

Okpebholo seeks FG backing on water projects, moves to secure key facilities

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, on Tuesday reaffirmed his administration's commitment to closer collaboration with the Federal Government to accelerate water infrastructure

development, tighten security around critical assets, and deliver tangible benefits to residents.

The governor stated this at Government House, Benin City, while receiving the Minister of Water Resources and Sanitation, Prof. Joseph Terlumun Utsev, who led a delegation from the

Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority (BORB-DA) on a courtesy visit.

Okpebholo emphasised that sustained federal-state partnership remains vital to achieving lasting development, particularly in the water sector, noting that investments must be protected

and efficiently utilised.

He disclosed that he had personally inspected some of the facilities under the river basin authority and expressed concern over widespread vandalism and wastage of public resources.

"A lot of resources are being wasted. This is not acceptable.

You cannot invest so much and have it destroyed by acts of vandalism. We are taking steps to strengthen security around such areas," the governor said.

Okpebholo revealed plans to establish a security outfit in vulnerable locations, including Obayantor, which he de-

scribed as volatile, adding that the deployment of a Forward Operating Base (FOB) would enhance protection of lives and critical infrastructure.

On funding, the governor assured that the state would meet

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#200

\$6.23m fraudulently taken from CBN coffers —EFCC witness

ABUJA

A prosecution witness, CP Eloho Okpozikbo on Tuesday told an Abuja High Court that 6.23 million dollars was fraudulently taken from the coffers of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) while Godwin Emefiele was governor of the apex bank.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)

charged Emefiele with criminal breach of trust, forgery, abuse of office, conspiracy to obtain by false pretence and obtaining money by false pretence.

The EFCC accused Emefiele of obtained by false pretence the sum of 6.23 million dollars purportedly meant for international election observers for the 2023 general election.

He however, pleaded not guilty to the charges preferred

against him.

At the resumed hearing in the case, the witness was taken in evidence by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Rotimi Oyedepo SAN.

Okpozikbo said, "The money was fraudulently taken because some of the suspects we interrogated confessed to that.

"The office of the Secretary General of the Federation (SGF) denied ever requesting

the payment."

"There was a letter from the SGF, purportedly approving a presidential directive for \$6.23million for the elections observers" the witness said.

The witness who testified as the 14th prosecution witness (PW 14), said he lead a team of officers in the investigations that led to Emefiele's interrogation.

Oyedepo, directed the wit-

ness to the document and asked him to disclose his findings; the defence opposed the style of the prosecution proceeding.

Emefiele's counsel, Matthew Burkaa SAN, accused the prosecution of asking the witness to read from the documents already in court.

Responding, Oyedepo said he asked the witness to explain.

Justice Hamza Muazu, cautioned parties to make the best

use of judicial time.

Thereafter, the witness explained that the document was a directive "purported to have come from the then president (Muhammadu Buhari) to the SGF to release the sum."

He said it was addressed to Emefiele as the governor of the CBN, and "the request was honoured, it was treated and the money was paid."

CONTINUES ON PG 2»

2027: S/West APC leaders target 10m votes for Tinubu

ADO-EKITI

The South-West leaders of All Progressives Congress (APC) said that 10 million votes have been targeted in the region to ensure victory for President Bola Tinubu in the 2027 General Elections.

The leaders, who spoke through the party's South-West Zonal Chairman, Dr Isaac Kekemeke, at a news briefing on Tuesday in Ado-Ekiti, based their projections on the series of achievements recorded by Tinubu.

Kekemeke also vowed to "Ensure overwhelming victory for APC in the June 20 Ekiti Governorship Election and the subsequent Osun offcycle governorship election on August 15."

According to him, Tinubu's administration has recorded notable achievements, particularly in the area of education financing through the introduction of the student loan scheme.

The chairman cited the removal of fuel subsidy as a bold economic reform, noting that it had freed up resources for developmental pro-

jects across the country.

He also commended the Federal Government for ensuring the regular payment of salaries and the implementation of improved minimum wages for workers.

"These policies have contributed to economic stability and enhanced public sector efficiency, particularly in the South-West region.

"We are proud of the achievements of Mr President. We will return him with overwhelming votes.

"He has tried to stabilise the economy, and approved the construction of numerous road projects in the South-West, while there has been no strike in the region's universities in the last three years," he said.

Kekemeke also cautioned any coalition formed by the opposition "to stop issuing threats."

"Nigerians don't even know which party is the opposition. Threats don't win elections but serious minded mobilisation can make people win," the chairman said.



A COURTESY VISIT:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo (right) and the Minister of Water Resources and Sanitation, Prof. Joseph Terlumun Utsev who led a delegation of Federal Government officials on a courtesy visit to Government House, Benin City.

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Suspect charged with attempted assassination of Trump at Washington dinner —Pg 9

Joshua-Fury superfight sealed for Nov 2026 in long-awaited heavyweight showdown —Pg 10

CVR 2nd phase: Participate in claims, objections — INEC tells registered voters

AKURE

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Ondo State has urged registered voters to participate in the claims and objections exercise for the recently concluded second phase of Continuous Voter Registration (CVR).

Mr Olayinka Ogunseye, Head of Department (HOD), Voter Education and Publicity, gave the advice in a statement on Tuesday in Akure, on behalf of the state's Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), Mr Mutiu Olaleke Agboke.

According to Ogunseye, the exercise will commence in the state on Wednesday, April 29

and end on May 5.

"The display of the Preliminary Register of Voters (PRV) of claims and objections will take place between 9:00 a.m and 3:00 p.m daily at all INEC offices across the 18 Local Gov-

ernment Areas in the state.

"The exercise is designed to enable newly registered persons and those applying for transfer, or updates of their biodata to verify their details and report any omission or errors for necessary corrections.

"It also serves as an avenue for the public to identify and raise objections to ineligible

entries, underage registrants, deceased persons, or non-citizens captured in the PRV for possible removal.

"INEC in Ondo State, under the leadership of the REC, is poised to ensure robust public engagement with all the activities of the commission to enable better participation and awareness.

"The commission, therefore, appeals to all eligible citizen and registered voters in Ondo State to take advantage of this exercise.

"See the exercise as part of the collective effort to ensure a clean and credible register of voters, which remains the bedrock of any credible election," he said

2027: Court to hear suit seeking Goodluck Jonathan's disqualification May 8

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Tuesday adjourned a suit seeking to restrain ex-President Goodluck Jonathan from contesting 2027 presidential election, until May 8 for hearing.

The matter, which was scheduled for mention on the day's cause list, was fixed for hearing by Justice Peter Life.

Justice Life also ordered that hearing notices be issued and served on the defendants, who were yet to file their counter affidavits, before the hearing date.

A lawyer, Johnmary Jideobi, had filed the case, praying the court to bar Jonathan from contesting in the 2027 poll.

Citing constitutional grounds, Jideobi urged the court to issue an order of perpetual injunction, restraining Jonathan from presenting himself to any political party in the country for the purpose of contesting in the poll.

He also urged the court to restrain the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) from accepting from any political party, Jonathan's name or publishing same as a duly nomi-

nated candidate for the election.

Jideobi, in the suit marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/2102/2025, sued the former president as 1st defendant.

In the suit dated and filed on October 6, 2025, the lawyer joined INEC and the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF) as 2nd and 3rd defendants respectively.

He sought one question for determination, which is:

"Whether in view of the combined provisions of the entirety Sections 1(1), (2) & (3) and 137(3) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended and their conflated interpretation, the 1st defendant is eligible, under any circumstances (whatsoever) to contest for the office of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria?"

Citing Sections 1(1), (2) & (3) and 137(3) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, he argued that INEC lacks the constitutional power to receive from any political party the name of the Jonathan for election into the office of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria holding in 2027 and other years to come.



BRIEFING NEWSMEN:

Kogi State Commissioner for Livestock Development, Mr Olufemi Bolarin (L), with the Coordinator, Federal Ministry of Livestock Development, Kogi State, Ms Abba Helen, briefing newsmen during the ongoing Tsetse Fly Survey and Vector Control Exercise in Kogi State on Tuesday.

Edo Assembly confirms Bello as EdoGIS MD

KEN ABU

BENIN CITY

The Edo State House of Assembly on Tuesday gave its nod to Dr Innocent Eighbina Bello as Managing Director of the Edo

State Geographic Information Service (EdoGIS), clearing the way for him to take charge of the agency.

Lawmakers approved the nomination after considering a report by the House Committee on Rules and Business,

presented by its Chairman, Hon. Jonathan Ibhama Aigbokhan, who told the House that the nominee is well qualified for the role.

According to the committee, Dr Bello satisfied all the requirements and demonstrated

the capacity to handle the responsibilities of the office.

With the report adopted, the Assembly confirmed his appointment without opposition.

The House subsequently adjourned plenary to June 1, 2026.

Okpebholo seeks FG backing on...

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its counterpart obligations for ongoing federal water projects, particularly the Jattu Dam in Etsako West Local Government Area, which he said is critical to addressing water supply challenges in Edo North.

"We will look into the 25 percent counterpart funding to ensure we meet our obligations. But beyond funding, timely completion is critical. Our people need water, and that project must be delivered on schedule," he stated.

He further linked ongoing infrastructure efforts in the state to the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, stressing that Edo is aligning with national priorities through visible development projects.

Earlier, Minister Utsev commended the Edo State Government for its cooperation and ongoing infrastructural improvements, particularly road rehabilitation leading to federal facilities.

He, however, highlighted major challenges affecting BORBDA operations in the

state, including security threats and encroachment on project sites, drawing attention to cases of vandalism and illegal activities around the Obayantor axis.

The minister called for strengthened protection of federal water infrastructure and urged the state government to assist in reclaiming encroached lands in areas such as Obayantor, Illushi and other operational zones.

On the Jattu Dam project, Utsev noted that significant progress had been made but stressed the need for the state to fulfil its 25 percent counterpart funding commitment to ensure timely completion.

He also sought urgent intervention at the Auchu Integrated Farm, where erosion is threatening key facilities, while commending ongoing road works, including the Benin-Sapele Road.

Utsev expressed optimism that stronger collaboration between the Edo State Government and the Federal Government would enhance water supply, boost agricultural productivity and drive rural development across the state.

ABUJA

The National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) has sealed 30 construction sites in the FCT for violating provisions of the National Environmental (Construction Sector) Regulations, 2011.

The affected facilities include Primgate Reality in Wuye, XTadok Nigeria Limited in Wuye, and Samdus Limited in Asokoro District, among others.

Speaking with newsmen after the exercise, the Director-General of NESREA, Prof. Innocent Barikori, expressed

concern over poor compliance with environmental regulations by operators in the construction sector.

Barikori, who was represented by Mr Elijah Udofia, Director of Environmental Quality Control, said the violations were uncovered during routine inspections and compliance monitoring across the FCT.

According to him, the affected facilities failed to meet regulatory requirements, especially in environmental documentation and responsiveness to compliance directives.

"These facilities demonstrated unwillingness to fully comply with regulatory re-

quirements relating to environmental documentation and engagement," he said.

He explained that the enforcement action was taken to halt environmentally non-compliant activities, compel adherence to regulations, and ensure corrective measures are implemented within stipulated timelines.

Barikori noted that while the construction sector remains vital to national development, it must be effectively regulated to mitigate risks such as poor waste management, construction on floodplains and environmentally sensitive areas, as well as uncontrolled dust emissions.

"Where regulatory communication is clear, time-bound and evidence-based, failure to respond constitutes a serious breach of compliance obligations and poses risks to both the environment and public health," he said.

He stressed that the regulations were designed to prevent environmental harm and ensure responsible construction practices from the outset.

"Environmental compliance is not optional," he warned.

The NESREA boss assured that the agency would continue to enforce environmental laws fairly and consistently nationwide.

\$6.23m fraudulently taken from...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

Also, the witness told the court how some documents were recovered from the branch of CBN (Abuja) where the money was cashed.

According to Okpoziakpo, the documents include details of the amount of money that was paid out on February 8 2023 and a memo from the

Director of Banking Services Department to the Bank Controller, Abuja branch.

The purpose of the memo was to gain approval and instruct the bank to pay the 6.23 million dollars, he said.

While Oyedepo asked the witness to make some confirmations from the documents, Burkaa again objected.

He said the prosecution was

providing the witness evidence despite being an Investigative Police Officer (IPO) who led the investigation.

Oyedepo responded, "We take exception to the aspersion that the defence is casting on the prosecution."

He urged the judge to refuse Burkaa's objection and see it as a ploy to prevent the prosecution from discharging its duty.

"The witness without documentary support is merely telling tales," he said.

Intervening in the exchange, the judge said, the witness was providing evidence but requested that the prosecution not ask details of the contents of documents already before the court.

Justice Muazu then adjourned the matter until July 2 for continuation.



www.eirs.gov.ng

PUBLIC NOTICE

ENFORCEMENT OF THE EDO REVENUE ADMINISTRATION LAW, CASHLESS POLICY, AND THE PROHIBITION OF REVENUE COLLECTION IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR AND OTHERS

The Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS) in exercise of its statutory powers hereby issues this official notice to the general public, taxpayers, and all relevant stakeholders to reaffirm the Edo State Government's position on revenue administration and the protection of citizens from extortionist practices.

In accordance with the Edo State Revenue Administration Law 2012, the EIRS emphasizes its status as the sole and legally empowered authority of Government to assess, collect all revenue accruing to Edo State Government as well as its cashless policy which remains the only legal framework for revenue collection.

Consequently, any individual whether claiming to be a government official or an agent found demanding or collecting cash for taxes, levies, or fees is acting in direct violation of the law and should be arrested immediately. All taxpayers are advised to conduct their transactions only through approved digital channels and banking institutions to ensure transparency and accountability.

Furthermore, the general public is hereby reminded that the ban on the collection of revenue from the transport sector by the Edo State Government is still in force. This prohibition specifically extends to the collection of any form of levies, fees, or the unauthorized sale of jackets, stickers, baskets, bowls to operators of buses, tricycles, and motorcycles. This directive applies without exception to all Local Government Councils, unions, and transport associations. Any attempt to bypass this ban amounts to criminal act and will be met with the full weight of the relevant extant Law.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned ban, the EIRS clarifies that the collection of levies within the Haulage space has not been suspended. However, to maintain transparency and eliminate illegal cash handling, all payments for haulage fees must be made exclusively via the issuance of Revenue Scratch Cards processed through government-approved Point of Sales (POS) terminals with receipts.

The EIRS remains committed to the ease of doing business and the safety of business owners and taxpayers. We urge the general public to remain vigilant and report any illicit activities to the nearest law enforcement agency to ensure that the integrity of our revenue system is upheld.

**Signed
Management**

NEWS

World Agriculture Forum unveils Nigeria council to boost food security

ABUJA

The World Agriculture Forum Nigeria (WAF) has inaugurated its Country Council to advance transformative dialogue, action on agriculture, food systems, and rural development to boost food security.

Speaking at the inauguration of the council in Abuja, the Executive Director, World Agriculture Forum, Dr MJ

Khan, described the establishment of the country's council as timely and strategic.

Khan was represented at the event by Mr Lekan Ofem, the Director of Strategy and Head of Country Councils and Stakeholder Engagement, World Agriculture Forum.

He said the event signaled renewed commitment to transforming agriculture into a powerful engine for economic growth, social inclusion and

environmental sustainability.

"Today, marks not just the inauguration of a council, it signals renewed commitment to transforming agriculture into a powerful engine for economic growth, social inclusion and environmental sustainability," he said.

Khan said the Nigerian Country Council was established to foster national collaboration, empower farmers and promote local innovations and to advance sustainable development and climate resilience.

He added that it aims to boost agribusiness, trade and technology as well as to serve as a national knowledge hub and catalyse public-private partnership.

Khan said sustainable progress requires collaboration between governments and the private sector.

"This council will act as a bridge, unlocking investments and driving impactful initiatives. "Let us seize this opportunity to build a resilient, inclusive and prosperous agricultural sector, one that creates jobs, ensures food security and meaningfully to national development.

"I congratulate Nigeria on this remarkable step forward. We look forward to working closely with you and supporting your journey towards agricultural transformation," he said.

In an address, Dr Musa

Umar, Director, Office of the Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, said the inauguration was timely and strategic.

Umar said that agriculture remains one of the most powerful instruments for national development.

He said agriculture is central to food security economic diversification, rural development, industrial growth, employment generation and social stability.

"As a government, our priority is clear, we are committed to building a resilient productive, inclusive and viable agricultural system that can feed our people, create jobs, attract investment

and position Nigeria as a major global player in regional and global food systems," he said.

Umar said government's focus is moving from subsistence farming to agribusiness driven productivity.

"We are prioritising value chain development, mechanisation, irrigation expansion, access to quality inputs, post-harvest management, storage systems agro processing and market linkages.

"Let us move beyond conversations into coordinated action. Let us ensure that policy translates into productivity and productivity into prosperity," he said.

Earlier, the Country Director, Nigeria World Agriculture

Delta police, 63 Brigade, synergize to strengthen collaboration

ASABA

The newly posted Commissioner of Police Delta Command, Yemi Oyeniyi, in his bid at strengthening inter-agency collaboration and operational synergy with the military, has visited the Commander, 63 Brigade/Sector 1, Joint Task Force, South South, Operation DELTA SAFE (OPDS).

The Commissioner, said the visit would enhance effective policing and overall security across the state.

Oyeniyi further emphasised the importance of sustained cooperation through timely intelligence sharing and joint operational strategies among security agencies in the state.

He particularly highlighted the need to address security

challenges around the riverine and coastal areas.

In his response, the Commander 63 Brigade, Brig.-Gen Moronfolu Shonibare, welcomed his guest and reassured his readiness to sustain close collaboration with all security agencies in the state, particularly, the Nigeria Police Force.

He assured the Compol of his support in crime prevention, maintenance of public order and the protection of lives and property within Delta State.

According to Shonibare, inter-agency cooperation and collaboration remain a critical pillar of effective security management.

He pledged continuous engagement and sensitisation to strengthen the existing security architecture in Delta.

SCB-Africa tasks young scientists on teamwork, innovation against climate change

IBADAN

The Society for Conservation Biology - Africa Region (SCB-AR) has urged young African scientists and conservationists to embrace teamwork, innovation and practical problem-solving skills in tackling climate change and environmental sustainability challenges.

President of SCB-AR, Dr Adedotun Afolayan, stated this in an interview with newsmen in Ibadan on Tuesday.

Afolayan said that the continent required a new generation of researchers who could move beyond academic publications to real-world solutions.

He said that empathy-driven problem solving and critical thinking had become essential for researchers seeking to make meaningful impact in conservation science.

According to him, scientists must take ownership of environmental problems and work actively toward solutions that influence policy and community action.

He said that collaboration had also become indispensable, stressing that modern conserva-

tion challenges could no longer be addressed in isolation.

"We are past the age of working in solitude. We need to join our efforts together and work with different stakeholders to bring the solutions our communities need," he said.

The SCB-AR president noted that partnerships among researchers, governments, civil society groups and local communities had continued to strengthen conservation outcomes across Africa.

He said one of the organisation's successful initiatives was its e-mentoring programme, which connects experienced conservation professionals with early-career researchers.

He added that the programme, including the Young Women in Conservation Biology Mentorship Initiative, was helping to build future African scientific leaders.

Afolayan also called for continuous capacity development among young researchers, urging them to seek knowledge from specialists in areas where they lacked expertise.

He further advised conservationists to value indigenous knowledge and local experience when designing ecological interventions.



MARCH ON YENAGOA STREETS:

Stakeholders in Bayelsa East Senatorial District march on Yenagoa streets in protest yesterday against alleged attempts to abandon established zoning system in the area.

₦1m salary worthless without stable Naira —NLC

ABUJA

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has said that a monthly salary of ₦1 million is worthless to workers without a stable naira and improved economic conditions.

Mr Joe Ajaero, NLC President, said this in an interview with newsmen on Tuesday in Abuja.

He said organised labour was more concerned about the value of the naira than nominal wage increases, stressing that rising inflation had continued to erode workers' purchasing power.

According to him, the steady increase in the cost of living has made it difficult for workers to afford necessities, including food,

transportation and housing.

"Even if Nigerian workers earn ₦1 million, it will not be meaningful if the naira has no value.

"What we are looking for is a currency that can sustain workers and their families at least to the end of the month.

Ajaero said that the ongoing conversation around a new national minimum wage must follow laid-down procedures, adding that it is governed by law and tied to a specific review cycle.

"The minimum wage has not been negotiated yet. It is a process that must follow the law.

"When it is time, we will commence negotiation ahead of its expiration. It cannot be

rushed because of election timelines," he said.

He said the congress would initiate the process within the stipulated window before the expiration of the current wage structure.

The NLC president also called for urgent government intervention to cushion the impact of inflation, noting that the current economic situation had not improved for workers.

He said the surge in fuel prices had worsened the hardship, with attendant effects on transportation, food prices and general cost of living.

"We raised concerns when global developments began to impact fuel prices locally, and

we called for intervention.

"The situation has not improved and the burden on workers continues to increase," he said.

Ajaero stressed the need for Nigeria to develop a resilient energy policy that would reduce vulnerability to external shocks.

"It is not ideal that events in other parts of the world automatically translate into hardship in Nigeria.

"We must build a system that protects our economy and citizens," he said.

On pension, Ajaero said there were emerging concerns over the multiplicity of pension unions, which had created confusion within the system.

Senate: Bayelsa East stakeholders insist on zoning

YENAGOA

Some stakeholders in Bayelsa East Senatorial District have taken to the streets to protest alleged moves to abandon existing zoning arrangement in the area.

The protesters who marched from the NUJ Press Center Azikoro Road through the Ekeki Area of Yenagoa City, chanted solidarity songs, insisting on zoning.

The protest is coming on the heels of scheduled screening of National Assembly aspirants by the Bayelsa chapter of All Pro-

gressives Congress (APC).

It would be recalled that Sen. Benson Agadaga who joined the APC with Governor Duoye Diri currently represents Bayelsa East in the Senate.

Speaking during the protest, Mr Quinicy Mac-Odo, the Convener, Bayelsa-East Forum, said the existing zoning arrangement should be maintained.

"Bayelsa-East Senatorial District is made up of Ogbia, Brass and Nembe Local Government Areas.

"A zoning format has been in existence since 1999. This for-

mat should be followed to promote equity and fairness.

"So far, Ogbia has produced three senators while Nembe and Brass have produced two senators each.

"It is now the turn of Brass to produce the senator to represent the district. This will promote peace, equity and fairness," he said.

Mac-Odo, also a former National Vice President, Ogbia Brotherhood Youth Council urged the APC leadership in Bayelsa to respect the existing zoning arrangement.

"As a people, we have a stake

within the system. The existing zoning format has produced seven senators, and this has kept the district peaceful and united.

"Anything contrary will be opposed vehemently because the will of the people should be honored," he said.

Also speaking, Chief Olerua Salvation, a Community Leader in Ogbia said that respecting the existing zoning arrangement would promote inclusion and justice.

"In Bayelsa East Senatorial District we have a zoning formula that is existing. Let's honour that arrangement."

NAF airstrikes destroy terrorists' structures in Mandara mountains

ABUJA

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) has sustained its counter-terrorism offensive with precision airstrikes that destroyed terrorists' structures and logistic hubs in the Mandara Mountains area of Borno.

This is contained in a statement by the NAF Director,

Public Relations and Information, Air Commodore Ehimen Ejodame, on Tuesday in Abuja.

Ejodame stated that the strikes, conducted on April 27 at Guduf, targeted a known terrorists' enclave following credible intelligence and confirmatory Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) missions.

He said NAF air assets iden-

tified multiple structures used by insurgents for logistics and coordination before executing a coordinated Air Interdiction operation.

He added that the targets were engaged with precision, leading to destruction of key infrastructure supporting the terrorists' activities in the area.

"The operation significantly degraded the operational capa-

bility of the terrorists and reinforced ongoing efforts to deny them freedom of action," he said.

Ejodame noted that the mission was carried out in strict compliance with rules of engagement, with due consideration for the protection of civilians and the environment.

He reiterated NAF's commitment to sustaining pressure on terrorists' elements and supporting broader military operations to restore peace and security in the North-East.

GOC reaffirms commitment to interagency cooperation for operational success

SOKOTO

Maj.-Gen. Bemgba Koughna, the General Officer Commanding (GOC), 8 Division, Nigerian Army, Sokoto, has reaffirmed the Nigerian Armed Forces' commitment to interagency cooperation and continuous professional development.

The GOC made the remark when he received participants of the Air Force War College Course 12/2026 on a national study tour to formations in Sokoto on Tuesday.

Represented by the Division's Chief of Staff, Brig.-Gen. Ibrahim Gambari, the GOC welcomed the Commandant, Directing Staff, and participants, urging them to appraise the division's activities with regard to efforts at restoring peace in the region.

Koughna said the division was established out of necessity due to the security challenges effectively countered through Operation FANSAN YAMMA and other security activities in the North West.

In his remarks, the Commandant, Air Force War College, Air Vice Marshal Gambo Mbaka, said the tour was aimed at deepening participants' understanding of operational and strategic air power in support of civil authority and national development.

Mbaka highlighted the tour's operational framework, adding that participants were divided into three teams for coordinat-

ed field engagements.

He said Team A is in Sokoto State, Team B went to Kebbi, while Team C is in Zamfara.

The commandant emphasised that the tour would provide first-hand exposure to the security challenges in Northwest Nigeria, showcasing the collaborative efforts of 8 Division, Nigerian Army, Operation FANSAN YAMMA, and other security agencies in countering security challenges in the North West region.

He underscored the synergy between theory and practice, stating: "While classroom instruction in operational art and joint planning is foundational, direct engagement with institutions sharpens professional judgment and operational readiness.

The Commandant also expressed gratitude to the Division for the warm reception and support extended to the delegation.

Highlights of the tour included briefings on the history, organization, and operational updates on 8 Division and Operation FANSAN YAMMA.

Others were engagements with Sokoto State Government officials, offering insights into sub-national governance and security strategies.

It will also feature cultural immersion at the Waziri Junaidi History and Culture Bureau, enriching participants' understanding of Sokoto's historical and cultural contexts, a vital aspect of operational awareness.



DEMAND FOR INCREASED MATERNITY LEAVE:

Members of Nigeria Women in Leadership Coalition held a rally in Abuja to demand increased maternity leave for women and two weeks of paid paternity leave for fathers across Nigeria on Monday.

PTAD clears N32,000 pension arrears for DBS retirees

ABUJA

The Pension Transitional Arrangement Directorate (PTAD) has paid the final one-month arrears of the N32,000 pension increase to eligible Defined Benefit Scheme (DBS) pensioners.

According to a statement by PTAD Head of Corporate Communications, Mr Olugbenga Ajayi, a total of N1,734,592,000 was disbursed to 54,206 eligible DBS pensioners.

He said the payment completed all arrears from the N32,000 increment approved by the National Salaries, Incomes and Wages Commission, effective July 29, 2024.

Under the Parastatals Pension Department, 25,804 pensioners received N825,728,000, completing payment of the full 13 months of arrears due.

Similarly, 28,402 pensioners under the Tertiary Education and Health Pension Department received N908,864,000, covering

the full 13 months owed.

Ajayi said the arrears covered a 13-month period from August 2024 to August 2025 for pensioners under both departments.

He noted that PTAD had earlier paid 12 months of the arrears in phases between December 2024 and December 2025.

"With this final payment, all outstanding obligations of the N32,000 pension increment have been fully settled," he said.

Ajayi added that some DBS pensioners had already received

separate increases of 10.66 per cent and 12.95 per cent.

He listed affected organisations as Peoples Bank, Assurance Bank, Nigeria Reinsurance, NICON Insurance, NITEL/MTEL, PTI, and PHCN.

"These pensioners are exempted from the N32,000 increment, in line with the NSIWC circular dated September 27, 2024.

"PTAD remains committed to ensuring pensioners' welfare through transparency, accuracy, and timely payments", Ajayi said.

Osun 2026: APC distances candidate from half-salary regime

OSOGBO

The All Progressives Congress (APC) Governorship Campaign Council in Osun has clarified that its candidate, Bola Oyebamiji, was not responsible for the payment of half salaries to workers under the previous administration in the state.

This is contained in a statement issued by the Head of Media and Publicity of the campaign council, Remi Omowaiye in Osogbo.

Omowaiye said Oyebamiji was appointed Commissioner for Finance in May 2017, while the half-salary payment began in 2015.

He, however, noted that

within a few months after former Governor Gboyega Oyetola assumed office, the half-salary regime was discontinued and full payment restored.

The payment of modulated salaries was introduced by the administration of former Governor Rauf Aregbesola in June 2015.

The APC candidate was appointed Commissioner for Finance in 2017 and also served in the same capacity under the administration of Oyetola for four years.

Omowaiye assured that Oyebamiji, if elected, would be prudent in managing public resources and ensure improved welfare for workers.

He also said the APC candidate plans to reintroduce the

car loan scheme for civil servants and revive the food support programme – initiatives he claimed the current state government has neglected.

Omowaiye added that Oyebamiji would prioritise housing development for workers and promote mortgage schemes to make home ownership more accessible to citizens.

He said the candidate would also focus on critical sectors such as agriculture, education, health, transportation and power generation.

Omowaiye explained that with the recent decentralisation of electricity generation, state governments now have the constitutional backing to generate and improve electrici-

ty supply within their domains.

"This is a major opportunity that Oyebamiji will leverage to transform Osun's power sector, stimulate industrial growth and improve the quality of life of our people," he said.

He added that the party's candidate represents a clear alternative, with a vision anchored on responsible governance and people-oriented policies.

Omowaiye lamented that despite increased revenue inflow to the state, there was little to show for it by the current government.

He said no amount of propaganda, falsehood or mudslinging would prevent the party from winning the August 15 governorship election in the state.

Petrol increased to N1,288.54 per litre in March —NBS

ABUJA

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) the as said that the average retail price of a litre of petrol witnessed an increase from N1,051.47 in February to N1,288.54 in March.

The NBS said this in its Premium Motor Spirit (Petrol) Price Watch for March, released in Abuja on Tuesday.

It said that the March price of N1,288.54 represented a 22.55 per cent increase over the price of N1,051.47 recorded in February.

The report said that the average retail price of petrol also increased on a year-on-year basis from N1,261.65 recorded in March 2025 to N1,288.54 in March 2026, adding that it represented a 2.13 per cent.

On state profiles analysis, it said Anambra paid the highest average retail price of N1,441.22 per litre, followed by Sokoto at N1,377.55 and Borno at N1,375.16.

"Conversely, Lagos paid the lowest average retail price of N1,162.71 followed by Ogun at N1,169.78 and Kaduna state at N1,193.40," it said.

Analysis by zone, showed that the North-East recorded the highest average retail price

in March at N1,336.50, while the South-West recorded the lowest at N1,232.46.

The NBS also said in its Diesel Price Watch Report for March, that the average retail price paid by consumers increased by 16.05 per cent on a month-on-month basis.

It said that the retail price increased from a lower cost of N1,420.17 per litre recorded in February to a higher cost of N1,648.08 per litre in March.

"Also on a year-on-year basis, the price increased by 3.05 per cent from N1,599.30 per litre recorded in March 2025 to an average of N1,648.08 in March 2026."

On state profiles analysis, it said that the highest average price of diesel in March was recorded in Ebonyi at N2,262.29 per litre, followed by Akwa Ibom at N1,895.72 and Osun at N1,872.15.

"On the other hand, the lowest price was recorded in Kogi at N1,383.40 per litre, followed by Katsina State at N1,438.25 and Enugu at N1,480.06.

"In addition, the analysis by zone showed that the South-East had the highest price at N1,730.14 per litre, while the North-Central Zone recorded the lowest price at N1,593.11 per litre."

NEWS

Equities halt 14-day surge, shed N1.37trn on profit-taking

LAGOS

The Nigerian stock market halted its bullish rally on Monday after 14 consecutive sessions of gains, resulting in a loss of N1.365 trillion.

The downturn was driven by profit-taking in stocks such as FirstHoldCo, Trans-Nationwide Express, United Bank for Africa, Access Corporation, Fidelity Bank, and 35 others.

Market capitalisation fell by 0.94 per cent, or N1.365 trillion, to close at N143.969 trillion, down from N145.334 trillion.

Similarly, the All-Share Index dropped from 225,722.49 to 223,602.29, a decline of 2,120.20 points or 0.94 per cent.

Consequently, the Year-to-Date return stood at 43.69 per cent, while the market breadth closed negatively with 40 decliners and 36 advancers.

On the losers' chart, First-

holdco, United Bank for Africa and Trans-Nationwide Express led by 10 per cent each, closing at N67.50, N49.50 and N7.11 per share respectively.

Similarly, Access Corporation dipped by 9.90 per cent, settling at N28.20 and Fidelity Bank dropped by 9.87 per cent, finishing at N20.10 per share.

Conversely, Abbey Mortgage Bank led the gainers' chart by 9.26 per cent, ending the session at N5.90.

Zichis Agro Allied Indus-

tries trailed by 8.91 per cent, finishing at N16.99 and Wema Bank gained by 8.80 per cent, settling at N34 per share.

Also, NPF Micro-finance Bank soared by 8.19 per cent, closing at N5.68 while WAPIC increased by 7.26 per cent, ending the session at N2.66 per share.

Market activity closed higher for the day, as total traded volume rose by 8.06 per cent to 678.17 million shares, valued at N44.14 billion across 83,838 deals.

Zenith Bank led the activity

chart, recording the highest volume and value with 76.07 million shares worth N9.53 billion.

This represented 11.22 per cent and 21.60 per cent of the day's total volume and value, respectively.

Mr Aruna Kebira, Managing Director of Globalview Capital Ltd., said the market sentiment was influenced by United Bank for Africa's latest financial results, which did not include a dividend payout.

He explained that prior to the

release, there had been strong expectations among some investors, including assumptions about a significant increase in the bank's share units.

He said, however, the absence of a dividend came as a surprise and shaped investor reactions.

Kebira noted that other major banking stocks, such as Access Corporation, Fidelity Bank and Stanbic IBTC, were also expected to release their results, with the market anticipating similar outcomes to that of UBA.

Experts say \$48.65bn reserves reinforces Nigeria's economic resilience

LAGOS

Some experts on Monday commended the Federal Government for sustaining the country's external reserves to \$48.65 billion.

The experts said that the robust reserves reinforced the economy's resilience in spite of the current global shocks.

The two experts, Dr Ayo Teriba of Economic Associates and Dr Muda Yusuf, of the Center for the Promotion of Private Enterprise, spoke in separate interviews with newsmen in Lagos.

The Chief Executive Officer, Economic Associates, Dr Ayo Teriba, commended the government for sustaining the reserve's height, regardless of the current shocks.

"Our people must encourage the government to continue to ensure that the economy stays resilient in spite of the headwinds associated with the war.

"There is really a need to

commend the government, as the country's exchange rate is yet stable, the stock market is looking up and the inflation rate increase is negligible," Teriba said.

He, however, urged the government to initiate more temporary programmes to support economically vulnerable Nigerians.

"This will cushion the economic hardship caused by expensive petroleum prices on the people.

"Also the government has made more Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) kits available as alternatives to petroleum products," Teriba said.

Similarly, Dr Muda Yusuf, the Chief Executive Officer, Center for the Promotion of Private Enterprise, acknowledged the government for ensuring confidence and stability in the foreign exchange market.

"The government should be lauded for yet raising the country's reserves to this height amid shocks.

AfCFTA: Nigeria targets value-added exports, deeper intra-African trade

KANO

The Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr. Jumoke Oduwole, has reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to expand value-added exports and deepen intra-African trade.

The minister made this known at AfCFTA P3 Sub-national Engagement for the North-West geopolitical zone in Kano on Monday.

Oduwole said Nigeria's participation in the Agreement was both strategic and imperative, noting that the country had recorded measurable progress since ratifying AfCFTA in 2020.

She highlighted key milestones including the inauguration of the AfCFTA Central Coordination Committee, gazetting of tariff concessions, and designation as co-champion of Digital Trade.

The minister enumerated others to include the launch of an Export Air Cargo Corridor to East and Southern Africa, which reduced logistics costs by up to 75 per cent.

According to her, the Kano

engagement represents a shift from policy awareness to practical implementation, with many initiatives.

She said that the initiatives included "One Local Government, One Export Product" scheme; on-site regulatory services for exporters; and live simulations of export procedures.

Oduwole stressed that intra-African trade currently accounted for less than 20 per cent of Africa's total trade, compared to over 60 per cent in Europe and Asia.

She stressed that Nigeria's objective was to increase its share by transitioning from raw commodities to value-added goods and services.

Oduwole said the Public, Private, and Press (P3) framework adopted in Kano was designed to simplify AfCFTA processes, localise information, and deliver practical support directly to exporters, including MSMEs, women-led enterprises, and informal sector operators.

The Minister added that the Kano pilot would serve as proof-of-concept for nationwide implementation across all six geopolitical zones.



RECEIVING AWARD:

Energy Correspondent of the News Agency of Nigeria, Mr Yunus Yusuf (L), receiving an award of Excellence in Energy Journalism from the Nigerian Association for Energy Economics (NAEE), presented by the Managing Director, Heirs Energies Ltd, Mr Osayande Igiehon at the 19th NAAEE/LAEE Annual International Conference in Lagos.

Nigeria's credit penetration too low for entrepreneurial growth —Expert

ILORIN

An economist, Mr Ahmed Popoola, has said Nigeria's credit penetration rate of 13 per cent is too low.

He made the assertion while delivering the maiden collaborative lecture of Kwara State University (KWASU), organised by the Faculty of Management and Social Sciences (FMSS) and the Centre for Advancement and Industrial Collaboration (CAIC).

Popoola, Managing Director

and Chief Executive Officer of CRC Credit Bureau Limited, said the penetration rate was too low to support the country's ambition of becoming a thriving entrepreneurial economy.

Speaking on the theme: "Finance, Entrepreneurship, and the Infrastructure of Trust", the economist called for increased access to credit facilities for entrepreneurs as a pathway to economic growth.

He noted that out of the country's 35.6 million registered enterprises, only about

two million have access to formal credit, describing the situation as a major constraint on business development.

"Entrepreneurship cannot thrive without an entrepreneurial economy.

"With access to finance, enterprises are better positioned to contribute meaningfully to overall economic development," he said.

Popoola added that access to credit played a critical role in the prosperity of nations, as it affects individuals, businesses and governments alike.

"Where a conducive environment for starting and running a business exists, supported by access to finance, economic prosperity is almost certain," he said.

The financial expert, however, stressed the importance of a unified identification system to improve access to finance, advocating the integration of multiple identification platforms into the National Identification Number (NIN).

"We need to accelerate the fusion of tax identification numbers, passport numbers, Bank Verification Numbers (BVN), driver's licence numbers and voter registration numbers with the NIN," he said.

Nigeria targets growth in sports economy through intellectual property

ABUJA

Nigeria is positioning Intellectual Property (IP) as a key driver of its sports economy, stakeholders said at the 2026 World Intellectual Property Day celebration in Abuja.

The event, organised by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), was themed "IP and Sports: Ready, Set, Innovate," and held at the United Nations House, Abuja.

The seminar attracted policy-makers, athletes, and industry

stakeholders, and provided a platform for discussions on the intersection of sports, innovation, and economic development.

Chairman of the National Sports Commission, Shehu Dikko, who delivered the keynote address, said sports must evolve beyond recreation into a structured economic asset.

Dikko noted that modern sports encompass media rights, branding, sponsorship, data, and technology, all anchored on intellectual property protection.

He stressed that Nigeria's challenge lies not in talent, but

in identifying, protecting, and commercialising sports-related intellectual property assets.

"Intellectual property is what transforms sports from mere activity into a viable economic asset," he said.

He added that ongoing reforms under President Bola Tinubu aim to reposition sports as a contributor to national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and job creation.

According to him, the Renewed Hope Initiative for Nigeria's Sports Economy targets investment-driven growth and

sustainable financing. Dikko highlighted key challenges, including weak IP awareness, poor rights documentation, piracy, and limited understanding of image and data rights.

"We must build a culture where athletes, clubs, and federations understand and protect their intellectual property rights," he said.

He also called for collaboration among government, the private sector, and regulators to unlock value across the sports ecosystem.

JUDICIARY**NEWS**

Edo APC secretary challenges court jurisdiction over tenure suit

BENIN CITY

Mr Lawrence Okah, Secretary of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Edo, has challenged the jurisdiction of the State High Court in Benin to hear a suit questioning his

emergence and tenure in office.

The suit, marked No. B/228/26, was filed by a party member, Mr Curtis Ugbo, against the APC, its National Working Committee (NWC), and Okah, seeking judicial intervention in the party's internal leadership structure in the state.

At the resumed hearing on Monday before Justice Mary Asumota, counsel to the defendants, Mr Ehiogie West-Idahosa (SAN), argued that the court lacked jurisdiction, describing the matter as an internal party affair.

West-Idahosa told the court that the defence had filed a preliminary objection dated March 10, supported by affidavits and a written address challenging the competence of the suit.

He added that after receiving the claimant's counter-affidavit, the defence filed a 12-paragraph further affidavit in reply on points of law on Friday.

He, however, noted that the claimant served an additional process on the defence in open court on Monday morning.

The senior advocate said the defence was not seeking to delay proceedings but insisted that the court must first deter-

mine whether it had jurisdiction to entertain the matter.

"We have joined issues. We have been served by the plaintiff, and we have responded to all applications.

"The papers are before the court, and we are ready to proceed—provided the court has jurisdiction—unless directed otherwise.

"It is only proper for the court to first determine whether it has jurisdiction," he said.

West-Idahosa argued that the dispute over Okah's election and tenure as Edo APC secretary was a domestic party matter and, therefore, outside the court's jurisdiction.

He relied on Section 83(5) of the Electoral Act 2026 and relevant judicial authorities, maintaining that courts do not interfere in the internal administration of political parties except where constitutional or statutory provisions are breached.

**LEADERSHIP TRAINING:**

A cross-section of participants at the leadership training of new members of Academic Staff Union of Universities, (ASUU), University of Ibadan on Tuesday.

4 docked over alleged assault on neighbour, police officers

IBADAN

The police on Tuesday, charged four people before an Iyaganku Magistrates' Court in Ibadan, for allegedly beating up their neighbour and two police officers.

The defendants are: Wahab Sikiru, 45; his wife, Taiwo Sikiru, 35; Taiwo Balikis, 30; and Ifeoluwa Alabi, 26.

They are standing trial on charges bordering on conspiracy, assault and conduct likely to cause a breach of peace.

They each, however, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The prosecutor, Cpl. David Adepoju, told the court that the defendants conspired to commit the offences on April 27, at Ido, Ibadan.

He alleged that following a misunderstanding, the defendants conspired to assault their neighbour, one Mrs Aduragbemi Edujobi, by beating her up and tearing her clothes to pieces.

The prosecutor alleged that the defendants also beat up two police officers Insp. Mercy Sunday and PC Phebe Olatunde, in the course of executing their lawful duties, and tore their uniforms and badges.

The offences contravene the provisions of sections 249(d), 351 and 516 of the Criminal Law of Oyo State, 2000.

The Magistrate, Mrs Kausarat Ayofe, granted the defendants bail in the sum of N500,000 each, with two sureties each in like sum.

She adjourned the case until June 24, for hearing.

Emefiele asks court to foreclose prosecution if it fails to produce witnesses

ABUJA

Former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Godwin Emefiele, has urged an Abuja High Court to foreclose the prosecution in his ongoing trial if the EFCC fails to produce its witnesses on the next adjourned date.

Emefiele's counsel, Matthew Burkaa SAN, made the appli-

cation for the foreclosure of the prosecution after the prosecution counsel, Rotimi Oyedepo SAN told the court that he was not sure of bringing his two witnesses on the next adjourned date of the case.

Oyedepo informed the court that the prosecution is yet to obtain the subpoena from the court and the witnesses lived outside the court's jurisdiction.

Emefiele, is charged with

criminal breach of trust, forgery, abuse of office, conspiracy to obtain by false pretence and obtaining money by false pretence while serving as CBN governor.

The EFCC alleged that Emefiele obtained by false pretence the sum of 6.3 billion dollars purportedly meant for international election observers for the 2023 general election.

He however, pleaded not guilty to the charges preferred against him.

At the resumed hearing on Monday, Mr Chinedu Eneanya,

Assistant Commander II in the EFCC, was called to testify as the 13th prosecution witness (PW 13)

Emefiele 'counsel frowned at bringing another Investigative officer (IPO) because the witness was going to testify on the same things others had said.

He also drew the attention of the court to what the that prosecution told the court about bringing its last witness.

"We understand their strategy. It seems that they are ridiculing the court. All the same, we are ready to go on."

Man, 55, docked over alleged destruction of cash crops worth N10m

IBADAN

55-year old Joseph Oyenan, on Tuesday, appeared before an Iyaganku Chief Magistrates' Court, Ibadan, charged with setting fire to cash crops worth N10 million.

The defendant, a resident of Akatupa area near Bara-Obe village, Ogbomosho, Oyo State, is facing two counts of conspir-

acy and arson.

He, however, pleaded not guilty to the charges against him.

The Prosecutor, Sgt. Akeem Akinloye alleged that the defendant and others at large conspired together to commit the offence of arson

Akinloye alleged that the defendant unlawfully set fire to farmland with cashew trees, palm trees, banana planta-

tion, and tubers of yam valued N10million, property of one Iyanda Solomon.

He said that the offences were committed on April 1, at about 6.00pm at Akatupa area, near Baara-Obe village, Ogbomosho.

Defence Counsel, Mr Femi Oyinloye, applied for the bail of the defendant on liberal terms.

The Chief Magistrate, Mrs

Olabisi Ogunkanmi, admitted the defendant to bail in the sum of N5 million with two sureties in like sum.

Ogunkanmi said one of the sureties must be resident within jurisdiction and the owner of a building, while the second surety must be a close relative to the defendant.

She, thereafter, adjourned the matter until July 15, for hearing.

Man, 30, arraigned over alleged phone theft

LAGOS

The Police on Tuesday arraigned a 30-year-old man in an Ojo Magistrates' Court in Lagos for allegedly stealing an Infinix Note 12 mobile phone.

The defendant is facing a

one-count charge of stealing before Magistrate Lateef Layeni.

He, however, pleaded not guilty to the charge.

The Prosecutor, ASP Simon Uche, told the court that the defendant committed the offence on April 17, at the Ajangbadi area of Ojo, Lagos.

Uche alleged that the defendant stole the phone, valued at N140,000, belonging to a businesswoman, Ms Funmi Nife.

According to the prosecutor, the defendant was apprehended by security guards on duty in the area, to whom he reportedly confessed to being a habit-

ual phone thief.

The offence, according to the prosecutor, contravenes the provisions of Section 287 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015.

The Magistrate granted the defendant bail in the sum of N300,000 with two sureties in like sum.

Layeni adjourned the case until May 21 for mention.

Man, 27, arraigned over alleged membership of unlawful society

IKEJA

A 27-year-old man, Adam Ayeni, on Tuesday appeared before an Ikeja Magistrates' Court in Lagos, over alleged membership of unlawful society.

The defendant who resides at Sito Yamaha Seme, is standing trial before the Magistrate, Mr Lateef Owolabi, on a two-count charge bordering on conspiracy and belonging to an unlawful society.

He, however, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The prosecutor SP Josephine Ikhayere, told the court that

the defendant conspired with others now at large, to commit the offences sometime in 2024 at the Seme area of Lagos.

She alleged that the defendant belonged to the "Aiye Confraternity," a group proscribed by Law adding that he also carried out unlawful activities of the group.

The offences contravene the provisions of section 2(3) of the Unlawful Society (Prohibition) and Cultism Law of Lagos State, 2021

It also contravenes the provisions of sections 411 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015.

Man, 43, bags six months imprisonment for stealing employer's money

SANGO-OTA (OGUN)

An Ota Magistrates' Court in Ogun, on Tuesday sentenced a 43-year-old man, Adewunmi Adebola, to six months imprisonment for stealing N212,750, belonging to his employer.

Delivering judgment, the Magistrate, Mrs O.O. Fadairo, held that the prosecution proved beyond reasonable doubts that Adebola was guilty of the charge brought against him.

She sentenced the convict to six months imprisonment with an option of payment of

N20,000 fine.

Fadairo also said that Adebola should restate N212,750 to his employer, Aremu Ayuba.

The convict had pleaded not guilty to a two-count charge of stealing and fraud when it was read to him.

Earlier, the Prosecutor, ASP E.O. Adaraloye, told the court that Adebola committed the offences on April 17, at about 6:30 p.m. at Bintilaye Bakery, the Bells University in Ota.

Adaraloye said that the convict fraudulently obtained the sum of N212,750 from a customer without the consent of his employer.

NEWS**Foreign**

US political violence generates a familiar cycle - this time it's in overdrive

For many in the ballroom at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner on Saturday night, the scene was painfully familiar. Shots fired, confusion and panic, and a sense that the normal order of things had been violently interrupted.

Erika Kirk, whose husband, the conservative activist Charlie Kirk, was shot and killed last September, was in tears. Congressman Steve Scalise, majority leader in the House of Representatives who suffered life-threatening injuries in a shooting at a baseball practice with Republican teammates in 2017, was escorted out by security.

So was Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr, who lost his father and uncle to assassin's bullets.

Many journalists in attendance had been at the 2024 rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, where an assailant opened fire on Donald Trump, grazing his ear, before being killed by a Secret Service sniper.

In modern America, it seems, political violence has become an ever-present storm, that can strike anywhere, at any moment.

Saturday night was the third time that Trump has been directly targeted - after the Butler attack and another attempt in 2024 at his Palm Beach golf resort. In a separate incident, the Secret Service killed an armed man trying to enter Trump's Mar-a-Lago club, although the president was not in Florida at the time.

These incidents have become frequent enough that there is

almost a routine to them.

Trump, reflective, calls for unity and a cooling of political rhetoric. News coverage speculates about a "new tone" from the president. Ultimately, partisan divisions reassert themselves - often with Trump leading the way.

That cycle is in overdrive this week.

On Saturday night, Trump called for unity.

"His many detractors should grant that his comments late Saturday at a White House press briefing hit the right notes of gratitude and comity," a Wall Street Journal editorial observed.

On Sunday evening, in a sit-down with CBS' 60 Minutes programme, Trump blamed Democrats for creating an atmosphere that encouraged the shooting, then derided inter-

viewer Norah O'Donnell as "a disgrace" and "horrible" after she asked about the manifesto written by the alleged assailant.

The contours of the policy goals for Trump and his Republican allies also have quickly come into view. Some on the left, fuelled by concerns about a crackdown on free speech or Democratic activism, circulated unfounded conspiracy theories that the attack was a means of boosting the president's standing.

But Trump's response since the shooting has focused largely on removing obstacles to constructing a massive ballroom at the White House where the mansion's east wing once stood.

On Sunday, Trump posted on social media that Saturday's incident was "exactly the reason" he wants the ballroom.

Russian superyacht sails through Strait of Hormuz despite blockade

A superyacht linked to one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's key allies has sailed through the Strait of Hormuz, despite the ongoing blockade of the critical shipping channel.

The 142m-long (465 ft) multi-deck luxury boat, named Nord, is linked to sanctioned Russian billionaire Alexei Mordashov. It travelled from Dubai to Muscat, Oman, over the weekend - one of few private vessels to transit through the strait in recent months.

Iran held high-level talks with Russia this week as its standoff with the US over the strait's re-opening continues.

Approximately one-fifth of global crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies normally pass through the waterway.

With an estimated net worth of about \$37bn (£27bn), Mordashov is the richest Russian national listed by the US business magazine Forbes.

Mordashov, who has close ties to Putin, is not listed as the formal owner of the Russian-flagged boat. However, Nord's records indicate it was registered to a firm owned by his wife in 2022.

Nord, estimated to be worth more than \$500m (£370m), left Dubai on Friday night and arrived at Al Mouj - a marina in Oman's capital - on Sunday

morning, according to data on the Marine Traffic platform.

The route shown on the tracker has been used by vessels crossing with agreement from Iran.

It is not clear whether Nord gained permission from Iran to sail through the route.

Mordashov made his fortune largely through his steel and mining company Severstal - the largest such firm in Russia.

With an estimated net worth of about \$37bn (£27bn), he is the richest Russian national listed by the US business magazine Forbes.

Iran has severely restricted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz in response to US and Israeli strikes that began on 28 February.

Earlier this month, Tehran warned that any vessel that approaches the strait would be targeted.

The US then announced that its forces would intercept or turn back vessels travelling to or from Iran's ports.

The Nord route shown by Marine Traffic does not indicate the yacht stopped in Iran.

The United States Central Command (Centcom) defines the blockade starting point as further east of the vessel's last reported location.

Maritime traffic through the Gulf channel is currently at a fraction of pre-war levels.



MULTI-DECK LUXURY BOAT:

The multi-deck luxury boat valued at more than \$500m (£370m) transited the Gulf waterway at the weekend.

Man admits plotting attack on Taylor Swift concert in Vienna

A 21-year-old Austrian man has admitted plotting a jihadist attack on a Taylor Swift concert in Vienna in August 2024.

The man, named only as Beran A, also admitted to being part of a terrorist organisation, although he denied other charges including involvement in planning an attack in the Islamic holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

The state prosecutor told the court in Wiener Neustadt near Vienna that police had found an almost completed bomb during a search of the man's house.

Beran A was arrested after a tip-off from the CIA just before Swift's opening concert in Vienna in 2024.

As a result, all three sold-out gigs by the US superstar singer at Vienna's Ernst Happel Stadium were cancelled.

More than 195,000 people in total had been expected to attend.

Thousands of disappointed fans roamed the streets of the city, singing and exchanging Taylor Swift-themed friendship bracelets.

Beran A was brought into the courtroom, wearing a blue shirt and handcuffs, to face charges of terrorism and other offences.

He went on trial with another 21-year-old man, named as Arda K, who is accused of being part of an Islamic State cell with him. They are accused of planning attacks in Istanbul and Dubai, as well as in Mecca.

The Eras Tour tour narrowly "dodged a massacre situation" thanks to the CIA foiling the plot, Taylor Swift said.

The main defendant's lawyer, Anna Mair, told the court: "My client has caused a great deal of fear and panic among many peo-

ple, and he will have to answer for that, no question. But please try to look beyond the headlines."

Vienna prosecutors allege that Beran A started planning the attack at the latest by 21 July 2024. He was arrested on 7 August, a day before the first concert.

Prosecutors accuse him of declaring allegiance to, and spreading online propaganda online for, the jihadist group Islamic State, as well as making explosives and attempting to purchase weapons illegally.

He is suspected of having obtained instructions via the internet on how to make a shrapnel bomb, of a type "specific to IS attacks", according to the indictment.

Prosecutors accuse him of having received training from other IS members on how to handle explosives and of having made several attempts to purchase various firearms and a hand grenade through illegal dealers, with the

intention of importing the weapons into Austria.

Three suspects - including Beran A - were arrested in 2024 just before Taylor Swift's concerts in Vienna in 2024.

The two men, who were in their teens at the time of the attack, both face up to 20 years in prison if found guilty.

Last year, a teenager in Germany was also given an 18-month suspended sentence, for helping to prepare the foiled attack.

Prosecutors said the Syrian national, named as Mohammed A, helped Beran A with a translation of bomb-making instructions from Arabic and put him in contact with an IS member.

The trial is expected to continue until late May.

Taylor Swift - one of the world's biggest superstars - learned about the bomb plot in Vienna when she was on the plane to Austria, according to a documentary on the Eras Tour.

United Arab Emirates to quit oil cartel OPEC

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is quitting the Opec and Opec+ groups of major oil producing nations next month after nearly 60 years of membership.

The UAE said its decision would help it meet growing global energy demand in the long term after recent investments to boost its production capacity.

It is seen as a blow to the cartel, with one analyst describing the exit as "the beginning of the end of Opec".

The Gulf state's energy minister said being a country with no obligation under the groups would give it more flexibility.

Opec was formed in 1960 by five countries - Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela - and its aim has been to co-ordinate production to provide steady revenue for its members.

The number of countries in the cartel has fluctuated over the years, but in addition to the five founding members it also includes Algeria, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Libya, Nigeria and the Republic of the Congo.

The UAE joined in 1967, and its departure will leave the cartel with 11 members. There are an additional 10 non-Opec members in the wider Opec+ alliance.

Saul Kavonic, head of energy research at MST Financial, said it was "the beginning of the end of Opec".

"With the UAE leaving, Opec loses about 15% of its ca-

capacity and one of its most compliant members."

The UAE's decision came as the World Bank warned the war in the Middle East has caused the biggest loss of oil supply on record.

Energy prices will rise by about a quarter on average as a result this year, it said, while it could take six months for shipping through the key Strait of Hormuz to return to pre-war levels.

"The poorest people, who spend the highest share of their income on food and fuels, will be hit the hardest," said the World Bank's chief economist Indermit Gill.

The UAE's decision to leave Opec will not have an immediate impact on global energy supply, due to the ongoing closure of the Strait of Hormuz, but could lead to a longer-term boost in output.

The country has invested heavily in boosting its production capacity and has wanted for a long time to pump more oil, economists said.

David Oxley, chief climate and commodities economist at Capital Economics, said its departure could lead to lower oil prices but higher volatility on the market in the coming decades.

He added that while the UAE is small, the implications could be major if other member states leave, or countries such as Russia and Saudi Arabia decide to ramp up production as a result.

Foreign**NEWS****Ukraine accuses Israel of receiving shipments of grain 'stolen' by Russia**

A diplomatic row has broken out over allegations that Israel is receiving shipments of grain from Russian-occupied Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that "another vessel" carrying grain "stolen by Russia" had arrived at a port in Israel and was preparing to unload.

He said Israeli authorities "cannot be unaware" of what cargo was inside vessels arriving at their country's ports, and warned that their failure to prevent the grain shipments was undermining bilateral relations.

Israel's Foreign Minister, Gideon Saar, said it rejected such "Twitter diplomacy" and that the Ukrainian government had not provided evidence in support of its claims.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists that he "would rather not comment on this in any way or get involved in this matter".

Russia has previously denied

that it is stealing Ukrainian grain.

The row between Ukraine and Israel erupted after the Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported that four vessels loaded with grain from occupied Ukraine had been unloaded in Israel so far this year.

Another vessel with a suspected cargo of such grain reached Haifa Bay on Sunday morning and was waiting its turn to enter the port, the paper reported.

On Monday night, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha wrote on X that his office had summoned the Israeli ambassador in Kyiv to protest against what he described as "Israel's lack of appropriate response to Ukraine's legitimate request regarding the previous vessel that delivered stolen goods to Haifa".

"Now that another such vessel has arrived in Haifa, we once again warn Israel against accepting the stolen grain and harming our relations," he added.



RUSSIAN-OCCUPIED TERRITORY:

Ukraine said a ship with grain from Russian-occupied territory was preparing to unload at Haifa (file photo)

Ghana's military hunts those behind convoy attack on northern highway

Ghana's army is investigating a deadly attack by gunmen on a military convoy that was escorting 140 civilians along a dangerous highway in the north-eastern of the country.

Seven gunmen and three civilians were killed in an exchange of gunfire in Binduri as the convoy was travelling between the centres of Bawku and Bolga. Ten suspects have been arrested.

A decades-long chieftaincy dispute has led to sporadic violence in the area with the Kusasi and Mamprusi ethnic groups claiming the traditional and powerful position.

Last year the government deployed extra soldiers to the area after some schools came under attack and the Asante king has led recent mediation efforts to restore calm.

Besides providing armed es-

corts, the government has been imposing curfews and joint military and police patrols to contain the violence.

The extra soldiers deployed are also tasked with securing the country's northern frontier with Burkina Faso, where armed Islamist militant groups are known to be active and are believed to sometimes cross the border.

The army said it had recovered a G3 automatic rifle, two full magazines and additional ammunition from one of the assailants who fled to a mosque to hide.

Operations to track down others linked to the attack are continuing.

The chieftaincy of Bawku used to rotate between the two groups, but several years ago the Supreme Court upheld the Kusasis' claim, fuelling further division.

UN expresses 'deep concern' over Mali attacks, calls for international assistance

The United Nations has expressed deep concern over the weekend's attacks in Mali.

Jihadist militants joined forces with Tuareg separatists to launch the largest coordinated offensive the country has seen in more than a decade.

The two groups have a shared interest in routing the army and Russian mercenaries from northern and central Mali.

Briefing reporters in New York on Monday, Spokesperson for the Secretary-General Stéphane Dujarric said António Guterres "calls for coordinated international support to address the evolving threat of

violent extremism and terrorism in the Sahel and to meet urgent humanitarian needs."

"The Secretary-General strongly condemns these acts of violence, expresses solidarity with the Malian people and stresses the need to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure," Dujarric said.

"He reiterates his call for robust security coordination and collaboration across the region."

Mali has been fighting insurgents for more than a decade.

Under the ruling military junta, Mali turned to Russia as its new security partner, ousting UN peacekeepers and traditional Western allies.

Suspect charged with attempted assassination of Trump at Washington dinner

A California man has been charged with attempting to assassinate US President Donald Trump after trying to storm a gala event with weapons on Saturday night.

Cole Tomas Allen, 31, was also charged with two firearms offences when he appeared in court in Washington DC on Monday. He did not enter a plea.

He was carrying a semi-automatic handgun, a pump-action shotgun and three knives as he charged past a security checkpoint at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner on Saturday, say prosecutors. The incident has sparked a White House security review.

A Secret Service agent was shot but not seriously wounded during the attack at a hotel. The accused faces life in prison if found guilty.

Dressed in a blue jumpsuit with a nametag, the suspect appeared calm at Monday's court appearance in the nation's capital.

He was softly spoken as he answered almost every question from the judge with either "yes, your honour" or "no, your honour".

He stated his age and said he had a master's degree.

Three US marshals stood behind him, and one was at his side, while the federal prosecutor handling the case, US Attorney for Washington Jeanine Pirro, looked on.

During Saturday night's incident, Trump, Vice-President JD Vance, cabinet members and other White House officials were rushed from the Washington Hilton hotel ballroom after gunfire rang out.

The suspect allegedly rushed through a security checkpoint one floor above the basement venue.

"One Secret Service officer was shot in the chest, but was wearing a ballistic vest that worked," Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche told a news conference on Monday.

"This heroic officer who was hit fired five times at Allen, who was not shot but fell to the ground and was promptly arrested."

Infographic showing the suspect's movement inside the Hilton hotel as he rushed past a security checkpoint. A red arrow traces the path from the hallway, through a security gate, and towards a staircase. There are ten figures shown around the security checkpoint and the path of the suspect passes between them. Labels note that the suspect was stopped before reaching the stairs, which a dotted line shows lead down to the doors of the International Ballroom.

Blanche said the suspect is believed to have discharged his shotgun at least once.

It is not clear whether the Secret Service agent was shot by the suspect, or was caught in crossfire from other law enforcement. The agent has been released from the hospital.

Attempting to assassinate the president carries a potential life sentence.

The other charges - transportation of a firearm between states to commit a felony and discharging a firearm in a crime of violence - both have maximum sentences of 10 years. The suspect is due to appear in court again on Thursday.

The court heard that the accused crossed multiple state lines in order to try to kill Trump.

The suspect left his home in the city of Torrance in the Los Angeles area on 21 April, travelling by train to Chicago, said officials.

On 24 April, he left Chicago, and arrived in Washington where he checked into the Hilton on the eve of the gala.

The suspect studied at the prestigious California Institute of Technology, and worshipped at the Pasadena United Reformed Church in the Los Angeles area.

Rescuers race to free survivors trapped inside train after fatal Indonesia crash

Rescuers are racing to try and free people trapped inside a train involved in a fatal collision outside the Indonesian capital Jakarta on Monday.

At least 15 people were killed and dozens injured in the accident which took place when a stationary passenger train was hit from behind by a long-distance commuter train running on the same track.

Local media ran footage of passengers on medical trolleys near Bekasi Timur Station, with other images showing rescuers trying to free people from the train wreckage.

There are still victims who are alive "but they're pinned by train material", Mohammad Syafii, who leads Indonesia's

search and rescue agency, told reporters early on Tuesday.

Composite map and satellite graphic illustrating the location and details of a train crash in Indonesia. An inset map at the top right highlights the Indonesian archipelago, with a marker pointing to the Jakarta region on the island of Java. The main map shows greater Jakarta, labeling Jakarta, South Jakarta, and the nearby city of Bekasi, with roads and waterways visible and a distance scale indicating kilometres and miles. Below, a high-resolution satellite image focuses on a dense urban area in East Bekasi, showing tightly packed housing, railway tracks running horizontally across the image, and nearby roads.

The location of Bekasi Timur train station is marked. Red text boxes indicate two incident points: one at the station where an incoming train collided with a train waiting on the platform, and another at a nearby road junction where a taxi was struck by a train.

"There are some victims who are alive to this minute and we're hoping to extricate them," he said. "We need to involve personnel with certain skills to perform a measured extrication."

Bobby Rasyidin, the president director of state-owned railway operator KAI, said on Tuesday that 84 people are being treated for their injuries in nearby hospitals.

The accident involved one taxi and three commuter trains. It started at about 20:00 on Monday, when one of the

commuter trains hit the taxi, which was lying across the middle of the rail crossing.

A second train was forced to stop at the station because of this collision. Nearly an hour later, the third train, a long-distance commuter train, then crashed into a women-only carriage on the second train, while pulling into the station.

Some people screamed "hysterically" as the trains collided, one passenger told the BBC's Indonesia service. Other eyewitnesses said they saw "many victims" injured in the crash.

Medical expenses for the injured and funeral expenses for the deceased will be fully covered by KAI and insurance, authorities say, adding that the Bekasi Timur Station will be closed to commuters for the rest of Tuesday.

Sports

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

Edo FA Cup: Bendel Insurance FC team visits injured Itoro Promise after successful surgery

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

It was a moment of joy with a sense of belonging for injured Center back Itoro Promise as his Bendel Insurance Football Club teammates, coaches and other officials of the club, today, paid him a solidarity visit at the Specialist Hospital in Benin where he

is currently recovering after a successful surgery.

The Benin Arsenal's defense strongman Itoro Promise suffered a simple fracture on his left leg on Wednesday, April 22, 2026 during the semi-finals match of Edo FA Cup with ST. Andrews FC which Insurance FC won 3-0 at the Crescent Sports Club field.

Following the result of the scan on Itoro's left leg, the medical team of Bendel Insurance FC recommended surgery which was successfully carried out on Friday, April 24, 2026 at the Benin Specialists Hospital.

The Benin Arsenal's visiting team led by the General Manager Charles Ohimekpen and Technical Manager Coach Kennedy Boboye with the team captain Efe Enabulele arrived at the medical facility at about 3:30pm with all the players who took along with them the 2026 Edo FA Cup they won yesterday at the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium after beating Westgate FC 2-0. They celebrated the FA Cup triumph and the successful surgery with Itoro Promise.

The management and players of Bendel Insurance FC wished Itoro Promise a speedy recovery. "We thank God and

the Doctors for the successful surgery and wish you a speedy recovery. It is our hope you return stronger." Boboye said.

"We missed you in the final match and we fought for the trophy, believing it will bring you joy and some relief as you recover from the pains you have been going through. We are happy the surgery went well. Here is the cup we brought for you to feel it with us together. We wish you quick recovery." The skipper Efe Enabulele said.

Itoro Promise who will be out of action for the rest period of current football season, expressed gratitude to the management of Bendel Insurance FC and his teammate for standing with him since he sustained the leg injury. He also commended the team's medics for their professionalism.



BENDEL INSURANCE FC TEAM VISITS INJURED ITORO PROMISE

Joshua–Fury superfight sealed for Nov 2026 in long-awaited heavyweight showdown

EDWARD OSEGHE

Anthony Joshua will make a high-profile return to the ring later this year, with a historic clash against long-time rival Tyson Fury now officially confirmed for November 2026.

The much-anticipated bout—years in the making—has finally been signed, setting the stage for one of the most significant heavyweight encounters in modern boxing.

The showdown pits former unified champion Joshua against reigning WBC titleholder Fury in a contest that has consistently eluded fans despite repeated negotiations.

Confirmation of the blockbuster came from Saudi boxing powerbroker Turki Alalshikh, who announced the deal on social media with a brief but decisive message to British fans: "It's happening. It's signed."

Momentum for the fight gathered pace following Fury's return to action in April 2026, when he outpointed Arslanbek Makhmudov via unanimous

decision at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. Joshua, who was present ringside, watched as Fury delivered a composed performance to reaffirm his dominance in the division.

Riding on that victory, the self-styled "Gypsy King" immediately turned his attention to Joshua, issuing a public challenge and urging his compatriot to finally settle their long-running rivalry inside the ring. The call-out reignited widespread interest in a contest



JOSHUA AND FURY

Moshood Abiola National Stadium, Abuja To Host Para-Powerlifting Championship

The usually serene atmosphere of Moshood Abiola National Stadium, Abuja is bound to come alive with a beehive of activities this Thursday, with the arrival of participants for this year's Kingsley Iwodi Para-Powerlifting Open Championship.

An array of physically challenged athletes, coaches, officials, stakeholders and journalists are expected to

start trooping in on the official arrival date of Thursday, April 30th, while departure is Monday, May 4th.

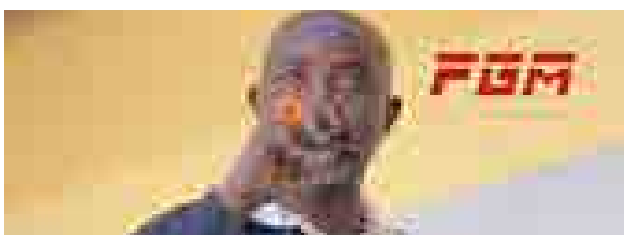
Read Also: Anthony Joshua Looks Forward To Picking Up Lost Ground On July 25th In Saudi Arabia | Sports247 Nigeria.

The competition proper will hold from this Friday to Sunday in the sports hall of the stadium's Package 'B', on the out-

skirts of Abuja, where officials of Nigeria Para-Powerlifting Federation have already finalised plans for a flawless event.

A media statement by the organizing committee added, "The Kingsley Iwodi Open Championship is expected to serve as a critical platform for talent discovery, athlete development, and preparation for upcoming international competitions.

Nigerian Police burst NBBofC Remi Aboderin with forged documents, NIN, and several counterfeit ID's



REMI ABODERIN

The Nigerian police have arrested the Secretary General of the Nigeria Boxing Board of Control (NBBofC) Remi Aboderin with forged documents consist of National Identification Number (NIN) and Several Counterfeit ID's used for fraudulent boxing activities.

The Anti-kidnapping Unit, Area C of the Lagos State police command acting on relevant intelligence arrested Remi Aboderin at the office of the NBBofC at the National Stadium Surulere, Lagos on Monday April 27th (Today).

The suspect has since been taken into custody pending further investigation.



NPFL: Ikorodu City's continental push delayed as NPFL fixture changed

Ikorodu City FC's push for a historic Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) continental slot has been paused following a late adjustment to their Matchday 36 fixture.

The league body confirmed on Tuesday that the crucial clash, against Wikki Tourists, initially slated for May 3, will now take place on May 5.

The NPFL said the rescheduling was due to fixture clashes involving the Lagos State Federation Cup final at the Mobolaji Johnson Arena.

While the change may appear routine, it introduces added ten-

sion at both ends of the table. Ikorodu City, chasing a maiden continental slot, must now manage the psychological challenge of a delayed fixture in a tightly contested race.

For Wikki Tourists, the shift could prove beneficial, offering extra time to regroup as they battle to avoid relegation.

The NPFL cited logistical considerations linked to hosting the Federation Cup final at the same venue as the reason for the adjustment.

"Matchday 36 fixture, Ikorodu City versus Wikki Tourists has been rescheduled from May 3 to May 5.

NOC unveils Olympafrica centre, launches integrated sports estate

The Nigeria Olympic Committee (NOC) has disclosed plans to transform Nigerian sport with the inauguration of the Olympafrica Centre in Lagos.

The project combines elite sporting infrastructure with residential development, aimed at fostering long-term athlete development and a sustainable sports ecosystem.

Tony Neziyana, NOC Public Relations Officer, told reporters yesterday the landmark centre is divided into two functional spaces.

"This Olympafrica site serves as both a sports facility and resource centre, situated on about 6.7 hectares in Amuwo Odofin," he said.

He said the committee had already established structures on the land, positioning it as a

hub for training, education and community engagement.

"The land is split, with 40 per cent for residential estates and 60 per cent dedicated to sports facilities.

"Interested investors have bid for portions of the estate land, and construction activities are already underway.

"It is designed as a residential estate where individuals can purchase property and live within a sports-driven environment," he said.

Neziyana explained that the concept promotes proximity between athletes, coaches and support systems, enhancing training outcomes and lifestyle balance.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the Olympic Residential Estate Project is sched-



OLYMPAFRICA CENTRE TEAM

Osimhen defies injury to hit 20-goal mark as Galatasaray close in on title

EDWARD OSEGHE

Victor Osimhen's relentless scoring form has powered Galatasaray to the brink of another Super Lig



VICTOR OSIMHEN

triumph, with the Nigerian striker reaching the 20-goal milestone for the 2025/26 season despite an injury-disrupted campaign.

The Super Eagles forward underlined his importance in em-

phatic fashion, opening the scoring in Galatasaray's commanding 3-0 derby victory over Fenerbahce. The strike not only set the tone for the win but also confirmed his second consecutive season hitting 20 goals across all competitions for the Turkish giants.

Signed permanently from Napoli last summer, Osimhen has quickly cemented his status as Galatasaray's focal point in attack. Even a mid-season forearm fracture that required surgery failed to derail his influence, as he returned strongly to lead the club's title charge.

Domestically, the 27-year-old has delivered 13 goals and four assists in just 20 league appearances, helping Galatasaray open up a seven-point lead at the top of the

table with three matches remaining. His contributions have placed the champions firmly on course for a 26th league crown.

While the Turkish Cup campaign ended prematurely with a disappointing exit, Osimhen's impact on the European stage stood out. He produced seven goals and one assist in 10 UEFA Champions League matches, averaging 84 minutes per game. His standout moments included a hat-trick against Ajax and decisive extra-time heroics against Juventus.

Osimhen came within touching distance of Burak Yilmaz's club record of eight goals in a single Champions League season before Galatasaray's run was halted by eventual winners Liverpool.



AFCON FINAL DISPUTE

CAS sets May 7 hearing date for AFCON final dispute

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) has fixed May 7 as the date to hear the case surrounding the controversial Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) final involving Morocco and Senegal.

The Royal Moroccan Football Federation is expected to appear before the tribunal to present its arguments and clarify its position following the withdrawal of the Senegalese national team from the highly anticipated final clash.

The dispute has generated significant attention within African football circles, with stakeholders awaiting CAS's ruling to determine the outcome of the abandoned fixture and any potential sanctions or directives.

Further details on the circumstances leading to Senegal's withdrawal are expected to be examined during the hearing, as CAS seeks to establish the facts and deliver a binding decision on the matter.

Nigeria Catchball Federation withdraws from South Africa competition over safety concerns

The Nigeria Catchball Federation (NCF) has announced its withdrawal from a forthcoming competition in South Africa over safety concerns.

A statement by the media coordinator, NCF, Naomi Nnaji, on Tuesday in Lagos, said the decision was made following recent xenophobic attacks targeting Nigerians.

The statement quoted the President of NCF, Bola Babarinde, as saying the that withdrawal was in the best interest of the players, officials and the broader Nigerian contingent scheduled to participate in the event.

According to him, the well-being and security of NCF members remain the top priority at all times.

Babarinde expressed disappointment over the unfortunate development.

He said that having spent several years in South Africa and contributed meaningfully to the growth of sports and community relations, the situation was both disheartening and unexpected.

Babarinde noted that such acts undermine the spirit of unity, sportsmanship, and African brotherhood that international sporting events are meant to promote.

He said that federation acknowledges and appreciates the efforts of the South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa, in

addressing the situation.

"The prevailing tension and uncertainty have inevitably impacted the integrity and feasibility of the competition.

"In light of these circumstances, the NCF has resolved to withdraw its participation, prioritising the safety and security of its athletes and officials above all else.

"The Federation remains committed to the development of Catchball both locally and internationally and hopes for a future where such decisions will not be necessary," he said



NIGERIA CATCHBALL PLAYERS

Nigeria's U-19 National Team gear up for crucial World Cup qualifiers

The Nigeria Cricket Federation (NCF) has opened a training camp for the country's U-19 women's team, the Junior Female Yellow Greens, as preparations begin for the 2027 ICC Women's U-19 T20 World Cup.

The qualifying tournament is scheduled to take place in Tanzania from September 25 to October 4 where Nigeria will compete against Namibia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and Malawi for a place at the global event, which will be co-hosted by Bangladesh and Nepal.

A total of 21 players have been invited for the first phase of camping, currently under-

way at the NCF High-Performance Centre in Benin City. The squad is being coached by Kenyan trainer Sarah Bhakita alongside head coach Theophilus Ebidome. Former team captain Blessing Etim is also part of the technical crew, which previously guided the team at the last World Cup in Malaysia.

Nigeria made its debut at the tournament during the 2023 ICC Women's U-19 T20 World Cup in Malaysia, finishing sixth after progressing to the Super Six stage. Led by captain Lucky Piety, the team exceeded expectations in a challenging group that featured South Africa, New Zealand, and Samoa.

Most of the players cur-

rently in camp were identified through the 2025 and 2026 National U-17 Championships, which have become a vital pathway for nurturing young talent into the national setup.

The NCF has outlined a multi-phase preparation plan, with the second phase of camping scheduled to take place in Abuja ahead of final team selection for the qualifiers.

Kenya and Malawi secured their spots in Division 1 after emerging as the top two teams in the Division 2 qualifiers held in Uganda last month. Only the winner of Division 1 will qualify for the World Cup, joining South Africa as Africa's representatives.

World Cup: Human Rights Watch urges FIFA to push for 'ICE Truce' at World Cup

FIFA should press the U.S. government to establish an "ICE Truce" for this year's World Cup, including a public guarantee from federal authorities to refrain from immigration enforcement operations at games and venues, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said.

The 2026 World Cup – the first edition of the global showcase tournament to feature 48 teams – will be co-hosted by the U.S., Canada and Mexico from June 11 to July 19.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has been the face of a headline immigration crackdown and deportation drive pursued by the administration of President Donald Trump.

Rights groups have condemned the crackdown, saying it has led to violations of free speech and due process rights

and created an unsafe environment, particularly for minorities. Trump casts his actions as necessary to improve domestic security and curb illegal immigration.

"FIFA needs to act urgently to address the risks of human rights abuses for athletes, fans, and workers," HRW said. "One concrete thing it should do is work to persuade the Trump administration to establish an 'ICE Truce'..."

"Gianni Infantino (FIFA president) and his FIFA colleagues should use their leverage to demand that the Trump administration do what's right for the games," it added.

"Roll back discriminatory travel bans, refrain from abusive immigration enforcement operations in and around World Cup venues, protect children's rights and commit to uphold freedom of assembly and speech."

Chiamaka Nnadozie reacts bluntly to WAFCON postponement



CHIAMAKA NNADOZIE

Super Falcons and Brighton & Hove Albion Women goalkeeper Chiamaka Nnadozie has expressed her frustration following the postponement of the 2026 Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) in Morocco.

The Confederation of African Football announced the sudden postponement just days before the tournament was scheduled to kick off, a decision that has sparked wide-

spread disappointment among players, officials, and fans.

Speaking to The Guardian in the United Kingdom, Nnadozie did not hide her displeasure over the development, describing the situation as frustrating and poorly communicated.

"We, the players, are not happy about it," she said bluntly. "We don't know the reason behind it... we were all prepared. We left our clubs, hoping to go to the WAFCON."



FEATURE



The American war: What Nigeria must learn from a world on edge

JAMAAL ISFATU

When Washington sneezes, Abuja catches a cold. When Washington fights, Abuja bleeds. In April 2026, “the American war” is not one battlefield but four: Ukraine’s frozen trenches, Gaza’s rubble, the Taiwan Strait’s shadow games, and the Red Sea’s burning ships. America is not formally at war, yet American weapons, dollars, and diplomacy define every front. For Nigeria — 6,000 miles from Kyiv and 5,500 from Taipei — the distance is a lie. The price of bread in Kano, the queue for PMS in Lagos, and the bandits in Zamfara all carry fingerprints from these wars. The question for Nigeria is not “whose side are we on?” It’s “what are we learning before the next shock hits us?”

THE FOUR FLASHPOINTS: AMERICA'S 2026 WAR MAP

1. Ukraine-Russia, Year 4: The frontlines have barely moved since 2024. What changed is fatigue. The U.S. passed a \$61bn aid package in February 2026 after 8 months of deadlock in Congress. Europe is stepping up, but Kyiv still runs on American artillery shells and HIMARS. Moscow now buys drones from Iran and artillery from North Korea. Stalemate is expensive. Global wheat prices jumped 14% after the Black Sea Grain deal collapsed again in March.

2. Israel-Gaza & the Middle East Spillover: Six months after the January 2026 ceasefire, Gaza is a humanitarian crater. The Houthis in Yemen still fire at Red Sea shipping. U.S. and UK navies run Operation Prosperity Guardian 2.0. Result: 40% of Asia-Europe trade reroutes around Africa, adding 14 days and \$1m per voyage. For Nigeria, that means higher landing costs for everything from refined petrol to pharmaceuticals.

3. Taiwan Strait Tension: No shots fired, but 2026 is the year of “grey zone” warfare. China ran its largest ever blockade drills in March. U.S. Navy transits increased. TSMC, which makes 60% of the world’s advanced chips, is now duplicating plants in Arizona and Japan. If the Strait closes for 1 week, global car and phone production stops. Nigeria’s POS terminals, bank servers, and telecom base stations all run on those chips.

4. The Election-Year Paradox: President Biden’s second-term doctrine is “burden-sharing.” Translation: America will still lead, but NATO, Japan, and Gulf allies must pay more. Donald Trump, leading GOP polls for 2028, campaigns on “no more blank checks.” U.S. defence budget hit \$905bn for FY2026, yet domestic pressure to focus on the border and



US military and Nigerian military

fantanyl is real. The world is hedging. So should we.

NIGERIA'S 5 PRESSURE POINTS

When America mobilizes, these 5 Nigerian weak spots get hit first:

1. Oil Price Rollercoaster: War premium adds \$8-\$12 per barrel. Brent at \$94 today vs \$76 if Red Sea was calm. That’s good for FG revenue but terrible for inflation. Why? Nigeria imports 90% of refined petrol. We export crude at \$94, import PMS at \$94 + freight + refining margin. The “subsidy is gone” but the FX pass-through isn’t. Every Houthi missile means N50 more per litre within 45 days.

2. Food Security as National Security: Nigeria imports 4.7m MT of wheat yearly — 98% from U.S., Russia, Canada. Ukraine was 12% before 2022. Add fertilizer: 70% of our urea inputs are imported. When Black Sea ports shut, flour mills in Apapa shut. The 2024 food import waiver crashed prices briefly. It’s gone. A Taiwan blockade would hit fertilizer faster than bullets — China supplies 31% of global phosphate.

3. Diaspora & Remittances: 17m Nigerians abroad sent \$20.1bn home in 2025. U.S. alone was \$6.4bn. If U.S. unemployment spikes due to war spending cuts or Taiwan supply shock, remittances fall. For states like Anambra and Edo, remittances are the largest FX inflow after FAAC. A 10% drop means more “sapa” and more pressure on the Naira.

4. Defence & Sahel Spillover: AF-RICOM’s budget is \$1.2bn. Niger,

Mali, Burkina Faso now host Russian Wagner/Africa Corps. U.S. drones left Niger in 2024. The Sahel vacuum is filling with guns. Arms meant for Ukraine show up in Lake Chad. Boko Haram now flies commercial drones. Nigeria’s defence budget is ₦3.8trn, but 80% is recurrent. We buy bullets. We don’t make them. DICON still can’t produce a standard assault rifle at scale.

5. Debt & Dollar Trap: Nigeria’s external debt is \$45.1bn. 38% is dollar-denominated. When U.S. Fed keeps rates high to fund war debt, the dollar strengthens. Our debt service gulps 96% of revenue in 2024. The 2026 Eurobond was priced at 11.2% — “war risk premium.” Every new American aid package to Israel or Ukraine quietly raises Nigeria’s borrowing cost.

LESSONS FOR ABUJA: WHAT TO DO BEFORE THE NEXT SHOCK

1. Food Is Strategy: Treat cassava, maize, and rice like ammunition. The Ministry of Agriculture needs a “war room” with NBS, NiMet, and NSA. Map every LGA for insecurity, soil, and yield. Deploy agro-rangers, not press releases. Brazil feeds 1bn people because EMBRAPA, their agric research body, is funded like a defence lab. NIFOR is not.

2. Make ECOWAS Real: When Niger coup happened in 2023, ECOWAS threatened war but couldn’t enforce it. Why? No standby force, no common currency, no shared intelligence. A toothless regional bloc means Ni-

geria fights alone. The 2024 ECOWAS Logistics Depot in Lungi, Sierra Leone is a start. Fund it. If America’s lesson is “allies or isolation,” ours is “region or ruin.”

3. Build a War Economy in Peacetime: DICON should be Nigeria’s version of Israel’s Elbit. Start with drones, bullets, uniforms. Not fighter jets. Ukraine survived because it had 500,000 people who could fix a generator, weld a truck, and code a drone app. Our NYSC should have a “National Service Defence Tech” track. Teach 50,000 corporates to build and repair, not just teach.

4. Hedge Our FX & Our Friends: Nigeria is non-aligned. Good. But non-aligned doesn’t mean unprepared. We need a 90-day strategic reserve of wheat, PMS, and chips — like the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve. And we need India, Brazil, and Turkey as much as we need U.S. and China. When the Red Sea closes, the Lagos-Abidjan corridor must work.

5. Tell Citizens the Truth: The biggest lesson from America’s wars? The home front loses first. Vietnam was lost on CBS. Iraq was lost on CNN. Nigeria can’t win food inflation if citizens think it’s “spiritual attack.” Monthly presidential briefings on food, fuel, and security — with charts, not jargon — build trust. Resilience needs information.

THE HUMAN COST: BORNO, BENUE, AND THE AID CRUNCH

Global aid is exhausted. UNHCR’s 2026 appeal is 60% underfunded.

“Donor fatigue” is real — Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, and now Haiti. For Nigeria’s 3.1m IDPs, it means less food, fewer tents. In Bama, Borno, WFP cut rations from 70% to 50% in February. The reason? Grain from Ukraine costs more. Ships from Odessa pay war insurance.

Mrs. Rahila Musa, 34, fled Gwoza in 2021. She now lives in Muna Camp, Maiduguri. “We used to get oil and beans. Now only guinea corn. My child asks me, ‘Mama, is America fighting again?’ I don’t know what to say.”

She shouldn’t have to. The connection between a drone over Crimea and a hungry child in Borno is direct. That’s the American war. It’s ours too.

2027: WHY THIS MATTERS FOR THE NEXT ELECTION

Every candidate for 2027 will talk about “security” and “economy.” The serious ones will connect them.

- Will you rebuild NIFOR and DICON or just buy more Tucanos?
- Will you fund agro-rangers or just share rice at Christmas?
- Will you negotiate AfCFTA implementation or just attend AU summits?

The war in 2026 is not America’s alone. It’s a stress test for every weak state. Nigeria failed the COVID test. We failed the subsidy test. We cannot fail the food + conflict test.

America spends \$905bn on defence because it learned from Pearl Harbor: expensive readiness is cheaper than cheap surprise. Nigeria’s defence + agric + research budget combined is \$9bn. We are planning for surprise.

THE DIARY WE'RE ALL WRITING

Lion Timinepere Jombo-Idoko titled her book *Diary of a Resilient Woman*. Resilience, she wrote, “is not the absence of falling. It’s the decision to rise, write it down, and teach someone else.”

Nations need diaries too. Ukraine writes hers in blood and generators. Israel writes hers in iron domes. America writes hers in \$905bn budgets and aircraft carriers.

What will Nigeria’s 2026 diary say? April: We watched Red Sea burn. Price of bread rose. We complained.

Or: April: We saw the world on edge. We secured 200,000 hectares in Benue. We funded 3 drone startups in Kaduna. We told citizens the truth. We chose to be ready.

The American war will not end in 2026. But Nigeria’s excuses can.

We don’t need to pick a side in their war. We need to win the peace in ours. That starts with food, facts, and the courage to prepare before the next sneeze becomes our fever.