

Alleged terrorism financing: Court gives EFCC nod to freeze 24 bank accounts

A Federal High Court in Abuja has granted the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) permission to freeze 24 bank accounts across multiple banks over allegations of

terrorism financing. Justice Emeka Nwite approved the EFCC's application, moved by its counsel Martha Babatunde, to freeze the accounts for 90 days pending the conclusion of investigations.

The accounts, reportedly owned by Lawrence Lucky Eromosele, are under investigation for suspected involvement in kidnapping, money laundering, and terrorism financing. According to preliminary

findings, the accounts are linked to individuals manipulating cryptocurrency exchange platforms for illegal activities.

In an affidavit, EFCC investigator Mohammed Khalil re-

vealed that Eromosele is part of a syndicate that has threatened senior operatives of the National Security Adviser (NSA) with kidnapping unless ransom demands are met.

He stated, "The syndicate

provided specific details about the families and movements of security operatives.

"The accounts must be frozen to preserve evidence and facilitate further investigations."

The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

[f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [g](#) NigerianObserver @Nigerian_Observer @NigerianObserver www.nigerianobservernews.com

PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968

VOL. 46, NO. 915

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 1ST 2025.

Benin hosts HIV awareness campaign to mark World AIDS Day

—Pg 2

Gov Okpebholo assures Edo citizens of prosperous 2025

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has expressed optimism for a prosperous 2025, emphasizing his administration's commitment to enhancing key sectors such as education, healthcare, agriculture, and job creation.

In his New Year message, he

acknowledged the challenges and achievements of 2024 and called for continued support from Edo citizens to collaborate in embracing future opportunities.

Governor Okpebholo also urged the people to support President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration, describing

the President's policies as bold and beneficial for national growth.

In a related development, Governor Okpebholo visited Imo State Governor, Senator Hope Uzodinma, to advocate for inter-state collaboration and healthy competition among governors to drive na-

tional development. He praised Uzodinma's achievements in Imo State and expressed his intention to replicate and surpass such successes in Edo.

Governor Uzodinma commended Okpebholo's proactive approach and pledged support for Edo State's progress, emphasizing the need for collabo-

ration among governors to accelerate national development.

In line with his commitment to development, Governor Okpebholo has signed the

2025 Appropriation Bill into law, enacting a budget totaling ₦675,220,058,858.52, tagged as a "Renewed Hope Budget for a Rising Edo."

AAU gets Governing Council

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has announced the reconstitution of the Governing Council for Ambrose Alli University (AAU), Ekpoma, effective December 31, 2024.

The move is part of a broader effort to strengthen the institution's governance and ensure its continued academic and administrative excellence.

The newly appointed members of the council include, Chief Daniel Osikheme Orbih as Chairman, along with Martins Osakwe, Prof. Steve Amienkharu Iyayi, Hon. Lukman Muhammad, Prof. Idialu Jeremiah Uwaifo, Prof. Eric Kelly Inanemo Omogbai, and Prof. Omoruyi Ikponmwonse Osahon.

These individuals bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the university's governing body, which plays a crucial role in shaping the institution's strategic direction and policies.

The reconstitution follows the dissolution of previous governing councils for AAU and other

state-owned tertiary institutions in December 2024, signaling a new phase in the state's higher education administration.

The new council members were tasked with working closely with the university's management to implement policies that promote academic excellence, institutional development, and the welfare of students and staff.

Governor Okpebholo's administration has been focused on enhancing the educational sector in Edo State, with recent efforts including the reinstatement of AAU staff members who were unjustly disengaged in March 2023.



ORBIH



A COURTESY VISIT:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo (left), in a handshake with Imo State Governor, Senator Hope Uzodinma, during a visit to Uzodinma, at the weekend

Nigeria poised to end petroleum imports by 2025, says CPPE chief

—Pg 2

US Treasury says it was hacked by China in 'major incident'

—Pg 3

NPFL25 MD19: Coach Greg Ikenoba leads Bendel Insurance out of red zone, holds Enyinba in Aba

—Pg 5

NWFL to take legal action against unauthorized logo usage

—Pg 6

Benin hosts HIV awareness campaign to mark World AIDS Day

Benin City recently came alive with an HIV Awareness Campaign and Road Show in commemoration of World AIDS Day.

The event marked the cul-

mination of a month-long initiative organized through a partnership between RAHI Medical Hospital and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).

Speaking with newsmen during the event in Benin City, Dr. Chris Ekiyor, Medical Director of RAHI Medical Hospital, explained the timing of the campaign.

"We decided to hold it during the festive period because people are out celebrating. This creates an opportunity to blend health

education with entertainment, drawing attention to vital messages about HIV prevention, testing, and safe living."

Dr. Ekiyor highlighted ND-DC's role in driving the campaign over the past four weeks. "The focus today is to take HIV awareness to the next level, emphasizing the importance of

breaking the cycle of transmission and striving for complete eradication of the disease."

Abigail Ugiagbe, Assistant Director of Education, Health, and Social Services at the ND-DC's Benin office, emphasized the campaign's goal of reducing HIV transmission in the Niger Delta region.

"This initiative is aimed at ensuring that the spread of HIV/AIDS is minimized to the barest level," she stated.

The campaign reflects the commitment of both organizations to improving public health through sustained awareness and preventive measures.

Warri Refinery restoration: A new year gift to Nigerians —Gov Okpebholo

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has described the restoration of the Warri Refinery as a landmark achievement for Nigeria's petroleum industry and a New Year gift to citizens.

In a statement released on Tuesday by his Chief Press Secretary, Fred Itua, Governor Okpebholo congratulated President Bola Tinubu and the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) on the successful restart of the Warri Refinery and Petrochemical Company, which has a production capacity of 125,000 barrels per day (bpd).

"The restoration of the 125,000 barrels per day Warri Refinery and Petrochemical Company marks a significant turnaround in the nation's petroleum sector," the governor stated.

He commended President Tinubu for implementing impactful reforms in the petro-

leum sector, noting that these initiatives are already yielding positive results for Nigeria's economic growth. Okpebholo also urged Nigerians to rally behind the president's vision for a more robust and self-reliant petroleum industry.

"With the Warri, Port Harcourt, and Dangote refineries operating simultaneously, there is renewed hope for the transformation of Nigeria's petroleum sector," he added.

Governor Okpebholo emphasized Edo State's commitment to supporting the Federal Government's Renewed Hope Agenda, which aims to position Nigeria as a leading hub for crude oil refining in Africa.

"This achievement is a New Year gift to Nigerians. I join countless others in congratulating President Tinubu and the NNPCL under the leadership of Mele Kyari for reviving the Warri Refinery. Edo State stands ready to contribute to restoring our national pride and advancing economic prosperity," the statement concluded.

Nigeria poised to end petroleum imports by 2025, says CPPE chief

Musa Yusuf, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise (CPPE), has stated that Nigeria is on course to end its reliance on petroleum imports, a move that could significantly bolster the nation's economy.

Speaking during an interview with newsmen on Tuesday, Yusuf noted that the country has historically spent 30-40% of its foreign exchange on petroleum imports, which has placed a heavy burden on the economy.

He emphasized that eliminating petroleum imports would free up resources, strengthen the foreign exchange market, and stabilize inflation.

"We are on the way to completely getting out of importation, but the government has to be very deliberate about this. It's a clear possibility," Yusuf said, adding that vested interests benefiting from the current system may resist the change.

pendency while delivering broader macroeconomic benefits.

"The government must commit to stopping imports and encouraging local production. Fiscal policies, monetary policies, and regulatory frameworks need to align to make this happen," he explained.

Yusuf cited President Bola Tinubu's 2025 projection, which envisions Nigeria becoming a petroleum product exporter. He stated that achieving this would provide relief to the foreign exchange market and enhance the country's economic stability.

"When the president presented the budget, he highlighted that by 2025, Nigeria could start exporting petroleum products. If this materializes, it will bring significant relief to the foreign exchange market, stabilize inflation, and improve the overall macroeconomic outlook," Yusuf remarked.

He also pointed out the potential benefits for manufacturers who rely on petrochemical-based raw materials, many of which are currently imported. Functional local refineries would reduce the need for such imports, boosting domestic production and lowering costs.



AWARDS PRESENTATION:

Efosa Uwanguie, winner of *ITV/Radio* highest marketer and best news dept staff (middle) with other staff after the presentation of the awards.

Gov Okpebholo advocates healthy competition among governors

OWERRI

The Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has called for a culture of healthy competition among state governors as a means of addressing Nigeria's developmental challenges.

He made the appeal during a visit to Imo State Governor, Senator Hope Uzodinma, at the weekend.

During his meeting with Senator Uzodinma, who is also the Chairman of the Progressives Governors' Forum, Governor Okpebholo emphasized the importance of governors conducting working visits to

other states.

He noted that such engagements allow leaders to exchange ideas, observe progress firsthand, and adopt or surpass best practices to benefit their own states.

"Most times, sitting back in your comfort zone, you assume you are doing great," Governor Okpebholo stated. "But when you go to other states and see the massive infrastructure, road networks, and overall coordination, you gain a whole new perspective on governance."

He commended Senator Uzodinma for transforming Imo State in just a few years, describing the progress as

"inspiring and worthy of replication." Okpebholo vowed to make Edo State a model of rapid development, promising that future visitors to Edo would witness a significant transformation.

"In one month, we have already achieved significant milestones that clearly signal the direction we are heading," he added. "When you next visit Edo, I assure you, it will be unrecognizable for the better."

Governor Uzodinma welcomed the visit, praising it as a step toward fostering collaboration and learning among governors.

He encouraged Governor

Okpebholo to uphold the ideals of the Progressives Governors' Forum by implementing impactful reforms and projects in Edo State.

"This exchange of ideas and experiences among governors can only lead to greater achievements across the country," Uzodinma remarked. "I look forward to seeing a modern and transformed Edo State."

Governor Okpebholo's visit underscores the growing trend of inter-state collaboration and serves as a call to action for other leaders to embrace competitive and innovative governance practices for national development.

NIPR calls for optimism, good governance in Edo

The Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), Edo State Chapter, has extended warm New Year greetings to the people of Edo State, urging them to embrace hope and optimism amid prevailing challenges.

In a statement by the Chapter Chairman, Dr. James-Wisdom Abbulimen, the NIPR encouraged citizens to remain resilient and focused, while urging Governor Monday Okpebholo to lead with integrity and ensure prudent management of state resources.

Dr. Abbulimen underscored the power of unity and determination, stating, "Our collective strength can shape a brighter tomorrow for ourselves and future generations."

He also called for a rejection of anti-democratic tendencies, corruption, and social vices that undermine the state's progress.

The NIPR emphasized the need for large-scale infrastructural development, including upgrading dilapidated roads, renovating public schools and health centers, reviving pipe-

borne water projects, and establishing a functional public transportation system.

Other priorities outlined include promoting agricultural development and grassroots progress through extensive road construction and sustainable practices.

The organization urged Governor Okpebholo to adopt transparent governance by publishing monthly income and expenditure reports to build trust and set an example of accountability.

The NIPR encouraged Edo

residents to work collectively toward making the state a model of integrity, inclusivity, and innovation.



ABHULIMEN

NEWS

Foreign

US Treasury says it was hacked by China in 'major incident'

Chinese state-sponsored hackers broke into the US Treasury Department's systems earlier this month and were able to access employee workstations and some unclassified documents, American officials have said.

The Treasury Department deemed the breach a "major incident" after disclosing it via a letter notifying lawmakers to

the incident.

The US agency said it had been working with the FBI and other agencies to investigate the impact of the hack.

China denied any involvement, calling the accusation "baseless" and saying it "consistently opposes all forms of hacking."

It is the latest in a series of high-profile and embarrassing

security breaches in the US being blamed on China.

A hack of telecoms companies in December potentially accessed phone record data across large swathes of American society.

The Treasury Department said in its letter to lawmakers that this latest attack involved China-based actors overriding security via a key used by

a third-party service provider. The application offers remote technical support to its employees.

The compromised third-party service - called BeyondTrust - has since been taken offline, officials said. There was no evidence to suggest the hacker had continued to access to Treasury Department information since, the statement

continued.

The department said it had been working with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and third-party forensic investigators to determine the overall impact.

Officials said initial investigations suggested the hack appeared to have been carried out by "a China-based Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) actor."

"In accordance with Treasury policy, intrusions attributable to an APT are considered a major cybersecurity incident," Treasury Department officials said.

The department monitors global financial systems and economies, and in recent years has levied US sanctions against China.

It said it was made aware of the hack on 8 December by BeyondTrust, a spokesperson told the BBC. According to the company, the suspicious activity was first spotted on 2 December, but it took three days for the company to determine it had been hacked.

The spokesperson said the

hackers were able to remotely access several Treasury user workstations and some unclassified documents that were kept by those users.

The department did not specify the nature of these files, or when and for how long the hack took place. They also did not specify the level of confidentiality of the computer systems or the seniority of the staff whose materials were accessed.

The hackers may have been able to create accounts or change passwords in the three days that they were being watched by BeyondTrust.

As espionage agents, the hackers are believed to have been seeking information, rather than attempting to steal funds.

The department letter states that a supplemental report on the incident will be provided to lawmakers in 30 days.

China's foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning denied the US claims, telling a news briefing these were "baseless accusations lacking evidence."



No safety issues flagged in pre-flight checks, airline boss says after South Korea crash

Jeju Air boss says no safety issues were flagged in pre-flight checks before one of its planes crashed at South Korea's Muan International Airport on Sunday.

CEO Kim Yi-bae has also pledged to "repair trust" by strengthening safety measures.

Winter air traffic will be reduced by between 10-15% in order to carry out more maintenance work.

Jeju Air is preparing emergency compensation for victims' families and will cover funeral costs - the funds will be released soon, Kim said.

Elsewhere, investigators have begun inspecting the plane's two black boxes - the cockpit voice recorder and the flight data recorder

Key questions remain around cause of South Korea's deadliest plane crash.

Days after the Jeju Air plane crash in South Korea that killed 179 people, we are beginning to learn more about the circumstances of the flight.

The airline's boss - CEO Kim Yi-bae - held a news conference on Tuesday. Here's what we learned from that, and a few more details from earlier in the day:

The CEO of Jeju Air says the pre-flight inspection of the Boeing 737-800, including its landing gear, "showed nothing abnormal".

He has pledged to "repair trust" in the airline by strengthening safety measures, adding that it will reduce its winter air

traffic by between 10-15%. This cut is not an admission that the airline was running too many flights, he added.

Some families of the people killed in the crash are still waiting for their relatives to be identified. One relative was told his two grandsons' bodies were "too scattered to be recognised".

Investigators have started inspecting the plane's two black boxes - the cockpit voice recorder and the flight data recorder.

Data have begun being downloaded from the voice recorder, but officials are struggling to extract data from the flight data recorder, which is said to be missing a critical connector.



Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt reach divorce deal

Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt have reached a divorce settlement following an eight-year legal battle, according to her lawyer.

The pair, who married in 2014 and have six children, were among the most high-profile couples in the entertainment

industry and were dubbed 'Brangelina' by the press.

Jolie filed for divorce in 2016, citing "irreconcilable differences". It later emerged during separate court proceedings that she had accused Pitt of being abusive to her and two of their children on a private

jet that year.

Pitt was not charged following a police investigation into the incident and has denied the allegations.

His lawyers have not publicly commented on the divorce settlement.

Jolie's lawyer James Simon said in a statement to People magazine that his client has been focusing on "finding peace and healing for their family" since divorce proceedings began.

He continued: "This is just one part of a long ongoing process that started eight years ago. Frankly, Angelina is exhausted, but she is relieved this

one part is over."

The terms of the agreement have not been made public.

When news of their separation first emerged in 2016, the couple said in a joint statement that it would be conducted privately - and neither have spoken extensively about their relationship in the years since.

However, details have emerged in overlapping court cases which paint a picture of an acrimonious divorce - with Jolie accusing her ex-husband of "waging a vindictive war", and Pitt accusing her of seeking to deliberately undermine his businesses.

Gaza babies dying from the cold as winter temperatures drop

Sila was less than three weeks old when her mother Nariman realised she wasn't moving.

"I woke up in the morning and told my husband that the baby hadn't stirred for a while. He uncovered her face and found her blue, biting her tongue, with blood coming out of her mouth," says Nariman al-Najmeh.

In their tent situated on the beach in southern Gaza, Nariman is sitting with her husband, Mahmoud Fasih, and their two young children - Rayan, who is four years old, and Nihad, who is two and a half.

The family say they have been displaced more than 10 times during the 14-month war.

"My husband is a fisherman, we're from the north and left without anything but we did it for our children," says Nariman in an interview with a freelance cameraman working with the BBC. Israel prevents international media from entering and freely working on the ground in Gaza.

"When I was pregnant, I used to think about how I was going to get clothes for the baby. I was really worried because my husband doesn't have work."

During her 20 days of life, Sila's home was the small and overcrowded campsite in the al-Mawasi "humanitarian area", where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced from elsewhere in the territory have been ordered to move by the Israeli military.

The area suffers from poor infrastructure and sanitation, as well as flooding caused by both rain and waves from the Mediterranean Sea.

"The cold is bitter and harsh. All night, because of the cold, we

huddle together, curling up next to each other," says Sila's father, Mahmoud.

"Our life is hell. It's hell because of the effects of the war, my family was martyred, and our situation is unbearable."

Despite telling civilians to head to the area, the Israeli military has struck al-Mawasi repeatedly during its campaign against Hamas and other armed groups in Gaza.

Sila's death was not by bombardment - but still caused by the punishing conditions that the war is imposing upon civilians.

She is one of six newborns who have died from hypothermia within a two-week period in Gaza - where night-time temperatures have fallen to 7C (45F) - according to the local health authorities, who have also reported that many thousands of tents have been damaged by the weather.

There are heavy restrictions by Israel on food and other aid deliveries to Gaza, says the UN, compounding the war's humanitarian crisis. Israel denies that it is restricting aid.

Nariman says Sila was born at a British field hospital established in the Khan Younis area.

"After I gave birth... I started thinking about how I could secure her milk, nappies. Everything I got, I got with great difficulty."

"I never thought I would give birth living in a tent, in such cold and freezing conditions, with water dripping on us. Water would leak into the tent, pouring down on us. At times, we had to run to escape the water - for the baby's sake," says Nariman.

Still, Sila was born without complications.



JOLIE (L)
AND PITT

US says Guantanamo inmate sent back to Tunisia

Guantanamo Bay inmate Ridah Bin Saleh al-Yazidi has been repatriated to Tunisia, the US Department of Defense says.

He was found eligible for transfer from the detention facility after a "rigorous inter-agency review process", a press statement said.

The Pentagon did not say if Mr Yazidi had accepted any guilt.

Since 2002, the Guantanamo Bay detention facility has been used to hold what the US describes as captured unlawful combatants during America's

"war on terror."

The camp is part of a US naval base complex in south-eastern Cuba.

According to an unconfirmed report by the New York Times, Mr Yazidi was never charged and was approved for transfer more than a decade ago.

The newspaper also said he had been at Guantanamo Bay since the facility was first set up in 2002.

According to Monday's Pentagon statement, 26 detainees remain at Guantanamo Bay, of whom 14 are eligible for trans-

fer.

Earlier in December, the Pentagon announced that the US had repatriated three other

detainees, the Associated Press news agency reported.

The camp was established by the Bush administration

to detain the most dangerous suspects for interrogation and the prosecution of war crimes.

Controversy has centred

around the period of time detainees have been held without charge and the use of interrogation techniques.



DETENTION CAMP:

Detainees in jumpsuits at the Guantanamo Bay detention camp, January 2002

Arrest warrant issued for impeached S'Korea president Yoon

A court in South Korea has issued an arrest warrant against suspended president Yoon Suk Yeol over his attempt to impose martial law on 3 December.

The warrant comes after Yoon, who is being investigated for abusing his power and inciting an insurrection, ignored three summonses to appear for questioning over the past two weeks.

Yoon's legal team has called the warrant "illegal and invalid" and said they would challenge it in court.

South Korea has been in political crisis since the short-lived martial law declaration, with Yoon and a successor both impeached by the opposition-dominated parliament.

Yoon is South Korea's first sitting president to face arrest.

Investigators have until 6 January to execute the warrant that was approved by a court in the capital Seoul, and can request an extension.

It is unclear, however, if investigators will be able to execute the warrant as they may be thwarted by his security team and protesters.

The presidential security service had earlier blocked investigators from entering the presidential office grounds and Yoon's private residence to conduct court-approved searches.

In the past, South Korean authorities have given up arrest attempts against prominent politicians after their aides and supporters have physically blocked the police.

On Monday, Yoon's legal team said that investigators had no authority to arrest him, as declaring martial law was

within the president's constitutional authority.

Yoon had earlier defended his decision to declare martial law and vowed to "fight to the end" - though he also said that he would not avoid his legal and political responsibilities.

His lawyer, Yun Gap-geun, said that Yoon's failure to comply with the earlier three summonses was due to "legitimate concerns".

Yoon's whereabouts are not publicly known, but he has been banned from leaving the country.

While he has been suspended from presidential duties since 14 December after lawmakers voted to impeach him, he can only be removed from office if his impeachment is upheld by the country's constitutional court.

There are currently only six judges on the constitutional court's nine-member bench. This means a single rejection would save Yoon from being removed.

Opposition lawmakers had hoped the nomination of three additional judges would improve the odds of Yoon getting impeached, but their proposal was vetoed by prime minister Han Duck-soo last week.

The opposition has since then voted to impeach Han, who had stepped in as acting leader after Yoon was suspended.

Now, they are threatening to do the same to finance minister Choi Sang-mok, who currently serves as both acting president and acting prime minister.

On Tuesday Choi appointed two new judges but said a third would require consensus among opposition and governing parties.

Why was there a wall near runway at S'Korea plane crash airport?

Aviation experts have raised questions about an "unusual" concrete wall near the runway and its role in the South Korea plane crash that killed 179 people.

Footage shows the Jeju Air plane coming off the runway before colliding with the wall and bursting into flames at Muan International Airport on Sunday.

Authorities investigating the cause of South Korea's worst-ever plane crash are considering the significance of the concrete wall's location about 250m (820ft) off the end of the runway

Air safety expert David Learmount said that, had the "ob-

struction" not been there, the plane "would have come to rest with most - possibly all - those on board still alive."

The pilot reported that the plane had struck a bird and then aborted the original landing and requested permission to land from the opposite direction.

The plane came down some distance along the 2,800m runway and appeared to land without using its wheels or any other landing gear.

Mr Learmount said the landing was "as good as a flapless/gearless touchdown could be: wings level, nose not too high to avoid breaking the tail" and the

plane had not sustained substantial damage as it slid along the runway.

"The reason so many people died was not the landing as such, but the fact that the aircraft collided with a very hard obstruction just beyond the runway end," he said.

Another aviation analyst agreed. Captain Ross Aimer, chief executive of Aero Consulting Experts, told Reuters news agency: "Unfortunately, that thing was the reason that everybody got killed, because they literally hit a concrete structure. It shouldn't have been there."

Christian Beckert, a Lufthansa pilot based in Munich, called the concrete structure "unusual", saying: "Normally, on an airport with a runway at the end, you don't have a wall."

The concrete structure holds a navigation system that assists aircraft landings - known as a localiser - according to South Korea's Yonhap News Agency.

At 4m high, it is covered with dirt and was raised to keep the localiser level with the runway to ensure it functions properly, Yonhap reported.

South Korea's transport ministry has said that other airports in the country and some overseas have the equipment installed with concrete structures. However officials will examine whether it should have been made with lighter materials that would break more easily upon impact.

Chris Kingswood, a pilot with 48 years' experience who has flown the same type of aircraft involved in the crash, told BBC News: "Obstacles within a certain

range and distance of the runway are required to be frangible, which means that if an aircraft strikes them that they do break.

"It does seem unusual that it's such a rigid thing. The aircraft, from what I understand, was travelling very fast, landed a long way down the runway, so it will have gone a long way past the end of the runway... so where will you draw the line with that? That's certainly something that will be investigated.

"Aeroplanes are not strong structures - they are, by design, light to make them efficient in flight. They're not really designed to go high-speed on its belly so any kind of structure could cause the fuselage to break up and then be catastrophic.

"The fuel is kept in the wings so once the wing ruptures, then the potential for fire is significant.

"So it's not a given that if the wall had not been there, it would have been a completely different outcome."

Mr Kingswood said he would be "surprised if the airfield hadn't met all the requirements in accordance with industry standards."

"I suspect if we went around the airfields at a lot of major international airports... we would find a lot of obstacles that could similarly be accused of presenting a hazard," he added.

However former pilot John Cox, chief executive of Safety Operating Systems, said the runway design "absolutely (did) not" meet industry best practices, which preclude any hard structure within at least 300m (984ft) of the end of the runway.



The plane skids along the runway



09:03 The aircraft explodes after hitting an embankment at the end of the runway



Sports

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

NPFL25 MD19: Coach Greg Ikhenoba leads Bendel Insurance out of red zone, holds Enyimba in Aba

Bendel Insurance Football Club of Benin, on the 2025 new year-eve put up an impressive performance against former CAF Champions League winners Enyimba FC, forcing a goalless stalemate against the People's Elephants in Aba to end the first round of the 2024/2025 Nigeria Premier Football League on a positive

note.

The Benin Arsenal started the match day 19 game on a good footing, looking comfortable and confident against the hosts, the People's Elephants who looked heavy and unconvincing. Vincent Okeke who started in the attack in the place of Kayode Oke who picked up a knee injury dur-

ing the warmup session, became a thorn in the flesh of the People's Elephants as the pacy striker kept penetrating into the area but wasted several scoring chances good enough to bring down the Elephants in the first half of the game.

The former champions Enyimba FC on the other hand stepped up their game in the

second half after their new manager Stanley Eguma had made some changes as they continued to mount pressure on the Benin Arsenal but Goalkeeper Joshua Baba and the defense line led by Stanley Okorom and Julius Emiloju were good enough to absorb the pressure from the Elephants, forcing the game into a

goalless stalemate.

Meanwhile, the confidence the management of Bendel Insurance FC have had on their stand-in Head Coach Greg Ikhenoba since the resignation of former Technical Director Coach Monday Odigie, is already yielding fruits as he has succeeded in guiding the Benin Arsenal out of the red zone in the league's standing.

Coach Greg Ikhenoba began the push for safety of the Bendel Insurance in the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) immediately after the resignation of his former boss on November 17 in Enugu, following their 3-2 loss to the Flying Antelopes at the Cathedral with a convincing triumph over Kwara Utd.

The Benin Arsenal started gaining stability and recovery under coach Greg Ikhenoba with a convincing 3-1 victory over Kwara Utd in the Match day 13 in Benin. The team narrowly lost 2-1 to Nasarawa Utd on Matchday 14 in Lafia before a 2-1 victory over Plateau Utd in week 15 at the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium.

Coach Ikhenoba led the team to two consecutive 1-1 draws with Akwa Utd and Heartland FC, in a double away fixture, followed by a 1-0 victory over Lobi Stars in the week

18 in Benin on Saturday, December 21.

Insurance FC wrapped up the NPFL first round with a 0-0 draw with Enyimba FC in a difficult terrain

In the post match interview, Head Coach of Bendel Insurance Greg Ikhenoba expressed the confidence that Bendel Insurance FC will come back smoky in the second round of the league.

On his team's performance at Aba, he noted Enyimba and other big teams in the league are beatable. He said that the away point was important and has helped the team to safe zone.

Our problem actually started with the 1-0 loss to Kano Pillars in Benin plus the deducted 3 points punishment that followed.

"I am happy now that we ended the year well. We were capable of getting the maximum points against Enyimba but we wasted a lot of chances before our opponents recovered in the second half. They also wasted chances and were also unlucky. That is the game of football, if you don't convert your chances when they come it becomes difficult. So, we are going back home happy with the point and to begin preparation for the second round." He said.



Benin Crown Prince becomes esports patron, encourages youths to embrace opportunities

The Crown Prince of the Great Benin Kingdom, His Royal Highness, Ezelekhæ Ewuare II, has called on the youths of Edo State to embrace esports, highlighting the vast opportunities it offers in the rapidly growing global industry.

Prince Ezelekhæ made this appeal at his residence during a visit by the Edo State eSports Association (ESEA).

Led by its Chairman, Daro Dean Bezi, the ESEA executives conferred on the Crown Prince, an honorary member and appointed him as the Grand Patron of the association.

In his remarks, the Crown Prince described esports as a meaningful avenue for youth engagement, noting its potential to become one of Africa's major drivers of economic growth and development.

He emphasized that esports provides entrepreneurial opportunities and serve as a val-

uable tool for steering young people away from social vices.

"I commend the Edo State eSports Association for their creativity, foresight, and dedication to advancing esports in the state. I urge Edo youth to take full advantage of the opportunities in this sector," Prince Ezelekhæ stated.

ESEA Chairman, Daro Dean Bezi, accompanied by Vice Chairman, Beowaosa Build Aghosa and Publicity Director Oviasuyi Cosmos, expressed gratitude to the Crown Prince for accepting the role of Grand Patron.

Bezi described the gesture as a significant milestone for the association and a testament to the Crown Prince's commitment to youth development in Edo State.

The event marks a new chapter in the promotion of esports in Edo State, positioning it as a platform for empowerment and economic transformation for the youth.

NPFL goes on break, resumes Jan 25

Season break following the conclusion of the first round of matches.

All the 20 clubs in the top-flight league are therefore expected to commence their holidays immediately.

According to the League body, the Mid-week break will last for three weeks while the transfer market will be from January 6- February 5, 2025.

The league is expected to resume on January 25, 2025 with the second round of matches as Remo Stars led the log with 36 points and closely followed by Rivers United in second place with 34 points.

Clubs in the league have embarked on a break, allowing their players to spend time with their families during the course of the break.

Meanwhile, Remo Stars ended the first stanza as league leaders with 36 points, with Rivers United coming close in the second position with 34. 3SC, Rangers International and El Kanemi Warriors occupied third, fourth and fifth positions with 33, 31, 29 points respectively. Bendel Insurance FC escaped the relegation zone after a goalless stalemate at Enyimba on the last day of the first round fixtures

after garnering 21 points.

At the relegation zone are; Nasarawa United who are at the bottom of the League with 19 points followed by Akwa United in the 19th position with the

same points. Lobi Stars finished the year with 18 points, while Plateau Utd closely followed Insurance FC on same 21 points but with lesser goals to place 16th on the log.



Amorim says Man United could be in relegation battle

Manchester United manager Ruben Amorim looks dejected after the match with Newcastle United



Ruben Amorim called it "embarrassing" as a Manchester United manager to be discussing the threat of relegation, but after Monday's miserable 2-0 Premier League loss to Newcastle United he conceded that is the reality his team are facing.

Newcastle's Alexander Isak and Joelinton headed early goals to hand Amorim's team their fifth loss in their last six league games. They go into the new

year 14th in the table, much closer to the relegation zone than the Champions League positions.

"I think (relegation) is a possibility and we have to be clear with our fans. We have to change something but this season will be really hard on everybody. It can make us stronger and we have to fight," Amorim said.

"It's also my fault in this moment, because I think the team is not improved, I think it is a

little bit lost at the moment. So it's a little bit embarrassing to be much like a United coach and to lose a lot of games. But we have to cope with that, difficult moments in the life of everybody. So it's a hard moment."

Amorim has had anything but a dream start to his United career, suffering five defeats in his first eight league games — the worst record for a Manchester United manager in 103 years.

SPORTS

Top agent Paul Omamomo praises CHAN Eagles, technical crew

Paul Ojo Omamomo, a renowned football agent and Chief Scout of FCD Vista Academy in Russia, has heaped praises on the CHAN Eagles and their technical crew, led by Coach Daniel Ogunmodede. In his recent statement, Omamomo acknowledged the impressive performances of the CHAN Eagles, emphasizing their exceptional talent and determination. He commended Ogunmodede's leadership and tactical expertise,

which have played a pivotal role in shaping the team into a formidable force in African football.

Omamomo's admiration for the CHAN Eagles stems from his extensive experience in football scouting and player development. As a seasoned agent, he has facilitated the transfer of over 200 players to clubs across the globe.

His keen eye for spotting talent has earned him recognition as one of the foremost scouts in

football today. In his capacity as the President of P. Sports Football Club, Omamomo has been instrumental in nurturing young players and providing them with opportunities to thrive on the international stage.

Reflecting on Nigeria's potential in world football, Omamomo reiterated his belief that the nation possesses a wealth of talent capable of dominating the global stage.

He highlighted the importance

of platforms like CHAN (African Nations Championship) in showcasing local players, offering them a pathway to professional success. He also stressed the need for sustained investment in grassroots football development and robust support systems for homegrown players.

As the Chief Scout of FCD Vista Academy, Omamomo continues to work tirelessly in identifying and promoting Nigerian players who exhibit exceptional skills and potential. His commitment to elevating Nigerian football aligns with his vision of seeing the country achieve global recognition and success.

Paul Ojo Omamomo's advocacy for the CHAN Eagles underscores the importance of nurturing local talent and providing them with the tools and opportunities to excel. His recognition of Coach Daniel Ogunmodede and his technical crew further highlights the value of strong leadership and strategic planning in achieving success. Together, their efforts serve as a beacon of hope for the future of Nigerian football.



Nigeria's sports revolution: The unprecedented ₦78bn budget that is set to usher in fresh sports dispensation

For the first time in 69 years, Nigeria's sports industry is on the brink of a revolution. The Federal Government of Nigeria's (FGN) 2025 budget, presented by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to the National Assembly on December 18, 2024, earmarked an unprecedented ₦78 billion for sports development. This historic allocation underscores a paradigm shift in the country's approach to sports, signaling its potential as a powerful tool for national development, youth empowerment, and economic transformation.

engagement, we are unlocking opportunities for young talents and creating pathways for Nigeria to shine on the global stage."

The budget encompasses a multi-pronged strategy aimed at addressing decades of neglect in the sports sector. A key highlight is the establishment of an Anti-Doping Laboratory, projected to generate significant foreign exchange revenue annually. This facility will align Nigeria with global standards, ensuring fair play while also serving as a regional hub for doping control in Africa.

The massive financial commitment is part of the Renewed Hope Initiative for Nigeria's Sports Economy (RHINSE), spearheaded by the National Sports Commission (NSC). Under the leadership of Mallam Shehu Dikko as Chairman and Hon. Bukola Olopade as Director General, the commission is resetting the narrative around sports in Nigeria. The initiative's Reset, Refocus, and Relaunch (RRR) framework aims to reposition sports as a vital driver of economic growth and social cohesion.

Beyond the laboratory, funds will be channeled into developing critical sports infrastructure across the country. From upgrading historical stadiums to constructing new facilities, the government aims to create world-class venues that meet international standards. Among these projects is the refurbishment of the iconic sporting facilities around the country, the construction of state-of-the-art sports centers and courts, and the overhaul of grassroots sports complexes to nurture budding talents.

"This budget is a game-changer for the Nigerian economy," Mallam Shehu Dikko remarked. "Sports can contribute significantly to GDP growth, create employment opportunities, and serve as a vehicle for poverty alleviation." "This is not just about numbers; it's about redefining sports as a national asset," added Dikko. "The unprecedented budget allocation reflects our commitment to elevating sports into a tool for unity, cultural promotion, and sustainable development."

Under the stewardship of Shehu Dikko and Bukola Olopade, the NSC is redefining what sports can achieve for Nigeria. The duo, known for their expertise and innovative strategies, are not just addressing infrastructure gaps but are also creating an ecosystem that fosters private sector collaboration. Through initiatives like RHINSE, sports federations are being restructured to improve governance and efficiency, while institutional reforms are laying the groundwork for sustainable growth. Partnerships with the private sector are being encouraged to inject capital and expertise into the industry, creating a win-win scenario for investors and the government.

Mallam Shehu Dikko has emphasized the transformative power of the initiative stating that by focusing on grassroots development, infrastructure revamp, and private sector



NWFL to take legal action against unauthorized logo usage

The Nigeria Women Football League has issued a strong warning to the general public against the unauthorized use of its logo for the promotion of individual or group activities without the NWFL involvement.

It has come to our attention that some individuals and groups have been using our logo to promote their agenda without obtaining proper authorization from NWFL. This is a violation of intellectual

property laws and is considered illegal.

We would like to remind everyone that the NWFL logo is a registered trade mark, and any use of it without our consent is prohibited. We take this matter seriously and will take

legal action against an individual or organization found to be using our logo without our authorization.

We urge the general public to respect intellectual property laws and to refrain from using our logo.

FCT FA board members petition NFF over illegal acts by chairman

In the heart of Nigeria's football community, tensions are brewing within the Federal Capital Territory Football Association (FCT FA), as some prominent board members, of the Association have raised allegations against the Chairman of the FCT FA, Abba Mukhtar, accusing him of unilateral and illegal actions that undermine the integrity of the association.

their dismay at Mukhtar's actions, calling them a violation of the board's authority. "The Chairman of the FCT FA does not have the executive power to solely run the FCT FA Board," they wrote. "It is now obvious that the Chairman has decided to challenge the legal foundations of the Board and bring the FCT FA to ridicule."

The members assert that such actions not only disrespect the board's processes but also undermine the contributions of experienced stakeholders like Samuel and Ajilore. Abimbola Samuel, a veteran in Nigerian football and former National U-20 coach, and Femi Ajilore, a former national team player, are seen as pillars of the FCT FA whose expertise is crucial for the association's growth.

that the Ethics Committee, which has already begun operations, is acting outside its legal mandate. They describe it as a "self-founded, witch-hunting" body running amok within the FCT FA. The petition calls on the NFF to:

Scrap the Ethics Committee and any other similarly established committees. Restrain such committees from interfering in the association's activities until proper processes are followed.

The petitioners emphasize their dedication to the development of football in the FCT but firmly distance themselves from what they describe as the Chairman's "unwholesome acts." They urge the NFF to intervene promptly, warning that failure to do so could further erode the FCT FA's credibility and derail its objectives.

"We appeal for your prompt intervention and anticipate same," the petition concludes, signed by Samuel Abimbola, Femi Ajilore, Ezech Ngozi Victoria and Akintade Babatunde.



NYESOM WIKE, FCT MINISTER