

MAIDUGURI/ABUJA

Nigerian troops have neutralised more than 80 terrorists in a fierce overnight battle in Mallam Fatori, Borno State, even as the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Olufemi Oluyede, warned that local complicity is undermining counter-insurgency efforts and urged residents of Borno and Yobe to take ownership of the war against Boko Haram and ISWAP.

The successful military op-

80 terrorists killed in Borno battle

● **As CDS warns of local complicity, urges community ownership of anti-insurgency war**

eration, carried out by troops of Operation HADIN KAI under the Joint Task Force (North East), repelled a coordinated five-pronged attack launched in the early hours of Wednesday on the 68 Battalion location in Sector 3.

According to an operational report made available to journalists, the insurgents advanced in large numbers

on foot and deployed armed drones in a bid to breach defensive positions, particularly along the Bravo Company frontage from the Duguri axis.

However, troops, acting on prior intelligence, mounted a well-coordinated offensive-defensive response, engaging the attackers with superior firepower and tactical manoeuvres

that overwhelmed them and forced a disorderly retreat.

Air support from the Air Component of Operation HADIN KAI, alongside allied Nigerian air assets, delivered precision strikes on fleeing insurgents, further decimating their ranks.

A subsequent sweep of the battlefield led to the recovery of a large cache of arms and ammunition,

including dozens of AK-47 rifles, machine guns, rocket-propelled grenade launchers, improvised explosive devices, and components of armed drones.

Despite the scale and intensity of the encounter, only four soldiers were wounded in action and have since been stabilised, while battle damage assessment is ongoing.

Among those killed were three senior terrorist commanders identified as Malam Abdulrahman Gobara, Malam Ba Yuram, and Abou Ayyuba, alongside several other fighters.

The military described the outcome as a major setback for insurgent operations in the axis, noting that the elimination of key commanders would significantly disrupt their command structure.

It reaffirmed that troops re-

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The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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**NYSC
postings:
NAS
demands
ban on
deployments
to high-risk
states**

—Pg 2

Edo tightens grip on contractors, enforces zero-tolerance on poor work

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has issued a tough ultimatum to contractors handling public infrastructure projects, warning that any job falling short of approved standards will be rejected and redone at the contractor's expense.

The directive, delivered during an on-site inspection of key road projects in Edo South Sen-

atorial District, underscores the administration's hardline stance against substandard construction and signals a sweeping enforcement drive across the state.

Speaking to journalists, the Special Adviser on Projects Implementation and Monitoring, Engr. Williams-Bello Phoebe, said the government would no longer tolerate poor-quality delivery under any guise, stressing that only projects that meet stipulated specifications

would be certified and paid for.

She conveyed the position of Governor Monday Okpebholo, noting that the administration has adopted a zero-tolerance policy on compromised standards as part of its broader commitment to accountability and value for money.

According to her, a comprehensive monitoring exercise has already commenced across the three senatorial districts—Edo North, Edo Central, and

Edo South to ensure strict compliance with contractual terms and uniformity in project execution statewide.

"We want all contractors to understand clearly that this administration places the highest premium on quality control. We have commenced curing processes on projects that have reached pavement level, including the binder and wearing course. There is absolutely no room for sub-standard work," she said.

Phoebe explained that beyond enforcing engineering standards, the ongoing inspection regime is aimed at safeguarding public funds and ensuring that infrastructure projects deliver long-term benefits to residents.

She warned that any contractor found to have delivered below standard would be compelled to reconstruct the affected sections entirely at their own cost, insisting that the state would not bear the financial burden of poor workmanship.

The Special Adviser also advised contractors whose projects are still at early stages to comply voluntarily with

required standards before inspection teams arrive, noting that the government's intention is not punitive but corrective.

"I urge contractors yet to reach the pavement stage to do the right thing. We do not want a situation where it appears we are witch-hunting anyone when we direct that defective work be scarified and redone," she added.

Reaffirming the administration's commitment to professionalism and durability in infrastructure delivery, Phoebe stressed that all projects executed under Governor Okpebholo must meet contractual benchmarks and stand the test of time.



SWEARING-IN CEREMONY:

L-R: Imo State Deputy Governor, Chinyere Ekomaru; Kaduna State Deputy Governor, Dr Hadiza Balarabe; former President Goodluck Jonathan; former President Olusegun Obasanjo, Vice-President Kashim Shettima; Governor Chukwuma Soludo of Anambra State; his wife, Nonye; Anambra State Deputy Governor, Dr Onyekachukwu Ibezim, and his wife, Oluchi, during the swearing-in ceremony of Prof Soludo as Governor of Anambra State for the second term in office at the Alex Ekwueme Square, Awka, Anambra State.

Funding delays threaten immunisation gains —Stakeholders

ABUJA

Stakeholders in Nigeria's health sector have warned that persistent delays in the release of approved funds are undermining the country's immunisation progress, despite a significant surge in budgetary allocations over the past two years.

The concern was raised on Wednesday in Abuja during a media engagement on immunisation financing and zero-dose children, organised by the Vaccine Network for Disease Control (VNDC) under the PREACH Project, with support from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance through the Global

Health Advocacy Incubator.

Participants disclosed that Nigeria's immunisation financing rose sharply by 233 percent — from N69.57 billion in 2023 to N231.74 billion in 2025, marking the highest allocation on record.

However, only N68.8 billion has so far been released, creating a widening gap between approved budgets and actual disbursement.

Chief Executive Officer of VNDC, Chika Ofor, cautioned that the delays pose serious risks to vaccine supply chains, routine immunisation programmes, and ongoing efforts

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EDOHIC cracks down on data lapses, tightens oversight to boost Edo PHC

EDWARD OSEGHE

BENIN CITY

In a decisive push to strengthen primary healthcare delivery, the Edo State Health Insurance Commission (EDOHIC) has moved to close critical data gaps and enforce

stricter accountability measures across the system, warning that persistent reporting lapses are undermining service efficiency and access to care.

The Commission ramped up its reform drive at a high-level stakeholders' engagement held on Wednesday at its headquar-

ters in Benin City, where key actors in the health sector reviewed performance, identified operational weaknesses, and mapped out practical steps to improve outcomes at the grassroots.

The meeting drew participation from Medical Officers of Health, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officers, and representatives from all 18 Local Government Areas, underscoring the breadth of concern over systemic inefficiencies.

At the heart of deliberations was the growing challenge of poor data quality, described by officials as a major obstacle to

effective planning, resource allocation, and service delivery.

Addressing participants, the Director-General of EDOHIC acknowledged noticeable improvements in supervisory activities across Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs), but warned that recurring inaccuracies, delays, and inconsistencies in data reporting continue to erode gains made in the sector.

"Data remains the backbone of our operations. It is indispensable for informed decision-making, resource allocation, and ensuring that healthcare services reach the

most vulnerable," she stated.

She aligned the Commission's renewed focus with the Edo State Government's SHINE Agenda under Governor Monday Okpebholo, stressing that a robust and efficient health system is central to achieving sustainable development goals.

A detailed performance review presented by the Director of Planning, Research and Statistics, Dr. Owen Omorogbe, covering the second to fourth quarters of 2025, highlighted interventions under the Basic Healthcare Provision Fund and the State Equity Programme.

Although some Local Government Areas recorded measurable improvements, the report revealed that data integrity challenges remain widespread.

Dr. Omorogbe identified recurring issues including poor image quality in digital submissions, illegible records, incomplete data fields, and delays in reporting.

He disclosed that the Commission has adopted a hybrid reporting framework combining digital and manual processes, in compliance with the National Health Insurance Authority's two-week reporting requirement.

Funding delays threaten immunisation...

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to reach zero-dose children in underserved communities.

She noted that while media attention has occasionally prompted partial releases of funds, such gains are often short-lived, allowing systemic bottlenecks to persist.

Offor stressed the need for sustained advocacy and stronger accountability mechanisms to ensure timely financing.

According to her, the PREACH Project is designed to drive policy reforms, enhance domestic resource mobilisation, and strengthen accountability in immunisation and primary healthcare financing nationwide.

Offor also highlighted proposals aimed at improving funding sustainability, including increasing the Basic Health Care Provision Fund from one to two per cent, allocating a portion of Federation Account resources to health commodities, reforming taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages, and establishing an Immunisation Trust Fund.

Chair of the Nigeria Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Forum, Chief Moji Mekanjuola, underscored the importance of grassroots advocacy, noting that community-driven storytelling can significantly influence government action and improve accountability.

She cited a case in Kwali where community voices spotlighted healthcare challenges, prompting government in-

tervention and the release of funds within a week, an example she said demonstrates the power of field-based reporting.

Mekanjuola observed that while some communities actively demand immunisation services, others remain constrained by access barriers and systemic weaknesses.

She urged journalists to prioritise grassroots perspectives through field reporting, visual documentation, and human-centred storytelling.

Also speaking, Prof. Emmanuel Alhassan, Nigeria Coordinator for Prevent Epidemics/Immunisation Programmes at the Global Health Advocacy Incubator, said community-focused reporting has already yielded tangible improvements in primary healthcare delivery.

He added that many communities continue to seek urgent interventions, reinforcing the need for sustained grassroots engagement.

He called on the media to move beyond elite discourse and amplify the voices of ordinary Nigerians, stressing that stronger collaboration among stakeholders is vital to improving health outcomes, particularly for children and vulnerable populations.

Participants at the forum agreed that sustained grassroots engagement and closer collaboration among the media, civil society organisations, and communities are essential to achieving responsive and inclusive healthcare governance.

80 terrorists killed in Borno...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

main firmly in control of Malam Fatori and surrounding areas, dismissing claims of setbacks as misinformation, and urged residents to remain vigilant and rely only on verified information as operations continue across the North-East.

Meanwhile, speaking in Maiduguri after a four-hour closed-door strategic meeting with top military commanders, General Oluyede stressed that the fight against insurgency cannot be won without the active cooperation of local communities.

The meeting, attended by the Chief of Army Staff, Lt.-Gen. Waidi Shaibu; the Theatre Commander, Operation HADIN KAI, Maj.-Gen. Abdul-salam Abubakar; and other senior officers, was part of renewed efforts to counter rising attacks and bombings in the region.

Oluyede said the military high command relocated to Borno on the directive of President Bola Tinubu to reassess and strength-

en operational strategies.

"We are here to review our strategies in the fight against Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorists in the North-East," he said, noting that recent attacks during the Ramadan period were consistent with insurgents' tactics.

While insisting that the military remains on top of the situation, the CDS expressed concern over intelligence indicating that many perpetrators of violence originate from within affected communities.

"Most of the people perpetrating these heinous acts are from these states. They are our brothers, sisters and cousins. We know them," he said.

He cited a recent incident in Kukawa, where troops conducting a cordon-and-search operation after an attack discovered two wounded terrorists hidden within the community, suggesting local collaboration.

"Therefore, the people in these two states, Borno and Yobe, must take ownership in this war," Oluyede declared.



COMMITTEE'S VISIT:

Deputy Senate President, Senator Barau Jibril (right), and Chairman, Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Committee on State Police, Professor Olu Ogunsakin, during the committee's visit to the Deputy Senate President in Abuja yesterday. Photo by Omoye Aminu

Edo SSG champions religious harmony at Ramadan Iftar with govt officials

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

BENIN CITY

The Secretary to the Edo State Government (SSG), Umar Musa Ikhilor, Esq., has hosted a Ramadan Iftar at his residence, calling on citizens and government functionaries to embrace religious harmony, peace, and mutual understanding.

Speaking to guests, Ikhilor said the gathering, held as the holy month of Ramadan winds down, was intended to strengthen bonds among col-

leagues and foster reflection.

"I just thought that as Ramadan is gradually winding down, we should use this opportunity to host something like this," he said.

The SSG explained that the event follows similar engagements across Edo's three senatorial districts, where government officials interacted with Muslim communities during the fasting period.

"We went to Edo North with some appointees, broke fast with the Muslim community, and the feedback was very amazing," he noted. "We thought it was only right to

extend the same gesture to our close colleagues in government."

Ikhilor emphasised that the true beauty of faith lies in building bridges and promoting understanding across different beliefs. "Harmony is what we need more than ever in our society today," he said, adding that this year's unusual coincidence, the Christian season of Lent and Ramadan beginning on the same day, February 18 symbolises a divine call for unity.

"Perhaps God is guiding us toward that purpose. This is a wonderful sign that this year is about coming together and building the harmony our society truly needs," he said, urging citizens to spread

peace, love, mutual understanding, and tolerance.

The Head of Service, Anthony Okungbowa, Esq., praised the SSG for the initiative, describing him as a unifying figure within government.

"What you have done today is a testimony to the kind of person you are. May God bless you," he said.

The Iftar brought together top Edo State Government officials, including special advisers, permanent secretaries, and heads of Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), who shared prayers, reflections, and fellowship in the spirit of Ramadan.

NYSC postings: NAS demands ban on deployments to high-risk states

ABUJA

The National Association of Seadogs (Pyrates Confraternity) has called for an immediate and far-reaching overhaul of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) deployment system, urging authorities to halt the posting of corps members to states plagued by persistent insecurity.

In a statement issued in Abuja on Wednesday, the association's Cap'n, Dr Joseph Oteri, warned that Nigeria's worsening security situation now poses a direct and grow-

ing threat to young graduates participating in the scheme.

He said current realities across the country demand an urgent reassessment of NYSC operations, particularly with regard to the safety of corps members.

"The present security realities across the country demand an urgent reassessment of how the scheme operates, particularly about the safety of corps members," Oteri stated.

While acknowledging that the NYSC, established in 1973 after the civil war, has played a vital role in fostering national unity, Oteri stressed that the scheme

must not expose participants to life-threatening risks.

"National unity should never come at the cost of the lives and safety of Nigeria's young graduates," he said.

The group pointed to rising cases of kidnapping, banditry and violent attacks across several parts of the country, noting that corps members travelling long distances for orientation and primary assignments have become increasingly vulnerable.

"Incidents of kidnapping for ransom, banditry, and violent assaults on highways have become more widespread; young gradu-

ates are increasingly vulnerable to such threats," he added.

The association cited recent and past incidents, including the abduction of a prospective corps member travelling to Sokoto, as well as earlier attacks involving corps members in Zamfara and the Federal Capital Territory, describing them as part of a disturbing pattern over the past decade.

According to NAS, corps members have repeatedly faced kidnappings, violent attacks and fatal road accidents linked to their deployment across the country.

Edo flood projects spark economic revival, win public backing

WINIFRED INARUMEN

BENIN CITY

Residents across Edo State have begun to celebrate visible improvements in their communities following intensified flood control and erosion management projects under Governor Monday Okpebholo's SHINE Agenda, as authorities move to permanently tackle decades-long environmental challenges.

The Edo State Flood, Erosion and Watershed Management Agency (EdoFEWMA), led by

the agency Boss and Project Coordinator for Edo State NEWM-AP-EIB, Hon. Muhammed Bawa Okoyomoh, recently carried out a comprehensive technical inspection of key intervention sites across the state.

The inspection covered both ongoing and completed projects designed to check the persistent threats of gully erosion and flooding.

Across affected communities, residents say the results are already transforming daily life. Areas once plagued by seasonal devastation now report

renewed commercial activity, improved access routes, and enhanced security.

Speaking during the inspection, Okoyomoh stressed that the administration's development drive is not limited to any one region.

He noted that projects executed in Edo South are being replicated across Edo North and Edo Central as part of a deliberate statewide strategy.

"The projects you see here in the South are being replicated across Edo North and Central," he said. "Edo State has become

a major construction hub. We commend the Governor's vision and the contractors' dedication to maintaining high standards."

Although construction activities have temporarily disrupted movement in some locations due to heavy machinery, residents said that the long-term gains, particularly improvements to schools, businesses, and neighbourhood safety, outweigh the inconveniences.

In Iwogban and surrounding areas, community members expressed strong support for the projects, describing

them as life-changing.

Mrs. Roseline Erahon, a respected elder from Uteh-Iwogban, urged residents to sustain their backing for the government's efforts, using a local proverb to underline her message.

"It is only good land that one would farm on twice," she said, praying for the Governor's continued success and calling for collective ownership of the progress achieved so far.

At Uteh-Iwogban Boundary Road, similar sentiments were

echoed by Mrs. Grace Aligbe and Mr. Junior Osawiew, a local vigilante from Eromosele Road.

They expressed gratitude for the long-awaited construction of access roads and commended the government for addressing years of neglect.

Osawiew noted that the reclamation of Eromosele Street from a devastating gully had restored livelihoods, reconnecting residents who were previously cut off from economic opportunities in the city.



SENSITIZATION RALLY:

L-R: Deputy Corps Commander, Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Oyo State, Bayode Olugbesan; Oyo State Sector Commander, Rosemary Alo, and Route Commander, Hakeem Alayande, during a sensitization rally to ensure hitch-free before and during Eld-el-Fitr celebration in Abuja on Wednesday.

Recycling drive gains momentum as 145 Lagos workers receive support

LAGOS

A major push to tackle plastic pollution in Lagos gathered momentum on Wednesday as Circularity Africa empowered 145 waste recovery officers with recycling equipment to strengthen grassroots waste management systems.

The initiative, unveiled to mark the 2026 World Recycling Day, is aimed at curbing

marine litter and preventing plastic waste from entering water bodies, particularly the Atlantic Ocean.

Founder and Managing Director of the organisation, Mr. Seunfunmi Ogungbure, said the programme targets underserved communities where waste management remains a low priority due to economic hardship.

He explained that the intervention would not only ad-

dress environmental concerns but also create income opportunities for participants.

"Today, we are distributing recycling equipment to 145 material recovery officers drawn from the communities we serve," Ogungbure said. "Our goal is to prevent plastic pollution and marine litter from getting into water bodies while also supporting livelihoods."

As part of the broader initiative, the organisation is establishing 54 community recycling collection clusters across Nigeria, particularly within

local government areas, to improve waste aggregation and recycling efficiency.

Ogungbure noted that many residents struggle to prioritise waste disposal due to poverty, often viewing it as an unnecessary expense.

"People ask why they should pay to dispose of waste when they cannot feed themselves. Waste management becomes secondary," he said.

"Recycling provides a solution that addresses both economic and environmental challenges."

Kwara, UNICEF launch trauma response for Woro massacre survivors

ILORIN

In response to the devastating February 2026 terrorist attack on Woro community, the Kwara State Government, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), has rolled out integrated mental health and psychosocial support services for affected residents.

The attack, which claimed over 100 lives including women and children, left survivors traumatised, displaced, and in urgent need of coordinated humanitarian assistance.

As part of the intervention,

volunteers drawn from teaching, healthcare, and social work professions, alongside community leaders, have been trained and deployed to deliver structured psychosocial support, with particular focus on vulnerable groups.

UNICEF Child Protection Specialist, Wilfred Mamah, said the initiative adopts a multi-sectoral approach, addressing not only immediate trauma but also long-term recovery needs.

He emphasised the importance of integrating services across health, education, nutrition, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) to strengthen

child protection systems.

According to Mamah, trained facilitators are already providing counselling and structured play therapy to help children cope with grief, fear, and loss.

"When children endure such trauma, the impact goes far beyond the moment of violence," he said. "Children who once lived freely may withdraw into silence or become afraid to attend school."

He stressed that while trauma robs children of their sense of normalcy, timely support can help them rebuild their lives.

Despite the scale of devastation, he expressed confidence

in the resilience of affected communities, noting that children have a remarkable capacity to heal when given adequate care and protection.

Kwara State Commissioner for Health, Aminat El-Imam, described the attack as tragic and reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting survivors through both psychosocial and infrastructural interventions.

She disclosed that the ministry had already provided medical consumables to mitigate the immediate impact of the crisis and pledged sustained collaboration with UNICEF to restore normalcy in the affected areas.

Don seeks research funding access for private Universities

EDE (OSUN)

A university don, Prof. Foluke Unuabonah, has called on governments at all levels to extend research funding support to private universities, arguing that their contributions to national development justify equal access to grants.

Unuabonah, a Professor of Linguistics and Discourse Analysis at Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State made the appeal while delivering the institution's 22nd inaugural lecture in Ede on Wednesday.

The lecture, titled "From Text to Context: Advancing Corpus Pragmatics in the Nigerian English Environment," explored the relevance of corpus pragmatics in understanding the structure and usage of Nigerian English.

She argued that private universities, which pay taxes and train thousands of Nigerian students, should not be excluded from research funding frameworks such as the Tertiary Ed-

ucation Trust Fund (TETFund).

"Supporting research in private universities is an investment in national development," she said, advocating for policies that would allow their academics to serve as principal investigators in TETFund-sponsored projects.

Unuabonah also called for the integration of corpus linguistics into undergraduate and postgraduate curricula, describing it as both a discipline and a research methodology with vast academic potential.



PROF. UNUABONAH

NNPP rejects court verdict, moves to challenge leadership ruling

ABUJA

The New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) has rejected the judgment of a Federal Capital Territory High Court recognising Dr. Agbo Major as the party's authentic leader, describing the ruling as a miscarriage of justice and vowing to challenge it at the appellate level.

In a statement issued in Abuja, the party's National Publicity Secretary, Ladipo Johnson, criticised the judgment as an affront to democratic principles and due process.

Johnson argued that the court overstepped its jurisdiction by entertaining a matter already pending before the Court of Appeal in Owerri, thereby violating established legal doctrines, including the principle of stare decisis.

He alleged that the suit was filed by expelled members acting in concert with Dr. Boniface Aniebonam in a bid to destabilise the party ahead of the 2027 general elections.

According to him, the proceedings were fundamentally

flawed, particularly as the party was allegedly not properly served with court documents.

"The court's decision to proceed despite clear evidence that NNPP was never served is a violation of the principle of fair hearing," he said, adding that substituted service was effected at an address not recognised by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

Johnson warned that the ruling could erode public confidence in the judiciary at a critical time for Nigeria's democracy.

He, however, reassured party members that the leadership remained intact and committed to pursuing legal redress.

"We are taking immediate steps to appeal this judgment. We are confident that the appellate court will correct this anomaly and uphold the rule of law," he said.

Describing the development as a temporary setback, Johnson insisted that attempts to hijack the party would ultimately fail, stressing that the NNPP remained a strong opposition force ahead of the 2027 elections.

NEWS

C'River deploys drones to expand rural healthcare access

CALABAR

Cross River State has deployed drone technology to boost healthcare delivery in remote communities, significantly improving access to essential medicines and immunisation services.

The Commissioner for Health, Mr Henry Ayuk, dis-

closed this while speaking with journalists in Calabar on Wednesday, noting that the innovation has strengthened service delivery in previously underserved and hard-to-reach areas.

Ayuk said the initiative, implemented in partnership with Zipline, is designed to serve more than 300 health facilities,

particularly in riverine and mountainous communities with limited transportation access.

According to him, the use of drones has enhanced efficiency and responsiveness in the distribution of medical supplies across the state.

"Beyond faster deliveries to hard-to-reach areas, the system has reduced wastage and helped curb the circulation of counterfeit medicines, thereby strengthening the integrity of the state's drug supply chain," he said.

He added that the initiative has also expanded immunisa-

tion coverage, ensuring that critical health services reach every part of the state.

Ayuk further disclosed that the administration of Governor Bassey Otu has introduced wide-ranging reforms to strengthen healthcare infrastructure, expand access and improve service quality.

He said the government is currently upgrading and renovating no fewer than 100 Primary Healthcare Centres across the state's 18 local government areas.

According to him, some health facilities have been designated to cater specifically to elderly

persons, children and pregnant women, ensuring that vulnerable groups receive priority care.

He noted that several of the upgraded centres have been completed, while others are at advanced stages, reflecting steady progress in revitalising healthcare infrastructure.

Ayuk added that specialised facilities for elderly persons above 65 years, children under five and pregnant women are already operational in three local government areas and will be replicated statewide.

On disease control, the commissioner said the government

has adopted a combination of preventive and curative strategies, focusing on early detection, rapid response and sustained public health interventions.

He noted a significant reduction in disease outbreaks due to increased emphasis on preventive measures, including health education and community awareness campaigns.

Ayuk explained that the state maintains an effective surveillance system that ensures swift response to reported cases, helping to contain and mitigate disease spread.

Shipping association defends tariff hike, cites due process

LAGOS

The Shipping Association of Nigeria (SAN) has defended recent tariff adjustments by shipping companies, insisting that the process was transparent, thorough and in line with regulatory provisions.

The association's Chairperson, Mrs Boma Alabi, made the clarification in an interview with journalists on Wednesday, following concerns raised by the NAGAFF Trade War Advocacy Committee.

Alabi described some of the criticisms as inaccurate and misleading, noting that the tariff approvals were granted by the Nigerian Shippers' Council in accordance with its statutory mandate.

She explained that the review process spanned nearly two years and involved extensive consultations with key stakeholders across the maritime industry.

According to her, shipping

companies submitted detailed cost analyses to justify the adjustments, which were assessed against prevailing economic realities such as inflation and foreign exchange fluctuations.

Alabi stressed that the approvals were not applied uniformly, as only companies that met regulatory requirements were granted permission to adjust tariffs.

She described the increase as modest and below the cumulative inflation rate over the review period, adding that it was necessary to offset rising operational and logistics costs.

She noted that other players in the maritime value chain have also reviewed their charges upward.

"Isolating shipping companies for criticism does not reflect the broader realities of the industry," she said.

Alabi called for continued dialogue and urged stakeholders to channel concerns through appropriate regulatory frameworks.

20 Ogun APC lawmakers back Tinubu's second-term bid

ABEOKUTA

Twenty members of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in the Ogun State House of Assembly have endorsed President Bola Tinubu for a second term in 2027.

The lawmakers, who form the majority in the assembly, made their position known on Wednesday during a news conference addressed by the Majority Leader, Mr Yusuf Sheriff.

Sheriff said the endorsement was based on what he described as the president's bold reforms, economic stabilisation efforts and massive infrastructure development across the country.

He noted that ongoing road projects connecting key economic corridors demonstrate Tinubu's commitment to repositioning Nigeria's economy and strengthening national infrastructure.

According to him, the achievements justify granting the president another term to consolidate the gains.

The lawmakers also declared support for the governorship ambition of Senator Solomon Adeola, popularly known as Yayi, describing him as a seasoned legislator with a track

record of competence and dedication.

Sheriff highlighted Adeola's contributions in the National Assembly, including leadership in key committees and advocacy for developmental projects and empowerment programmes.

He said the senator's experience positions him to advance the "Igbega Ipinle Ogun" agenda of Governor Dapo Abiodun.

The lawmakers further pledged support for Abiodun in his future political pursuits after his tenure, citing his experience and performance in office.

"Having successfully steered the affairs of Ogun State and delivered significant development, the governor remains well positioned to contribute to national development in any capacity," Sheriff said.

Lawmakers Olakunle Oluomo (Ogun Central), Musefiu Lamidi (Ogun West) and Mrs Omolola Bakare (Ogun East) also spoke, citing reasons for the endorsement.

The Ogun State House of Assembly comprises 20 APC members and six members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).



AKODU'S VISIT TO NAN:

L-R: Vice Chairman, Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Lagos Information Chapel, Muiyiwa Ojekunle; Deputy Editor-in-Chief and Head of Editorial Operations, News Agency Nigeria (NAN), Mr Kevin Okunzuwa; Head of NAN, Lagos Operations, Mrs Ifeyinwa Omowole; Chairman, Press Week, Lagos State Council, Adewale Akodu; and Treasurer, Lagos Information Chapel, Olatunde Ekundayo, during the visit of Akodu to NAN office in Lagos on Wednesday

Eid-el-fitr: NSCDC deploys 771 personnel in Anambra

AWKA

The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Anambra State Command, has deployed 771 personnel to ensure a peaceful Eid-el-Fitr celebration across the state.

The State Commandant, Mr Maku Olatunde, disclosed this in a statement issued by the Head of Media and Tactical Operations, Mr Edwin Okadigbo, on Wednesday.

He said the deployment, alongside other operational assets, was aimed at providing watertight security before, during and after the festivities.

According to the statement, specialised units including the Armed Squad, Female Strike Force, Rapid Tactical Squad, Anti-Vandalism Squad, Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear Explosives (CBRNE) Unit, Counter-Terrorism Unit and Disaster Management Unit will be deployed.

Personnel will be stationed at Eid prayer grounds, markets, motor parks, recreational centres and other strategic public locations, as well as critical national infrastructure.

Olatunde warned hoodlums, vandals and other criminal elements to stay away from public assets, stressing that offenders would face strict consequences.

He urged officers to remain vigilant, professional and respectful of citizens' rights,

while directing strict adherence to Standard Operating Procedures, Rules of Engagement and Service Orders.

The commandant also advised residents to remain alert, monitor their children and co-operate with security agencies by reporting suspicious activities.

He congratulated Muslim faithful and urged them to uphold the values of Ramadan, while calling on Nigerians to remain law-abiding and committed to the common good.

Otu pledges stronger collaboration with Navy to secure waterways

CALABAR

Governor Bassey Otu of Cross River State has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to sustained collaboration with the Nigerian Navy to enhance security along the state's waterways.

Otu gave the assurance while receiving the Commandant of Nigerian Navy Ship (NNS) Victory, Commodore Shuaib Ahmed, who paid him a courtesy visit in Calabar.

The governor described the

visit as significant in strengthening existing partnerships aimed at maintaining peace and security in the state.

"Peace and stability remain non-negotiable prerequisites for development. This visit reaffirms our shared resolve to keep Cross River safe through sustained collaboration," he said.

He stressed that security remains the foundation for meaningful development, noting that no society can prosper amid insecurity.

The governor commended

the navy for its professionalism, adding that its efforts have boosted investor confidence and improved the state's economic environment.

He assured the navy of continued government support to enhance its operations.

Earlier, Ahmed said the visit was in line with military tradition of engaging key stakeholders upon assumption of duty.

He emphasised the need to align naval operations with the state government's development priorities.

The naval chief commend-

ed the state government for its support, noting that it has contributed significantly to the navy's operational successes.

He also highlighted the need to strengthen infrastructure and communication systems to address emerging security challenges.

'Operationalizing' key naval facilities will improve our capacity to tackle maritime crimes. We remain committed to ensuring safety on our waterways and enabling residents to carry out lawful activities without fear," he said.

Troops repel ISWAP assault in Borno, kill over 60 insurgents

ABUJA

Troops of Operation HADIN KAI have foiled a coordinated infiltration attempt by ISWAP terrorists at Mallam Fatori in Abadam Local Government Area of Borno

State, neutralising no fewer than 60 insurgents.

According to an operational report made available to journalists on Wednesday, the terrorists launched the attack on the 68 Battalion, Mobile Defence Area, on Tuesday

evening.

The report stated that the assault originated from the Duguri general area, targeting the frontage of Bravo Company, with the attackers advancing on foot and deploying armed drones.

Troops of the Joint Task Force (JTF), supported by air assets, swiftly engaged the terrorists, neutralising the drones and forcing the insurgents to retreat in disarray towards the Arege general area.

"Initial assessments indi-

cate that over 60 terrorists were neutralised during the operation, while four soldiers sustained minor injuries," the report said.

The military disclosed that follow-up intelligence and surveillance operations are ongoing, with at least six suspected terrorist groups sighted moving towards the Arege axis.

It added that further exploitation of the area is planned

to consolidate gains and prevent renewed attacks.

A video clip released by the JTF showing the aftermath of the airstrike underscored the operational readiness and precision of troops in the North-East theatre.

The JTF reaffirmed its commitment to protecting civilians and sustaining pressure on terrorist networks across Borno and neighbouring states.



INSPECTION OF ROAD/ BRIDGE:

Gov. Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers State (M), during the inspection of Road/ bridge at the ongoing construction of Elele, Umudiaga/ Umuoku road in Rivers State on Wednesday.

Eid-el-Fitr: FRSC warns motorists against reckless driving

SANGO-OTA (OGUN)

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) has urged motorists to drive responsibly and exercise patience to reduce road crashes before, during and after the Eid-el-Fitr celebration.

The FRSC Commander in charge of the Sagamu-Ore-Be-

nin Expressway corridor, Mr Nasir Mohammed, gave the advice in an interview with journalists on Wednesday in Ota.

Mohammed said the warning became necessary, particularly during the festive period, to heighten motorists' awareness and prevent avoidable accidents.

"We urge motorists to desist from reckless driving, speeding, drunk driving and overloading in order to minimise road mishaps.

"We also call on them to celebrate in peace and unity," he said.

He further advised motorists to ensure their vehicles are in good condition and to avoid night travel in order to arrive

safely at their destinations.

Mohammed also urged road users to cooperate with FRSC personnel and other security agencies to minimise loss of lives during the festivities.

The Federal Government has declared Thursday and Friday as public holidays to enable Muslim faithful celebrate Eid-el-Fitr across the country.

Labour Party fixes May 23 for Presidential primary ahead of 2027 polls

ABUJA

The National Executive Council (NEC) of the Labour Party has fixed May 23 for its presidential primary as part of preparations for the 2027 general elections.

This was disclosed in a statement issued on Wednesday in Abuja by the Senior Special Adviser (Media) to the Interim National Chairman, Ken Asogwa.

Asogwa said the date formed part of the party's approved timetable for its primary elections, adopted at a statutory NEC meeting observed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

He added that, in compliance with the Electoral Act and INEC guidelines, the party also approved April 15 for the submission of its membership register to the electoral body.

According to him, governorship, Senate, House of Representatives and House of Assembly primaries have been scheduled for May 15.

He further disclosed that NEC ratified the conduct of ward, local government and state congresses slated for March 26, 28 and March 31 respectively, while the party's national convention is fixed for April 11.

"The council, which remains the highest decision-making or-

gan of the party after the national convention, reviewed recent developments within the party, including the unfortunate invasion of the party secretariat by hoodlums allegedly sponsored by certain rogue elements," he said.

Asogwa said the Board of Trustees (BoT), after reviewing the report of the Peace, Reconciliation and Disciplinary Committee chaired by its Secretary, Salisu Mohammed, approved the suspension of some members over alleged indiscipline, anti-party activities and complicity in the desecration of the party's national secretariat.

He added that NEC also endorsed the ongoing expansion

of the party's membership register through a hybrid system combining digital (e-registration) and manual registration in rural communities.

The initiative, he said, is aimed at modernising the party's database, strengthening participatory democracy and enhancing transparency and efficiency in party administration in line with the Electoral Act 2026.

Asogwa further stated that NEC resolved that existing vacancies within party structures be filled through interim appointments to ensure administrative continuity pending substantive congresses.

Security expert condemns Maiduguri hospital bombing, urges nat'l unity

LAGOS

The NA security expert, Mr Seyi Babaeko, has condemned the recent bombing of a hospital in Maiduguri, describing it as a heinous attack on innocent civilians and healthcare workers.

Babaeko, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Absolute Security and Advance Protocol Ltd (ASAP Ltd), made the condemnation in an interview with journalists in Lagos on Wednesday.

He described the incident as a grave assault on humanity and a violation of international humanitarian norms, stressing that hospitals are sacred institutions meant to save lives and must never be targets of violence.

The expert extended condolences to families of the victims

and expressed solidarity with residents of Maiduguri and the wider Borno community, while also praying for the speedy recovery of the injured.

According to him, terrorism remains a major threat to Nigeria's peace and development.

"Such violence affects all citizens regardless of ethnic, religious or regional differences," he said.

Babaeko called for a united front involving citizens, community leaders, civil society organisations and all tiers of government to combat terrorism and safeguard national stability.

He also commended the Nigerian Armed Forces, other security agencies and local vigilance groups for their continued sacrifices in the fight against insurgency, stressing that national unity is key to overcoming terrorism in the country.

Barau assures public as State Police plan celebrates

ABUJA

Efforts to establish state police in Nigeria gathered momentum as the Deputy President of the Senate, Senator Barau Jibrin, assured that concerns raised by Nigerians would be carefully addressed in the ongoing constitutional review process.

Barau gave the assurance while receiving members of the Nigeria Police Force steering committee tasked with developing a framework for state policing during a courtesy visit in Abuja.

The committee, inaugurated on March 4, 2026, by the Inspector-General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, is chaired by Olu Ogunsakin and is mandat-

ed to design a workable structure for the proposed system.

During the meeting, the committee briefed the Deputy Senate President on its assignment and sought legislative input to strengthen its final recommendations.

Barau, who also chairs the Senate Committee on the Review of the 1999 Constitution, commend-

ed the Inspector-General of Police for aligning the initiative with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda aimed at improving national security.

He urged the committee to prioritise accountability, guard against potential abuse and embark on extensive public enlightenment to build trust in the proposed policing structure.

NEWS

JTF reclaims Orsu, urges displaced residents to return

ORSU (IMO)

The Joint Task Force (JTF) South-East Operation UDO KA said that it has successfully reclaimed Orsu Local Government Area of Imo State from bandits, urging displaced indigenes to return home without fear.

The Garrison Commander of the 34 Artillery Brigade of the Nigerian Army, Obinze, Owerri, Lt.-Col. Jude Abuo, disclosed this while addressing journalists during a media tour of the recovered communities.

Abuo said the operation, which commenced on February 2, involved personnel of the Nigerian Army, Air Force, Deep Blue, Police and NSCDC, with support from local vigilantes.

He explained that the offensive aligns with the Chief

of Army Staff's command philosophy aimed at transforming the Nigerian Army into a professional, combat-ready and resilient force capable of effectively discharging its constitutional roles in joint and multi-operational environments.

According to him, the operation has significantly degraded elements of the proscribed Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) and its armed wing in the area.

"We have pushed them out, gained more ground and detonated several Improvised Explosive Devices used as force multipliers.

"We have captured the 'Mother Valley' as you can see, and we have not recorded any casualty on our side.

"We assure you that this local government will soon be completely free of IPOB ele-

ments. We therefore call on indigenes to return to their homes," he said.

Abuo added that the media tour was organised to counter

claims that images from the operation were manipulated or sourced from other states, insisting they were authentic.

In separate remarks, the

President-General of Orsu Ihietukwa clan, Chief Chika Obuladike, commended the military and urged expansion of the operation to other troubled

communities.

Also, the Youth Leader, Mr Ezeani Ikedinekpere, pledged sustained collaboration with security forces.



PRESENTATION OF AWARD:

Minister of Works, David Umahi (2nd L), receiving from Permanent Secretary, Adelan Rafiu-Olarinre a medal won by the staff of the ministry at the 2025 Federal Government Ministries Department and Agencies (MDAs) games hosted by Adamawa State Government in Abuja on Wednesday.

CVR hits 2.6m as youths, women dominate registration —INEC

ABUJA

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has said that 2,657,784 Nigerians have completed registration in the ongoing Phase II of the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) exercise as of week 10.

In its update released on Tuesday, INEC disclosed that 1,563,169 registrants completed online pre-registration, while 1,094,615 opted for physical registration.

Jigawa recorded the highest number of completed registrations with 171,471, followed by Lagos (154,565) and Kano (136,073), while Anambra had the lowest figure at 21,836.

The data showed that female registrants led with 1,508,858 (57 percent), while males accounted for 1,148,926 (43 percent).

Youths aged 18 to 34 dom-

inated the exercise with 1,813,082 registrations, representing 68.22 per cent of the total.

Students formed the largest occupational group with 640,826 (24.11 percent), followed by business persons at 540,376 (20.33 percent).

INEC also reported that 37,687 Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) had registered so far, noting that the figures remain provisional pending data clean-up and verification using the Automated Biometric Identification System (ABIS).

The commission added that registration in the Federal Capital Territory remains suspended following the Area Council elections held on February 21, in line with the Electoral Act 2022.

Eligible Nigerians were urged to complete their registration via the commission's official portals.

Estate agent docked over illegal N430,000 rent fraud in Ibadan

IBADAN

A 47-year-old estate agent, Omoniyi Asiwa-j, has been arraigned before a Grade A Customary Court in Ibadan over alleged N430,000 rent fraud.

The defendant pleaded not guilty to a four-count charge of breach of peace, obtaining by false pretence, unlawful conversion and stealing.

The court's President, Mrs S.M. Akintayo, granted him bail in the sum of N200,000 with two reliable sureties in like sum.

She ordered that the sureties must provide evidence of tax payment to the Oyo State Government and adjourned the

case to May 4 for hearing.

Earlier, prosecutor Insp Ayodele Ayeni told the court that the defendant committed the offences on February 2 at the Mapo area of Ibadan.

He alleged that Asiwa-j fraudulently obtained N430,000 from one Bose Amada under the pretence of being the authorised agent for a two-bedroom apartment.

According to the prosecutor, the landlord did not grant the defendant consent to let out the apartment, and the money was converted to personal use before his arrest.

The offences contravene Sections 249, 390(9) and 419 of the Criminal Code, Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

IGP visits Maiduguri bomb sites, orders tightened security

MAIDUGURI

The Inspector-General of Police, Olatunji Disu has visited victims of recent Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attacks receiving treatment at the University of

Maiduguri Teaching Hospital, as part of efforts to strengthen security in the state.

During the visit to the victims, the IGP also inspected the Monday Market bombing site and held high-level security reviews at the Borno State

Government House and the State Police Command Headquarters.

Disu commiserated with victims and their families, assuring residents of the Nigeria Police Force's resolve to dismantle networks behind the

attacks and prevent recurrence.

He emphasised that security across Maiduguri has been reinforced through increased deployments, enhanced surveillance and coordinated joint operations aimed at safeguarding lives and property.

Aiyedatiwa reopens Ikare Central Mosque after 4yr closure

AKURE

Ondo State Governor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa, has ordered the reopening of the Ikare-Akoko Central Mosque, four years after it was shut over a protracted leadership crisis.

The governor gave the directive during the annual Ramadan Iftar prayer, "Iftar With Mr Governor," organised in collaboration with the State Muslim Welfare Board.

Aiyedatiwa directed Sheikh Abubakar Muhammed Abbas, the Chief Imam before the clo-

sure, to resume leadership of Islamic prayers and activities in the mosque.

"Today, in the presence of Kabiyesi, the Olukare of Ikare, the Grand Mufti and other religious leaders, I hereby declare the central mosque open.

"The Chief Imam will resume

prayers in the spirit of unity and peace," the governor said.

The mosque was shut on October 18, 2022, by the late former Governor Oluwarotimi Akeredolu to prevent violence arising from a leadership tussle over the position of Chief Imam.

Eid-el-Fitr: NSCDC deploys 1,000 personnel across Ondo

AKURE

The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Ondo State Command, has deployed 1,000 personnel across the state to ensure a peaceful 2026 Eid-el-Fitr celebration.

State Commandant, Oluayemi Ibiyoye, disclosed this in a state-

ment issued on Wednesday, noting that the deployment also covers the Easter period.

He said officers would be stationed at Eid prayer grounds, markets, motor parks, recreational centres, worship centres and other critical national assets and infrastructure.

Specialised units deployed include the Agro Rangers, Armed

Squad, Female Strike Force, Rapid Tactical Squad, Anti-Vandalism Squad, CBRNE Unit, Counter-Terrorism Unit and Disaster Management Unit.

Ibiyoye directed area commanders and divisional officers to intensify surveillance and visibility patrols, while collaborating with other security agencies for intelligence gathering.

He urged personnel to remain professional, vigilant and respectful of citizens' rights, stressing strict adherence to operational guidelines.

The commandant also extended goodwill to Muslim faithful, urging residents to remain law-abiding and security-conscious during and after the festivities.

4 docked for alleged social media impersonation

IBADAN

Four persons were on Wednesday arraigned before an Iyaganku Magistrates' Court in Ibadan over alleged impersonation on social media.

The defendants — Omotayo Ezekiel, 26; Favour Jire-Ige, 22; Abiodun Oluwasegun, 23; and Godwin Akinbiyi, 26 pleaded not guilty to charges of conspiracy and impersonation.

The prosecutor alleged that on March 3 at Ologuneru area

of Ibadan, the defendants posed as Caucasian men and women using foreign phone numbers on Facebook, TikTok and Gmail with intent to defraud unsuspecting members of the public.

The offences allegedly contravene Sections 484 and 516

of the Criminal Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

Magistrate Adebola Adeola granted each defendant bail in the sum of N200,000 with two sureties, one of whom must be a blood relative. The case was adjourned until April 13 for hearing.

JUDICIARY

NEWS

Engineer slams EFCC with N100m suit over 'unlawful' detention

ABUJA

A mechanical engineer, Mr Jacob Acheneje, has filed a N100 million fundamental rights enforcement suit against the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) over his alleged unlawful and prolonged detention.

Acheneje, through his lawyer, Reuben Atabo (SAN), filed

the suit at the Federal High Court, joining the Managing Director of PetroCam Blending Plant Ltd, Mr Patrick Ilo, as the second respondent.

In the suit marked FH-C/L/CS/505/2026 and filed on March 11, the applicant is seeking six reliefs, including a declaration that his arrest and continued detention at the instance of Ilo, despite being granted bail, is unlawful, illegal and unconstitutional.

He argued that the action

violated his fundamental rights to dignity of the human person, personal liberty, fair hearing and freedom of movement, as guaranteed under Sections 34, 35(1), 36 and 41 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), as well as Articles 4, 5, 6 and 12 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Acheneje further asked the court to declare that his re-arrest and detention by the EFCC over the same charge currently pending before Justice Jordan

Adeyemi of the Federal High Court, Abeokuta, constitutes an abuse of court process and is unconstitutional.

He is also seeking an order for his immediate release pending trial, as well as an injunction restraining the EFCC and the second respondent from further arresting or harassing him over the same matter.

In addition, he is demanding N100 million as general and exemplary damages.

In an affidavit deposed to by

his wife, Mrs Rhoda Acheneje, she stated that her husband, a former employee of PetroCam Blending Plant Ltd, was first arrested on October 19, 2025, and detained at the Elewera Police Station in Abeokuta, Ogun State.

She said he was subsequently arraigned on December 4, 2025, before the Federal High Court in Abeokuta on a three-count charge bordering on conspiracy, money laundering, fraud and stealing.

According to her, he was granted bail on December 24, 2025, pending trial, which was initially adjourned to February 16, 2026.

However, she said the prosecution failed to file and serve proof of evidence on that date, forcing the court to adjourn the matter to April 21.

Rhoda alleged that shortly

after the February 16 court session, EFCC operatives from the BFS Unit, allegedly acting on the instruction of Ilo, blocked the court premises, harassed and re-arrested her husband.

She further claimed that he was subsequently detained in EFCC custody in Lagos for the same offences for which he is already standing trial in Abeokuta.

She added that a letter dated February 25 by his lawyers requesting his release had not been honoured.

According to her, Acheneje has suffered health challenges, psychological trauma and hardship as a result of his continued detention.

She urged the court to intervene, warning that the EFCC would continue its alleged unlawful actions unless restrained.



PRESIDENT WORKING VISIT:

Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa (2nd L); Minister of Women Affairs, Imaan Suleiman-Ibrahim (L); Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State (3rd R); and others, during the President working visit to London on Wednesday.

El-Rufai's detention backed by court order, not fresh directive —CPC

ABUJA

The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) has clarified that the continued detention of former Kaduna State Governor, Malam Nasir El-Rufai, is based on a valid subsisting court order.

In a statement issued in Abuja by its spokesperson, Mr

Okor Odey, the commission said its appearance in court on Tuesday was for the hearing of an application filed by El-Rufai on March 6, seeking to set aside a remand order granted on March 5.

Odey explained that no fresh detention order was made during the proceedings, as the court merely adjourned the case to March 31 at the instance of El-Rufai's legal team,

which requested time to respond to the commission's submissions.

He noted that the initial remand order granted the ICPC 14 days to detain and investigate the former governor over allegations of money laundering and abuse of office.

"Upon the expiration of that order, the commission applied for an extension, which was duly granted by the court on March 5," he said.

Odey added that an earlier

attempt by El-Rufai's lawyers to vacate a remand order issued on February 19 was dismissed on March 9.

He maintained that the former governor remains in lawful custody in strict compliance with the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) 2015.

The ICPC reiterated its commitment to due process and cautioned against misinformation, urging the public to rely on verified updates.

Court jails labourer 5 months for stealing pregnant goat, illegal gun possession

KAFANCHAN (KADUNA)

A Customary Court in Kafanchan has sentenced an 18-year-old labourer, Gado Adamu, to five months imprisonment for stealing a pregnant she-goat and unlawfully possessing a firearm.

Adamu was charged under Sections 345 and 270 of the Kaduna State Penal Code Law.

He pleaded guilty to the charges and begged the court for leniency.

Delivering judgment, the presiding judge, Mrs Patience Baryat, sentenced him to three months imprisonment for un-

lawful possession of a weapon, with an option of a N20,000 fine.

He was also sentenced to two months imprisonment or a N10,000 fine for theft.

Earlier, the prosecutor, Favour Solomon, told the court that the case was reported at the Kafanchan Divisional Police Station on February 2.

He said the defendant was apprehended in Zankan village with a pregnant she-goat valued at N160,000, belonging to one Dinatu Habila.

Solomon added that Adamu was also found in possession of a dane gun without a licence.

Man arraigned over alleged N350,000 building materials theft in Ondo

OKITIPUPA (ONDO)

A 45-year-old man, Kunle Akinrodoye, has been arraigned before an Okitipupa Chief Magistrate's Court for allegedly stealing building materials worth N350,000.

The defendant, whose occupation was not disclosed, is facing a two-count charge of conspiracy and stealing but pleaded not guilty.

Prosecutor, ASP Ayodeji Omoyeigha, told the court that the defendant and an accomplice still at large committed the offence on January 2 at an uncompleted building along

Okitipupa-Erinje Road.

He alleged that the duo stole iron rods, plastic pipes and bags of cement belonging to one Olayemi Omowole.

The offences, he said, contravene Sections 390(9) and 516 of the Criminal Law of Ondo State, 2006.

Chief Magistrate Mayowa Olanipekun granted the defendant bail in the sum of N100,000 with one surety in like sum.

He ruled that the surety must reside within the court's jurisdiction and provide evidence of two years' tax payment.

The case was adjourned to March 27 for further hearing.

Court adjourns suit challenging Shell divestment, pollution claims to May 6

YENAGOA

The Federal High Court in Yenagoa has adjourned to May 6 a suit challenging the divestment of Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited (SPDC) from its onshore assets, as well as issues relating to environmental pollution.

Justice Ayo Emmanuel granted the adjournment on Wednesday following the absence of legal representatives from the Office of the Attorney-General of the Federation.

The judge said the decision was

taken in the interest of justice.

Earlier, counsel to Shell UK PLC, Mr J.P. Kudo, informed the court that the Attorney-General's counsel had written to seek an adjournment, citing engagement at the Court of Appeal.

However, counsel to the plaintiff, the traditional ruler of Ekpetiama Kingdom, King Bubaraiye Dakolo, Mr Chuks Uguru, strongly opposed the request.

He urged the court to proceed with hearing Shell's preliminary objection, arguing that delay tactics and legal technicalities should not be used to frustrate access to jus-

tice for host communities.

"I urge my Lord not to touch this letter even with insulated fingers. The defendants have practically held us to ransom," Uguru said.

Shell is challenging the jurisdiction of the court in the suit, which questions the legality of its divestment from onshore and shallow water assets previously operated by SPDC.

The plaintiffs contend that the divestment did not comply with provisions of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021.

Environmental justice groups, including Social Ac-

tion and Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), are also parties to the suit.

Listed as defendants are Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria, Shell Petroleum N.V, Shell UK PLC, the Attorney-General of the Federation, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission, the Minister of Petroleum Resources and Renaissance Energy Africa Ltd.

Renaissance Energy Africa, a consortium of indigenous oil firms, acquired the assets in March 2025 following Shell's divestment.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **EGHAIPE QUEEN OJEWWE**, now wish to be known as **IJEHEDE QUEEN OJEWWE**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **ONOFONU OGHOSA FAITH**, now wish to be known as **ONI-OSAIGBOVO OGHOSA FAITH**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

NEWS

Foreign

Top US counterterrorism official resigns over Iran war, urging Trump to 'reverse course'

Donald Trump's top counterterrorism official has resigned over the war in Iran, urging the president to "reverse course".

Joe Kent is a long-time Trump supporter and decorated veteran of the US military.

In a letter posted on X, National Counterterrorism Center Director Joe Kent said that Iran posed "no imminent threat" to the US and claimed the administration "started this war due to pressure from Israel and its powerful American lobby".

The White House dismissed the letter, saying the president had "compelling evidence" that Iran was going to attack the US first. A US hate monitor accused Kent of "antisemitic tropes".

With his departure, Kent is the most high-profile figure within the Trump administration to publicly criticise the US-Israeli attack on Iran.

In the Oval Office on Tues-

day, Trump said Kent was a "nice guy", but "weak on security".

He also said Kent's resignation letter had made him realise "it was a good thing that he's out".

In the letter addressed to Trump, Kent alleged that "high-ranking Israeli officials" and influential US journalists had sown "misinformation" that led the president to undermine his "America First" platform.

"This echo chamber was used to deceive you into believing that Iran posed an imminent threat to the United States," the letter continued. "This was a lie."

Kent, a long-time Trump supporter who unsuccessfully ran for Congress twice, was nominated by the president early in his administration and narrowly confirmed to his post.

In his confirmation hearings, Kent refused to renounce claims that federal agents had fomented the January 2021 riot at the US Capitol, or that

Trump had not been defeated in the 2020 election.

Democrats had criticised his hiring of a member of the far-right Proud Boys as a consultant to his 2022 election bid.

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), a US antisemitism monitor, said in a statement that accusations in Kent's resignation letter "traffic in old-age antisemitic tropes".

"So it's no surprise that he would blame Israel and the media for pushing the President into war against the Iranian regime," the ADL said.

The pro-Israel lobbying group, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (Aipac), reposted the ADL statement on X. Aipac did not immediately respond to a BBC request for comment.

Ilan Goldenberg, a senior official at the liberal pro-Israel advocacy group J Street, described Kent's letter as "ugly stuff that plays on the worst an-

tisemitic tropes".

Kent, 45, is a US special forces and CIA veteran whose wife, navy cryptologic technician Shannon Kent, was killed in a suicide bombing in Syria in 2019.

The father-of-two deployed 11 times overseas with the US military, including with the US Army's special forces in Iraq.

He later became a paramilitary officer at the CIA, before leaving government service following his wife's death.

Kent cited his military service and his wife's death in his letter, saying that he "cannot support sending the next generation off to fight and die in a war that serves no benefit to the American people nor justifies the cost of American lives".

At the National Counterterrorism Center, Kent reported to Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard and oversaw the analysis and detection of potential terrorist threats from around the globe.

Death of Ali Larijani deepens crisis at heart of Iran's leadership

The Israeli air strike which killed Iran's security chief, Ali Larijani, has removed one of the Islamic Republic's most experienced and influential policymakers at a critical moment.

Larijani was not a military commander, but he was a central figure in shaping Iran's strategic decisions.

As secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, he sat at the heart of decision-making on war, diplomacy, and national security.

His voice carried weight across the system, particularly in managing Iran's confrontation with the United States and Israel.

After the killing of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei on 28 February, Larijani struck a defiant tone, signalling that Iran was prepared for a long conflict.

His death, now confirmed by state media, comes amid a broader campaign in which several senior Iranian officials and commanders have been killed within a matter of weeks. This pattern suggests a sustained effort to weaken Iran's leadership structure during wartime.

Despite his hardline stance against the West, Larijani was often described inside Iran as a pragmatist. He combined ideological loyalty with a technocratic approach, favouring calculated strategy over rhetoric.

He remained deeply sceptical of engagement with Western powers, but he was also involved in key diplomatic efforts, including acting as an envoy in Iran's long-term co-operation agreement with China.

At the time of his death, Larijani was in charge of managing three major crises.

The first was the war itself. He argued that Iran should prepare for a prolonged struggle and expand the conflict across the region and beyond, including closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

The second was a wave of domestic unrest, which began with economic grievances but quickly turned into wider protests seeking to topple the Islamic Republic. These were met with a crackdown that killed many thousands of protesters across the country.

The third was Iran's nuclear programme and stalled indirect negotiations with Washington, both of which had already been disrupted by military strikes.

His removal leaves these issues unresolved and transfers them to an as-yet-unknown successor facing an extremely fragile situation. While Iran has shown resilience, partly by disrupting global energy markets, its airspace remains open to continued strikes. Any new senior figure will face immediate risk of being targeted.



LONG-TIME TRUMP SUPPORTER:

Joe Kent is a long-time Trump supporter and decorated veteran of the US military.

US judge orders Trump administration to reopen Voice of America

A judge in the US has ruled that the effective closure of the Voice of America (VOA) last year was "illegal" and that hundreds of its journalists should be reinstated.

District Court Judge Royce Lamberth has given authorities one week to put the international broadcaster back on air.

The VOA was set up during World War Two to counter Nazi propaganda.

Just weeks after returning to office as president, Donald Trump issued an executive order to close the broadcaster which his officials accused of left-wing bias. Trump also ordered outlets such as Radio Free Europe and Radio Free

Asia to be "eliminated to the maximum extent consistent with applicable law".

The president appointed Kari Lake to head the US Agency for Global Media (USAGM) - the parent company that oversees and funds the VOA as well as Radio Free Europe and Radio Free Asia.

Lake proceeded to sack more than 85% of the agency's employees - more than 1,000 staff at VOA alone - leaving just a handful of employees in their jobs.

Most have been on paid administrative leave since last year, including Persian Service reporters who were called back to work after Israel attacked Iran last June.

Last week, Judge Lamberth ruled that Lake did not have authority to order the suspension of the USAGM workforce as she had not been confirmed by the US Senate.

In Tuesday's ruling, the federal judge described the decision to sack the journalists as "arbitrary and capricious," adding that the government had not taken into account legislation that determines what languages and regions the VOA must serve.

"Defendants have provided nothing approaching a principled basis for their decision," Lamberth wrote.

Three VOA journalists had sued the Trump administration. One of them, Patsy Wida-

kuswara, said she was deeply grateful for the judge's decision.

"We hope the American people will continue to support our mission to produce journalism, not propaganda," she told the Associated Press news agency.

It is not clear if Lake's nominated successor, Sarah Rogers - whose appointment needs Senate confirmation - will appeal.

Before being wound down, the VOA broadcast TV, radio and digital content in almost 50 languages.

Trump's criticisms of the VOA form part of his broader attacks against the US media, which studies suggest American news consumers view as highly polarised.

King Charles greets Nigerian president in Windsor sunshine

King Charles is hosting the first Nigerian state visit to the UK for 37 years, with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and his wife Oluremi Tinubu receiving a ceremonial welcome at Windsor Castle.

At the start of the two-day visit, the leaders of the African nation with the biggest population - triple that of the UK - were greeted by senior royals including Queen Camilla, and the Prince and Princess of Wales.

The King and President Tinubu were expected to give speeches on Wednesday evening at the state banquet, which will be attended by political leaders and celebrities with links to Nigeria.

However, there will be no traditional lunch with the King at Windsor as the president is a Muslim and fasting in Ramadan.

In warm spring sunshine, the president and first lady - wearing traditional robes - were given the ceremonial grandeur of a royal welcome.

There was a carriage procession, bringing the Nigerian visitors into the quadrangle inside Windsor Castle, where a military band, with careful symmetry, paraded on the checkerboard lawn.

There was a gun salute, national anthems were played, guards were inspected and the Household Cavalry kicked up

dust as they paraded inside the castle, in front of a viewing stand for the King and Queen and their visitors.

President Tinubu and Mrs Tinubu had been met earlier by Prince William and Catherine, Princess of Wales, before being escorted to formally meet the King and Queen.

When the royal hosts and their visitors went inside the castle, they viewed Nigerian items from the Royal Collection, including a Yoruba throne, sculptures, paintings and the manuscript of a poem by Sir Ben Okri.

Official gifts were exchanged. The president and Mrs Tinubu were given hand-crafted pottery, a silver photo frame containing a picture of the King and Queen and a silver and enamel bowl.

In return, the King and Queen were given a traditional Yoruba statuette and a jewellery box featuring the faces of important Nigerian women.

The Prince and Princess of Wales were there to greet the Nigerian visitors

The Nigerian president was met with pomp and ceremony at Windsor

State visits are a way of building relationships with international partners and the Nigeria visit will see a strengthening of business links, including financial services.

Foreign

NEWS

Oil nears \$110 a barrel after gas field strike

Oil prices leapt to nearly \$110 a barrel after Iranian media reported an airstrike hitting a facility on the world's largest natural gas field.

The Brent crude oil benchmark hit \$109.91 a barrel just after 14:30GMT, more than 5% higher than Tuesday's prices. It remains above \$108.

The surge followed a report from Tasnim, a news agency affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), that Iran's petrochemical complex on the South Pars gas field had been hit.

The benchmark UK gas price also jumped by 6% to 143.53p a therm before falling back below the 140p mark.

While the price of both oil and gas spiked, they remained below highs seen earlier in the conflict.

Oil reached \$116.78 a barrel on 9 March, while UK gas reached 162.55p a therm on 3 March.

Iran's oil ministry said a fire at the petrochemical complex was under control on Wednesday afternoon, Tasnim reported, but the extent of the damage to the facility remained unclear.

Iran's military warned it would take "decisive action" in response to the strike on its energy infrastructure.

"As previously warned, if the fuel, energy, gas, and economic infrastructures of our country are attacked by the American-Zionist enemy, in addition to a powerful counterattack against the enemy, we will severely strike the origin of that aggression as well," the military said in a statement published by Tasnim.

"We consider targeting the fuel, energy, and gas infrastructures of the countries of origin legitimate and will retaliate strongly at the earliest opportunity."

Iran has also suspended the flow of gas to Iraq in response to the attack to shore up domestic supplies, a senior Iraqi official told Reuters.

The vast majority of Iran's gas supply - 94% - is used domestically, according to data from the Gas Exporting Countries Forum.

However, Qatar also operates facilities on the gas field, which it calls North Dome.

Qatar, which produces a fifth of the world's liquefied natural gas, had halted production earlier in March in response to the conflict.

Qatar's foreign ministry spokesman Majed Al Ansari said strikes against energy infrastructure "constitutes a threat to global energy security".

Sudan: RSF reportedly take over town near Chadian border

Images posted on social media showed fighters from Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces firing in the air as they celebrated after reportedly seizing the border town of Al-Tina in North Darfur State near Chad, as fighting intensifies across the country's west.

Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces launched coordinated attacks on Monday in the Kordofan region in a bid to isolate a strategic city, while also carrying out assaults on towns along the border with Chad, RSF and army sources said.

Paramilitary fighters simultaneously hit the North Kordofan city of Bara, according to a paramilitary source, as well as the South Kordofan city of Dilling, according to another from the army, striking two stepping stones on the way to the major hub of El-Obeid.

Both sources requested anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media.

The battle for Bara Kordofan is currently the fiercest battlefield in the three-year war between the army and the RSF that has killed tens of thousands and created the world's largest hunger and displacement crises.

Near-daily drone strikes kill dozens at a time across the region, where hundreds of thousands are threatened by mass starvation. The RSF source said "our forces have recaptured Bara", which lies on a key highway linking the army-held capital Khartoum with El-Obeid, Kordofan's biggest city.

Bara - a key staging post for

attacks on El-Obeid - has repeatedly changed hands, most recently falling to the army earlier this month. Some 200 kilometres (130 miles) south, the RSF and their local allies attacked the South Kordofan city of Dilling "from three axes", an army source told AFP.

The army broke a years-long paramilitary siege on Dilling in January, and the RSF has launched artillery and drone strikes on it since.

"Our forces repelled the attack launched by the RSF and Abdelaziz al-Hilu's forces," the army source said, referring to a faction of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North.

A spillover effect into Chad?

Halfway between Bara and Dilling lies El-Obeid, which the RSF has been trying to encircle again ever since the army broke a siege there last year.

Its capture would secure Sudan's central east-west axis, linking RSF strongholds in the Darfur region to the army-controlled east and bringing the paramilitary closer to Khartoum.

Last year, the RSF consolidated its hold on the west by seizing North Darfur state capital El-Fasher, going on to commit what a UN probe determined were "acts of genocide" there.

It has since pushed west to the Chadian border, through enclaves controlled by the Joint Forces, a group of pro-army militias. RSF fighters again attacked the border town of Al-Tina and nearby Kerno on Monday, the RSF source and another from the Joint Forces said.



POSTER FEATURING THE PRESIDENT:

An election poster featuring President Denis Sassou N'Gusso stands over a market in central Brazzaville

'Very difficult to stop': BBC visits scene of Iran cluster bomb strike on Israel

It was late at night when an Iranian cluster bomb flew through the ceiling of an elderly couple's apartment in central Israel and exploded in their tiny living room, killing them both.

The path of the bomb was still clearly mapped onto the ash-covered debris left behind. A large hole in the ceiling of their top-floor apartment marked where it punched through, forcing broken concrete and metal rods inwards.

Shrapnel holes across the back walls showed the force of the explosion, which destroyed the front of the apartment - leaving it open to the street outside.

Inside, a walking frame lay upended on the floor under the ash-covered furniture and rubble.

"We heard three noisy interceptions, but on the fourth one, we knew it was our house," said Sigal Amir, who lives next door and was sheltering in her safe room when the explosion hit.

"There was a massive boom and I felt a pain in my ear from the blast," she said. "The neighbours live five metres from us - their door was blown off and their house was full of dust like snow."

She said the couple had not

been in the shelter when the bomb hit as one of them had mobility issues.

Iranians show daily life under air strikes and regime crackdown Israel strikes and destroys building in heart of Beirut

Why the Strait of Hormuz matters so much in the Iran war

Deaths from Iran's daily missile attacks have been rare in Israel, with air defences intercepting most of them. But cluster bombs disperse over a wide area and are much harder to defend against, even when the missile carrying them is shot down.

As the war has gone on, Iran has shifted to using more of them.

"You can see the entry point of the rocket that flew all the way from Iran in a huge missile, and broke into dozens of pieces," said Israeli military spokesman Lt Col Nadav Shoshani during a visit to the site. "We had dozens of impact points like this in central Israel."

He said that while Israel had intercepted the missiles carrying cluster bombs, each carried 20 to 80 munitions, which were "very difficult to stop".

While we were there, another alarm sounded, warning of incom-

ing missiles. The neighbour, Sigal, beckoned us into her safe room.

There have been relatively few casualties from Iranian missiles in Israel. Fourteen people have so far been killed directly by strikes, nine of them in one attack in Bet Shemesh in the early days of the war.

The joint US-Israel campaign against Iran, now in its 19th day, has destroyed military sites, oil facilities and other infrastructure across the country, with the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency (Hrana) reporting on Tuesday that at least 1354 civilians and 1138 military personnel have been killed since the war began.

Israel's military says it has destroyed more than 70% of Iran's ballistic missile launchers, and that Iran's attacks against Israel are now weakening.

Meanwhile, Israel's population is resilient, and support for the war still appears to be strong.

But the regular alarms, which send Israelis into shelters night and day, and the increasing use of cluster munitions, has left some in this war-weary population starting to ask when and

how it will end.

Rescuers were seen combing through the wreckage of the cluster bomb strike overnight

"To be honest, in the last days I'm losing hope a little bit," said Sigal as we sheltered in the safe room. "I feel there's no end to it, there's no direction, we can't see the light at the end of the tunnel. We must endure this, but I'm not sure how long it will take, [or] where we are going from here."

This war was framed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as the culmination of a long battle against Israel's enemies in the region.

He has basked in his country's military superiority, saying the current conflict has already changed the Middle East, and that Israel is now a regional power and, in some respects, a global one.

But this is an asymmetric war, and Iran is pressing on US sensitivities around oil prices, casualties and the vulnerability of its Gulf allies, to force an end to hostilities.

Israel's potential timeline for this conflict is thought to be longer than Washington's. It is also fighting on a second front, against the Lebanese group Hezbollah - a well-armed Iranian proxy on Israel's northern border - which joined the war after the assassination of Iran's former Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Hundreds of thousands of Lebanese have been displaced, and 912 killed in Israeli operations, according to Lebanon's health ministry.

This week, Israeli ground forces expanded operations in southern Lebanon, after ordering vast areas of the country to evacuate.

But the US is already reported to be exploring a deal with the Lebanese government to calm the situation.

Congo's Sassou Nguesso wins 5th term with 94.8%, provisional results

Supporters of Congo-Brazzaville's incumbent President Denis Sassou Nguesso celebrated in the streets as provisional results confirmed he is winning a fifth term with nearly 95% of the vote.

This victory will extend Sassou Nguesso's 42-year hold on power by another five years.

Interior Minister Raymond Zephyrin Mboulou announced on national TV that he secured a fifth term with "94.8%" of the votes. Voter turnout, initially expected to be low, was reported at

"84.65%."

Some candidates have publicly challenged the results, citing a lack of transparency. First-time candidate Destin Gavet held a press conference to condemn irregularities and criticize the government's complete internet blackout.

Ivan Ngoy, executive director of NGO Global Participate, called the election a major setback for democracy in Congo. Bertrand Menier, spokesperson for civil society platform CAPGED's citizen observation

mission, described the election as "a Nintendo election," asserting that "the results do not reflect reality."

The platform reported numerous irregularities throughout Sunday and declared the election was "neither fair, nor free, nor transparent."

Academic Etanislav Ngodi stated that Denis Sassou-Nguesso achieved "a Soviet-style score," emphasizing that he "controls the institutions, security forces, and administrative structures."

Feature



GOVERNOR SENATOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO AND

Federal recognition confirms Edo-Gov 2.0 as a landmark in Nigeria's digital governance

DR PATRICK AKHERE EBOJELE

The Federal Government has recently urged state governments to deepen public service reforms and strengthen digital transformation. This call has highlighted Edo State under Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo, whose visionary leadership is reshaping governance through technology.

The Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR) in Abuja has not only encouraged subnational governments to adopt digital systems but also specifically commended Governor Okpebholo for his proactive reforms, particularly Edo-Gov 2.0, the state's innovative electronic governance platform, also known as Edo Cloud. Recognition from Nigeria's apex public service reform authority underscores Edo State's emergence as a trailblazer in modern governance.

The BPSR's endorsement signals a broader national drive toward efficiency, transparency, and accountability. Strategically, the alignment between federal digital reform priorities and Edo's homegrown initiatives demonstrates a decisive shift from conventional public service practices to systems that leverage technology to improve service delivery. Edo State's recognition as a model for subnational digital governance shows how carefully designed policy and implementation can turn vision into measurable public value.

At the heart of Governor Okpebholo's digital agenda is the belief that

government must be responsive and citizen-focused. Edo-Gov 2.0 represents more than a platform; it is a statement that governance must evolve with the times. By leveraging secure, scalable digital technologies, the platform streamlines operations across ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs), replacing slow, paper-dependent processes with efficient digital workflows that improve transparency, reduce bottlenecks, and cut operational costs.

Preparation for the platform's launch has been thorough. The Edo State Government recently trained over 900 civil and public servants in digital skills essential for operating Edo Cloud. Organized by the Edo State Information Communication and Technology Agency (ICTA) in collaboration with Tech4Dev, the initiative goes beyond orientation; it builds a workforce ready to extract the full value of the new system. Officials highlighted that the program equips civil servants with practical, daily-use skills to navigate the platform once it becomes operational.

Governor Okpebholo understands that human capital is central to the success of any digital platform. By investing in the skills of public servants now, the government ensures that Edo-Gov 2.0 will be efficiently managed and its potential fully realized. Training covered system navigation, digital safety, data management, analysis, reporting, task management, and workflow coordination — all essential competencies for a modern, efficient

public service.

The architecture of Edo-Gov 2.0 was designed with scalability, security, and full data sovereignty in mind. Unlike previous systems that relied heavily on external vendors, Edo State retains full control over its data and governance infrastructure. This reduces the risks associated with outsourcing and strengthens public confidence in government technology platforms. By securing sensitive information under local oversight, the platform reinforces transparency and accountability, key pillars of good

His administration's focus on digital transformation forms part of a broader reform agenda aimed at professionalizing the public service, enhancing efficiency, and strengthening accountability.

governance.

Once fully operational, Edo-Gov 2.0 promises to transform government operations. It will reduce bureaucratic delays, streamline approvals, allow real-time tracking of transactions, and improve inter-agency collaboration. Citizens and businesses will gain clearer visibility into government processes, enhancing trust and creating an environment that is difficult to manipulate and easy to engage with meaningfully.

The benefits of Edo-Gov 2.0 extend beyond internal processes. Analysts note that robust digital governance platforms improve the ease of doing business and attract investment by making government interactions predictable, transparent, and efficient. Edo State's adoption of modern digital systems positions it as a competitive, investor-friendly destination — a move that could generate jobs, encourage entrepreneurship, and drive economic growth.

Governor Okpebholo's agenda also reflects Edo State's capacity to deploy digital solutions across sectors. Initiatives like EdoCert 2.0, a platform for secure digital academic certificates and report cards, have already enhanced efficiency and trust in public services. While critics sometimes warn that digital reform can disrupt continuity, the governor's administration approaches transformation with strategic intent and inclusion, ensuring innovation complements institutional resilience. Stakeholders acknowledge that while the transition requires patience, the

long-term benefits outweigh the initial complexities of change management.

Governor Okpebholo's vision is not technology for its own sake but better governance that meets global standards while addressing Edo citizens' specific needs. His administration's focus on digital transformation forms part of a broader reform agenda aimed at professionalizing the public service, enhancing efficiency, and strengthening accountability.

As Edo-Gov 2.0 nears full deployment, all indicators point to a system ready for functionality and integration across government. With a trained workforce, secure infrastructure, and federal endorsement, Edo State is moving from vision to practical implementation. By strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing transparency, and empowering public servants, Edo State is creating a governance platform that demonstrates how thoughtfully applied technology can transform the relationship between government and citizens.

Under Governor Okpebholo's leadership, Edo-Gov 2.0 is poised to revolutionize governance in Edo State — not in the distant future, but very soon. The state is now set to become a national benchmark for digital public service delivery: efficient, transparent, and citizen-centered, offering government services that work seamlessly for the people.

• Dr Patrick Akhere Ebojele, PhD, is the Chief Press Secretary to Edo State Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo*

FEATURE

Touching lives: The ripple effect of one act of kindness



”
Many now give back themselves, helping another child cross the same dangerous distance between potential and poverty.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

In 1982, his name was Chris Mburu — a gifted student with the kind of brilliance teachers notice immediately. But in a mud-walled home lit by a smoking kerosene lamp, talent alone could not pay tuition. His family had little. And without school fees, his education would end before his promise ever had the chance to bloom.

The road ahead already seemed decided for him: coffee fields, hard labor, small wages, and dreams quietly buried beneath survival.

But thousands of miles away, in Sweden, an elderly kindergarten teacher was turning the pages of a child sponsorship brochure.

Her name was Hilde Back.

She was 80 years old, living simply on a pension. She was not rich. She had no grand platform, no foundation, no public audience. What she had was fifteen dollars.

So she chose a child's name.

Chris Mburu. Kenya.

Every school term, she sent that small amount. No fanfare. No speeches. No expectation of being remembered. Just a faithful act of kindness, repeated again and again.

Fifteen dollars.

To her, it may have seemed small.

To him, it was everything.

Because of those payments, Chris stayed in school. He wrote to Hilde about his exams, his teachers, his hopes. She wrote back with warmth and encouragement. And somewhere in those letters, a life-changing truth took root inside him:

A stranger believed he was worth investing in.

That belief became fuel.

Chris excelled. He graduated at the top of his law class at the University of Nairobi. He earned a Fulbright scholarship to Harvard. He went on to become a United Nations human rights lawyer, helping prosecute genocide and crimes against humanity.

The boy whose future once hung by a thread grew into a man committed to justice.

Still, one question stayed with him:

Who was the woman who changed my life?

In 2001, Chris created a scholarship program for Kenyan students who, like him, were trapped by poverty but full of promise. He wanted to name it after the woman who had once helped him. There was only one problem — he knew almost nothing about her beyond her name.

So the search began.

With the help of the Swedish ambassador, they found her.

Hilde Back.

Alive.

Still in Sweden.

When Chris finally met her, he expected someone larger than life — perhaps a famous philanthropist surrounded by comfort and recognition. Instead, he found a gentle, humble woman in a small apartment, surprised that anyone thought she had done something extraordinary.

And then the story deepened.

As a filmmaker began tracing Hilde's past, another truth came into view — one Hilde herself had never centered.

She had once been the child in need of rescue.

Born in Germany in 1922 to a Jewish family, Hilde's life was shattered when the Nazis tightened their grip. Jewish children were pushed out of schools. As danger closed in, Hilde was smuggled to Sweden as a teenager. Her parents could not come with her. Immigration rules kept many older Jews out.

Her father died in a concentration camp.

Her mother vanished into the machinery of genocide and was never heard from again.

Strangers had once saved Hilde.

Strangers had once made it possible for her to live, to learn, to survive.

And decades later, without fully telling that story, she had passed that same mercy forward to a child in

Kenya she would never meet.

When Chris learned the full weight of her history, he wept.

The meaning of it was almost too much to hold.

A Holocaust survivor had unknowingly helped educate a man who would spend his life fighting the very kinds of hatred, violence, and dehumanization that once destroyed her family.

That is how grace moves through history.

Quietly.

Person to person.

Wound to healing.

Life to life.

In 2003, Hilde traveled to Kenya for the launch of the Hilde Back Education Fund. Villagers welcomed her with songs, embraces, and gratitude too deep for words. Children whose lives had been redirected by opportunity stood before her because she had once decided that fifteen dollars mattered.

She looked overwhelmed.

Because in her mind, she had only helped one boy.

But that one boy helped build something far greater than either of them could have imagined.

The fund went on to support nearly a thousand students. Many entered universities around the world. Some came back as doctors, lawyers, and

teachers. Many now give back themselves, helping another child cross the same dangerous distance between potential and poverty.

The ripple never stopped.

Hilde Back died in 2021 at the age of 98.

She never chased recognition.

Never tried to become a symbol.

Never imagined a foundation would carry her name.

Never guessed that the boy she once sponsored would one day stand in international courtrooms speaking for victims of genocide.

She helped one child.

That child helped hundreds.

Those hundreds are now helping thousands more.

The world often teaches us to wait for giants — for wealthy donors, sweeping gestures, famous names, and grand rescues.

But history does not always turn on power.

Sometimes it turns because an elderly teacher in a small Swedish apartment decides that fifteen dollars, sent faithfully, is enough to change a life.

One name on a page.

One check each term.

One act of belief.

And the ripple is still moving.

Bullying In Public Schools: What Manner of Delinquency?

RAYMOND OSOGBE

Recently we saw a disturbing trending Video of Igbinedion Education center Students molesting fellow Students. Our discreet investigations revealed that, these bullying acts are prevalent in most Public and Private Schools.

We are just getting to know, because most of the affected Schools hid these occurrences. Unknown to many of us, our children are entrusted to careless guardians who

masquerade themselves as seasoned teachers and otherwise.

There were some reports of bullying that led to death and others. Many untold bizarre occurrences happen in our schools hostels. Bullying has a lot of consequential effects on our children. It distracts them from effective concentration. Bullying Victims often lose concentration and focus. They often have nightmares. They carry these trauma for life. Government need to take a proactive measure to stamp out Bul-

lying from our Schools. There is no need denying the fact that bullying exists. It's absolutely going to be a holistic approach, to stop the arrant nonsense.

My Daughter was a victim of bullying in her school. I'm very much conversant with what I am talking about. All principal Stakeholders of education should be at alert. Parents and Teachers Associations nationwide should wake up and do the needful. A word they say is always enough for the wise!



The Nigerian Observer ...That the people may know					ADVERTISEMENT RATES (PRINT)					
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FULL PAGE	517,344	556,145	369,500	397,213	325,150	349,536	665,156	715,043	443,440	476,698
13 X 4	369,500	397,213	295,600	317,770	206,938	222,458	443,500	476,763	369,550	397,266
10 X 4	340,000	365,500	273,500	294,013	177,400	190,705	370,000	397,750	295,600	317,770
HALF PAGE	295,600	317,770	236,500	254,238	147,800	158,885	340,000	365,500	273,450	293,959
10 X 3	221,700	238,328	147,800	158,885	118,300	127,173	266,000	285,950	251,300	270,148
13 X2	206,900	222,418	133,000	142,925	103,500	111,263	221,800	238,435	147,810	158,896
QUARTER PAGE	192,150	206,561	118,250	127,119	88,690	95,342	236,500	254,238	133,000	142,975
CENTER SPREAD	1,356,968	1,466,992						B/W	1,148,181	1,241,276
HALF CENTER	991,590	1,071,989						B/W	887,272	959,212
FRONT PAGE POSITIONS					OTHER SIZES					EFFECTIVE FROM FEBRUARY 1, 2023
PRODUCTS		PUBLIC NOTICE		SIZES	PUBLIC NOTICE		PRODUCTS			
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FP 5X2	81,100	87,183	97,300	104,598	5 X 2	51,950	55,846	42,120	45,279	
FP 4X2	73,000	78,475	80,700	86,753	4 X 2	45,260	48,655	34,400	36,980	
FP 3X2	64,870	69,735	73,000	78,475	3 X 2	30,900	33,218	26,600	28,595	
FP 2X2	59,000	63,425	64,900	69,768	2 X 2	18,680	20,081	15,600	16,770	
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Sports

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AFCON: Senegal calls for inquiry into removal of its Africa Cup of Nations title

Senegal's government yesterday called for an international investigation into what it said was suspected corruption within the Confederation of African Football (CAF) after the country was stripped of its 2025 Africa Cup of Nations title.

CAF's appeals board ruled on Tuesday that Senegal had "forfeited" the January final

by briefly leaving the pitch in protest during stoppage time, converting a 1-0 extra-time win into a 3-0 default defeat in favour of hosts Morocco.

In a statement, the government condemned CAF's ruling as "grossly illegal and profoundly unjust" and called for the opening of an international independent investigation to address what it described as

suspensions of corruption inside CAF's leadership.

CAF did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Senegalese Football Federation earlier said it would appeal the decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, calling the ruling unprecedented and unacceptable and vowing to file its challenge in Lausanne "as soon as possible."

...Senegal Faces AFCON 2026 Blackout If CAS Upholds CAF Ruling

Senegal could be excluded from the next Africa Cup of Nations if the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) upholds the decision of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) to award the 2025 AFCON title to Morocco and rule that Senegal forfeited the final.

The controversy stems from the dramatic conclusion of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations final, where Senegal were adjudged to have abandoned the match, leading CAF's Appeal Committee to

record the fixture as a 3-0 victory in favour of Morocco.

However, the situation could take a more severe turn for the Teranga Lions if CAS affirms CAF's ruling.

Under Article 59 of the AFCON regulations, any team found guilty of forfeiting a match may face additional disciplinary measures, including suspension from subsequent editions of the competition.

Such a sanction would deal a major blow to Senegal's football ambitions, potentially ruling them

out of the next AFCON tournament and disrupting their competitive cycle on the continental stage.

While Senegal are expected to continue their legal challenge at CAS, the final verdict will be decisive in determining whether the West African nation faces further punishment beyond the loss of the title.

For now, uncertainty surrounds Senegal's immediate future in African football as stakeholders await the outcome of the arbitration process.



SENEGAL PLAYERS

AFCON: Morocco Crowned Champions, Senegal Stripped Off Title

Host country Morocco has been officially crowned champions of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations after the CAF Appeal Board overturned the result of the final against Senegal.

CAF disclosed this in an X post that the decision comes after scenes in Rabat where the Lions of Teranga walked off the pitch in protest, leading to a retrospective 3-0 forfeit victory for the host nation.

CAF said the Senegalese team is stripped of the trophy after final protest in a detailed statement, the board also confirmed that the appeal lodged by the FRMF was "declared admissible in form and the appeal is upheld."

The ruling effectively strips Senegal of what would have been its second continental crown, rewarding the hosts for a match that descended into chaos during extra time.

The cause of the controversy came during a heated moment deep into stoppage time when Morocco's Brahim Diaz went down in the box.

While the referee initially waved play on, a VAR review resulted in a penalty kick for the hosts. This sparked a furious reaction from the Senegalese bench, with head coach Pape Thiaw instructing his players to return to the dressing room in a protest that lasted several minutes.

The CAF Appeal Board found that "the conduct of the Senegal team falls within the scope of Articles 82 and 84 of the Regulations of the Africa Cup of Nations." By

leaving the field of play, Senegal was deemed to have infringed on the regulation resulting in an administrative 3-0 defeat.

"The ruling sets aside the previous CAF Disciplinary Board decision and confirms that the protest lodged by Morocco has been fully upheld.

SEE FULL CAF STATEMENT BELOW:

The CAF Appeal Board decided that in application of Article 84 of the Regulations of the CAF Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON), the Senegal National Team is declared to have forfeited the Final Match of

the TotalEnergies CAF Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) Morocco 2025 ("the Match"), with the result

of the Match being recorded as 3-0 in favour of the Fédération Royale Marocaine de Football (FRMF).



SENEGAL TEAM CELEBRATING

International Friendlies: Chelle invites Ndidi, Iwobi, Lookman, 20 others for Iran and Jordan

Head Coach Eric Chelle has picked team captain Wilfred Ndidi, midfield ace Alex Iwobi and forward Ademola Lookman in a list of 23 players for this

month's international friendly matches against Iran and Jordan, which have now been moved from the Jordanian capital, Amman to the city of Antalya in Turkey.



COACH ERIC CHELLE

The Super Eagles will take on Iran's senior men football team in Antalya on Friday, 27th March (with kick off set for 4pm local time), and then the Jordan senior men national team on Tuesday, 31st March (with kick off set for 8pm local time).

Originally scheduled for the 17,000-capacity Amman International Stadium and the 62,000-capacity King Abdullah Sports City Stadium (also in Amman), the games had to be moved to a new venue following the outbreak of military conflict in the Middle East.

Chelle has also called Italy-based goalkeeper Maduka Okoye, defender Oluwasemilogo Ajayi, midfielder Frank Onyeka, and forwards Simon Moses,

Okpekpe International 10km Road Race set for thrilling return May 23

The Okpekpe International 10km Road Race, Nigeria's most prestigious road-running event, is set to make a grand comeback on May 23, 2026, with organizers promising new innovations and an even bigger spectacle for its 11th edition.

Mike Itemuagbor, CEO of Pamodzi Sports International, confirmed the return, emphasizing that the race will be stronger than ever after unforeseen circumstances forced the cancellation of last year's edition.

"The Okpekpe race is coming back stronger in 2026. Circumstances beyond our control ensured we could not hold last year. We have received a lot of inquiries from both athletes and officials who wanted to participate in the event and we explained to them that the race will come back this year for its 11th edition," Itemuagbor said.

The Okpekpe Road Race has carved a special place in Nigerian sports history. It was the first road-running event in the coun-

try to have its course measured by a World Athletics-certified measurer and, in 2015, became the first road race in West Africa to earn label status.

Since then, it has grown from bronze to gold label, attracting elite athletes from Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Morocco, Bahrain, and Nigeria.

Beyond its athletic prestige, the race has transformed the Okpekpe community in Edo State, opening up the rural town to the world and bringing economic and tourism benefits.

"We want to thank the thousands that communicated with us via telephones, emails, and our social media handles and assure them that we are not only coming back this May but that the event has come to stay," Itemuagbor emphasized.

The race has witnessed remarkable performances, with Daniel Ebenyo setting the men's course record at 28:28 in 2023 and Caroline Kipkirui holding the women's record at 32:38.



OKPEKPE INTERNATIONAL 10KM ROAD RACE

OPINION

The Nigerian Observer
...that the people may know

Bwala: From crisis communications and management stand point



Daniel Bwala with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu

EYARU COLLINS

After Ediale Kinglsey, a public commentary analyst himself, scored Bwala 60/100 for his performance. Here's my viewpoint:

Let's be honest about what happened in that interview. Calling it a 60/100 crisis response is extremely generous. From a political communications standpoint, Daniel Bwala scored 0/100. Not because he faced tough questions, but because he violated almost every basic principle of crisis management.

Start with the core rule of crisis communication: own the problem, control the narrative, and pivot to substance. Bwala did none of these.

The interview on Al Jazeera with Mehdi Hasan exposed a credibility issue that had been hanging over him long before the interview took place. Before joining the government of Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Bwala had publicly attacked Tinubu repeatedly. Those statements are part of the public record. When confronted with them, he looked unprepared, defensive, and inconsistent. That moment was the crisis.

A competent crisis response would have been simple and disci-

plined.

First, acknowledge the contradiction clearly. Something along the lines of: "Yes, I criticised Tinubu strongly in the past. Politics evolves, new information emerges, and today I believe his administration deserves support." That is how politicians close credibility gaps. Own it, neutralise it, and move forward.

Instead, Bwala did the opposite. His press statement tried to shift blame to the interviewer and the format of the program. That is amateur crisis management. Blaming the journalist rarely works, especially when the journalist is someone like Mehdi Hasan, whose entire reputation is built on forensic interviews.

Once you start complaining that you were not warned about questions, you have already lost the argument. Every serious political communicator understands that any past statement can be raised in an interview. Preparation is the job.

Second, he attacked the messenger instead of stabilising the message. He described the interview as "opposition research-style journalism" and suggested inaccuracies without providing evidence. That approach does not rebuild credibility. It signals

panic.

Third, he failed the most important task of the role he currently

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Crisis communication depends heavily on consistency of record. When a political spokesperson has a long history of attacking the very leader they now defend, the burden of credibility becomes extremely high.

holds. As Special Adviser on Media and Policy Communication, his responsibility is to redirect attention to policy achievements of the administration. The statement barely does that. Instead of shifting the discussion to economic reforms, security developments, or governance outcomes under Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the statement spends most of its time defending Bwala himself.

That is not crisis management. That is self-preservation.

There is another deeper issue here. Crisis communication depends heavily on consistency of record. When a political spokesperson has a long history of attacking the very leader they now defend, the burden of credibility becomes extremely high. Every interview becomes a potential minefield. The only way to neutralise that risk is radical transparency about the past.

Bwala chose the opposite strategy. He essentially said, "It was politics." That line might satisfy loyal supporters inside government circles, but it does not persuade a neutral audience. To many observers it sounds like an admission that political statements are disposable.

And once a spokesperson signals

that their previous words were merely political tools, audiences naturally begin to question whether their current words are equally disposable.

That is why the crisis response failed.

A proper response would have done three things:

1. Acknowledge past criticisms honestly.
2. Explain clearly why his position changed.
3. Pivot immediately to the administration's policies and measurable outcomes.

Instead, the statement defended the interview, criticised the interviewer, and dismissed critics as opposition voices. That approach might rally partisan supporters, but it does nothing to repair credibility with the broader public.

In political communications, a successful crisis response reduces the story's lifespan. This one did the opposite. It extended the controversy.

So the real score is not 60/100. It is 0/100 because the response failed the only metric that matters in crisis management: did it stabilise the narrative and restore credibility? It did neither.