

Sultan declares social media 'Terrorist Threat'

● Demands crackdown by security agencies

The Sultan of Sokoto, His Eminence Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III, has made a declaration, describing social media as a "terrorist organisation" and calling on Nigeria's security agencies to take urgent action against its growing influence.

Speaking during a public en-

gagement on Wednesday, the revered traditional leader expressed deep concern over the unchecked spread of misinformation and harmful narratives on digital platforms.

His remarks were captured in a video shared by News Central, sparking immediate attention and debate across various sectors.

"What happened has happened. You cannot come and be doing social media because that is one terrorist organisation," the Sultan remarked.

"Social media is a terrorist organisation. What they do—somebody will sit down in his comfort zone and formulate stories, and you will discover

that it is not true."

The Sultan's comments reflect a broader frustration with the ease and speed at which unverified information can circulate online, often leading to societal tensions, public unrest, and reputational damage.

He emphasised that individuals hiding behind the anonymity

of the internet are fuelling instability by deliberately creating and spreading false content.

He reiterated his stance with a direct call to action: "So, social media is a terrorist organisation that we must deal with. Security agencies must deal with this terrorist organisation called social media."

While his remarks may generate controversy, especially in light of Nigeria's ongoing debates about free speech and digital regulation, they underscore a growing concern among leaders about the impact of online disinformation on national cohesion and public safety.

The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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Candidates free to take exams anywhere in Nigeria —JAMB

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Rivers administrator to appear before Reps today

● Seeks NASS support to boost maritime operations

The House of Representatives Ad-Hoc Committee on Rivers State Oversight has invited the Rivers State Sole Administrator, Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ibas (retd),

to appear before it on Thursday, April 17, 2025.

Recall that following the declaration of emergency rule in Rivers State by President Bola Tinubu and the subsequent appointment

of Admiral Ibas to oversee the running of the state for an initial period of six months, the National Assembly, citing Section 11 of the Constitution, resolved to take up the role of the suspended State

Assembly.

On Tuesday, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tajudeen Abbas, inaugurated a 21-member committee chaired by the House Leader, Prof Julius

Ihonvbere, to take up the responsibility and charged members against bias and partisanship.

A statement issued by the House Spokesman, Akin Rotimi on Wednesday said, "Pursuant to its constitutional mandate to exercise full legislative oversight in accordance with Section 11(4) of the 1999 Constitution

(as amended), the Committee resolved, among other matters, to invite Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ibas (retd), the Sole Administrator of Rivers State, to appear before it for a comprehensive interactive session.

The statement quoted Prof

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COURTESY VISIT:

Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, receiving a giant card from Mrs. Barbara Omozele Agbebaku, the wife of Hon. Blessing Agbebaku, Speaker of the Edo State House of Assembly, during a courtesy visit by the Spouses of Edo State House of Assembly members (SPOHAM), to Government House, Benin City.

PHOTO: MOSES OBO

Another PDP lawmaker defects to APC in Edo

IDAHOUSA MUSA

The Edo State chapter of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) suffered yet another setback on Wednesday as Hon. Nicolas Asosere, the member representing Ikpoba-Okha constituency in the State House of Assembly, officially defected to the All Progressives Congress (APC).

Asosere's defection brings the number of PDP lawmakers who have crossed over to the ruling party to five, increasing the APC's representation in the 24-member House to 15.

A known political protégé of Osarodion Ogie, the PDP's deputy governorship candidate in the upcoming September 21, 2024 election, Asosere explained that his decision was driven by a

conviction that Governor Monday Okpebholo is actively transforming the state.

"I can't remain on the other side while the governor is constructing a flyover in my constituency and initiating development projects that directly benefit my people," he said. "I am not joining the APC to obstruct progress but to support the growth of my constituency and the state."

Welcoming the lawmaker into the party, acting APC State Chairman, Jarret Tenebe, hailed the defection as a major blow to the PDP, noting that Asosere's departure strips the opposition of one of its most influential and vocal figures.

"This isn't just a defection—

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Edo govt boosts SME capacity for global market access, export readiness —Pg 2

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Biden attacks Trump in first speech since leaving White House —Pgs 5

National Sports festival 2025 unveils theme song, logo, Mascot —Pg 7

Edo govt boosts SME capacity for global market access, export readiness

ABDULKADIR ABDULLAH
AND EDENIYERE OSOSE

In a bid to enhance business performance and improve the certification success rate of locally made products, the Edo State Government, through its Investment Promotion Office (ESIPO), has partnered with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON), and other relevant stakeholders to conduct a series of capacity-building workshops for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across the state.

The workshops are designed to address persistent challenges that often lead to product rejections and decertifications by regulatory bodies—issues that have continued to limit the export potential and market growth of local businesses.

Participants received comprehensive training on key aspects such as quality assurance, effective packaging, adherence to regulations, and production processes aligned with both national and international standards.

These efforts are part of a

broader strategy to reverse the economic setbacks caused by frequent export rejections.

Experts from NAFDAC and SON led technical sessions, underlining the need for consistent quality control at every stage of production.

They also offered practical guidance on certification procedures and how to navigate the regulatory landscape to make Edo-manufactured goods more competitive both within Nigeria and globally.

Mr. Joel Edionwe, Coordinator of the Edo State One-Stop Investment Centre, highlighted the importance of the workshops not only in promoting compliance but also in building the capacity of local producers.

He noted that equipping SMEs with relevant skills and knowledge would help them align with global best practices, thereby increasing Edo's relevance in international trade.

Also speaking, the Managing Director of ESIPO, Hon. Amen Odigie—represented by Mr. Abraham Ose Akhigbe—reaffirmed the Edo State Government's commitment to supporting export-led economic growth.

He revealed that the state has an export value nearing \$15 billion and stressed that initiatives

like this are crucial for boosting internally generated revenue, expanding trade opportunities, and ensuring long-term economic sustainability.

Mrs. Rhones Peters, Coordinator of the Edo Licensed Exporters Association and one of the workshop participants, commended the government

for the initiative.

She pointed out that many local producers have faced setbacks due to a lack of understanding of regulatory stand-

ards, and said the training had offered valuable insights that would help reduce rejection rates and enhance access to international markets



TECHNICAL WORKSHOP:

A cross-section of participants at a recent technical workshop held at the Edo State One-Stop Investment Centre (ES-OSIC) in Benin City. The workshop, aimed at enhancing business operations and improving the certification success rate of locally made products, was organised by the Edo State Investment Promotion Office (ESIPO) in collaboration with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON), and other relevant stakeholders, including Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) across the state.

Another PDP lawmaker defects to...

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it's the exit of the political godson of two major PDP figures: Osarodion Ogie, the deputy governorship candidate, and Mathew Iduoriyekemwen, the party's campaign director-general." Tenebe stated. "Asosere was a key voice that once gave the PDP relevance, but he has now aligned with the future—APC."

Tenebe further declared that the ongoing wave of defec-

tions signalled the decline of the PDP's political relevance in Edo, applauding those lawmakers who have chosen to support Governor Okpebholo's vision for a new Edo State.

He assured that the APC government under Okpebholo remains open to collaboration, reiterating that the governor's call for unity in governance is genuine and inclusive, as the state moves towards a renewed phase of development.

Candidates free to take exams anywhere in Nigeria —JAMB

The Joint Administration and Matriculation Board has stated that its candidates are free to sit for their examination anywhere in the country.

The examination body is reacting to a misleading publication regarding the UTME examination, which inaccurately claims that candidates cannot sit for the examination outside their state of registration.

In a statement by the Public Communication Advisor, JAMB, Fabian Benjamin on

Wednesday, he said the information disseminated by a news medium is incorrect.

"In a recent interview with a reporter, I clarified that candidates are not restricted to taking the examination within their state of registration. They have the flexibility to register anywhere in the country and select any town nationwide from any registration point.

"Computer-Based Test Centres are clustered according to towns for convenience, allowing candidates to choose the town where they wish to take the examination.

"For example, if a candidate selects Garki as their examination town, they must take the exam there and cannot do so or be posted, as alleged at times, to a different town.

"It is crucial to rectify this misunderstanding to prevent confusion among candidates. Those who have registered for the UTME and selected examination towns outside their state of registration are indeed permitted to sit for the examination in their chosen towns," he added.

He further stated that candi-

dates have the freedom to select their examination town from any location across the country, regardless of their state of registration.

"For instance, a candidate can register in Lagos and opt to take the examination in Sokoto or any other location.

"This flexibility is designed to accommodate candidates' preferences and ensure they can choose a location that is convenient for them.

"We urge the public to disregard the erroneous report in its entirety," he added.

Rivers administrator to appear before Reps today

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Ihonvhere as saying, "This engagement is necessary to ascertain the true state of affairs in Rivers State and ensure that the House remains properly guided in the discharge of its oversight responsibilities in the public interest.

"The Sole Administrator is expected to appear before the Committee on Thursday, April 17, 2025, at 4:00 PM, in Room 414, House of Representatives New Building, National Assembly Complex, Abuja.

"A formal letter of invitation has been sent and acknowledged accordingly. This public announcement serves to reinforce transparency in the Committee's proceedings.

"The Committee reiterates its commitment to fulfilling its duties with diligence, transparency, and strict adherence to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria."

Meanwhile, Ibas has appealed to the National Assembly to support the state in enhancing mar-

itime operations there.

He stressed the need for strict implementation of all existing Public Private Partnership agreements at the various Sea Ports in the State to properly harness derivable benefits.

Ibas made the call when he received on a courtesy visit members of the House of Representatives Committee on Public Assets, led by its Chairman, Hon. Ademorin Kuye, in Port Harcourt on Wednesday.

He said the State has continued to serve as a critical hub for maritime, oil and gas operations, including other industrial activities.

He stated that however, weak regulatory framework, a lack of accountability and conflicting interests between stakeholders, have hampered business growth.

The sole administrator charged them to fine-tune such PPP agreements to ensure transparency and strict adherence to contractual obligations.

Ibas expressed regret that despite the volume of such maritime activities going on, Rivers

State continues to grapple with numerous challenges in the infrastructure landscape due to years of neglect, vandalism and under-utilization.

He noted the need for such public assets that are now in dire need of rehabilitation and strategic realignment, to be given the desired attention.

Ibas stated, "Among the assets currently operating under Public, Private Partnership framework in the state are the Onne Port Complex, various oil and gas service zones and certain segments of the Nigerian Ports Authority facilities.

"While some of these partnerships have yielded appreciable results in enhancing operational capacities and boosting revenue, others remain underperforming due to weak regulatory frameworks, lack of accountability, and conflicting interest between stakeholders

"A comprehensive assessment of these assets is therefore essential to determine their current state and chart a clear path forward.

"I believe that the National Assembly, through this committee, is well positioned to help fine-tune existing Public, Private Partnership arrangements by ensuring greater transparency, adherence to contractual obligations, and improved monitoring mechanisms."

He described their visit as auspicious, because it provides an opportunity for them to carry out on-the-spot assessments of key federal assets, particularly those under Public-Private Partnership, Lease-holding and Concession Agreements.

The Administrator urged greater collaboration in ensuring that those partnerships truly deliver value for money and serve the best interest of Rivers people.

"It is also important to emphasise the significance of this oversight visit in evaluating the state of critical infrastructure in our state.

"In the past few weeks, our administration has prioritised the stabilization of the state's security environment and the peaceful resolution of the polit-

ical conflicts that had threatened to erode public trust and economic progress.

"Through consultations, peace-building engagements, and coordination with security agencies, we have taken deliberate steps to restore normalcy and strengthen the fabric of unity in Rivers State," he explained.

Ibas stressed that as his administration looks to the future, it will require sustained collaboration and the support of institutions like the National Assembly to achieve its mandate.

He said, "We therefore call on the National Assembly to continue supporting us in our effort to reposition Rivers State on the path of peace, progress, and prosperity.

"We count on your expertise and your legislative support as we work to enhance the value of federal assets in the state, improve service delivery, and stimulate economic growth."

Ibas said the visit of the national lawmakers has rekindled hope that together, they can work to overcome the

challenges and unlock the vast potential of Rivers State for the benefit of all Nigerians.

Chairman of the House Committee on Public Assets, Ademorin Kuye, said they were in the state to conduct oversight on federal assets, specifically to determine their usage, status, and possible disposal of assets within Nigeria and overseas.

Kuye explained that they are also mandated to look at seized assets, as proceeds of crime in particular, working with The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission to ensure that Nigerians get the full benefits of the disposal of such assets.

Kuye stated that they are looking at the Public-Private Partnership arrangements entered into by the Nigerian Ports Authority that are still subsisting at Port Harcourt Ports, Ibeto Ports, and Onne Ports, to evaluate their findings and present a report to the House.

Dan Orbih donates parallel secretariat to factional PDP in Edo

IDAHOUSA MUSA

The internal crisis plaguing the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Edo State has taken another turn, as Chief Dan Orbih, the National Vice Chairman of the party for the South South region, on Wednesday, inaugurated a new secretariat for the state chapter. The new office, situated along Airport Road directly opposite the Benin airport in Benin City, is being described by party observers as a parallel secretariat, further deepening the divisions within the party.

Chief Orbih explained that his decision to donate the build-

ing followed numerous appeals from members of the party who had expressed their frustrations over the PDP's lack of a central office in the state.

According to him, the party had been left without a secretariat since its former premises were reclaimed by the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) earlier in the year.

"A few weeks ago, during one of our meetings, I pledged to provide a new secretariat for the party," he said during the inauguration ceremony.

"You and I know that the PDP cannot be a homeless party. On 17 January 2025, our former State Chairman was ejected

from our old office on Airport Road, and since then, the PDP in Edo State has had no central location.

Many leaders and members of our party have reached out to me, expressing their disappointment and concern over that sad development."

Orbih said the decision to open the new office on the day of the Christian celebration of Jesus Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem was symbolic, describing it as a day to mark the triumphant return of the PDP's organisational structure in the state.

"We are putting an end to that unfortunate chapter where the PDP had no state secretariat for

four months," he declared.

He also used the occasion to send a pointed message to the Edo APC Chairman, Jarret Tenbebe, warning him against any attempt to interfere with the newly inaugurated office. "If he dares to come here, he must be ready to declare for the PDP," Orbih said.

Addressing recent statements attributed to individuals claiming to be the acting secretary and acting press secretary of the PDP in the state, Orbih dismissed them as illegitimate.

"As the National Vice Chairman, South South, I want to state clearly that these individuals have no standing in the PDP.

From this moment forward, we will no longer entertain statements from anyone outside those who are officially designated to manage the party in Edo State," he said.

Orbih blamed the immediate past state administration for what he described as the near-collapse of the PDP's influence in Edo. He lamented

the party's dwindling political fortunes, recalling that it once held two senatorial seats and a majority in the House of Representatives.

"Now, we have no senator, only one member in the House of Representatives, and even the governorship has slipped into the hands of the APC," he said regretfully.

Three suspected herdsmen arrested over Benue killings, says Gov. Alia

Three individuals suspected to be herdsmen have been arrested in connection with the deadly attacks that claimed 11 lives in the Otobi community, located in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State.

Governor Hyacinth Alia made the disclosure during a press briefing at Government House, Makurdi, on Wednesday. He condemned the renewed violence and called for urgent action from security agencies to apprehend those behind the killings.

Alia said National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu, has assured him of the deployment of more security resources to quell the attacks, particularly in the troubled Otukpo axis.

The governor confirmed that security forces had already been dispatched to the affected areas and that three suspects were taken into custody. Local reports from the member representing Otukpo-Akpa Constituency in the Benue State House of Assembly, Kennedy Angbo, indicated that nine bodies were dis-

covered Tuesday night, followed by two more the next morning, bringing the death toll to eleven.

The attack has stirred fear and mourning across the state. Otobi, a community that houses the Federal Ministry of Water Resources' Multipurpose Dam, has now come under violent assault twice in April. Just days earlier, a security guard was killed at the dam site.

Deputy Governor Samuel Ode was earlier dispatched to visit the bereaved community. He conveyed the government's condolences and pledged to tackle the rising insecurity.

Ode also made monetary donations to help victims with immediate needs, while the Benue State Emergency Management Agency was directed to carry out a full assessment and provide relief materials.

The attack on Otobi is the latest in a troubling series of incidents stretching along the Otukpo-Ado road, affecting communities from Okpamaju to Asa One, Asa Two, and extending towards the Ebonyi State border.

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COURTESY VISIT:

Vice Chancellor, University of Benin, Professor Omoregie Edoba (left), receiving a souvenir from the Chairman of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council, Dr Festus Alenke, who led executive members of the union on a courtesy visit to the Vice Chancellor recently.

Delta Energy Commissioner highlights gains of energy law, hails Gov. Oborewori

AJUWA VICTOR

The Delta State Commissioner for Energy, Mr. Sunday Tatabuzogwu, has commended Governor Sheriff Oborewori for signing the Delta State Energy Bill into law, describing it as a landmark achievement that aligns with the administration's MORE Agenda.

In a statement, Tatabuzogwu praised the Governor's vision and leadership, noting that the

new law provides Delta State with the legal framework to establish and regulate its own independent power infrastructure, separate from the national grid.

According to the Commissioner, the law is a significant step towards achieving stable and affordable electricity across the state, a longstanding challenge for both households and businesses.

"This breakthrough will not only ensure reliable power

supply but also attract industrial investments and generate employment opportunities for our youth," he said.

Tatabuzogwu emphasised that the law will strengthen Delta State's Internally Generated Revenue and enhance socio-economic development across all sectors.

He also highlighted that the legislation empowers the state government to oversee all operators in the energy value chain—from generation

to transmission and distribution—thereby improving service delivery to consumers.

Tatabuzogwu thanked Governor Oborewori for keeping his campaign promise and advancing transformative policies like the Energy Law. He further revealed that the government will soon hold stakeholder meetings to begin implementation, laying the groundwork for the state's journey towards energy independence and sustainability.

Yakubu urges African youths to champion peaceful elections

CAROLINE AMEH

The Chairman of Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Professor Mahmood Yakubu, has urged young people across Africa to take the lead in promoting peaceful and credible elections throughout the continent.

Speaking at the Civil Service University in The Gambia, where he delivered a keynote address titled "Democracy and Peaceful Elections in West Af-

rica," Prof. Yakubu called on students, particularly those studying International Affairs, Diplomacy, and Peace and Conflict Studies, to engage positively in the electoral process.

"Young people must be at the forefront of peaceful electoral engagement," he said. "Avoid malpractices and stand for democratic values."

Yakubu stressed that youth participation is critical, as young people make up the bulk of both voters and ad hoc election staff. "No African election can be suc-

cessfully conducted without the involvement of youths," he said.

He also highlighted the importance of integrity during sensitive phases such as voter registration, urging young people to act responsibly and patriotically. He warned against unethical behaviour, including spreading misinformation, particularly in their roles as political agents or social media users.

"Don't be among the merchants of fake news," he warned. "If it's not verified, don't share it. As citizen reporters, your duty

is to report elections truthfully and responsibly."

The INEC Chairman concluded with a message of hope and responsibility. "Democracy is the system we have chosen. We must all nurture it, defend it, and improve it. Every young African has a role to play in deepening democratic institutions."

His visit to The Gambia forms part of broader efforts to promote electoral integrity and democratic governance across West Africa.

Tinubu unveils nat'l census c'ttee

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has inaugurated a committee tasked with overseeing the upcoming national population and housing census. The committee is expected to submit an interim report within three weeks.

The inauguration ceremony, held at the State House in Abuja, was represented by the President's Chief of Staff, Femi Gbajabamila. According to a statement from Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, Tinubu underscored the critical importance of the census for national development, accurate planning, and informed decision-making in key sectors such as healthcare, education, security, and the economy.

The President called for a technologically driven census process to ensure credibility and verifiability of the results, urging the committee to work closely with all relevant agencies, including the Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning. He stressed that effective budgeting cannot be achieved without knowing the actual population figures.

He urged the committee to explore both domestic and international funding options for the exercise, saying, "The enumera-

tion has to be driven by technology—biometrics, digitalisation, and all. The world has moved on since our last census."

Committee Chairman and Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Senator Atiku Bagudu, assured the President that the group will meet the three-week deadline. He recalled the President's earlier advice for ministers to work creatively within available resources, especially under current economic constraints. Bagudu noted improvements in Nigeria's economic indicators, including currency stability and economic growth.

The committee's focus will include exploring resource mobilisation strategies to finance the census. Minister of Information, Muhammed Idris, also a member of the committee, reiterated the importance of credible data for national planning.

Chairman of the National Population Commission, Nasir Kwarra, who will serve as the committee's secretary, said groundwork has already begun, with key requirements identified to guide the President's decision on the conduct of the census. He reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to a reliable, technology-based enumeration process.

NEWS

Egor LG Chairman begins rehabilitation of failed section on Ugbowo service lane

The Chairman of Egor Local Government Area, Honourable Kelvin Ighodaro Eguakun, has commenced the rehabilitation of a deteriorated section of the service lane along the Ugbowo expressway, bringing hope of relief to road users who have long endured the hardship of navigating the failed portion.

Speaking to journalists during the project inspection, the Chairman stressed the significance of road infrastructure, describing it as a vital link between government and the people.

He explained that the ongoing repairs, which began at Tomline office complex site stretched up to the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH), forming part of a broader strategy to enhance road connectivity in the area.

Honourable Eguakun also revealed that the project is in fulfilment of a commitment he made to the Uselu community during

a courtesy visit.

He underscored the importance of good roads in fostering a sense of inclusion among residents and urged the public to see infrastructural development as a shared responsibility that requires collective support.

The rehabilitation, according to the Chairman, will be executed in phases. The first phase will be completed before the second commences, with full asphaltting planned to ensure durability.

He called on residents of Egor to support the ongoing reform agenda of the Edo State Government, reiterating that sustainable development is a collective effort that cuts across all sectors.

In a show of appreciation, a National Youth Service Corps member serving in Egor, Chinaza Paul, thanked the Chairman for the swift response to the pressing road issue, acknowledging the positive impact the repairs would have on daily commuting.

Police nab car thieves, reject N1m bribe

The Katsina State Police Command has arrested two suspected car thieves, rejected a one million naira bribe, and recovered a stolen vehicle among other exhibits.

This was contained in a statement by the Command Public Relations Officer, DSP Abubakar Sadiq, and made available to newsmen on Wednesday in Katsina.

"On April 11th, 2025, at about 1500 hrs, while on a routine patrol along Birnin Kuka village, Mashi LGA, Katsina State, officers attached to attached to Border Patrol Zone 4, Katsina, flagged down a Toyota Corolla LE, green colour, driven by one Mubarak Kabir, m, age 26, and Adamu Hashim, m, age 27, all of Kurna quarters, Fagge LGA, Kano State.

"During the preliminary investigation, it was revealed that the said vehicle was reportedly stolen from FCT Abuja. The suspects then offered a bribe of one million naira (₦1,000,000)

in cash to the patrol team with a view to evading justice, which the officers sternly rejected. Suspects are in custody.

"Furthermore, the suspected stolen motor vehicle, a cash sum of ₦1,000,000, three mobile phones, one power bank and a bunch of keys were recovered from the suspects as exhibits. Investigations are ongoing to unravel the extent of the suspects' involvement in criminal activities. Further developments will be communicated as the investigation proceeds," the statement read.

The Commissioner of Police, Katsina State Command, CP Bello Shehu, commended the officers' commitment to upholding the law and exhibiting a high level of integrity.

He further reaffirmed the Command's commitment and dedication towards protecting the lives and property of the citizens of Katsina State while maintaining a high level of integrity and respect for human rights.

NITDA signs MoU with SecDojo to establish cybersecurity academy

The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with SecDojo, a France-based cybersecurity training and upskilling company, the agreement is to build cybersecurity resilience in Nigeria, and establish a Cybersecurity Academy.

This agreement was finalized on the sidelines of GITEX Africa 2025 in Marrakech, Morocco.

According to the agency, the focus of the MoU is to strengthen national resilience against cyber threats through targeted capacity building initiatives.

This strategic collaboration is

designed to drive a multi-faceted approach to cybersecurity awareness, with emphasis on developing comprehensive skill-building frameworks, promoting cyber hygiene, and expanding access to digital tools and infrastructure nationwide which aligns with the redefined priority areas of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda to strengthen national security for peace and prosperity.

The partnership will also facilitate training programmes, workshops, and certifications aimed at equipping both public and private sector stakeholders with the necessary skills to detect, prevent, and respond to cyber threats effectively.

Etsako Central LG chairman launches free eye care programme in Fugar

CASSIUS LAMAI

The Chairman of Etsako Central Local Government Area, Hon. Cephas Yakubu, in partnership with the Edo State government has flagged off a three-day free eye care initiative in Fugar, the council's administrative headquarters.

The programme, which commenced at the Unone Comprehensive Health Centre, offers free eye screening, treatment, and cataract surgeries to residents across the local government.

Speaking at the launch, Hon. Yakubu explained that the initiative aims to improve access to essential eye care services for people of all ages, especially those who cannot afford treatment.

According to him, the screenings are designed to detect a wide range of eye conditions, including glaucoma, cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, age-related macular degeneration, and amblyopia.

He assured that patients diagnosed with conditions requiring surgery would be promptly scheduled for treatment.

"The programme is inclu-

sive and accessible to children, adults, and the elderly, and it is being carried out across major health centres in the local government," Yakubu said.

He emphasised the importance of regular eye examinations, not only in preventing visual impairment, but also in identifying underlying health issues early.

The chairman expressed appreciation to Governor Monday Okpebholo for initiating the state-wide health intervention, which he described as timely and impactful, especially for residents with limited financial means.

Also speaking at the event, the Team Administrator, Dr. Godsglory Braimoh, encouraged residents to participate fully and make use of the opportunity to safeguard their vision.

The Assistant Director of Nursing Services in Etsako Central, Mrs Oghiadomhe Etu Evelyn, hailed the programme as a remarkable development and appealed to the state government to consider conducting similar initiatives quarterly to meet the growing healthcare needs of the people.

The programme is expected to benefit over 2,000 residents.



ASPHALTING:

Asphaltting of the service lane on the Uselu-Lagos Road in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State

Edo community youth leader refutes claims of tenure elongation

The youth leader (Okaighele) of Ori-or-Ozolua village in Uhumwonde Local Government Area of Edo State, Egharevba Osasere, has faulted claims that he has remained in office for 17 years, asserting instead that he was only installed in November 2023 by the Odionwere of the village, Pa. Joseph Imadiyi Osayamwanbo, in accordance with Benin traditional customs.

This clarification came in response to a protest held on Monday, 14 April 2025, by a group of demonstrators who carried placards to the Press Centre of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council.

The agitators accused Osasere of overstaying his term and demanded his immediate removal, alleging that he had been in office for nearly two decades, despite the traditional two-year tenure typically allotted to youth leaders in the community.

Speaking on the matter, Osasere described the allegations as false and politically

motivated, suggesting that his detractors are acting out of self-interest and are being supported by individuals.

He explained that he officially assumed the position of Okaighele on 15 November 2023 after subscribing to an oath before His Royal Majesty, Oba Ewuare II, alongside the Odionwere and representatives from about 18 other villages.

According to him, this process followed the established custom and conferred legitimate authority upon him to serve his community.

Osasere accused one Paul Akhere, who claims to be a Special Assistant to the Edo State Governor on security matters, of meddling into the affairs of the village.

He alleged that Akhere conspired with a faction in the community to incite unrest, which led to the shooting of three individuals.

He said that he and the Odionwere had reported the incident to the Government House,

only to be told by Akhere that the matter had been "settled" and that he did not want the police to be involved.

Akhere, according to Osasere, directed the Odionwere to take funds from the community treasury to treat the injured and reportedly declared that he had the authority to both remove and install an Okaighele.

"He told us plainly that he had removed me as Okaighele and that he would install a new one within two weeks. We are now waiting to see what he does next," Osasere stated.

He further revealed that the same agitators had been summoned to appear before the Oba's Palace to resolve the dispute, but they refused to honour the invitation, allegedly on Akhere's advice.

Osasere questioned the motive behind Akhere's involvement, citing rumours that the interference may be linked to land allocation or financial inducement.

"The Odionwere was even threatened that if he didn't comply, he too would be removed. This

cannot be driven by anything other than ulterior motives," he said.

Despite the threats, Osasere affirmed that the Odionwere continues to recognise him as the legitimate Okaighele and has reaffirmed this position before palace Chiefs.

He stressed that in accordance with Benin traditions, only the Odionwere, acting with the elders' council, can install a youth leader and present him to the Oba for endorsement, adding that "That process was followed in my case."

Osasere argued that the agitation against him is being orchestrated by individuals who wish to return to a corrupt practice of selling the same parcel of land to multiple buyers, an abuse he and the Odionwere have sworn to stop after their oath-taking before the Oba.

Responding to the allegations, Paul Akhere maintained that the governor, as the Chief Security Officer of the state, is empowered to ensure peace and had instructed that a new youth leader be chosen to quell the unrest.

Foreign

NEWS

Biden attacks Trump in first speech since leaving White House

Joe Biden has used his first speech since leaving office to criticise the Trump administration's welfare policies.

The ex-US president told a conference in Chicago that the government had "taken a hatchet" the social security system, which Donald Trump and Elon Musk - who is leading the White House's cost-cutting efforts - claim is beset by fraud.

The administration wants to

cut staff at the agency responsible for spending \$1.6 trillion (£1.2 trillion) in benefits a year.

Biden did not refer to Trump by name during his speech on Tuesday, but said: "In fewer than 100 days, this new administration has done so much damage and so much destruction. It's kind of breath-taking."

He described social security as a "sacred promise", adding: "We know just how much social secu-

rity matters to people's lives."

Biden - who was speaking at a disability rights event - did not address his departure from the White House or the 2024 presidential election during his remarks.

The Social Security Agency (SSA) provides a base income for people in the US who are retired or cannot work because of a disability. It covers about 67 million Americans, primarily older citizens.

Democratic politicians have

repeatedly accused the administration of planning sweeping social security cuts.

Members of Elon Musk's so-called Department of Government Efficiency have been making cuts to the agency since February, with the target of slashing 7,000 jobs - about 10% of its total staff.

Musk has described social security as "the biggest Ponzi scheme of all time".

Trump has previously said that he intends to target fraudulent claims and payments to illegal immigrants and not make wholesale cuts to benefits.

On Tuesday, he signed an order preventing illegal immigrants and "other ineligible people" from obtaining social security payments.

Before Biden's Chicago speech, Trump's press secretary Karoline Leavitt said that the president was "absolutely certain" about protecting benefits for "law-abiding tax-paying American citizens and seniors".

"He will always protect that programme," she added.

In a post on X, the SSA - which is now controlled by a Trump appointee - said Biden had been "lying" during his Chicago speech.

Since leaving office, Biden has kept a relatively low profile. In February, he signed with Creative Artists Agency, the Los Angeles talent agency that represented him between 2017 and 2020.

Barack Obama also criticised the Trump administration on Tuesday, saying on X that its decision to freeze more than \$2bn (£1.5bn) in federal funds for Harvard University was "unlawful and ham-handed".

Trump is freezing the fund because Harvard said it would not make changes to its hiring, admissions and teaching practices that he claims are key to fighting alleged antisemitism on campus.

Obama has rarely criticised or rebuked government officials or government policies on social media since leaving the White House almost a decade ago.



DRAMATIC RESCUE:

US pastor Josh Sullivan has been found unharmed following a dramatic rescue.

US pastor kidnapped during church service in South Africa found after shoot-out

An American pastor who was kidnapped by armed men during a church service in South Africa last week has been rescued following a "high-intensity shoot-out" that left three people dead, police say.

Josh Sullivan was found unharmed in the township in Gqeberha in the Eastern Cape on Tuesday evening - the area where the 45-year-old was snatched from last Thursday.

There were no immediate details on the kidnapers who are suspected of having

been familiar with the family's movements.

Over the past decade, there has been a dramatic increase in kidnappings for ransom in South Africa.

Mr Sullivan's kidnapers had made a ransom demand, prompting the intervention of South Africa's elite police unit, known as the Hawks.

In a statement released on Wednesday morning, the Hawks said that Sullivan had been rescued following "verified intelligence wherein a co-

ordinated team... moved swiftly to the identified location".

Hawks spokesperson Avele Fumba said that as the officers approached the house, the suspects attempted to flee inside a vehicle, while opening fire.

"The officers responded with tactical precision, leading to a high-intensity shootout in which three unidentified suspects were fatally wounded," Mr Fumba said.

Mr Sullivan's family and friends had made impassioned pleas for his safe return since

his abduction.

Jeremy Hall, the Sullivan family's spokesman, told local newspaper TimesLIVE that he was at the church with his wife and their children when he was kidnapped.

"They knew his name," he said at the time.

Mr Sullivan describes himself as "a church planting missionary" on his personal website.

On it, he says he moved to South Africa with his wife and children in 2018 to establish a church for Xhosa-speaking people.

India's Gandhis charged in money laundering case amid opposition outcry

India's opposition Congress party has said it will organise nationwide protests on Wednesday after the country's financial crimes agency charged senior leaders Sonia and Rahul Gandhi and others with money laundering.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) presented its findings in a Delhi court on Tuesday, accusing the Gandhis of forming a shell company to illegally acquire assets of the National Herald newspaper worth more than 20bn rupees (\$233mn; £176mn).

Congress spokesperson Jairam Ramesh called the charges "politics of vendetta and intimidation" by the government.

The Gandhis who have previously denied any wrongdoing have

not commented on the charges.

The investigation also names other members of the Congress party, including its overseas chief Sam Pitroda, according to news agency ANI.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) began investigating the case in 2021 after a private complaint filed by Subramanian Swamy, a member of the governing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Swamy alleged that the Gandhis used party funds to take over Associated Journals Limited (AJL), which published the National Herald newspaper, and illegally acquired properties worth millions through AJL. The newspaper ceased operations in 2008 but was later relaunched as a digital publication.

The Congress maintains that it bailed out the publisher due to its historical legacy and had lent more than 900m rupees to AJL over the years.

In 2010, AJL became debt-free by swapping its debt for equity and assigning the shares to a newly created company called Young Indian, which the party says is a "not-for-profit company" with no dividends paid to its shareholders and directors.

Sonia and Rahul Gandhi are among Young Indian's directors and they each own 38% of the company. The remaining 24% is owned by Congress leaders, including Motilal Vora and Sam Pitroda.

Last week, the Enforcement Directorate said Young Indian had

acquired AJL properties worth 20bn rupees for just 5m, significantly undervaluing their worth.

It also served several notices to seize assets worth 6.6bn rupees across several Indian cities - including Delhi and Mumbai - which are connected to Young Indian.

The case is scheduled to come up for hearing on 25 April.

In recent years, the opposition has repeatedly accused the Narendra Modi government of weaponising the Enforcement Directorate against its political opponents.

According to data compiled by Reuters in 2024, the agency has summoned, questioned or raided around 150 opposition politicians since Modi came to power in 2014.

Peru's ex-president and first lady sentenced to 15 years in jail

Peru's former president, Ollanta Humala, has been found guilty of money laundering and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

A court in the capital, Lima, said he had accepted illegal funds from the Venezuelan president at the time, Hugo Chávez, and from the Brazilian construction company Odebrecht to bankroll his election campaigns in 2006 and 2011.

Humala's lawyer said he would appeal against the conviction.

His wife, Nadine Heredia, was also found guilty of money laundering and sentenced to 15 years in jail. However, she has been granted safe passage to Brazil after seeking asylum in the Brazilian embassy.

Humala's lawyer said he would appeal against the conviction.

Unlike her husband, Heredia was not present in court when Judge Nayko Coronado passed sentence - she had entered the Brazilian embassy along with the couple's son before an arrest warrant could be executed.

Brazil offered her asylum and the Peruvian government said it would honour the 1954 asylum convention to grant both Heredia and her son safe passage.

The former president, 62, was meanwhile taken to Barbadillo prison, where two other former leaders, Alejandro Toledo and Pedro Castillo, are already being held.

Humala was the first of four Peruvian presidents to be investigated in connection with the Odebrecht scandal.

Toledo, who governed from 2001 to 2006, was sentenced last year to more than 20 years in prison for taking \$35m (£26m) in bribes from the company.

Alan Garcia, president from 1985 to 1990 and 2006 to 2011, killed himself in 2019 as he faced imminent arrest over allegations he was bribed by Odebrecht. He denied the accusations.

Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, in office from 2016 to 2018, faced impeachment proceedings after it emerged that Odebrecht had

paid him millions of dollars in his previous government role.

Kuczynski has always maintained the payments were not illegal but an investigation is ongoing.

Prosecutors said that Humala and his wife, with whom he cofounded the Nationalist Party, had accepted \$3m in illegal contributions from the firm, which they used to finance his 2011 presidential campaign.

They also accused him of taking \$200,000 from Venezuelan leader Hugo Chávez to bankroll the 2006 campaign.

The couple have always maintained that they are the victims of political persecution.

Humala's lawyer, Wilfredo Pedraza, also said that their 15-year sentence was "excessive".

Prosecutors had asked for 20 years for the ex-president and 25 and a half years for Heredia.

Who is Ollanta Humala:

Humala is a former army officer who fought against the Maoist Shining Path rebels. He first came to national prominence in 2000 when he led a short-lived military rebellion against then-president Alberto Fujimori.

In 2006, he ran for president on a platform inspired by the socialist revolution of Venezuela's Chávez.

Alan García, Humala's election rival, warned voters "not to let Peru turn into another Venezuela" and won the presidency.

In 2011, Humala ran on a more moderate platform emulating the policies of Brazil's then-president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to defeat right-wing rival Keiko Fujimori, the eldest daughter of Alberto Fujimori.

Violent social conflicts quickly dented his popularity, and he lost the support of many members of Congress.

His legal troubles started shortly after his term finished in 2016, when Odebrecht admitted to bribing Latin American government officials and political parties with hundreds of millions of dollars to win business.

News

Foreign

Harvard just stood up to Trump: How long can it last?

Harvard University says it will not acquiesce to US President Donald Trump's demands - whether it continues to get federal funding or not.

"No government - regardless of which party is in power - should dictate what private universities can teach," Harvard's president Alan Garber said in a letter posted on the university's website.

Not long after Harvard refused to agree to the White House's sweeping list of demands - which included directions on how to govern, hire and teach - the Trump administration froze \$2.2bn (£1.7bn) of federal funds to the institution.

Many students and alumni lauded the university's decision to stand its ground, despite the consequences. Former President Barack Obama, an alumnus himself, called Trump's move "ham-handed" and praised Harvard as "an example for other higher-ed institutions".

In response to Harvard's decision to refuse the government's demands, the education department accused the university of a "troubling entitlement mindset that is endemic in our nation's most prestigious universities and colleges - that federal investment does not come with the responsibility to uphold civil rights laws".

With billions in the balance, the battle for the higher ground in the case of Harvard may just be the opening salvo in a war of attrition between the federal government and higher education.

Trump's attacks on Harvard are not isolated - the government's antisemitism task force has identified at least 60 universities for review.

At issue, the government says, is last year's pro-Palestinian campus protests, which wracked campuses across the country, and which the Trump administration says contributed to the harassment of Jewish students.

Last month, Columbia University agreed to many of the administration's demands in the wake of the protests - after the government cut \$400m in funding.

Harvard, too, made concessions. It agreed to engage with the administration's task force to combat antisemitism. The school dismissed the leaders of its Center for Middle Eastern Studies and suspended its Religion, Conflict, and Peace Initiative over accusations of anti-Israel bias.

And in January, Harvard settled two lawsuits brought by Jewish students alleging antisemitism. It did not admit any wrongdoing, and said the settlement showed its commitment to supporting its Jewish students and staff.

But the university drew the line at the White House's list of demands on Friday.

Harvard student Sa'maia Evans, who is an activist and member of the university's African and African American Resistance Organization, said the university's decision to take a stand was a long time coming.

"Harvard will only do that of which it is held accountable to," she told the BBC. She pointed to campus protests in the past few weeks - and the widespread criticism of Columbia's agreement with the Trump administration - as helping to put pressure on university officials.

"They know the public - they would experience public backlash" if they capitulated, Ms Evans said.



ADDRESSING UN:

Li Chenggang is a former World Trade Organisation and UN representative.

Gambian ex-soldier convicted of torture in rare US trial

A former Gambian soldier has been convicted on torture charges by a US court for his involvement in crimes committed while feared strongman Yahya Jammeh was in power in the West African country.

Michael Sang Correa was found guilty of being part of a conspiracy to commit torture against suspected opponents while serving under a military unit known as the "Junglers".

"The torture inflicted by Michael Sang Correa and his co-conspirators is abhorrent," the Justice Department said.

It follows a week-long trial in Denver, Colorado, under a rarely

used law that prosecutes crimes committed outside the US.

Correa was first detained in the US in 2019 for overstaying his visa, three years after settling in Denver where he reportedly worked as a day labourer.

The 46-year-old was charged in 2020 with torture and conspiracy to commit the torture of at least six people in The Gambia under a seldom-used law that allows people to be tried by the US judicial system for torture allegedly committed abroad.

He is the first non-US citizen to be convicted on torture charges in a federal district court for crimes committed

overseas, according to the Department of Justice. The law has only been used twice since it was enacted in 1994 but both of the previous cases were brought against US citizens.

The Department of Justice said Correa "tried to evade responsibility for his crimes in The Gambia by coming to the US and hiding his past".

"But we found him, we investigated him," said Matthew Galeotti, head of the Justice Department's Criminal Division.

The evidence at trial showed that Correa and his fellow Junglers tortured five people accused of plotting a coup against Jammeh.

The victims, including high-profile members of Jammeh's inner circle who fell out with him, told the jury how they were tortured by being electrocuted and smothered with plastic bags.

"Correa and his co-conspirators beat, stabbed, burned, and electrocuted the victims," the Justice Department said.

Prosecutors on Tuesday said Correa "played an integral role in inflicting this torture on the victims".

He faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison for each of the five torture counts

and the count of conspiracy to commit torture, the Justice Department said.

His lawyers had argued that Correa was a low-ranking soldier who only obeyed orders from his superiors.

But while the jury agreed that there was evidence that the Junglers lived in "constant fear," prosecutors said at trial that some Junglers had refused to obey orders to torture victims.

Jammeh, who seized power in 1994, foiled several attempts to overthrow him before he lost an election in 2016 to Adama Barrow in a surprise defeat.

His rule was characterised by allegations of human rights abuses and state repression, which he denied.

He went into exile in Equatorial Guinea after his defeat, though he remains an influential figure in The Gambia.

A Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC), held between 2019 and 2021, unearthed the crimes committed under Jammeh and recommended prosecution for those who were involved.

Last year, Jammeh's former interior minister was sentenced to 20 years in jail by a Swiss court for crimes against humanity.

China appoints new trade envoy in face of tariff turmoil

China has unexpectedly appointed a new trade envoy, as officials said the US's practice of "tariff barriers and trade bullying" is having a serious impact on the global economic order.

Li Chenggang, a former assistant commerce minister and WTO ambassador, is taking over from veteran trade negotiator Vice Commerce Minister Wang Shouwen.

The shift comes as Beijing refuses to back down in an escalating trade war with Washington triggered by US President Donald Trump's hefty tariffs on Chinese goods.

China's already sluggish economy is bracing for the impact on a key source of revenue - exports.

Beijing announced on Wednesday its GDP grew by 5.4% between January and March, compared with the same period a year earlier.

The figure has exceeded expectations but reflects the period before US tariffs jumped from 10% to 145%, and Chinese officials warned of more economic pain ahead.

While both Washington and Beijing have said they are open to negotiating, neither have

made a move to do so yet.

When that happens, Li, 58, will play a key role. He previously served as a deputy permanent representative to the United Nations in Geneva and has held several key jobs in the commerce ministry.

Speaking to Reuters, one expert said the change in jobs was "very abrupt and potentially disruptive" given the current trade tensions - adding that Wang also had experience negotiating with US since the first Trump administration.

"It might be that in the view of China's top leadership, given how tensions have continued escalating, they need someone else to break the impasse... and finally start negotiating," said Alfredo Montufar-Helu, a senior adviser to the Conference Board's China Centre.

However, another analyst who spoke to Reuters suggested the move could just be a "routine promotion" that just happened to come at a particularly tense period in time.

The US should 'stop whining'

Speaking at a press conference on Wednesday, Sheng Laiyun, deputy commissioner of the National Bureau of Sta-

tistics (NBS) warned that US levies would put pressure on China's foreign trade and economy, but added that China's economy is resilient and should improve in the long term.

"We firmly oppose the US practice of tariff barriers and trade bullying," said Sheng.

"It violates the economic laws and the principles of the World Trade Organization, has a serious impact on the world economic order, and drags down the recovery of the world economy."

In an editorial by state news outlet China Daily earlier this week, the outlet described the US's behaviour as "capricious and destructive", adding that it should "stop whining about itself being a victim in global trade".

"The US is not getting ripped off by anybody...rather... [it] has been taking a free ride on the globalisation train," the editorial went on to say.

Promising growth - but will it last?

German doctor charged with murder of 15 patients

A German palliative care doctor has been charged with murdering 15 of his patients using a cocktail of lethal drugs.

Prosecutors in Berlin have accused the 40-year-old of setting fire to the homes of some of his suspected victims to cover his tracks.

He allegedly killed 12 women and three men between September 2021 and July 2024, though prosecutors have said they believe that total could rise.

The doctor, who has not been named due to strict pri-

vacy laws in Germany, has not admitted to the charges, prosecutors said.

He is accused of administering an anaesthetic and a muscle relaxant to his patients without their knowledge or consent.

The relaxant "paralysed the respiratory muscles, leading to respiratory arrest and death within minutes", the prosecutor's office said in a statement.

He worked in several German states, and the ages of those whose deaths are being treated as suspicious range from 25 to 94.

It is also alleged that the suspect set fire to the apartments of his alleged victims to cover up the killings on five different occasions.

The suspect is accused of killing two patients in a single day in July 2024 - a 75-year-old man at his home in central Berlin, and a 76-year-old woman in a neighbouring district "a few hours later".

Prosecutors said the doctor tried to set fire to the woman's house but failed, adding: "When he noticed this, he reportedly informed a relative

of the woman, claiming that he was standing in front of her apartment and that no one had responded to his ringing."

The doctor was initially suspected of having killed four people in his care when he was arrested in August 2024 but investigations have uncovered other suspicious deaths, with more exhumations on potential victims planned.

A "lifelong professional ban" and "preventative detention" is being sought for the 40-year-old suspect. He remains in custody.

Sports

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

Praises for Aluo-led Board as NNL celebrates players, officials, referees

There were commendations from all quarters for the George Aluo-led Board of the Nigeria National League as the management of the second-tier of Nigeria's domestic football organized its third Awards Ceremony in Abuja on Tuesday.

President of Nigeria Football Federation, Alhaji Ibrahim Musa Gusau, who was represented by the NFF 1st Vice President Chief Felix Anyansi-Agwu, gave kudos to the NNL Board for the innovations it has introduced into the league, and challenged it to keep at the pace in order to take the 'most important league' to new heights.

On his part, NFF 2nd Vice President/Chairman of NPFL, Hon. Gbenga Elegbeleye, affirmed that the NNL is on the right track to actualizing full private-sector clubs' participation, while challenging the NNL board to keep encouraging private sector participation in club ownership and management. He also applauded the accomplishments of the Aluo-led board so far.

NFF General Secretary, Dr Mohammed Sanusi, was emphatic that given the various changes and innovations introduced into the league by



Hon. Elegbeleye (standing) gives his speech while Chief Anyansi (second left), Aluo (first right) and Dr Sanusi (left) watch.

the present board, the NFF has no regrets in putting the board in charge of the second-tier league. He utilized the opportunity to invite First Bank PLC to consider partnering with the NNL, as a way of giving back to the society and taking the youth off the streets to curb all forms of social vices.

In his remarks, former NFF President Alhaji Sani Lulu Abdullahi commended the warm relationship among the various league bodies and the Nigeria Football Federation. He noted that the present NFF leadership has continued to show genuine passion for football development at the grassroots,

while also calling for private sector involvement in sponsorship of the domestic game.

Chairman of the NNL, Mr. George Aluo, was full of appreciation to the eminent guests for their warm words of encouragement. He extolled the leadership qualities of Alhaji Ibrahim Musa Gusau and Dr Mohammed Sanusi at the NFF, and attributed the successes recorded so far by the league to the purpose-driven leadership at the NFF.

"These Awards are a way of encouraging good performances and good conduct, and also to inculcate the spirit of competition among the vari-

ous participants in the league. I commend our partners, ProStar Recreational Services Limited and Sportslights Hub for supporting the NNL to organize these awards to encourage our outstanding players, officials and referees."

Chief Executive Officer of the NNL, Mr. Emmanuel Atah, gave a brief background on how NNL secured the partnerships with ProStar and Sportslights Hub. He enjoined both organizations to continue to identify with the league especially as footage of league matches are now being seen in various parts of the country and the world at large.

FA Cup25: Insurance FC now focus on league after Federation Cup exit

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The rivalry between Bendel Insurance and Rangers International FC of Enugu continues as the Enugu side side gained upper hand in the round of 16 of the 2025: President Federation Cup after a 1-0 triumph over the Benin Arsenals on Wednesday, April 16, 2025 at the Onikan stadium, Lagos.

Godwin Obaje scored the only goal of the match for the Flying Antelope in the extra time after 45 minutes before the first half whistle. Insurance Young goalkeeper had been penalized for a hard tackle in his box for a penalty kick which Obaje neatly converted.

The second half of the highly tactical game did not produce results as Insurance FC effort

● host Nasarawa on Sunday

to reply their old foes met strong resistance.

The two traditional clubs played to a goalless draw in an exciting but yet frustrating encounter for the hosts in the match day 32 of the 2025 Nigeria premier Football League.

Recall that Insurance defeated Rangers International 1-0 in Asaba to win the 2023 Federation Cup.

The two sides also met in a crucial league match, played on Saturday, April 5, 2025 at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin which saw both teams settled for a goalless draw in Benin despite showing impressive attacking prowess and solid defensive performances.

The coach Greg Ikhenoba led Insurance defeated Kwara United 1-0 in Ilorin in the NPFL

week 33 match before the FA Cup encounter with Rangers.

Bendel Insurance also suffered a 3-2 defeat in the hands of Rangers in their first round meeting in the NPFL first round in Enugu.

Speaking during the post match interview, Bendel Insurance head coach Greg Ikhenoba in disappointment over inability to convert the few chances they got to get equalizer and possibly get to the quarter finals.

National Sports festival 2025 unveils theme song, logo, Mascot

Organisers of the 22nd National Sports Festival, tagged the Gateway Games, have unveiled its logo, theme song, and mascot.

The communication materials were unveiled yesterday during a colourful ceremony

inside the June 12 Cultural Centre in Abeokuta.

The Deputy Governor, Nomot Salako-Oyedele stood in for the Ogun State Governor, Prince Dapo Abiodun during the unveiling.

The logo is mainly in Ogun

State theme colours of lemon green and yellow.

The unveiling of the logo was immediately followed by that of the Festival's Theme Song as composed by Dr Bayo Adepetun.

It is titled 'E'kaabo' a Yoruba word for 'Welcome' as Ogun State prepares to welcome thousands of athletes, officials, tourists and VIPs when the 22nd National Sports Festival comes alive on May 16.

The jam-packed hall roared in excitement when the festival's mascot was eventually unveiled.

Named 'Omo Ogun', the animated version strolled on the stage and saluted the audience before getting down the stage to greet the dignitaries. The Festival ends on 31 May 2025.



AFCON U20: Kenyan captain Ocheho confident ahead Nigeria clash

Kenya U20 captain Baron Ochieng has expressed confidence in his team's readiness to take on any opponent at the upcoming U20 Africa Cup of Nations in Egypt.

The Rising Stars secured their spot in the tournament after overcoming Tanzania in the qualifiers and have been drawn into a challenging group alongside Nigeria's Flying Eagles, Morocco, and Tunisia.

Speaking to The Star, the talented midfielder emphasized the team's solid preparations and fearless attitude.

"We've prepared well, and despite the tough group, we're not afraid of our opponents. Even if we had been placed in the other group, we would still have faced teams like Morocco in the knockout stages," Ochieng stated.

The biennial tournament is set to kick off on April 27.



Nigeria Rowing, Canoeing and Sailing Federation launch Ibom Club

In order to make water sport take its rightful position in the Niger Delta Region, the Nigeria Rowing, Canoeing and Sailing Federation recently launched Ibom Club.

The lunch took place at the Marina Waterfront of the 5 Star Ibom Hotels in Uruan LGA of Akwa Ibom State, venue of canoeing competition during the closing ceremony of the Canoeing championship of the first Niger Delta Sports Festival held in Uyo the Akwa Ibom State Capital from 2nd - 9th April 2025.

With the growing global interest in recreational and competitive water sports, it will serve as a hub to develop other canoeing club in the state.

Rowing, Canoeing, & Sailing are excellent water sports that promote physical fitness, team work and environmental appreciation.

The club will provide a structured platform for development and harnessing of our

cultural lifestyle.

During the launch which was presided over by the Federation President Rear Admiral Festus Porbeni Rtd, in the presence of Secretary General Olubunmi Ola Oluode, Technical Director Ebenezer Ayomide Bello who is also the African number 1, world number 8 and two time Olympian, and King Okon, the Sports consultant and the Club Promoter.

The Local Government Chairman of Uruan LGA ably represented by Comrade Liberty Usanga was on hand to receive his guests.

Also present to grace the occasion was the Director of Sports of Bayelsa State Sir Braveman Wodi, Rivers State Head of Delegation Gabriel Opuona who alongside Obong Ntiense Williams popularly known as Mr. Rugby also represented the Sports Coaches Association of Nigeria (SCAN).



SPORTS

Ogun 2025 NSF a test of Nigerian sports reforms says Dikko, as Ogun governor declares National Council on sports meeting open

An Olympics-standard National Sports Festival in Abeokuta will be the true test of the ongoing reforms in the Nigerian sports sector. These were the views of National Sports Commission Chairman Mallam Shehu Dikko while virtually delivering a keynote address at the opening ceremony of the Extraordinary National Council on Sports meeting in Abeokuta today from Milan Italy. The NSC chairman is the chairman of the National Council on Sports which comprised all the commissioners of sports and Directors of sports from across all the 36 States plus FCT and other stakeholders. It is the apex policy decision-making body for sports. While hailing President Bola Ahmed Tinubu GCFR for the bold decision to scrap the Federal Ministry of Sports for the Nation-

al Sports Commission and the deliberate and intentional decisions to advance sports, Mallam Dikko pointed out that this has set the tone for the reforms in the sector. His words, "Mr. President is noted for taking very bold decisions. The decision to reintroduce the NSC was a very bold one and truly challenged us. The current status has placed sports as a national asset and the necessary legislations and regulations supporting the sector are being facilitated. "We aligned with the President's Renewed Hope and Shared prosperity agenda and came up with the Renewed Hope Initiative for Nigerian Sports Economy (RHINSE) to anchor the reforms agenda. This has taken us to a road less-travelled. So we are no longer competition driven but we are focusing on the domestic development of our

sports from the grassroots to the elite levels. Hence we have set the three Rs namely reset, refocus and relaunch as the key pillars. "We are very deliberate with what we are doing. The private sector has to be more involved in our sports development; our infrastructure should be refurbished

and upscaled while we must place more emphasis on grassroots and schools sports. We must focus on talent development. If we get this right, we can generate immense revenue through the export of talents. The target is basically to make sports a huge contributor to the nation's economy and one of

its major drivers." Considering this, the importance of the National Council on Sports Extraordinary Meeting cannot be overemphasized. "All these reforms mean that the National Council on Sports has to align appropriately and ensure that the 22nd National Sports

Festival to be hosted by Abeokuta should be the best ever. We should host an Olympics-standard Festival that will set a benchmark for future editions," he said. While welcoming the Council members to the extraordinary meeting, Ogun State Governor Prince Dapo Abiodun, represented by the Deputy Governor Enge. Noimot Salako-Oyedele, assured that the state will host a memorable Sports Festival. He said, "National Council on Sports as the apex sports decision-making body plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of sports in our nation. This meeting will usher in the 22nd National Sports Festival Ogun 2025. Just yesterday we unveiled the official logo, theme song and mascot. All these speak to our commitment to delivering a world-class Sports Festival in May"



FA Cup revenge: Nasarawa Utd beat Bayelsa Utd in Penalty Shootout to secure FA Cup quarter-finals' ticket

In a dramatic round of 16 clash in the 2025 President Federation's Cup, Nasarawa United avenged their 2021 FA Cup final loss to Bayelsa United by defeating them 5-3 in a penalty shootout after regulation time had ended 1-1 apiece. The match, played at the Late Prince Abubakar Audu University Stadium, Anyigba, Kogi State, on Wednesday morning, was evenly contested, with both sides creating scoring opportunities. The Solid Miners and Bayelsa United traded goals, resulting in a 1-1 deadlock after 90 minutes, with Anas Yusuf scoring from the spot for United in the 49th minute after Shina Kumater was hacked down inside the box, while Yahaya Ibrahim levelled matters for the 2021 champions in the 61st minute. Nasarawa United showed excellent composure and skill in the penalty shootout session, converting five out of five spot kicks to emerge victorious. Kabir Balogun, Utake Emmanuel, Salomon Chigoziem, Jack Benjamin and Manga Mohammed all converted their spot kicks, while Detan Ogundare saved Bayelsa United's Isa Owoyemi's kick. The hard-fought win sees the Solid Miners advancing to the last eight of the single knock-out longest inter-club football competition in Nigeria, where they hope to continue with

their determination and enthusiasm to get to a third final's appearance within the space of ten years. United's next opponents will be known after the completion of other round of 16 fixtures. For now, the coach Salisu Yusuf-tutored side will turn their attention to the match-day 34 clash against Bendel Insurance at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin City, Edo State, this weekend, in the ongoing 2024/25 Nigeria Premier Football League Season.



Football: Osaze Urhoghide shun Netherlands call up for Super Eagle

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Osaze Urhoghide, a top defender for FC Dallas in the MLS, has expressed his desire and avail-

ability to represent his fatherland Nigeria, if called upon at anytime soon. The 24-year-old strong and talented defender who previously played for Celtic in Scot-

land, has reportedly informed family and friends of his readiness to join the Super Eagles when the opportunity comes. Known for his defensive prowess and counter-attacking ability, the Benin boy Urhoghide is often compared to legendary Austin Eguavon. His versatility allows him to play various defensive roles, including defensive midfield. With the Super Eagles' defensive line facing stability issues, particularly with captain William Troost-Ekong's advancing age and Samuel Ajayi injury-prone nature, Urhoghide's inclusion could provide a valuable boost to the national senior team.



AFCON U20: Senegal protests Tunisia's inclusion, petitions CAF

Despite a revised draw for the upcoming U-20 Africa Cup of Nations in Egypt, tensions remain high among the participating teams, BSNSports.com.ng reports. The unexpected withdrawal of Côte d'Ivoire as tournament host has continued to create complications—particularly for Senegal. Following Egypt's confir-

mation as the new host nation, Tunisia was selected to replace Ivory Coast in the tournament lineup. However, the Senegalese Football Federation (FSF) has formally objected to Tunisia's inclusion. On Tuesday afternoon, the FSF submitted an official protest letter to the Confederation of African Football (CAF) headquarters in Cairo.

Mourinho's next managerial job after Fenerbahce revealed

Fenerbahce's Jose Mourinho is believed to be "close" to replacing Roberto Martinez as Portugal manager, according to CNN. It is a shock move that could see Mourinho reunited with Cristiano Ronaldo. The two Portuguese men worked together at Real Madrid between 2010 and 2013. Mourinho is being lined up by

the Portuguese federation, and is likely land the job this summer. Coaching Ronaldo is not believed to be an issue for Mourinho, despite the tension between the two from their time together in Spain. Taking over now would allow Mourinho a long time with the national team ahead of the 2026 World Cup in North America.

