

15 health workers infected as 2 die in Edo, other states amid Lassa fever surge

● **NCDC warns health workers to follow strict safety protocols during peak transmission season**

BENIN CITY

Fifteen frontline health workers, including two who have died, have contracted Lassa fever in Edo State and other affected regions, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has confirmed, as the country grapples with a surge in infections during the

peak transmission period.

Presently, Edo joins Ondo, Bauchi, Taraba, Ebonyi, and Benue among states recording rising cases, with several local government areas identified as hotspots.

In Edo, hospitals in Benin City and other major towns have been placed on high alert, with enhanced screening and isolation procedures for suspected cases.

Dr Jide Idris, Director-General of NCDC, said the infections and deaths underline persistent gaps in infection prevention and control (IPC) measures in health facilities, particularly in outpatient and general wards.

"Protecting our medical staff is central to sustaining outbreak response. Strict adherence to IPC practices, early detection,

and coordinated state-level action will save lives," he said.

Investigations indicate that exposure risks increase when undiagnosed febrile patients first present in general hospital wards, where staff may not suspect Lassa fever. Delayed recognition, combined with irregular supply or improper use of personal protective equipment

(PPE), contributes significantly to hospital-based transmission.

Non-clinical staff, including cleaners, porters, and administrative officers, are also vulnerable without adequate training and protective gear.

The advisory also highlighted other risk factors, including late care-seeking by healthcare workers themselves, self-medi-

cation, and fear of isolation.

NCDC investigations found an average six-day delay between symptom onset and reporting among affected staff, increasing the likelihood of severe complications and fatalities.

In response, Edo State Ministry of Health has been directed to reinforce IPC training for all hospital personnel,

CONTINUES ON PG 2»

The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

f t i NigerianObserver @Nigerian_Observer @NigerianObserver www.nigerianobservernews.com

PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968

VOL. 47, NO. 1,199

TUESDAY 17TH FEBRUARY, 2026.

Inflation slides to 15.10% signals economic stabilisation —CPPE

—Pg 3

Okpebholo to unveil 54 heavy-duty machines for Edo LGAs

● **as Benin residents laud road reconstruction**

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

The State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, will on Thursday unveil 54 units of heavy-duty construction equipment for the 18 Local Government Councils in the state, in what the government described as a major push to strengthen grassroots infrastructure delivery and fast-track development projects across communities.

The development was disclosed in a statement signed by the

Chief Press Secretary to the governor, Mr Patrick Akhere Ebojele.

According to the statement, the equipment package includes graders, excavators, rollers and other heavy-duty machinery designed to support road construction, rural access works and drainage rehabilitation across the state.

The state government explained that the direct deployment of the machines to the councils is aimed at accelerating community-based projects, reducing bureaucratic bottlenecks associated with

centralised equipment control, and enhancing the capacity of local governments to respond promptly to infrastructure needs within their domains.

It further noted that the initiative is part of the administration's broader strategy to promote balanced and inclusive development across Edo's three senatorial districts, while deepening local governance and improving service delivery at the grassroots.

The Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, is expected to perform the commissioning ceremony. The event

is anticipated to attract senior government officials, political stakeholders and traditional rulers from across the state.

Meanwhile, residents of Ogheghe and Charismatic Road, Off Ekenhuan Road in Benin City, have lauded Governor Okpebholo over the ongoing reconstruction of their road, describing the intervention as long overdue and a significant relief to the community.

The residents said the project has brought renewed hope after years of neglect that left the road in a deplorable state, resulting in

persistent hardship, especially during the rainy season.

One of the residents, Osas Uyi, recalled that erosion, flooding and deep potholes made movement almost impossible at the height of the rains.

He stated that commercial drivers frequently avoided the route due to its poor condition, forcing residents to trek long distances before accessing transportation.

According to him, the situation not only affected mobility

but also increased transport fares and exposed residents to security risks, particularly at night.

Business owners in the area also lamented the toll the road's previous condition had taken on economic activities. They noted that customers often found it difficult to access shops and offices, leading to reduced patronage and financial losses.

However, some shop owners along Charismatic Road said the

CONTINUES ON PG 2»



COMMISSIONING:

L-R: Governor Umaru Fintiri of Adamawa State; President Bola Tinubu; National Security Adviser, Malam Nuhu and others during the commissioning of Governor's Office and other projects by President Tinubu in Yola on Monday.

Senate approves ₦140bn for NCDC, queries poor releases to Women Affairs Ministry

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

The Senate has approved a total estimate of ₦140 billion for the 2026 financial year of the North-Central Development Commission (NCDC), directing the agency to prioritise agriculture and security in the implementation of its budget, even as lawmakers raised concerns over meagre fund releases to the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development.

Chairman of the Senate Committee on NCDC, Senator Titus Zam, issued the directive after the commission's management appeared before the committee to defend its 2026 budget proposals. Lawmakers went into a

closed-door session at the commencement of the exercise to deliberate on the financial estimates before reconvening.

Addressing journalists afterwards, Zam said the committee examined all items in the proposal and found them relevant to the developmental needs of the North-Central region.

He, however, stressed that expenditures must align strictly with the commission's statutory mandate.

"As a committee overseeing this commission, we have requested them to prioritise their spending in line with their mandate so that the people of the North-Central region will benefit fully and get value for

CONTINUES ON PG 2»

EFCC quizzes El-Rufai over alleged ₦423bn fraud

—Pg 2

Lawmaker advocates 16-year single tenure to end policy abandonments

—Pg 5

Madagascar cyclone death toll rises to 59 as devastation mounts

—Pg 9

Nigeria-DR Congo row: NFF dismisses reports of FIFA decision

—Pg 14

EFCC quizzes El-Rufai over alleged N423bn fraud

ABUJA

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) on Monday grilled former Kaduna State governor, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, over alleged fraud said to have occurred during his tenure between 2015 and 2023.

El-Rufai, a chieftain of the African Democratic Congress (ADC), honoured the commission's invitation days after his legal team confirmed he would present himself for questioning.

His appearance followed a failed attempt to arrest him last Thursday at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja.

The former governor arrived at the EFCC headquarters in Abuja accompanied by hundreds of supporters.

A source within the commission confirmed that El-Rufai was being interrogated over corruption allegations linked to his administration in Kaduna State.

"He is with our investigators, but it is too early to determine how long the questioning

will last," the source said.

Another source indicated that arraignment in court could follow, depending on the outcome of the interrogation.

Counsel to the former governor, Ubong Akpan, disclosed that the EFCC invitation was received while his client was overseas.

He maintained that there was no legal basis for the attempted arrest, describing it as a violation of constitutional provisions guaranteeing fundamental rights.

"There exists no justifiable basis for this attempted arrest

or the accompanying mistreatment," Akpan stated.

Meanwhile, two groups of protesters stormed the EFCC headquarters on Monday over the matter.

While one group chanted solidarity songs in support of the former governor, another demanded a thorough investigation into the allegations.

There was mild drama at the commission's office in Jabi, Abuja, when some supporters who accompanied El-Rufai were denied entry into the premises.

Muhammad Abdullahi, spokesperson for the group calling for his prosecution, insisted that the allegations must not be trivialised or politicised.

"We reiterate our firm position that the ongoing prosecution of former Kaduna State governor, Nasir El-Rufai, remains a lawful and constitutional matter strictly between him and the Government of Kaduna State.

"This issue should not be reduced to political theatre or emotional manipulation," he said.

Responding, EFCC spokes-

person Dele Oyewale appealed for calm and assured the protesters that their petition would be forwarded to the appropriate authorities within the commission.

"The EFCC recognises the right of Nigerians to lawful protest on issues of concern. Your protest and demands will be communicated to the Executive Chairman accordingly.

"I want to assure you that the EFCC, as we know it, will discharge its responsibilities professionally by addressing all the issues raised in your letter," Oyewale said.



STAKEHOLDERS' ROUNDTABLE:

Minister of State for Education, Prof. Suwaiba Sa'id Ahmad (R), with Chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Education, Abubakar Fulata, during a stakeholders' roundtable on the Future of Education in Nigeria, at the National Assembly in Abuja on Monday.

Expert calls for stronger TSA enforcement as reform hits 10yrs

ABUJA

Mr Valentine Achum, Advocacy Lead for Equal Trade Alliance, has called for stronger enforcement, legislative support, and technological upgrades for Nigeria's Treasury Single Account (TSA) as the system marks its second decade.

Achum described the TSA as Nigeria's most successful fiscal reform, credited with enhancing transparency and optimising government revenue.

"Successive administrations have recognised the TSA as a key achievement worth preserving and expanding," he said.

He warned that revenue leakages persist as some funds

remain outside the TSA and Central Bank, stressing the need for continued enforcement and improved technology. Achum also recommended extending the TSA to include foreign exchange inflows for full visibility of public finances.

"The TSA has recovered trillions of Naira, eliminated billions in wasteful spending, restored constitutional compliance, transformed institutional behaviour, stabilised the economy during crises, and earned international recognition," he said.

He urged reliance on local technology, citing Remita's success in powering the TSA, and warned that weakening the system would risk a return to pre-2015 fiscal disorder.

Edo govt issues 7-day ultimatum to community leaders over cult killings

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government (EDSG) has given three community youth leaders, known as Okiagheles, a seven-day ultimatum to report to the Special Security Squad, "Operation Flush Out Cultists and Kidnappers," in the wake of a recent surge in cult-related violence across the state.

Innocent Okunozee,

Okiaghele of Obazagbon Community and a suspected member of the Black Axe Confraternity, is already in custody.

Those expected to turn themselves in include the Okiagheles of Obagie, Ofumwengbe, and Ara communities.

The ultimatum follows a series of targeted raids in Benin City by the Special Security Squad, led by the Principal Security Officer (PSO) to the Edo State

Governor, which resulted in the arrest of suspected cult members in Amagba and Obagie communities. Five others linked to the killings remain at large and have been officially declared wanted by the government.

"The squad has made significant progress in its mandate to rid the state of crime, killings, and other social vices," said Eribo Enwanta, spokesperson for the Special Security Squad. "Preliminary investigations linked the arrested Okiagheles and five others to recent cult killings in the state."

The raid at Amagba GRA led to the arrest of two suspected Black Axe members, Osazee Omoruyi and Osahon Anito. Weapons and live ammunition were also recovered from a vehicle connected to Okunozee, which was driven by his cousin, Godspower Obayuwana.

The government has called on citizens with information about the suspects to cooperate with security agencies.

"The arm of the law will find these fleeing suspects, no matter where they run," Enwanta warned.

Okpebholo to unveil 54 heavy-duty...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

ongoing construction by the Edo State Government has already begun to restore confidence among residents and investors.

They expressed optimism that upon completion, the road would stimulate economic activities, improve ease of movement, enhance security within the neighbourhood and increase property values.

A trader, Mama Peace, who sells roasted plantain at the Charismatic Junction off Ekenhuan Road, urged the contractors handling the project to maintain high standards and

deliver quality work within the stipulated timeframe.

She also pledged continued support for Governor Okpebholo's development agenda, describing the road project as tangible evidence of the administration's commitment to grassroots development and improved living conditions across Edo State.

Residents unanimously described the reconstruction as a practical demonstration of the governor's resolve to address long-standing infrastructure challenges and uplift communities across the state.

Religious leaders call for ethical AI governance in Nigeria

LAGOS

Religious leaders across Nigeria are urging the government to adopt an inclusive, value-driven framework to regulate Artificial Intelligence (AI) development and deployment.

The call was made during a media training organised by the Nigeria Religious Coalition

on Artificial Intelligence (NRC-AI) in Lagos on Monday.

Rt. Rev. Dr Evans Onyemara, General Secretary of the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), said the council is partnering with the Future of Life Institute to build AI awareness among religious leaders and is collaborating with Jama'atu Nasril Islam to promote interfaith AI governance.

He called on government to

involve faith-based organisations and civil society groups in AI policy-making. CCN Director, Very Rev. Kolade Fadahunsi, stressed that AI policies must be rooted in justice, accountability, and human dignity, while protecting indigenous values and critical thinking among youths.

Civil society partner Philip Jakpor highlighted the media's role in promoting ethical AI adoption,

while Ms Nkechi Oseni, CCN Programmes Officer, advocated for an independent AI Ethics Expert Group and standardised assessment mechanisms to ensure AI projects align with Nigeria's cultural and religious values.

The coalition emphasised that responsible AI development must uphold constitutional principles and safeguard the interests of future generations.

15 health workers infected as 2 die in Edo, other states...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

ensure uninterrupted supplies of gloves, masks, gowns, respirators, and disinfectants, and maintain functional Lassa fever isolation and treatment centres.

Rapid Response Teams have been deployed to high-risk areas, while hospitals continue targeted

sensitization campaigns to improve compliance and awareness.

Dr Idris urged all healthcare facilities to observe strict hygiene protocols, including regular hand washing with soap and running water, safe specimen handling, proper waste disposal, and routine environmental disinfection. He em-

phasised that standard precautions must be applied to every patient, regardless of diagnosis.

The NCDC also called on the public to report suspected Lassa fever cases promptly via the toll-free line 6232 and warned that continued collaboration between federal and state authorities, along with institutional dis-

cipline in hospitals, is essential to preventing further spread.

As Edo and other states navigate the peak Lassa fever season, health authorities are urging heightened vigilance, strict adherence to safety protocols, and immediate reporting of any suspected infections to curb the outbreak and protect frontline workers.

Senate approves 140bn for NCDC,...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

allocated resources," he said.

He identified agriculture, security, health, education, public infrastructure and other essential social services as key priority areas.

Noting that the North-Central zone is predominantly agrarian, Zam said agriculture must take centre stage in the commission's programme, adding that the sector had been adequately reflected in the 2026 budget framework.

The senator also disclosed that the commission was exploring collaboration with security experts and stakeholders across the region to complement the efforts of security agencies.

Zam, however, expressed dissatisfaction with the implementa-

tion of the capital component of the commission's 2025 budget, attributing the shortfall to broader national budget execution challenges. Despite the concerns, the committee resolved to approve the ₦140 billion estimate for appropriation, describing it as necessary to advance development across the region in the coming financial year.

Meanwhile, during a separate budget defence session before the Senate Committee on Women Affairs, lawmakers questioned the Federal Government's pattern of poor fund releases to the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, as the Minister, Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, sought an upward review of the ministry's proposed ₦134.2 billion budget for 2026.

NEWS

Inflation slides to 15.10% signals economic stabilisation —CPPE

LAGOS

The Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise (CPPE) has said Nigeria's headline inflation decline to 15.10 percent in January signals a decisive shift towards macroeconomic stabilisation, with encouraging implications for households and investors.

Founder of CPPE, Dr Muda Yusuf, stated this on Monday in

Lagos while reacting to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), which showed a 0.05 percentage point drop in inflation for January 2026.

Yusuf noted that the easing of inflationary pressure was broad-based across key components of the price index. Food inflation, he said, declined sharply to 8.89 per cent year-on-year in January, down from 29.63 per cent in January 2025 and 10.84 percent in De-

cember 2025.

Core inflation also moderated to 17.72 per cent year-on-year in January, compared with 18.63 percent in December 2025, indicating that price moderation is extending beyond food to other segments of the consumption basket.

According to him, the sharp decline in food inflation would deliver significant welfare gains, as food accounts for the largest share of household spending in Nigeria.

Lower food prices, he explained, are expected to boost real purchasing power, particularly for low-income

households, ease food-security pressures and gradually revive demand for non-food goods and services.

"If sustained, these developments could stimulate retail trade, manufacturing utilisation and service-sector activity, thereby supporting broader economic recovery," he said.

However, Yusuf cautioned that prolonged declines in food prices could pose risks to farm incomes and rural economic stability. Persistent weakness in farm-gate prices, he warned, could reduce farmers' revenues and investment capacity, weaken rural purchasing power and

discourage agricultural production, potentially leading to future supply shortages and renewed inflationary pressures.

He stressed the need to balance consumer affordability with producer sustainability to safeguard national food security, recommending targeted measures such as productivity support, minimum guaranteed prices for selected crops, strategic reserves and expanded agro-processing capacity to absorb surplus output.

Yusuf also highlighted state-level disparities in inflation, noting that headline inflation was highest in Benue,

Kogi and the Federal Capital Territory, and lowest in Ebonyi, Katsina and Imo.

He said the pattern underscores the impact of transport costs, security conditions and supply-chain efficiency on price formation, urging government to address structural constraints to achieve durable nationwide price stability.

He maintained that consolidating disinflation while protecting agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods would be critical to translating current price moderation into lasting stability and inclusive growth.

Consultant seeks stronger Nigeria-Belgium business forum to drive growth

ABUJA

Senior international trade consultant Collins Nweke has called on the Federal Government to deepen cooperation with the Nigeria Belgium Luxembourg Business Forum (NBLBF) as part of efforts to strengthen Nigeria's economic diplomacy and accelerate growth.

Nweke made the call following a meeting with the Minister of Arts, Culture, Tourism and the Creative Economy, Hannatu Musawa, describing Nigeria's creative industry as a strategic asset capable of advancing narrative-driven diplomacy.

He said preparations for the 2026 NBLBF in Brussels present an opportunity to position

Nigeria's creative economy at the forefront of bilateral engagement, shifting focus from traditional sectors such as infrastructure and agriculture to culture and tourism.

According to him, Nigeria's cultural exports — including Afrobeats, Nollywood, fashion and festivals are not merely expressions of identity, but engines of economic value that open markets, attract tourism and build lasting partnerships.

He noted that the forum has served as a bridge between Nigeria and the Belux region, facilitating investment flows and dialogue, and stressed that modern economic diplomacy requires shared narratives, trust and cultural understanding to secure enduring partnerships.

Tax is backbone of modern capital, FCT-IRS boss tells Abuja residents

ABUJA

Acting Chairman of the Federal Capital Territory Internal Revenue Service (FCT-IRS), Mr Michael Anjo, has urged residents of Abuja to embrace timely tax registration, filing and payment, describing taxation as the backbone of a liveable and modern capital city.

Speaking at a stakeholder engagement forum themed "Harmonising Revenue Systems and Implementing the New Tax Laws," Anjo said tax revenue remains the essential engine for public health, safety, infrastructure and inclusive access to public goods.

He highlighted visible outcomes of internally generated revenue since 2023, including satellite town expansion, construction of public buildings, roads and bridges, and improved connectivity across the territory.

Anjo said reforms under the Nigeria Tax Administration Act 2025 and the establishment of the Nigeria Revenue Service would harmonise procedures, introduce standardised self-assessment systems and mandate

electronic fiscal reporting from 2026.

He added that the 2026 vision prioritises voluntary compliance through digital integration, risk profiling and data analytics, with enforcement measures reserved as a last resort for identified evaders.

The FCT-IRS boss also commended the FCT Minister, Nyesom Wike, for strides in infrastructure development and security, describing tax compliance as both a civic duty and a statutory obligation essential for sustainable urban growth.



ANJO



SOLIDARITY RALLY:

Members of the Women Political Participation (WPP) during their Special Seat Solidarity Rally at the National Assembly main entrance in Abuja on Monday.

Foundation clears N20m hospital bills for 2,000 indigent patients in Ebonyi

ISHIAGU (EBONYI)

No fewer than 2,000 indigent patients in Ishiagu, Ivo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, benefited from a three-day free medical outreach organised by the Ubazuoha Charity Foundation (UCF), which also cleared hospital bills exceeding N20 million.

The large-scale intervention, held at the Ishiagu Civic Centre, marked the 39th birthday of the foundation's founder and Chief Executive, Chief Ernest Ndukwe, who said he

chose service over celebration in gratitude to God.

Ndukwe, a businessman and philanthropist, said the initiative was inspired by his upbringing in Ishiagu and the hardship faced by vulnerable residents.

"Our target was about 3,000 patients. Beyond medication, beneficiaries also received food items to aid recovery," he said, noting that each patient was given bags of rice after consultation.

Medical services included laboratory tests such as hepatitis B screening and malaria diagnosis, while complex cases were docu-

mented and referred to specialist hospitals, with the foundation undertaking to fund advanced treatment where necessary.

Chairman of the Planning Committee, Mr Daniel Okorie, disclosed that more than N20 million was raised through voluntary donations from friends and associates.

Cheques were issued to offset outstanding hospital bills of indigent patients, including some detained in medical facilities over unpaid bills.

Although organisers initially projected 500 beneficiaries

and later reviewed the figure to 1,000, turnout exceeded expectations, prompting an expansion of logistics.

Selected beneficiaries also received direct cash grants ranging from several hundred thousand naira to N1 million for urgent medical and personal needs.

Community leaders and clerics commended the initiative, describing it as a model of compassion and responsible citizenship. Organisers said the outreach would become an annual intervention, with follow-up support for referred cases and expanded empowerment schemes planned later in the year.

2027: Coalition presses NASS to fast-track Women's Reserved Seats Bill

ABUJA

The Reserved Seats for Women Bill Campaign Coalition has urged the National Assembly to take urgent and decisive action to pass legislation creating reserved seats for women ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Communications Lead of the coalition, Mr Hammed Adejare, made the call in Abuja, stressing

that the release of the 2027 election timetable by the Independent National Electoral Commission heightened the need for immediate legislative action.

The proposed amendment, also known as House Bill 1349, seeks to alter the 1999 Constitution to establish special constituencies exclusively contested by women in the National Assembly and State Houses of Assembly.

Adejare said Nigeria continues

to record one of the lowest levels of female parliamentary representation globally, with women occupying less than five per cent of seats in the National Assembly.

He described the bill as a time-bound corrective mechanism designed to operate for an initial 16-year period, subject to review after four general election cycles.

"The question before the nation is whether the 469 lawmakers of the 10th National

Assembly are prepared to act with urgency and responsibility to remove systemic barriers that have constrained women's participation for decades," he said.

He warned that the legislative window for concluding consideration of the proposed constitutional amendment, which would create 182 reserved seats across federal and state legislatures, is rapidly narrowing as the 2027 polls approach.

Police detain 30 suspected drug dealers in A'lbom

UYO

The Police Command in Akwa Ibom has detained 30 suspected drug dealers in the state.

The Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Timfon John, disclosed this in an interview with newsmen in Uyo on Monday.

She stated that the command had intensified its intelligence-driven and sustained crackdown on dealers of Indian hemp and other illicit substances across the state.

"No fewer than 30 suspects are currently in custody while 20 will be charged to court upon the conclusion of ongoing investigations.

"The coordinated raids in various identified flashpoints, have resulted in multiple arrests and the recovery of significant quantities of suspected prohibited drugs," John said.

John said the operations were strategically planned and

simultaneously executed in known criminal hideouts following actionable intelligence.

She said the Commissioner of Police, Baba Azare, directed that the fight against drug trafficking and distribution be sustained without interruption.

"Azare has issued a firm and unequivocal warning to all individuals engaged in the unlawful trade of Indian hemp and other illicit substances to cease immediately or vacate Akwa Ibom," she said.

John said the command would not standby and watch the youths lured into addiction, criminality, and social decay.

According to her, the proliferation of illicit drugs remains directly linked to cultism, armed robbery, violent crimes, and the erosion of family and community values.

"The Command is unwavering in its resolve to dismantle networks that threaten the safety and future of our state.

"Akwa Ibom is no longer a safe operating ground for drug barons and peddlers.

"Surveillance mechanisms have been reinforced, intelligence gathering enhanced, and inter-agency collaborations

strengthened.

"Those who disregard this final warning will face relentless enforcement actions, arrest, prosecution, and the full weight of the law," she said.

The PPRO therefore called on

parents, traditional institutions, youth leaders, and all community stakeholders to partner with the Police by providing credible and timely information.

"Together, we will safeguard our communities and ensure

that discipline, dignity, and honour prevail.

"The command remains resolute, uncompromising, and fully committed to maintaining law, order, and moral integrity across the state, she said.



FMST'S STRATEGY WORKSHOP:

L-R: Director-General, National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion (NOTAP), Dr Oby Amadiobi; Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Innovation, Science and Technology (FMST), Mr Philip Ndiomu-Ebiogeh; Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology, Dr Kingsley Udeh; Registrar, Nigerian Council of Food Science and Technology (NICFoST), Mrs Veronica Ezeh and Director-General, National Board for Technology Incubation (NBTI), Dr Kazeem Raji, during FMST's Strategy Workshop on implementation of the Presidential Promoting and Ministerial Deliverables, in Abuja on Monday.

Use Ramadan, Lent, to foster unity —Akeugbagold

IBADAN

An Ibadan-based Islamic Scholar, Sheikh Taofeek Akeugbagold, has advised Muslims and Christians to use the 2026 Ramadan and Lent to foster unity among themselves.

Akeugbagold, the former Chairman of Oyo State Pilgrim Welfare Board (Muslim Wing), advised in an interview with newsmen in Ibadan on Monday.

Ramadan and Lent will commence on Wednesday, a situation Akeugbagold described as a rare occurrence.

"This alignment comes at a time when our country is facing the challenge of terrorism, affecting both Muslims and Christians," he said.

He urged both Muslims and Christians to share spiritual experiences, fear God, aid the less privileged, and exercise self-discipline, among other things.

"Muslims and Christians must understand that they are brothers and have many things in common under spiritual faith.

"Some verses of the Holy

Quran proved the claim that both Islam and Christianity have many things in common.

"The Holy Prophet Muhammad once honoured some Christian delegates who visited him, including some from Africa.

"In fact, he established an agreement between Muslims and other religious communities, known as the Charter of Medina.

"One of the points in the Charter of Medina is that all residents should see themselves as one community.

"While they did not need to worship together, they should agree to cooperate in fighting evil," he said.

He said terrorists claiming to be Muslims represented a distorted ideology and not true Muslims.

He appealed to the Nigerian government to take serious action against radical ideologies, especially those inciting violence and hatred.

"Authorities must monitor and prevent inflammatory speeches on social media, radio, television, and the print media," Akeugbagold said.

Police confirm killing of man by his apprentice in Anambra

ONITSHA (ANAMBRA)

The Police Command in Anambra has confirmed the killing of a man by his 21-year-old apprentice (name withheld) on Sunday at Fegge in Onitsha.

Confirming the incident on Monday to newsmen, the command's Public Relations Officer (PRO), SP Tochukwu Ikenga, said the suspect has been arrested.

CONTINUES ON PG 6»

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS OGECHI NORAH NWABUEZE**, now wish to be called and addressed as **MRS. OGECHI NORAH OKODUGHA**. All former documents remain valid. General public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known and addressed as **OMOZUWA LOVELY**, now wish to be called and addressed as **OMOZUWA SAMSON**. All former documents remain valid. General public please take note.

SUBEB distributes textbooks, uniforms, others to schools in Kaduna

KADUNA

The Kaduna State Universal Basic Education Board (KADSUBEB), has inaugurated the distribution of 174,366 textbooks, 190,175 exercise books and 32,343 school uniforms to public schools across Kaduna State.

The Executive Chairman, KADSUBEB, Mr Mubarak Muhammad, disclosed this at the event on Monday in Kaduna.

Muhammad said that other materials included 3,675 pairs of school sandals; 3,675 school bags; 40,175 pencils; 36,000 biros; 36,000 rulers and 2,788 sports equipment items for pupils statewide.

He said that the intervention reflected government's unwavering commitment to strengthening basic education delivery.

He described the items as more than numbers, saying, "They represent opportunity, dignity and renewed hope for thousands of children across the state."

Muhammad explained that the provision of textbooks would improve instructional delivery, while exercise books would enhance practice, retention and overall learning outcomes in classrooms.

He added that uniforms, sandals and school bags would promote inclusion and reduce socio-economic barriers that often prevent children from attending school regularly.

"When federal, state institutions and development partners align strategically, measurable impact becomes inevitable, particularly in foundational literacy and numeracy development.

"The board's mandate goes beyond infrastructure to improving learning outcomes and ensuring no child is left behind due to lack of basic learning

materials," the chairman said.

Muhammad appreciated the commissioner for education, education secretaries at local government education authority level, school heads and teachers for sustaining the system.

In her remarks, the Executive Secretary, Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), Dr Aisha Garba, said the exercise was not merely about distributing materials, but about strengthening hope.

Represented by the commission's acting Director of Academic Services, Mrs Zippora Banguru, she said that the initiative aligned with the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Tinubu, which placed education at the centre of national development.

"Human capital development begins at the basic education level, where strong foundations in literacy, numeracy, values and skills are laid," Garba said.

She outlined the commission's statutory mandate to coordinate

implementation of the Universal Basic Education programme.

Others, she said, were to disburse intervention funds to states and the Federal Capital Territory, and ensure quality, access, equity and accountability.

The executive secretary acknowledged the leadership of the Minister of Education, Dr Maruf Alausa, and Prof. Suwaila Ahmed for strengthening reforms across the education sector.

She disclosed that the commission was distributing more than one million school bags, shoes, pencils and exercise books nationwide, alongside 8,369,514 assorted teaching and learning materials for Early Childhood Care Development and Education and primary schools.

"567,180 teachers' guides; 419,293 library resources for junior secondary schools; 1,480 interactive smart boards; 287 computers and digital literacy centre equipment for 37 centres are also being deployed," she said.

100 indigent students to benefit from OkLA scholarship award

LAGOS

No fewer than 100 indigent undergraduate students in Kosofe Constituency 1 in Lagos State will benefit from the OKLA Scholarship Awards.

The scholarship is an initiative of Mr Sanni Okanlawon, Lagos State House of Assembly member representing Kosofe Constituency 1.

Mr Hakeem Alli-Balogun, Chairman, OKLA Scholarship Advisory Committee, dis-

closed this on Monday during a physical screening and oral interview for students seeking to benefit from the initiative.

Alli-Balogun said that the exercise, which is the third edition for the 2025/2026 academic session, was aimed at identifying indigent but deserving students who require financial support to pursue their education.

"This scholarship scheme was established to ease the financial burden on parents and guardians, while also providing mean-

ingful support for students from humble backgrounds who are determined to secure a better future through education," he said.

According to him, special arrangements have also been made to ensure inclusiveness, as applicants currently writing examinations or studying in institutions outside Lagos State will participate in an online screening exercise in the coming days.

Alli-Balogun expressed appreciation to Okanlawon for the confidence reposed in members

of the advisory committee.

"We sincerely appreciate Hon. Okanlawon for the honour and trust given to us to serve in this important process.

"His commitment to educational development and quality representation in Kosofe Constituency 1 is commendable," he said.

He noted that the initiative was non-political, describing it as a genuine intervention designed to empower young people and promote educational advancement within the constituency.

Police confirm 3 killed in Ebonyi mine pit collapse

ABAKALIKI

The Police Command in Ebonyi has confirmed the killing of three people following the collapse of a mining pit in a rural community.

Confirming the incident to newsmen in Abakaliki on Sunday, SP Joshua Ukan-du, its spokesman, said four others were injured in the incident which occurred on Saturday.

"Three people were killed

on Saturday when a mining pit collapsed at Enyim Agalegu in Ikwo Local Government Area.

"We received information on the incident and the DPO in the area also visited the scene but no official report has been received from the victim's family," he added.

Also confirming the development, the Commissioner for Solid Minerals Development,

Mr Chidi Onyi, described the incident as unfortunate.

The commissioner attributed the recurring collapse in mining communities to illegal mining activities, occasioned by greed for money.

"The incident occurred at a pit reportedly covered by the mining lease of First Patriots Limited, formerly known as Royal Salt," he said.

Abia Govt to clear longstanding salary arrears owed ex-councillors

UMUAHIA

The Abia State Government has announced plans to settle outstanding salary arrears owed to former Local Government Councillors who served between 1999 and 2022.

Gov. Alex Otti of Abia made this known on Sunday during a meeting with members of Association of Former Elected Councillors, in Umuahia.

The governor stated that payments of the arrears accumulated under previous administrations would commence before the end of the month, and will be settled in batches.

He explained that when the proposal on the arrears owed former councillors was first brought to him, he was not aware of the issues involved, including ongoing court cases.

Otti said that he insisted that his administration would address and resolve all inherited challenges, because he believed that leadership should be about stewardship and problem-solving.

He noted that leaders were elected to tackle existing difficulties and it behoves them to live up to their responsibilities.

Otti said that all government workers, whether core or non-core civil servants, including pensioners deserve equal treatment and payment.

He stressed that every labourer deserves his wages, affirming that his administration stands for justice and would always "uphold what is right and fair."

The governor commended the association for withdrawing its court case over the unpaid salaries' issue.

"When we looked at everything, we found that there was need to do a little bit more work, because some people were in court, some people had been paid based on court orders.

"I said, okay, let's harmonise all this; bring out all the matters in court, because when people go to court, they feel in-

jured, they feel treated unjustly.

"So since we are going to deal with everything, all the matters in court should be brought out and I want to thank all of you, because I'm told that there is no matter in court anymore.

"Every one of them has been brought out and that builds confidence, because you haven't been paid, but you already have chosen the path of reconciliation.

"So I am told that everything should be set by the end of this month; so what that means is that by the end of this month, we will start the payment."

Otti noted that some former councillors were his long-standing friends and assured all the councillors of equal treatment, regardless of political affiliation.

The governor directed the lawmaker representing Isiala Ngwa North and South Constituency, Chief Ginger Onwusibe and the Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Mr Uzo Nwachukwu, to formalise the association's structure.

In their separate remarks, Onwusibe and the Deputy Speaker of Abia House of Assembly, Mr Austin Meregini, lauded the governor's inclusive approach in addressing the matter.

They urged the councillors to mobilise support for the Otti-led administration across their wards.

Also, the National Secretary of Labour Party, Sen. Darlington Nwokocha, commended the state government for addressing the councillors' concerns.

Nwokocha urged the councillors to join Labour Party and obtain the party's membership cards.

He described the party as a platform of conscience and dignity, committed to justice under Otti's leadership.

Earlier, the Association's Coordinator, Chief Tony Agbayim, thanked the government for concluding plans to offset the arrears, describing the move as redemptive.



2ND WORKSHOP AND RELAUNCH:

Chairman, Transport Drivers Healthcare Safety Initiative (TDHSI), Mr Solomon Ude (3rd L); Federal Roads Safety Corps (FRSC) RSS: I Enugu Commander, Mr Franklin Agbakoba (4th L); Secretary TDHSI, Mr Madus Mathias (5th L); FRSC Sector, Training Officer, Mr Michael Eloyi (6th L); Director Still Waters Transport Solutions, Mr Michael Okonkwo (7th L) with stakeholders and participants, during the 2nd workshop and relaunch of Transport Manifest Application Software in Enugu on Monday.

Troops neutralise 2 terrorists, recover weapons in Ondo

AKURE

Troops of the 32 Artillery Brigade of the Nigerian Army have neutralised two terrorists during a tactical operation conducted along Akunu-Auga road in Akoko North-East Local Government Area of Ondo State.

Maj. Irabor Njoka, Assistant Director, Army Public Relations, 32 Artillery Brigade, made this known in a statement on Monday in Akure.

The News Agency of Nigeria reports that Njoka said the opera-

tion was carried out on Feb. 14 by troops deployed at the Forward Operating Base (FOB), Auga.

He explained that the troops acting on credible intelligence on the movement of the criminals within the area, swiftly mobilised and intercepted the suspects.

Njoka said that the troops' interception of the criminals led to a firefight that resulted in neutralising two of the terrorists, while others fled with gunshot wounds.

"The operation was carried out in conjunction with personnel of Ondo State Security Net-

work Agency and local vigilantes.

"Items recovered from the encounter with the criminals include; one AK-47 rifle with two magazines and 61 rounds of ammunition,

"Also, three mobile handsets, a jackknife, torchlight, suspected illicit drugs, charms and the sum of N39,000 among other personal effects," he said.

He said that the success of the operation highlighted the Nigerian Army's unwavering resolve to deny criminals freedom of action and movement, as well as to protect lives and

property across the state.

"The Brigade will continue to sustain aggressive clearance and exploitation operations, intensify patrols along identified criminal corridors, strengthen collaboration with other security agencies and local stakeholders to ensure a secured environment for residents," he said.

He urged members of the public to continue to provide timely and credible information to security agencies, saying public cooperation remains critical to the ongoing efforts to rid the state of criminals.

Lawmaker advocates 16-year single tenure to end policy abandonments

OHIGBO-AMAGU

Senator Kenneth Eze (APC-Ebonyi) has called for a nationwide debate on replacing Nigeria's current two-term, four-year presidential cycle with a single 16-year tenure.

Eze representing Ebonyi Central and Chairman, Senate Committee on Information and National Orientation, said this on Monday, while addressing journalists at his Ohigbo-Amagu country home in Ezza South Local Government Area.

He noted that frequent election cycles undermined policy continuity and stall national development.

According to him, every four years we return to campaign mode. By the third year, gov-

ernance slows as attention shifts to re-election; that is why projects are abandoned and policies are not allowed to mature.

"Nigeria's constitution provides for a four-year presidential term, renewable once, but if you ask me, I will advocate one tenure of 16 years.

"It sounds controversial, but it will allow policies to run their full course and stabilise the system."

He therefore proposed scrapping the two-term structure in favour of a single, elongated tenure that would free leaders from electoral pressures and enable them to pursue long-term reforms.

The lawmaker noted that critical sectors such as power, infrastructure, agriculture and fiscal reform required sustained commitment beyond

short political cycles.

According to him, irrigation schemes, mechanised farming programmes and energy reforms demand continuity to yield measurable impact.

He defended recent economic measures, including fuel subsidy removal, describing them as unavoidable steps to avert fiscal collapse.

"We were borrowing to pay salaries. That is not sustainable for any country; tough decisions are necessary to secure long-term stability," he said.

Eze maintained that his proposal should be seen as a governance conversation, not an assault on democracy.

He called for broader national dialogue on constitutional reform to determine whether an

extended tenure could improve implementation while preserving checks and balances.

He acknowledged that any amendment would require approval by the National Assembly and ratification by state legislatures, but stressed that the process must remain transparent and participatory.

Beyond tenure reform, Eze urged citizens to embrace civic responsibility and patriotism.

He challenged journalists, teachers, civil servants and parents to promote national values, warning that policy changes alone could not transform the country.

"Everybody has a role to play. If we do not change our orientation, policies alone cannot save the system," he emphasised.

TCN restores Shiroro-Mando transmission line 1

ABUJA

The Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) says it has successfully restored the 330 Kilo Volt (KV) Shiroro-Mando Transmission Line 1, saying it is currently operational.

This is contained in a statement on Monday in Abuja by Mrs Ndidi Mbah, TCN's General Manager, Public Affairs.

Mbah said that the line was restored following the completion of repair works undertaken by company's engineers.

She also said that with the restoration of Line 1, bulk power supply to the Kaduna Electricity Distribution Company

had significantly improved, and power supply constraints previously experienced in the state alleviated.

"Meanwhile, repair works are ongoing on the 330kV Shiroro-Mando Transmission Line 2, and barring any unforeseen circumstances, restoration of power will be completed soon.

"This will further strengthen network redundancy and the overall system reliability.

"TCN appreciates the patience, understanding, and cooperation of its customers and stakeholders throughout this period and remains firmly committed to delivering stable and efficient transmission service nationwide," she said.

NEWS

APGA clears aspirants for 2026 Anambra LG primaries

AWKA

All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) has released the list of cleared aspirants for its chairmanship primaries ahead of the 2026 local government elections in Anambra.

The list, issued on Sunday at the party's state secretariat in Awka, contains candidates cleared to contest the party's primaries across the 21 local government areas of the state.

According to a statement signed by Dr Ejimofor Opara, National Publicity Secretary of APGA, the clearance followed the completion of screening processes in line with party guidelines.

The party noted that aspirants from all local government areas successfully met the requirements necessary to participate in the forthcoming primaries to select candidates for the council chairmanship positions.

Some of the cleared aspirants include Kingsley Ezeagu (Aguata), Ifeanyi Chinweze (Anambra East), Tony Obierika (Anambra West), Paulinus Okafor (Anaocha), Thank-God Anago (Awka North), and Chinedu Okafor (Awka South), among others across the remaining councils.

APGA reiterated its commitment to conducting transparent and credible primaries, urging party members and supporters

to maintain unity and abide by party rules throughout the elec-

tioning period.

The Anambra local govern-

ment election is expected to hold on Aug. 29, with political

parties intensifying preparations ahead of the polls.



INDEFINITE STRIKE:

An official of the Judiciary Staff Union of Nigeria (JUSUN), Kaduna branch sealing-off a Kaduna State High Court of Justice at Bida Road, during the indefinite strike over noncompliance with the agreement reached at the last negotiation with State Government in Kaduna on Monday.

Active voice subscription hit 171.7m in Q2 —NBS

ABUJA

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has said that the telecom industry maintained strong performance through the second quarter of 2025, with active voice subscriptions rising 171,730,06.

According to NBS, this shows a growth rate of 0.48 per cent compared to the 170,904,257 reported in the second quarter of 2024.

This is contained in the NBS Telecoms Data: Active Voice and Internet, Porting and Tariff Information Report for Q2 2025, released in Abuja on Monday.

On a quarter-on-quarter basis, the report showed that active voice subscribers decreased by 0.57 per cent from the 172,708,410 recorded in Q1 2025.

Also, the report revealed a total of 141,171,679 active internet subscribers were recorded in Q2 of 2025 compared to the 136,497,384 reported in Q2 2024.

"This represents a 3.42 per cent increase in active internet subscriptions year-on-year.

"While on a quarter-on-quar-

ter basis, active internet subscribers grew by -0.62 per cent from the 142,053,537 recorded in Q1 of 2025," it stated.

On state-by-state analysis, the report showed that Lagos State had the highest number of active voice subscribers in Q2 2025 with 20,469,762, followed by Kano with 11,006,922 and Ogun with 9,759,254.

"On the other hand, Bayelsa still recorded the least number of 1,148,655 voice subscribers, followed by Ebonyi and Ekiti with 1,633,547 and 1,667,558, respectively.

Similarly, the report said Lagos State had the highest number of active internet subscribers in Q2 2025 with 17,591,914, followed by Kano with 8,896,247 and Ogun with 8,458,904.

"On the other hand, Bayelsa recorded the least number of internet subscribers with 1,288,960, followed by Ebonyi and Ekiti with 1,288,960 and 1,422,334, respectfully."

The NBS report showed that MTN maintained its status quo as the telecommunication service provider with the highest share of subscriptions in Q2 2025.

Police confirm killing of man by...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 4

Ikenga further confirmed recovery of a pestle believed to have been used to commit the crime.

"The boss scolded the suspect for his behaviour of pilfering money in the shop, taking drugs and coming back late at night.

"It resulted in an altercation and the situation escalated leading to the suspect using a

pestle from the kitchen to hit his boss on the head."

The PRO explained that the victim's wife was rescued and taken to the hospital, where she was responding to treatment.

He said that the case has been transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department, Awka, for a comprehensive investigation and to ensure that justice was served.

Police detain 3 suspects, recover firearms, hard drugs in Enugu

ENUGU

The Police Command in Enugu has detained three male suspects and recovered firearms, ammunition and hard drugs from them.

This is contained in a statement issued by the command's spokesman, SP Daniel Ndukwe, on Sunday in Enugu.

Ndukwe said that on Jan. 19, police operatives of the Anti-Cultism Tactical Squad,

acting on credible intelligence, detained Emmanuel Mba, 31, and Nnam Onukwube, 35, in Awkunanaw axis of Enugu South Local Government Area.

According to him, the suspects confessed to being members of the Supreme Vikings Confraternity, with Mba identified as the head and executor of the unlawful group in Enugu South LGA as of December 2025.

He said that the police recov-

ered one pump action gun and a locally-fabricated Beretta-type pistol, 31 live cartridges, a large wrap of substance suspected to be cannabis sativa, one HP laptop and one motorcycle.

The spokesman said that in a related operation on January 31, police operatives raided criminal hideouts in the Agbani axis of the state, detaining eight suspects.

"Following screening, one suspect, Monday Ezeani, 32, was found in possession of dried substance suspected to be cannabis sativa and 39

pellets of suspected crystal methamphetamine ("Mkpuru-mmiri").

"While the remaining suspects were released after preliminary investigation," he said.

Ndukwe said that the state's Commissioner of Police, Mr Mamman Giwa, had reassured the public of the command's firm resolve to protect lives and property.

He warned individuals involved in armed robbery and related crimes, cultism, and illicit drug activities to repent or face the full weight of the law.

Post-harvest losses in fruits, vegetables in Nigeria hits 40% —Horticulturist

IBADAN

Horticulturist, Mrs Oluwafolakemi Omidwura, says Nigeria loses up to 40 per cent of its fruits and vegetables to post-harvest losses.

Omidwura, a lecturer in the Department of Crop and Horticultural Science, University of Ibadan, in an interview with newsmen in Ibadan, attributed the losses to poor handling as well as inadequate transportation and storage facilities.

The don defined post-harvest loss as the reduction in quantity and quality of farm produce from the time of harvest to the point of consumption.

"A lot happens after harvest, including packaging, transportation, marketing and processing. As time progresses, the quality of the produce begins to decrease and deterioration sets in," Omidwura said.

According to her, fruits and vegetables are particularly vulnerable because of their high moisture content and perishability.

"As soon as fruits and vegetables are harvested, they continue to respire. During this process, stored food components begin to break down.

"By the time you harvest today and leave them on the shelf for 24 hours, depending on the variety and temperature, they may no

longer be as firm or fresh as before.

"If, however, left longer, they may not be safe for consumption," she said.

Omidwura attributed the high rate of losses in Nigeria to poor infrastructure, especially bad roads, lack of proper packaging and inadequate storage systems.

She said that farmers often transport produce in baskets, sacks or overloaded trucks, exposing them to heat, compression and vibration over long distances.

"These fruits are compressed together and carried over bad roads. They are exposed to heat and rough handling. By the time they get to the market, significant damage has occurred.

"In the markets, they are often displayed in heaps under the sun. You can even perceive the odour of rotting produce, which indicates substantial losses," she said.

The don said the situation contributed to high food prices, noting that although Nigeria ranks among the largest producers of some crops in Africa and globally, much of the produce does not get to consumers at the end.

On the use of chemicals to prolong shelf life, Omidwura warned that some preservatives and pesticides used before and after harvest have adverse effects on human health and the environment.

FFS seeks strict compliance with fire safety measures in public, private buildings

KANO

The Federal Fire Service has called for increased awareness and strict compliance with fire safety measures in public and private buildings.

Assistant Comptroller General of the Service, Umar Fa-

ruk-Muhammad, in a sympathy message on behalf of the Comptroller General of the FFS, expressed solidarity with the affected residents following the devastating fire incident at the Singer Market in Kano.

He said that its officers had taken necessary measures to contain the incident, adding

that those present at the scene witnessed the prompt response and efforts deployed by its men.

"The people at the fire scene have seen the measures taken by the Federal Fire Service. There is no need to explain further, "they commended our intervention," he said.

He stressed the need for sustained public awareness on the use of fire safety accessories, particularly fire extinguishers, in homes, markets and business premises.

According to him, property owners and traders must ensure the provision of fire extinguishers within their premises

and acquire basic knowledge on how to operate them in the event of a fire outbreak.

"There should be proper awareness on fire safety accessories, how to operate them and what steps to take immediately a fire incident starts," he said.

Faruk-Muhammad added

that further discussions on fire prevention and safety measures would be held with the Chairman and leaders of the Singha Market Association.

He said that more issues relating to fire awareness and safety protocols would be addressed after the meeting with the market leadership.

JUDICIARY

NEWS

AGF to re-arraign lawyer, others on amended charge for allegedly cyberbullying

ABUJA

The Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF) will, on March 9, re-arraign an Abuja-based lawyer, Ahmed Abdulrahman, and his co-defendants, for allegedly cyberbullying Sen. Shehu Buba Umar.

Justice Rita Offili-Ajumogobia fixed the date, on Monday,

due to the absence of the 4th and 5th defendants in court.

When the case was called on Monday, all the defendants, except the 4th and 5th defendants (Abdulrashid Musa and Nasir Abubakar), were in court.

The AGF's counsel, Ley-ii Abueh, informed the court that the matter was scheduled for continuation of hearing.

She said though the court hinted that the amendment to the charge could be done orally with the agreement of the defence lawyers, Abueh said the prosecution sought to go with the formal amended charge.

The lawyer, however, told the court that the defendants could continue to enjoy the earlier bail granted by the

court after taking their plea.

Offili-Ajumogobia, who agreed with the prosecuting lawyer's submission, said since two defendants were not in court, the re-arraignment cannot proceed.

The judge then adjourned the matter until March 9 and 10 for continuation of trial.

It would be recalled that on Feb. 10, Justice Offili-Ajumogobia had advised parties in the case to agree to continue with

the earlier charge and to allow the prosecution to correct the mistakes on the charge sheet in order to accelerate hearing in the trial.

The judge, who said justice delay is justice denied, said such a move would save the precious time of the court on hearing another bail applications of the defendants, among others.

Two witnesses had, earlier, given their evidence in the ongoing trial of Abdulrahman and his co-defendants.

One of the witnesses, Rabi-u-Rangers Abdullahi, on Feb. 9, told the court how David Dauri, the 2nd defendant, attempted to use the name of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Amb. Yusuf Tuggar, to defraud Sen. Umar.



STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGEMENT:

L-R: Executive Secretary, Joint Revenue Board, Mr Olusegun Adesokan; Executive Chairman, FCT Internal Revenue Service, Mr Michael Ango and Deputy Director, Finance and Account of EFCC, Abubakar Mohammed, during a stakeholders engagement forum on harmonization of revenue systems and implementing new tax laws in Abuja on Monday.

Alleged \$25.5m debt: Court appoints interim administrator for Green Energy, Lekoil

LAGOS

Justice Ambrose Allagoa of the Federal High Court in Lagos has ordered an interim administration for Green Energy International Ltd. and Lekoil Oil and Gas Investments Ltd. following their alleged failure to pay 25.5 million dollars debt.

He also appointed Mr Chimezie Ihekweazu (SAN), an accredited insolvency practitioner,

as the interim administrator for both companies throughout the interim administration.

The judge ordered that Ihekweazu should do all functions of an administrator, except distribution of the assets of the respondents.

The judge ordered that the interim administration would continue until the determination of a substantive suit on the matter.

Also granted was an order

directing all banks and financial institutions regulated by the Central Bank of Nigeria to ensure that the accounts of the respondents would be controlled by the administrator or his nominee.

He made the orders following an ex-parte application filed by H-PTP Energy Services Ltd. seeking restraining, mareva and injunctive orders against Green Energy and Lekoil.

The applicant averred in the ex-parte application that it sought the reliefs following alleged failure

by the respondents to honour 25.5 million dollars debt obligation.

H-PTP Energy Services Ltd stated that Green Energy and Lekoil were indebted to it to the tune of 25.5 million dollars as Joint venture partners in Okatikpa Field, under Petroleum Mining Lease 11 located at Andoni, Rivers.

According to H-PTL Energy Services Ltd., the respondents have been indebted to it since mid 2025 and have been unable to liquidate the debt in spite of acknowledging the debt in writing.

3 friends docked for allegedly stealing railway bolts, nut

IBADAN

Three friends: Sunday Tajudeen, 21, Ismail Sarafa, 22 and Abdulamid Taiwo, 20, were on Monday docked in an Iyaganku Magistrates' Court Ibadan for allegedly stealing railway bolts and nut.

The trio whose addresses were not provided were charged with conspiracy and stealing, to which they pleaded not guilty.

The Prosecutor, Insp. Samuel Owolabi, told the court that the defendants committed the offence on Feb. 11, at about 2.00 p.m., at Olodo area of Ibadan.

Owolabi alleged that the defendants stole two Washer bolts and one nut worth N10,000, belonging to the Nigeria Railway Cooperation.

He said the offences contravene provisions of Sections 390(9) and 516 of the Criminal Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

The Magistrate, Mrs Gladys Olanrewaju, granted the defendants bail in the sum of N20,000 each and one surety each in like sum.

She held that the sureties must be a biological parent of each of the defendants and adjourned the case until March 9, for hearing.

3 arraigned over alleged assault

ADO-EKITI

The police on Monday, charged a man, his wife and daughter before an Ado-Ekiti Chief Magistrates' Court, over alleged assault.

The defendants Babatunde Awolusi, 45; Mary Awolusi, 42, and Oluwaseun Awolusi, 23, who reside at Gloryland Avenue, Covenant Extension, Ado-Ekiti, are standing trial on a four-count charge bordering on assault and obstruction of duty.

The prosecutor, ASP Akinwale Oriyomi, told the court that the defendants committed the offence on Feb. 11, at about 10:00 a.m. in Ado-Ekiti.

He alleged that the defendants assaulted one Precious Agunbiade and Kehinde Agunbiade, following a misunderstanding over land demarcation.

According to the prosecutor, in the process, the third

defendant cut Kehinde with a razor blade on her back.

He alleged that the defendants also assaulted some police officers, ASP Taiwo Ogunleye, Insp. Adejoh Esther, and Insp. Omozuafo Juliet, and obstructed them from performing their lawful duties.

According to him, the offences contravene the provisions of section 184, 186, 187 and 187 of the Criminal Law of Ekiti State, 2021.

The Chief Magistrate, Mr Abayomi Adeosun, refused the bail of the first and third defendants, and consequently, ordered their remand at the correctional centre in Ado-Ekiti.

The court, however, granted the second defendant bail on health grounds, in the sum of N100,000 with two sureties in like sum.

He adjourned the case till Feb. 20, for mention.

NGF, Hiil unite to advance community based justice reforms

ABUJA

The Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) and the Hague Institute for Innovation of Law (Hiil) have reiterated their commitment to advance community based justice reforms.

They made the commitment in Abuja on Sunday at a stakeholder dialogue on People-Centred Justice (PCJ) by the Attorneys General from the 36 states of the federation.

The NGF Director-General, Abdulateef Shittu, underscored the critical role of Attorneys General in driving reforms, noting that they were critical to driving the process in their respective states.

"Today's dialogue is designed to enable states to share ideas, experiences, and lessons on justice sector reforms. We want to see justice not just as a sector, but as a driver of peace, development, and trust.

"Our peace-building commissions in Plateau, Kaduna, and Adamawa are already functioning as a network. We can see the results of this non-kinetic approach to solving issues.

"It is time to extend this model to all 36 states. Our secretariat is committed to supporting states in adapting reforms to their unique contexts and linking them with development partners to ensure sustainability," he said.

Ms Ijeoma Nwafor, the Hiil Country Representative, emphasised the importance of measurable outcomes in justice reform.

"Justice reforms often struggle to attract funding because outcomes are seen as intangible, but with people-centred justice, we can demonstrate real impact.

"Our tools, guidelines, pilot programmes, and strategy documents show donors and policymakers that justice can be measured, tracked, and improved.

"People-centred justice promotes the recognition of informal justice mechanisms by the formal system.

"This is particularly important in land disputes, where

informal resolutions are faster and cheaper and by integrating them into the formal system. We make justice more accessible and sustainable," she said.

Prof. Ben Odoh, Chairman of the Body of State Attorneys General and Attorney General of Ebonyi State, reflected on Nigeria's evolving justice system.

Odoh said the justice system, prior to 2015, was retributive Administration of Criminal Justice Act domesticated by the 36 states but had become a justice system that uses reconciliation, restoration, reintegration, and re-institution.

"That alone is a holistic people-centred system," he added.

Herders arraigned for allegedly stealing cow worth N700,000

IBADAN

Two herders, Abubakar Lawal, 18, and Ibrahim Abubakar, 20, on Monday appeared before an Iyaganku Magistrates' Court in Ibadan over the alleged theft of a cow valued at N700,000.

The defendants, both residents of Odirin Village, Ido, Ibadan, were charged with a two-count charge of conspiracy and stealing, to which they pleaded not guilty.

The prosecutor, Insp. Iyabo Oladoyin, told the court that the defendants, alongside others now at large, conspired and

committed the offences on Feb. 12 at about 5.00 a.m. at Kaguo Village in the Ido area of Ibadan.

Oladoyin alleged that the defendants stole a cow valued at N700,000 from the residence of one Yusuf Ibrahim.

She said the offences contravened Sections 390 and 516 of the Criminal Code Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

The Magistrate, Mrs T. G. Daodu, admitted the defendants to bail in the sum of N500,000 each, with one surety each in like sum.

She adjourned the case until March 16 for hearing.

NEWS

Foreign

Navalny's mother says she always knew he was murdered after poison finding

The mother of the late Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny says the assessment that her son died of poisoning has validated her belief that he was murdered.

On Saturday, the UK and European allies put out a state-

ment saying Navalny, who died in 2024, was killed using a poison developed from a dart frog toxin, and that "only the Russian state had the means, motive and opportunity to deploy this lethal toxin".

"This confirms what we knew

from the very beginning," Lyudmila Navalnaya said while visiting her son's grave in Moscow on Monday - the second anniversary of his death. "We knew that our son did not simply die in prison, he was murdered."

Russia has firmly rejected

the accusations.

"Of course, we do not accept such accusations. We disagree with them, we consider them biased and unfounded. And, in fact, we resolutely reject them," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday.

Navalny's widow Yulia has also marked the two-year anniversary of his death, writing in a social media post: "We have achieved truth and we will achieve justice one day too."

She previously said that analysis of smuggled biological samples carried out by laboratories in two countries showed that her husband had been "murdered", and challenged the facilities to publish their results.

The Kremlin did not comment on her statements at the time.

Navalny was a fierce critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin

Dozens of Muscovites, as well as several foreign diplomats, visited Borisovskoye cemetery on Monday, heaping flowers on Navalny's grave.

A note left on the grave read: "Alexei, we remember you every day".

Navalny was 47 when he died in the Siberian penal colony where he was serving a 19-year sentence for "extremism".

A fierce and charismatic critic of President Vladimir Putin, he mounted campaigns highlighting high-level corruption in government, bringing hundreds of thousands onto the streets and becoming

known abroad as Russia's only opposition leader.

He survived a suspected poisoning with the Novichok nerve agent in 2020, for which he received treatment in a German hospital. He returned to Russia the following year, saying he did not want to "give up either my country or my beliefs".

Police arrested him on arrival. Just over a year later, he died in the Polar Wolf penal colony above the Arctic Circle.

At the time, the Kremlin said Navalny had died of natural causes. Although the authorities initially refused to release his body, he was eventually buried in Moscow in March 2024.

His funeral, which was attended by thousands of mourners who defied fears of a police crackdown, was the last time like-minded Russians gathered publicly.

Repression in Russia has steadily intensified over the years, ramping up following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Punitive new laws have been introduced and displays of anti-government stance - whether in the form of street protests or online posts - are routinely met with long prison sentences.



AKRAM:

Naveed Akram spoke for the first time since his arrest on Monday - saying just one word.

Bondi Beach shooting accused faces court for the first time

Accused Bondi Beach gunman Naveed Akram faced court for the first time on Monday, two months after he and his father allegedly carried out Australia's worst mass shooting in almost 30 years.

The 24-year-old appeared in a Sydney court for about five minutes via video link from prison. He faces 59 charges relating to the Bondi Beach shooting, including 15 counts of murder and one of committing a terrorist attack.

Naveed and his father, Sajid, allegedly attacked a Hanukkah event at the famous beach on

14 December, killing 15 people and injuring more than 40.

Sajid, 50, was shot dead by police at the scene, while Naveed was critically injured and later transferred from hospital to prison.

Monday was the first time Akram had been seen on screen and spoken since his arrest - saying just one word when Deputy Chief Magistrate Sharon Freund asked if he heard a discussion about an extension of suppression orders: "Yeah".

The court orders cover the identities of those who survived the shooting, but allow the survi-

vors to self-identify if they wish.

Outside court, Akram's lawyer, Ben Archbold, said it was too early to say what plea his client would enter, according to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

He said Akram was doing "as well as can be expected" while in custody in Goulburn supermax prison.

"Everyone knows it's supermax ... very onerous conditions," Archbold told journalists.

When asked if Akram had given a police interview, he said "All we've done is start the process. We're waiting for

the brief to be served. There's nothing more I can say."

Court documents released in late December alleged that the two shooters "meticulously" planned the attack on Bondi Beach for months and visited the location for reconnaissance two days prior.

One video - taken on one of their mobile phones in October - was described as showing the men sitting in front of an image of an Islamic State group (IS) flag.

They could be heard making statements about their motivations for the attack and condemning "the acts of 'Zionists'", police said.

Female Israeli soldiers rescued after being chased by ultra-Orthodox men

Two female Israeli soldiers had to be rescued by police after being chased by a crowd of ultra-Orthodox Jewish men.

Footage from the city of Bnei Brak showed the women running through streets strewn with rubbish and overturned bins as police officers formed a protective barrier. More than 20 people were arrested.

Reports suggest the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers were wrongly believed to be trying to deliver army conscription orders. Military service is mandatory for most Jewish Israelis, but ultra-Orthodox Jews have long been exempt. Moves to reform this have caused outrage among the community.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu condemned the incident as "unacceptable".

"This is an extreme minority that does not represent the entire Haredi [ultra-Orthodox] community," Netanyahu said in a post on X.

"We will not allow anarchy, and we will not tolerate any harm to IDF servicemen and security forces who carry out their duties with dedication and determination."

Jewish religious leaders also condemned the actions of those involved in the unrest.

Riot police in Bnei Brak, on the edge of Tel Aviv, used stun grenades against the crowd and arrested 23 people, police said

in a statement.

Three officers were injured and several police vehicles damaged, including a patrol car that was overturned and a police motorcycle that was set on fire, police added.

The IDF servicewomen had been on an official home visit to another soldier when the confrontation broke out, Israeli broadcaster Kan reported.

Late last year, hundreds of thousands of people took part in one of the biggest anti-conscription protests by ultra-Orthodox Israelis in years.

The issue of conscription has become increasingly contentious during the war in Gaza, with the Israeli government now debating draft legislation that would require ultra-Orthodox men not in full-time religious study to serve.

Since the State of Israel was declared in 1948, students enrolled full-time at a religious school, or yeshiva, have been exempted from conscription.

That exemption was ruled unconstitutional by Israel's High Court of Justice more than a decade ago. Temporary arrangements to continue it were formally ended by the court last year, forcing the government to begin conscripting the community.

The ultra-Orthodox population has more than doubled its share of Israel's population over the past seven decades, and now accounts for 14%.

Pressure grows for release of remaining Venezuelan political prisoners

Pressure is growing on the Venezuelan interim government to free the remaining political prisoners being held in the country.

A pressure group campaigning on detainees' behalf, Foro Penal, said on Sunday that it had been able to verify that 444 political prisoners had been released since US forces seized Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro last month.

But hundreds more remain behind bars, according to a tally kept by Foro Penal, even though the Trump administration has pressured Venezuelan officials to speed up their release.

Activists say the health of some relatives who have gone on hunger strike to demand

the release of their loved ones is quickly deteriorating.

Opposition party Vente Venezuela posted footage of one of the relatives - who appears to be unconscious - being tended to by others outside the Zona 7 detention centre in the capital, Caracas.

According to a pressure group, 10 people went on hunger strike on Saturday to demand that their relatives, who are being held at Zona 7, be freed.

They have been holding a vigil outside the police detention centre since 8 January, when the head of Venezuela's National Assembly, Jorge Rodríguez, first announced that "a significant number" of prisoners would be freed as a goodwill gesture to demonstrate what he

said was the interim government's will "seek peace".

While the Trump administration has praised Venezuela's interim government for the progress it has made so far, activists within the South American country have denounced delays and a lack of transparency in who is being freed.

Members of the opposition have also denounced that those who have been released have been barred from speaking out publicly.

They cite the case of opposition politician Juan Pablo Guanipa as evidence that those released are not "really free".

Guanipa was released on 8 February after eight months in jail, only to be seized again hours later for allegedly break-

ing the conditions of his release. He has since been placed under house arrest.

Last week, students took to the streets to demand an amnesty for those who have been jailed as part of the widespread repression against critics of the government of Nicolás Maduro.

Venezuela's interim government - led by Maduro's former vice-president, Delcy Rodríguez - has put forward an amnesty bill since Maduro was removed from power in a US raid on 3 January.

The bill passed its first reading unanimously on 5 February but lawmakers failed to approve it as scheduled last week as they could not agree on how it should be applied.

Foreign

NEWS

Madagascar cyclone death toll rises to 59 as devastation mounts

The death toll from Cyclone Gezani, which slammed into Madagascar's east coast on February 10, has risen to 59, with 15 people still missing and more than 16,000 displaced, the country's disaster agency announced Monday.

Most fatalities occurred in Toamasina, Madagascar's second-largest city of 400,000, where the cyclone made landfall with winds reaching 250 kilometers per hour.

The destruction is extensive—approximately 25,000 homes destroyed, 27,000 flooded, and over 200 classrooms wrecked.

The city now operates on just five percent of its electricity and remains without running water.

Back-to-back storms expose climate vulnerability

This marks the second cyclone to strike the island nation in weeks, following Tropical Cyclone Fytia, which killed at least seven and displaced 20,000 in early February.

The back-to-back disasters underscore Madagascar's growing vulnerability to extreme weather fueled by climate change.

International response underway

China and France have deployed search-and-rescue support, while Pope Leo XIV offered prayers for the stricken nation.

The storm largely spared Mozambique, though at least four died there

Drone attack on Sudan market kills 28: Rights group

A drone strike on a crowded market in central Sudan has killed 28 people and wounded dozens more, a rights group said Monday, without specifying who was responsible for the attack.

Several drones struck on Sunday the Al-Safiya area market outside the North Kordofan town of Sodari, accord-

ing to Emergency Lawyers, a group monitoring atrocities in Sudan's nearly three-year war between the army and a rival paramilitary group.

"The attack occurred when the market was bustling with civilians, including women, children and the elderly," the group said, warning that their toll was preliminary.



MARKET DRONE ATTACK:

The Sudan's Market drone attack causes 28 dead.

African Union adopts resolution calling slavery and colonialism genocide

African Union leaders meeting at a two-day summit in Addis Ababa have adopted a resolution that describes slavery, deportation and colonialism as genocide and crimes against the people of Africa.

Chairman Mahmoud Ali Youssouf also called for an end to what he called the extermination of the Palestinian people.

"The conference recognises colonisation as a crime against

humanity. That's very important. And the conference expresses its solidarity with Palestine and the Palestinian people."

Member states agreed to designate November 30 as the "African Day of Tribute to African Martyrs and Victims of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, Colonization, and Apartheid."

They said they would keep the issue under review and work together towards the recognition of the resolution at the international level.

Iran FM in Geneva for US talks, as IRGC holds drills in Strait of Hormuz

Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Abbas Araghchi has arrived in Geneva for a second round of high-stakes nuclear talks with the United States, seeking to ease tensions and avert a military confrontation that Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has warned could escalate into a regional conflict.

"I am in Geneva with real ideas to achieve a fair and equitable deal," Araghchi wrote on X on Monday. "What is not on the table: submission before threats."

Iran and the US resumed nuclear negotiations earlier this month amid heightened military tensions, with Washington deploying warships, including a second aircraft car-

rier, to the region, as mediators work to prevent a war.

Araghchi met with the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi, on Monday, saying his team of nuclear experts expected a "deep technical discussion".

The IAEA, the United Nations nuclear watchdog, has been calling for access to Iran's main nuclear facilities, which were bombed by the US and Israel during the 12-day war in June. Tehran has said there might be a risk of radiation, so an official protocol is required to carry out the unprecedented task of inspecting highly enriched uranium ostensibly buried under the rubble.

Zambia closes borders to South African livestock amid FMD outbreak

Zambia has slammed its border shut to all South African livestock and related products in an urgent biosecurity move, as a devastating foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreak spreads across South Africa, prompting Pretoria to declare a national disaster.

The Zambian Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock announced the suspension with immediate effect, revoking all previously issued import permits.

"The ministry has suspended all livestock import permits

from South Africa following the outbreak of FMD in that country," said spokesperson Benny Munyama.

The ban extends beyond live animals to include livestock feeds, trophies, skins, hides, and cloven-hoofed animal products such as dairy—unless strict mitigation measures are implemented.

Transit of live animals from South Africa through Zambia has also been halted.

South Africa declares national disaster

The drastic measure follows President Cyril Ramaphosa's

declaration of the FMD crisis as a national disaster during his State of the Nation Address.

The outbreak has now spread to all nine provinces, with the Western and Northern Capes implementing quarantine measures at affected farms.

Ramaphosa acknowledged this as "among the worst outbreaks" the country has experienced, establishing a task team of farmers and experts to report monthly on progress.

Vaccination drive underway To contain the spread, South Africa plans to vaccinate 14

million cattle over 12 months using 28 million doses.

The government is importing vaccines from Botswana, Türkiye, and Argentina while local producer Onderstepoort ramps up production.

The outbreak has already battered South Africa's beef industry, with exports to China plummeting 69% last year following Beijing's import ban.

Zambian authorities say their precautionary measures will be reviewed based on the outbreak's progression in South Africa.

Five injured as Swiss train derails in heavy snow

Five people have been injured after a train derailed in southern Switzerland, in an incident that could have been caused by an avalanche, police says

The derailment happened near the village of Goppenstein - which is under an avalanche warning - around 07:00 local

time (06:00 GMT), officials said.

All 29 passengers have been rescued, while one of the injured was sent to hospital, police said.

Switzerland has experienced heavy rain and snow in recent days, and the country's Institute for Snow and Avalanche

Research says the avalanche risk is very high across the alps.

"According to initial findings, an avalanche may have crossed the tracks shortly before the train passed," police stated, adding that the public prosecutor's office has opened an investigation.

"Five people were injured.

One of them was taken to hospital," police added.

The regional commuter train was on its way from Spiez to Brig when it derailed.

Goppenstein, a key hub for road and rail transport, sits at the exit of the Lotschberg rail tunnel. The train derailed as it was exiting the tunnel, police said.

The region is under its second highest avalanche warning - level four of five.

Heavy snow also resulted in 50 people being evacuated from the village of Orsieres, near the French border.

Skiers have been warned by authorities to stay on the marked slopes, and those walking in the mountains should also check avalanche bulletins before setting off.

Last month, a German man was killed in an avalanche, and four other people were injured, as they were cross-country skiing in the Swiss alps.



IN THE FEDERAL HIGH COURT OF NIGERIA
IN THE BENIN JUDICIAL DIVISION
HOLDEN AT BENIN CITY
CHARGE NO: FHC/B/5C/2024

BETWEEN:
INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE....COMPLIANANT/APPLICANT
AND
JESSICA IGUODALA OGHOMWEN 'F' 42YRS....DEFENDANT

PUBLIC SUMMONS
PURSUANT TO SECTION 41 OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF
CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT, 2015

To: **JESSICA IGUODALA OGHOMWEN 'F' 42YRS** of No. 72, 1st East
Circular Road, Benin City and also resident in the Federal Republic of
Germany.

TAKE NOTICE that a charge has been preferred against you before the
Federal High Court 1, Benin Judicial Division for the offences of
Conspiracy, Money Laundering, Carrying on Specialized Banking or
Business of other Financial Institution Without a Valid License and Aiding
Suicide.

You are hereby summoned to appear before this Honourable Court sitting
at Sapele Road, Benin City on the 12th March, 2026 at the hour of 9 0'
clock in the forenoon, to answer to the charge.

This summons is issued pursuant to the Order of Court made on the 11th
February, 2026.

Dated this.....11TH.....day of FEB.,.....2026.

1


.....
Judge

3. **FURTHER TAKE NOTICE** that the ground
upon which this application is sought is as
contained in the Affidavit in support of this
Motion.

AND FOR SUCH further order(s) that this
Honourable Court may deem fit to make in the
circumstances of this case.

UPON READING THE AFFIDAVIT in supports
of the Motion sworn to by Odion Polycap, Male,
Nigerian, Christian and a Legal Officer of the
Nigeria Police Force attached to the Directorate
of Legal Services, Edo State Police Command
Headquarters, Benin City and the written address
both filed on the 10th February, 2026.

AND AFTER HEARING P. O. Odion Esq for
the Prosecution moved in terms of the Motion Paper.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED AS FOLLOWS:

1. That An Order is hereby granted for the Publication of a
Public Summons for the appearance of **JESSICA
IGUODALA OGHOMWEN**.

2. That An Order is hereby granted directing the
publication of the Public Summons in two newspapers
i.e the Observer Newspaper and the Vanguard
Newspaper and also affixing or pasting of a copy of the
Public Summons to the Notice Board of the Federal
High Court, Sapele Road, Benin City.

3

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY
NAME *K. O. Oraka*
RANK *PTD*
SIGN *[Signature]*
DATE *12-2-26*
FEDERAL HIGH COURT
BENIN

IN THE FEDERAL HIGH COURT OF NIGERIA
IN THE BENIN JUDICIAL DIVISION
HOLDEN AT BENIN

BETWEEN: CHARGE NO. FHC/B/5C/2024

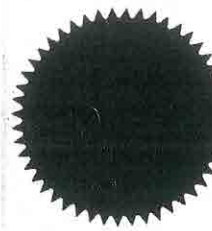
INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE ... COMPLAINANT
AND
JESSICAL IGUODALA OGHOMWEN ... DEFENDANT

ORDER

UPON THIS MOTION EXPARTE dated 9th February,
2026 but filed on the 10th of February, 2026 praying the
Honourable Court for the following Orders:

1. **AN ODER** for the publishing of a Public
Summons for the appearance of **JESSICA
IGUODALA OGHOMWEN** before this
Honourable Court on or before 12th day of March,
2026 at the hour of 9'0 clock or any other date
this Honourable Court may direct in the
circumstance of this case.

2. **AN ORDER** directing the publication of the
Public Summons in two newspapers (The
Observer Newspaper and The Vanguard
Newspaper) and also the affixing or pasting of a
copy of the Public Summons to the Notice Board
of the Federal High Court, Sapele Road, Benin
City.


[Signature]
B. O. QUADRI
PRESIDING JUDGE

2

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY
NAME *K. O. Oraka*
RANK *PTD*
SIGN *[Signature]*
DATE *12-2-26*
FEDERAL HIGH COURT
BENIN

ISSUED AT BENIN CITY under the Seal of the
Court and the Hand of the Presiding Judge this
11th day of February, 2026.

[Signature]
MR. ADUDU EMMANUEL
REGISTRAR

4

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY
NAME *K. O. Oraka*
RANK *PTD*
SIGN *[Signature]*
DATE *12-2-26*
FEDERAL HIGH COURT
BENIN





PHOTO: JESSICA

FEATURES

Assessing Gen. Shaibu's first 100 days as Army Chief

SUMAILA OGBAJE (NAN)

When Lt.-Gen. Waidi Shaibu became the 25th Chief of Army Staff (COAS) on October 30, 2025, expectations were immediate, intense, and uncompromising.

He assumed command amid a highly complex security landscape.

For instance, the North-East continues to grapple with a protracted insurgency, while the North-West faces escalating banditry and kidnappings.

At the same time, persistent farmer-herder clashes in the North-Central and separatist tensions in the South-East, combined with widespread insecurity, have tested both operational capacity and public confidence.

For any new Army Chief, the first 100 days rarely produce dramatic battlefield victories.

Instead, they reveal leadership style, command priorities, and strategic direction.

In Shaibu's case, his early tenure shows a command philosophy anchored on visibility, operational consistency, urgency, and troop welfare.

Shaibu inherited not just an Army at war, but one under intense scrutiny.

Meanwhile, communities affected by violence demanded relief, political leaders faced pressure, and frontline troops contended with adaptive adversaries exploiting terrain, intelligence gaps, and logistical weaknesses.

Thus, his immediate challenge was to establish authority and credibility; internally among officers and soldiers, and externally with a watchful public.

Leadership by presence has defined his early approach.

Shaibu visited frontline formations in the North-West and North-East, engaging with troops, inspecting bases, and holding candid discussions with field commanders.

During one early visit, he told soldiers: "Failure is not an option. The Nigerian Army must take the fight to the enemy and sustain the pressure."

He also emphasised discipline and accountability.

"Success in internal security operations comes not from headline victories but from sustained, consistent

operations.

"Every officer and soldier must understand that excellence is non-negotiable, but it cannot be demanded without the tools to achieve it," Shaibu said.

For troops operating under austere and often dangerous conditions, such visibility and direct communication carry significant weight.

It signals that leadership understands the risks and sacrifices inherent in frontline duty, boosting morale and reinforcing performance expectations.

Within military circles, these visits have been widely interpreted as a reminder that initiative, accountability, and operational excellence matter at every level.

Unlike some transitions accompanied by sweeping doctrinal pronouncements, Shaibu's approach has been restrained in rhetoric but firm in execution.

Instead of unveiling entirely new strategies, he has focused on tightening existing operations, closing gaps, and enforcing discipline.

Commanders have been directed to prioritise sustained operations over episodic offensives, with emphasis on denying armed groups freedom of action, disrupting logistics networks, and degrading command structures.

Intelligence-led operations have been repeatedly highlighted.

Shaibu stressed the need to "reduce predictability and adapt tactics to evolving threats," reflecting an understanding of the fragmented and adaptive nature of Nigeria's security challenges.

Troop welfare, logistics, and equipment have also been central to his messaging.

Shaibu openly acknowledged constraints, from equipment shortages and maintenance backlogs to supply chain inefficiencies.

"You cannot demand excellence from soldiers without giving them the tools to succeed," he told officers and troops during one visit.

Although systemic logistics challenges cannot realistically be resolved within 100 days, his early emphasis on these issues has resonated within the ranks, signalling that welfare and sustainment



GEN. SHAIBU

are now core command priorities.

Professionalism and discipline remain non-negotiable pillars.

Troops are reminded to adhere to rules of engagement and respect civilian populations, especially in complex internal security operations where the line between combatant and non-combatant is blurred.

Shaibu noted, "Operational success and public trust are inseparable. The Nigerian Army must protect civilians even as it neutralizes threats."

Civil-military relations and strategic communication have also been emphasised.

At a time of heightened public scrutiny, the Army under Shaibu has sought to balance operational secrecy with transparency, explaining actions that affect civilians and reinforcing that modern conflicts are fought not

just on the battlefield but also in the court of public opinion.

Albeit early momentum, entrenched challenges remain.

Nigeria's vast terrain, multiple threat groups, intelligence gaps, and resource constraints continue to shape operations.

Analysts caution that leadership tone and presence alone cannot secure durable gains.

Therefore, institutional reforms, improved inter-agency coordination, intelligence fusion, technological upgrades, and sustained political support are critical.

A military scholar and Publisher of OurNigeria News Magazine, Dr Sani Abubakar describes Shaibu's early tenure as "reassuring and energising."

He praises the COAS's combat credibility, operational boldness, and

focus on troop welfare.

According to Abubakar, Shaibu's operational philosophy centres on sustained dominance of the battlespace, intelligence-led targeting, and uncompromising control of reclaimed terrain, principles critical to breaking cycles of retreat and resurgence by armed groups.

Among the early gains cited by Abubakar are the neutralisation of numerous terrorist elements and the surrender of others weakened by sustained pressure.

He also commends Shaibu's emphasis on sound administration, especially fairness and transparency in postings and appointments, which is gradually restoring confidence within the officer corps and rank and file.

Reflecting on Shaibu's career, Abubakar said, "He is a thoroughbred, no-nonsense officer who led from the front and was unflinching in confronting Boko Haram terrorists."

"His insistence on integrity, accountability, and merit-based leadership comes from experience at every level of command."

Looking ahead, Abubakar advises deeper investment in human intelligence (HUMINT) and greater use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

He also stresses the need for a sustained focus on security sector governance reforms; measures he says are essential for efficiency and professionalism within the Army.

At 100 days, Shaibu's tenure is defined more by direction than outcomes.

Communities affected by violence will now judge him by tangible results; fewer attacks, improved protection, and restored public confidence.

Officers and soldiers will assess whether leadership intent is matched by resources, reforms, and consistent follow-through.

Ultimately, whether this early momentum yields lasting security gains will depend on how effectively intent is translated into institutional capacity and sustained action.

For now, the clock is ticking, and the mission is far from over.

(NAN Feature)

Post-harvest losses: Oyo women farmers struggle after harvest

IBUKUN EMIOLA (NAN)

At Akinyele Peppers Market, perishable goods arrive in sacks

Mrs Kudirat Salami, a small holder farmer in Apaadi community, Oluyole Local Government Area of Oyo State, harvested her tomatoes early, packaged them carefully and transport them to the market.

After five years in vegetable farming, she believed proper planning would secure her income.

But delays caused by bad roads, police checkpoints and the absence of storage facilities worked against her.

By the time her produce arrived at the market, prices had crashed and buyers rejected bruised and spoiling tomatoes.

"I could not sell anything that day. Some were already going bad. Others

were rejected. At the end of the day, I was asked to pay to dispose of them," Salami said.

For many women farmers in Oyo State, losses do not begin from the farm. They begin after harvest.

Across farming communities in the state, timing has become a matter of survival for women who grow and trade perishable crops.

At Sasa Market the display of perishable tomatoes and peppers in a stall Mrs Temilade Olabiye, leader of the Smallholder Women Farmers Organisation in Nigeria (SWOFON) in Oluyole LGA, said that post-harvest losses often stem from market timing rather than poor yields.

"You must look for the market before you plant. If you plant outside premium demand periods, you are forced to sell cheaply or watch your produce rot," she said.

A bag that once attracted N200 levy now costs up to N1,000. We are paying to sell, and when goods spoil, we pay again to dump them... If a farmer refuses a price, others will insist on the same amount

With tomatoes and peppers operating on short planting cycles, she explained that one wrong decision could wipe out an entire season's income.

For many women farmers, losses begin even before reaching the market.

Poor rural roads and long travel times cause bruising and spillage, especially as farm produce are often packed in traditional raffia baskets.

"By the time we get to markets like Bodija or Oje, deductions start immediately. You pay ground rent, stall fees and other charges even before making a sale," Olabiye said.

According to her, delays give middlemen leverage to dictate prices, leaving farmers with little choice but to accept losses.

Mrs Oluwatoyin Oyediji, a small holder farmer in Oyo town, said rising transport costs and levies forced

her to stop selling in major markets.

According to her, the arithmetic no longer adds up,

"Sometimes, transport and levies compete with my profit. I barely recover my costs."

At major markets including Bodija, Sasa, Akinyele and Omi-Adio, women farmers and traders told newsmen that they faced multiple levies, many undocumented

Moving perishable goods from farm to market

Mrs Bolanle Raimi, a potato vendor at the Omi-Adio market, said that charges began long before profit was considered.

"A bag that once attracted N200 levy now costs up to N1,000. We are paying to sell, and when goods spoil, we pay again to dump them," she said.

CONTINUES ON PG 12»

PARENTING

FEATURE

The war-war and jaw-jaw of child custody: What does the law say?

CLARETH SOLOMON

Over the years, the issue of matrimonial causes - marriage, divorce and alimony appear to be the only issues that arise when couples decide to go their separate ways. This is because in the patriarchal society, male dominance revolves around everything, welfare of both spouse and children inclusive, if not paramount.

However, with women empowerment and self determination by a gender hitherto described as weak, Child custody became a major issue, resulting to legal battles. Women are now demanding to take custody of their children and co-parenting often becomes the last resort.

Child Custody Laws in Nigeria are primarily governed by the Child Rights Act 2003 and various state laws. Generally, the law prioritizes the best interest of the child.

IN NIGERIA, THE LAW RECOGNIZES DIFFERENT TYPES OF CUSTODY ARRANGEMENTS:

*Joint Custody: Not explicitly defined in Nigerian law, but courts often consider joint parental responsibility, with decisions made in the best interest of the child.

*Sole Custody: One parent is granted custody, usually when the other parent is deemed unfit or unable to care for the child.

FACTORS INFLUENCING CUSTODY DECISIONS INCLUDE:

*Best interest of the child: Primary consideration.

*Child's welfare and preference: Courts consider the child's wishes (if mature enough).

*Parental capability: Each parent's ability to provide care.

Sole custody in Nigeria means one parent has primary responsibility for the child's care and decision-making. Courts grant sole custody when one parent is deemed unfit (e.g., abuse,

neglect, or abandonment).

or one parent is unavailable or unable to care for the child or when it's in the best interest of the child.

THE OTHER PARENT MAY BE GRANTED

Visitation rights: Regular visits or access to the child and Maintenance obligations: Financial support for the child.

Parenting challenges and matrimonial causes can significantly impact child custody decisions. Courts consider

Parental conflict. High conflict may lead to sole custody or limited access.

They also consider Child's stability. Maintaining stability and routine is key.

Parental involvement in the child's life is also key. That is, to what level was each parent's involvement in the child's life?

Matrimonial causes (divorce, separation) often involve custody battles. Disputes over child custody and access but parents are also taking into consideration what is best for the child while a few push selfish interests forward: the inordinate desire to be the center of a child's life and attention.

Child's best interest should however override all selfish interests. It should be the primary consideration in taking decisions.

HANDLING CUSTODY DISPUTES REQUIRES PRIORITIZING THE CHILD'S BEST INTEREST. HERE ARE SOME STEPS:

Couples are advised to seek mediation: Try mediation or counseling to resolve disputes amicably.

-Understand court factors: Courts consider the child's welfare, parental capability, and stability.

*Document interactions: Keep records of parental involvement and disputes.

*Legal representation: Engage a lawyer specializing in family law.

Here are some tips on co-parenting and litigations for custody:

Parents could co-parent their child or children when divorce becomes

inevitable or irreconcilable differences cause separation. It is all about sitting down to agree on modalities, putting everyone's interests on the table. A structured timeline, visitation periods, bonding, school runs, parental team work should all be critically outlined in a friendly atmosphere. This would make the child see both parents as actually being involved rather than just bidding time.

The emotional wellbeing of all parties should be prioritized.

However, where co-parenting fails, one can approach the courts for custodyship.

PREPARING FOR A CUSTODY HEARING

*Gather documents: Collect records of parental involvement, child's welfare, and disputes.

*Understand court factors: Focus on the child's best interest and your capability.

*Show willingness to co-parent: Demonstrate commitment to the child's welfare.

*Prepare your testimony: Be clear, concise, and focused on the child.

But co-parenting is the key, hence we revisit it!

NAVIGATING CO-PARENTING

*Communicate effectively: Keep discussions child-focused.

*Be flexible: Adapt to changing circumstances.

*Prioritize the child: Put the child's needs first.

*Seek support: Consider counseling or support groups.

LET'S SAY YOU'RE DEALING WITH:

*Different parenting styles: Try to find common ground and compromise on key issues.

*Communication breakdowns: Use a co-parenting app or mediator to facilitate discussions.

cilitate discussions.

*New partners or relationships: Consider how they impact the child and co-parenting dynamics.

SPECIFIC SCENARIOS:

*Child refuses to visit the other parent, what to do? Try to understand the reason and communicate with the other parent.

*One parent is inconsistent: Focus on maintaining your routine and communicating with the child.

On the whole, the child is the focus. However, parents should seek counselling to know when their mental health is being negatively impacted, because it is only a healthy parent that can nurture a healthy child into a well-rounded adult.

Seek help early and follow guidelines wisely.

Best of luck to all parents in this really challenging situation!



Post-harvest losses: Oyo women farmers struggle after harvest

«CONTINUED FROM PG 11

She said that many levies were imposed by middlemen rather than government officials, often without receipts.

According to Raimi, middlemen operate in coordinated groups, fixing prices and limiting farmers' bargaining power.

"If a farmer refuses a price, others will insist on the same amount. They work together."

The Iyaloja of Omi-Adio Market, Alhaja Mojisola Latinwo, acknowledged the challenges, but said that the market handled fast-moving goods with minimal spoilage.

She said that traders pay N50 ticket fees to the market union and N50 per basket to local government revenue officers.

However, traders insist that these figures do not reflect the full cost imposed through informal charges before farm produce reach stalls.

Latinwo also blamed poor road

conditions, particularly during the rainy season, estimating losses at between 10 percent and 20 percent.

Beyond roads and levies, the absence of storage facilities remains a critical challenge.

Mrs Oluwafolakemi Omidawura, a post-harvest researcher at the University of Ibadan, said that the lack of cold storage allowed middlemen to use time as leverage against farmers.

"Fresh produce are sometimes delayed until older stock is sold. The longer the delay, the more decay sets in."

Without storage, farmers must sell immediately, accept low prices or lose everything.

Traders of perishable goods and how the goods are transported to and from the market.

Raimi, a mother of four, said she sometimes lose up to half of her goods, adding that it affects her ability to feed her family and pay school fees.

"Sometimes we eat from what is left unsold. When losses are heavy, it

becomes difficult to survive."

Aggregators also feel the strain.

Mr Emmanuel Akinsoji, who has worked in produce aggregation for over 25 years, said that delays and heat destroyed value quickly.

According to him, it can take three days to move produce from the North to the South.

He said that a bag that sells for N80,000 in the morning may go for N35,000 in the evening.

Stakeholders described post-harvest loss as a structural threat to food availability and affordability.

They said that Nigeria lost up to 40 per cent of fruits and vegetables after harvest, not because solutions are unknown but due to weak implementation.

They cautioned against chemical preservatives and called for research into low-cost, electricity-free storage options such as evaporative cooling systems.

Mr John Olateru, National First

Deputy President of the All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN), blamed years of policy inertia.

"Farmers absorb losses while conferences continue. Without cold-chain infrastructure and processing hubs near farms, losses will persist," he said.

Investigations show that many market levies form part of local government Internally Generated Revenue, now often collected by private consultants.

Officials in Akinyele Local Government Area, who craved anonymity, said contractors collect revenues, remit agreed sums and operate with limited transparency.

A rate officer in the council said official ground rent ranged from N1,200 to N5,000 depending on stall type, but admitted that several markets are no longer under direct council collection.

The Oyo State Government says it is addressing post-harvest losses through infrastructure and market reforms.

The Director-General of Oyo State

Agribusiness Development Agency, Dr Debo Akande, said about 1,200 kilometres of feeder roads were under construction to improve farm access.

He said that aggregation centres were being developed and that at least 16 medium-scale processing factories had been attracted as off-takers since 2019.

The Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Olasunkanmi Olaleye, said that the state was developing an Agricultural Information Management System with a virtual market to link farmers directly with buyers.

He also disclosed plans for a 10,000-metric-tonne silo project and agro-logistics centres in partnership with development agencies.

On market levies, Olaleye said collection fell under local governments and traditional authorities, stressing that the state does not engage contractors for market levies.

(NAN Feature)

The Nigerian Observer ...That the people may know					ADVERTISEMENT RATES (PRINT)					
SIZES	COLOUR		BLACK AND WHITE		BLACK AND WHITE		MULTI NATIONALS			
			PUBLIC NOTICE		PRODUCT		COLOUR		BLACK & WHITE	
	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)
FULL PAGE	517,344	556,145	369,500	397,213	325,150	349,536	665,156	715,043	443,440	476,698
13 X 4	369,500	397,213	295,600	317,770	206,938	222,458	443,500	476,763	369,550	397,266
10 X 4	340,000	365,500	273,500	294,013	177,400	190,705	370,000	397,750	295,600	317,770
HALF PAGE	295,600	317,770	236,500	254,238	147,800	158,885	340,000	365,500	273,450	293,959
10 X 3	221,700	238,328	147,800	158,885	118,300	127,173	266,000	285,950	251,300	270,148
13 X2	206,900	222,418	133,000	142,925	103,500	111,263	221,800	238,435	147,810	158,896
QUARTER PAGE	192,150	206,561	118,250	127,119	88,690	95,342	236,500	254,238	133,000	142,975
CENTER SPREAD	1,356,968	1,466,992						B/W	1,148,181	1,241,276
HALF CENTER	991,590	1,071,989						B/W	887,272	959,212
FRONT PAGE POSITIONS					OTHER SIZES					EFFECTIVE FROM FEBRUARY 1, 2023
PRODUCTS		PUBLIC NOTICE		PUBLIC NOTICE		PRODUCTS				
SIZES	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	SIZES	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	
FP 6X2	89,800	96,535	105,450	113,359	6 X 2	60,640	65,188	49,140	52,826	
FP 5X2	81,100	87,183	97,300	104,598	5 X 2	51,950	55,846	42,120	45,279	
FP 4X2	73,000	78,475	80,700	86,753	4 X 2	45,260	48,655	34,400	36,980	
FP 3X2	64,870	69,735	73,000	78,475	3 X 2	30,900	33,218	26,600	28,595	
FP 2X2	59,000	63,425	64,900	69,768	2 X 2	18,680	20,081	15,600	16,770	
SPECIAL POSITIONS					2 X 1	12,400	13,330	7,415	7,971	
SIZES	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	CAC	38,000	40,850			
STRIP	118,250	127,119	147,800	158,885	LOOSE INSERTS					
STRIP INSIDE	88,600	95,245	118,250	127,119	LOOSE INSERTS: N40 PER SHEET MINIMUM ORDER: 5000 COPIES HANDLING CHARGES: N40,000 PER 1000 COPIES NEWSPAPER DIMENSION: 14.5" X 10.5"					
SPECIAL PAGES					CHANGE OF NAME					
FRONT PAGE	ADD 70% SURCHARGE				Type		Fridays	Other Days		
PAGES 2 & 3	ADD 55% SURCHARGE				Miss to Mrs.		5000	7000		
PAGES 4 & 5	ADD 40% SURCHARGE				Reconciliation/Corrections of name		6000	8000		
BACK PAGE	ADD 60% SURCHARGE									
PAGES 4 & 5	ADD 40% SURCHARGE									
BACK PAGE	ADD 60% SURCHARGE									
NOTE: Booking for Colour Advert should be done 48 hours (i.e 2 days) before Publication.										
The Nigerian Observer ...That the people may know					For advert placement contact: 08023457635 or 08137709000 Email: nigerianobservernews1@gmail.com					
24 Airport Road, Benin City, Edo State										

EFFECTIVE FROM FEBRUARY 1, 2023

Sports

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

Nigeria-DR Congo row: NFF dismisses reports of FIFA decision



NIGERIA AND DR CONGO MATCH DURING THE AFCON 2025

The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) has said there is no truth to claims that FIFA has delivered a verdict on Nigeria's protest against DR Congo national football team.

Online reports had suggested world football's governing body had ruled on the eligibility dispute stemming from November's World Cup play-off, with some posts even alleging that Nigeria had been awarded a 3-0 victory.

But the NFF says no such decision exists.

"There is no decision from FIFA at this time," NFF Direc-

tor of Communications Ademola Olajire said.

"Any claims that a ruling has been made are false. FIFA has not communicated any verdict to us or to the Congolese federation."

The dispute arose after the Nigeria national football team were beaten on penalties by DR Congo in the final African play-off round for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, ending their hopes of progressing to the intercontinental stage.

Nigeria's complaint centres on questions surrounding nationality.



NIGERIA RUGBY PLAYER

Nigeria Rugby unveils 2026 calendar

The Nigeria Rugby Football Federation (NRFF) has unveiled its comprehensive 2026 calendar of activities, outlining an expanded domestic structure and a renewed drive to reposition women's rugby on the continental stage.

The federation's media coordinator, Tolu Oguntimehin, made this known in a statement issued on Monday in Lagos and made available to journalists.

According to the release, the roadmap focuses on grassroots growth, youth development, high-performance pathways, and stronger international competitive-

ness in both the 7s and 15s formats.

The statement also disclosed that the 2026 season would feature expanded domestic competitions, representing one of the federation's most comprehensive frameworks in recent years.

"A National 7s Circuit for both men and women across host states such as Kano, Lagos, Delta, and Edo, a six-zone National 15s League (North, South West, South East, South South), culminating in national finals in Abuja.

Also unveiled are, "Youth tournaments including Get Into Rugby 2.0 (U13 & U18) and Rugby 7s at the National Youth Games (U15).

NFF decorates 30 FIFA-Badged referees amid integrity charge, global relevance concerns

In a move seen as both symbolic and corrective, the Nigeria Football Federation on Monday decorated 30 Nigerian referees with FIFA badges, as its President, Ibrahim Musa Gusau, delivered a stern warning on integrity and performance in the face of growing scrutiny over domestic officiating and the declining international presence of Nigerian match officials.

The ceremony comes against a backdrop of concerns about the waning influence of Nigerian referees at continental and global championships, as well as persistent complaints about questionable officiating in the domestic leagues — issues that have affected confidence in the system.

Addressing the newly badged officials, Gusau underscored that increased television coverage of league matches would eliminate any room for misconduct.

"Our league matches are now being televised. For instance, the game between Shooting Stars and Warri Wolves was broadcast live on approximately eleven television stations. We intend to increase this coverage to thirty stations by the end of the season, ensuring that your of-

ficiating will be visible worldwide," Gusau said.

He warned that live broadcasts would expose any wrongdoing, stressing that the NFF would not hesitate to withdraw FIFA badges from referees found wanting.

"There is no hiding place now. Your matches will be televised live, and any referee who conducts himself improperly will have his or her badge revoked without exception. We must take this very seriously," he stated.



30 FIFA-BADGED REFEREES

NSC to kick off 3rd National Para Games Unveils top-notch organizing committee

The National Sports Commission (NSC) has officially constituted the Local Organising Committee (LOC) for the 3rd edition of the National Para Games, reaffirming its commitment to

inclusivity, empowerment, and the continued development of para sports.

The National Para Games is an annual multi-sport event organized by the Federal Government of Nigeria through

the NSC. The Games provide a competitive platform for Nigerian men and women living with disabilities, promoting excellence, healthy competition, and national unity through sports.

The Commission has now constituted a thirteen-member Local Organising Committee made up of men and women of integrity to deliver a world-class Games.

The Committee is chaired by the Director, National Sports Festival & Para Sports Department, Mrs. Thecla Opara, while Mrs. Hauwa Saibu, serves as Secretary.



BUKOLA OLOPADE WITH DIKKO SHEHU

CAF to investigate unacceptable incidents during Al Ahly vs ASFAR clash

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) has strongly condemned the incidents that occurred during the CAF Champions League fixture between Al Ahly SC of Egypt and AS FAR of Morocco in Cairo on Sunday.

The match, part of the group stage of Africa's premier inter-club competition, was played

amid heightened tension, with reports of crowd disturbances and other unsporting conduct during and after the encounter.

In a statement published on its official website on Monday, CAF described the incidents as "unacceptable" and confirmed that the matter had been referred to its Disciplinary Board for thorough investigation and

possible sanctions.

"The Confederation of African Football (CAF) strongly condemns the unacceptable incidents which took place during the CAF Champions League fixture between Al Ahly of Egypt and ASFAR of Morocco in Cairo on Sunday.

"CAF has referred the matter to the Disciplinary Board

for investigation and has called for appropriate action to be taken against those proven responsible," the statement read.

CAF reiterated its zero-tolerance stance on violence, misconduct, and any actions that tarnish the image of African football, stressing that safety, respect, and fair play remain central to its competitions.

African legends to conduct CAF interclub quarter-final draws in Cairo

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) has unveiled four African legends to conduct its interclub quarter-final draws on Tuesday in Cairo.

The draws involve the TotalEnergies CAF Champions League and the TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup.

The ceremonies will hold at the Egyptian Football Association headquarters in Cairo.

The Confederation Cup draw begins at 13h00 Cairo Time (11h00 GMT).

The Champions League draw follows at 2 p.m. Cairo Time (12 p.m. GMT).

Both events will be streamed live on CAF's official YouTube channel, CAF TV.

The legends are Radhi Jaïdi (Tunisia), Momo Sissoko (Mali), Emad Moteab (Egypt) and Manucho Goncalves (Angola).

CAF said their selection reflects its commitment to honouring past heroes of African football.

Jaïdi won multiple domestic titles with Espérance and earned over 100 caps for Tunisia.

He was part of Tunisia's 2004 Africa Cup of Nations-winning squad.

Sissoko featured for top European clubs in Spain, England and Italy.



MOMO SISSOKO

Sports

The Nigerian
Observer
...that the people may know

SWAN condemns journalists' exclusion from Enyimba, Ikorodu City NPFL clash

The Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN), Abia Chapter, has condemned the exclusion of journalists from covering the Nigeria Premier Football League

(NPFL) Matchday 27 fixture between Enyimba FC and Ikorodu City FC on Sunday in Aba.

Enyimba lost 0-1 at home to the visitors in the match, which was played at the Eny-

imba International Stadium.

A statement signed by the SWAN Chairman, Abia, Kingsley Okwum, and his Secretary, Bethel Kalu, and made available to newsmen in Aba on Monday said that the match was scheduled to be played behind closed doors following NPFL sanctions on Enyimba.

The statement quoted Enyimba's media department as informing accredited journalists on Sunday morning that journalists would be granted access but on the contrary, they were denied access to the match.

SWAN, however, described the situation as embarrassing, noting that journalists who presented their accreditation

tags and official identity cards were denied entry, in spite of efforts they made to arrive at the stadium as early as 2 p.m.

According to the association, enquiries by the journalists revealed that the Match Commissioner, Saidu Aliyu, placed an embargo on media coverage, citing the "behind closed doors" directive.

The association described the action as a direct affront to sports journalism and an insult to members of the fourth estate of the realm.

"We condemn in strong terms the actions of the Match Commissioner, Saidu Aliyu, and all officials involved in this act of disrespect and shame," the statement said.



We won't be derailed by player exodus – Ikorodu City FC

The Director of Ikorodu City FC, Olawale Quadri has dismissed concerns that the exodus of some key players will affect the team's performance in the ongoing football season.

Quadri spoke in a separate interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Monday in Lagos.

The director was responding to questions on the mass exit of players from the club, especially some key members of the team.

The Oga Boys have witnessed some depletion in their squad, as a number of players had left in search of greener pastures.

Some of the players who left the team include: defenders Adewale Adebayo and Austin Harrison, striker Stephen Chinonso Uzoma, while Shola Adelani is the latest to leave the club.

Speaking on their exit, Quadri expressed optimism that Ikorodu City FC had a solid structure capable of filling the gap left by the former players.

"For the overall performance of the team, I don't really think it will have any effect; About five players have left and maybe a sixth is about to leave.

"The team is still going strong and we are still winning games; so, I doubt that it will affect the team," he said.

He noted that the club had a good structure such that when players leave, others come in to fill the gap.

"By some standards, we did very well last season, and even before this season, some players had left yet, the team is still where it is.

"So, I don't think it will affect the team," he said.

Quadri maintained that Ikorodu City FC would continue to evolve and send shockwaves across Nigerian football.

"Our fans and Nigerians should watch out for us because we are not done yet; we still have lots of good football to offer as a club.



IKORODU CITY FC

2nd Niger Delta Games: Governor Oborevori receives torch of unity

Governor Sheriff Oborevori of Delta, on Monday, formally received the Torch of Unity for the 2nd Niger Delta Games, billed to take place in Benin.

Oborevori, represented by his deputy, Sir Monday Onyeme, received the torch at the Government House, Asaba.

He reaffirmed the State Government's commitment to youth empowerment and regional integration through sports.

"This torch we received today goes beyond a ceremonial sporting emblem.

"It is a profound symbol of peace, unity, and our shared vision to use sports as a catalyst for sustainable development in the Niger Delta," Ob-

orevori said.

He further said that the competition had evolved into "a credible platform for discovering and grooming sporting talents, encouraging healthy competition, and reinforcing brotherhood among states in the region."

According to him, sports remain one of the most effective tools for positively engaging young people, instilling discipline, nurturing teamwork, promoting excellence, and steering youths away from social vices.

"As preparation intensifies for the Games to be hosted in Benin City, Edo State, sports continue to unite us across boundaries and differences, while opening doors of opportunities for our youths," the

governor said.

He lauded the organisers for their vision and consistency in using sports as a vehicle for regional development, and also acknowledged the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) for its sponsorship and unwavering support.

"The NDDC's investment in this festival underscores its dedication to youth empowerment, peace, and unity across the Niger Delta region," he said.

He assured the organisers and stakeholders of his government's full support towards the successful hosting of the event from Feb. 20 to Feb. 27.

He urged the participating athletes to compete with determination, fairness, and true sportsmanship.



MR HABU GUMEL

NOC lauds Bola Tinubu's support for sports development

The President of the Nigeria Olympic Committee (NOC), Mr Habu Gumel, has commended President Bola Tinubu for his visionary leadership and support for sports development.

Gumel, in a statement issued through the committee's spokesperson, Tony Neziannya, said the President's unwavering support had propelled Nigerian sports to remarkable heights within a short period.

He praised the President for recognising the socio-economic potential of sports and for inaugurating a focused and competent leadership team to drive the sector forward.

"On behalf of the Nigeria Olympic Committee, I wish to express profound gratitude to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his proactiveness towards sports development.

"The timely release of funds

has been a game-changer, enabling sports managers to achieve milestones that were previously thought impossible," he said.

The NOC President also lauded the appointments of Shehu Dikko as Chairman and Bukola Olopade as Director-General of the National Sports Commission (NSC).

According to him, the appointments have proven to be masterstrokes in the administration's quest for sporting excellence.

"The nation is witnessing a paradigm shift in sports administration because the President appointed two focused individuals to lead the NSC.

"Their impressive performances before the Senate and House of Representatives Committees on Sports during the budget defence showcased their progressive ideas and dedication to national goals," Gumel said.



SUPER EAGLES

Super Eagles to face Jordan in March 2026 in Pre-World Cup friendly

The Nigeria national football team will face the Jordan national football team in an international friendly in Amman between 23 and 31 March 2026, following an agreement between both federations.

Jordan, who have secured qualification for their first-ever appearance at the 2026 FIFA World Cup, are expected to use the fixture as part of their preparations for the global tournament. The Middle Eastern side have been drawn to face an African opponent, including Algeria national football team, in the group stage.

For Nigeria, the match presents an opportunity to rebuild and recalibrate after narrowly missing out on qualification.

Head coach Eric Chelle is expected to utilise the friendly to integrate emerging talents into the senior squad as the Super Eagles begin preparations for future competitions.

Nigeria's World Cup hopes were dashed following a penalty shootout defeat to the DR Congo national football team in the African qualifying play-offs held in Morocco. However, the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) has continued to pursue the matter off the pitch.

In December, the Nigeria Football Federation lodged a formal complaint with FIFA, alleging that Congo DR fielded ineligible players during the playoffs. Reports indicate that a decision on the case is expected on 16 February 2026.

NIS commences operations, set for academic activities in 6 geopolitical zones



PHILIP SHAIBU

The National Institute for Sports (NIS) has officially commenced operations and is set for academic activities across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones.

Philip Shaibu, the Director-General of the Institute, disclosed this on Monday in a statement signed by Ben Ogbemudia, his Special Adviser on media in Abuja.

According to Shaibu, the move was to ensure sports development, talent identification, and youth empowerment across the country.

The DG also noted that the

development was in partnership with state governments, adding that the academic activities would commence in April.

"This is part of President Bola Tinubu's renewed hope agenda and his visionary effort to diversify Nigeria's economy using sports as a unifying tool and a platform to empower the nation's youth.

"It is impossible to overstate the foresight, courage, and patriotism of Tinubu, whose leadership continues to bring new initiatives into reality like the NIS after 52 years," he said.

FEATURE

The Nigerian Observer
...that the people may know

Challenges in the healthcare sector, squaring up with the Antivenin shortage in Nigeria

CHIKODI OBODO

The current issues in Nigeria's health sector are multifaceted. Some of the major concerns include,

Brain drain: Many skilled healthcare professionals are leaving the country, leading to a significant shortage of medical staff.

Poor funding: Inadequate budgetary allocation to the health sector, with Nigeria spending around 4-6% of its budget on healthcare, below the 15% recommended by the World Health Organisation.

Weak healthcare infrastructure: Unreliable power supply, inadequate equipment, and poor maintenance of facilities.

Limited access to healthcare: High costs of medical services, limited health insurance coverage, and poor accessibility to quality healthcare, especially in rural areas.

Medical negligence and patient safety: Concerns about clinical governance, patient safety, and medical errors, with one in 24 patients dying due to unsafe hospital practices.

Industrial disputes: Frequent strikes by healthcare workers due to poor working conditions, low wages,

and lack of career development opportunities.

Antimicrobial resistance: Rising concerns about the spread of antimicrobial resistance, with Nigeria developing a national action plan to address the issue.

These issues are being addressed through various initiatives, including government reforms, public-private partnerships, and the integration of digital health technologies.

Recently, the death from snakebite of Miss Ifunanya Nwangene, also known as Nanyah, an Abuja-based classic singer drew global bile on Nigeria's unpreparedness to handle certain medical emergencies. Ifunanya was touted to have received no antivenom treatment in a hospital which should have had it in stock, in the heart of Abuja.

The lack of antivenin in Nigeria is a serious health crisis. Many hospitals, especially in rural areas, are left without lifesaving antivenom, severely limiting their ability to manage snakebite cases. A single vial of antivenom can cost as much as N250,000, with most patients requiring two or three vials to survive. This is unaffordable for many families, leading to catastrophic out-of-pocket spending or

Soursop does contain compounds like annonaceous acetogenins, which have shown promise in lab tests. More research is needed to fully understand its potential benefits and limitations.

Soursop's potential health benefits are definitely worth exploring

deadly delays while funds are raised.

In fact, hospital records show over 200 deaths from snakebites in 2026 alone, with many cases in rural areas unreported. The situation is dire, with

50% of Nigerian hospitals lacking the capacity to treat snakebite envenoming.

The Federal Ministry of Health has acknowledged snakebite as a public health concern, but there's no consistent nationwide antivenom stockpile, and procurement is often fragmented across states. Regulatory challenges also allow counterfeit or substandard antivenoms to enter informal markets, further endangering lives.

The Nigerian government has taken steps to address the antivenom shortage, including procuring 2,554 vials of Panaf Premium Anti-Snake Venom (ASV) and 108 vials of Echitab ASV for distribution to selected public health facilities. The government has also scaled up the number of snakebite treatment centers from two to 25 nationwide, aiming to improve access to life-saving care in high-risk and hard-to-reach communities.

Additionally, the Senate has directed the government to make antivenoms mandatory in hospitals, strengthen emergency preparedness, and ensure proper training of medical staff to prevent avoidable deaths from snakebites³. Efforts are also being made to promote local production of antivenom, with the Association of Community Pharmacists of Nigeria

calling on the government to prioritize local manufacturing to curb the annual importation cost of \$12 million. Experts suggest that local production could reduce dependence on costly imports and ensure antivenoms are tailored to Nigerian snake species.

The government can improve access to antivenom in rural areas by:

Establishing rural treatment centers: Setting up snakebite treatment centers with antivenom stockpiles in high-risk rural areas.

Training healthcare workers: Providing training on snakebite management and antivenom administration to rural healthcare staff.

Subsidizing antivenom costs: Offering subsidies or free antivenom to low-income patients in rural areas.

Improving supply chains: Ensuring reliable antivenom supply chains to rural health facilities.

Community outreach: Educating communities on snakebite prevention and treatment.

Individuals should however do certain self help: Clear surroundings: Keep homes and surroundings clear of debris, tall grass, and bushes where snakes hide.

Wear protective gear: Wear boots and long pants when walking in snake-prone areas.

Avoid snake habitats: Steer clear of areas with known snake populations.

Educate others: Share snakebite prevention tips with family, friends, and community members.

Support awareness campaigns: Participate in or promote snakebite awareness initiatives.

CAN SOURSOP CURE CANCER?

Soursop, also known as Graviola, has been touted as a potential cancer-fighting fruit, but let's get real, the claims are still largely anecdotal. While some studies suggest its extracts may have anti-tumor properties, there's no conclusive evidence it can cure cancer in humans.

That being said, Soursop does contain compounds like annonaceous acetogenins, which have shown promise in lab tests. More research is needed to fully understand its potential benefits and limitations.

Soursop's potential health benefits are definitely worth exploring.

Soursop's antioxidants and compounds like acetogenins might help with cancer prevention and immune support.

For cancer prevention, some studies suggest Soursop extracts can inhibit cancer cell growth, but more human trials are needed.

For immune support, Soursop's vitamin C content can help boost immunity.

