

Children's Day: Edo govt condemns social media narratives on Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium incident

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has condemned the misleading social media narratives about the Children's Day incident at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium yesterday.

A statement issued by the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Dr. Patrick Ebojele rejected the sensational interpretations, spins,

twists, and misinformation that were dubiously orchestrated to give the government a bad name.

According to the CPS, "the stadium was filled to capacity with thousands of excited children who came to participate in the day's activities. The turn out was unprecedented. All the entrances into the facility were opened for children to access the stadium. Some excited children resorted

to unruly behaviour at one of the gates, an incident that led to some kind of stampede which necessitated one of the bouncers to deploy the use of tear gas to disperse them. In the cause of the pandemonium that ensued, few students sustained injuries.

"The Deputy Governor, Rt Hon. Dennis Idahosa who was physically present at the stadium, rose to the challenge imme-

diately assisting children with first aids; and those requiring further care were taken to the Edo Specialist Hospital where they received appropriate medical attention and are now safely back home with their families.

"The Edo State government has already authorised investigations into the incident while the bouncer involved is presently being interrogated by the Po-

lice to ascertain the immediate or remote cause of the incident. The government wishes to restate its commitment to the safety and security of all including our children. We however call on social media users to refrain from unverified narratives that could cause unnecessary panic.

"Isolated incidents at large gatherings, while regrettable, do not diminish Governor Ok-

pebholo's commitment to child safety and wellbeing. The Governor's unparalleled investment in education is the reason for the huge attendance by students of different schools in the state to celebrate Children's Day.

"We thank security personnel, medical staff, and volunteers for their swift response and dedication to duty. Their immediate response helped douse the tension."

The Nigerian OBSERVER

That The People May Know

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Children's Day: 'Your dreams, safety, education matter'

● Tinubu assures worried children, teachers, families

ABUJA

The President, Bola Tinubu, has assured his administration's commitment to a Nigeria where every

child can learn safely, grow, access opportunity and dream without fear.

The Nigerian leader, who gave the pledge in a "statement on Children's Day and the children in

captivity," said their future matters to the government and the nation and they will safeguard it.

Speaking against the backdrop of some Nigerian children and their teachers in Oyo and

Borno States that are being held captive by criminals, Tinubu re-assured them and their parents of his determination, saying "You are not forgotten. You are not abandoned."

The President added: "We will continue to work until children taken from their homes, schools and communities are returned safely, and until those who profit from this cruelty are brought to justice."

On the theme of this year's Children's Day celebration, "Future Now: Promotion Inclusion for Every Nigerian Child," he said it speaks pow-

erfully to the soul of the nation and reminds everyone that the future is not a distant promise.

He described the day, which coincides with Eid-el-Kabir, as a special day to celebrate every Nigerian child who is excelling in school, learning a trade or living with disability and still pressing forward with courage.

"Today belongs to you. It is a day to celebrate your innocence, your strength, your creativity, your aspirations and the immense value you bring to our nation.

"You are the pride of our Republic, the custodians of tomorrow's, and the living reminder that we can shape the future of Nigeria by the opportunities we create for our children today," he stated.



TRADITIONAL SALLA VISIT:

Edo State Deputy Governor Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa (centre), welcomes Alhaji Abdulfattah Enabulele, Chief Imam of the Benin Central Mosque, while the Secretary to the Edo State Government Barr. Umar Musa Ikhilor (right), looks on during the traditional Salla visit to Government House on Wednesday.

PHOTO: MOSES OBOH

Gov Okpebholo salutes Edo Muslims, seeks continued support and prayers

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Governor of Edo State, Monday Okpebholo, has described the annual Eid-al-Adha celebration as a sacred season of faith, sacrifice, obedience and compassion, urging Muslims and all Nigerians to continue to pray for peace, unity and progress in the country.

The governor, who was represented by his deputy, Hon Dennis Idahosa, stated this during the annual Eid-al-Adha celebration with Muslim faithfuls held at Government House in Benin

City, where he reiterated his administration's commitment to fairness, inclusivity and equal opportunities for all citizens irrespective of religion and tribe.

According to him, the present administration remains determined to build a government that reflects the diversity of Edo State, noting that competent and qualified Muslims have continued to play vital roles in his government because of their capacity, integrity and commitment to service.

"As a government, we re-

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Gov Okpebholo reaffirms commitment to child protection at 2026 Children's Day celebration

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has reaffirmed its commitment to protecting the rights of children, promoting quality education, and

strengthening sports development across the State.

This assurance was given by the Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo, represented by the Deputy Governor, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, during the 2026 Children's Day

Celebration and Governor's Cup Finale held on Wednesday at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin City.

Addressing pupils, students, teachers, parents, school administrators, sports officials, and guests at the event, the Governor described children as the pride of Edo State and the future of the nation, noting that the annual celebration provides an opportunity to honour their dreams, talents, and limitless potential.

Speaking on this year's Children's Day theme, "Choose Kindness, Reject Bullying," the Governor said the message was timely and significant, as it emphasizes the need to create safe, supportive, and inclusive environments for children both in schools and communities.

He stated that bullying in all forms — physical, verbal, emotional, or online — has no place in society, adding that the Edo State Government remains fully committed to protecting the

rights and dignity of every child.

According to him, the administration will continue to strengthen policies and programmes that promote child protection, discipline, mutual respect, and positive learning environments across schools in the State.

The Governor urged children to embrace kindness, compassion, teamwork, and respect for one another, stressing that true strength lies not in intimidation but in empathy, good character, and mutual understanding.

He also commended teachers, parents, caregivers, and school

administrators for their vital role in nurturing children academically, morally, and emotionally, while calling for collective efforts towards raising a generation built on peace, unity, discipline, tolerance, and excellence.

Highlighting the significance of the Governor's Cup Finale and other sporting activities held as part of the celebration, including march-past displays and athletics competitions, the Governor noted that sports remain an important tool for youth development, leadership, discipline, teamwork, and social integration.

NUJ Warri Correspondents' Chapel raises alarm over insecurity, cult killings, police extortion

BETTY IDIALU

WARRI

The Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Warri Correspondents' Chapel, has expressed concern over rising insecurity, cult-related violence, police extortion, traffic congestion, and the abuse of social media by political actors, calling for urgent actions to address the challenges.

The concerns formed part of resolutions reached at the monthly Congress of the Chapel held on Wednesday, May 27, 2026, at the NUJ Secretariat in Warri, Delta State.

On insecurity, Congress condemned the worsening security situation across the country, particularly the reported abduction of 39 pupils and seven teachers from three schools, including a nursery school in Oyo State, by suspected terrorists.

The Chapel also expressed sadness over the reported killing of a male teacher attached to one of the affected schools and called on security agencies to intensify

efforts toward rescuing the abducted victims and tackling kidnapping nationwide.

Congress also condemned recent cult-related killings in the Cemetery and Iyara areas of Warri, where two persons were reportedly killed in separate incidents linked to rival cult groups.

Members urged security agencies to identify and prosecute perpetrators of cult-related crimes while calling on Warri South Local Government authorities to strengthen measures aimed at restoring peace and security.

Parents and guardians were advised to discourage their children and wards from involvement in cultism and criminal activities capable of endangering lives and public safety.

The Chapel further commended the Delta State Government for infrastructure projects, particularly the construction of flyovers at PTI Junction, DSC Roundabout and Enerhen Junction to improve vehicular movement within Warri and Effurun.



CULTURAL PROMOTION:

Beauty pageants and female Edo culture ambassadors file out as products of the fast growing Miss Edo International Pageantry, during the 5th edition, which held in Benin City on Sunday, 24th May, 2026.

PHOTO: OKONDOH TALLE EBOSE

Gov Okpebholo salutes Edo...

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main committed to fairness, inclusivity and equal opportunity for every Edo citizen, irrespective of religion, ethnicity or political affiliation. This is why quality and competent Muslims are serving in key positions in our administration."

Governor Okpebholo appreciated the Muslim community in Edo State for their unwavering support and continuous prayers for his administration, noting that such prayers and support have contributed immensely to the peace and steady development being witnessed across the state.

He then called on all Nigerians to use the occasion of Eid-al-Adha to pray for the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, stressing that the country needs collective prayers, unity and cooperation to overcome its present economic and security challenges.

"I urge all Muslims and indeed all Nigerians to use this occasion to pray for our dear nation and for the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Nigeria needs our collective prayers, unity and support as we strive to overcome our challenges and build a more prosperous future for all."

Speaking earlier, the Secretary to the State Government, Umar Musa Ikhilor Esq, commended Governor Okpebholo for his support and goodwill towards the Muslim community in Edo State.

He described the governor as a leader who has consistently demonstrated love, fairness and inclusiveness in governance, adding that Muslims in the state remain grateful for the opportunities and recognition accorded by the present administration.

He noted that Governor Okpebholo has continued to serve as a source of hope and joy to the Muslim faithful through his policies and appointments, assuring him of the community's continued loyalty and support.

In his remarks, the Chief Imam of Edo State, Abdulfatai Enabulele, applauded the governor for what he described as remarkable developmental strides recorded in less than two years in office.

The cleric commended the administration for ongoing infrastructural development and efforts geared towards improving governance in the state, but appealed to the government to revisit and complete some abandoned projects inherited from the previous administration for the benefit of the people.

DG, NAGIS interfaces with Edo counterpart, highlights benefits of networking

MUYIWA AKINSANYA/
BLESSING OSEGHAE

NASARAWA

As part of his familiarisation tour to understudy and get acquainted with technical and professional land governance systems in other existing State GIS outfits in Nigeria, the Managing Director, Edo State Geographic Information Service (EDOGIS), Dr. Innocent Ehi Bello, has interfaced with Dr. Sonny Agasi, Director-General, Nasarawa State Geographic Information Service (NAGIS) in

Karu, Nasarawa State.

Welcoming him, Dr. Agasi recounted his earlier meeting with Dr. Bello (as former National Secretary of the Nigerian Cartographic Association -NCA), when he paid him a similar courtesy visit in 2023 as part of preparations to host the 2023 International Conference of the Nigerian Cartographic Association at FuLafia, Lafia, Nasarawa State.

Hon. Agasi thanked Dr. Bello immensely for his humility to conduct a firsthand assessment of the facilities, software, and working ethics in NAGIS and harped

on the benefits of effective networking and collaboration of State GIS outfits across the country.

He emphasised the need to rally round one another as State GIS managers with a view to tackling land disputes, insecurity and ethnic violence arising from land racketeering and trespasses.

The DG, NAGIS informed Dr. Bello that his success was made possible because the Executive Governor, Engr. A.A. Sule, gave him all the support to continue to preside over land matters since he assumed duty over 7 years ago.

He noted that he currently re-

ports directly to the Governor on matters of land administration in the State, and this helps the Governor to be properly briefed with firsthand information.

He said that since NAGIS doesn't report to any Ministry, the job has become more professional to discharge without bureaucratic rigidities.

He advocated for more State GIS outfits so as to easily track landed properties, their locations, uses, and the resources therein and emphasized the need to rally round one another as state GIS managers with a view to tackling land disputes, insecurity, and ethnic violence arising from land racketeering and trespasses.

Ben Murray-Bruce steps down for his brother, Roy, as new Silverbird boss

EUBALDUS ENAHORO

LAGOS

A new era begins in Nigeria and Africa foremost global media, tourism and entertainment powerhouse, Silverbird Group, as Mr. Roy Murray-Bruce officially assumes office as Chairman, succeeding Senator Ben Murray-Bruce.

With more than 40 years of remarkable leadership experience across media, entertainment, governance, hospitality, real estate, retail, and strategic business

development in Africa and the United Kingdom, Roy Murray-Bruce steps into the role with a legacy of innovation, excellence, and visionary leadership.

As former President of Silverbird Group, he was instrumental in driving the company's expansion across television, radio, cinemas, retail, and property development, while also helping pioneer the modern Cineplex culture in Nigeria and West Africa.

Silverbird Group, in a public statement, assured of a brighter future with their new Chair-

man. "We look forward to an exciting new chapter as Silverbird Group continues to push boundaries, inspire innovation, and strengthen its position as a leading force in Africa's media and entertainment industry"

However, in his personal press release, the outgoing Chairman, Senator Murray-Bruce, confirmed that the new Chairman is very experienced to lead the organization to greater heights. "After decades of leading and building the Silverbird Group across media, entertainment, hospitality, real estate, and stra-

tegic business development in Africa and the United Kingdom, I am pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Roy Murray-Bruce as the new Chairman of Silverbird Group.

"Roy brings with him over four decades of leadership experience, vision, and governance expertise. As former President of Silverbird Group, he played a significant role in the expansion of our organisation across television, radio, cinemas, retail, and property development, while helping pioneer Cineplex culture in Nigeria and West Africa."

Omo-Agege dumps APC over Delta political developments

BETTY IDIALU

WARRI

Former Deputy President of the Senate and Obarisi of Urhoboland, Ovie Omo-Agege, has resigned from the All Progressives Congress (APC), citing recent developments within the party in Delta State.

Omo-Agege announced his resignation in a letter dated May 22, 2026, addressed to the

Chairman of Orogun Ward 2 in Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State, formally ending his membership of the ruling party.

His resignation was conveyed in a statement signed by his Media Adviser, Sunday Areh.

The former lawmaker explained that his decision followed extensive consultations with his political associates and supporters, noting that his political aspirations and the interests

of his constituents would be better pursued outside the APC.

According to him, recent developments within the party in Delta State made it necessary for him to chart a different political course.

"After reviewing recent developments within the APC in Delta State and consulting with my associates and supporters, it is clear that my political objectives and those of my constituents are better served out-

side the party," he stated.

Omo-Agege further declared that he could no longer remain in a political environment where he was unable to effectively advance the interests of his people.

"I will not remain a sitting duck in a party where I cannot advance the interests of Delta Central, Delta State and Nigeria," he said.

The former Deputy Senate President also expressed gratitude to the APC for the oppor-

tunity to serve at the national level during the 9th Senate.

"I thank the APC for the opportunity to serve as Deputy President of the 9th Senate.

I wish the party well and have requested that my name be removed from all membership records, registers and commu-

nication lists," he added.

Omo-Agege maintained that his political focus remains on attracting development and ensuring effective representation for Delta Central and Delta State, stressing that he would continue to pursue those objectives outside the APC.

**BLOWING UP A GOAT:**

A man blows up a goat killed in preparation for barbecue in Benin City.

PHOTO BY FRANCIS ODUPUTE

Navy upgrades training and infrastructure to tackle security threats —CNS

ONNE (RIVERS)

The Nigerian Navy says it is expanding training and infrastructure to address emerging security threats and strengthen operational efficiency across formations and units nationwide.

The Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Adm. Idi Abbas, spoke during the inauguration of projects at the Nigerian Navy Basic Training School (NNBTS) in Onne, Rivers as part of activities marking the Nigerian Navy's 70th anniversary.

Abbas, represented by the Flag Officer Commanding, Naval Training Command (NAVTRAC), Rear Adm. Ebiobowei Zipele, said the projects reflected significant progress made by the navy since its establishment in 1956 from the British Royal Navy.

"Training and infrastructure have improved significantly to meet contemporary security challenges and fulfil the navy's constitutional responsibilities."

According to him, the anniversary provides the navy

an opportunity to reflect on its achievements and contributions over the past seven decades.

Projects inaugurated included a remodelled female trainees' hostel accommodating more than 500 occupants and an expanded golf course upgraded from one to nine holes.

Others were the NNBTS fuel dump, Chief Boatswain's Mate House, renovated pharmacy department and a new theatre block at the Naval Medical Centre, Onne.

Abbas described the new theatre as a major milestone for the navy's medical services.

"Previously, injured personnel requiring surgeries were referred outside the facility.

"With this theatre, surgeries can now be conducted within the base."

He added that a 30KVA inverter had also been installed to guarantee uninterrupted electricity supply at the training school.

The naval chief assured officers, ratings and trainees that the navy leadership remained committed to their welfare and wellbeing.

Abuja-Kaduna gridlock cleared as FRSC intensifies Eid

ABUJA

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) has successfully cleared the traffic obstruction along the Abuja-Kaduna expressway, restoring free vehicular movement at the Azara bridge, Jere axis.

This is contained in a statement in Abuja on Wednesday by the FRSC Corp Public Education Officer, Osondu Ohaeri, who described the incident as a serious threat to mobility on one of Nigeria's busiest transport corridors.

The emergency intervention which was led by the FRSC

Corp Marshal, Shehu Mohammad was done in collaboration with the FRSC Kaduna and FCT sector commands alongside the Nigerian Army and construction officials.

Ohaeri clarified that the gridlock, which stretched for several kilometres, was caused by ongoing road constructions compounded by the breakdown of an articulated vehicle conveying a crane at a narrow diversion point.

"In a remarkable display of proactive leadership, operational expertise, and commitment to public safety, Corps Marshal Shehu Mohammed

personally led the emergency intervention and avoided complete traffic paralysis.

"Determined to prevent further chaos and ensure the safety of road users, the Corps Marshal swiftly moved to the scene in person, taking direct charge of operations and coordinating a multi-agency emergency response.

"Under his leadership, FCT and Kaduna FRSC personnel worked in close synergy with the Nigerian Army and construction officials to execute a strategic evacuation of the obstructing vehicle and clear the corridor within record time," said Ohaeri.

Ohaeri highlighted that the successful restoration of traffic flow once again highlights the Corps Marshal's exceptional leadership style, hands-on operational approach, and relentless dedication to ensuring safer highways across the country.

He said the intervention not only eliminated the obstruction but also averted potential secondary crashes, security concerns, and economic losses associated with prolonged traffic congestion on the strategic expressway.

He noted that motorists and commuters who witnessed the operation commended the FRSC leadership for the rapid response.

Troops secure Eid, tighten grip on terrorists in North East

ABUJA

Troops of Operation HADIN KAI (OPHK), have ensured the peaceful conduct of Eid-el-kabir prayers across parts of the North East, while sustaining offensive operations against terrorist and criminal elements.

This is contained in a statement by the Media Information Officer of OPHK, Lt.-Col. Sani Uba, on Wednesday.

Uba said the troops, under Operation DESERT SANITY V/Siege Operations, recorded significant gains in ongoing ef-

forts to stabilise the region.

He said troops deployed at Ngoshe community provided security and joined residents and vigilantes for Eid prayers at the central mosque, describing it as a reflection of improved security and growing public confidence.

The area, he noted, had previously been threatened by insurgents.

"Similarly, troops of the 26 Task Force Brigade secured designated prayer grounds in Gwoza town, ensuring a safe environment for worshippers during the celebrations," he said.

Uba said troops acting on credible intelligence foiled a robbery in Gar Gwigwi village, Biu Local Government Area, arresting three suspects.

According to him, items recovered include mobile phones, wristwatches, charms, cash, a dagger and a dane gun, which has been returned to its rightful owner.

He added that troops, in collaboration with the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), also apprehended a suspected terrorist collaborator, Alhaji Gambo, 33, during routine security checks in Monguno.

According to him, the suspects are in custody, while follow-up operations are ongoing to track down other members of criminal and terrorist networks.

Uba said the general security situation in the theatre remained calm but unpredictable, noting that troops have continued to demonstrate high morale, resilience and operational effectiveness.

He reiterated the resolve of Operation HADIN KAI to sustain the momentum and deny terrorists freedom of action while working towards lasting peace in the North East.

Foundation distributes 10,000 sanitary pads to boost menstrual health in Anambra

AWKA

The Zobam Foundation, says it has distributed over 10,000 sanitary pads to adolescent girls in Anambra since the inception of its "Give A Girl A Pad" project in 2019.

Mrs Chizoba Okelieukwu, the Founder and Director of Zobam Foundation, disclosed this during the 2026 edition of the annual Menstrual Hygiene Day and Symposium in Awka on Wednesday.

The symposium which had students from 10 schools in attendance, featured drama and quiz competition on menstrual health related issues as well as distribution of sanitary pads.

Okelieukwu said the foundation, through the support of its partners, reached out to about 40 secondary schools across the 21 local government areas of the state.

She said that the Menstrual Hygiene Day and Symposium was meant to demystify menstruation among young girls.

She said it was also to empower them with access to sanitary pads as well as confidence to manage the 'stigma' associ-

ated with monthly periods.

"We started this programme in 2019 and we have consistently organised this menstrual hygiene day and symposium every year.

"During the period, we have reached out to 40 schools in Anambra and distributed not less than 10,000 sanitary pads to young girls.

"We have a menstrual hygiene club through which we want to take our message to the rural and remote areas of the state.

"So, we are calling on the state government to support this initiative," Okelieukwu said.

Speaking, Prof. Chinyere Okunna, a doyenne of Mass Communication, said the development and productivity of the girl-child was being hindered because of menstrual health challenges.

Okunna said many women did not have access to sanitary pads due to poverty and had to resort to pieces of clothes which exposed them to diseases and sicknesses.

"In a very bad performing economy, many women cannot afford the hygiene items and the danger is that disease can be contracted.

NEWS

Looming food crisis: Uwaleke seeks urgent agricultural reforms

LAGOS

Prof. Uche Uwaleke, the President of the Capital Market Academics of Nigeria, has called for urgent agricultural reforms and stronger support for farmers to improve food security in the country.

Uwaleke made the call in an interview with newsmen on Wednesday while reacting to the United Nations projection that millions of Nigerians could face acute hunger in the coming months.

The United Nations Humanitarian Country Team had warned that about 35 million Nigerians could face acute food insecurity

between June and August.

According to the organisation, nearly one in seven Nigerians may experience severe food shortages during the 2026 lean season.

Uwaleke said the projection underscored the urgent need for Nigeria to strengthen its food production systems and address factors driving food insecurity.

"The warning should be taken seriously because it reflects the difficult realities many Nigerians are already experiencing, especially vulnerable households.

"A projection of about 35 million people facing acute hunger is disturbing for a country with enormous agricultural potential," he said.

He attributed worsening food insecurity to inflation, insecurity in farming communities, climate-related challenges, naira depreciation and high transportation costs.

According to him, the combined effects of fuel subsidy removal and declining purchasing power have further reduced access to food for many Nigerians.

Uwaleke said the situation required immediate and coordinated interventions to prevent a deeper humanitarian crisis.

"The lean season is usually difficult, but the scale being projected by the United Nations

suggests the need for urgent action from both government and development partners," he said.

He acknowledged recent government measures aimed at improving food supply, including food imports and tariff reductions on selected commodities such as rice and palm oil.

He, however, said the interventions might not yield the desired results without stronger investments in local agricultural production and improved security for farmers.

"I believe the government has made efforts to address the situation, particularly through

policies aimed at boosting food availability.

"However, insecurity continues to disrupt farming activities in major food-producing areas, while inflation and weak purchasing power remain major concerns for ordinary Nigerians," he said.

Uwaleke urged the Federal Government to increase support for farmers through subsidies on fertilisers, improved seedlings and other agricultural inputs ahead of the peak farming season.

He also stressed the need to improve security in farming communities to enable displaced farmers to return safely

to their farms.

According to him, targeted food distribution programmes should be expanded to support vulnerable households across the country.

Uwaleke further called for long-term investments in irrigation, mechanisation, storage facilities, rural infrastructure and agricultural research to strengthen food security.

He added that food security should be treated as both an economic and national security priority requiring sustained policy implementation and adequate funding.

Rivers at 59: Fubara reiterates commitment to peace, inclusive dev't

PORT HARCOURT

Governor Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers, has reiterated his administration's commitment to peace, unity, security and inclusive development.

Fubara made the expression in a goodwill message on Wednesday in Port Harcourt to commemorate the 59th anniversary of the state's creation.

It would be recalled that Rivers was created on May 27, 1967 by the administration of Gen. Yakubu Gowon (Rtd).

The governor expressed his administration's resolve to implement policies and programmes that would promote peace, security, and expand development across the state.

He said that despite the challenges faced over the years, Rivers people had continued to demonstrate resilience, strength,

and an enduring spirit of unity.

The governor said that the bond of brotherhood among the ethnic nationalities in the state had remained a great source of strength and foundation for peace, stability and progress.

"We have continued to live together peacefully in the interest of the state," he said.

Fubara further stated that Rivers had remained a major driver of Nigeria's economy for decades, adding, "this is not only because of oil and gas resources, but the contributions of our people across different sectors"

He stated that Rivers people were visible in the academia, jurisprudence, business, entertainment, public service, sports among others.

Fubara stated that governance should remain people-centred and impactful, with equal attention to every local government area.

NULGE declares support for Gov Mbah's re-election bid

ENUGU

The Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees, NULGE, Enugu State chapter, has declared its support for Governor Peter Mbah's re-election bid ahead of the 2027 governorship poll.

The endorsement was announced in Enugu on Wednesday during a programme organised at the union's state Secretariat.

Addressing its members, the State President of NULGE, Mr Udoagha Ani, said the union was backing the governor in recognition of what he described as unprecedented welfare reforms for local government workers.

He noted that although past administrations offered varying levels of support, the Mbah administration had introduced the most far-reaching benefits.

Ani listed prompt payment of salaries, approval of the N80,000 minimum wage and the full integration of local government workers into the state's scheme of service as landmark achievements.

The immediate past NULGE

president, Mr Kenneth Ugwueze, also commended Gov. Mbah, saying long-standing welfare demands of workers were implemented with sincerity and urgency under the current administration.

Similarly, the Secretary of the State Local Government Service Commission, Mr Osondu Nnaji, highlighted the governor's decision to appoint a statutory local government staff as secretary of the commission for the first time, describing it as a historic recognition.

On behalf of the union's local government branches, the NULGE Chairman of Udi Local Government Area, Mr Emeka Ngwu, assured of stronger mobilisation at the grassroots to sustain the gains recorded by workers.

Also aligning with the trend, NULGE Vice-president (South East), Mr Lambert Onuigbo acknowledged that the support platform had yielded a lot of favour for the local government system in the state and commended the state leadership for sustaining it.



A SEMINAR:

A cross-section of panelists during a seminar titled "Invest in Girls, Transform the Future," organized by the Center for Leadership and Gender Studies, Wellspring University, Benin City, on Tuesday, 26th May, 2026.

PHOTO BY FRANCIS ODUPUTE

Eno inaugurates projects in Oron to mark 3rd anniversary

ORON (AKWA IBOM)

Governor Umo Eno of Akwa Ibom has inaugurated some people-oriented projects in Oron Local Government Area as part of activities to mark his administration's third year anniversary.

The projects inaugurated included a Model Primary Health Centre, Youth Development Centre, and a 4.2 km

Effiong Esang and Ukpong Streets.

The governor also inaugurated an 800-metre drainage project, and an administrative building at the council secretariat.

Speaking at inauguration, Eno urged Oron people to take advantage of the health centre to access quality and affordable healthcare services.

The governor stated youth development centres would be

replicated across the 31 local government areas in the state.

He urged youths to take advantage of the facilities in their areas for personal development and the overall progress of the state.

Eno said that when completed across the state, no fewer than 31,000 youths would be trained annually in ICT, fashion design, catering among others.

The governor said that his administration deliberately

created a Ministry of Youth Development in order to give youth development a priority attention.

He further stated that state government projects at the grassroots were aimed at decentralising development and reducing rural-urban migration.

Eno assured Oron people of continued commitment to transformative initiatives if elected for a second term as governor.

No child must be left behind, Oborevori says on Children's Day celebration

ASABA

Governor. Sheriff Oborevori of Delta has called on Nigerians to build a caring society where every child feels included and supported, saying none of them must be left behind.

Oborevori made the call on Wednesday in Asaba during the 2026 National Children's Day celebration.

He was represented by his deputy, Mr Monday Onyeme.

The governor said the 2026 theme, "Future Now: Promoting Inclusion for Every Nigerian Child," underscores the need to ensure that every child matters and has equal access to

opportunities, particularly in education.

He stressed that children deserve access to education, healthcare and protection, regardless of gender, background or physical condition.

"Children's Day is a time to celebrate our children, who remain the pride and future of our state and nation," he said.

Oborevori added that no child should feel abandoned, rejected or denied opportunities to succeed in life.

"As parents, teachers and leaders, we must create a supportive society where every child can grow and thrive," he said.

He urged residents to en-

courage children living with disabilities and to recognise their talents and abilities.

The governor commended the You Matter Charity Foundation, a pet project of his wife, Tobore Oborevori, for supporting children with autism and special needs across the state.

He also highlighted the achievement of 15-year-old Kanyeyachukwu Tagbo-Okeke, who earned a Guinness World Record through autism awareness art.

"His achievement proves that disability is not inability when children receive love, support and opportunity," he said.

Oborevori advised children to remain focused on their edu-

cation, respect their parents and teachers, and work diligently towards their aspirations.

He assured residents that his administration would continue to invest in programmes that promote child welfare.

In her remarks, the Commissioner for Women Affairs, Community and Social Development, Mrs Pat Ajudua, praised the state government for implementing policies that promote the wellbeing and protection of children.

Ajudua said the administration had continued to introduce initiatives aimed at improving the lives of children and expanding opportunities for their growth and development.

2027 Presidency: At last, Osifo surrenders political structures to Tinubu

LAGOS

The lone contender with President Bola Tinubu for the 2027 presidential ticket of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), Mr. Stanley Osifo, has surrendered his campaign structure to the President after the latter's landslide

slide victory in the party primaries.

In a May 25, 2026, letter addressed to Tinubu on his victory in presidential primary election of the APC, Osifo described Tinubu's emergence as the party's flag bearer as a reward for decades of political stewardship, resilience and leadership.

The 50-year-old former presidential aspirant also disclosed that all his political structures had been merged with Tinubu's campaign organization.

He pledged total support for the President's second term ambition and campaign activities nationwide as he called

for unity, collective purpose and consolidation of strength ahead of the general elections.

The Benin-born businessman cum politician noted that APC had used the primary to reassure Nigerians about its commitment to fairness and transparency.

"We have dispelled undemocratic perception within and outside the party. We restored confidence in our party and in Nigerians who are worried

about tendencies which never had foundations in our great party.

"The presidential primary is now behind us, and the greater task of securing the future of Nigeria lies ahead," he wrote.

According to him, Tinubu's victory reflected the confidence the party members re-

posed in his leadership capacity and political experience.

"It's with a deep sense of patriotism, respect and shared vision for the future of our great nation that I congratulate you on your victory at the All Progressives Congress (APC) Presidential Primary Election," the letter further stated.



TROPHY PRESENTATION:

The Deputy governor of Edo State Hon. Dannis Idahosa presenting the football trophy to captain of the Benin Technical College who emerged champion of the 2026 Governor's Cup held at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium.

PHOTO: OKONDOH TALLE EBOSE

NNPP urges prayers over Nigeria's insecurity, safe return of abducted school children

LAGOS

The New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) has called for prayers for the safety of the lives of children and other Nigerians abducted all over the country as Muslims mark the 2026 Eid-el-Kabir.

Recall that heavily-armed gunmen on May 15, attacked three schools -Community Grammar School, Baptist Nursery and Primary School, and L.A. Primary School- in the Ahoro-Esinele

community of Orire Local Government Area, Oyo State, abducting 39 children and seven teachers.

In a statement signed by its Secretary General Mr Ogini Olaposi on Wednesday in Lagos, the NNPP also urged low key celebrations in solidarity with families of the missing children and all kidnapped victims nationwide.

The party noted that Nigeria is fighting a war against insecurity and needed the prayers and support of all citizens.

"Today is Children's day

across the globe. We must reflect on how parents of all children in the den of kidnapers feel.

"These parents are our neighbours and relations. We must show solidarity and support the government in fighting this evil.

"This is no longer time for blame game. It can happen to anyone. Families have lost dear ones to kidnapping, robbery, rituals, organ harvesting and entire villages almost wiped out by bandits and unidentified gunmen.

"The mistake we make is underrating the intentions of the criminals, who do not know tribe or religion. Therefore, we

must stop politicising criminality and giving it religious and tribal colorations."

The party particularly urged traditional rulers to rise up to assist in fighting crime by strictly monitoring their domains, including their forests to ensure that unknown persons are fished out.

"As a country, we can do this if we unite on the purpose of brotherhood and love. Nobody is safe, people are attacked and abducted near airports, in churches and even in their homes. We have only one alternative, which is to face the challenges and respond appropriately."

Motorists allege fuel pump adjustment, seek regulators' intervention

ABUJA

Many motorists in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), have accused some fuel stations in the territory of adjusting their fuel pumps to cheat unsuspecting buyers.

According to them, the development has made them not to have value for their money.

The motorists said it was an act of wickedness for the fuel stations to adjust their fuel pumps just to make extra cash, adding that Nigerians are really going through a difficult time.

The development has forced many motorists to park their cars as they could no longer

afford to fuel them.

The motorists at Dei-Dei, Central Area, Dutse, Nyayan, Mararaba and Kubwa spoke with newsmen in Abuja on Wednesday.

Mrs Ladi Odika said she observed that many pump attendants, who dispensed petroleum products increasingly cheated consumers through pump adjustment.

She said some attendants could do all kinds of things, including blocking motorists from seeing their metres by introducing items to them to buy.

"Some attendants will make compliments on motorists in order to cause confusion or distract them," she said.

She called on the regulatory authorities to intervene on the matter, following the hike in fuel prices and economic hardship.

"When I buy fuel at some filling stations, I notice my fuel gauge will not rise, but when I buy at filling stations like MRS or NNPC, my gauge will rise.

"The hike of fuel is causing a lot of hardship and when you buy fuel, you can't get the value for your money," she said.

A motorist, Mr Abdul Danladi said he often patronised a filling station along Dutse but he suspected that the attendants had adjusted the pumps to under dispense the product directly.

Price of cooking gas skyrockets in Enugu

ENUGU

The cost of cooking gas, also known as Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), has drastically increased in Enugu State.

Investigation shows that in many areas of the state capital, the increase varies according to the point of buying the product.

In the Trans-Ekulu area of the state, several retail outlets sell a kilogram of gas at between N1,400 and N1,450 as against the former price of N1,100 and N1,200 sold in April.

However, a mini gas depot in the same area sells the product at a rate of N1,350 per kilo.

On why the change in the price of the product, an official of the depot told NAN on the condition of anonymity, that the price of gas was not stable.

"This price schedule can change any time. You may come here tomorrow and discover that the price has gone up or come down; it all depends on the suppliers," the official said.

Another gas depot at New Haven area, Best Top Gas Depot sells at N1,400 a kilogramme while at Independence Layout, Achara

Layout and Uwani it is sold at between N1,450 and N1,500.

NAN also visited another retail outlet at Nowas area still within the metropolis where a kilogram of gas goes for N1,500 while at Abakpa, a kilogramme also sells at N1,550.

A gas attendant, Mr Livinus Uguru, explained that the price was not constant as it could change anytime.

"Even today, this price can change, again it depends on where you buy your product.

"If you buy from a depot that is far from your shop, you have to add transportation and every other cost, probably that is the reason for difference in prices," he said.

Some buyers said that they would resort to firewood as the cost of kerosene was also high.

A resident, Mrs Chinelo Onyema said that she used firewood to cook foods like beans, okpa, meat and moimoi and used gas for rice and breakfast.

According to her, I spend N18,000 to fill my 12kg cylinder as against N12,500 I spent early in the year.

Another resident, Mrs Sylvia Chukwu, said she no longer refilled her gas cylinder but used the money to get a charcoal stove.

Ram sellers urge safety, moderate spending as prices affect patronage

SULEJA

Ram sellers and poultry traders in Suleja, Niger have urged residents celebrating Eid-el-Kabir to prioritise safety, avoid overcrowded areas, and spend within their means as rising ram prices continue to affect patronage.

The Secretary of the Rams Sellers Association, Kwamba Zone, Suleja, Muhammad Ibrahim, advised residents to focus on peaceful family celebrations and avoid unnecessary movement to crowded recreational centres during the festive period.

Speaking in an interview with newsmen on Wednesday, Ibrahim said the essence of the celebration was best expressed within the family setting.

"My advice to everybody is that they should stay at home and celebrate with their families because celebrating Salah with your family is very good," he said.

He urged residents to remain security conscious and avoid unsafe environments during the festivities.

"People should avoid going anywhere that may put their lives at

risk. It is not good," he added.

Similarly, Alhaji Harun Musa, a member of the association and a long-time trader, said high cost of rams had reduced patronage compared to previous years, as many families opted to rear their own animals.

He said ram prices currently ranged from about N60,000 for smaller sizes to as high as N1.5 million depending on size and quality.

Musa, however, said there had been slight improvement in sales as the celebration progressed, noting that many buyers still fulfilled the religious obligation in spite of economic challenges.

He added that he had earlier stocked about 30 rams but had only a few left as of Wednesday, expressing optimism of selling out before the end of the festivities.

A chicken seller, Mr Solomon Ogunbiyi, also said poultry sales were lower than expected as many residents preferred rams in spite of the high cost.

He attributed the moderate patronage to economic pressures, which forced some households to adjust their spending.

NEWS

External shocks, domestic factors pushing Nigeria's inflation higher — Experts

ABUJA

Some experts have linked Nigeria's recent rise in inflation to external shocks and domestic factors, including the removal of fuel subsidy and insecurity.

The experts made this known in an interview with newsmen in Abuja on Wednesday, while reacting to the latest inflation figures for April.

According to them, Nigeria's recent uptick in inflation is a

combination of external shocks, particularly geo-political tensions in the Middle East, and domestic structural challenges, including the removal of fuel subsidy and persistent insecurity.

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported that Nigeria's headline inflation rose to 15.69 per cent in April 2026, up by 0.31 per cent from the 15.38 per cent recorded in March.

NAN reports that Nigeria's inflation rate reversed its downward trend after 12 consecutive months and started rising again in March 2026, continuing into April.

An economist, Chidi Nwanze, said emerging global risks, especially the Middle East conflict, were increasingly shaping Nigeria's inflation outlook in 2026.

He said the crisis had heightened uncertainty in global energy markets, disrupted supply chains and pushed up transportation and import costs, contributing to inflationary pressures recorded in April.

"Although, domestic structural issues remain the primary drivers of inflation, external shocks such as the Middle East conflict are increasingly influencing prices through higher energy costs, exchange rate pressures and rising global commodity prices."

Nwanze also identified the removal of fuel subsidy as one of the most significant structural drivers of inflation in recent years.

"Since the removal of fuel subsidy, Nigeria has experienced a broad-based inflationary shock.

"Petrol prices surged almost immediately, triggering higher transportation costs, increased electricity tariffs and rising production expenses for businesses.

"The ripple effects quickly spread across nearly every sector of the economy," he said.

Also, Mr Olaolu Balogun, an economist, said the latest inflationary pressure was largely driven by rising energy costs linked to the Middle East crisis.

Balogun noted that higher fuel prices had increased transportation and import costs across the economy, adding that businesses were passing the costs

on to consumers.

He, however, said that Nigeria's inflation could ease if the ongoing Middle East crisis subsides, as this would likely lower global oil prices.

Balogun said that a decline in crude oil prices would reduce transportation and energy costs, ease pressure on imported goods and help stabilise domestic price levels.

An agro-economist, Sunday Peter, said food inflation continued to dominate Nigeria's inflation basket due to its large weight in household consumption.

UCH dispels rumoured power outage at facility

IBADAN

The University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan, has debunked the story that it is experiencing a severe power outage.

The hospital's Public Relations Officer (PRO), Mrs Funmi Adetuyibi, discredited the story in an interview with newsmen in Ibadan on Wednesday.

It would be recalled that a viral video had exposed a staff member allegedly diverting diesel meant for the hospital's critical units while it battles a power outage.

The hospital's Chief Security Officer was seen in the video uncovering the sabotage on Monday.

Adetuyibi confirmed the diesel theft incident but said

that it was untrue that the hospital was experiencing a power crisis, as alleged in the video.

"The story that there is a power outage currently in UCH is not true at all.

"The guy in the video actually stole diesel, and that is all.

"There is no power outage in the hospital; everything is fine and calm.

"We have IBDEC now, and there is light in the hospital.

"We have other places where the generator runs in case the light goes off.

"Also, there are no issues with the services in the hospital," she said.

The hospital's spokesperson, thereafter, pleaded with the public to desist from spreading rumours.

Tax reforms: ACCI urges 2-year grace period on tax penalties

ABUJA

The Abuja Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) has urged government to suspend penalties on late tax filings until business owners adjust and fully understand new tax laws and systems.

Dr Aliyu Hong, Chairman, National Policy Advocacy Centre (NPAC), ACCI, disclosed this in an interview with newsmen on Wednesday in Abuja.

Hong advocated a one or two-year grace period on penalties linked to the new tax laws to allow business owners adjust to compliance procedures.

According to him, business owners require time to adapt to Nigeria's new tax laws and online filing systems.

"Online tax submission platforms should be properly tested and widely understood before enforcement of penalties for non-compliance.

"So government should allow a one or two-year moratorium on penalties as taxpayers are still learning the new tax system.

"Government should also prioritise building reliable online tax infrastructure before

enforcing strict compliance measures.

"Therefore, penalties should only begin after the infrastructure becomes stable, tested and widely understood by taxpayers," he said.

Hong, also Second Deputy President of the chamber, said the ACCI had a tax roundtable recently, which aimed to provide clearer understanding of the new tax framework for business owners.

According to him, the roundtable aims to educate members on the requirements, implementation process and obligations under the new laws.

"It is also meant to simplify the new tax laws for business owners and improve understanding among stakeholders," he said.

Hong said that many Nigerians still lacked adequate understanding of the new tax laws and their practical implications.

He noted that implementation structures for the laws were yet to be fully developed and properly coordinated.

He urged government to adopt a gradual implementation process to enable business owners adjust effectively to the reforms.



DAY OF THE BOY CHILD:

Inspector-General of Police, Olatunji Disu, takes a selfie photo with boys/students of the Police Officers' Wives Association (POWA) School, during a special event held at the Force Headquarters in Abuja, to mark the International Day of the Boy Child, focused on the themes: "Flourish and Thrive: Investing in Boys for Stronger Families and Communities" and "Breaking the Silence: Boys and Mental Health."

NEM Insurance pays N41.46bn claims in 2025

LAGOS

NEM Insurance Plc. has reported a total of N41.46 billion in gross claims paid across its various lines of operation for the financial year ended December 31, 2025.

This is according to the Group's audited annual report for the year ended Dec. 31, 2025, submitted to the Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX) and obtained by our correspondent in Lagos on Wednesday.

The figures showed that the parent company paid N41.46bn in 2025 from N24.24bn in 2024.

Details from the audited fi-

nancial statements showed that the highest claims payout was recorded in the motor insurance segment, which accounted for N13.00 billion of the total claims paid during the period.

Fire insurance followed with claims amounting to N9.04 billion, while the oil and gas segment recorded N7.01 billion in claims payments.

General accident insurance also posted a significant payout of N6.73 billion.

In the marine segment, NEM Insurance paid N3.77 billion in claims, while engineering insurance claims stood at N1.64 billion.

Other segments recorded

relatively lower claims. Agriculture insurance accounted for N152.21 million in claims, while bond insurance recorded N110.03 million.

NEM Insurance Plc said it is strategically positioned to deliver sustainable value to shareholders and policyholders, while contributing to the development of the insurance sector.

It said this is backed by a strong capital base, a growing customer network and rising investment income.

According to the company, its latest performance further underscored its standing among insurers with strong claims-paying capacity, a key

indicator of financial stability and operational reliability in the industry.

GCR Ratings had upgraded NEM Insurance Plc's national scale financial strength rating to AA+(NG) from AA(NG), with the outlook maintained as stable.

According to the rating agency, the upgrade reflects sustained strengthening in the company's competitive position within the non-life insurance segment, supported by a sound financial profile characterised by robust risk-adjusted capitalisation, adequate liquidity, and strong earnings capacity.

Africa can save \$299bn through efficient public spending — Report

The African Development Bank (AfDB) said this in its 2026 African Economic Outlook released during the banks 2026 annual Meetings in Brazzaville.

The report said improving spending efficiency would help African countries ease financing constraints and support economic growth.

It said that more than 40 per cent of public investment across the continent was cur-

rently lost to inefficiencies. According to the report, stronger public financial management systems are necessary to ensure resources are deployed productively.

The report urged governments to improve project selection, procurement processes, fiscal planning and oversight mechanisms.

It also called for increased transparency, accountability and public participation in

budget implementation. According to the report, digitising fiscal systems and tightening procurement controls will reduce leakages of public resources.

The report described efficiency reforms as both a governance priority and an important financing strategy for Africa.

It added that improving public spending outcomes would enable countries to achieve higher growth within existing resource levels.

The report further called for gradual fiscal reforms to strengthen revenue generation and public confidence in taxation systems.

It recommended expanding tax bases, improving tax administration and strengthening customs and audit systems.

The report also urged African countries to deepen capital markets and strengthen public-private partnership frameworks to attract long-term investments.

IPMAN protests alleged invasion, harassment of marketers by gov't agents in Anambra

AWKA

The Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria (IPMAN) has called on Governor Chukwuma Soludo of Anambra to caution officials of the Ministry of Petroleum Resources against alleged harassment and intimidation of its members in the state.

IPMAN made the appeal in a protest letter to Soludo entitled "An Appeal To Stop Forthwith, Undue Harassment and Intimidation of our Members".

The letter, signed by Mr Chinedu Anyaso and Mr Emeka Iloafor, Chairman and Secretary respectively of IPMAN, Enugu Depot Community in charge of Anambra, Ebonyi and Enugu States, was made available to jour-

nalists in Awka on Wednesday.

IPMAN said it was protesting alleged invasion of outlets by agents of the ministry, who were acting on a memo which engaged Divine Rapture Company as consultants to monitor and report 'illegal activities' within the oil and gas value chain.

The letter, signed by the Permanent Secretary and dated March 15 empowered Divine

Rapture Company to monitor illegal bunkering, identify production and distribution of substandard petroleum products and gather intelligence on unlawful mining.

But the marketers called on Soludo to prevail on the ministry and its agents to withdraw their activities and stay off members' outlets to forestall breakdown of law and order.

It said the regulation of the midstream and downstream operations rested with the Nigeria Midstream Petroleum

Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) under the Petroleum Industry Act 2021.

It said the action of the ministry and its agent contravened section 48 (1) of the PIA 2021 which conferred powers of regulation and guideline, enforcement order or directive on NMDPRA.

IPMAN said their members were law abiding citizens and would not condone people who are unknown to law to invade, harass or seal outlets as they had done to some marketers in the State.

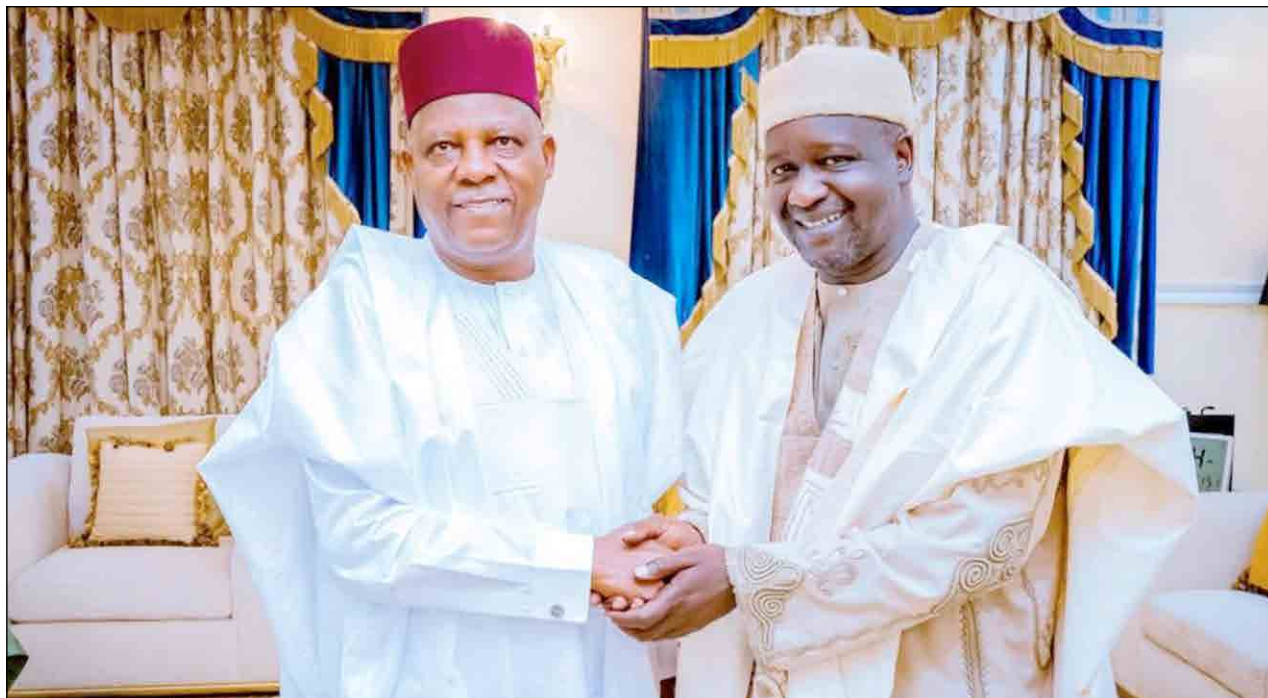
"These people have started operations, harassing and in-

timidating our members with security personnel to legalise their operation.

"Their activities are unacceptable to our association as law abiding citizens.

"We are therefore not ready to cooperate with them as they are not the statutory agency created for the petroleum downstream industry as provided in the Petroleum Industry Act 2021.

"We shall continue to support your government and would not want to take further action that will result in unnecessary hardship to the people of Anambra, it said.



END-EL-KABIR PRAYERS:

Vice President Kashim Shettima (left), with Borno State Deputy Governor, Hon. Umar Usman Kadafur, shortly after observing the End-el-Kabir prayers, at the Ramat Square Did ground in Maiduguri, Borno State on Wednesday.

Clerics, Muslim leaders preach peace, unity at Eid-el-Kabir

UMUAHIA

The Muslim faithful in Umuahia, on Wednesday, joined their counterparts across the world to celebrate this year's Eid-el-Kabir with prayers, sacrifice and acts of charity.

Worshippers gathered at the various prayer grounds early in the day to observe the special Eid prayers and reflected on the values of obedience, sacrifice and love for humanity, symbolised by the festival.

During the prayers, some Islamic clerics and some northern community leader in Abia

appealed to Nigerians to embrace peace, tolerance, unity and good values for national growth and development.

In an interview, the Imam of Umuahia Central Mosque, Alhaji Aminu Lawal, called for peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians in the country.

Lawal prayed for Governor Alex Otti and the Sarki Hausawa of the state, asking God to grant them wisdom, knowledge and strength to continue to lead the people well.

He also prayed for God's guidance ahead of the 2027 General Elections and urged

Nigerians to choose leaders that will govern the country well.

He further prayed for divine intervention in the nation's economic challenges and asked God to help the government come up with better solutions to the country's difficulties.

Another Islamic cleric, Alhaji Misbaudeen Raji, said that prayer alone could not solve the nation's multiple problems without the corresponding positive attitudes and actions from citizens.

Raji urged other Muslim faithful to be considerate in their relationship with others and extend love and charity to everyone without discrimination.

"The Prophet said that none of you is a true believer until you wish for your brother what you wish for yourself.

"He also taught that people must honour and care for their neighbours, irrespective of religious affiliation.

"Allah expects us to support those around us, especially those in need, so that our wealth can positively impact their lives," he said.

Raji frowned at the attitude of some citizens who believed that the "national cake" simply meant sharing money to people.

"Everybody wants to share from the national cake without understanding that the national cake means the provision

Children's Day: Adeleke reaffirms commitment to child protection

OSOGBO

Governor Ademola Adeleke of Osun has sent Nigerian children a message of felicitation on the occasion of the 2026 Children's Day, describing them as the hope, pride and future of society.

In a statement issued on Wednesday in Osogbo by his spokesperson, Malam Olawale Rasheed, the governor said the celebration serves as a reminder of the collective responsibility to nurture, protect and invest in the younger generation.

Adeleke noted that children remain the driving force behind government efforts to build a better future, stressing that every child deserves access to quality education, healthcare, protection and equal opportunities, regardless of background or social status.

He said the dreams, talents and aspirations of children are vital to the state's long-term growth and prosperity, adding that every child matters to his administration, whether in public schools, private institutions or government care homes.

The governor reaffirmed his commitment to policies and programmes that promote the

welfare, growth and development of children, highlighting ongoing efforts to improve access to quality education, safe learning environments, child welfare services and better living conditions.

According to him, the administration remains focused on building a state where children of all abilities can thrive, develop their talents and pursue their aspirations without limitation.

Adeleke also urged parents, guardians, teachers and religious leaders to instill discipline, moral values, respect and compassion in children, emphasising that raising responsible citizens is a shared duty.

He warned against child abuse, neglect, exploitation and all forms of violence, noting that any society that fails to protect its children risks jeopardising its future.

The governor encouraged children to celebrate responsibly, remain committed to their education and believe in their abilities.

"As we celebrate our children today, I assure every parent and child that our administration will leave no stone unturned in protecting and developing the future of our young ones.

We are committed to building a government that is truly pro-people and pro-children," he said.

...Obasa urges collective responsibility for child safety

LAGOS

The chairman of Agege Local Government, Mr Abdul-Ganiyu Obasa, has called for urgent and sustained efforts to ensure that every missing child is found.

Obasa made the call in a goodwill message on Wednesday in Lagos to commemorate this year's Children's Day celebration.

According to him, Children's Day is not only a celebration of innocence and dreams but also a reminder of the collective responsibility to safeguard the future of every Nigerian child.

Obasa noted that while the day was filled with joy, "our hearts remain with the families of the abducted children in Oyo State during this painful and heartbreaking time."

He emphasised that no par-

ent should endure the fear of uncertainty and that no child should grow up surrounded by insecurity or violence.

"As we mark this year's Children's Day, may we all be reminded to protect our children, build communities of peace, and nurture their dreams," he said.

He reaffirmed his commitment to a society where every child has access to education, opportunities, and the freedom to dream without fear.

Obasa added that every child deserved safety, love, and hope, stressing that leaders must prioritise policies that protect children's rights.

He concluded: "Happy Children's Day to every child in Agege and across Nigeria, and to the missing children of Oyo State, may you return home safely and soon.

NYSC boosts community health with medical outreach in Lagos

LAGOS

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) on Wednesday provided free healthcare services to a Lagos community through its Health Initiative for Rural Dwellers (HIRD).

The outreach, the second in 2026, took place at the palace of the Traditional Ruler of Iruland (Oniru), Victoria Island in Eti Osa

Constituency of Lagos State.

The event had the theme: 'Empowering Communities through Sustainable Healthcare Awareness'.

NYSC provided free medical consultations, free blood pressure and blood sugar screenings, oral healthcare sensitisation, and preventive healthcare support services.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that NYSC had a

similar outreach at Oshodi-Isolo council area of the state in the first quarter of 2026.

The free services were provided in partnership with Divine Dental Home, Medplus, Space-Trade, and Cedacare Pharmacy.

The Lagos State Coordinator of NYSC, Mrs Christiana Salmwang, said at the event that HIRD reflected NYSC's commitment to delivering accessible healthcare services to under-

served communities, while promoting healthy living.

Salmwang urged Lagos residents to prioritise their health by embracing regular medical checkups, preventive healthcare practices, and taking advantage of free medical outreaches to improve their health.

She emphasised that good health remained essential for productivity and overall well-being.

NEWS

Foreign

Five people found alive after week trapped in flooded Laos cave

Rescuers in Laos have found five villagers alive inside a flooded cave after they were trapped for a week following heavy rain and landslides.

Two other villagers who were with them are missing, Laotian and Thai rescue teams involved in the operation said.

The seven were part of a group of villagers from the central province of Xaysomboun who had gone into the cave on Wednesday last week in search of gold deposits and wildlife, but could not get out as the cave's entrance was blocked.

Footage shared by the rescuers showed cave divers crawling through narrow, muddy passageways that were almost

completely flooded.

Bounkham Luanglath of the Laotian organisation Rescue Volunteer for People told the Associated Press the search for the missing would continue.

"I'm still shaking," he said in a voice message. "Our team made it happen."

The cave system, which extends deep underground, is also extremely narrow, with some chambers measuring only about 50cm (20in) wide, rescuers say.

"We've found five people alive and all safe," Rescue Volunteer for People said in a social media post.

"There are still two people we are searching for."

Thai rescuer Kengkach Bang-

kawong said on Facebook that the villagers had been found at 16:30 local time (09:30 GMT).

Specialist rescue diver Mikko Paasi from Finland said earlier on Wednesday that rescuers needed to "navigate hundreds of metres of constant restrictions, flood waters, collapse hazards and high risk of contaminated air quality" inside the cave, which he called an "abandoned gold mine".

He estimated the seven people were trapped around 300m (984ft) from the exit.

The villagers entered the cave, about 120km (75 miles) north of the capital Vientiane, last Wednesday, state media said.

"The area is not owned by anybody," Laotian rescuer Bae-

ng, who requested one name be used for security reasons, told AFP news agency. "Locals usually go there to dig holes and look for food."

Kengkach was part of the team that helped bring 12 young Thai boys and their football coach to safety after they were trapped for two weeks inside a flooded cave underneath a mountain in Thailand's Chiang Rai province in 2018.

The extraordinary rescue involved more than 10,000 experts from around the world and drew intense global attention.

Several films and documentaries have been made based on it, including the feature film *Thirteen Lives* and the documentary *The Rescue*.

South Korea detains dissident who fled China in rubber boat

A Chinese dissident who fled his country on a rubber boat has been detained in South Korea after spending hours at sea.

Dong Guangping, a former police officer and human rights activist, was found in Korean waters on Monday night.

South Korea's coast guard told the BBC that Dong is under investigation for suspected immigration violations and his case will be referred to prosecutors.

The 68-year-old had been jailed in China several times for his activism, such as taking part in events to commemorate the Tiananmen Square crackdown. Dong had escaped China at least three times previously, but was sent back each time.

When asked about Monday's incident China's foreign affairs ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said she had not aware of the case.

Dong had set out from Weifang, a city in the central Shandong province, in a rubber boat with an engine, according to Canada-based activist Sheng Xue who posted on X saying she had spoken to Dong after he reached South Korea.

He had told her that he had spent more than 30 hours at sea, and was "fainting" from exhaustion by the time he reached the waters off Taean, a county on South Korea's western coast.

South Korea's coast guard said they rescued him after receiving a report from a fishing boat that had spotted Dong.

Dong had previously discussed his escape plan with Sheng Xue, she said, but she had told him it would be too dangerous.

"He ended up really doing it... Dong Guangping is too tenacious, too brave," she said, adding that he had planned his escape with "meticulous checks and preparation".

Human Rights in China (HRIC), an NGO based in New York, has urged Seoul to "uphold humanitarian principles and international human rights obligations" by not handing Dong over to China, where he "faces a grave risk of persecution and torture".

It also called on Korean authorities to allow Dong to seek political asylum, or help facilitate his safe passage to Canada where his family members live.

"That a man nearing seventy years old was driven to cross open seas in a small inflatable boat is itself a devastating indictment of China's human rights situation," HRIC said.

Multiple escapes

In 1999, Dong was fired from the police force after he signed a petition to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the brutal Tiananmen crackdown on pro-democracy protesters.

Then in 2001, he was imprisoned for three years for "inciting subversion of state power". He was jailed again in 2014 for participating in another Tiananmen commemoration event, according to Amnesty International.



THE CAVE:

The cave system, which extends deep underground, is also extremely narrow, with some chambers measuring only about 50cm (20in) wide, rescuers say.

Israeli strike in Gaza City kills new head of Hamas's military wing

The commander of Hamas's military wing, Mohammed Odeh, has been killed in a strike in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday - days after his predecessor died in a similar attack.

Dozens more were injured in the attack, which hit a residential building in one of Gaza City's busiest market areas, local medics and witnesses said.

Israel's military and Shin Bet security service said buildings that served as a hideout for Odeh were targeted after his movements were tracked for several months.

On Wednesday, Hamas confirmed that Odeh had been killed, along with his wife and two of his children.

Despite the Israel-Hamas ceasefire agreed in October, violence in Gaza has continued on a near-daily basis.

A Hamas source and relatives said Mohammed Odeh was killed along with his wife and son.

Tuesday's strike hit the upper three floors of the al-Kayali

building in the centre of Gaza City, where streets were busy with shoppers ahead of the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha.

Rescue teams rushed to the scene of the strikes but struggled to reach the upper floors because of the scale of the damage and congestion in the area.

Witnesses said at least five missiles struck the building almost simultaneously from different directions.

One resident said he heard the sound of a helicopter hovering overhead before the attack.

Footage from the scene showed ambulances and civil defence crews searching through the damaged building as crowds gathered nearby.

A statement from the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and Shin Bet said: "As part of the joint operation by the IDF and Shin Bet to eliminate the terrorist Mohammed Odeh, several buildings in the heart of Gaza City that served as a hideout for him

were attacked, after months of intelligence surveillance in order to track his movements and the movements of his assistants in the organisation."

They added that they had also struck "a nearby apartment belonging to a Hamas terrorist who raided on October 7 and was part of Odeh's circle of assistants", referring to the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel that triggered the war in Gaza.

A local Hamas source later told the BBC that Odeh and his wife had been killed.

Their family said one of Odeh's children died of his wounds in hospital on Wednesday morning and a funeral was held after noon prayers at a mosque in Gaza City.

Odeh had not been officially declared the new leader of the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades but is understood to have been chosen just days ago.

A funeral was held for Odeh at a mosque in Gaza City on Wednesday.

A statement from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said on Tuesday that Odeh was "one of the architects of the October 7 massacre".

"Odeh was responsible for the murder, abduction, and wounding of many Israeli citizens and IDF soldiers," it continued.

Odeh's predecessor as commander of the group's armed wing, Izz ad-Din al-Haddad, was killed in another Israeli air strike earlier in May.

That attack also targeted a residential building and killed at least three people, according to eyewitnesses and a local source.

Israel has conducted regular strikes across Gaza since a ceasefire began on 10 October.

Hamas has repeatedly accused Israel of breaching the terms of the ceasefire and attacking civilians. The Palestinian territory's Hamas-run health ministry has reported the killing of more than 900 people in Israeli strikes during the ceasefire.

One killed and nine missing after chemical explosion at US paper mill

At least one person has been killed and nine others are still missing after a major chemical explosion at a paper mill in Washington, authorities said.

The explosion occurred at 07:15 PDT (15:15 GMT) at the Nippon Dynawave Packaging facility in Longview, 130 miles (210km) south of Seattle.

A further nine people have been injured in the spill, including eight employees and one firefighter, the Longview Fire Department said Tuesday evening, adding that the tank remains unstable.

The explosion occurred due to a "rupture of a tank containing white liquor", the company said in a statement. White liquor is a highly corrosive chemical used in the paper-making process.

"Recovery efforts remain complex due to ongoing safety concerns at the site," the fire department said in an evening update.

"Currently, the tank remains unstable, creating hazardous conditions for emergency personnel," the statement continued. "Responders are continuing efforts to structurally reinforce and stabilize the site before additional recovery operations can safely proceed."

While investigators originally believed the tank contained

about 80,000 gallons (300,000 litres) of white liquor, officials later said it held approximately 90,000 gallons (3,406,000 litres).

About 90,000 gallons (340,000 litres) "may remain inside the damaged tank", the fire department said.

Cowlitz Fire and Rescue Chief Scott Goldstein said during an earlier news conference that 10 people had been injured and transported to hospital.

Nine of the people injured are employees at the factory, and one is a firefighter, Goldstein said at the time. Their injuries range from "critical severe to minor", and include burn and inhalation injuries. The company statement said there were "multiple critical injuries".

The scene is stable, the chief said, but the public should stay away from the area as firefighting efforts continue. He said the fire does not pose any threat to the larger community.

"The scene remains in the recovery phase as emergency responders continue operations," the Longview Fire Department said in a statement.

"No identifying information regarding injured or deceased individuals will be released at this time pending notification of family members."

Starmer warns of Russian aggression as UK agrees new treaty with Poland

Sir Keir Starmer has said the UK and Poland are facing "no greater challenge" than Russian aggression, as the two countries signed a new defence and security treaty.

The prime minister described the agreement as providing a "generational uplift" in the relationship with Poland.

Downing Street said the treaty's aims include supporting defence jobs, helping respond to cyber attacks, improving border security and dismantling organised crime groups.

But Ed Arnold, defence adviser at The D Group and senior associate fellow at the RUSI think tank, questioned the impact the treaty would have and how it differed from previous agreements between the two countries.

Sir Keir held talks with Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk at RAF Northolt in west London on Wednesday to formalise the treaty.

They also visited the nearby Battle of Britain Bunker, where they laid a commemorative wreath.

Sir Keir said: "There's no greater challenge for either of our countries than the challenge of Russian aggression, and we see that not just in Ukraine itself, but beyond Ukraine, impacting on our own countries.

"So that's the context in which we sign what is actually a gener-

ational uplift in the relationship on security and defence between our two countries."

Tusk, speaking through an interpreter, said the UK and Poland's "shared values", including rule of law and human rights, provided the "foundation of the treaty".

He said some people "might say these values are now old-fashioned and obsolete, but they are important for us and for our nations".

The treaty text said it aims to "strengthen close co-operation in security and defence and preparing for the challenges facing" both the UK and Poland "and Europe as a whole".

It identifies Russia as "the most significant long-term threat" to Euro-Atlantic security and the "need to counter its malign actions".

It also reaffirms the UK and Poland's "ironclad commitment" to Nato and speaks of migrant smuggling being a "shared challenge requiring joint solutions".

The UK government said the two countries will discuss how to take action through a "new joint action plan on irregular migration".

They added this includes targeting the use of social media by smuggling gangs, maximising intelligence sharing and using new technologies to their monitor borders.



EBOLA-HIT DR CONGO:

DR Congo is the epicentre of the outbreak though a few cases have been detected in Uganda.

Ebola-hit DR Congo faces 'catastrophic collision' of disease and conflict, WHO warns

Ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo is hampering the Ebola outbreak response, the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) has warned. Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the east of the country was at the centre of a "catastrophic collision of disease and conflict" with the Ebola outbreak in Ituri province outpacing the response.

In a statement posted on X, Tedros said the WHO "cannot build community trust or isolate the sick while bombs are falling".

He is due to arrive in DR Congo on Wednesday to spearhead scaling up efforts to contain the virus. There have been 220 suspected deaths since the outbreak was declared.

Aid workers have been struggling as travel is difficult because of poor road conditions while conflict and mass displacement have also weakened the health system - as

have international aid cuts.

Ituri, where most of the cases have been reported, has been under military rule since 2021, when the civilian authority was replaced by a military general in an attempt to neutralise dozens of armed groups that operate there.

Tedros said stopping transmission in the region "depends entirely on humanitarian access".

"Yet ongoing clashes are driving mass displacement, pushing exposed contacts into overcrowded camps and severing critical containment corridors," he added.

"Frontline workers are risking everything, while attacks on health facilities make tracking cases and their contacts nearly impossible."

He called on all parties to agree to an immediate ceasefire to allow medical teams safe access.

Concerns over the possible spread of the Ebola outbreak has spurred more countries into im-

posing strict travel restrictions.

Canada has announced a temporary 90-day entry ban on residents from DR Congo and neighbouring Uganda and South Sudan. The Bahamas also imposed strict rules meaning foreign nationals from those countries face quarantine or isolation measures.

Last week the US banned non-citizens who had travelled to the three places from entering.

The Congolese health authorities say around 1,000 people are currently showing symptoms consistent with Ebola.

The DR Congo country director for the medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has told the BBC it will take several weeks to get proper infrastructure in place to contain the outbreak.

This outbreak is a rare species of Ebola, known as Bundibugyo, for which there are no vaccines or medicines.

DR Congo health authorities

have been struggling to confirm cases of the 220 deaths, only 17 people so far have been confirmed by lab tests as having died from the disease.

Medics are also facing a race against time to trace 3,600 people identified as contacts of the infected group.

Some 2,000 tests have been distributed, with a further 4,000 due to be sent out. Experimental treatments - including an antibody developed in the US - could also be introduced soon.

Ewald Stals, MSF director in DR Congo, said the medical charity and other organisations were working to get medical supplies and workers in to the epicentre of the crisis but insecurity and poor transport links in Ituri province made it difficult.

"Slowly but surely, there is, of course, some activity going on, but overall, we're still far behind having a control on the situation," he told the BBC.

Trump says US 'not satisfied' with Iran deal yet

US President Donald Trump has said he is "not satisfied" yet with the terms of the deal being negotiated with Iran.

He said Tehran was "very much intent" on reaching an agreement to end the conflict, but added "so far they haven't gotten there", repeating Washington's willingness to resume strikes if one is not reached.

His remarks came after Iranian state TV reported what it said were details of a draft agreement, which included reopening the Strait of Hormuz and the withdrawal of US forces from the region.

The White House branded the text a "complete fabrication".

Both sides signalled progress had been made towards a deal late last week, prompting speculation an announcement was close.

However, they soon tempered expectations, with Tehran cautioning a deal was "not imminent", while Trump said he had instructed his negotiators "not to rush into" one.

Speaking to reporters at a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, the US president said: "They just want to make a deal - I don't think they have a choice.

He added: "They're negotiating on fumes."

Trump also said: "Iran is very much intent, they want very much to make a deal.

"So far, they haven't gotten there and we're not satisfied with it. But now we will be we will be either that or will have to just finish the job."

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said there had been "some progress and some interest" in negotiations, adding: "We'll see over the next few hours and days whether progress could be made."

While both Trump and Rubio continued to express optimism that talks were progressing well, neither gave any details of which specific disagreements continued between the two sides.

Trump did not address the 14 points reported by Iranian media earlier on Wednesday - many of which would have raised eyebrows in Washington and likely been seized upon by the US president's detractors and political opponents.

The US and Israel launched wide-ranging strikes against Iran on 28 February, sparking conflict across the Middle East.

Iran responded by attacking Israel and US-allied states in the Gulf, and effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz shipping channel, which sent global oil prices soaring.

A ceasefire was agreed on 8 April which has largely been observed by both sides, but talks to resolve the conflict had stalled in recent weeks.

Ghana welcomes Pope's apology over Catholic Church's role in slavery

Ghana has welcomed Pope Leo XIV's apology for the Catholic Church's historic role in slavery, describing it as an "act of moral courage" that was important in the global pursuit of "truth, human dignity and justice".

The Pope issued the clearest apology yet for the Church's involvement in legitimising slavery and its delay in condemning it for centuries.

The apology was published on Monday in the Pope's first major teaching document of his papacy, which also focused on the dangers of artificial intelligence (AI).

Ghana was a major hub for the transatlantic slave trade when millions of people were

captured and loaded on to ships, never to return home.

Between the 16th and 19th Centuries, 12-15 million Africans were shipped to the Caribbean, with about two million dying during the journey.

Ghana has long been leading efforts for compensation and apologies from Western nations for the slave trade.

"The gravest crime against humanity: What does the UN vote on slavery mean?"

The West African nation's government said the Pope's recognition of the painful past was an important step towards healing, reconciliation and a just society.

"[The apology] reinforces the growing global understanding

that confronting historical injustices demands truth-telling and moral responsibility as essential foundations for justice and reconciliation," its statement, released late on Tuesday, said.

The Pope's apology was delivered in what is known as a encyclical - technically a letter to Catholic bishops, but which over recent decades have been how a pontiff passes on messages to the world.

In the papal letter - titled "Magnifica Humanitas" ("Magnificent Humanity") - Pope Leo sincerely asked for a pardon in the name of the Church, adding that it was "impossible not to feel deep sorrow when contemplating the immense suffering and humiliation en-

dured by so many".

Leo said Church authorities had at times responded to requests of rulers by "regulating and legitimising forms of subjugation, including the enslavement of [non-Christians]".

He also acknowledged that earlier in the Middle Ages, ecclesiastical institutions had their own slaves.

"This constitutes a wound in Christian memory," he said of the Church's record.

In April, Pope Leo completed a 11-day, four-nation of Africa - his first visit to the continent as pontiff - and where he made several forthright remarks including lashing out at foreigners who exploit Africa's wealth for profit.

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Sports

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'We will play' —Rangers GM addresses Federation Cup boycott rumours

Enugu Rangers will honor their President Federation Cup clash against Rivers United despite mounting speculation over a possible boycott, the General Manager of the club Ezeaku Ameobi confirmed.

Fresh reports had emerged suggesting the Flying Antelopes were considering pulling out of the highly anticipated fixture

following dissatisfaction with the decision to move the match venue to Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

However, Rangers General Manager, Barr. Amobi Ezeaku, dismissed uncertainty surrounding the club's participation, making it clear that the NPFL champions will honour the fixture.

"We will play," Ezeaku said.

The brief but definitive re-

sponse appears to calm growing concerns over reports that Rangers could boycott the competition if organizers failed to review the venue arrangement.

The blockbuster encounter was initially scheduled to be played in Owerri before organizers opted for a relocation amid concerns over the close proximity between Enugu and the Imo State capital.

The fixture was subsequently moved to Uyo, but the new venue has also reportedly failed to satisfy Rangers officials, who are believed to prefer a more neutral location.

Reports had claimed the Enugu club raised concerns that Uyo's proximity to Port Harcourt could potentially favour Rivers United in terms of fan presence, travel convenience, and familiarity.

Sources had further suggested Rangers proposed alternatives such as Abuja or Jos as neutral grounds for the crucial

encounter.

While Ezeaku's comments have effectively shut down speculation of a withdrawal from the competition, they do not entirely dismiss concerns surrounding the venue decision, with dissatisfaction over the relocation understood to remain unresolved.

The President Federation Cup showdown between Rangers and Rivers United remains a high-profile fixture after both teams recently went toe to toe in the battle in the 2025/26 NPFL title race, Rangers eventually emerged champions after winning last game of the season in Lagos against Ikorodu City.

The president federation cup fixture offers a rare square off for two giants, it's scheduled for June 1, 2026, with both sides expected to battle for a place in the next stage despite the growing off-field tension surrounding the tie



RANGERS FEDERATION CUP

FG concludes plans to revamp Muda Lawal Stadium in Abeokuta

The Federal Government, through the National Sports Commission (NSC), has approved the revamping of the Muda Lawal Stadium in Abeokuta, Ogun State, in honour of one of Nigeria's greatest football legends, Mudashiru Babatunde Lawal.

The rebirth of the historic stadium is part of the Federal Government's broader commitment under the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to upgrade sports infrastructure across the country and create world-class facilities capable of driving grassroots and elite sports development.

Director General of the National Sports Commission, Hon. Bukola Olopade, described the project as a "fitting recognition for a true Nigerian sporting icon whose legacy continues to inspire generations of athletes across the country."

"Muda Lawal remains one of the finest footballers ever produced by Nigeria and deserves to be immortalized through a modern sporting facility that will serve not only Ogun State but the entire nation," the DG said.

He added that the revamp of the stadium will significantly boost football and other sporting activities in the region, especially at a time when sports participation and youth engagement continue to grow rapidly across the country.

The renovation project will include the installation of new tartan tracks and the rehabilitation of major facilities within the sta-

dium to meet modern standards. The upgraded complex is expected to become a hub for sports and national competitions.

Muda Lawal, who hailed from Abeokuta, Ogun State, remains one of Nigeria's most celebrated football heroes. The former Green Eagles player was a central figure in Nigeria's historic 1980 Africa Cup of Nations triumph, where he scored in the memorable 3-0 victory over Algeria to secure the country's first-ever continental title.



MUDA LAWAL STADIUM

New Morocco coach Ouahbi Rings changes for 2026 World Cup

New Morocco coach Mohamed Ouahbi has unveiled a bold 26-man squad for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, retaining experienced stars like Achraf Hakimi and Sofyan Amrabat while making several surprise decisions ahead of the

tournament in the United States, Mexico and Canada.

Ouahbi, who succeeded Walid Regragui in March after previously handling Morocco's U-20 side, included defender Nayef Aguerd despite the Marseille centre-back not playing

since early March due to injury.

Aguerd, a key member of Morocco's historic run to the semi-finals of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, is yet to fully recover but has been handed the opportunity to prove his fitness before the tournament begins.

One of the biggest talking points from the squad announcement was the omission of experienced striker Youssef En-Nesyri, who played a pivotal role in Morocco's unforgettable World Cup campaign in Qatar and also featured at the Africa Cup of Nations earlier this year.

Ouahbi's squad also reflects a shift towards youth and renewal, highlighted by the inclusion of highly-rated midfielder Ayyoub Bouaddi, who recently switched international allegiance from France to Morocco.



MOHAMED OUAHBI



FEMI AZEEZ AND ERIC CHELLE

A Super Eagles debut not to forget by Femi Azeez

Femi Azeez is trending on social media and for good reason too as his two well-taken strikes on a most unforgettable debut has lifted the Super Eagles to the final of the Unity Cup in London at the expense of a more experienced Warriors of Zimbabwe.

He is the first player in 55 years to fire a double on a Super Eagles debut.

The record keepers also said he is only the sixth player to score on his international debut in recent times.

The 24-year-old Millwall winger could not have dreamt of a better start to life in the Super Eagles. Besides his strikes, he showed the many qualities that have made him one of the most sought-after players in the

Championship in England.

"Excellent goal. Brilliant player. Dream Eagles debut for Femi Azeez," celebrated

"Insane debut performance from Femi Azeez, 2 goals on his debut for the Super Eagles and it can't get even better. Unbelievable player," added

Should he now not be the man for the high-profile friendlies against Poland and Portugal in June and not mystery player Owen Oseni?

Born to a Nigerian father and a Spanish mother, Azeez is a clever, technically gifted winger who scores goals and is now in the prime of a career that has taken him to several English clubs, from Reading, now Millwall and before very long to the Premier League.

Super Eagles coach faults Man of Match Femi Azeez

Super Eagles coach Eric Chelle has congratulated Man of the Match Femi Azeez on his goal-scoring debut, but at the same time faulted some of the things that the Millwall winger failed to do.

Femi Azeez made the dream debut with two goals for the Super Eagles to sink Zimbabwe and advance to the final of the Unity Cup Saturday in London.

"He scored two goals, I congratulate him, but he lost a lot of balls, so not happy with him even though he recovered some of these balls," Eric

Chelle said at the post-match media briefing.

"I also asked them to do the high pressing for the whole 90 minutes."

The coach praised his experimental selection for "playing like a team who have been playing together for the past six months, one year", saying they deserved their victory.

"It was not easy for some of the players to play for the first time against a strong team like Zimbabwe," he said.

"But this is a friendly not a World Cup or AFCON qualifier.



FEMI AZEEZ

Sports

Girls Play Forward: Every girl deserves the chance to discover her potential —Aisha Falode

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The ancient city of Benin came alive with excitement, and inspiration



AISHA FALODE

activities as the second edition of the Aisha Falode 'Girls Play Forward' initiative officially kicked off at the Lucky Igbin- edion Sports Complex, GRA,

Benin City, Edo State.

The impactful initiative, spearheaded by renowned sports administrator, broadcaster, and passionate advocate for women's football, Aisha Falode, is focused on empowering young girls through football, mentorship, leadership development, health education, and life skills training.

Designed to create safe and inclusive spaces where girls can grow, express themselves, and build confidence, the programme continues to use sport as a powerful tool for social change and personal development. Through football and interactive learning sessions, participants are encouraged to embrace discipline, teamwork, courage, leadership, and self-belief.

The atmosphere at the venue was vibrant and energetic as the girls participated in football drills, fun games, mentorship sessions, face painting, and engaging educational activities, all carefully structured to inspire and uplift the participants while celebrating the spirit of Children's Day 2026.

Speaking on the programme, Aisha Falode reaffirmed her passion and commitment towards creating opportunities for young girls to thrive through sports and education.

According to her, the 'Girls Play Forward' initiative is not just about football, but about helping young girls discover their voices, unlock their potential, and believe in themselves regardless of their background or circumstances.

Enabulele Celebrates Children's Day, reaffirms Commitment to discovering future stars

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele, has congratulated children across Edo State and Nigeria on the occasion of the 2026 Children's Day celebration, reaffirming the commitment of the Edo State Sports Commission to nurturing young talents and creating opportunities for future champions.

Enabulele described children as the pride, hope, and future of the nation, stressing that investment in their development remains one of the greatest responsibilities of the leadership of the

According to him, this year's Children's Day celebration is particularly significant as it coincides with the Sports Commission's successful conclusion of the 2026 "Discovering Tomorrow's Stars" Grassroots Talent Hunt Programme at the iconic Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium.

He noted that the initiative was designed to identify hidden talents from schools and communities across Edo State while providing young athletes with platforms to develop their skills and pursue excellence through sports.

"Today is not just about celebrating our children, but about preparing them for greatness. Every child carries a dream, a talent, and the potential to become a champion if given the right guidance and opportuni-

ty," Enabulele stated.

The Sports Commission boss said the programme aligns with the vision of Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo, particularly the administration's "Catch Them Young" policy under the SHINE Agenda.

He encouraged children across the state to remain disciplined, hardworking, focused, and committed to their education and talents, noting that many global sports stars and successful leaders started from humble beginnings.



HON. AMADIN DESMOND ENABULELE

Edo Gov's Cup 2026: Benin Technical College, Idia College emerge champions



BENIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE WITH EDO STATE GOVERNOR'S CUP

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

It was a memorable experience at the iconic Samuel Ogbemudia stadium on children's day celebration as impactful and fun-filled events marked the conclusion of Edo State Governor's Cup with

Technical College and Idia College emerging champions of the male and football competition.

The Governor's cup finals and closing ceremony which coincided with the celebration of 2026 children day saw the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium packed full with thousands of children

expressing their excitement.

The champions Benin Technical College and Agba Grammar School of Uromi battled to a 1-1 draw at regulation period after thrilling the crowd with skills before going into a shoot-out which went in favour of the Benin Technical who eventually won 4-3 on Penalties.

Ogbona Secondary School defeated Omolua Secondary School of Igbanke 4-3 on penalty after a 0-0 draw to secure the third place finish.

In the female category, Idia College beat St Angela Grammar School 1-0 to emerge champions.

Eguare grammar School defeated Umagbae Grammar school 2-0 to win the third place position in the female.

Fenerbache Presidential hopeful meets Calvin Bassey on transfer



CALVIN BASSEY

Fenerbahçe presidential candidate Aziz Yıldırım will travel to England for talks regarding Super Eagles defender Calvin Bassey.

In London, Yıldırım will meet with executives from the English team and the 26-year-old player's manager.

Bassey is capable of playing as a centre-back and a left-

back, and he transferred to Fulham from Ajax in 2023 for a fee of €22.5 million.

His contract with Fulham is valid until June 2027.

He has earned 43 caps and scored one goal for the Nigerian national team.

According to Transfermarkt, Bassey's current market value is €28 million



MOHAMMED KUDUS

Ghana suffer major World Cup setback after Kudus ruled out

The Black Stars of Ghana have suffered a massive blow ahead of the 2026 World Cup after top star Mohammed Kudus was ruled out of the tournament due to injury. He has therefore been left out of the country's preliminary squad for the Mundial.

Tottenham Hotspur forward Kudus has struggled with physical issues since January, when

he suffered a quadriceps muscle injury while playing for his club.

He was initially expected to return in March, but complications in his recovery process ultimately ruled him out of the World Cup.

The 25-year-old has established himself in the Black Stars since his debut in 2019.

At the last World Cup in Qatar, he scored twice.

Family seeks autopsy of late Golden Eaglets star Victor Udoh

Top sources have revealed that the family has sought an autopsy to be done on former Golden Eaglets star Victor Udoh, who died in Abuja at the weekend amid various speculations surrounding his untimely death.

The autopsy will uncover the cause of death of the player, who was hail and hearty on the day he died.

The autopsy will be conducted after the Sallah holidays by Friday as a court will have to authorise it.

"So many lies have been written about the circumstances leading to his death and that it the more reason an autopsy is now very necessary," another source

confided to SCORENigeria

"No one has been arrested or detained in connection with his death and the cause of death has yet to be determined."

A close family source further informed SCORENigeria on the fateful day of his death Udoh had trained around the hills between Kubwa and Bwari along with his friends, which he even posted on social media.

He later retired to his house and it was only when he could not be reached on phone that all efforts were done to break into his room, where his body was found.

It was further gathered that the player even got his entry visa to restart his career in the Czech Republic just days to his demise.



VICTOR UDOH

FEATURE



“Beyond the gun: Can Nigeria win peace through development?”

GRACE IJEOMA UMEH

On May 15, suspected terrorists abducted over 45 people, including toddlers aged 2 and 3, from Esinele, Yamota, and Alawusa in Oyo State's Oriire LGA. The Yoruba Council of Elders says the kidnappers now demand talks only with Governor Seyi Makinde. Amotekun and police are deployed, but forest terrain makes rescue hard.

The Oyo attack is not isolated. From Kaduna to Zamfara, from Benue to Imo, insecurity remains Nigeria's biggest drag on development. The UN says insecurity and banditry have stopped farming in 12 states, contributing to the 35 million people facing acute hunger.

THE SECURITY PICTURE IN 2026

1. Northwest & North-Central*: Bandits still control forests. Over 300 schools remain closed in Zamfara and Katsina.

2. Southeast Sit-at-home and separatist attacks have reduced, but kidnapping for ransom is rising.

3. Southwest: Oyo's mass abduction shows that no zone is immune. Lagos and Ogun have increased border patrols.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The FG has deployed 10,000 more



police recruits and is procuring drones for surveillance. Operation Safe Haven in Plateau and Operation Hadin Kai in the Northeast continue. NSA Nuhu Ribadu says 8,000 terrorists have been neutralized since 2023.

But experts argue guns alone can-

not solve it. “You must remove the reasons young men pick up guns,” says Prof. Bulama Bukarti, security analyst. He lists unemployment, poor schools, and weak justice.

DEVELOPMENT AS SECURITY

Some states are trying that route. In Sokoto, a new 10MW solar plant now powers 20 villages off the grid. Farmers use it for irrigation. In Kaduna, traders built a “solar market” that cut diesel costs by 80%. In Bayelsa, 200 fishermen returned to sea with new

trawlers after 3 years.

These projects do two things: they create jobs and they restore state presence. Where people see government, recruitment by criminals drops.

THE LINK TO NATIONAL PROGRESS

Development agencies say insecurity costs Nigeria \$18 billion yearly in lost investment and displacement. The World Bank's 2026 report warns that without peace, the \$1 trillion economy target is unrealistic.

In Abuja, the National Security Strategy 2026 now has a “Human Security Pillar” focusing on food, health, and education. It is early, but the shift is clear: security is no longer just the army's job.

For the mother in Oriire waiting for her child, or the farmer in Katsina afraid to go to his land, development is not an abstract idea. It is safety, food, and a future.

Nigeria's economy, politics, and security are tied together. Reforms will fail if hunger continues. Elections will be tense if fear persists. Peace will be fragile if development is absent.

The next two years will decide if Tinubu's Renewed Hope can move from slogan to reality. For 220 million Nigerians, that is the real headline.

From subsidy pain to \$1 trillion dream: Can Tinubu's reforms deliver growth?

AKIM BABAJIDE

Two years after President Bola Ahmed Tinubu removed petrol subsidy and unified the exchange rate, Nigerians are still counting the cost. A bag of rice is above N120,000. Transport fares have doubled. Inflation sits at 24.23% as of April 2026, according to the NBS.

Yet in Abuja, the message from government is consistent: the pain is necessary. Tinubu himself admitted at the APC primary: “If you lost sleep, I lost some too. If you lost weight, I lost some too.” He says the reforms are the foundation for a \$1 trillion economy by 2030.

WHAT HAS CHANGED?

1. Revenue is up: FAAC allocations to states hit N1.1 trillion in March 2026, the highest in history. States now have more to spend on salaries, projects, and debt.

2. Oil production rising: Output is averaging 1.6 million bpd after years below 1.3 million. NNPC says this is due to security improvements in the Niger Delta and new investments.

3. Foreign investment returning: The World Bank and AfDB have committed over \$3 billion to power, agriculture, and digital projects. Dangote Refinery is now supplying fuel locally, easing import pressure.

WHAT IS STILL HARD?

Food inflation remains the biggest threat. 35 million Nigerians will face acute hunger between June and August 2026, per UN OCHA. Farmers in Borno, Zamfara, and Benue still cannot access their farms due to banditry. Banditry and flooding have cut domestic food supply by 18% in two years.

Manufacturers are also struggling. The MAN says 23 firms shut down in 2025 due to high diesel costs and FX volatility. SMEs say bank lending is still expensive, with rates above 28%.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Economists say Tinubu's second-term focus must be jobs and food security. “You cannot have a \$1 trillion economy if your people are hungry,” notes Dr. Ike Ibe, an Abuja-based economist. He lists 3 priorities: mechanize agriculture, fix power,

and protect small businesses from tax overreach.

The CBN has promised to keep inflation in single digits by 2027. For

now, families are adjusting. Mama Nkechi in Yaba Market says she now sells in smaller portions: “N200 can no longer buy a full plate.”

Tinubu's gamble is clear: endure short-term pain for long-term gain. Whether Nigerians will wait is the real political question heading to 2027.



PRESIDENT BOLA TINUBU