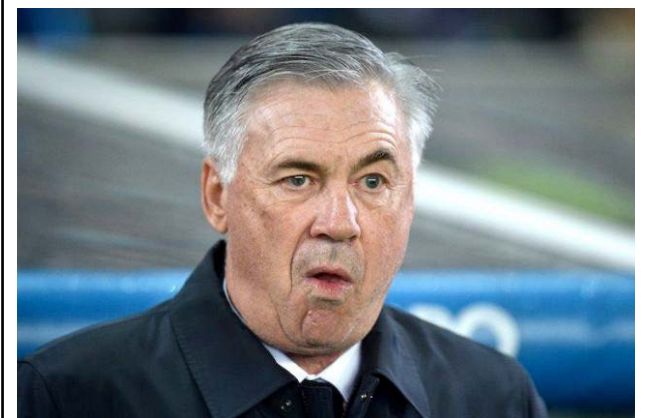


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"At the same time, any Club that fails to honour any match at the State level, after the draw has been released, will pay a fine of N500,000. If any Club should fail to honour a match during the National competition, that Club will be slammed with a fine of N1million," Ruth David, Director of Competitions, said.

The National Play-Off of this year's competition has been scheduled for 5th March, with the National Draw one week later, while the Rounds of 64, 32 and 16 are scheduled for 19th March, 2nd April and 16th April 2025 respectively. The quarter-finals have been slated for 3rd and 4th May, with the semi-finals



LaLiga: Carlo Ancelotti set to quit Real Madrid

Carlo Ancelotti has decided to leave Real Madrid at the end of this season, according to Radioestadio Noche on Onda Cero.

It is believed that Ancelotti has made up his mind to depart from the LaLiga giants.

Ancelotti signed a new deal in December 2023, tying him to Real Madrid until 2026.

The former Chelsea and PSG boss chose to remain at the Bernabéu despite strong interest from the Brazilian Football Confederation.

Last month, the 65-year-old cemented his place as Real Madrid's greatest manager of

all time after securing his 15th trophy with the club, following their triumph in the Intercontinental Cup in Qatar.

Although Ancelotti is very happy at the club, he is ready to take on a new challenge.

He is unlikely to retire and could potentially manage a national team.

Former Spain midfielder Xabi Alonso, who led Bayer Leverkusen to a historic Bundesliga title last season, has been strongly linked with a move to the Spanish capital.

If Ancelotti does quit the job, Alonso is the favourite candidate to replace him at the helm.

Gov Makinde completes Houston Half Marathon in under 3 hours

Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State has demonstrated his commitment to both governance and personal fitness by participating in a marathon in the United States.

The governor joined other

athletes in the Houston Half Marathon, completing the race in 2 hours and 53 minutes. Sharing his experience on social media, Makinde expressed satisfaction with his performance despite the challenging weather condi-

tions, which saw temperatures drop to 1°C.

"Glad to have completed the Houston Half Marathon in 2 hours 53 minutes today," Makinde wrote. "Though conditions were tough with

freezing temperatures, I finished faster than the Berkeley Half Marathon, which I ran about two years ago. I also took part in a 5K fun run yesterday, completing it in 38 minutes."



Jose Mourinho launches wine brand 'The Special One'

Jose Mourinho has entered the world of wine business with the launch of his wine brand, named 'The Special One'. The iconic manager, known for his bold personality and unparalleled success on the touchline, is now blending his passion for excellence into a bottle of wine.

The 61-year-old Portuguese tactician shared his excitement in a video where he stated:

"Finals, I've won them. Leagues, I've conquered them. I've never

been one of the bottle. I make the bottle. My achievements, my success, my work—they speak for themselves. This is 'The Special One, now yours to share.'"

The wine comes with a special case and label, featuring the silhouette of Mourinho's iconic Champions League celebration with Porto in 2004. As the first football manager to venture into winemaking, Mourinho once again proves why he's the pioneer of new terrains in football and beyond.



Guardiola happy with Man City's emphatic 6-0 win over Ipswich Town

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola expressed his satisfaction with the team's remarkable resurgence following a commanding 6-0 victory over Ipswich Town in the Premier League on Sunday.

This significant win not only showcased a return to form but also propelled the reigning champions into the coveted top four of the league table, highlighting the importance of the performance as they vie for Champions League qualification for the upcoming season.

Phil Foden starred in the match, scoring his second brace within just a week and also providing an assist, showcasing his growing influence and versatility on the pitch.

Meanwhile, Erling Haaland continued to prove his worth, adding another goal to his impressive tally. With this emphatic win, Manchester City now sit at 38 points, a crucial milestone in their pursuit of domestic and European glory.

In a post-match interview with

Sky Sports, Guardiola shared his thoughts on the team's performance, stating, "We are very

pleased with the result; it reflects the qualities that have defined our team over the last decade."



OPINION

Crusoe Osagie's distortion of Edo State realities calls for reflection

GODSWILL INEGBE

Crusoe Osagie's recent remarks offer a clear indication of a deeply negative stance towards the current administration in Edo State, one that appears to stem from a mixture of frustration, resentment, and perhaps a deeper psychological imbalance.

Since his departure from office, Osagie has taken every opportunity to launch harsh and unfounded criticisms against Senator Monday Okpebholo, the current governor, whose commitment to the growth and development of Edo State has been evident from day one of his tenure.

To better understand the gravity of Osagie's comments, we must first examine the concepts of sadism and mental health. A sadist is someone who derives pleasure from causing pain or suffering in others, while mental disorders often manifest as disturbances in thought processes, emotional regulation, or behavior.

In the case of Osagie's repeated attacks on Governor Okpebholo's leadership, there seems to be a deliberate attempt to create division, distort facts, and undermine the progress that has been made under the current administration. This troubling behavior hints at a possible disconnect from reality or a deeper-seated bitterness, which raises questions about his objectivity.

One of Osagie's more recent pieces, titled "Okpebholo's 60 Days Without a Plan," serves as a prime example of his distorted narrative.

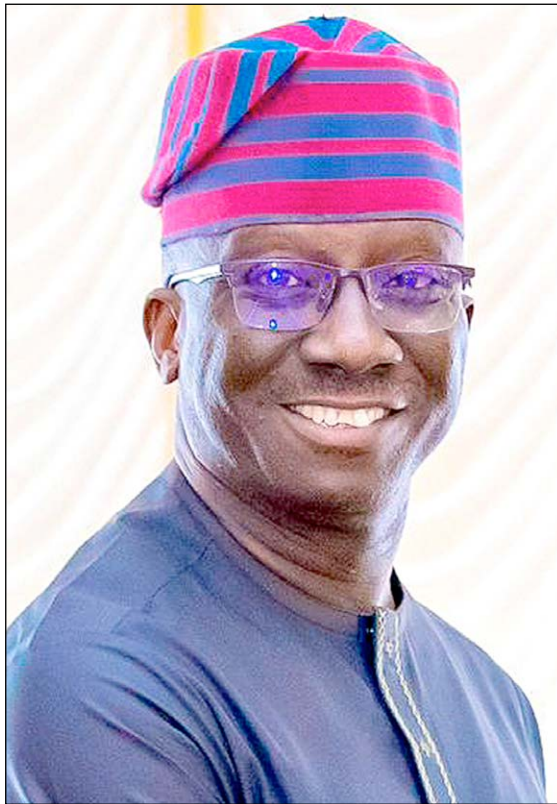
In his article, Osagie's criticisms go beyond simple political disagreement and venture into the realm of personal animus, as he attempts to rewrite the history of Edo State, belittle its current leadership, and insult the intelligence of its people.

Given Osagie's former role as the chief spin doctor in one of the most controversial and divisive administrations in the state's history, his comments are not entirely surprising but remain profoundly disappointing.

A particularly striking aspect of Osagie's narrative is his obsessive fixation on John Mayaki and the failed years of the Godwin Obaseki administration.

Despite the fact that Governor Okpebholo has now been in office for over two months and has already initiated visible changes, Osagie continues to link past grievances to the progress being made.

This fixation, seemingly divorced from any consideration of the actual improvements taking place in Edo State, suggests a concerning inability—or unwillingness—to objectively engage with current realities.



OKPEBHOLO



OSAGIE

Osagie's continued efforts to attack this new leadership are nothing more than an attempt to stay relevant in a post-Obaseki political landscape. It is high time that Osagie retire his pen and allow Edo State to move forward under a leadership that prioritizes development, progress, and the collective good of its people.

The future of Edo State lies in its ability to embrace change and leave behind the bitterness of the past

In stark contrast to Osagie's cynical portrayal of the Okpebholo administration, the governor has already demonstrated a clear commitment to the people of Edo State.

His administration is focused on delivering tangible results and restoring order to a state that was plagued by years of mismanagement, conflict, and neglect under Obaseki's rule.

Governor Okpebholo is not focused on revisiting past mistakes; rather, he is forging ahead with a vision to build a better future for the state.

One of the most damaging claims made by Osagie is the accusation that Okpebholo is involved in thuggery and violence. This baseless and

unfounded allegation stands in stark contrast to the reality of the situation. Under the Obaseki administration, violence and political thuggery were rampant, with one of the most tragic incidents being the death of the police orderly to Senator Okpebholo.

Far from engaging in violence, Okpebholo's leadership is grounded in a commitment to peace, law, and order, as well as addressing long-standing issues such as the state's infrastructure deficit.

Osagie's accusations of the current government's involvement in reversing Edo State's e-governance system also appear to be grounded in distortion. The so-called e-governance

system implemented under Obaseki was marred by inefficiency and corruption.

Far from "reversing" progress, Governor Okpebholo has swiftly moved to address the failings of the past administration, including identifying and shutting down covert operations that were designed to misappropriate public funds.

This stands as a testament to the current administration's commitment to transparency and accountability—values that Osagie seems to have forgotten in his zeal to tarnish Okpebholo's reputation.

Another area where Osagie's claims are found wanting is in his discussion of the state's finances. He has repeatedly cited a supposed N8 billion monthly revenue as evidence of the Okpebholo administration's failure to address the state's fiscal challenges.

What Osagie fails to mention, however, is that the current administration inherited a deeply troubled financial situation, and Okpebholo has since introduced a range of reforms aimed at restoring fiscal discipline, curbing waste, and improving revenue generation.

This approach stands in stark contrast to the Obaseki administration's penchant for opaque financial dealings and unsustainable spending.

Osagie's assertion that Governor Okpebholo is attempting to take credit for road projects initiated under Obaseki also deserves scrutiny.

In just over two months in office,

Governor Okpebholo has made substantial progress in improving the state's infrastructure, including federal roads and neglected state roads.

While Obaseki's administration failed to deliver on many of its promises, Okpebholo's leadership has already started to make a tangible difference.

Perhaps one of the most glaring falsehoods in Osagie's rhetoric is his dismissal of the Ramat Park flyover project. Despite Osagie's dismissive tone, this project is moving forward with full transparency and due process.

In contrast to the murky deals of the past, Okpebholo is committed to ensuring that all major infrastructure projects are executed with integrity, in full compliance with established regulations.

Far from being the rudderless administration Osagie suggests, Governor Okpebholo has laid out a clear development agenda for Edo State. In just 65 days, he has met with key stakeholders, initiated consultations, and begun the process of developing a comprehensive, long-term strategy for the state's growth.

This proactive approach is a far cry from Obaseki's autocratic rule, which was characterized by a lack of transparency and disregard for the opinions of others.

Osagie's final attempt to paint Obaseki's tenure as "enviable" is laughable at best. Under Obaseki's leadership, civil servants were alienated, the business community suffered, and public funds were wasted on unfulfilled promises.

The only "enviable" aspect of the Obaseki administration was its leader's remarkable ability to create the illusion of progress, all while neglecting the real needs of the people.

Governor Okpebholo, in contrast, has already achieved more in his first two months in office than Obaseki managed in eight years. His focus on improving security, rebuilding the state's economy, and restoring order has yielded tangible results.

Osagie's continued efforts to attack this new leadership are nothing more than an attempt to stay relevant in a post-Obaseki political landscape.

It is high time that Osagie retire his pen and allow Edo State to move forward under a leadership that prioritizes development, progress, and the collective good of its people.

The future of Edo State lies in its ability to embrace change and leave behind the bitterness of the past.

Inegbe is Special Adviser to the Governor on Communication, Strategy, and Media Projects