

2026 Rains: Edo braces for longer season, moderate Aug break —NiMet

BENIN CITY
Edo State is set to experience a longer-than-normal rainy season in 2026, with periods of moderate dry spells and a noticeable August Break, according to the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet). The forecast, contained in NiMet's 2026 Seasonal Climate Prediction (SCP) unveiled in

Abuja on Tuesday, places Edo among states expected to record a generally extended wet season, alongside evolving rainfall patterns that could affect farming, transportation and flood-prone communities. Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Mr Festus Keyamo, who presented the outlook, said NiMet anticipates a normal annual rainfall amount

across most parts of Nigeria compared with the long-term average. However, he warned that variations in onset, cessation and intra-seasonal dry spells would shape local experiences. For Edo, the agency projected moderate dry spells during the March–May period, a development that could affect early planting schedules for rain-fed agriculture.

The state is also expected to experience a moderate Little Dry Season, popularly called the August Break, with between 28 and 40 days of little or no rainfall in some areas. NiMet further noted that while several states would face delayed cessation of rainfall later in the year, parts of the South-South and South-East would continue to record significant

rains, underscoring the need for flood preparedness and effective drainage management. The agency cautioned residents and farmers against assuming that early heavy rains signal the formal start of the rainy season, stressing that planning should be guided strictly by the predicted onset dates. "Those engaged in rain-fed agriculture and other rainfall-de-

pendent activities are advised to consult the Seasonal Climate Prediction or seek guidance from NiMet to avoid losses," NiMet said. NiMet also forecast warmer-than-average daytime and nighttime temperatures across much of the country in the early months of the year, a factor expected to interact with rainfall patterns and influence soil moisture and crop performance.

The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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Security scare halts Edo Assembly plenary as bullets are found
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Electoral Act: Senate backtracks, approves e-transmission of results

● Urges FG to step up rescue efforts in Woro

ABUJA
The Senate on Tuesday reversed its earlier position on Clause 60(3) of the Electoral Act, approving the electronic transmission of election results from polling units. The upper chamber rescinded the decision it took during its February 4 plenary, when

it passed the Electoral Act (Amendment) Bill while retaining a controversial provision that allowed results to be merely "transferred" rather than electronically transmitted. That decision had sparked widespread public debate and criticism, particularly over concerns about transparency and credibility in the electoral

process. At an emergency plenary on Tuesday, the Chief Whip, Sen. Mohammed Monguno, moved a motion seeking the Senate's approval to rescind the earlier decision. The motion was seconded by the Minority Leader, Sen. Abba Moro. Monguno recalled that the Electoral Act Repeal and En-

actment Bill was passed by the Senate last Wednesday but noted that further scrutiny had revealed issues requiring urgent legislative attention. "Upon careful examination of the bill, fresh issues have emerged in respect of Clause 60(3), requiring further legislative consideration for smooth and transparent elections," he said.

Relying on the relevant provisions of the Senate Standing Orders, Monguno moved that the word "transfer" in Clause 60(3) be replaced with "transmit" and that the clause be re-committed to the Committee of the Whole for reconsideration. He explained that he was rescinding the earlier motion he personally moved, citing the controversy it generated nationwide. Following extensive deliberations, the Senate adopted the amended clause, which now mandates the electronic transmission of results from polling units to the INEC Result View-

ing Portal (IREV). Under the amendment, results must be transmitted electronically after the prescribed EC8A forms have been signed and stamped by the presiding officer and available party agents at the polling units. The Senate further provided that where electronic transmission fails due to communication challenges, the signed or countersigned EC8A form shall remain the primary basis for collation and declaration of results. The amended Clause 60(3) states that results "shall be

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ON-GOING 2ND NEC CONFERENCE:
L-R: Ondo State Deputy Governor, Olayide Adelami; his principal Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa; Jigawa State Governor Umar Namadi; Abia State Governor Alex Otti; Nasarawa State Governor Abdullahi Sule; Deputy Chief of Staff to the President, Office of the Vice President, Sen. Ibrahim Hadejia; and Vice President Kashim Shettima, at the on-going 2nd NEC Conference on the Delivering Inclusive Growth and Sustainable National Development at the State House Conference Centre in Abuja on Tuesday.

NRS targets N40.7trn revenue in 2026

ABUJA
The Nigeria Revenue Service (NRS) has set an ambitious revenue target of N40.71 trillion for 2026, following a record-breaking collection of N28.3 trillion in 2025. The agency, formerly known as the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), exceeded its 2025 target of N25.2 trillion, marking its strongest revenue performance to date. The figures were disclosed on Tuesday by the Executive Director, Government and Large Taxpayers Group, Ms Amina Ado, on behalf of the NRS Executive Chairman, Mr Zacch Adedeji, at the opening of a two-day man-

agement retreat in Abuja. According to a statement by the chairman's Special Adviser on Media, Mr Dare Adekanmbi, the retreat was themed "Designed to Adapt, Built to Deliver." Ado revealed that the 2026 revenue target represents a 44 per cent increase over the 2025 target, reflecting the agency's expanded mandate. Breaking down the 2025 performance, she said non-oil taxes contributed N21.4 trillion, surpassing the projected N18 trillion, while oil tax revenue stood at N6.8 trillion, representing 95 per cent of the N7.2 trillion target.

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Army seeks NUJ partnership to tackle crime in Edo

BENIN CITY

The Nigerian Army's 4 Brigade Headquarters in Benin City has called for a strategic partnership with the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council, to strengthen efforts at preventing crime and criminality across the state.

The Brigade Commander, Brigadier-General Ahmed Balogun, made the call on Tuesday while receiving the leadership of the NUJ during a courtesy visit to the Brigade.

He said closer collaboration between the military and the media was vital to enhancing security and safeguarding lives and property in Edo State.

Balogun commended the NUJ for its role in complementing the efforts of security agencies through responsible reportage, noting that such support had continued to boost public awareness and security outcomes in the state.

Earlier, the Chairman of the NUJ, Edo State Council, Dr Festus Alenkhe, said the visit was aimed at familiarising the union with officers and operations of the Brigade.

He praised the Nigerian Army for its media-friendly disposition and its contribution to ensuring a relatively crime-free yuletide period in Edo State.

Alenkhe appealed for sustained cooperation from the Army in ensuring that criminals

and their activities are exposed and publicised before suspects are handed over to sister security agencies for prosecution.

He recalled the recent ar-

rest of alleged kidnappers of two medical doctors in Auchi, noting that the suspects had reportedly been arrested for kidnapping in March last year

but were later released under circumstances that remain unclear, allowing them to resume criminal activities.

He stressed that greater

transparency and publicity surrounding such cases would help deter crime and reinforce public confidence in the justice system.



COURTESY VISIT:

A cross section of members of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council and officers of 4 Brigade, Nigeria Army Headquarters, Benin City. The Brigade Commander, Brig. General Ahmed Balogun (6th right); Chairman, NUJ, Edo State Council, Dr. Festus Alenkhe (6th left); NUJ Secretary, Andy Egbon (4th left); Auditor, Paul Idoozee (2nd left); from right: Assistant Director, Army Public Relations Officer, Kenneth Anyanwu; Treasurer, Solomon Obozunya (2nd right), Financial Secretary, Lucky Ighomuaye (3rd right); Chairperson of Nigeria Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), Edo State Chapter, Habiba Sam (4th right) and other officers of 4 Brigade, during a courtesy visit to the Brigade headquarters by the leadership of the union on Tuesday.

Lassa fever: ARD President urges clean environment to keep rats away

OSOGBO

The President of the Association of Resident Doctors (ARD), UnioSun Teaching Hospital, Dr Adediran Adewale, has called on Nigerians to maintain proper hygiene and sanitation to prevent rat infestations that spread Lassa fever.

Adewale made the appeal on Tuesday during an interview with journalists, stressing that Lassa fever remains a deadly disease that has claimed many lives.

He noted that the virus is transmitted by a rodent species known as the "multimammate" rat, but said it is often difficult to identify the specific carrier once a home becomes infested. "Lassa fever is a deadly dis-

ease, and it has claimed far too many lives.

Sadly, even the best graduating student in my set died of the disease about three years ago in Ibadan," he said.

He urged residents to keep their surroundings clean, store food properly and promptly report signs of rat droppings to relevant authorities.

Adewale also described as tragic the recent death of Dr Salome Oboyi of Bingham University Teaching Hospital, Jos, who contracted Lassa fever while caring for a patient.

He extended condolences to her family and urged health-care workers to prioritise personal safety and adhere strictly to infection prevention protocols when managing suspected cases.

NRS targets N40.7trn revenue in...

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She noted that oil and non-oil tax revenues recorded year-on-year growth of 19 per cent and 35 per cent respectively.

"For 2025, oil tax revenue totalled N6.6 trillion, up from N5.8 trillion in 2024, while non-oil tax revenue rose sharply to N21.5 trillion from N15.9 trillion in the previous year," Ado said.

She attributed the growth to improved tax administration, digitalisation, expansion of the withholding tax system, enhanced compliance initiatives and stronger enforcement strategies.

Ado explained that the higher 2026 target was driven by the NRS's new role as Nigeria's revenue system integrator, including the collection of royalties previously handled by the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission.

Earlier, Adedeji charged management and staff to abandon outdated thinking, stressing that the credibility of Nigeria's revenue architecture rests with the agency.

"If we walk into the future with rigid beliefs, we will build walls where bridges are required," he said, urging integrity, courage and openness in driving reform.

The Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of

the Economy, Mr Wale Edun, who joined the retreat virtually, urged Nigerians to prioritise made-in-Nigeria products to strengthen domestic revenue mobilisation.

He warned that developing countries now pay more in debt servicing than they receive in foreign aid and investment, stressing the need for stronger internal economic activity.

"What we do for ourselves internally will be critical at this time," Edun said, reaffirming the government's commitment to fiscal reforms.

Also speaking, Chairman of the National Tax Policy Implementation Committee, Mr Joseph Tegbe, underscored the importance of effective execution of tax laws, warning that poor implementation could derail the reforms.

He noted that Nigeria's reliance on volatile oil revenues exposes the economy to external shocks and called for stable, predictable domestic revenue sources.

"NRS is not just another agency; it is the nation's revenue system integrator," Tegbe said, adding that the success of the reforms would be judged by the trust rebuilt between the state and its citizens.

Tinubu pledges tangible impact of policies across all communities

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu on Tuesday assured Nigerians that the dividends of his administration's Renewed Hope Agenda reforms will be felt in every state and community across the country.

Speaking through the Senate President, Sen. Godswill Akpabio, at the closing of the second National Economic Council (NEC) Conference at the State House Conference Hall, Abuja, Tinubu emphasised the administration's commitment to inclusive growth and sustainable national development.

Themed "Delivering Inclusive Growth and Sustainable National Development: The Renewed Hope National Development Plan," the conference brought together state governors, government officials, and key stakeholders.

The president urged NEC members to renew their commitment to the agenda, stressing that reforms are a process requiring courage, patience, and consistency. "The decisions we make here must translate into visible improvements in the daily lives of Nigerians — jobs created, businesses supported, roads constructed, schools strengthened, healthcare improved, and oppor-

tunities expanded," he said.

Tinubu highlighted that the Renewed Hope Agenda is not just a slogan but a national commitment, requiring action beyond dialogue.

"Our administration remains resolute. We will continue to support sub-national governments, deepen institutional reforms, and ensure that the dividends of our policies are felt across every state and community in this country," he said.

He also commended Vice-President Kashim Shettima, chairman of NEC, for his steady leadership and thanked governors, ministers, development partners, and private sector stakeholders for their con-

tributions to national progress.

The NEC Conference underscored the importance of collaboration between the federal and state governments, public and private sectors, and between policy formulation and disciplined execution. Members reaffirmed commitment to fiscal responsibility, economic diversification, infrastructure expansion, food security, social protection, and human capital development.

The conference featured seven panel sessions and nine lead papers covering the economy, interstate collaboration, fiscal governance, human capital development, security, domestic production, and partnership frameworks for economic growth.

Electoral Act: Senate backtracks, approves e-transmission...

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transmitted electronically from each polling unit to IReV," while allowing manual forms to prevail only in cases of verified transmission failure.

Senate President Godswill Akpabio thereafter announced the membership of the conference committee, chaired by Sen. Simon Lalong (APC—Plateau South), to harmonise the bill for onward transmission to the President for assent.

In another development, the Senate has urged the Federal Government to intensify efforts towards the safe rescue and release of all abducted women and children from Woro community in Kaima Local Government Area of Kwara State, following renewed killings and worsening insecurity in the area.

The upper chamber also called on the Federal Government to redesign and comprehensively clear the forest

reserves in the area of criminal elements, as well as consider the strategic establishment of security formations where necessary to curb further attacks.

In addition, the Senate urged both the federal and Kwara State governments to provide comprehensive support, resources and well-structured programmes for displaced farmers and residents of Woro community now taking refuge in neighbouring areas. It said the intervention was necessary to restore livelihoods, rebuild economic resilience and ensure sustainable economic stability for the affected persons.

The resolutions followed a Point of Order raised by Senator Sadiq Umar (APC—Kwara) on the killings of over 100 innocent persons in Woro communities of Kaima Local Government Area during plenary on Tuesday.

Moving the motion, Umar said the Senate was deeply con-

cerned that communities in remote and forest-bordering areas remained highly vulnerable and required enhanced protection and early warning mechanisms to prevent loss of lives and avert humanitarian crises.

He, however, acknowledged the prompt humanitarian interventions of President Bola Tinubu, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the Kwara State Emergency Management Agency and the Red Cross, as well as the subsequent deployment of personnel of the Nigerian Armed Forces and the Nigerian Police Force to the affected communities.

Contributing, Senate Minority Leader, Senator Abba Moro, described the attacks and killings in Woro community as disturbing, noting that insecurity, banditry, kidnapping and the killing of innocent persons had become recurrent across the country.

Moro said that despite tough

pronouncements by the Federal Government, killings had continued in various parts of the country, particularly in Kwara in recent times. He called on the Senate ad hoc committee on security to urgently revive plans for a national security summit, stressing that such a forum would help shape legislative interventions and a review of the nation's security architecture.

Similarly, Senator Adamu Aliero (APC—Kebbi) said Nigeria had the capacity to deal decisively with bandits and kidnappers, while former Senate President, Senator Ahmad Lawan (APC—Yobe), urged closer collaboration between the legislature and the executive, including the recruitment of more soldiers and security personnel.

All the prayers of the motion were adopted after a voice vote conducted by the Deputy Senate President, Senator Jibrin Barau, who presided over the plenary.

COREN moves to globalise Nigerian engineering practice

ABUJA

The Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria (COREN) has approved far-reaching resolutions aimed at strengthening engineering regulation, raising professional standards and securing global recognition for Nigerian engineering qualifications.

The Registrar of COREN, Prof. Okorie Uche, disclosed this on Tuesday at the end of the Council's 188th Ordinary Meeting for the first quarter of

2026, held in Abuja.

Uche said the Council took strategic decisions to advance its statutory mandate of regulating and improving engineering education, training and professional practice nationwide.

He explained that, in line with COREN's drive for international mobility and global acceptance of Nigerian engineering credentials, the Council approved a landmark international engagement strategy.

Under the initiative, COREN, in collaboration with the

National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), will submit applications for Provisional Status under the Sydney and Dublin Accords, as well as an application for Full Signatory Status under the Washington Accord.

According to him, the applications will be pursued in strict compliance with the requirements of the International Engineering Alliance (IEA), marking a critical step towards global acceptance of Nigerian engineering qualifications.

To strengthen domestic

capacity in support of these international aspirations, the Council approved the creation of specialised units within its Engineering Education and Accreditation Department.

Uche said the restructuring would ensure effective alignment with the Washington, Sydney and Dublin Accord frameworks, while enhancing regulatory oversight of engineering and technology education at all levels, with particular emphasis on Technical Colleges.

As part of broader reforms, the Council also endorsed a

draft Amendment Bill to the COREN Act, aimed at improving professionalism, public safety and accountability within the engineering sector.

Key provisions of the proposed amendments include the expansion of Engineering Regulation and Monitoring Enforcement (ERME) to cover multiple sectors of the economy and the introduction of mandatory insurance for infrastructure projects, to guarantee compensation in cases of injury or death arising

from infrastructure failure.

The registrar added that the ERME framework would also criminalise the use of substandard materials and unauthorised alterations to approved engineering designs during construction.

In further efforts to refine professional standards, COREN approved the draft report of the Technical Review Committee on the Engineers' Code of Practice and Conditions of Engagement (ECOPACCE), alongside a revised ECOPACCE document.



LAUNCH OF CPI:

L-R: Executive Director, Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), Auwal Rafsanjani; Executive Director, Centre for Fiscal Transparency (CFT), Umar Yakubu, and Storytelling Development Officer, Accountability Lab Nigeria (ALN), Blessing Arolaba, during the official launch of Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2025 in Nigeria, at CISLAC's headquarters in Abuja on Tuesday.

Cyberbullying case: Court adjourns trial of Abuja lawyer, influencers to Feb 16

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Tuesday adjourned the trial of an Abuja-based lawyer and four social media influencers accused of cyberbullying Senator Shehu Buba Umar to February 16.

Justice Rita Ofili-Ajumogobia fixed the date following an application by Leyii Abueh, counsel to the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF), seeking leave of court to re-arraign the defendants on an amended charge.

The trial had earlier commenced, with two witnesses already testifying against the first defendant, Ahmed Abdulrah-

man, and his co-defendants.

One of the witnesses, Rabi-u-Rangers Abdullahi, had told the court how the second defendant, David Daure, allegedly attempted to use the name of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Yusuf Tuggar, to defraud Senator Umar.

The Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, Mr Lateef Fagbemi, SAN, took over prosecution of the case from the Inspector-General of Police in December 2025.

The defendants were initially arraigned on October 30, 2025, on an 11-count charge bordering on alleged cybercrime, cyberstalking, defamation and advance fee fraud.

They pleaded not guilty and were remanded at the Kuje Correctional Centre before being granted bail.

At Tuesday's resumed hearing, Abueh informed the court that although the matter was scheduled for continuation of trial, the prosecution had filed an amended charge and sought leave to substitute it for the earlier one.

Defence counsel, including Abdul Mohammed, SAN; Hamza Danttani; Afix Matanmi and A.A. Badmus, raised no objection.

However, while the amended charge was being read, the court queried whether the changes were substantial.

Abueh explained that the ear-

lier charge contained an error in the name of the nominal complainant, an incorrect citation of the applicable law and that the prosecution also intended to tender additional evidence.

Justice Ofili-Ajumogobia advised that, if the defence did not oppose the correction of the minor errors and the introduction of additional evidence, the amended charge could be dropped to speed up the trial.

She stressed that justice delayed is justice denied and noted that re-arraignment could lead to fresh bail applications and further delays.

Both the prosecution and defence agreed, and the court adjourned the matter to February 16 for arguments on the necessity of the amended charge.

NDLEA, Army bust drug syndicate in Edo, arrest 5

BENIN CITY

Five suspected drug dealers, including a patent medicine vendor and a supermarket owner, have been arrested in Edo State by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in a joint operation with the Nigerian Army.

The Edo State Commander of the NDLEA, Mitchell Ofoyeju, disclosed this in a statement on Tuesday, saying the arrests followed intelligence-led raids on identified drug hotspots across Benin City.

According to him, large quantities of illicit drugs were recovered during the operation, including 11,297 capsules of tramadol.

Those arrested were identified as Akam Theophilus (46), a patent medicine vendor; Ashitor Godfrey (25), a supermarket owner; and Asemota Endurance (23), Franklin Kijie (25) and Smart Ekhaior (39).

Ofoyeju said the suspects were apprehended at locations including a patent medicine shop near the Nigerian Army School of Supply and Transport (S&T) Barracks, a supermarket opposite Ekenwan Barracks and the Obagie area off Sapele Road.

Items recovered included

11,297 capsules of tramadol, 400 tablets of diazepam, 108 tablets of Swinol, 22 tablets of Danabol (popularly known as "Molly"), 3.685 kilogrammes of cannabis, 181 grammes of Loud, seven grammes of methamphetamine and 10 bottles of codeine cough syrup.

The commander said the operation was in line with the directive of the NDLEA Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Brigadier General Mohamed Buba Marwa (Rtd), to rid Edo State of drug criminals.

"Drugs are a catalyst for crime. Anyone hiding under the canopy of a patent medicine shop or supermarket to peddle illicit drugs will not go unpunished," Ofoyeju warned.

He added that the arrests sent a strong message that there is no safe haven for drug traffickers in the state.

Meanwhile, the Commanding Officer of the Nigerian Army School of Supply and Transport, Major General M. Hassan, and the Commanding Officer of the 4 Brigade, Brigadier General A.O. Balogun, reaffirmed the Army's support for the NDLEA, warning that drug traffickers, especially around military formations, would be decisively dealt with.

Edo CoS begins familiarization tour of Govt House

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Chief of Staff, Hon. Yakubu O. Musa, on Tuesday commenced a familiarization tour of departments within the Government House, as part of efforts to strengthen coordination and improve service delivery.

The tour followed an interactive meeting with staff members held in his office on Friday, February 6, 2026.

Musa said the visit was designed to consolidate discussions from the earlier meeting and deepen engagement with departments under the Governor's Office.

He described the exercise as a strategic step to gain firsthand understanding of departmental operations, challenges and expectations, noting that effective governance requires synergy and shared purpose.

According to him, the administration is committed to strengthening institutional efficiency and driving the vision of a responsive, people-centred government in Edo State.

The Chief of Staff was accompanied by the Permanent Secretary, Government House and Protocol, Mrs E.I. Sede; the Director of Shared Services, Mrs Caroline; the Public Relations Officer, Governor's Office, Jimoh Akande; and other senior officials.

Departments visited included the Press Unit, Gold Mine, Drivers' Unit, Government House Stores, Medical Unit, Police Kitchen and the Office of the Special Advisers.

The visit underscored the Chief of Staff's commitment to hands-on leadership, teamwork and effective coordination in advancing the programmes of the Okpebholo administration.

Security scare halts Edo Assembly plenary as bullets are found

MUSA IDAHOSA

BENIN CITY

Plenary sitting at the Edo State House of Assembly was abruptly postponed on Tuesday following the discovery of bullets and gunshot marks on the roof of the Assembly complex.

The incident disrupted the first sitting of the House for the 2026 legislative year, triggering tension among lawmakers and

staff.

Briefing journalists, the Majority Leader, Hon. Jonathan Ebamewu, confirmed the development, saying security agencies had been alerted and investigations were underway.

He said the sitting was postponed to allow security operatives to thoroughly sweep the chambers and determine the circumstances surrounding the discovery.

"We were ready for sitting

when our attention was drawn to the incident. I immediately contacted the Commissioner of Police and the Department of State Services, and we have left everything to them to investigate," Ebamewu said.

He stressed that although lawmakers were eager to commence legislative business, the safety of members and staff remained paramount.

"For now, everything is calm, but we want to give secu-

ity agencies the opportunity to properly comb the chambers and submit a report that will be satisfactory to everyone," he added.

Ebamewu assured that the House remained undeterred and would resume normal legislative duties once security clearance was given.

As at press time, operatives of the Edo State Police Command were conducting a thorough security sweep of the complex.

NEWS

JOHESU warns of fresh nationwide strike over salary review

CALABAR

The Joint Health Sector Unions (JOHESU) has threatened to resume a nationwide strike if the Federal Government fails to im-

plement agreed salary adjustments by April.

The Chairman of JOHESU, Cross River Chapter, Dr Bassey Icha, issued the warning on Tuesday in Calabar during an interview with journalists.

The warning comes barely weeks after the union suspended its industrial action, which commenced on November 15, 2025 and was called off on February 6 following an appeal by the union's national leadership.

Icha said members resumed work after holding congresses across units and branches, stressing that the strike was largely driven by the failure to review the Consolidated Health Salary Structure (CONHESS),

which was introduced in 2009 and has remained unchanged.

According to him, medical doctors under the Consolidated Medical Salary Structure (CONMESS) have enjoyed several salary reviews over the years, further widening the pay disparity in the health sector.

He clarified that JOHESU was not demanding parity with doctors but was seeking a fair and overdue review based on existing government salary templates.

Icha further lamented that several Memoranda of Understanding signed with the Federal Government since 2014 remained unimplemented, adding that a 2021 memorandum submitted to the Budget Office was yet to be processed by the National Salaries, Incomes and Wages Commission.

He said the union agreed to suspend the strike after the government appealed for time, pending committee approvals

expected by April.

"Failure to record positive outcomes by the end of April will force JOHESU to return to industrial action," he warned.

Icha also disclosed that research showed Nigeria paid health workers less than most West African countries, including Ghana, and urged the government to prioritise training, modern equipment and improved working conditions to strengthen healthcare delivery nationwide.

Kogi govt, financiers inspect N81bn airport market projects

LOKOJA

The Kogi State Government and major financiers on Tuesday inspected the sites of the proposed N50 billion international airport and the N31 billion international market to ensure timely commencement and completion.

The airport project is located on a 4,000-square-metre site at Zariagi, while the international market occupies a 400 by 400-square-metre site along Hassan Katsina Road, Lokoja.

Members of the inspection team included officials from the Ministry of Transport, One-17 Finance Services Limited, Eva Capital, Mable Capital, and the Governor's Office.

Speaking at the airport site, Senior Analyst at One-17 Finance Services, Mr Kamal Shuaib, said the inspection marked the final stage before construction begins.

He explained that the airport project would be financed through a Sukuk arrangement in line with Sharia principles and aimed at raising N50 billion from the capital market on an interest-free basis.

Shuaib said Governor

Ahmed Ododo was deeply committed to the project, which is expected to be completed within two years, with the state government assuming ownership after a lease period of between five and ten years.

At the international market site, the project engineer, Mr Ben Omojola of SABC Limited, disclosed that construction was between 35 and 45 per cent completed.

He said work had been ongoing for 13 months, with key facilities such as banks, a clinic and security posts nearing roofing stage.

Omojola noted that the project had a 36-month completion timeline and that funding had been adequate, adding that the construction firm faced no major challenges.

The Governor's Special Adviser on Finance said the state government remained committed to completing both projects, describing them as critical to stimulating economic growth and development in Kogi.

The airport and international market are flagship projects of Governor Ododo, which he hopes to complete within his first tenure.



ODE'S VISIT TO UDEH:

L-R: Commissioner of Science, Technology and Innovation in Benue, Mr Dwem James; Deputy Governor of Benue State, Dr Sam Ode, and Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology, Dr Kingsley Udeh, during Ode's visit to the Minister's Office in Abuja on Tuesday.

Build strong institutions to protect your legacy, group tells Otti

UMUAHIA

The Citizens Centre for Integrated Development and Social Rights (CCIDESOR) has urged Abia State Governor Alex Otti to prioritise building strong institutions capable of preserving his legacies beyond his tenure.

The Executive Director of the organisation, Dr Emeka Ononamadu, gave the advice on Tuesday at a one-day Freedom of Information (FOI) Act Round Table for stakeholders in Umuahia.

Ononamadu said durable institutions, particularly functional local governments, would serve as the strongest safeguard against future bad leadership that could erode current achievements.

Delivering a lecture titled "Freedom of Information Act in Nigeria: Proactive Disclosure, Compliance Obligations and Action Points," he stressed the need for concrete steps to strengthen governance structures.

He cited the achievements of the late Sam Mbakwe, former governor of old Imo State, and former President Goodluck Jonathan, noting that weak institutional frameworks had undermined aspects of their legacies.

According to him, reviving and empowering local governments remains critical to sustaining good governance. He said Nigerians must choose between rebuilding sustainable governance structures or continuing to suffer under ineffective political leadership.

Ononamadu explained that Section 2 of the FOI Act mandates proactive disclosure of information by Ministries, Departments, Agencies and Local Government Authorities without waiting for formal requests.

Also speaking, the State Coordinator of the National Human Rights Commission, Mrs Uche Nwokocha, described the FOI Act as a fundamental human right linked to freedom of expression and applicable to public institutions and private bodies handling public funds.

She noted that the Act supersedes the 1911 Official Secrets Act and enhances transparency, political participation and good governance at the local government level.

Nwokocha advocated the creation of dedicated FOI desks and functional websites by local governments to ensure timely responses to information requests and strengthen accountability.

Fubara assures corps members of welfare, security in Rivers

PORT HARCOURT

Governor Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers State has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to the welfare and security of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members serving in the state.

Fubara gave the assurance at the closing ceremony of the 2026 Batch A Stream I orientation course at the NYSC camp in Nonwa-Gbam Tai Local Government Area.

Represented by the Permanent Secretary, Special Services Bureau, Office of the Secretary to the State Government, Mr Samson Dede, the governor urged corps members to serve

selflessly and leave lasting legacies in their host communities.

He assured them that ongoing renovation works at the orientation camp would be completed promptly, describing Rivers as "a home away from home" for corps members.

The State NYSC Coordinator, Mr Moses Oleghe, charged the corps members to act as beacons of hope by rejecting tribalism,

ethnic bigotry and corruption.

Oleghe encouraged them to make meaningful contributions to their host communities during their service year and appealed to employers to provide conducive working environments that would enable corps members to thrive.

He also commended Governor Fubara for his sustained support for the NYSC scheme in the state.

Appeal Court ruling: Akpabio hails Senate over Natasha suspension

ABUJA

Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, has congratulated senators following the Court of Appeal judgment affirming the six-month suspension of Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan.

Akpabio made the remarks on Tuesday at the commence-

ment of an emergency plenary session of the Senate.

The Court of Appeal in Abuja had upheld the Senate's decision to suspend Akpoti-Uduaghan over alleged misconduct, ruling that the legislature acted within its constitutional powers.

In a unanimous decision, the three-member panel held

that the senator's parliamentary privilege and constitutional rights were not violated by the suspension.

Addressing his colleagues, Akpabio stressed the supremacy of legislative rules derived from the Constitution and the importance of discipline within the chamber.

"Any community without

law and order will descend into anarchy. The suspension handed down for unruly behaviour was confirmed by the Court of Appeal," he said.

He added that the court affirmed the Senate's authority to discipline erring public officers, while applauding the judiciary for its firmness and commitment to the rule of law.

Rivers crisis: Wike says Tinubu's intervention should be final

ABUJA

Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Mr Nyesom Wike, has expressed optimism that President Bola Tinubu's latest intervention in the Rivers political crisis would be the last.

Wike spoke on Tuesday while reacting to the outcome of a high-level meeting con-

vened by the President to resolve the prolonged dispute between members of the Rivers State House of Assembly and Governor Siminalayi Fubara.

President Tinubu had on Sunday night met with Wike, Governor Fubara and other key political stakeholders from the state in an effort to restore peace.

The minister spoke to journalists after inspecting ongoing pro-

jects in Abuja, noting that this was the second time the President had intervened in the Rivers crisis.

"The President has been very kind to the people of Rivers. As a father, he had to intervene in a dispute between the governor and the lawmakers," Wike said.

He expressed confidence that both parties would abide by the President's directives, adding that he had already instructed

the lawmakers to comply.

Wike also said he believed Governor Fubara would honour his part of the agreement to ensure lasting peace.

The Rivers Assembly had on January 8 initiated impeachment proceedings against Governor Fubara and his deputy, Prof. Ngozi Odu, over allegations of gross misconduct and unconstitutional expenditure.

Labour Party reclaims secretariat as Usman takes charge

ABUJA

The Usman-led interim national leadership of the Labour Party on Tuesday formally took over

the party's national secretariat in Abuja, pledging sweeping reforms and renewed efforts to reposition the party for national relevance.

Interim National Chairman,

Senator Nenadi Usman, said the takeover followed the April 4, 2025 judgment of the Supreme Court, which affirmed her leadership of the opposition party.

Addressing journalists at the

secretariat, Usman described the development as historic, noting that it was the first major gathering at the party headquarters since the apex court ruling.

The secretariat had previ-

ously been occupied by the former National Chairman, Mr Julius Abure, and his executive.

A Federal High Court, presided over by Justice Peter Lifu, had earlier sacked Abure, relying on the Supreme Court judgment which affirmed Usman as the authentic national leader of the party.

Usman said although the party anticipated a smooth transition following the court ruling, the process took longer than expected, expressing relief that stability had finally been restored.

The former Minister of Finance assured members and supporters that the interim leadership would act responsibly in rebuilding the party's internal structures.

"Our focus now is to build a stronger party that can meet the expectations of Nigerians," she said.

She commended the Deputy Governor of Abia State and Chairman of the National

Steering Committee on Party Membership Revalidation and E-registration for strengthening the party's membership database, noting that the committee had worked extensively since its inauguration in December 2025.

"For those who stood by us with prayers and encouragement, I want to assure you that we will not let you down," Usman added.

Also speaking, Abia Deputy Governor, Mr Ikechukwu Emetu, said the party was committed to unity, internal rebuilding and participation in future elections across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory.

He dismissed speculations that Labour Party would support President Bola Tinubu's re-election bid in 2027, stressing that the party would instead field its own candidates.

Emetu maintained that the Supreme Court judgment on the party's leadership crisis was final and ruled out any successful appeal by the Abure faction.



CLOSING CEREMONY:

Members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), coming out of the camp with their luggage, during the closing ceremony of NYSC 2026 Batch A orientation course at Kubwa orientation camp in Abuja on Tuesday.

Senate backs e-transmission of results, warns against disenfranchising rural voters

ABUJA

The Senate has reaffirmed its support for real-time electronic transmission of election results to INEC's iREV portal, but warned that poor network coverage in rural and riverine communities could disenfranchise voters if safeguards are not built into the law.

Senator Neda Imasuen, representing Edo South Senatorial District, raised the concern on Monday while speaking on Khakaki, a current affairs programme on African Independent Television (AIT), during a

discussion on the Electoral Act Amendment Bill.

He said the Senate had no objection to electronic transmission of results on Election Day, but questioned how results from areas without reliable network coverage would be handled.

Imasuen warned that elections conducted in such locations should not be invalidated simply because results could not be transmitted instantly.

Citing parts of Ovia North-East and Ovia South-West local government areas in Edo State, the senator said some communities were only acces-

sible by boat and lacked basic network connectivity.

Clarifying reports that the amended Electoral Act had already been passed, Imasuen said the bill was still undergoing legislative processes, including harmonization between the Senate and the House of Representatives.

"Let me correct the impression that the bill has been passed. It has not," he said, explaining that both chambers must reconcile their versions before final passage.

He acknowledged the role of civil society organisations in

advocating credible elections but urged greater legislative engagement to help address practical challenges.

Imasuen added that while the law provides a 24-hour window for concluding elections in certain cases, electronic transmission posed deeper infrastructure challenges.

He urged telecommunications firms and regulatory agencies to prioritise national interest, stressing that no Nigerian community should be excluded from the democratic process due to circumstances beyond its control.

Housing deficit figure realistic, says developer

LAGOS

A construction professional and real estate developer, Mr Ayotunde Bally, has described the Federal Government's estimate of Nigeria's housing deficit at 14.9 million units as realistic.

Speaking with journalists in Lagos on Tuesday, Bally said the figure reflected population growth, rising construction costs and limited access to housing finance.

He described the deficit as both a challenge and an

opportunity, noting that it underscored the growing demand for affordable housing nationwide.

Bally welcomed the Federal Government's plan to establish local manufacturing hubs for building materials, saying the initiative could reduce construction costs, boost local production and create jobs if properly coordinated.

He urged the government to ensure effective regulation and implementation to maximise the impact on housing affordability and access.

Killing of Nigerian in S'Africa: Consulate urges calm, due process

ABUJA

The Consulate General of Nigeria in Johannesburg has condemned the killing of a Nigerian citizen, Mr Emeka Clement Uzor, in South Africa, urging Nigerians in the country to seek justice through due process.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the consulate said Uzor was attacked on February

8 at Windsor East, Johannesburg, by a group allegedly led by one Xoilani Khumalo.

Describing the killing as unfortunate, the consulate said the incident had raised renewed concerns over the safety of Nigerians and other foreign nationals in South Africa.

It cautioned against what it described as attempts by some elements to generalise crim-

inality and label law-abiding Nigerians as offenders.

According to the consulate, the incident has caused deep shock and pain to the victim's family, the Nigerian community and diplomatic missions in South Africa.

It disclosed that South African authorities had assured that a thorough investigation would be conducted and the perpetrators brought to justice.

The consulate appealed to Nigerians in the country to remain calm and law-abiding while awaiting the outcome of investigations.

Xenophobic violence has remained a recurring challenge in South Africa, with major outbreaks recorded in 2008, 2015 and 2019, sparking repeated calls for stronger measures to protect foreign nationals.

FG intervention revives onion farming, stabilises prices —Producers

ABUJA

Federal Government intervention funds and farm inputs have revived onion production and stabilised prices across major producing states, the National Onion Producers, Processors and Marketers Association of Nigeria (NOPPMAN) has said.

The association's National President, Alhaji Aliyu Isah, disclosed

this on Tuesday in Abuja, listing Borno, Yobe, Sokoto, Kebbi and Adamawa as key beneficiaries.

Isah said the distribution of improved seeds, fertilisers and chemicals helped farmers recover from climate-related setbacks and stabilise the market.

He noted that climate change had severely affected onion production and storage, leading to massive financial losses, particularly following flooding from

dam failures and erratic rainfall.

According to him, the collapse of Alau Dam in Borno State destroyed thousands of hectares of farmland, while flooding around the Goronyo Dam and Sokoto Rima Basin damaged lowland farms.

Isah said post-harvest losses peaked in 2025 due to poor storage facilities and extreme weather conditions, stressing the urgent need for modern

storage infrastructure.

He also called for increased onion processing plants to reduce waste, add value and strengthen the economy, adding that the association was promoting climate-smart farming practices.

Describing the onion sub-sector as strategic for food security and rural livelihoods, Isah urged policymakers to prioritise climate adaptation strategies in agriculture.

ABUJA

Kuwait on Tuesday marked its 65th National Day in Abuja, reaffirming its commitment to deepening bilateral relations with Nigeria and promoting democracy, development and international cooperation.

The celebration, which also commemorated Kuwait's 35th Liberation Day, brought together diplomats, government officials and members of the international community.

Speaking at the reception, Kuwait's Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr Salim Almuzayen, described relations between both countries, dating back to the 1960s as historic and cordial.

He cited the establishment of the Al-Sabah School in Kaduna State as a symbol of enduring ties and highlighted ongoing collaboration through the Kuwait Fund, UNICEF and other partners on the "Reaching Out-of-School Children Project" in Kaduna.

The initiative is aimed at supporting the education of more than 200,000 children.

Almuzayen expressed optimism that the longstanding friendship between both nations would expand into new areas of cooperation for mutual benefit.

He noted that Kuwait takes pride in its constitutional democracy, which guarantees citizens' participation in governance, and said its foreign policy is guided by moderation and constructive global engagement.

"Kuwait aspires to global partnership in the realisation of Kuwait Vision 2035, aimed at transforming the country into a regional financial, commercial and cultural centre," he said.

The ambassador also recalled that since 1961, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development has financed projects in 107 countries, underscoring Kuwait's sustained commitment to humanitarian and development assistance.

NEWS

CAS orders all-out air assault on insurgents nationwide

ABUJA

The Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshal Sunday Aneke, has ordered intensified airstrikes across all theatres of operation as the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) moves

to crush insurgent and terrorist groups nationwide.

Aneke gave the directive on Tuesday in Abuja during a strategic meeting with Air Component Commanders, where he reaffirmed the Air Force's uncompromising re-

solve to sustain decisive, intelligence-driven air operations.

In a statement issued by the Director of Public Relations and Information, NAF, Air Commodore Ehimen Ejodame, the CAS praised commanders and personnel for their courage, discipline and operational resilience, noting that sustained air campaigns had recorded measurable gains in degrading terrorist networks and disrupting hostile elements.

He directed commanders to deepen intelligence-led operations, strengthen inter-agency

collaboration, fully exploit modern technology, standardise training, and prioritise predictive maintenance and rapid logistics support nationwide.

Describing the engagement as a critical war-fighting review forum, Aneke said the meeting provided an opportunity to rigorously assess ongoing missions, close operational gaps and align strategies with emerging security threats.

"Counter-insurgency operations demand speed, precision and relentless pressure on hostile elements," he said.

"We must dominate the operational space through superior coordination, innovation and unwavering professionalism. Every sortie, every mission and every decision must move us closer to total security restoration."

The CAS assured Nigerians that the NAF would remain relentless in protecting civilians and critical national assets, projecting decisive airpower alongside ground forces until lasting peace and stability are restored.

He commended personnel for their sacrifices, describing them as the Service's greatest

strength, but cautioned that the security environment remains fluid and requires constant adaptation.

The meeting featured detailed operational briefings and interactive reviews by branch chiefs and senior officers, culminating in a unified operational roadmap to sustain operational tempo across all theatres.

"The NAF stands as a shield over the nation. We will continue to evolve, strengthen partnerships and apply decisive airpower until lasting peace is secured," Aneke said.

New FUNAI VC, Prof Nwachukwu, takes over as Elom bows out

IKWO (EBONYI)

Prof Daniel Nwachukwu has assumed office as the fourth Vice-Chancellor of Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike (AE-FUNAI).

The professor of Cardiovascular Physiology took over from Prof Sunday Elom at a ceremony held on Tuesday at the university's Senate Building in Ikwo Local Government Area.

Nwachukwu's appointment followed the completion of Elom's five-year tenure on February 10, 2026.

In his acceptance speech, Nwachukwu thanked the Federal Government and the Governing Council for the confidence reposed in him, pledging to consolidate existing gains while promoting inclusive leadership, academic excellence, research innovation and improved welfare.

"We have challenges ahead, but with unity, creativity and de-

termination, we can turn them into opportunities," he said.

Outgoing Vice-Chancellor, Prof Elom, expressed gratitude to God and appreciation to staff, students, management and the Governing Council for their support, noting that the university recorded significant achievements despite initial challenges.

He disclosed that all academic programmes received NUC and professional accreditation, including approvals for Law and Medicine, while pioneer MBBS graduates are expected to be inducted in March 2026.

Elom said student enrolment rose from about 9,000 to 14,000, faculties expanded from 11 to 14, and the university achieved global research recognition, including ranking among the top two per cent of scientists worldwide.

The ceremony climaxed with the formal handover of the university seal and Senate maze.

FG orders FCC to enforce fed character without compromise

ABUJA

The Federal Government has directed the Federal Character Commission (FCC) to intensify enforcement of the federal character principle across all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), warning that fairness and public trust depend on strict compliance.

Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Senator George Akume, gave the directive on Tuesday at a two-day induction workshop for members of the fifth FCC board.

Akume, represented by his Senior Technical Adviser, Prof Babatunde Bernard, described the principle as a constitutional imperative and a cornerstone of national cohesion that must be implemented without compromise.

He urged commissioners to act

with professionalism, objectivity and loyalty to the constitution, stressing the need for transparency and data-driven oversight.

FCC Chairman, Mrs Ayo Omidiran, said the new board would not operate on a "business as usual" basis, pledging strict adherence to the law and ethical standards.

Chief of Staff to the President, Mr Femi Gbajabiamila, said national unity was a strategic necessity, cautioning that federal character must not be reduced to symbolism or used to justify mediocrity.

House Committee Chairman on FCC, Mr Ahmed Wase, assured the commission of the National Assembly's support.

The workshop is aimed at aligning the board's vision and strengthening enforcement of the federal character principle.



INAUGURATION OF THE SCHOOL'S ARTS GALLERY:

Founder, Nike Arts and Gallery, Chief Nike Davies (M) with students of Department of Archaeology and Museum Studies, Federal University, Lokoja, during the inauguration of the School's Arts Gallery and Museum in Lokoja.

NYSC warns Corps members on safety, conduct as orientation ends

LAGOS

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) has warned corps members to prioritise personal safety and uphold the highest standards of moral conduct throughout their national service.

The Lagos State Coordinator of NYSC, Mrs Christiana Salmwang, gave the charge on Tuesday at the closing ceremony of the 2026 Batch 'A' Stream 1 Orientation Course at the

Iyana-Ipaja camp.

"Always remember that your safety is paramount, as unauthorised journeys remain prohibited," Salmwang said.

"In moments of difficulty, seek immediate refuge at the nearest military or police formation."

She said the three-week orientation programme equipped corps members with regimented training, leadership development and skills acquisition, expressing confidence that

they would discharge their duties with excellence, loyalty and a sense of responsibility.

The coordinator commended Lagos residents for their hospitality and appealed for continued support for corps members, particularly in the area of accommodation.

She also thanked the Lagos State Government, partners and the media for their support, which ensured a safe and successful orientation exercise.

Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, represented by the Commissioner for Youth and So-

cial Development, Mr Mobolaji Ogunlende, praised the NYSC management for the smooth conduct of the programme.

Sanwo-Olu urged organisations to willingly accept corps members and provide them with adequate welfare and conducive working environments, noting that their contributions would be invaluable.

He also charged the corps members to positively impact their host communities by leaving lasting legacies in education, healthcare, social services and other critical sectors.

Edun pushes 'Nigeria First' agenda as revenue service holds maiden retreat

ABUJA

The Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr Wale Edun, has urged Nigerians to prioritise locally produced goods and services as a critical step towards boosting revenue and curbing economic leakages.

Edun made the call on Tuesday at the maiden leadership retreat of the Nigeria Revenue Service (NRS) in Abuja.

"It is time for us to rely much more on what we have in Nige-

ria. It is time for us to buy from ourselves," the minister said, stressing that intra-Nigerian trade was central to economic growth and revenue mobilisation.

He disclosed that developing countries paid about 163 billion dollars in debt servicing in 2024, while overseas development assistance stood at just 42 billion dollars, with foreign direct investment and private sector inflows amounting to 97 billion dollars.

"Clearly, what we do for ourselves internally is what will

matter most at this time," he said, adding that fiscal reform and revenue mobilisation had become more urgent.

Edun described the NRS as indispensable to the government's reform agenda.

Executive Chairman of NRS, Dr Zacch Adedeji, said the Service represented a new era that demanded adaptability, excellence and leadership, warning against "internal blockers" that could undermine reform efforts.

He emphasised the need for self-examination among leaders, noting that leadership was

about elevating others rather than replicating oneself.

Chief of Staff to the NRS Chairman, Mr Tayo Koleoso, said the tax reforms were unprecedented and aimed at positioning Nigeria towards a trillion-dollar economy.

He said the retreat was designed to align the Service's strategic direction for 2026 and beyond, adding that NRS now carried responsibility for the nation's entire revenue system.

The NRS has set a revenue target of N40.7 trillion for the 2026 fiscal year.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known and called **SHARON SHIEDU**, now wish to be known and addressed as **SHARON SHIEDU UWADIAE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **OHIAGBAGHIJI DANIEL IFEANYICHUKWU** and **OHIAGBAGHIJI DANIEL** are one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known and address as **OHIAGBAGHIJI DANIEL IFEANYICHUKWU**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS OSIGWE BARBARA**, now wish to be known and called **MRS. BARBARA OMOROTIOMWAN**. All former documents remain valid. General public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME/ DATE OF BIRTH

The general public is hereby notified that **EDOBOR TRACY** and **GLORY MORGAN**, are one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known and address as **EDOBOR TRACY** and my correct date of birth is **8/8/1986**, not **8/8/1989**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

JUDICIARY

NEWS

Man, 50, docked for alleged N820,000 land scam in Ibadan

IBADAN

A 50-year-old man, Ade-wale Yusuff, was on Tuesday arraigned before an Iyaganku Magistrates' Court in Ibadan for allegedly defrauding a complainant of N820,000 under the guise of

selling a plot of land.

Yusuff, whose address was not disclosed, is standing trial on a charge of obtaining money by false pretence but pleaded not guilty.

Prosecutor, Insp. Omolade Adetule, told the court that the offence was committed in

March 2025 at the Idi-Ayunre area of Ibadan, where the defendant allegedly collected the sum from Mr Sunday Stanley, claiming he would allocate a plot of land to him.

She said Yusuff failed to allocate the land and instead converted the money to his

personal use.

The offence, according to the prosecution, contravenes Section 419 of the Criminal Law of Oyo State, 2000.

The Magistrate, Mrs Olatinmibo Sanusi-Zubair, granted the defendant bail in the sum of N200,000 with two reliable

sureties, who must be blood relations.

The case was adjourned until March 17 for hearing.



49TH SESSION OF IFAD:

Chairperson, 49th Governing Council of IFAD and Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Sen. Abubakar Kyari (R), at the 49th Session of the Governing Council of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), in Rome, Italy. With him is IFAD President, Mr Álvaro Lario, on Tuesday.

Banks hoarded redesigned naira, EFCC witness tells Court in Emefiele trial

ABUJA

An Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) witness on Tuesday told an Abuja court that commercial banks hoarded newly redesigned naira notes during the currency swap, a development that allegedly worsened the hardship

experienced by Nigerians.

The witness, Chinedu Eneanya, an EFCC investigator and the seventh prosecution witness, testified in the trial of former Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Governor, Godwin Emefiele, over alleged disobedience to presidential directives during the naira redesign.

Emefiele is accused of

approving the printing of 375,520,000 colour-swapped N1,000 notes at the cost of N11.05 billion between October 2022 and March 2023 without the recommendation of the CBN Board and the approval of the President.

Under cross-examination by defence counsel, Olalekan Ojo, SAN, Eneanya admitted awareness that bank officials hoarded currencies but said he could not recall the specific

banks involved.

"I am aware of that, but I cannot be specific," he said.

He also told the court that he was not privy to instructions under which EFCC teams visited commercial banks nationwide and could not confirm what actions were taken against offending bank officials.

Justice Maryann Anenih adjourned the case until March 19 for continuation of cross-examination.

Witness tells court how defendant allegedly used minister's name to defraud senator

ABUJA

A prosecution witness on Monday narrated before a Federal High Court how a defendant allegedly attempted to use the name of a serving minister to defraud Senator Shehu Buba Umar.

The witness, Rabiun-Rangers Abdullahi, testified as the second prosecution witness in the trial of David Daure and four others on charges bordering on cybercrime, defamation and advance fee fraud.

Abdullahi told the court that Daure informed him of

a planned protest in London against Senator Buba, alleging that the lawmaker was sponsoring terrorism.

According to the witness, Daure claimed the protest was being sponsored by a minister, Yusuf Maitama Tuggar, and later demanded £10,000, which was reduced

to N5 million.

He said investigations later revealed that the protest was fictitious and that Daure was arrested when arrangements were made to pay the money.

Justice Rita Ofili-Ajumogobia adjourned the case until February 10 for continuation of trial.

"My neighbour was lying in a pool of blood," witness testifies in murder trial of Arise News anchor

ABUJA

An engineer, Sani Yusuf, on Tuesday gave a harrowing account of how he found his neighbour, Arise News correspondent, Somtochukwu Maduagwu, lying in a

pool of blood following an alleged armed robbery attack at their Katampe residence.

Yusuf was testifying before an Abuja High Court in the ongoing trial of 11 suspects charged with armed robbery and culpable homicide punishable by death.

He told the court that gun-wielding assailants invaded the apartment in the early hours of September 29, 2025, robbed residents and shot a security guard.

Yusuf said Maduagwu sustained severe head injuries and was later confirmed dead, while the injured guard was

rushed to hospital.

Another resident, Fatou Toborteh, corroborated the account, describing how robbers looted her flat and how residents later discovered Maduagwu's body.

Justice Mohammed Idris adjourned the matter until February 12 for hearing.

Son jailed 3yrs for stealing father's N18m cattle in Benue

MAKURDI

Makurdi Chief Magistrates' Court on Tuesday sentenced a 20-year-old cattle rearer, Ibrahim Haruna, to three years imprisonment for stealing his father's cows valued at N18 million.

Haruna, who lives behind Rice Mill, Wadata, Makurdi, was convicted on charges of

criminal conspiracy and cattle rustling, with an option of N500,000 fine.

The court heard that the convict conspired with others still at large to steal 15 cows belonging to his father, Abdul Haruna.

The offences contravened the Penal Code Law of Benue State and the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law.

3 men arraigned for alleged assault on woman in Ibadan

IBADAN

Three men were on Tuesday arraigned before an Iyaganku Chief Magistrates' Court in Ibadan for allegedly assaulting a middle-aged woman over a land dispute.

The defendants, Dada Oyeniran, Oloyede Adeshile and Sesan Aborisade pleaded not guilty to the charge.

Prosecutor Sgt. Akeem Akinyole said the defendants assaulted Ramota Giwa by hitting her stomach, causing her harm, an offence allegedly committed on September 18, 2025, at Akoto Estate, Elebu, Ibadan.

The court admitted the defendants to bail in the sum of N100,000 each and adjourned the case until June 30 for hearing.

79% of Nigerian children feel unsafe online, Survey reveals

LAGOS

A new survey by civic technology organisation, Techsocietal, has revealed that 79 percent of Nigerian children between the ages of 11 and 16 feel unsafe online, raising fresh concerns over digital protection and child safety in the country.

The alarming statistics were disclosed on Tuesday by Techsocietal's Programmes Manager, Mr Gabriel Odunsi, at the organisation's 2026 Safer Internet Day workshop for educators in Lagos.

The workshop, themed "AI Aware: Safe, Smart and in Control," focused on equipping teachers with the tools to address emerging digital risks.

Odunsi said the survey also found that 97 percent of Nigerian children within the age bracket had experienced unwanted sexual approaches through chatrooms, social networking platforms and emails.

Additionally, 89 per cent reported receiving sexual images or explicit content online.

According to him, 93 percent of children aged 11 to 16 access the internet via mobile phones or other digital devices, making the online space central to their learning, communication and identity formation.

He further revealed that 48 per cent of children watch online videos daily, while 85 per cent browse, chat and use social networking platforms every day.

"Children are increasingly connected through smartphones, social media and online platforms. While digital tools enhance research, creativity and collaboration, they also expose children to risks such as cyberbullying, online sexual abuse, harmful content, privacy breaches, scams and excessive screen use," Odunsi said.

He warned that prolonged screen time could lead to sleep disorders, reduced attention span and declining academic performance, stressing that digital platforms now significantly influence peer relationships and reputation building among young users.

Odunsi urged educators to provide guidance on safe and respectful online behaviour, integrate digital literacy into teaching, identify warning signs of digital harm and collaborate with parents and communities to protect learners. He noted that many teachers still lack practical guidance to tackle technology-facilitated abuse and data privacy concerns in age-appropriate ways.

Also speaking, Techsocietal's Programme Officer for Cybersecurity and Digital Protection, Miss Emmanuella Aston, called on schools to strengthen data privacy practices.

She explained that student data, including names, addresses, academic records, health details and photographs can expose children to identity theft, fraud and physical vulnerability if poorly managed.

NEWS

Foreign

Trump threatens to block opening of US-Canada bridge

President Donald Trump has threatened to block the opening of a bridge connecting the US and Canada until Washington is "fully compensated for everything" it has given to its northern neighbour.

The Gordie Howe International Bridge, connecting the Canadian province of Ontario to the US state of Michigan, will not open until Ottawa "treats the United States with the Fairness and Respect that we deserve", Trump wrote on social media.

The bridge is funded by the Canadian government but will be publicly owned by both Canada and Michigan.

Prime Minister Mark Carney said on Tuesday he had a "positive" conversation with Trump, reminding him Canada paid for the bridge.

AFP via Getty Images The Gordie Howe International Bridge connecting the US and

Canada, spans the Detroit River. Carney noted that he also reminded the president it was built by US and Canadian workers and with steel from both countries.

"This is a great example of cooperation between our countries and I look forward to it opening," he told reporters in Ottawa on Tuesday.

He said that Trump asked that the US ambassador to Canada, Pete Hoekstra, who is from Michigan, "play a role in smoothing the conversation in and around the bridge".

Ontario Premier Doug Ford said he was glad to hear about the Trump-Carney call, adding he was "confident" the bridge will open as planned as it's in the best interests of the economies of both countries.

On Monday, Michigan Senator Elissa Slotkin, a Democrat, said closing the "incredibly important infrastructure project" would be "awful for our state's economy".

The move could have "serious repercussions" she said in a post on X: "Higher costs for Michigan businesses, less secure supply chains, and ultimately, fewer jobs."

It is not clear how Trump could block its opening but he said negotiations would begin immediately, without elaborating.

The bridge, which spans the Detroit River and is named after late Canadian hockey legend Gordie Howe, who played for the Detroit Red Wings, is expected to open to traffic pending formal tests and approvals in the early part of this year. Construction began in 2018, but the project has been a point of contention between the countries for more than a decade.

It is estimated to have cost \$6.4bn CAD (£3.4bn).

In the statement on his Truth Social platform, Trump said that the US should own "at least one half of this asset".

He also suggested that Canada owned both the Canadian and US sides of the bridge.

The organisation developing the bridge, the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority, is a Canadian federal Crown corporation, an organisation that is wholly owned by the government but operates at arm's length.

Trump wrote: "The Canadian Government expects me, as President of the United States, to PERMIT them to just 'take advantage of America!'"

"I will not allow this bridge to open until the United States is fully compensated for everything we have given them," he added.

He also blamed former President Barack Obama for allowing construction to begin without the use of any US steel.

But Mayor Drew Dilkens of Windsor, Ontario, on the Canadian side of the bridge, told the CBC that this accusation is wrong.

Macron urges Europe to start acting like world power

French President Emmanuel Macron has urged Europe to assert itself on the world stage, saying it is time to start acting like a "power".

In the face of growing threats from China, Russia and now the US, he told a group of European newspapers that the continent faced a "wake-up call".

"Are we ready to become a power? This is the question in the field of economy and finance, in defence and security, and in our democratic systems."

"In another era we might have said it is the moment to 'assume our majority'," he said ahead of an EU summit in Brussels later this week.

Macron repeated his call for EU-wide mutualised loans in order to raise hundreds of billions of euros needed for industrial investment.

"The time has come to launch a shared debt capacity to fund our future expense - eurobonds for the future. We need big European programmes to finance the best projects," he said.

Similar calls in the past have met scepticism from Germany and other countries, who feel France wants to use Europe to bear a financial burden which it alone - because of its failure to reform - is unable to take up.

Macron admitted that France "has never had a balanced model, unlike certain economies of the north, which are built more on a sense of responsibility."

"And we have never had reforms like the ones initiated in the 2010s in Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece, which are paying dividends today."

But he said there was growing demand in the world's financial markets for mutualised European debt, which currently the EU was not equipped to supply.

"The world markets are increasingly afraid of the Amer-

ican greenback [dollar]. They want alternatives..."

"For investors everywhere a democratic state of law is a huge attraction. And when I look at the world as it is, we have the authoritarian regime that is China, and on the other side we have the US distancing itself further and further from a state of law."

According to Macron, the 27-member EU needs €1.2tn (£1tn; \$1.4tn) a year to invest in the vital sectors of security and defence, clean energy, and artificial intelligence.

Calling on the EU to "protect" these and other industries, he said: "The Chinese do it, the Americans too. Europe today is the most open market in the world."

"In the face of that, I am not saying we should be protectionist. It's more a question of being coherent - in other words not imposing on our own producers rules which we do not impose on non-Europeans."

"Today Europe faces a massive challenge, in a world of disorder," he said.

"Climate change is accelerating. The US - which we thought would guarantee our security for ever - is no longer sure. Russia was to give us cheap energy for ever, but that stopped three years ago. China... has become a rival that gets fiercer and fiercer."

"Today, we Europeans are on our own. But we have each other. We are 450 million people. It's huge. For me [becoming a power] is the fulfilment of the European adventure."

"We came together to stop war, we came together to build a market. But we always forbade ourselves to think of power."

Asked about the latest stand-off with Washington over Greenland, at the end of which US President Donald Trump appeared to back down from threats to annex the Danish territory, Macron said the Europeans should not be fooled.



SOMALIA PLANE CRASH-LANDING:

The plane was on its way to Puntland before the pilot requested a return to Mogadishu

US lawmakers accuse justice department of 'inappropriately' redacting Epstein files

US lawmakers say files related to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein were improperly redacted ahead of their release by the Department of Justice (DOJ).

Members of Congress on Monday were allowed to begin a review of the unredacted versions of the approximately three million pages of files released under the Epstein Files Transparency Act (EFTA) since December.

"The core issue is that they're not complying with... my law, because these were scrubbed back in March by Donald Trump's FBI," Democratic Representative Ro Khanna told MS NOW.

At least one document has been unredacted since the lawmakers' complaint, with Deputy Attorney General Todd

Blanche saying on X: "The DOJ is committed to transparency."

The files' redactions came under scrutiny last week after lawyers for Epstein's victims said the latest tranche of files included email addresses and nude photos in which the names and faces of potential victims could be identified.

Survivors issued a statement calling the disclosure "outrageous" and said they should not be "named, scrutinized and retraumatized".

The DOJ said it had taken down all the flagged files and that mistakes were due to "technical or human error".

After viewing the unredacted documents, Massie and Khanna, who co-sponsored the law which compelled the release of the Epstein files last

year, told reporters they had a list of about 20 people in which every name was redacted except for Epstein's and his convicted sex trafficker associate Ghislaine Maxwell.

Six of the names could even belong to men who are "likely incriminated by their inclusion in these files", Massie said outside the DOJ on Monday night, before posting a screenshot of the redacted file online and demanding an explanation.

These names were "inappropriately" redacted, Khanna said on MS NOW.

In response to their concerns, Blanche said his department "just unredacted all non-victim names from this document. The DOJ is committed to transparency."

He linked to what appears

to be a new version of the file - which he said contains the names of Epstein victims, whose identities the EFTA law orders the government to conceal - with only two names now blacked out.

Blanche also responded to two other files highlighted by Massie, saying those files do not obfuscate any substantive information.

But Khanna said those measures taken after the documents' release are still not in compliance with the EFTA law, which passed nearly unanimously in Congress and was signed by President Trump in November.

"Trump's FBI scrubbed these files in March," Khanna said on social media. "The documents (the Department of) Justice [received] had the redactions that the FBI made back then."

Pilot praised after crash-landing faulty Somalia passenger plane on seashore

An airline in Somalia has praised one of its pilots after he crash-landed his passenger plane, which had suffered a technical fault, on the shoreline next to the capital's international airport with all 55 on board surviving.

The plane was on its way to Puntland before the pilot requested a return to Mogadishu.

Starsky Aviation said the pilot's quick thinking was crucial in saving the 50 passengers and five crew.

The crew of the aircraft, a Fokker 50, reported a problem shortly after take off from Mogadishu on Tuesday morning and requested that the plane return, Somalia's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) said.

It then touched down but failed to stop on the runway, overshooting the tarmac before coming to rest in shallow water, the CAA's director Ahmed Macalin Hassan said.

It is not clear yet exactly

what the issue was.

Footage posted on X appeared to show passengers leaving the aircraft and walking away from the wreckage on the shore of the Indian Ocean. No serious injuries have been reported.

The African Union's mission in Somalia said UN and AU troops were "swiftly deployed" to help with rescue efforts. Somalia's transport minister was also at the scene, its post on X added.

"We are relieved to confirm that all passengers and crew are safe. Investigations are under way to establish what caused the technical issue that led to the emergency landing," Starsky spokesman Hassan Mohamed Aden said.

"The pilot's swift and calm decision-making played a decisive role in ensuring the safety of everyone on board, and we commend him for how he handled the situation," he added.

Foreign

NEWS

Burkina Faso's parliament approves ban on political parties

Burkina Faso's transitional parliament on Monday approved a bill banning all political parties in a move observers say allows the military junta led by Captain Ibrahim Traore to consolidate control.

The text which received no opposition from lawmakers repeals the charter of political parties and the law relating to the financing of parties, electoral campaigns and the status of the political opposition.

Political party activities have been suspended in the Sahel country since the army seized power in 2022.

On Thursday, the United Nations rights chief called on the Burkina Faso government to halt all repression of civic space and to overturn its plan to prohibit all political parties.

In July, Burkinabe authorities enacted a restrictive new law on freedom of association and, in November, issued a new decree requiring NGOs and associations to open and maintain cash accounts exclusively with a state-run bank.

A government minister has defended the ban as a 'reset' which ends the polarization of the population which he blamed on political parties.

Guinea: Heavy gunfire reported near central Prison in Conakry

Heavy "automatic gunfire" rang out near the central prison in Guinea's capital early on Tuesday in Kaloum, Conakry's administrative centre where the presidential palace is located, witnesses told AFP.

"I heard the sound of vehicles speeding by, I rushed to the window and heard automatic gunfire," said Thierno Balde, an accountant who works in the neighbourhood, confirming similar statements by other witnesses.

According to neighbours of the prison, the shooting began shortly before 9:00 am (local and GMT) and lasted just more than a half hour, with rapid gunfire ringing out.

A security detail made up of

police officers and special forces blocked access to the road leading to the prison late Tuesday morning, an AFP journalist saw.

An armoured vehicle belonging to the special forces was also visible in front of the jail.

Abdouramane Doukoure, a retired civil servant, said he was heading past the prison in a car when he "heard the gunshots. Since there was a traffic jam, we all rushed in different directions to escape."

Another resident whose home is next to the prison reported hearing gunfire inside the facility but "as we speak, things have calmed down".

But "we don't know for how long", the resident added.

Angola's President João Lourenço makes new push for peace in eastern DRC

Angola's president and several African Union representatives Monday called for a ceasefire in the conflict-plagued eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo after meeting with DRC President Félix Tshisekedi in Luanda.

The resource-rich region, which borders Rwanda as well as Burundi, has been beset by decades of continual conflict with the Rwandan-backed M23 armed group.

The conflict flared last year with the M23 seizing key cities and continuing attacks despite a flurry of diplomatic efforts, including a US-brokered peace deal signed in December and a parallel mediation effort by Qatar.

In a statement Monday evening, Angolan President and AU chairperson João Lourenço called "on the Parties to the conflict in the DRC to declare a ceasefire to take effect on a date and time to be agreed" and "accelerate the implementation of the Cease-fire Verification Mechanisms agreed in Doha on 14 October 2025".

Tshisekedi signed the statement, alongside Togolese leader Faure Gnassingbe and former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo, appointed respectively as AU mediator and facilitators of the DRC peace process.

The leaders also threw their weight behind the US-brokered peace agreement, and said Angola would be mandated to "initiate consultations with all interested Congolese parties".

Qatar has been mediating between the Congolese government and the M23 for several months, and a commitment towards a ceasefire was signed in July.

In a parallel effort, the DRC and Rwanda formalised a US-brokered peace deal in December in Washington.

The agreements provide for a monitoring mechanism for the implementation of a "permanent" ceasefire, with support on the ground by the UN mission in the DRC, MONUSCO.

The United Nations has said it would soon send a mission to the volatile region to help en-



UNITED NATION FORCES PATROL:

Congolese Defense Forces soldiers and United Nation forces patrol the area of an attack near the town of Oicha, 30 kms (20 miles) from Beni, DRC, July 23, 2021.

Kenya to confront Russia over 'unacceptable' use of its nationals in combat

Kenya says it will talk to Russia over growing reports that its citizens are being recruited to fight in the war in Ukraine.

Speaking to the BBC, Foreign Minister Musalia Mudavadi called the practice "unacceptable and clandestine", and said Nairobi had shut down illegal recruiters and would urge Moscow to sign a deal banning the conscription of Kenyan soldiers.

The Kenyan government estimates that around 200 of its nationals have been recruited to fight for Russia.

The exact number remains unclear, as Nairobi maintains that none of them travelled through official channels.

"Kenya and Russia have had long relations since independence, literally. So this, in my view,

becomes a very unfortunate episode of otherwise very positive and cordial relations between our two countries," he added.

Mudavadi has told the BBC that Kenya's engagement with Russia will focus on curbing illegal recruitment practices, including discussions on visa policy and bilateral labour agreements excluding military conscription.

He said the Kenyan authorities had closed more than 600 recruitment agencies suspected of duping Kenyans with promises of jobs overseas.

So far 27 Kenyans who had been fighting in Russia have been repatriated, he said, with authorities providing psychological care to address their trauma and "de-radicalise" them.

It is not clear how many Kenyans have died fighting for

Russian forces, and Russia has not formally addressed such reports. Relatives who have approached the Russian embassy in Nairobi for answers report being turned away.

"Families that we've spoken to say they have not been able to bury their loved ones because their bodies are still on the other end," Kenya's foreign minister said.

"It is difficult because, remember, it depends on where the body has been found. There some have been found in Ukraine - we are also working with the government of Ukraine to try and get the remains of those people repatriated."

Pressure has been mounting on the Kenyan government to act after the recent discovery of more bodies of citizens who had been recruited to fight for

Russian armed forces.

Some of the affected families have told the BBC that they lay the blame squarely on Kenya's government, for failing to regulate and criminalise clandestine recruitment agencies.

But the Kenyan foreign minister rejects this.

"You cannot blame the government on this," Mudavadi told the BBC. "Where there are illegal recruitment agencies, we have scrapped them and we continue to scrap them."

Ukrainian intelligence assessment estimates that more than 1,400 people from 36 countries in Africa have been recruited to fight for Russia. Ukraine has also previously come in for criticism for trying to recruit foreign nationals, including Africans, to fight on its side.

Son of Zambia's ex-President Lungu ordered to surrender 79 cars, petrol station, 'luxury' flats

Zambia's High Court has ordered the seizure of assets worth more than \$1.3m (£923,000) from Dalitso Lungu, the son of former President Edgar Lungu.

The forfeiture order covers 79 vehicles and 23 pieces of land and real estate, including a shopping mall, petrol station, "luxury apartments and an executive residence" in the capital, Lusaka.

The judgement said the 39-year-old and his company had failed to provide a credible and verifiable explanation for how the assets were acquired lawfully.

Edgar Lungu, who led Zambia for six years from 2015, died in South Africa last June but has yet to be buried because of an ongoing legal battle between his family and the current government.

It follows a long-standing feud between Lungu and his successor, President Hakainde Hichile-

ma, who defeated him in the 2021 elections by a huge margin.

Hichilema's government wants his remains to be repatriated and given a state funeral, with full state honours - and a South African court ruled in their favour in August.

But the family wants a private burial in South Africa as they say the former president had not wanted Hichilema to attend his funeral.

Dalitso Lungu's lawyers have indicated they will appeal against Monday's ruling by the Economic and Financial Crimes Division of the High Court.

In assessing Lungu's financial capacity, the court examined his employment history and income.

Evidence showed that he worked briefly at a beverages company in Lusaka in 2012 and later spent nearly three years at the Zambia Revenue Authority.

The court concluded that his earnings were insufficient, even when taken together, to account for the acquisition of the extensive fleet of vehicles and high-value properties.

Investigations into his company, Saloid Traders Limited, found that its financial statements, tax returns, bank records and social security contributions did not demonstrate the capacity to lawfully acquire or maintain the assets in question.

Claims that the properties were financed through commercial farming, business income or family support were rejected, with the court noting the absence of supporting documentation.

"[Dalitso] Lungu has failed to proffer further and solid evidence to substantiate his claims that Mr Edgar Chagwa Lungu, and indeed his parents, were the source of the funds used to purchase the impugned prop-

erties," the judges ruled.

Other members of the Lungu family have also been investigated in recent years for allegedly accruing wealth fraudulently.

In 2024, the high court ruled that the former first lady, Esther Lungu, had to forfeit 15 flats valued at \$3.5m.

Critics say the anti-corruption drive is politically motivated.

Mrs Lungu has remained in South Africa since the death of her husband from an undisclosed illness.

She is leading legal efforts to have him buried in South Africa - and has just filed a notice at the Supreme Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein to overturn the earlier ruling that her husband's body be sent back home.

The family's earlier attempts at various other South African courts for leave to appeal had failed.

Lungu's body remains in a funeral home in Johannesburg.

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HALF PAGE	295,600	317,770	236,500	254,238	147,800	158,885	340,000	365,500	273,450	293,959			
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FP 3X2	64,870	69,735	73,000	78,475	3 X 2	30,900	33,218	26,600	28,595				
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Sports

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NDGs: ESSC Chairman declares camp open for Team Edo, urges athletes to remain disciplined

KEHINDE OSAGIEDÉ

...inspects Sports facilities

The Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele has urged Edo athletes to let discipline be their watchword and remain focused in order to achieve

the target set for themselves as they begin intensive training ahead of the Games, scheduled to kickoff on February 20, 2026.

The Edo State Sports Commission boss gave the charge on Tuesday, February 10, 2026

when he officially declared Team Edo camp open and ready for the second Niger Delta Games in Benin.

Declaring the 12-day camping open for the host state athletes in GRA, Hon Enabulele told the athletes and coaches that the responsibility of Edo State to deliver and to set a new record of achievements rests on their shoulders. He assured them that the state government has done its part by providing the resources to keep them in camp with top notch facilities and welfare.

"We are ready for the 2026 Niger Delta Games. Congratulations to you all here. Remember we have a lot of intelligence and brilliant people

in our state. So for you to be selected for the task, you are already a winner. From now on you should know you are now state Ambassadors because you are representing Edo state.

"As we are in this camp, discipline must be our watchword. We have set target for ourselves and to achieve the goals, you must be disciplined. Without discipline and commitment it is difficult to achieve much as sports men and women.

"In this particular edition of the Niger Delta Games, we are not just participating or adding to the number of teams, but we are working towards hosting to win. We can do it if we are disciplined as host state," Enabulele said.



Edo State Sports Commission Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele with ESSC Chairman inspecting Sports facilities

Road Racing Commission gears up for 11th Access Bank Lagos City Marathon

With only five days to the 11th Access Bank Lagos City Marathon, Nigeria's Road Racing Commission says it is fine-tuning operations to ensure the event meets global standards.

Under the leadership of Chairperson Ms. Akuchukwu Aghazu, the commission is overseeing every technical detail to guarantee a seamless experience for athletes and spectators alike.

"As the leading oversight entity for road competitions throughout Nigeria, we stand ready to push boundaries higher through the Access Bank Lagos City Marathon, highlighting our country's resolve toward outstanding sports oversight," Aghazu said in a statement given to Persecutionnews on Tuesday.

Emphasizing runner efficiency and protection, the Commission is refining the complete 42-km trail to build a prime competitive milieu, integrating lengthened straight pathways, decreased hindrances, more generous boulevards, sophisticated live-event super-

vision, judiciously positioned refueling spots, and clearly outlined fan engagement areas.

"Our work within the racing commission centers on ensuring that race organizers craft an elite setup for the marathon span, including prolonged continuous portions, restrained disruptions, ampler routes, polished coordination throughout the proceedings, cleverly placed beverage hubs, and sharply delineated sections for supporter cheers," Aghazu stated.



ACCESS BANK LAGOS CITY MARATHON

Edo camps 282 athletes, targets strong showing at Niger Delta games

Edo has moved 282 athletes into a full residential camp ahead of the second edition of the Niger Delta Games, signaling strong intent to dominate the regional sporting event.

The Chairman of the State Sports Commission, Amadin Enabulele, disclosed this on Tuesday in Benin while officially declaring the Team Edo camp open ahead of the games, which the state will host.

Enabulele said Edo would compete in 16 sporting events and was the only one of the

nine Niger Delta states to have placed its athletes in full camp.

"Edo State will be participating in 16 events with 282 athletes already in camp. As of today, Edo is the only state that has gone into full camping," he said.

The sports commission chairman described the early camping and improved welfare of athletes as evidence of the state government's seriousness about sports development, attributing the support to Gov. Monday Okpebholo.

"This clearly shows that the state government is genuinely interested in the games and in the development of our athletes," Enabulele said.

The chairman urged the athletes to remain disciplined and focused, reminding them that they were ambassadors of Edo.

He also commended the organisers – the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and Dunamis-Icon Limited – for their level of preparedness.

2nd NDG: Ondo athletes screened, as organisers clamp down on age cheating

Sports administrators and coaches have been urged to eliminate age cheating in the nation's sports sector.

Tonnex Chukwu, a member of the 2026 Niger Delta National Screening Committee, stated this in an interview after the final screening of Ondo State athletes for the Niger Delta Games (NDG)

Chukwu commended the

organisers of the games for introducing a pre-competition screening, describing it as a thoughtful reform.

He also praised the consulting company-Dunamis, particularly its Chief Executive Officer, Mr Itiakpo Ikpopo, for what he described as efforts to reposition sports development in the Niger Delta region.

"He called us and said; let's

see if we can rejig sports in the Niger Delta states.

"He said he wanted a system where athletes going to the Niger Delta Games and even international competitions must truly be from the Niger Delta.

"That was why we decided to lower the age limit compared to the first edition," Chukwu said.

According to him, the

screening has exposed long-standing issues of age falsification in sports.

"It has really opened our eyes. If you remember what happened in Uyo during the maiden edition, there was no screening, which gave room for too many age cheats.

"Age cheating must be wiped out in our sports, no matter whose ox is gored," he said



PRESIDENT OF THE NIGERIA BASKETBALL FEDERATION (NBBF) MR MUSA KIDA AND SOME ATHLETE

10 teams for Musa Kida basketball competition Season 2

President of the Nigeria Basketball Federation (NBBF) Mr Musa Kida, has called on stakeholders in sports to join the federation to achieve greater heights.

Kida made the call on Thursday at a media conference on Musa Kida Basketball competition Season 2 for U-17 players.

He said the event would provide opportunity for the technical crew of the junior national teams to pick players for the teams.

Kida, who is the sponsor of the competition, urged participating teams to play by the rules guiding the competition.

Kida commended organisers, Wonderland Events, for choosing to organise the age grade event.

"You will agree with me that the competition is a productive one because we need to replace our ageing players and no other way to start it than the grassroots.

The federation cannot do everything. It requires all of us to improve the sports of basketball.

"We are ready to partner any group or individuals all in a bid to take basketball forward.

"The participating teams should take advantage of the competition and compete fairly," Kida said.

Commonwealth Games Build-Up: NSC funds 26 Athletes with N200m training support

The National Sports Commission (NSC) has disbursed more than N200 million in training grants to 26 Nigerian athletes as part of preparations for the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland.

The funding, released through the Commission's Elite and Podium Board, is aimed at supporting the training and high-performance preparation of selected athletes across multiple sports. Beneficiaries were drawn from both home-based and foreign-based categories.

The recipients span several disciplines, including athletics, wrestling, weightlifting, taekwondo, powerlifting and para-sports, such as para athletics, para table tennis and para bad-

minton. The initiative aligns with the NSC's mandate to prioritise athlete welfare and strengthen Nigeria's competitiveness at major international events.

The grants follow the establishment of the Elite and Podium Board, which was created to implement a structured, scientific and institutionalised support system designed to sustain peak performance among elite Nigerian athletes.

According to the NSC, the selection of beneficiaries was carried out through a rigorous and professional evaluation process by the Yusuf Ali-led Elite and Podium Board, focusing on athletes with strong prospects ahead of the 2026 Commonwealth Games and other global competitions.



TOBI AMUSAN AND TEAM MATE

SPORTS

The Nigerian Observer
...that the people may know

NWF applauds NSC, Tinubu for timely training grants for 5 Elite Athletes, targets bigger podium presence

The President of the Nigeria Weightlifting Federation (NWF), Dr. Ibrahim Aladi Abdul, has expressed profound appreciation to the leadership of the National Sports Commission (NSC) and the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, for the approval and release of training grants for five elite Nigerian weightlifters as part of prepa-

rations for major international competitions.

Dr. Abdul described the intervention as a reflection of purposeful leadership and goal-driven governance, commending President Tinubu for creating an enabling environment where sports development and athlete welfare are receiving renewed national attention.

He also lauded the Chairman of the NSC, Mallam She-

hu Dikko, and the Director General, Bukola Olopade, for translating the President's vision for sports into actionable support for athletes.

The beneficiaries of the training grants are Rafiatu Folashade Lawal, Onome Didih, Sarah Matthew, Edidiong Umoafia, and Joy Benedict, all of whom are central to Nigeria's weightlifting ambitions ahead of the Commonwealth Games and the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games.

"We sincerely thank President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his purposeful leadership and clear commitment to repositioning Nigerian sports as a tool for national pride and global competitiveness," Dr. Abdul said.

"His vision is being effectively driven through the National Sports Commission, and we are grateful to Mallam Shehu Dikko and Bukola Olopade for ensuring that this

support reaches our athletes at the right time."

"These training grants are not just financial assistance; they are a statement of belief in Nigerian weightlifting and in the potential of our athletes to excel on the world stage," he added.

The NWF President confirmed that the federation is intensifying preparations ahead of the African Senior Weightlifting Championship scheduled for May in Ismaili, Egypt, which will serve as the final qualification event for the 2026 Commonwealth Games slated for Edinburgh, Scotland, in July 2026.

According to him, the championship represents a critical opportunity to increase Nigeria's athlete quota for the Commonwealth Games.

"At present, three of our weightlifters — Sarah Matthew, Islamiyat Yusuf, and Onome Didih — have already



NIGERIA FALCONETS

Poland 2026: Aduku says Falconets know what to do to overcome Senegal in Thies

Head Coach Moses Aduku has assured that despite the absence of top striker Janet Akekoromewei, Nigeria's U20 girls, Falconets, will give it their all and overcome hosts Senegal in Saturday's FIFA U20 Women's World Cup third round, second leg encounter.

Akekoromewei sustained an injury in the first half of last Saturday's first leg in Abeokuta and had to be taken off. She has been left out of the squad to travel to

Dakar on Wednesday morning.

"We will overcome because we have reviewed the match and taken a lot of lessons on board. I commend the girls for regrouping after a tough first half, adjusting tactics and showing character in the second half. We could have won by more goals because we created a number of opportunities in that second period.

"In Senegal, we must defend resolutely and attack with purpose. We will play with focus and determination."

Finidi George calls for squad reinforcement after Rivers United crash out of CAF Champions League

Rivers United head coach Finidi George has urged the club to strengthen its squad after a disappointing CAF Champions League campaign that ended with their elimination from Group A following a heavy home defeat to Egypt's Pyramids FC.

The former Nigerian champions sit at the bottom of the group with just one point from five matches, having lost four games and drawn once. They have conceded ten goals and scored only twice.

Rivers United's exit was confirmed after a 4-1 loss to the defending champions, Pyramids, at the Godswill Akpabio Stadium in Uyo. Despite taking an early lead through Stephen Manu, Rivers United were overwhelmed in the second half as the Egyptian side scored four unanswered goals to secure a dominant win.

Speaking after the match, Finidi acknowledged the gulf in quality and intensity, stressing the need for reinforcements if the club is to compete more effectively in future continental outings.

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"Let us see how we can compete

in the NPFL. If we win it, we will have time to prepare and to bring in a couple of players to strengthen the team. We have seen our lapses and we know we can do better next time," Finidi said.

"For the players, this is a learning process. Now they have seen a different level of football. To match a team like this, we definitely have to step up and bring in a couple of players."

Finidi dismissed claims that his side were simply unlucky, insisting Pyramids deserved their victory over the course of the match.

"What can I say? For me, it is quite difficult coming here and explaining what happened. I think we all saw it. They were better, far better in the second half. This is another level of football, another level of intensity.

Abuja 2027: NSC inaugurates Local Organising Committee for African Youth Games



MALLAM SHEHU DIKKO (RIGHT) AND HON. BUKOLA OLOPADE

In Its bid to stage a successful second edition of the African Youth Games, tagged Abuja 2027, the National Sports Commission has officially inaugurated the Local Organising Committee for the Games.

The 28 member committee was inaugurated by the Chairman of the National Sports Com-

mission, NSC, Mallam Shehu Dikko, with the clear mandate to organise the best ever staged youth Games on the continent.

The Chairman assured the LOC of the Commission's total support to deliver on the given assignment while assuring the rest of Africa and ANOCA of the federal Government's commitment to host an

international standard games.

"I congratulate all the LOC members on their appointments, knowing full well that you all have been entrusted with a serious national assignment.

Your work will require planning, coordination, transparency and team work for the desired success to be achieved."

"I want to assure all our African partners and stakeholders that Abuja 2027 will be safe, well organised and memorable for all our young athletes."

Director General of the NSC, Honorable Bukola Olopade said hosting the African youth Games in 2027 fits perfectly with the RHINSE (Renewed Hope Initiative for Nigeria Sports Economy) agenda of the NSC that prioritises Sports Production.

Road Racing Commission gears up for 11th Access Bank Lagos City Marathon

With only five days to the 11th Access Bank Lagos City Marathon, Nigeria's Road Racing Commission says it is fine-tuning operations to ensure the event meets global standards.

Under the leadership of Chairperson Ms. Akuchukwu Aghazu, the commission is overseeing every technical detail to guarantee a seamless experience for athletes and spectators alike.

"As the leading oversight entity for road competitions throughout Nigeria, we stand ready to push boundaries higher through the Access

Bank Lagos City Marathon, highlighting our country's resolve toward outstanding sports oversight," Aghazu said in a statement given to Persecutionnews on Tuesday.

Emphasizing runner efficiency and protection, the Commission is refining the complete 42-km trail to build a prime competitive milieu, integrating lengthened straight pathways, decreased hindrances, more generous boulevards, sophisticated live-event supervision, judiciously positioned refueling spots, and clearly outlined fan engagement areas.



ACCESS BANK MARATHON