

Fines alone won't fix Nigeria's telecom woes, Expert warns

Nigeria's plan to slap telecom operators with about N12.4 billion in fines for poor service will do little to improve consumers' experience unless companies adopt proper "recovery engineering," a senior tech expert has warned.

Mr Sheriff Adepoju, a Senior Software Engineer at Oracle, told journalists on Monday that recovery engineering —

practical systems that restore network service swiftly after failures is the missing link in Nigeria's telecom landscape.

Adepoju spoke in reaction to the Nigerian Communications Commission's (NCC) recent announcement of penalties for breaches of service standards, part of a broader directive from the Minister of Communications, Innovation, and Digital

Economy, Bosun Tijani, to enforce automatic fines for network failures within 90 days.

"Fines may punish operators after a failure, but they do not automatically improve their ability to fix problems faster in the future," Adepoju said.

He explained that networks frequently experience disruptions such as fibre cuts, power outages, software errors, and

congestion, and that recovery engineering combines tools, processes, and trained teams to detect, resolve, and communicate outages efficiently.

Adepoju emphasised that without this approach, subscribers are left in cycles of failed connections, unclear restoration timelines, and unhelpful customer care interactions.

Citing NCC data, Adepoju noted that monthly mobile data usage in Nigeria rose from 518,000 terabytes in January 2023 to over 1.23 million terabytes by November 2025, while broadband subscriptions hit 109.6 million by December 2025, increasing penetration to 50.58 percent.

He said the growing demand is outpacing operators' capacity to recover from routine failures.

"Recovery engineering changes what happens during an outage," he explained. "Problems must be detected quickly, assigned to the right team, and resolved in a controlled manner to prevent small disruptions from escalating. Communication with customers must be accurate and linked to real recovery steps,

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The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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NDCCITMA targets \$5bn investment, 500,000 jobs for N'Delta —Pg 3

PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968

VOL. 47, NO. 1,224

TUESDAY 24TH MARCH, 2026.

EU pledges €288m to boost Nigeria's health, agric, digital infrastructure

The European Union has announced a €288 million support package to strengthen Nigeria's healthcare, agriculture, finance, migration, climate, and digital public infrastructure sectors.

The move signals a deepening of cooperation under the new EU-Nigeria Partnership.

The announcement came at an EU-Nigeria Ministerial

news conference in Abuja.

Mr Stefano Signore, Director General of International Partnerships at the European Commission, said the funding is part of the EU's Global Gateway strategy to accelerate investment in critical sectors.

Signore highlighted healthcare and agriculture as key areas where EU support will improve standards, infrastructure, local manufacturing, and inclusion. He also emphasised efforts to

support sustainable migration and provide better opportunities for returnee migrants.

Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Mr Abubakar Bagudu, said the initiative builds on momentum from the 2023 EU-Nigeria Strategic Dialogue. Represented by Dr Doris Anite-Uzoka, he stressed that the partnership reflects a shared commitment to an investment-driven relationship anchored on mutual respect

and sustainable development.

Bagudu added that under President Bola Tinubu, Nigeria is implementing macroeconomic reforms to stabilise the economy, improve transparency, and create an enabling environment for private sector-led growth.

Dr Olasupo Olusi, Managing Director of the Bank of Industry, said the EU partnership channels long-term investment into critical sectors, particularly healthcare and agriculture,

which are central to national resilience and inclusive growth.

Finland, leading the Team Europe Initiative, will support Nigeria's digital public services and the development of three million technical talents.

Implementation will be led by Finland's HAUS and Estonia's ESTDEV agency.

Mr Uche Amaonwu of the Gates Foundation highlighted the importance of health manufacturing, praising the

partnership for translating financing into tangible investment for Nigerian healthcare players.

Officials said the €288 million package will support digital infrastructure, healthcare manufacturing, agriculture development, skills training, and migration governance. The EU described the initiative as a major step in deepening economic, social, and technological cooperation with Nigeria.



EID-EL-FITR HOMAGE:

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (right) and Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, exchanging pleasantries during the Nigerian Governor's Eid-el-Fitr homage to the President in his Lagos residence at the weekend.

BNCL boss assures imminent return of *The Nigerian Observer* to newsstands

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

The General Manager of Bendel Newspapers Corporation, publisher of *The Nigerian Observer* titles, Hon. Peter Odibo, has assured readers that the long-awaited return of the newspaper to the newsstands is imminent.

Odibo gave the assurance when he toured the facilities of the publishing company, alongside a team of engineers to assess the condition of printing machines and determine their readiness for optimal use.

Expressing confidence in the revival process, he called on staff to work closely with management and the Edo State Government to restore the publication's presence across the state.

He said the newspaper would soon be available in Benin City before extending to other parts of Edo, noting that efforts were underway to reactivate in-house printing operations.

Odibo emphasised his commitment to fostering cooperation, rather than victimisation among workers, urging them to carry out their duties diligently to reposition the organisation within the media landscape.

He disclosed that appeals had been made to the state government to address operational challenges, including manpower shortages, expressing optimism that support would be forthcoming.

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Fuel price hike: Makinde approves N10,000 transport allowance for Oyo workers —Pg 2

Nigeria moves to roll out long-acting HIV prevention injection —Pg 4

Oil falls and shares rebound after Trump says talks have been held to end war —Pg 8

Morocco captain Hakimi stuns Football World by rejecting AFCON title —Pg 11

Edo Disability Commission pledges stronger inclusion for PWDs

FRANCIS ODUPUTE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has reaffirmed its commitment to promoting the welfare and inclusion of Persons With Disabilities (PWDs), with a focus on strengthening advocacy and support systems.

Chairman of the Edo State Disability Commission, Hon. Theophilus Egbodion, made this

known while receiving members of the Association for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities of Nigeria (AIDDN), Edo State chapter, during a courtesy visit to the Commission's office in Benin City.

Egbodion said the Commission was established after years of advocacy to ensure that persons with disabilities in the state are given a voice and greater visibility in governance and development.

He noted that the agency would continue to champion policies and programmes that protect their rights and improve their living conditions, while appreciating Governor Monday Okpebholo for setting up the Commission.

Speaking on behalf of the delegation, AIDDN State Chair-

man, Ambassador Onome Emmanuel Otueroro, said the visit was to congratulate the Commission's leadership and introduce the intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) cluster, which he described as one of the most neglected within the PWD community.

He said the association also

sought collaboration with the Commission to promote inclusive policies, accessible services and sustainable interventions for children and adults living with IDD in Edo State.

Otueroro noted that persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities often face stigma, discrimination and

limited opportunities, stressing that with adequate support, they can contribute meaningfully to society.

He called for stronger government and stakeholder partnerships to expand programmes and improve the lives of affected individuals and their families.

Gov Lawal thrilled as Zamfara tests flight ops at Gusau airport

GUSAU

Governor Dauda Lawal on Sunday expressed excitement about the historic flight test-run at the Gusau International Airport.

A statement by the governor's spokesperson, Sulaiman Idris, disclosed that the test

flight landed at the Gusau International Airport at exactly 4:30 p.m. on Sunday.

It said the aircraft, a Bombardier Challenger 605, was operated by the Federal Government of Nigeria.

The statement read in part,

CONTINUES ON PG 3»

Court jails ex-AGoF Nwabuoku 72 yrs over N868m fraud

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja has convicted and sentenced a former Acting Accountant-General of the Federation, Chukwunyeri Nwabuoku, to a total of 72 years imprisonment for money laundering involving N868 million.

Delivering judgment on Monday, Justice James Omotosho found that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) proved its nine-count charge beyond reasonable doubt.

The court sentenced Nwabuoku to eight years on each count, to run concurrently from March 23, 2026.

Nwabuoku was arraigned on January 15, 2025, on charges bordering on laundering public funds while serving as Director of Finance and Accounts in the Ministry of Defence between 2019 and 2021.

The judge held that the defendant diverted funds meant for national security into personal investments, using prox-

ies and corporate accounts to channel the money into securities trading.

He described the act as a classic case of money laundering, involving the conversion of illicit funds into seemingly legitimate assets.

Justice Omotosho dismissed the defence's argument that the defendant's confessional statements were involuntary, ruling that failure to object at the point of tendering rendered the claim an afterthought.

The court noted that evidence showed a sudden surge in Nwabuoku's financial portfolio during the period of the alleged offences, with tens of millions of naira traced to his accounts through linked entities.

Although the defendant refunded N220 million during investigation and pleaded for leniency, the court held that the gravity of the offence warranted strict punishment.

The judge also directed the EFCC to file a formal application for the forfeiture of assets linked to the crime.

Fines alone won't fix Nigeria's...

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not guesses.”

Adepoju concluded that while the NCC's fines may raise the cost of poor service,

sustainable improvement depends on operators proving their recovery performance — how fast they detect, restore, and communicate during failures.

BNCL boss assures imminent return of...

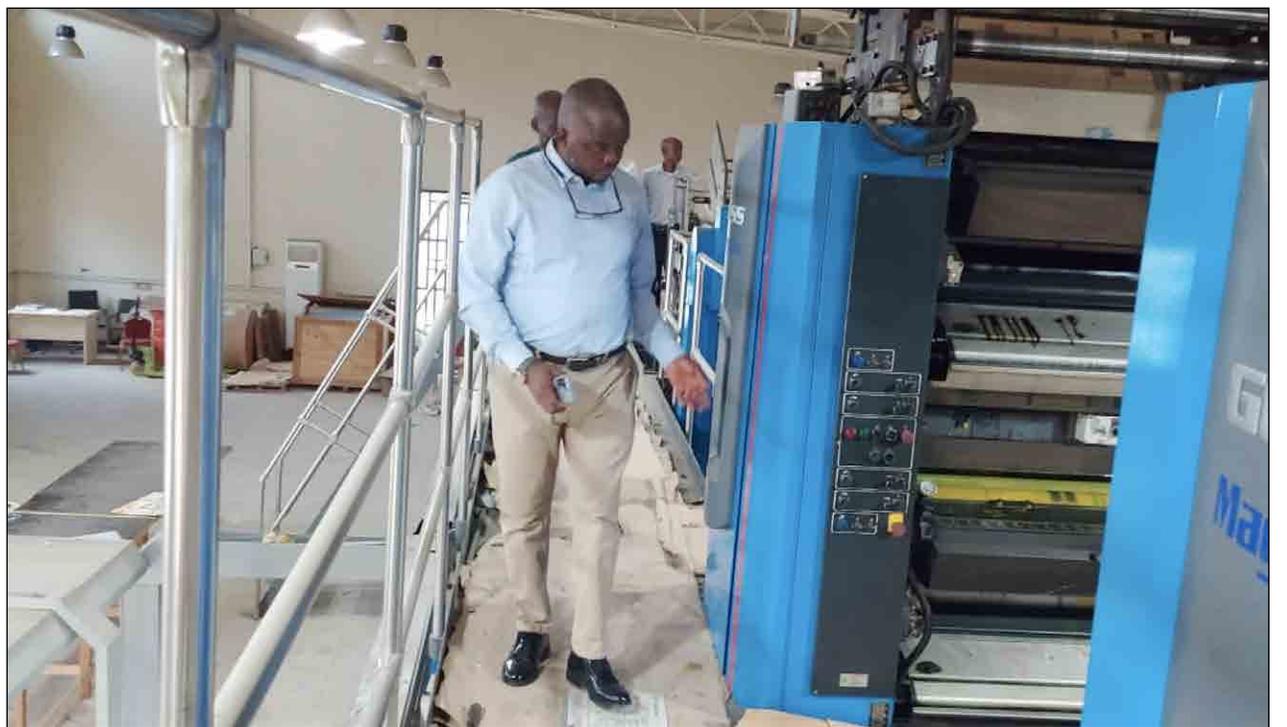
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The BNCL boss also directed an end to remote working arrangements, insisting that staff must be physically present to contribute effectively.

He stressed the need to fully utilise existing printing equip-

ment instead of outsourcing jobs.

Commending Governor Monday Okpebholo for prioritising workers' welfare through prompt salary payments, Odibo urged employees to reciprocate with improved productivity and dedication.

**FACILITIES TOUR:**

General Manager, Bendel Newspapers Corporation, publisher of *The Observer* titles, Hon. Peter Odibo, during a tour of facilities of the publishing company, with a team of engineers to assess the condition of printing machines, with a view to determine their readiness for optimal use.

Fuel price hike: Makinde approves N10,000 transport allowance for Oyo workers

IBADAN

Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State has approved a N10,000 monthly transport support allowance for civil servants, as part of measures to cushion the impact of rising fuel costs.

Makinde announced the intervention on Monday while

supervising the YEAP-SAFER support disbursement and stakeholder engagement programme at the Fashola Agribusiness Hub in Oyo town.

The governor said the allowance, which takes effect from March, would run initially for three months, with modalities for disbursement to be communicated through official

government channels.

He explained that the measure was a strategic response to prevailing economic challenges, particularly the spike in transportation costs driven by the ongoing energy crisis, which has adversely affected workers' welfare and productivity.

The governor noted that the

support would ease financial pressure on civil servants while sustaining efficient service delivery across ministries, departments and agencies.

Recent global tensions have pushed up petroleum prices, with Nigeria witnessing a sharp increase in pump prices from about N860 per litre to between N1,320 and N1,500, triggering higher transport fares and food prices nationwide.

Ozoro outrage: 'No culture justifies sexual violence' —Dvocate

LAGOS

A men's mental health advocate, Ms Halima Layeni, has condemned alleged acts of sexual violence in Ozoro, Delta State, declaring that no tradition or cultural practice can justify such abuse.

Layeni, Executive Director of Life After Abuse Foundation (LAAF), spoke on Monday in reaction to viral videos showing women being stripped, harassed and assaulted during

what was described as a "festival" in the community.

The footage, which has sparked widespread outrage, depicts chaotic scenes of women being chased and attacked in public by groups of men.

Describing the incidents as a grave violation of human dignity, Layeni said the victims deserved justice, protection and sustained support.

She argued that the disturbing development reflected deeper societal failures, noting that

harmful behaviours among boys and young men were often ignored or trivialised.

According to her, many boys grow up without emotional guidance, are discouraged from expressing vulnerability, and are denied safe spaces to process trauma, leading to suppressed emotions that can manifest as violence.

Layeni stressed that when violence is normalised and women are dehumanised, such attitudes become entrenched and may

erupt into collective abuse.

She called for a shift from reactive responses to preventive measures, including early education on consent, access to mental health support, and mentorship programmes that promote responsible and respectful masculinity.

"The tragedy in Ozoro must serve as a turning point for sustained reform and action," she said, warning that failure to address root causes would perpetuate cycles of violence.

EU-backed intervention saves 40,000 malnourished children in Yobe

DAMATURU

More than 40,000 malnourished children in Yobe State have received life-saving treatment through European Union-supported nutrition programmes, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has said.

UNICEF Malnutrition Manager, Mr Joseph Senesie,

disclosed this during a media field visit and virtual briefing in Damaturu on Monday.

He noted that the May-to-September lean season typically worsens acute malnutrition among children but expressed optimism that 2026 would record improved outcomes due to sustained interventions.

Senesie attributed the pro-

gress to EU humanitarian funding, which enabled the procurement of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) for rapid recovery of affected children.

He added that collaboration with government and partners had strengthened the overall nutrition response in the state.

Also speaking, the Executive Secretary of the Yobe State Primary Health Care Board, Dr

Babagana Machina, described malnutrition as a major public health challenge driven by food shortages, disease outbreaks and displacement caused by conflict.

He said EU support had enhanced the delivery of critical nutrition services, ensuring steady supplies of therapeutic food across hundreds of health facilities in the state.

NEWS

NDCCITMA targets \$5bn investment, 500,000 jobs for N'Delta

PORT HARCOURT

The Niger Delta Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Trade, Mines and Agriculture (NDCCITMA) has unveiled plans to attract \$5 billion in investment aimed at generating over 500,000 jobs across the Niger Delta region.

Chairman of the Board, Mr Idaere Ogan, disclosed this during a media briefing on Monday in Port Harcourt, held to announce the forthcoming Niger Delta Economic and Investment Summit (NDEI Summit) scheduled for May.

Ogan explained that the initiative would be driven through a structured investment marketplace featuring a Deal Room of between 30 and 50 pre-screened, investment-ready projects spanning key sectors critical to the region's future.

He listed priority areas to include agro-industry and food security, manufacturing and industrial clusters, infrastructure and logistics, as well as the blue economy and marine enterprise.

Others, he said, are tourism and the creative economy, technology and digital innovation, gas commercialisation, human capital development, and access to finance.

According to him, the project pipeline combines ambi-

tion with practicality, highlighting initiatives such as the Niger Delta Rural and Urban Mobility Scheme to enhance connectivity between communities and markets.

Additional projects include an Agro Food Hub and Integrated Logistics System to strengthen processing, packaging, storage and market access, alongside a Cargo Flight System designed to improve freight connectivity.

Ogan further revealed plans for a Niger Delta Science and Technology Park to serve as a hub for innovation, enterprise development and startup growth.

He added that greenhouse agriculture projects, an Export Trade Programme to boost export readiness, and an Investment Partnership Scheme linking investors to viable opportunities are also part of the initiative.

The summit, he said, will showcase strategic infrastructure such as rail-linked transport systems, incubation facilities, cold chain networks and fisheries support infrastructure, including ice hubs.

"These are practical vehicles for jobs, productivity, trade and enterprise growth. Our ambition is bold but achievable," Ogan stated, noting that the investment drive could deliver significant economic

expansion if executed with discipline.

He disclosed that over 4,000 nano, micro and small enterprises had already benefited from intervention support, with an initial N5 billion financing tranche currently sup-

porting qualified businesses across the region.

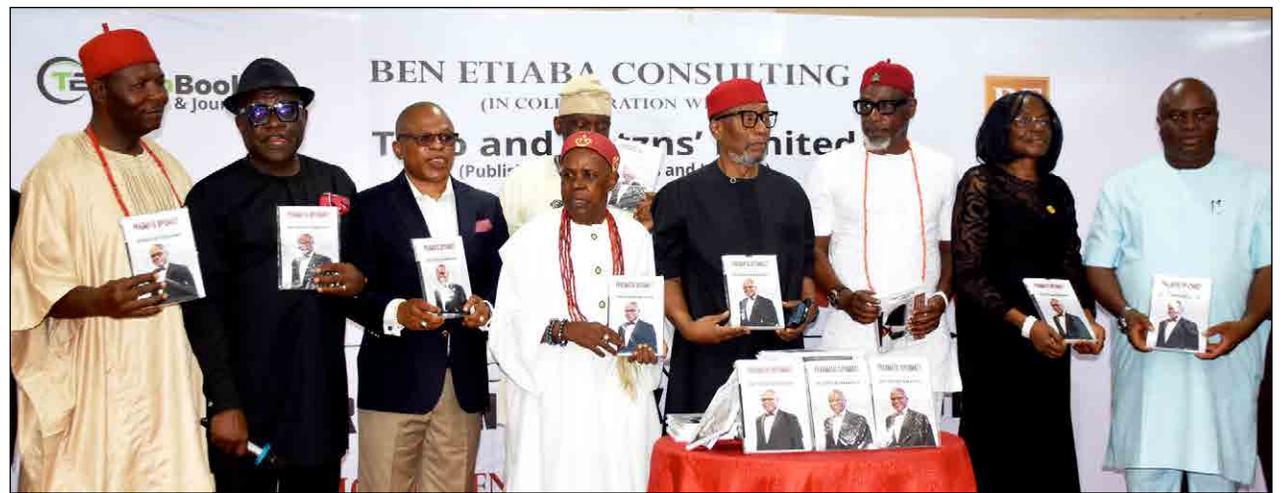
Ogan said the summit, a fallout of the Niger Delta Business Roundtable, is designed to reshape the region's economic narrative by reducing reliance on oil and promoting diversi-

fied growth.

He called on state governors, chambers of commerce and investors to collaborate with NDCCITMA in transforming the region's economy.

Earlier, Chairman of the Conference Planning Com-

mittee, Dr Solomon Edebiri, said the summit would boost investment inflows, promote diversification, create jobs and empower youths, while strengthening infrastructure and public-private partnerships.



BOOK PUBLIC PRESENTATION:

L-R: Sen. Chukwuka Utazi; Convener, Chief Ben Etiaba; book author, Amb. Anderson Nkemakonam-Madubike; former Chairman Council of Traditional Rulers, Enugu State, Igwe Lawrence Agubuzo; Chairman of the Occasion, Amb. Joe Keshi; Igwe Chima Achiekwelu; book reviewer, Dame Elizabeth Agu and representative of Co-Chief launcher, Arthur Eze, Sir Chinedu Ogubuike, during the public presentation of a book titled 'Pragmatic Diplomacy' in Enugu on Monday.

Troops uncover terrorists' burial site

● Arrest key collaborators in N'East

ABUJA

Troops of Operation Hadin Kai have uncovered a suspected terrorists' burial ground and arrested high-profile collaborators in ongoing operations across Borno and Adamawa states.

Operational reports made available in Abuja indicated that an air interdiction at

Chikide neutralised several ISWAP/JAS fighters gathered under a shelter, while others fled following the precision strike.

The military disclosed that troops conducting offensive operations in Abadam Local Government Area of Borno State discovered a burial ground containing about eight bodies.

Items recovered at the site

included a fabricated mortar tube and an improvised medical post.

In a related development, troops of the 231 Tank Battalion, in collaboration with local hunters, apprehended two suspected high-profile terrorist collaborators at Miringa Market in Biu Local Government Area of Borno.

The suspects were reportedly involved in coordinating sleeper cells and stockpiling

arms for terrorist operations.

Meanwhile, troops responding to an explosion in Hong Local Government Area of Adamawa State confirmed that it was caused by a livestock-triggered improvised explosive device, with no casualties recorded.

The military said the operations are part of sustained efforts to dismantle terrorist networks and deny them freedom of action across the North-East.

Edo SSG hails civil servants as pillars of govt success

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH BENIN CITY

The Secretary to the Edo State Government, Umar Musa Ikhilor, has commended civil servants for their critical role in driving the achievements of the state administration.

Ikhilor made the remarks while hosting government workers to a Sallah get-together at his residence in Benin City, marking the end of Ramadan.

The gathering brought together permanent secretaries, directors, and staff across ministries, departments, and agencies, providing an opportunity for appreciation and reflection.

Describing civil servants as the backbone of governance, the SSG acknowledged their contributions to policy implementation and service delivery.

He stressed that the successes recorded by the administration were the result of collective effort and urged workers to remain committed to their duties.

Ikhilor also highlighted the importance of unity and religious harmony, noting that the overlap of Lent and Ramadan underscored shared values of

sacrifice and devotion.

He extended Sallah greetings to Muslim faithful and expressed hope for continued interfaith celebrations, including the forthcoming Easter season.

Responding on behalf of the Governor's Press Crew, Abdul-Kadir Abdullah praised the SSG's inclusive leadership style, noting that it has boosted morale within the system.

The event featured interactions among staff and reaffirmed the administration's commitment to a supportive work environment



IKHILOR

IPC condemns police assault on journalist in Bauchi

LAGOS

The International Press Centre (IPC), Lagos, has condemned the alleged assault on a journalist, Mohammed Adamu, during the Eid Durbar celebrations in Bununu, Tafawa Balewa Local Government Area of Bauchi State.

In a statement issued on March 23, 2026, through its Safety and Protection of Jour-

nalists (SPJ) Hub, the organisation described the incident as a grave abuse of power and a threat to press freedom.

Adamu, a reporter with Albarka Radio and a media partner to Wikki Times, was reportedly attacked by police officers while on assignment covering the event.

Recounting the incident, the journalist said he was stopped by a police constable while heading to the designated me-

dia area and was subsequently ordered out of the venue by the Divisional Police Officer, SP Jamilu Kabir.

Despite identifying himself as a journalist, Adamu alleged that he was verbally abused and physically assaulted by the officer, with other policemen joining in the attack.

Reacting, IPC Executive Director Lanre Arogundade warned that such actions undermine democracy and violate

fundamental human rights.

The organisation called on the Bauchi State Commissioner of Police, Sani-Omolori Aliyu, to investigate the matter and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.

It also urged the Nigeria Police Force to improve the training of its personnel to promote professionalism and respect for journalists, while demanding adequate compensation for the victim.

Ozoro sexual assault scandal: Police Arrest 15, Monarch orders crackdown

BETTY IDIALU

WARRI

Authorities in Delta State have arrested 15 suspects in connection with an alleged sexual assault incident that has sparked outrage in Ozoro community, Isoko North Local Government Area.

The Delta State Police Command confirmed the arrests following the detention of additional suspects linked to the case, with investigations driven by video evidence and intelligence reports.

Among those in custody are Samson Atukpodo, Steven Ovie, Ugbevo Samson, Afoke Akporobaro, and Evidence Oguname, alongside others yet to be identified.

Amid mounting public concern, the Commissioner of Police, Aina Adesola, led a delegation of senior officers to the community to assess the situation and reassure residents of the command's commitment to justice.

During engagements with stakeholders, the police reiterated their zero tolerance for sexual and gender-based vio-

lence, noting the national attention the case has attracted.

In a decisive move, the traditional ruler of Ozoro, Anthony Uvietobore Ogbogbo, condemned the incident and ordered that all festivals and public gatherings in the kingdom must henceforth receive prior palace approval.

Chairman of Isoko North Local Government Area, Godwin Ogorugba, clarified that the event in question was not an officially recognised festival but a poorly managed gathering exploited by criminal elements.

Despite tensions, students

of Southern Delta University have been praised for maintaining calm.

The South-South Zonal Coordinator of the National Association of Nigerian Students, Victor Ogechukwu, commended their restraint, while the institution's Student Union President, Ori-belua Precious, participated in dialogue efforts.

The police have urged victims and witnesses to come forward, assuring confidentiality through the Gender Desk at the State Headquarters, as investigations continue with the possibility of further arrests.

Police warn against unauthorised political rallies in A'ibom

UYO
The Akwa Ibom State Police Command has cautioned political parties and groups against staging unauthorised rallies, warning that violators will face legal

consequences.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Timfon John, in a statement on Monday, said police approval remains mandatory for all political gatherings in the state.

She disclosed that the com-

mand had received intelligence on planned rallies by the Village Boys Movement and Renewed Hope Ambassadors scheduled for March 28, noting that no approval had been granted.

John said the rallies, already

being promoted on social media, contravene established guidelines by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

"Political campaigns can only commence within the designated periods specified by

INEC. Defaulters will be sanctioned accordingly," she said.

She warned that any attempt to proceed with unauthorised rallies would attract the intervention of law enforcement agencies, stressing that the

command would not tolerate actions capable of threatening public peace.

The police urged organisers to suspend further plans until proper authorisation is obtained.



LEADERSHIP SUMMIT:

A cross section of participants at a Project Leadership Summit held in Benin City recently.

Group holds Project Leadership Summit

FRANCIS ODUPUTE

BENIN CITY

The pilot edition of the Project Leadership Summit (PLS) was held in Benin City, focusing on strengthening leadership capacity and improving project management practices for sustainable development.

The summit, themed "Beyond Delivery: Creating Sustainable Impact Through Projects," brought together professionals, aspiring project managers, and industry leaders from across the South-South geo-political zone, including participants from Ekpoma, Rivers and Delta states.

Convener, Philip Neil Gideon, said the event was designed to bridge a critical gap in the region's project ecosystem by ensuring projects are not only delivered but sustained for long-term impact.

Speakers, including Engr. Osayamen Airhumwunde, Mrs. Isimeme Whyte, Mrs. Tinah Balewa, and Gideon, delivered practical insights on

sustainability, impact, and strategic execution.

A key highlight was the emphasis on defining the purpose of every project, with Gideon asking: "Of what use is your project after the delivery date?"

Engr. Osayamen stressed community collaboration, urging professionals to work with communities to ensure inclusion and sustainability, while Mrs. Balewa introduced structured project approaches such as Waterfall, Agile and hybrid models.

Mrs. Whyte highlighted the importance of data-driven decision-making, environmental and social planning, integrity, and continuous evaluation from project inception.

The summit also featured the launch of the Global Project Managers Network (GPMN) and interactive sessions that encouraged networking and knowledge exchange.

Overall, PLS 2026 underscored the need to redefine success in project management beyond delivery to sustained impact and long-term value.

FG, C'River move to sanitise mining sector

CALABAR
The Federal Government has reaffirmed its commitment to partnering with the Cross River State Government to sanitise and standardise mining operations in the state.

The Operational Head of the Nigerian Nuclear Regulatory Authority (NNRA), Mrs Eme-

mobong Essien, stated this on Monday during a visit to the state Commissioner for Mineral Resources, Mr Effiom-Ekaha Otu.

Essien described the collaboration as strategic to improving safety, regulation, and oversight in the extractive sector.

She noted that Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials

often emerge during mineral exploration and require specialised handling to prevent environmental and health risks.

"This partnership will ensure adherence to international safety standards and protect host communities," she said, adding that the NNRA would deploy its resources to enforce compliance.

Responding, the commissioner said the Gov. Bassey Otu-led administration remained committed to sanitising the sector and ensuring responsible mining practices.

He assured the Federal Government of full cooperation, including the profiling of mining operators to enhance accountability, security, and productivity.

Nigeria moves to roll out long-acting HIV prevention injection

ABUJA
Nigeria has commenced preparations to roll out Lenacapavir, a long-acting injectable drug for HIV prevention, across eight states and the Federal Capital Territory.

The Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, Dr Iziq Salako, disclosed this at a media briefing on Monday, describing the move as a ma-

ajor step toward ending HIV/AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

He said the selected states include Anambra, Ebonyi, Gombe, Kwara, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, and Benue, alongside the FCT.

Lenacapavir, administered once every six months, is designed for HIV-negative individuals at high risk and serves as an alternative to daily oral preventive medication.

Salako said about 52,000 doses had been secured to support the initial rollout, with the first batch already delivered.

"This is not a treatment, but a preventive option. It must not be seen as a licence for risky behaviour," he cautioned.

He explained that the roll-

out would follow a phased approach to monitor safety and effectiveness before nationwide expansion.

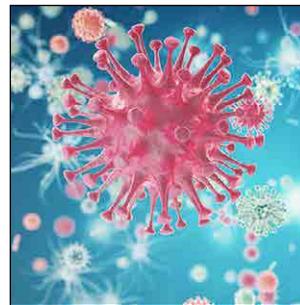
The National Coordinator of the AIDS, Viral Hepatitis and STIs Control Programme, Dr Adebobola Bashorun, said the drug would complement existing prevention methods, noting that no major adverse effects had been recorded.

Director-General of the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA), Dr Temitope Ilori, described the innovation as a boost to Nigeria's HIV prevention strategy, particularly for high-risk populations.

She stressed that the drug does not prevent other sexually transmitted infections or unwanted pregnancies and is not

recommended for pregnant women.

Officials said implementation would be guided by the National Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis Plan (2025-2028), with a focus on service delivery, supply chain management, financing, and community engagement.



HIV/AIDS VIRUS

Navy intercepts 44,000 ltrs of illegal fuel, arrests 8 in Rivers

ABUJA

The Nigerian Navy has intercepted about 44,000 litres of suspected illegally refined petroleum products and arrested eight suspects in Rivers State.

The Director of Naval Information, Commodore Abiodun Folorunsho, disclosed this in a statement, noting that the operation was carried out under Operation DELTA SENTINEL.

He said personnel of Nigerian Navy Ship (NNS) PATH-FINDER, acting on intelligence, intercepted two wooden boats conveying suspected illegally refined Automotive Gas Oil (AGO) in the Degema/

Ogbogoro/Ogbologo axis.

Folorunsho added that some armed accomplices fled on sighting the patrol team, while the arrested suspects and recovered products were taken into custody for further investigation and possible prosecution.

He said the operation aligns with the directive of the Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Adm. Idi Abbas, to intensify the fight against crude oil theft and maritime crimes.

The Navy reaffirmed its commitment to sustaining operations through intelligence-driven patrols and inter-agency collaboration to protect critical national assets.

Gov Lawal thrilled as Zamfara tests...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 2

"Today will remain a historic day in the history of Zamfara as Governor Lawal witnessed the landing of the maiden flight at the Gusau International Airport.

"The aircraft with registration 5N-FGZ performed a one-off test to assess the airport's capability for VIP movements scheduled next week.

"The test flight is in accordance with the provisions

of the Nigeria Civil Aviation Regulations (Nig. CARs) Part 12.1.4.1(c)."

According to the statement, before the test flight, the state government requested permission from the NCAA, and the Authority granted a one-off 'No Technical Objection' (NTO) for the aircraft to land in Gusau.

"The flight operation was conducted under Visual Flight Rules (VFR), which was strictly from sunrise to sunset," it added.

CHANGE OF NAME

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

CHANGE OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **MRS. OMOZEE ANITA, MISS ERHUNMWUNSE ANITA** and **MRS. AGBONYI ANITA** are one and the same person as appeared in some of my documents. Henceforth, I wish to be known and address as **MISS ERHUNMWUNSE ANITA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **EGHAIRE QUEEN OJEVWE**, now wish to be known as **IJEHEDDE QUEEN OJEVWE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **RITA UZONUFOGHO UZAZOMARO**, now wish to be known and address as **RITA UZONUFOGHO DIMOKO**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

REMOVAL OF NAME

I, formerly known as **OSUYI SAMUEL OSAYEWENRE**, now wish to be known and address as **OSUYI SAMUEL**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

Navy rescues 7 after boat collision in Bayelsa

ABUJA

The Nigerian Navy has rescued seven persons following a boat collision in the Ogboinbiri waterways of Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

The Director of Naval Information, Navy Captain Abiodun Folorunsho, disclosed this in a statement on Monday in Abuja.

Folorunsho said the rescue followed a distress call on an incident involving a Tantita patrol boat and a wooden mar-

ket boat.

He explained that personnel of Nigerian Navy Ship (NNS) SOROH were immediately deployed to the scene, resulting in the successful rescue of the victims.

According to him, the rescued persons were promptly

evacuated to a nearby medical facility for urgent attention, while efforts are ongoing to locate other missing persons.

Folorunsho noted that the operation underscored the Navy's commitment to safeguarding lives within Nigeria's maritime environment.

He added that the effort aligns with the vision of the Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Idi Abbas, which prioritises maritime security and human safety.

Highlighting recent successes, he said the Navy rescued 16 passengers during a sea robbery incident in the Ibaka-Calabar Channel in March, 20 crew members from a burning

vessel near Calabar in December 2025, and 10 crew members from a distressed vessel in November 2025.

He also recalled the rescue of 17 kidnapped victims in Calabar waterways in October 2025.

The Navy assured the public of its readiness to sustain rapid response to maritime emergencies in line with global best practices.



A VISIT:

L-R: Chairman, Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Oyo State Council, Mr Akeem Abas; member, House of Representatives, Adedeji Olajide, and Chairman, PDP, Ibadan South-West Local Government, Chief Kunle Folarin, during a visit in Ibadan on Monday.

AFAN warns farmers against selling govt distributed inputs

LAGOS

The All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN), Lagos chapter, has warned farmers against selling agricultural inputs distributed by the Federal Government.

The Acting Chairman of AFAN in the state, Mr Sakin Agbayewa, gave the warning in an interview with newsmen on Monday in Lagos.

He commended the Federal Government for supporting farmers through interventions, including the recent distribution of agro-inputs by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.

According to him, the inputs were distributed through 68 farmers' cooperatives across the state.

Agbayewa stressed that the cooperative-based distribution ensured transparency and fairness.

"We are encouraging farmers to use the inputs for the intended purpose to enhance food security, rather than selling them," he said.

He, however, noted that the association could not ascertain the total quantity of inputs distributed, as some were channelled through local government areas.

Agbayewa praised the monitoring and supervision of the exercise by ministry officials, describing the process as transparent and orderly.

He urged the government to increase the quantity of inputs in future interventions to further support local farmers.

Gateway programme targets youth unemployment, opens 340,000 slots

LAGOS

A five-year initiative, the Gateway Programme, aimed at tackling youth unemployment, has opened registration to connect 340,000 Nigerian youths to global gig opportunities.

Speaking at the programme's launch in Lagos, the Managing Director of Co-creation Hub Ltd (CCHUB), Ms Ojoma Ochai, said the initiative would provide

pathways for unemployed and underemployed youths to access sustainable income through the global gig economy.

She explained that the programme is designed to bridge the skills-to-employment gap by equipping young people with in-demand digital competencies.

Ochai noted that the global gig economy is expanding rapidly and is projected to reach about 1.85 trillion dollars by 2032.

"Participants will be trained

in areas such as digital marketing, video production and editing, graphic design, and UI/UX design," she said.

She added that the programme would accommodate participants at different skill levels through two pathways — Growth Pathways and Foundation Pathways.

According to her, the Growth Pathway targets individuals with existing digital and creative skills seeking to improve their portfolios and access gig opportunities, while

the Foundation Pathway is designed for beginners.

Ochai also emphasised inclusivity, noting that the programme prioritises women, persons with disabilities, and displaced youths.

She said the initiative would be implemented across 10 states, including Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, the Federal Capital Territory, Kano, Kaduna, Rivers, Delta, Edo, and Enugu.

Registration, she added, is currently open through the programme's portal.

TRCN staff laud registrar over restoration of Fed funding

ABUJA

Senior staff of the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) have commended the Registrar, Dr Ronke Soyombo, for restoring Federal Government funding to the council.

The Chairman of the Senior Staff Association of Universities, Teaching Hospitals, Research Institutes and Allied Institutions

(SSAUTHRIAL), TRCN chapter, Mr Augustus Ihionu, gave the commendation during the registrar's golden jubilee celebration in Abuja on Monday.

Ihionu described Soyombo's efforts as unprecedented, noting that her leadership brought renewed hope during a period of uncertainty caused by the council's defunding.

"It is with great pride that we commend our registrar for her ef-

forts in returning the council to federal government funding," he said.

He added that the achievement was a result of tireless advocacy, strategic engagement, and a strong belief in the institution's role in national development.

Ihionu also praised Soyombo for boosting staff morale, restoring confidence, and repositioning the council for greater efficiency.

He commended the Gov-

erning Board Chairman, Dr Mustapha Salihu, for his leadership and support.

In her remarks, Soyombo described TRCN staff as hardworking and deserving of better wages, recalling that workers were paid below minimum wage and denied promotion arrears for two years.

She noted that the restoration of funding has significantly improved staff morale and service delivery.

Expert: NCC's N12.4bn fine won't improve service without recovery systems

ABUJA

A Senior Software Engineer at Oracle, Mr Sheriff Adepoju, has said that the planned N12.4 billion fine on telecom operators for poor service will not significantly improve user experience without investment in recovery systems.

Adepoju made this known on Monday in Abuja while reacting to the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) move to impose penalties for breaches of service standards.

The enforcement follows a directive by the Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, Bosun Tijani, mandating the introduction of automatic penalties for network failures within 90 days.

While acknowledging the intent of the sanctions, Adepoju argued that fines alone cannot enhance network performance.

He explained that "recovery engineering" systems that restore services quickly after disruptions, remains the missing link in Nigeria's telecoms sector.

According to him, networks frequently face disruptions from fibre cuts, power issues, equipment faults, software errors, and congestion during

peak periods.

"Recovery engineering ensures that disruptions are detected early, assigned promptly, resolved safely, and communicated clearly to customers," he said.

He noted that mobile data usage in Nigeria has surged from about 518,000 terabytes in January 2023 to over 1.23 million terabytes by November 2025, while broadband subscriptions rose to 109.6 million by December 2025.

Adepoju warned that growing demand without corresponding recovery capacity worsens service failures, affecting businesses, education, and digital transactions.

He added that effective recovery systems would enable faster fault detection, clearer responsibility allocation, controlled restoration, and better customer communication.

"The NCC's penalties may raise the cost of poor service, but lasting improvement will depend on how quickly operators detect faults, restore services, and communicate during outages," he said.

He maintained that without strong recovery capabilities, fines would not translate into better day-to-day telecom service for Nigerians.

Insecurity: Lawmaker urges FG to arm Amotekun with modern weapons

AKURE

A member of the Ondo State House of Assembly, Mr Olatunji Ifabiye, has urged the Federal Government to permit the Amotekun Corps to bear sophisticated weapons to enhance the fight against insecurity.

Ifabiye, who represents Odigbo Constituency I and chairs the House Committee on Security Matters, said the corps cannot effectively combat armed criminals with outdated weapons.

According to him, Amotekun operatives possess strong knowledge of local terrain but require modern equip-

ment and technology to tackle rising security challenges.

"They cannot continue to confront criminals armed with lethal weapons using obsolete arms. We must be realistic," he said.

The lawmaker noted that the Assembly had consistently supported security initiatives and granted speedy passage to

bills strengthening the corps.

He added that the request would enable Amotekun to complement other security agencies more effectively, while commending the Federal Government's Forest Guards initiative as a step towards flushing out criminals from forest reserves.

NEWS

Akinade retains Chair as Lagos IPAC elects new exco

LAGOS

The Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC) in Lagos State on Monday re-elected Mrs Temilola Akinade of the National Rescue Movement (NRM) as its chairman, alongside other members of a new executive committee.

The leaders emerged through consensus and affirmation at the headquarters of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Lagos.

Speaking at the congress, Chairman of the Electoral Committee and IPAC National Organising Secretary, Mrs Chinyere Kalu, said 18 political parties were accredited for the exercise.

She announced that Dr Adedola Jokomba of the All Progressives Congress (APC) emerged as Deputy Chairman, Mrs Adeyemi Abiola of the Action Peoples Party (APP) as Secretary, and Mr Oladele Oladeji of Accord as Deputy Secretary.

Others are Mrs Bunmi Adeyemo of the Allied Peoples Movement (APM) as

Treasurer, Mr Adenipebi Mode-Adekunle of the Zenith Labour Party (ZLP) as Organising Secretary, and Mr Oluwaseyi Akinleye of the Boot Party as Financial Secretary.

Also elected were Mr James Adeshina of the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) as Publicity Secretary and Mrs Rosemary Giwa-Amu of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) as Legal Adviser.

Kalu described the process as peaceful, noting that party leaders demonstrated unity by stepping down for one another.

"For the first time, we watched party leaders exhibit what they preach — brotherhood," she said, commending the inclusion of four women in the nine-member executive.

She urged political parties to strengthen internal structures and deepen democracy ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The INEC Resident Electoral Commissioner in Lagos, Prof. Ayobami Salami, represented by Mr Babalola Badejo, advised party leaders to comply with the

Electoral Act and timelines.

"Don't be left behind. The timeline is short. You must move with time and avoid contraventions," he warned.

In her acceptance speech, Akinade expressed gratitude

for the renewed mandate, pledging to promote unity, transparency, and collaboration among political parties.

"Our diversity remains our strength, and together we will continue to build a platform

that prioritises dialogue over division and progress over conflict," she said.

Also speaking, Jokomba urged members to avoid actions capable of undermining democracy, while Adeshina

said the council would remain committed to its mandate of deepening democratic practice.

Political parties present included APGA, AAC, PDP, NNPP, YPP, SDP, AA, ADP, and Labour Party.



A VISIT TO NAN:

L-R: Head of Lagos Operations, *News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)*, Mrs. Ifeyinwa Omowole (L) and Chief Executive Officer and founder of the Women's Technology Empowerment Centre (W.TEC), Oreoluwa Lesi, during a visit of the non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women and girls through technology education and mentoring to *NAN*, Lagos office.

NIWA debunks report of '150 bandits drowning' in Sokoto

SOKOTO

The National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA) has dismissed reports alleging that about 150 bandits drowned in a boat mishap in Sabon Birni Local Government Area of Sokoto State, describing the claim as false.

The NIWA Area Manager in charge of Sokoto Zonal Office, Mr Bello Bala, said no such incident occurred, noting that the river mentioned in the re-

port is not navigable.

He urged the media to verify information before publication to avoid spreading misinformation.

Bala added that NIWA has continued sensitization campaigns in riverine communities on safety practices, including the use of life jackets.

A military source from the 8 Division of the Nigerian Army in Sokoto also confirmed that the report was unfounded, stating that troops in the area recorded no such incident.

Alake wants regional energy hubs established to boost cross-border mining

ABUJA

The Minister of Solid Minerals Development, Dele Alake, has called for the establishment of regional energy hubs as a strategic pathway to accelerate cross-border mining industrialization.

Alake made the call while speaking at a panel session themed 'Critical Minerals in Africa: Meeting Global Demand' on the sidelines of the 11th Powering Africa Summit (PAS) in Washington, D.C., United States.

The Minister's Special Assistant on Media, Segun Tomori, made this known in a statement in Abuja.

He charged the U.S. and African nations to prioritise the establishment of the hubs, which he described as crucial to strengthen the supply chain of critical minerals essential for the global energy transition.

He said that sustainable partnerships with Africa re-

mained the fastest route to meeting rising global demand for critical minerals.

The minister called for the development of regional industrial corridors similar to the Lobito Corridor.

According to him, similar belts, such as the Lagos to Abidjan corridor, spanning Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire, as well as the Walvis Bay Corridor linking Southern and Central Africa to global markets, could unlock vast mineral potential across the continent.

The minister said such corridors would serve as economic catalysts through driving infrastructure development, enhancing energy access and promoting regional integration.

"The development of nuclear power in one West African country, for instance, can service an entire corridor.

"With that in place, local beneficiation, technology transfer, manufacturing and cross-border industrialization will naturally follow," he said.

Rights abuse: Lagos CP threatens to disband taskforce

LAGOS

The Commissioner of Police in Lagos State, Moshood Olohundare Jimoh, has warned that the state Taskforce on Environmental and Special Offences could be dissolved over proven cases of human rights violations.

The police boss issued the warning following public outcry over the alleged maltreatment of a motorist, Mr Lateef Adeyemo, reportedly arrested

for driving against traffic.

The incident, which gained traction on social media, drew criticism from members of the public who accused taskforce operatives of habitual misconduct.

Addressing journalists after a lecture session with taskforce personnel at the Police Command Headquarters in Ikeja, Jimoh said available video evidence did not support claims of abuse.

"Throughout the video,

there is no instance where the individual was dehumanised; no beating, dragging, or inappropriate conduct constituting a human rights violation," he said.

He noted that the motorist was processed in line with the law and taken before a mobile court, where he was granted bail but remanded after failing to meet the conditions.

Jimoh said he had cautioned operatives and re-emphasised the need to enforce laws with

respect for human dignity.

"I have warned them that any proven violation of rights will attract strict consequences, including possible dissolution of the taskforce," he stated.

The commissioner stressed that no officer is indispensable and that abuse of power would not be tolerated.

He also urged the media to exercise responsibility in reporting, while encouraging residents to seek redress through proper channels where aggrieved.

Ohanaeze celebrates nuclear physicist Oragwu at 92

ENUGU

Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide has congratulated renowned nuclear physicist, Prof. Felix Oragwu, on his 92nd birthday, describing his life as a testament to intellectual brilliance, patriotism, and resilience.

In a statement issued by its National Publicity Secretary,

Ezechi Chukwu, the group highlighted Oragwu's pivotal role during the Nigerian civil war as Head of Research Planning and Coordinator of Technological Services for the Science and Technology Group in Biafra.

It noted that amid severe scarcity, he led efforts to convert palm oil into aviation fuel and contributed to the development of the "Ogbunigwe"

artillery.

Ohanaeze said the feats remain enduring symbols of innovation driven by necessity and courage.

The group also recalled that Oragwu attended Christ the King College, Onitsha, before furthering his studies at the Universities of Glasgow, Toronto, and Manchester, and later served as a lecturer at the

University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Quoting its President-General, Azuta Mbata, the statement described Oragwu as a symbol of Igbo ingenuity and excellence.

"His contributions to science and history will remain a source of pride and inspiration for generations," Mbata said, wishing him continued good health and longevity.

I-G warns newly promoted police chiefs on discipline

ABUJA

The Inspector-General of Police, Olatunji Disu, has warned newly promoted Assistant Inspectors-General of Police (AIGs) and Commissioners of Police (CPs) against indiscipline, abuse of office, and dereliction of duty.

Disu gave the warning on Monday during the decoration ceremony of the senior officers in Abuja.

"You are no longer just senior officers; you are strategic leaders expected to lead from the front with discipline, integrity, and respect for the rule of law," he said.

He charged them to enforce

zero tolerance for misconduct and to take responsibility for the actions of personnel under their command.

"Lax supervision breeds misconduct; strong leadership enforces standards. I will hold you accountable," he added.

The I-G reiterated the force's commitment to people-orient-

ed policing, stressing professionalism, respect for human rights, and public accountability.

He urged the officers to embrace innovation, improve operational efficiency, and eliminate outdated practices, noting that their promotion was based on merit and carries greater responsibility.

JUDICIARY

NEWS

Surety faces trial for allegedly perverting justice

IBADAN

The police on Monday arraigned 46-year-old Kazeem Oluwande at the

Iyaganku Chief Magistrates' Court for allegedly perverting the course of justice.

Oluwande, who stood as surety for a defendant, Ganiyu

Muyidat, in a criminal case, is accused of failing to produce her for trial.

He faces a two-count charge of perverting justice but plead-

ed not guilty.

The prosecutor, PC Olapeju Durodola, said Oluwande allegedly failed to produce Muyidat between July 15, 2024, and

March 23, 2026, preventing her from facing trial for fraudulently obtaining 567 bags of rice worth N14 million from Sefiat Adams under false pretences.

Chief Magistrate Mrs Ola-

bisi Ogunkanmi granted Oluwande bail of N5 million with two sureties, one landed property owner and the other a close relative.

The case was adjourned to June 3 for hearing.



PRESENTATION OF MAGAZINE:

L-R: Olubadan of Ibadanland, Oba Rashidi Ladoja; President, Bodija Estate Residents Association, Dr Muiyiw Bamigbose; Vice President, Mr Dipo Olasope, during the presentation of Bodija Connet Magazine to the Olubadan.

Son jailed 2yrs for stealing from mother

JOS

A 20-year-old unemployed man, John Bawa, was on Monday

sentenced to two years in prison by a Jos Magistrates' Court for stealing from and insulting his mother.

Magistrate Mrs Irene Pati de-

livered the sentence following Bawa's guilty plea, but allowed him the option of paying fines of N30,000 for theft and N50,000 for insulting his mother.

The prosecutor, Insp. Daniel Lengman, said Bawa stole N100,000 and cooking pots, selling them as scrap.

When confronted, he insulted the complainant, Lami.

The offence contravenes the Plateau Penal Code Law.

Man seeks divorce over third-party interference

ABUJA

Appetitioner, Mr Tilenen Eru, on Monday asked a Garki Customary

Court to dissolve his marriage to Mrs Magret Eru, alleging constant interference by friends in their marital affairs. Eru told the court his wife

repeatedly discussed private marital matters with friends who offered negative advice, aggravating marital problems. He also accused her of dis-

honesty and alleged threats to his life.

The respondent, a businesswoman, denied all allegations. Presiding Judge Mr Festus Enomhose adjourned the case to April 15 for hearing.

5 men arraigned for stealing passengers' phones

IBADAN

Five men were arraigned on Monday at Iyaganku Magistrates' Court for allegedly stealing phones from

passengers in a tricycle. The defendants, Christopher Solomon (35), Idris Ramoni (29), Taoreed Aderibigbe (33), Kelvin Daniel (21), and Teslim Hammed (21), pleaded not guilty to charges

of conspiracy and stealing. Prosecutor Cpl. David Adepoju said the offences occurred on March 2 in the Academy area of Ibadan, targeting passengers Mr Kazeem Olu-

wasope and Mayowa Dada. The court granted bail of N500,000 each with one close relative as surety. The case was adjourned to May 25.

IG, Angela Okorie move to settle defamation case out of court

ABUJA

The Inspector-General of Police and Nollywood actress Angela Okorie are exploring an out-of-court settlement in an alleged criminal defamation case arising from a petition by fellow actress, Mercy Johnson-Okojie.

Counsel to the I-G, C. Odinaka, and Okorie's lawyer, W.I. Okereke, informed Justice Emeka Nwite of the Federal High Court, Abuja, that both parties had commenced dis-

cussions aimed at reaching an amicable resolution.

Okorie is being prosecuted by the police over allegations of cyberbullying Johnson-Okojie. She was re-arraigned on a seven-count charge bordering on cybercrimes and granted N5 million bail on January 30.

At Monday's proceedings, Odinaka told the court that settlement talks were underway, a position corroborated by Okereke, who confirmed that both sides had agreed to resolve the matter out of court.

Justice Nwite described the development as encouraging and urged the parties to conclude discussions promptly. He granted an adjournment to April 21 for a report on the settlement.

Meanwhile, Johnson-Okojie, in a letter dated March 18 to the Nigeria Police Force National Cybercrime Centre, requested the withdrawal of the petition and discontinuation of proceedings against Okorie.

The request, conveyed through her lawyer, A. Agbi, followed appeals from influ-

ential individuals, including associates of her husband.

Earlier in the case, the court had ordered Okorie's remand at Suleja Correctional Centre after she pleaded not guilty to an earlier three-count charge, before granting her bail.

The amended charge alleges that Okorie and a co-defendant at large used social media platforms, including Instagram and TikTok, to publish defamatory statements against Johnson-Okojie, allegedly intended to damage her reputation and incite public hostility.

Trader jailed 3yrs for housebreaking

JOS

Abdulrahman Yusuf, a 32-year-old trader, was on Monday sentenced to three years in prison by a Jos Magistrates' Court for breaking into a house and stealing. Magistrate Mrs Irene Pati

gave him the option of paying a N100,000 fine.

Yusuf had stolen a plasma TV and standing fan valued at N185,000 from Mr Suleiman Abubakar, later selling the items to an accomplice now at large.

The offence contravenes the Plateau Penal Code Law.

Alleged graft: ICPC to arraign ex-Kaduna Gov

ABUJA

The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) will arraign former Kaduna State governor, Malam Nasir El-Rufa'i, alongside Joel Adoga on March 24 at the Federal High Court, Kaduna.

ICPC Spokesperson John Odey said the charges include alleged conversion and pos-

session of public property and money laundering.

El-Rufa'i and Amadu Sule (LEDA) also face a separate case at the Kaduna State High Court over allegations of abuse of office, fraud, and conferring undue advantage. Both cases were filed on March 18.

Odey reiterated ICPC's commitment to due process and adherence to the rule of law in prosecuting corruption-related offences.

Lawyers demand strategy overhaul as insurgency resurges in Borno

LAGOS

Legal practitioners have called for an urgent review of Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy following renewed suicide attacks in parts of Maiduguri, Borno State.

The lawyers, who spoke in separate interviews, described the resurgence of violence as alarming and warned that previous gains against insurgents may not be sustainable without addressing underlying causes.

Mr Chibuikem Opara of Justification Chambers, Ikeja, said the attacks exposed deep-rooted challenges, noting that while security forces recorded successes, the fundamental drivers of extremism remained unresolved.

He commended the Federal Government's swift security response but cautioned against complacency, urging greater investment in youth empowerment and education.

Mr Ademola Owolabi of Adetokunbo Ademola Chambers attributed the resurgence to what he described as a largely defensive military posture.

According to him, a shift towards a more proactive and offensive strategy is necessary to decisively confront insurgents.

Owolabi also urged the media to focus on highlighting military successes rather than amplifying insurgent propaganda, and called for clear timelines in ending the insurgency.

Similarly, Mr Julius Ayoola of Ayoola Chambers, Bariga, said the resurgence was not unexpected, stressing that terrorism is often difficult to eradicate due to complex socio-economic and ideological factors.

He advocated a balanced approach combining military operations with social and economic interventions, including job creation and infrastructure development.

Ayoola also called for efforts to identify and prosecute sponsors of terrorism, noting that reducing poverty and hopelessness would help curb recruitment into extremist groups.

He further suggested a review of firearms laws to enable citizens act as first responders in emergencies, with support from security agencies.

Court remands man for concealing arms dealings information

IBADAN

Federal High Court sitting in Ibadan has ordered the remand of a

49-year-old man, Isaac Busuyi, for concealing information on alleged arms dealings.

Busuyi, prosecuted by the Department of State Services (DSS),

pleaded guilty to a one-count charge of withholding information from security agencies.

Justice Uche Agomoh directed that the defendant be

remanded at the Agodi Correctional Centre and adjourned the case until April 27 for review of facts and sentencing.

Earlier, prosecutor T.A.

Nurudeen told the court that the offence was committed on December 7 at Gbopa area in Ido Local Government Area of Oyo State.

He alleged that Busuyi was aware that a suspected terrorist, identified simply as Peter, was in-

involved in arms and ammunition transactions but failed to report the information to authorities.

The offence, according to the prosecution, contravenes provisions of the Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act, 2022.

NEWS

Foreign

Two pilots dead after plane and ground vehicle collide at New York's LaGuardia Airport

Two pilots have died after an Air Canada plane carrying dozens of people collided with a firefighting vehicle responding to a separate incident at New York's LaGuardia Airport.

Forty-one people were taken to hospital, Port Authority executive director Kathryn Garcia confirmed. Thirty-two of them were later discharged but others had serious injuries, she said.

LaGuardia Airport would remain closed until at least 14:00 local time (18:00 GMT) on Monday, Garcia said.

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani described it as a "tragic collision" and said the National Transportation Safety Board was investigating Sunday's incident.

"I am grateful to our first re-

sponders, whose swift actions saved lives."

At about 23:40 local time on Sunday (03:40 GMT Monday), shortly after Air Canada Flight 8646 had landed from Montreal, it collided with a firefighting vehicle on the tarmac.

The fire engine from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey was responding to a United Airlines aircraft that had "reported an issue with odour", Garcia said during a news briefing.

Video footage on social media showed the aircraft, which is operated by Air Canada's regional partner Jazz Aviation, coming to a rest with its nose upturned.

Eyewitness Leo Medina, 23, told the BBC: "We were literally like 100 meters away. It was like the plane got cut in half."

In audio from the air traffic control tower at LaGuardia, a staff member can be heard saying: "Truck One, stop, stop, stop!" in the seconds before the crash.

The aircraft - a CRJ 900 model, carrying 72 passengers and four crew members - suffered significant damage.

All on board the plane have been accounted for, Garcia said, while adding that the sergeant and police officer who were inside the firefighting vehicle were in a stable condition in hospital "with no life-threatening injuries".

"I visited them both in the hospital, as has the chairman, and they were able to speak and we're notifying their families," said Garcia.

A map of LaGuardia Airport showing where the plane collided with an emergency ser-

vice vehicle

All arrivals and departures from the airport have been cancelled or delayed until further notice.

Hundreds of flights are affected, with carriers including American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Southwest Airlines, United Airlines, and Air Canada.

As of 08:00 local time at Terminal B, from where Air Canada operates, a board showed every departing flight for Monday morning, bar one, had been cancelled. Confused passengers were huddled on benches or sleeping on the floor. Many had small children with them.

Some people were on their phones trying to sort out their travel plans. Others were waiting in the hope the airport opens again.

France's Socialists hold on to power in major cities in election boost for mainstream

Socialists and allies held on to power France's big four cities - Paris, Marseille, Lyon and Lille - on a local election night that offered hopes for mainstream parties in next year's presidential elections.

The new aspirants of the far-left and far-right also made gains - notably in Nice for an ally of Marine Le Pen and Roubaix in the north for the France Unbowed (LFI) party.

But the big lesson of the evening was the failure of alliances between mainstream left and LFI, with voters turning to the centre and right in long-time Socialist Party (PS) strongholds like Clermont-Ferrand and Brest.

On the contrary, in cities like Paris, Marseille and Lille - where incumbent Socialists steered clear of the far-left because of accusations of sectarian anti-Semitism in its ranks - left-wing administrations were comfortably returned.

Lyon - where the ecologist mayor Gregory Doucet did ally himself with LFI and still won - was seen as a case apart, because the right-wing challenger, businessman Jean-Michel Aulas, ran a poor campaign.

"My conclusion from tonight is that the LFI wins nothing - and what is worse it is the LFI that brings about defeat," said Pierre Jouvot, PS secretary-general.

There had been calls for a boycott of LFI after one of its parliamentary assistants was charged with incitement to murdering a far-right student in Lyon. The party's firebrand leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon also enraged his enemies when in a speech he seemed to joke about the Jewishness of the late sex-offender Jeffrey Epstein.

But after round one of voting a week ago, many Socialist and Green candidates decided to overlook their objections to the far-left party and formed what the right then termed "alliances of shame" in order - they hoped - to secure victory.

The alliances between left and far-left also failed to perform in Toulouse, Strasbourg, Poitiers, Limoges and Tulle. The last is the electoral fief of the former PS president François Hollande, whose calls for a boycott of LFI went unheeded there.

But reacting to the results Sunday evening the LFI's Manuel Bompard pointed to the party's first-round victory in the northern Paris suburb of Saint-Denis, as well as Sunday's win in Roubaix.

"Tonight we have made the demonstration that nothing can stand in the way of a people on the move. Next year the new France will sweep away the world of [President] Macron and his nefarious policies," he said.



AIR CANADA PLANE:

Image shows damaged Air Canada plane at LaGuardia airport after collision

Oil falls and shares rebound after Trump says talks have been held to end war

Oil prices plunged and stock markets rebounded after Donald Trump said the US would hold off on strikes against Iranian power plants, citing "constructive" discussions about ending the conflict in the Middle East.

The US president wrote on social media that the two countries had held talks about a "COMPLETE AND TOTAL" resolution -but Iran denied these talks had happened.

The price of Brent crude sank, while European and US shares rose following Trump's statement.

Trump had previously said he would "obliterate" Iranian power plants if the Strait of Hormuz shipping route was not reopened in 48 hours. Iran had said it would respond by targeting key infrastructure in the region.

The comments over the weekend had rattled financial markets, adding to fears that the US-Israeli war with Iran would be a prolonged conflict.

At one point on Monday, the price of Brent had hit \$113 a barrel, but it tumbled in the immediate aftermath of Trump's latest comments. It fell to a low of \$96 a barrel, before rebounding to \$103.

While oil fell, stocks rose. London's FTSE 100 index ended the day flat after being down more than 2% earlier on Monday.

Germany's Dax index also rebounded to close 1.2% higher while France's Cac ended up roughly 0.9%.

In the US, both the S&P 500 index and the Dow Jones were up more than 1% at mid-day.

Stocks in Asia, which closed before Trump's latest comments, had seen heavy falls

with Japan's Nikkei index dropping 3.5% and South Korea's Kospi down 6.5%.

Japan and South Korea have been particularly affected by the conflict, as they are heavily dependent on oil and gas that would normally pass through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's busiest oil shipping channels.

Since the war began on 28 February, Iran has effectively blocked the waterway. About 20% of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas usually passes through the strait - and the conflict has sent global fuel prices soaring.

In the Monday morning post on Truth Social, written in all capital letters, Trump said the US and Iran had held talks over the weekend about "a complete and total resolution of our hostilities".

He said based on the "tenor and tone of these in depth,

detailed and constructive conversations" he had instructed the military to postpone any strikes against Iranian power plants and energy infrastructure for five days.

That decision was "subject to the success of ongoing meetings and discussions," he added.

However, Iran's foreign ministry then issued a statement, which said: "We deny what US President Donald Trump said regarding negotiations taking place between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran."

"No negotiations have been held with the US, and fake news is used to manipulate the financial and oil markets and escape the quagmire in which the US and Israel are trapped," Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf, speaker of Iran's parliament wrote on X.

Nigerian police arrest 15 after viral videos of alleged sexual assault at festival

Police in Nigeria say 15 people have been arrested following allegations of sexual assault at a community festival in the southern Delta state.

Videos circulated online showing young men openly attacking women who were on their own. The clips sparked widespread anger, leading to the hashtag #StopRapingWomen to trend on social media, and renewed calls for accountability over gender-based violence.

Delta state police have rejected claims circulating online that the Alue-Do festival in Ozoro was a "rape festival".

Local spokesperson Bright Edefe told Channels TV on Monday that no formal report of rape had been made in connection with the festival.

The videos, taken during the Alue-Do fertility festival in the city of Ozoro, show groups of young men chasing, stripping, grabbing and assaulting women in public spaces, in some cases while people are filming.

The police spokesman described the scenes as "alarming, disgusting and embarrassing" and said they had arrested several suspects identified from the videos and transferred them to the state Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

Edefe told Channels: "We have spoken to four girls and all of

them said nobody raped them."

Among those detained is a community leader widely named as the organiser of the event.

The police say investigations are continuing.

Some witnesses, activists and residents say women were warned not to go out during parts of the festival, and that those seen outside were deliberately targeted.

This has raised concerns that sexual violence may have been organised or tolerated under the cover of tradition.

Rights groups say that even if it is not clear whether anyone was raped, the documented acts - including forced stripping, grabbing and public humiliation - constitute serious gender-based violence under Nigerian law.

The King of Ozoro has rejected suggestions that the Alue-Do festival condones sexual assault, describing it as a fertility rite that was "misinterpreted and abused by some youths".

Traditional leaders also say that no rape occurred. They admit that two women were harassed, but stressing that such acts are criminal, not cultural.

The Delta state government has backed this view, adding that no recognised festival in the state permits sexual assault and that any violence should be treated strictly as a crime.

Foreign**NEWS****Starmer considers options over Iran cost-of-living concerns**

Sir Keir Starmer has said he is looking at "every lever that's available to government" to deal with cost of living pressures caused by the Iran war.

The prime minister is chairing an emergency Cobra committee, which will be attended by Bank of England governor Andrew Bailey and senior ministers.

Housing Minister Matthew Pennycook said a "range of options" are being assessed, telling the BBC this would include on the issue of "profiteering that we're potentially seeing from fuel retailers".

The meeting will take place after US President Donald Trump said military strikes against Iranian energy infrastructure would be postponed for five days following "productive" talks with Iran.

Trump's post on his Truth-Social platform said discussions had been taking place for two days regarding the "complete and total resolution of our hostilities in the Middle East" and these will "continue throughout the week".

Oil prices eased back and London's FTSE 100 share index reversed early session falls following his comments.

A Downing Street spokesperson said: "Any reports of productive talks are welcome", adding: "We have always said a swift resolution to the war is in the global interest and the Strait of Hormuz specifically needs to be re-opened."

On Sunday, Sir Keir and Trump discussed the need to

reopen the strait, a vital oil shipping channel.

Iran has effectively blocked the Strait of Hormuz since the US and Israel attacked the country on 28 February.

In a social media post on Saturday, Trump threatened to "obliterate" Iranian power plants if the strait was not opened within 48 hours.

Tehran said it would target US-linked energy sites across the Gulf region if the US followed through with its threat, according to Iranian state media.

On Monday, Trump gave a TruthSocial update on the "in depth, detailed, and constructive conversations" between the US and Iran.

He added he has "instructed the department of war to postpone any and all military strikes against Iranian power plants and energy infrastructure for a five day period, subject to the success of the ongoing meetings and discussions".

Topics expected to be covered at the Cobra meeting, which will also be attended by the chancellor, foreign secretary and energy secretary, include energy security and the economic impact of the crisis on families.

Ministers will also discuss the impact on business and supply chains, alongside the international response.

Sir Keir told broadcasters: "I am asking for every lever that's available to the government to deal with the cost of living to be discussed at Cobra, hence we've got the Bank of England and others there."

Flash floods in Kenya have killed at least 81 and displace thousands

Torrential rains and flash floods have killed at least 81 people across Kenya this month, authorities said, as heavy downpours continue. In Kisumu County, entire villages have been submerged, with about 1,200 hectares of farmland destroyed and crops swept away.

The worst-hit area is Nyakach, where more than 3,000 families have been displaced after the Sondu Miriu River overflowed.

"We have lost farmlands due to massive erosion... and many crops," said local chief Seth Oluoch Agwanda, adding that residents have been moved to more than eight evacuation centres.

Flood victims say they have nowhere to go.

"There is no house that is not

flooded," said Kennedy Oguta, who is struggling to find shelter for his family and livestock.

Another resident, Sarah Akinyi Onyango, said families remain stranded in rising with children.

Capital and other regions affected

In Nairobi, the death toll stands at 37, with floods damaging homes and infrastructure.

Authorities also reported deaths in Kiambu and landslides in Kasaka.

Warnings as rains continue
Officials have urged "extreme caution" as more rain is forecast.

Scientists warn that climate change is intensifying extreme weather, with East Africa increasingly hit by severe floods and droughts.



KENYAN EX-FOREIGN MINISTER:
Raphael Tuju has been embroiled in a long-running legal dispute.

Kenyan ex-foreign minister arrested and accused of staging his disappearance

Former Kenyan Foreign Minister Raphael Tuju has been arrested a day after he was reported to have disappeared, leading to fears he may have been abducted.

Director of Criminal Investigations Mohamed Amin said in a press conference that Tuju was inside his residence the whole time, describing it as a "carefully staged disappearance rather than a genuine case of abduction".

Just before his arrest, Tuju had told local station Citizen TV that he had gone into hiding after being followed by an unmarked vehicle.

The former minister has been embroiled in a long-running legal battle contesting the auction and takeover of his properties in Nairobi over an unsettled bank loan.

Amin said: "The deliberate conduct by Raphael Tuju appears to be a calculated effort to deceive the public to generate unwarranted sympathy and to undermine the integrity of the National Police Service."

He added that the police view "the provision of false information to authorities as a very, very serious offence".

Tuju told Citizen that on realising he was being trailed, he had branched off onto a road where it would be more difficult to follow him. Once he had shaken off the other vehicle, he then abandoned

his car which he knew they would be looking for.

He added: "My family is very traumatised... and I consider myself blessed because there are many Kenyans in unmarked graves," he said, thanking Kenyans and opposition politicians who had stood by him.

He mentioned other Kenyans who had been abducted or killed in the past, explaining that this was why he had not sought police help and instead went into hiding.

Earlier, the police had said they were investigating his reported disappearance and appealed to the public for information.

His family had said the ex-minister and his driver had gone missing as they were on their way to an evening radio interview on Saturday.

Police said his vehicle was found abandoned with its hazard lights on along a road in Karen, an upmarket suburb of the capital, Nairobi. They said

they could not reach him as his phone was switched off.

The former minister, who served in several government roles, recently alleged that dozens of police officers had raided his property in Karen, ejected his staff and security guards and taken control of the business premises.

He claimed that powerful officials were behind attempts to seize his property. The government has not commented on the allegations.

Blast that injured two was 'terrorist attack', Ukrainian authorities say

Two police officers have been injured in an explosion that authorities say was a "terrorist act" in the town of Bucha near the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv.

An explosion occurred on a residential street in the early hours of Monday. When police arrived at the site, a second blast took place, injuring two officers.

Police arrested a 21-year-old local resident who they say was recruited online to carry out the two explosions.

They did not share what platform the suspect had been recruited on, but a security source told the BBC it had been done through the online game World of Tanks.

"He says he just wanted to make some money and was promised 25,000 hryvnias [€450; \$570] for each blast," the Kyiv Region Criminal Investigations Directorate head, Andriy Kravchuk, told the media at the scene.

The Ukrainian security service SBU issued a statement calling the suspect "a Russian agent".

But police - who are working to establish who recruited the suspect - are not confirming any links to Russia.

They released footage of the suspect being questioned, in which he says he was blackmailed into planting the explosives.

The man said those he communicated with over the internet told him they knew where his mother was and could "see her from a drone".

"Either you do what we tell you or something happens to your mum," they allegedly told him.

The suspect has been charged with terrorism.

Kravchuk said the two police officers who were injured in the explosions received injuries to their limbs, which are not believed to be life-threatening.

Local resident Viktoria Ivasyshyna, 21, told the BBC she heard "a very loud explo-

sion and I immediately realised that this was not civilian or an industrial accident."

"We woke up to a powerful explosion. At first we thought someone had a gas explosion in their apartment, but it turned out that it wasn't," a resident of the house in Bucha outside which blasts occurred told the local town council.

In a post on Facebook, the council also quoted eyewitnesses as saying that the shock wave was palpable, and all emergency services quickly arrived at the scene.

This follows a string of similar incidents across Ukraine this year. In the western city of Lviv on 22 February, a police officer was killed and more than 20 people were injured as a bomb went off after police arrived to look into a report of an earlier explosion.

Police say the explosives in Lviv were planted by a Ukrainian woman who had been paid by Russian secret services.

On 23 February, a bomb targeted police who had gathered at a disused police station in the southern city of Mykolayiv, injuring seven. On the same day, there was a blast outside a police station in Dnipro, a city in central Ukraine.

Ruling party candidate Wadagni lays out platform ahead of Benin's presidential campaign

Benin's 2026 presidential campaign hasn't even started but there's already a clear favourite: the ruling coalition's candidate, Romuald Wadagni.

The 49-year, who's served as finance minister for the last 10 years, is President Patrice Tal-

on's designated successor.

With the main opposition candidate barred from running, Wadagni is heavily favoured to win next month's race for the highest office.

At an event in Cotonou on Saturday, he laid out his platform before a crowd of support-

ers. He highlighted his plans to tackle extreme poverty, and shore up the country's security.

Vowing to do the job with integrity, courage and perseverance, Wadagni also unveiled his campaign slogan: 'Going further together.'

Talon is stepping down after

two terms in office. He's presided over strong economic growth and efforts to modernise the West African nation. But critics say it's been at the expense of the democratic process, accusing him of restricting political opposition and curtailing basic freedoms.

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Nigerian Football reform must start with the removal of Dr. Mohammed Sanusi

SYLVANUS OFEKUN

The management of Nigerian football is in a state of crisis, plagued by incompetence and greed. The Nigeria



DR. MOHAMMED SANUSI

Football Federation (NFF) has consistently failed to deliver results, leaving fans disillusioned and frustrated. The organization's inability to qualify for major tournaments, coupled with

its poor handling of the national team's affairs, has raised serious questions about its competence.

The latest setback is the rejection of Nigeria's petition against the Democratic Republic of Congo's eligibility of players in a 2026 FIFA World Cup playoff match. The NFF's attempt to appeal the decision has been criticized as a publicity stunt, designed to distract from the organization's own failures. The statement announcing the appeal was long on rhetoric but short on substance, failing to address the underlying issues that led to the petition's rejection.

The NFF's General Secretary, Dr. Sanusi Mohammed, has been in office for over 11 years, with little to show for it. His tenure has been marked by controversy and

allegations of financial mismanagement, with many questioning his qualifications and appointment process. Despite the lack of results, Dr. Sanusi continues to cling to power, using every trick in the book to remain in office.

The NFF's statement announcing the appeal failed to disclose the reasons for the petition's rejection. Insiders reveal that the protest didn't meet FIFA's procedural requirements, including strict timelines. The Regulations Governing the Preliminary Competition for the 2026 FIFA World Cup stipulate that protests must be submitted within two hours of the match and followed by a detailed written submission within 24 hours.



VICTOR OSIMHEN

Osimhen eyes Istanbulspor takeover, NPFL investment

Nigeria international striker Victor Osimhen has revealed plans to expand his influence beyond the pitch by venturing into football club ownership, with targets in both Turkey and Nigeria. The Super Eagles forward disclosed his ambitions during a live online session with content creator Carter Efe, outlining a long-term strategy focused on talent development and investment in the sport.

Osimhen identified Istanbulspor—a historic side currently competing in Turkey's TFF First League—as his primary acquisition target. The proposed move would mark his entry into Eu-

ropean football management through a club seen as offering both competitive potential and financial accessibility.

In parallel, the 27-year-old is considering establishing or acquiring a club in the Nigeria Premier Football League. The domestic side would function as a developmental hub, identifying and nurturing young Nigerian talent, with a structured pathway for progression to Europe via Istanbulspor.

Speaking during the broadcast, Osimhen emphasized his motivation to contribute to the growth of football in Nigeria, noting his desire to create opportunities for emerging players.

LaLiga: Lookman makes history in Atlético's derby defeat to Real Madrid

Atlético Madrid forward, Ademola Lookman, delivered a historic performance on Sunday night, scoring on his Madrid derby debut despite his side's narrow 3-2 loss to Real Madrid.

The Nigerian international etched his name into the club's record books, becoming the eighth Atlético Madrid player in the 21st century to score in his first appearance in the famous derby clash. He is also the first player to achieve the feat since Luciano Vietto in October 2015. More significantly, Lookman became the first Nigerian in history to score in a Madrid derby, underlining his growing influence since joining the Spanish side.

Lookman announced himself on the big stage in the 33rd minute with a composed finish that capped a brilliant attacking move. The forward made a decisive run into the penalty area before receiving an intelligent backheel assist from Giuliano Simeone, which he converted calmly past the goalkeeper. The goal gave Atlético Madrid a deserved 1-0 lead heading into halftime, with Diego Simeone's men looking organised and dangerous on the counter.

The first half saw Atlético execute their game plan effectively, pressing at key moments and exploiting spaces behind Real Madrid's defence. Lookman's pace and movement caused constant problems for the hosts, while the midfield maintained discipline to keep Real Madrid at bay.

However, the momentum shifted dramatically after the break as Real Madrid respond-

ed with urgency and attacking intent. Carlo Ancelotti's side increased the tempo and began to dominate possession, eventually finding a breakthrough through Vinicius Junior, who equalised with a well-taken effort.

Atlético briefly regained control when Nahuel Molina struck a stunning long-range goal to level the score, reigniting hopes of an away victory. But Real Madrid's quality proved decisive in the closing stages.



ADEMOLA LOOKMAN

Abia Warriors beat Niger Tornadoes 2-1 in exhilarating encounter

The much-anticipated Matchday 31 fixture of the Nigeria Premier Football League between Abia Warriors Football Club of Umuahia and Niger Tornadoes Football Club of Minna ended in a three-goal thriller as both sides gave a good account of themselves to give spectators value for their money.

The match lived up to expectations as it was intriguing, intense, and interesting, giving spectators an edge-of-the-seat spectacle.

The visitors, who were beaten at home by the rampaging Warri-

ors in the first leg in Minna, were surely on a revenge mission as they clearly demonstrated from the beginning of proceedings, but it was the Warriors who had the final say in a hard-fought victory to quench the Ikon Allah Boys' tempest.

Goals from Suraj Lawal and Casmir Azubuikwe gave Umu Chineke a 2-0 cushion, and a consolation strike by Joseph Godfrey settled a thrilling encounter at the Enyimba International Stadium, Aba.

Abia Warriors' gaffer, Imama Amapakabo, made two changes

to the squad that played in the last league fixture in Kano, with Somiri Alalibo taking the place of Emmanuel Ogbuagu, while Odah Okiemute replaced Ali Ishaku in-between the sticks.

Some spectators were still making their way into the arena when Umu Chineke took the lead in the 6th minute of play. Suraj Lawal received a pass from Casmir Azubuikwe in the midfield area, raced goal-wards before cutting inside to release a curling effort that sailed into the net, leaving the visitors stunned and the teeming Warriors' supporters in ecstasy.

The Minna Boys refused to lie low but went in search of the equalizer as they carved out chances of their own that failed to materialize.

The Warriors responded in equal measure as Paul Samson and Kunle Adeleke were unlucky not to get their names on the score sheet, while Suraj Lawal could not make it a brace when he failed to tap in Chukwue-meka Obioma's cross from the six-yard box in the 36th minute of play.



ABIA WARRIORS BEAT NIGER TORNADOES

Morocco captain Hakimi stuns Football World by rejecting AFCON title

Morocco captain Achraf Hakimi has publicly declined recognition as the winner of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations, insisting that his team did not earn the title on the field of play.

The Paris Saint-Germain defender made the remarks after Morocco's defeat to Senegal in the tournament final, despite a subsequent ruling by the Confederation of African Football that awarded Morocco a 3-0 victory.

Hakimi stated that he could not accept the title under such

circumstances, stressing that Senegal deserved to be recognised as champions based on their performance during the match. He argued that accepting the trophy would undermine the principles of fair competition and diminish Senegal's achievement.

"Football is about merit," Hakimi said, emphasising that victories should be decided on the pitch rather than through administrative rulings. While acknowledging CAF's authority, he reiterated his personal rejection of any outcome that contradicts the result of play.



ACHRAF HAKIMI

Sports

O'Reilly brace fires Manchester City to Carabao Cup glory

Manchester City claimed the 2026 Carabao Cup title with a commanding 2-0 victory over Arsenal at Wembley Stadium, thanks to a second-half brace from rising star Nico O'Reilly.

After a cagey first half that

ended goalless, City took control of proceedings shortly after the restart, with O'Reilly striking twice in quick succession to seal the contest and hand manager Pep Guardiola a record fifth League Cup triumph.

The breakthrough arrived in



MAN.CITY CARABAO CUP GLORY

the 60th minute when Arsenal goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga failed to deal with a routine cross, spilling the ball into the path of O'Reilly, who nodded home from close range.

Just four minutes later, the youngster doubled City's advantage, rising unmarked at the far post to head in a pinpoint delivery from Matheus Nunes.

City's dominance in the second half proved decisive, as they overwhelmed an Arsenal side that struggled to find attacking rhythm for much of the encounter.

Goalkeeper James Trafford justified his selection with a crucial early triple save to keep the Gunners at bay during their best spell.

For Arsenal and manager Mikel Arteta, the defeat marks another missed opportunity to

end their wait for silverware, which now stretches back to their 2020 FA Cup success.

Arteta's decision to rotate his squad, particularly in goal, ultimately backfired as costly errors proved pivotal.

Despite the setback, Arsenal remain in contention on multiple fronts this season, including the Premier League and European competitions.

However, this loss will raise questions about their ability to deliver in decisive moments.

For Manchester City, the victory not only adds another trophy to their cabinet but also serves as a statement of intent after recent inconsistencies.

Guardiola's side demonstrated their trademark quality and resilience, reminding rivals they remain a formidable force in English football



ZAMALEK SC

Zamalek survive late drama to reach Confederation Cup semi-finals

Egyptian giants Zamalek SC booked their place in the CAF Confederation Cup semi-finals after a tense 2-1 victory over Congolese side AS Otoho d'Oyo in their quarter-final second leg at Cairo Stadium on Sunday.

Following a 1-1 draw in the first leg, Zamalek wasted no time asserting control, racing into a two-goal lead within the opening 25 minutes.

Defender Hossam Abdel-Meguid opened the scoring in the 17th minute before Palestinian forward Oday Dabagh doubled the advantage seven minutes later.

The hosts dominated proceedings and created several clear-cut

chances but failed to extend their lead, a lapse that nearly proved costly in a dramatic finale.

Otoho d'Oyo found a lifeline in the 84th minute when substitute striker Grace Mavoungou unleashed a stunning long-range effort from about 30 metres, reducing the deficit and setting up a nervy finish.

Tensions boiled over moments later as Otoho players scrambled to restart play quickly, sparking a confrontation with Zamalek goalkeeper Mohamed Sobhy.

The referee initially issued a yellow card but upgraded it to a red after a VAR review, leaving the hosts a man down in the closing stages.

"I will return the medal to ease the tension between the two countries" – Gueye

Senegal and Everton FC midfielder Idrissa Gana Gueye has declared his willingness to return his Africa Cup of Nations winner's medal in a bid to calm rising tensions between Senegal and Morocco.

The controversy surrounding the 2025 AFCON final has continued to generate debate across the continent after the appeal committee overturned Senegal's victory and awarded the title to Morocco.

The decision has sparked widespread reactions, with tensions escalating between both nations and among football stakeholders in Africa.

Speaking in an interview with Canal+, Gueye emphasized the need for unity on the continent, insisting that football should not become a source of division.

"We deserve to be African champions. For us, we are the African champions, nothing changes," Gueye stated.

The experienced midfielder, however, expressed concern over the broader implications of the decision, suggesting it could create unnecessary discord.

"This announcement is just a distraction, perhaps an attempt to divide Africa. If it were up to me, I would have told the Federation not to appeal," he added.

In a strong gesture aimed at promoting peace, Gueye

further revealed his personal commitment to resolving the situation.

"I personally pledge to gather the medals and return them to Morocco if that can truly ease tensions between the two countries," he said.

The development adds another layer to the ongoing AFCON final saga, as calls for calm and unity continue to grow across the African football community.



IDRISSA GANA GUEYE

Super Eagles coaches arrive in Turkey ahead of International Friendlies

The two assistant coaches of Nigeria's senior national team, the Super Eagles, Daniel Ogunmodede and Fidelis Ilechukwu, are expected to arrive in Turkey on Monday, March 23, 2026, ahead of the team's upcoming international friendlies against Iran and Jordan.



SUPER EAGLES TRAIN IN TURKEY

The fixtures form part of preparations for future competitive engagements, with both coaches retaining their roles in the national setup despite ongoing internal evaluations.

However, their positions have recently come under increased scrutiny from the Nigeria Football Federation

(NFF) technical committee. Concerns have been raised over the depth of experience within the current backroom staff, particularly regarding their ability to step into the head coach role if required.

A senior official within the federation, speaking on condition of anonymity, indicated that the committee is considering the inclusion of more experienced Nigerian coaches to strengthen the technical crew alongside head coach Eric Chelle's existing assistants.

"Neither of the current assistant coaches is seen as ready to take charge of the Super Eagles at short notice," the official said. "This has prompted discussions about recruiting more qualified local coaches to provide strong-

CAF demands \$30m fee from Kenya to secure AFCON 2027 hosting role

The Confederation of African Football has formally instructed Kenya to pay a \$30 million hosting commitment fee as confirmation of its readiness to co-host the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON).

The directive introduces fresh uncertainty over Kenya's participation in the tournament's hosting arrangements, with CAF warning that failure to meet the financial obligation could put the country's role at risk and potentially affect broader preparations for the competition.

Kenya is part of a landmark joint bid with regional partners to stage the 2027 edition, marking a significant mo-

ment for East African football. However, CAF's latest move underscores a more stringent approach to ensuring that host nations fulfill financial and organizational requirements well in advance of the tournament.

Confirming the development, Kenya's Sports Principal Secretary, Elijah Mwangi, acknowledged the urgency of the situation and indicated that steps are being taken to address the governing body's demand.

With timelines narrowing, focus now shifts to how swiftly Kenya can meet CAF's conditions and secure its place in what is expected to be a historic AFCON tournament.



KENYA'S SPORTS PRINCIPAL SECRETARY, ELIJAH MWANGI

NFF Congress: Dikko reiterates NSC commitment to NFF, urges reform

The Chairman of the National Sports Commission, Malam Shehu Dikko, has reaffirmed the commission's commitment to supporting the Nigeria Football Federation, while calling for urgent reforms to align its statutes with global standards.

Dikko made this known during the NFF Congress held

in Yenagoa, where key stakeholders gathered to deliberate on the future of football administration in the country.

Speaking at the event, Dikko emphasized the readiness of the commission to collaborate with the NFF in ensuring that the reform process is both comprehensive and compliant

with international best practices, particularly those of FIFA.

"The National Sports Commission under my leadership remains committed to working with the Nigeria Football Federation and all stakeholders in this process," he said.

"We are ready to provide the necessary institutional support,

policy guidance, and legal framework to ensure that the required reforms are properly structured, legally sound, and in line with FIFA principles as well as Nigerian laws."

The call for reforms is seen as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen governance, transparency, and operational efficiency within Nigerian football.

FEATURE

Promise meets the people at Irrua's ultra modern market

DR. PATRICK AKHERE EBOJELE

When Senator Monday Okpebholo assumed office as Governor of Edo State, he didn't try to impress with lofty promises or complicated policy language. His message was straightforward: development must get to the people who actually need it. In Irrua, the headquarters of Esan Central local government council, that promise is no longer something to be debated. It is taking shape in clear, visible terms—a 700-shop ultra-modern market that is already shifting the mood and expectations of an entire community.

For years, Irrua like many across the state, have been active but limited. Commerce has always been part of daily life—subsistence farmers tilling the land, women selling the produce, small-scale traders pushing the goods, and artisans carving out a living. But the conditions were stunted. Many operated from makeshift stalls, exposed to the sun and rain, managing tight spaces that made expansion impossible. It was an aged system built on resilience, not support. People worked hard, but the environment kept them at a standstill.

That is what this new market is about to change.

It is not just about new buildings or better structures. It is about creating the kind of environment where effort can actually translate into progress. For many traders, this will be the first time they can hope to operate in a space that protects their goods, attracts more customers, and allows them to think long-term. It is a shift from daily survival to something more stable.

The governor's earlier remark in Irrua last week carries more weight than when it was first said: "If I do not develop my home, no one else will develop it." At the time, it sounded like one of those lines politicians use to connect with a crowd. But with the market rising steadily, it now feels like a statement backed by action.

And the market is not happening in isolation. There are road projects improving access across Edo Central. Efforts are ongoing to strengthen power supply. These are not random moves. They are connected. Because without good roads, movement slows. Without electricity, businesses struggle. What is unfolding is not just a project, but a wider attempt to open up the local economy.

Still, the market remains the most visible part of that effort.

Seven hundred shops may sound like a simple figure, but on the ground, it means something real. It means hundreds of traders mov-



Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo inspecting Irrua's ultra modern market

ing into proper spaces. It means less congestion, better organisation, and a more attractive environment for both buyers and sellers. It also means that Irrua begins to look different—not just to those who live there, but to those who might consider doing business there.

That change in perception matters.

Once infrastructure improves, attention follows. Suppliers begin to see potential. Distributors reconsider routes. Investors start asking questions. A place that was once bypassed gradually enters the conversation. That is how growth begins—quietly at first, then steadily.

But beyond the economic possibilities, what stands out most is the reaction from the people.

When Governor Okpebholo visited the site to inspect progress, the response was immediate and genuine. Residents and traders came out in large numbers. There was music in local tongues, there was dancing, and there was a sense of pride that is hard to stage. It didn't feel like a political event. It felt like a community recognising something that directly affects them.

Moments like that say more than official speeches.

And when you listen to individuals, the message becomes even clearer.

"This market will change our lives and businesses for the better," said Isidahome Ose, a trader. Her words were simple, but they carried weight. They reflect what many are thinking—that this project is not just another government announcement, but something that will touch everyday life.

Evelyn Osemu, another trader described the development as something she never expected to see in Irrua. She called it a miracle and referred to the governor as "Akpakomiza," a title that speaks of a leader who remembers his people. In a place where expectations have often been low, that kind of response is significant.

It shows that people are paying attention again.

There is also a broader point this project quietly addresses: the argument that markets and similar infrastructure should be left entirely to private investors. In theory, that makes sense. But in reality, private investors often go where conditions are already favourable. For years, Irrua did not attract that kind of interest—not because there was no activity, but because there was no structure.

That is what Governor Monday Okpebholo's government is changing.

By building this market, the state is providing the foundation that has been missing. It reduces the risk for others and creates a starting point for further investment. It is not about replacing private enterprise, but about making it possible.

Beyond economics, there is a social side to this as well.

Markets are not just places of trade. They are meeting points, community spaces, and part of daily life. Improving that space improves the overall experience for everyone—traders and customers alike. It creates a cleaner, safer, more organised environment where people can work and interact with dignity.

And perhaps most importantly, it sends a message.

It tells small traders that they matter. It tells young people that opportunity does not always require leaving home. It tells communities outside major cities that development can reach them too. That message is powerful, especially in places where people have learned to expect very little.

Projects like this begin to change that mindset.

They restore a level of belief—not

loud or dramatic, but steady. The kind that builds over time as people see real results. The kind that makes people start to imagine more for themselves and their community.

Of course, the job is not finished. Completing the market on schedule, ensuring fair allocation of shops, and maintaining the facility over time will be just as important as building it. These are the steps that will determine whether the project delivers lasting value.

But for now, what matters is that something concrete is happening. In Irrua, development is no longer an abstract idea. It is visible. It is ongoing. It is part of daily conversation. And as the structure continues to rise, so does something else—a renewed sense of inclusion.

For a community that has waited for this kind of attention, that may be the biggest shift of all. This market is not just a project. It is a signal that things can change, for good. Promises can be made and trusted to be kept by those who made them.

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