

EDOFEWMA moves to halt erosion, flooding before disaster

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Flood, Erosion and Watershed Management Agency (EDOFEWMA) has called for early intervention in erosion-prone areas to prevent incipient gullies from developing into major environmental disasters.

The Chief Executive Officer of EDOFEWMA, Mr Mohammed Okoyomoh, made the call on Wednesday at a stakeholders' engagement on soil, erosion control and stabilisation organised by a team from the University of Lagos in Benin City. Okoyomoh said the engagement was aimed at developing practical and sustainable solutions to the state's erosion and flooding challenges.

He disclosed that the agency had identified several massive gullies across Edo's three senatorial districts, stressing that early intervention was essential to prevent smaller erosion sites from becoming catastrophic. According to him, EDOFEWMA has completed more than 35

designs for erosion control projects across the state, with the support and mandate of Governor Monday Okpebholo. "Erosion control is not something you just jump into. You need a comprehensive design before you can solve the problem," he said. Okoyomoh said designs had been completed for erosion

sites in Edo South, Central and North, adding that civil works on some projects would commence after the rains subside. He also disclosed that the agency had made progress in addressing flooding in areas around Ikpoba, where improved drainage and underground infrastructure had enhanced the flow of storm water.

He said the state government had also channelled water from the Tempoga area into the river, reducing the risk of flooding within the affected catchment. Speaking, Prof. Lukeman Adams, Director, Central Research and Reference Laboratory, University of Lagos, said the

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#200

Okpebholo's market reconstruction drive targets commercial revival – Ebojele

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo is reconstructing major markets across the state as part of efforts to revive commercial activities in trading centers that have been abandoned or

underutilised for years. The Chief Press Secretary to Governor Monday Okpebholo, Dr Patrick Akhere Ebojele, who disclosed this in an interview, said the projects were part of the infrastructure pillar of the administration's SHINE Agenda, adding that they were intended

to restore commercial facilities that had deteriorated over time. On the Oba Market in Benin City, which was abandoned after being fitted by fire, Ebojele said the redesigned market has more than 450 open stalls on the ground floor, with lock-up shops and commercial spaces

on the upper floors. "The market includes modern facilities—restaurants, a crèche, a sick bay, and a fire station. Original traders and previous occupants have been given free shop allocations. This isn't just about rebuilding. It's about restoring livelihoods," he said.

Ebojele said the reconstruction was designed to address traders' needs and improve safety and convenience within the market. Commending the Governor's foresight, he added that the initiative extends to other parts of the state, with the Irrua Ultra-Modern Market in Esan

Central, the Ekpoma Modern Market in Esan West and the Jattu Modern Market in Edo North also under reconstruction. "The Irrua market is designed to accommodate 700 lock-up shops, while more than

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FG sets December deadline for 95% NIN coverage

ABUJA

The Federal Government has set December 2026 as the deadline to achieve 95 per cent National Identification Number (NIN) coverage nationwide. The target was announced yesterday by the Chief of Staff to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Femi Gbajabiamila, who represented the President at the 2026 National Day of Identity celebration. Gbajabiamila said the national identity database had grown from about 80 million NINs at the beginning of the administration to nearly 140 million, describing the expansion as a major step towards integrating Nigerians and legal residents into the formal econ-

omy and public-service system. He said the significance of the exercise went beyond the number of identities captured, noting that a verifiable identity would increasingly determine access to government services, financial transactions and social interventions. "Behind every NIN is a Nigerian with a recognised identity; a citizen or resident who can increasingly participate in the formal economy, access government services, establish financial relationships, and be better protected by the institutions of the Nigerian state," he said. To close the remaining identity gap, the government has commenced ward-level en-

CONTINUES ON PG 2»



MARKET RECONSTRUCTION DRIVE: Governor Monday Okpebholo (3rd left) accompanied by some top government functionaries during an inspection visit to Oba Market in Benin City which was redesigned with lock up shops and commercial spaces, among others, after it was abandoned.

Nigerian stocks rise as market capitalisation hits ₦158.4trn—Pg 2

EIRS engages Edo MDAs on 2026 revenue consolidation law—Pg 3

At least 20 killed after war-damaged Gaza building collapses—Pg 9

Volleyball: Nigeria records first win at 2026 African Nations Championship—Pg 11

NEWS

Okpebholo's market reconstruction...

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20 shops have already been reconstructed at the POWA Shopping Complex, which was also gutted by fire and reconstructed by the governor".

"When you lose a market for ten years, you lose more than buildings. You lose the trader's capital, the community's commercial identity. These projects are about getting traders back into proper spaces where they can actually grow their busi-

nesses," he said.

He added that the projects will help promote balanced development across Edo's three senatorial districts, particularly in areas where commercial infrastructure had been neglected.

"Edo North has been overlooked for too long on infrastructure. The governor made a commitment to ensure that development wasn't concentrated in Benin or the South. Jattu Market is part of keeping that commitment," Ebojele said.

EDOFEWMA moves to halt...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

university team had visited Edo about a year ago and collected soil samples from the three senatorial districts for research.

Adams said the research was aimed at developing a home-grown solution capable of arresting incipient and gully erosion before they became massive.

He said the team had returned to Edo to demonstrate an integrated soil stabilisation approach involving nano-silica, nanotechnology and organic soil vegetation.

According to him, the technology works by binding loose soil particles, making the soil denser and more compact and reducing its susceptibility to being washed away.

Adams said the proposed solution was safe because its components occur naturally in soil, explaining that nano-silica was derived from silica found in sand.

He said the state government

had also channelled water from the Tempoga area into the river, reducing the risk of flooding within the affected catchment.

Speaking, Prof. Lukeman Adams, Director, Central Research and Reference Laboratory, University of Lagos, said the university team had visited Edo about a year ago and collected soil samples from the three senatorial districts for research.

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FG sets December deadline...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

rolment across the country, taking registration directly to communities.

According to Gbajabiamila, free enrolment is being conducted across 8,809 wards, with more than 5,000 enrolment agents trained to assist persons with disabilities, elderly citizens and other vulnerable groups.

The Chief of Staff also said the newly enacted National Identity Management Commission Act 2026 had strengthened the legal framework for identity management, including provisions on data protection, mandatory NIN use in critical sectors and tougher penalties for identity-related offences.

Also speaking, the Director-General and Chief Executive Officer of NIMC, Dr. Abisoye Coker-Odusote, said the national register now contained the identities of more than 140 million Nigerians and legal residents.

She attributed the growth largely to the Ward-to-Ward Enrolment Project, which has extended NIMC services to communities across the country. Coker-Odusote disclosed

that the NIMC Self-Service Modification Platform had processed nearly two million record updates, reducing modification time from weeks to between 24 and 48 hours through citizens' mobile phones.

She also announced that Nigerians are expected to begin receiving physical National e-ID Cards before the end of 2026.

According to her, the biometric cards will combine identity verification with access to government benefits and financial payments, including functionality designed for areas with limited internet connectivity.

Meanwhile, Minister of Education, Dr. Tunji Alausa, said reliable identity data was essential to addressing challenges in the education sector, particularly the identification of out-of-school children, deployment of teachers and targeting of government interventions.

He said the education sector serves between 75 million and 80 million students, making accurate data critical for effective planning.

Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, similarly linked reliable identity data to national security, economic development and social inclusion.

Dangote Refinery IPO, landmark for Africa's capital market – Coronation Group

● Says offer will broaden wealth creation, attract capital for productive sectors

OSEMUDIAMHEN FAITH

LAGOS

The Initial Public Offering (IPO) of Dangote Petroleum Refinery and Petrochemicals FZE will deepen Nigeria's capital market and support economic growth, the Chairman of Coronation Group, Mr Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede, has said.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, 15 September 2026 after the Opening Gong Ceremony and Facts Behind the Offer presentation at the Nigerian Exchange (NGX), Aig-Imoukhuede described the IPO as a landmark moment for Nigeria and Africa's capital market.

He said the offer demonstrated the market's capacity to

mobilise capital for large-scale productive enterprises and would broaden participation in wealth creation by giving Nigerians and other investors the opportunity to own stakes in a major African industrial enterprise.

According to him, the development underscores the wider role of the capital market in economic development beyond providing financing for businesses.

"Aliko Dangote has consistently championed a capital market where Nigerian companies could grow while the prosperity created by African businesses is shared more broadly.

"Vision attracts capital, governance preserves capital, and talent and execution com-

pounds capital," he said.

Also quoted in the statement, Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State described the offer as a significant development for Nigeria and Africa.

"The IPO demonstrates Africa's growing capacity to mobilise and deploy capital for its own economic development. Today, we are witnessing a company that is changing the landscape of what is possible in Africa. We are demonstrating once again that Africa can finance and invest in Africa," Sanwo-Olu said.

In his remarks, the President/Chief Executive Officer of Dangote Industries Ltd., Alhaji Aliko Dangote, said the offer would widen participation in the capital market and enable

more Nigerians and African investors to partake in the value created by leading African businesses.

"We want to share prosperity more broadly with our people. That is the ideal we are working towards," Dangote said.

He added that the IPO would strengthen the ability of Nigeria's capital market to attract domestic and international investment into productive sectors and encourage more businesses to access the market for expansion, investment and job creation.

The statement advised prospective investors to study the offer documents carefully, understand the applicable terms and risks, and assess the investment before subscribing.



EARLY INTERVENTION TO CHECK EROSION, FLOODING:

A cross section of participants at a stakeholders' engagement on soil, erosion and flooding challenges across Edo State in Benin City Wednesday.

Nigerian stocks rise as market capitalisation hits ₦158.4trn

EMMANUELLA EWERE

ABUJA

The Nigerian equities market continued its upward rise on Tuesday as market capitalisation increased by ₦652 billion following sustained buying interest in

major stocks.

Market capitalisation rose from ₦157.747 trillion to ₦158.399 trillion, representing a 0.41 per cent increase.

Similarly, the All-Share Index gained 1,005.27 points to close at 244,304.51 points, compared to 243,299.24 points

recorded at the previous trading session.

The increase was driven by continued buying activities across selected major stocks, extending the market's positive movement.

Trading activities also recorded significant volume,

with investors exchanging 520.65 million shares valued at ₦37.14 billion in 71,977 deals.

The latest performance reflects continued activity in the Nigerian equities market as investors respond to developments affecting listed companies and the wider economy.

Olu Jacobs, veteran actor, bows out at 84

LAGOS

Veteran Nigerian actor and executive film maker and producer, Oludotun Baiyewu Jacobs, fondly called Olu Jacobs, has passed on at the age of 84.

He was reported to have died on Wednesday, September 16, 2026, according to an announcement by his family on Instagram.

His son, Olusoji Jacobs, actually confirmed the development.

He described late father

and one of Nigeria's finest actor as a beloved husband, father, grandfather and uncle while saying that the family was mourning his death.

He appealed to members of the public, particularly bloggers and social media influencers, to give them privacy as they come to terms with the loss.

"It is with gratitude to God for a life well lived and fought, that we announce the passing of our dear husband, father, grandfather and uncle. The Lion of Lufodo," Olusoji stated.



Oludotun Baiyewu Jacobs (Olu Jacobs)

NEWS**LAGOS**

State Governor and Visitor to Lagos State University (LASU), Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has appointed Professor Ayodeji Olawunmi Badejo as the 10th substantive Vice-Chancellor of the institution.

Badejo, a Professor of Counselling Psychology, will succeed Professor Ibimiyemi Ibilola Olatunji-Bello,

Sanwo-Olu appoints Badejo LASU VC

whose five-year tenure ends on Saturday, September 19, 2026.

She is expected to assume office on Sunday, September 20, for a single, non-renewable five-year term.

The appointment, announced in a statement by the Lagos State Commis-

sioner for Information and Strategy, Gbenga Omotoso, was made in accordance with the provisions of the LASU Law 2004 (as amended).

According to LASU, Professor Badejo has over three decades of experience in teaching, research, university administration and academic

mentorship. She has served in several leadership positions, including Dean of the Faculty of Education, Chairman of the Senate Curriculum Committee, Chairman of the Research Ethics Committee and Chairman of the LASU International School Board.

She has supervised 23 PhD graduates, authored four books, contributed 17 book chapters and published more than 60 peer-reviewed journal articles.

The university described her appointment as bringing to the office extensive academic experience, insti-

tutional knowledge, administrative competence and a record of service to higher education.

Professor Olatunji-Bello, who became LASU Vice-Chancellor in 2021, will formally hand over to Professor Badejo at the expiration of her tenure.

New session: Commissioner embarks on inspection of public shools

SUCCESS EDENAMUIKI

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has commenced an intensive inspection of public schools across the state as part of efforts to ensure a smooth and hitch-free take-off of the new academic session.

The Commissioner for Education, Dr. Washington Osifo, who led the inspection tour, visited schools in Benin City to assess their level of preparedness and inspect facilities ahead of the resumption of academic activities.

The exercise, according to the ministry, is aimed at identifying critical challenges and ensuring that pupils and students return to safe, clean and conducive learning environments.

During the tour, Osifo inspected classrooms, administrative blocks, laboratories, libraries, toilet facilities and other essential infrastructure, while also engaging principals, head teachers and teachers on their preparedness for the new session.

Speaking during one of the visits, the Commissioner stressed the importance of providing an environment that would support effective teaching and learning.

He charged school administrators to ensure that their institutions were properly organised and fully prepared to receive students, noting that the quality of the learning environment remained an important component of the state's education reform agenda.

Osifo also urged teachers and school administrators to complement government's efforts through dedication, discipline and professionalism.

He directed relevant officials to give urgent attention to damaged facilities and other conditions capable of disrupting academic activities.

The Commissioner said the government would sustain regular inspection and monitoring of schools to ensure compliance with established standards and enable the ministry to identify challenges requiring timely intervention.

The inspection also provided school authorities an opportunity to highlight pressing needs, including improved infrastructure, teaching and

learning materials, maintenance of facilities and other resources required for effective academic activities.

Osifo assured the school authorities that the concerns raised during the inspection would be carefully examined by the ministry, stressing that the government remained committed to strengthening the education sector and improving the conditions under which teachers and students operate.

He urged teachers to approach the new academic session with renewed commitment, reminding them of their responsibility to help shape the future of Edo State through quality education.

The Commissioner also appealed to parents and guardians to ensure that their children and wards resumed school on schedule and were adequately prepared for the new session.

He called for greater cooperation among parents, teachers and government in addressing challenges confronting the education system.

"Government would continue to place education among its top priorities, while pursuing measures aimed at improving school facilities, strengthening teaching standards and providing a more conducive atmosphere for learning across Edo State," Osifo assured.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT:

The Executive Chairman of EIRS, Mr. John Osirenimbe Idior (left) receiving Rt. Hon. Patrick Auguinede, MD of Edo State Outdoor Advertising Agency (EDSAA) in audience on Tuesday.

EIRS engages Edo MDAs on 2026 revenue consolidation law

BENEDICT OKATE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS) has intensified its engagement with heads of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) across the state to ensure effective implementation and compliance with the

Edo State Revenue Consolidation Account Law, 2026.

The engagement is aimed at clarifying grey areas in the new legislation, addressing concerns raised by government agencies and ensuring a smooth transition to the new revenue administration framework.

As part of the initiative, the Executive Chairman of EIRS, Mr. John Osirenimbe Odior,

FCA, ACTI, received the Managing Director of the Edo State Outdoor Advertising Agency (EDSAA), Rt. Hon. Patrick Auguinede, and the Executive Secretary/Chief Executive Officer of the Edo State Hospital Management Agency, Dr. Nelson Tenebe.

The Agency heads sought clarification on the requirements of the new law and assistance on the steps needed to ensure compliance and a seamless transition within their respective institutions.

Speaking during the engagement, Odior said the Revenue Consolidation Account Law was designed to strengthen the state's revenue system and block leakages within the revenue ecosystem.

He said: "The State's Revenue Consolidation Account Law is designed to enhance the state's revenue base by sealing off leakages within the revenue ecosystem."

The EIRS chairman also stressed the importance of proper accounting and reporting of internally generated revenue, noting that improved revenue transparency would strengthen the state's credibility before national and international institutions.

He further explained that the new law had clearly defined the roles of MDAs in revenue collection and enforcement, stressing that agencies must operate within the framework

established by the legislation.

According to him, "No MDA has the power to engage consultants, carry out enforcement, or set up a mobile court without the approval of the EIRS."

Odior assured the visiting Agency heads that the implementation of the law was not intended to undermine the operations of MDAs but to establish a more coordinated and accountable revenue system that would ultimately benefit government institutions and residents of the state.

He said improved revenue administration would contribute to a better working environment and provide government agencies with enhanced tools to deliver services to the public.

The EIRS chairman therefore urged heads of MDAs to comply with existing tax laws as well as the provisions of the new Revenue Consolidation Account Law within the stipulated timelines.

He warned that failure to comply could attract sanctions from the state government, while encouraging the agencies to sustain dialogue with the EIRS whenever clarification or technical assistance was required.

PDP defends Nyesom Wike's support for President Tinubu amid tensions with APC Governors' forum

HASSAN DAISY

OSOGBO

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has defended the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Minister, Nyesom Wike, for his support of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, emphasizing that the former Rivers State governor remains a significant political figure who cannot be overlooked ahead of the 2027 general elections.

In response to reports that the All Progressives Congress (APC) Governors' Forum had rejected Wike's political backing for Tinubu, the PDP issued a statement through its National Publicity Secretary, Jungudo Haruna Mohammed.

The party argued that the APC governors should not view Wike as a political liability, asserting that he has the consti-

tutional and democratic right to support any candidate of his choice.

The PDP clarified that Wike's support for Tinubu does not equate to an endorsement of the APC or a departure from the PDP.

The party emphasized that Wike can support the president while maintaining his political identity and relationships within the PDP.

The PDP also criticized the APC governors' Forum for misinterpreting Wike's support for Tinubu as an endorsement of the ruling party.

It noted that supporting the president does not necessarily mean abandoning the PDP, and that the were by the APC governors that Wike should not support or field candidates capable of challenging them in the 2027 elections.

The PDP called this a misun-

derstanding of the democratic process, stressing that political parties have the right to for elective positions.

The PDP argued that the APC governors' stance was not only politically curious but also a miscalculation opposition candidates in 2027. The party questioned why governors who had performed well in office would be opposed to strong opposition candidates contesting against them.

"If they have truly performed and retained the confidence of their people, they should welcome a contest and allow the electorate to decide," the PDP said.

The PDP highlighted Wike's political organisational and mobilisation capacity, noting that his support for Tinubu is a strategic move that could contribute to the president's political project.

CHANGE OF NAME/ CORRECTION OF DATE OF BIRTH

I formerly known as **NUHU ESTHER** now wish to be known and addressed as **UMARU GRACE MASANG** and also my correct date of birth is 1/12/1978 and not 1/12/ 1979. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public please take note.



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NEWS

FRSC warns motorists against fake traffic offence SMS

ABUJA

The Federal Road Safety Corps has warned motorists and members of the public against fraudulent text messages claiming that recipients have been recorded for new road traffic offences.

The corps, in a statement signed by its Public Education Officer, Osondu Ohaeri, said the messages were being circulated through mobile devices

and social media platforms and falsely presented themselves as communications from FRSC.

According to the Corps Public Education Officer, Federal Road Safety Corps National Headquarters, Abuja, Osondu Ohaeri, on the corps' X handle on Wednesday, the fraudulent messages create a sense of urgency by informing recipients that a new traffic offence has been recorded

against them and directing them to a website to "review the relevant details."

The Corps specifically disowned the website "frscgov.top/ng", stressing that it "has no affiliation with the Federal Road Safety Corps."

"The Corps therefore unequivocally disowns the messages and the website, stressing that members of the public should not regard such communications as originating

from FRSC," the statement said.

FRSC warned that the links could be used to obtain sensitive information from unsuspecting victims.

"Such links may be intended to harvest personal information, financial details or other sensitive data from unsuspecting victims," the Corps said.

It advised members of the public not to click on suspicious links or provide sensitive information in response to the messages.

"No member of the public should click on suspicious links, make payments, disclose banking information, passwords, card details, driver's licence information, vehicle registration details or other personal information in response to such messages," FRSC said.

The Corps urged motorists who receive the messages to preserve the evidence, avoid further engagement with the senders and report the matter through appropriate channels.

It further advised motorists to verify any alleged traffic offence directly through official FRSC channels rather than through links contained in unsolicited messages.



VISIT: APC Coordinator in Bayelsa State, Mr Bassy Emborah (4th L); Leader of Urobo Progressive Union, Pastor Godgi (M) and other members of the Union, during their visit to APC Office in Yenagoa on Tuesday

Onoike distributes learning materials to Etsako West pupils - Announces scholarship for best performing pupils

LAMAI CASSIUS**AUCHI**

The Chairman of Etsako West Local Government Council, Hon. Romeo Aloaye Omoike, has flagged off the distribution of learning materials to pupils and students in public primary and junior secondary schools across the local government area as schools resumed for the new academic session.

The initiative which is a collaboration between the Edo State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and the Etsako West Local Govern-

ment Council, is aimed at supporting pupils and easing the financial burden on parents.

The materials distributed include school bags, sandals, textbooks, exercise books and other writing materials. The intervention brought considerable relief to families, with pupils receiving the items with excitement.

Among the schools visited were Oyagha Primary School, Jattu Uzairue; Our Lady of Fatima College, Auch; and Akpekpe Primary School, Auch.

Speaking during the flag-off, Hon. Omoike expressed appreciation to the Governor of Edo State, Sen. Monday

Okpebholo, for the support towards the initiative. He also commended SUBEB and the Etsako West Local Education Authority for their collaboration.

The Chairman noted that investing in the education of children remained a priority of his administration, stressing that the future of Etsako West depends significantly on the younger generation.

He assured schools across the LGA of continued support, promising to work with the relevant authorities to improve learning conditions and enhance educational outcomes.

Hon. Omoike also announced a scholarship programme for the three best-performing pupils in the next First School Leaving Certificate Examination in Etsako West.

Also speaking, the Acting Secretary of the Etsako West Local Education Authority, Mrs. Beatrice Modejemu, said the intervention would contribute to improving the educational prospects of pupils in the local government. She appreciated Governor Okpebholo, Chairman Omoike and other stakeholders for their commitment to the welfare and education of pupils.

Owan East council chairman sues for peace, unity to advance development

LAMAI CASSIUS**AFUZE**

The Executive Chairman of Owan East Local Government Council, Comrade Ernest Oyaole Attalegbe, has called on political leaders and their supporters to embrace peace, unity and stability as only panacea for achieving progress in the council area.

and for the actualization of

the 2.5 million votes promised to President Bola Tinubu by Governor Monday Okpebholo.

The Chairman made the call during a reception organised in his honour to celebrate his victory and resumption of office, held at Ihievbe at the weekend.

Addressing party leaders, stakeholders and supporters, Attalegbe said his administration would not be for a select few.

"My administration is not for a select few, but an administration committed to serving the generality of the people of

Owan East," he said.

He stressed that his government stands for unity, inclusion a determination to reconcile all political differences among leaders and their followers.

He noted that unity among political stakeholders was the instrument needed to move Owan East forward and to help Governor Okpebholo to win the State for the re-election of President Tinubu.

In the spirit of unity, the Chairman announced the lifting of all suspensions placed on some leaders of the APC in

the local government, noting that the gesture was aimed at strengthening cohesion and fostering progress in Owan East.

Highlighting his administration's areas of priority, Attalegbe listed quality healthcare delivery, improved security through collaboration with all relevant security agencies, provision of soft loans to farmers to ensure food security, reactivation of the Owan East Transport Line, and construction of a befitting Chairman's lodge with state-of-the-art facilities.

Police arrest two, recover 11 phones, laptop after Ogun hostel robbery

ABEOKUTA

Operatives of the Ogun State Police Command have arrested two suspects after foiling a robbery operation at a student hostel in the Eruku/Agbon area of Ewekoro Local Government Area of the state.

The suspects, identified as Waris Dauda and Tiamiyu Abiodun, were arrested in the early hours of Sunday, September 13, 2026, after the police responded to a distress call about an armed gang robbing students at a hostel.

According to the Police Public Relations Officer, Ogun State Command, Elewera, Abeokuta, Oluseyi Babaseyi on X on Wednesday, the incident occurred at about 2:40 a.m. when operatives of the Ewekoro Division, led by the Divisional Police Officer, raced to the scene.

The command said the suspects abandoned their loot in a school bag and attempted to

escape after sighting the approaching police team.

"However, the team pursued and successfully apprehended two suspects," the statement said.

A search of the abandoned bag reportedly led to the recovery of 11 assorted iPhones, an HP laptop and various items of clothing.

The police said some of the victims had already identified the recovered property as theirs.

Preliminary investigations also revealed that the gang allegedly forced one of the victims to transfer N200,000 into an account during the robbery.

Detectives have visited the scene, documented evidence of forced entry and secured the recovered exhibits, according to the command.

The police further disclosed that searches conducted at the residences of the two suspects did not yield additional incriminating items.

Police arrest man who kidnapped grandfather in Katsina, rescue two victims

KATSINA

The Katsina State Police Command has arrested a 22-year-old man, Sani Dikko, who allegedly conspired with two others to kidnap his grandfather and secured N3m ransom before his release.

Dikko was arrested alongside Kabir Sani, 22, and Salisu Bello, 22, during an operation by operatives of the command's Violent Crime Response Unit along Marabar Shema Village in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area.

The command's Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Abubakar Aliyu, disclosed this in a statement issued on Wednesday on behalf of the Commissioner of Police, CP Ali Fage.

According to the statement, the suspects were arrest-

ed on September 12, 2026, at about 8:23pm during a confidence-building patrol based on credible intelligence.

"On 12th September 2026, at about 8:23 pm, operatives of the Command's Violent Crime Response Unit (VCRU), while on a confidence-building patrol along Marabar Shema Village, acted on credible intelligence and successfully busted a three-man kidnap syndicate.

"The suspects were identified as: Sani Dikko, m, aged 22 – Informant, Kabir Sani, m, aged 22, Salisu Bello, m, aged 22.

"During preliminary investigation, the suspects confessed to the commission of the offence. Specifically, Sani Dikko voluntarily confessed to conspiring with the other suspects to kidnap his grandfather, one Alhaji Lawal, about three weeks ago. The victim spent 16 days in captivity before securing his release following the payment of a N3,000,000 ransom."

Presidency dares Peter Obi to quit presidential race over Anambra debt controversy

ABUJA

The Presidency has reacted to the ongoing dispute between former Anambra State Governor and presidential candidate of the Nigeria Democratic Congress, Peter Obi, and the state government over the state's debts and financial liabilities.

Special Adviser to President

Bola Tinubu on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, in a post on X on Wednesday, said Obi had claimed to have left Anambra without debt and challenged him to follow through on his pledge to quit the presidential race if his claim was disproved.

Onanuga wrote, "Peter Obi claimed he left Anambra with a clean slate of debt and even

threatened to quit the presidential race if his claims were proven otherwise."

He added that the Anambra State Government had responded with claims concerning liabilities allegedly left by the former governor's administration.

"Now, the Anambra government has confronted him with facts and figures showing he owed Water Corporation workers, teachers, and pension and gratuities, and had also borrowed for frivolous things," Onanuga said.

"The ball is back in his court. Will he follow through on his threat by quitting the race?" he asked.

The reaction followed a fresh response by the Anambra State Government to Obi's Tuesday denial of claims that his administration left behind inherited debts, including a 2bn ecological fund, contractor liabilities and unpaid salaries, gratuities and pensions.

Obi had said his administration cleared more than 35bn in historical gratuities and arrears and left office without

outstanding salary, pension or gratuity obligations.

He also disputed the government's claim concerning the ecological fund, saying more than 2.13bn was left untouched in a First Bank account for the Oko/Umuchiana erosion crisis.

However, in a statement on Wednesday, Anambra State Commissioner for Information and Value Reformation, Law Mefor, disputed Obi's account, saying the account he identified was an Internally Generated Revenue Consolidated

Revenue Account and not an ecological fund account.

Mefor said the government obtained a certified printout of the account and claimed that "from 2011 when the account was opened until date, there has never been any such amount—whether as inflow or balance—in the account."

Obi had challenged anyone who could establish that his account of the state's finances was incorrect, saying, "If anybody can establish anything to the contrary, I will stop campaigning."

Tinubu mourns Olu Jacobs, calls him creative industry giant

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu has mourned veteran Nollywood actor and film executive, Oludotun Baiyewu Jacobs, popularly known as Olu Jacobs, who died at age 84.

Jacobs' death was announced by his son, Olusoji Jacobs, on Instagram on Wednesday.

In a statement issued on Wednesday by his Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, Tinubu described the late actor as one of Nigeria's most distinguished actors and a towering figure whose career spanned theatre, television and film globally.

The President said Jacobs contributed to the development and professionalisation of Nigeria's entertainment industry and inspired generations of actors and filmmakers through his talent, discipline and dedication to his craft.

Tinubu also praised Jacobs' ability to bring "depth, dignity, and authenticity" to the characters he portrayed, saying this earned him admiration in Nigeria and beyond.

"He was a giant of the Nigerian creative industry. His passing is a great loss to Nige-

ria, the African film industry and the global community of lovers of the performing arts. His remarkable body of work will continue to speak to generations yet unborn.

"The nation recognises the enormous contributions of Nigeria's creative practitioners to the country's cultural identity, global image and economic development. Olu Jacobs played a big role in creating this identity," the President said.

According to the statement, Jacobs trained at London's Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts and built a career in British television and international film before returning to Nigeria, where he became a major figure in the country's film industry.

He received several industry honours and awards and was conferred with the national honour of Member of the Order of the Federal Republic.

Tinubu extended his condolences to the Jacobs family, particularly his wife, veteran actress Joke Silva, their children, relatives, colleagues in the Nigerian film industry and the wider creative community.

He prayed for the repose of Jacobs' soul.



MEETING:

A cross-section of the participants at the opening ceremony of Stocktaking exercise meeting in preparation for Nigeria's 3rd round mutual evaluation exercise organised by Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) in collaboration with Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) in Abuja.

Police strengthen security in Anambra schools for new session

AWKA

The Anambra State Police Command has commenced enhanced security deployment in schools and strategic locations across the state as schools resume for the new academic session.

In a press statement released on Wednesday, the spokesman for the state police command, SP Tochukwu Ikenga, said the move was in line with the Inspector-General of Police's "Safe School Initiative."

According to him, the opera-

tion, coordinated under the supervision of the Assistant Commissioner of Police in charge of Operations, ACP Harrison Oruruo, involves the deployment of police personnel, sister security agencies and other relevant stakeholders to designated schools and strategic locations across the state.

He said, "The deployment is aimed at strengthening security around educational institutions, sensitising pupils and students on personal safety and security awareness, assisting school children with safe road crossing,

and providing other necessary policing services to maintain a safe and conducive learning environment.

"The Command is also using the exercise to strengthen collaboration among the Police, school authorities, teachers, parents, guardians, host communities and other stakeholders towards the early identification, prevention and prompt response to security threats around schools.

"Personnel deployed for the exercise have been directed to maintain high-visibility presence, monitor activities within

and around school environments, assist pupils and students, particularly during peak arrival and closing periods, and respond promptly to security concerns."

Community petitions govt over land grabbers, backs criminal proceedings

Meanwhile, the Commissioner of Police, Anambra State Command, CP Nnanna Ama, reiterated the command's commitment to the safety and protection of children, teachers, school authorities and other members of the school community.

2027: Abiodun, Osoba, Daniel, Amosun lead APC Ogun campaign

ABEOKUTA

Former Ogun State governor and senator representing Ogun East, Gbenga Daniel, and his successor, Ibikunle Amosun, are among those appointed to spearhead the All Progressives Congress campaign in the state ahead of the 2027 elections.

In a document signed by the state chairman of the party, Yemi Sanusi, and made available to journalists on Tuesday, Governor Dapo Abiodun was named chairman of the APC Campaign Council.

The party's governorship candidate and senator representing Ogun West, Solomon Adeola, popularly known as Yayi, is the co-chairman, while the former senator representing Ogun East, Lekan Mustapha, is the Director-General.

Daniel and Amosun were designated as deputy grand patrons of the campaign council, while another former governor and national leader of the party, Olusegun Osoba, was named grand patron.

Other members of the 156-member campaign committee include the Deputy Governor, Noimot Salako-Oyedele, and the party's deputy governorship candidate, Kudirat Adegunwa-Balogun, who will serve as deputy chairmen of the campaign team.

The state party chairman, Yemi Sanusi, will serve as vice-chairman, while the Secretary to the State Government, Tokunbo Talabi, and the Minister of State for Health, Kunle Salako, will serve as Vice Director-General, Campaign Operations, and Vice Director-General, Administration.

Army rescues 31 kidnap victims, kills terrorist kingpin in Kebbi, Katsina

Birni Kebbi

Troops of the Joint Task Force North-West, Operation FANSAN YAMMA, have rescued 31 kidnapped victims and neutralised two terrorists, including a suspected kingpin, during separate operations in Katsina and Kebbi states.

The troops also arrested two suspected terrorists in Katsina State as part of operations conducted on September 14 and 15, 2026.

The Media Information Officer of the JTF North-West, Operation FANSAN YAMMA, Lt. Col. Aliyu Danja, disclosed

this in a statement issued on Wednesday.

Danja said troops of Sector 2 were deployed to Funtua Local Government Area, Katsina State, on September 14 following reports that terrorists had abducted civilians from Unguwan Daudu and Unguwan Chibauna communities.

According to him, the troops immediately launched a hot pursuit of the attackers and engaged them in a gun battle, forcing them to flee.

He said the operation resulted in the rescue of 10 victims, comprising three males and seven females, including an infant.

"The rescued victims are in

troops' custody for further action," Danja stated.

The military spokesman said that on the same day, troops operating in Kebbi State responded to a distress call over the abduction of civilians from Fafala Village in Kangiwa Local Government Area.

He said troops, acting on credible intelligence, conducted a fighting patrol towards Fafala and Dandikwa, where they made contact with the terrorists.

"Troops engaged them in a heavy exchange of fire, forcing the terrorists to withdraw in disarray," he said.

Danja added that subsequent

exploitation of the area led to the rescue of 21 kidnapped victims, who were later reunited with their families.

The JTF spokesman further disclosed that troops recorded another major success in Katsina State on September 15 after receiving intelligence about plans by terrorists to attack communities in Matazu and Kankara local government areas.

He said troops mobilised to the suspected hideout and engaged the terrorists with superior firepower, killing two of them.

"One of the terrorists neutralised was Abbah Alhassan, a known terrorist kingpin," Danja stated.

NEWS

Nigeria's capital challenge is finding bankable

LAGOS

Nigeria does not lack capital, but rather a sufficient volume of investable, bankable opportunities capable of attracting and absorbing available funds, experts at the 2026 Chief Executive Officer Forum of the UN Global Compact Network Nigeria have stated.

The closed-door forum, held in Lagos under the theme "Financing a Dignified Future: Aligning Capital, Policy and Business Action," brought together chief executives, policymakers, financiers, and

development partners to examine how capital, policy, and enterprise can drive economic productivity.

In her opening address, the CEO and Executive Director of UN Global Compact Network Nigeria, Naomi Nwoko, urged business leaders to shift focus from longstanding constraints toward immediate, actionable solutions that foster long-term competitiveness, living wages, and sustainable growth.

Contributing to the dialogue, the Director-General of the Northwest Governors Forum, Maryam Musa Yahaya, stressed that state govern-

ments must actively engage investors to resolve specific structural bottlenecks, including power, regulatory friction, and security concerns.

Highlighting a practical model, Zamfara State Governor, Dauda Lawal, outlined his administration's 10-year development plan aimed at bolstering policy predictability, improving geophysical data, and boosting internally generated revenue from N90m

to roughly N45bn monthly.

Addressing financial access, the Deputy Managing Director of First Bank of Nigeria, Ini Ebong, stated that financial inclusion must be treated as critical infrastructure rather than corporate social responsibility, noting that the broader constraint remains the capacity of small businesses to become financeable through proper record-keeping and corporate governance.

On institutional capital de-

ployment, the Group Chief Operating Officer of Custodian Investment, Adeniyi Falade, revealed that out of the pension industry's N32tn asset pool, less than three per cent is allocated to infrastructure due to a scarcity of properly structured, bankable projects.

Similarly, the Managing Director of Sahara Power Group, Anthony Youdeowei, noted that addressing energy deficits requires substantial capital for distribution infra-

structure alongside clear tariff frameworks to ensure investor returns.

Providing an international trade perspective, the Deputy High Commissioner of Canada to Nigeria, Carlos Rojas-Arbulú, stated that while bilateral merchandise trade between both nations has surpassed \$3bn, global capital remains highly selective, prioritising transparent data and bankable feasibility studies over general market potential.

Suspected herders ambush Benue DPO, kill two policemen

MAKURDI

Suspected armed herders have ambushed the entourage of the Divisional Police Officer in Ayilamo, Logo Local Government Area of Benue State, killing two police officers.

The latest attack occurred on Monday evening, barely days after suspected herders reportedly killed four policemen and seven residents in the same community.

Sources in the community told our correspondent that the DPO, who had travelled to Makurdi on official duty, was returning to Ayilamo when his entourage was ambushed by the armed assailants.

One of the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the victims were

among newly deployed Mobile Police officers in the area.

He said, "At about 6pm on Monday, some newly deployed Mobile Police officers to Ayilamo community were attacked and killed.

"The incident occurred while the officers were on their way from Ayilamo to escort the Divisional Police Officer, who was returning to the community from Makurdi."

The latest incident came barely four days after suspected armed herders attacked Ayilamo community, killing four police officers and seven residents.

Confirming the latest attack, the spokesperson for the Benue State Police Command, DSP Peter Aondongu, said two officers in the DPO's entourage were killed.

Four vehicles crash on Lagos-Ibadan expressway, worsens gridlock

LAGOS

A multiple-vehicle crash involving three trucks and a car has occurred at Otedola, on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, inward Berger, Lagos State.

The Lagos State Traffic Management Authority disclosed this in a post on its X handle on Wednesday.

According to LASTMA, the crash occurred shortly before the Otedola Bridge, with its officers mobilising to the scene to commence rescue and evacuation operations.

"A multiple-vehicle accident involving three trucks and a car has occurred at Otedola, just before the bridge inward Berger.

"Our officers have promptly mobilised to the scene to commence necessary interventions, including rescue and evacuation

operations. Personnel of the Nigerian Police Force and other relevant first responders are also on the ground to support and facilitate the operations," the agency stated.

According to the traffic agency, the incident had resulted in a traffic backlog stretching to the Toll Gate.

It added that its personnel were managing traffic in the area to reduce the impact of the crash and restore normal vehicular movement.

"Traffic management efforts are ongoing to mitigate the impact and restore normal vehicular movement," the agency said.

The fresh crash came as motorists and commuters on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway are still grappling with the aftermath of a multiple-vehicle crash at the Kara Bridge on Tuesday, which leaves traffic severely disrupted amid ongoing repair works on the bridge.



COURTESY VISIT:

From Left: His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, The Oba of Benin, flanked by Senator Abdulaziz Yari, Director-General of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu 2027 Campaign Council and leader of delegation, Edo State Deputy Governor Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa (3rd left) with Senator George Akume, former Governor Benue State (Right) during a Courtesy visit to the Palace of Oba of Benin

Fitch flags Nigeria's \$5bn TRS over debt, liquidity risks

LAGOS

Fitch Ratings has warned that Nigeria's proposed \$5bn Total Return Swap (TRS) could introduce significant risks to the country's debt management, liquidity position and future debt restructuring.

The warning was contained in Fitch's latest special report, Sovereign Total Return Swaps and Repo Transactions: Q&A 2026, published on 14 September.

The rating agency said while TRS arrangements can give sovereigns access to alternative sources of funding

and help diversify their financing base, their complexity could make it harder for investors and policymakers to determine the full extent of a government's financial obligations.

Nigeria's proposed transaction with First Abu Dhabi Bank involves using local-currency government bonds as collateral to obtain hard-currency liquidity.

Fitch said the arrangement appears to be driven largely by Nigeria's desire to diversify its funding sources and manage liquidity rather than by an inability to access conventional international capital markets.

The agency identified transparency, liquidity management and creditor recovery as the three major risks associated with sovereign TRS transactions.

On transparency, Fitch said the limited disclosure of some TRS agreements could make it difficult to assess contingent liabilities and contractual obligations that may arise under stress.

The rating agency said provisions relating to margin calls and early termination could create additional liabilities for a sovereign at a time when its finances are already under pressure.

The liquidity risk is particularly significant because the collateral used in such transactions can lose value during periods of market stress, Fitch said.

Where governments pledge their own bonds, a decline in bond prices could trigger margin calls or force early termination of the transaction, potentially creating additional pressure on foreign exchange and liquidity when both are already constrained.

Fitch also warned that TRS arrangements could change the distribution of losses among creditors if a sovereign eventually needs to restructure its debt.

Ex-labour leader seeks oil buffer to stabilise petrol prices

KANO

Nigeria needs a mechanism to absorb exceptional increases in global oil prices while the government tackles the structural costs of petrol production and distribution, veteran labour leader and oil and gas practitioner Mustapha Wali has said.

A former National Vice President of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff

Association of Nigeria, Wali, in a non-partisan policy document, 'Beyond Petroleum Subsidy: A Petroleum Price Moderator and Downstream Transformation Framework for Nigeria,' made available to journalists in Kano on Tuesday, proposed the establishment of a petroleum price moderator backed by a ring-fenced stabilisation reserve.

He argued that Nigeria's recurring petrol price crisis could not be sustainably addressed by restoring the old subsidy regime or relying on

ad hoc government interventions whenever pump prices became politically or economically difficult.

The proposed reserve, he said, would accumulate funds when international petroleum prices were favourable and deploy them when prices rose beyond predetermined thresholds.

"This is not a return to the old subsidy regime. It is a counter-cyclical stabilisation mechanism designed to protect consumers from exceptional shocks while Nigeria

tackles the structural causes of high petroleum costs," he said.

Wali called for a forensic review of the existing petroleum pricing template covering crude supply, refining, freight, foreign exchange, financing, pipelines, storage, depots, transportation and distribution.

According to him, the review should distinguish between genuinely unavoidable costs and those that are excessive, reducible, unnecessary or capable of being addressed through regulation.

NEWS**FOREIGN****South African president vows justice as more women bodies found near Johannesburg**

South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa has vowed that "no stone will be left unturned" in finding those behind the killings of several women in and around the town of Kempton Park, north-east of Johannesburg, over the last two months.

Two more bodies were discovered on Tuesday and police say their investigation now includes the deaths of eight women, most of whom have been found either partially or fully naked.

"These incidents are causing fear and uncertainty in our communities, and especially among women," the president said.

Police say they are not linking the deaths to a serial killer at this stage, but are investigating the possibility that a group of people is behind the killings.

"[It] could be that it's a copy-cat crime that is happening right here but so far, no linkages as yet," police spokesperson Brig Athlenda Mathe said.

One arrest has been made in connection with the discovery of the first body. The person is still in police custody.

The police have also offered a reward of 400,000 rand (\$24,500; £18,000) for "information that could lead to a breakthrough in the investigation".

So far only two of the eight women have been identified.

South Africa calls gender violence a national disaster after protests

I built this 'AI aunt' for women after family tragedy in South Africa

On Monday, police said that one of them was Elizabeth Moselakgomo, a runner whose disappearance last week sparked a

frantic and public search for her.

President Ramaphosa said he had directed that the cases be prioritised: "Our law enforcement agencies are working urgently to establish the facts, keep communities safe and bring the perpetrator or perpetrators to justice."

South Africa experiences some of the world's highest levels of gender-based violence (GBV), with the rate at which women are killed five times higher than the global average, according to UN Women.

The discoveries of the bodies have sparked outrage and fear across the country, with many criticising the authorities for failing to adequately protect women.

Moselakgomo was identified by her relatives on Monday after her body was discovered on Saturday. It was the 38-year-old's young daughter who raised the alarm about her disappearance after she failed to return from her daily run last Wednesday.

The body of the first woman was found in mid-July, the second in late August - the others were discovered this month, three since Monday.

On Tuesday morning, police said that the body of woman found on 7 September in a town near Kempton Park was also being included.

"After noticing that there are bodies being picked up, we went back to our police stations... and unfortunately it came to light that a body of a female in her late 20s was observed in a river next to a mall," Maj-Gen Fred Kekana, acting police chief for Gauteng province, said at a briefing.

Legendary Nigerian actor Olu Jacobs dies aged 84

Olu Jacobs, one of Nigeria's best known actors, whose career spanned several decades across theatre, television and film, has died at the age of 84.

His wife, veteran actress Joke Silva, announced his death and asked for privacy while the family mourns.

Silva announced his passing in a statement describing the celebrated actor as "The Lion of Lufodo" and saying his life was "well lived and fought".

Some of his notable films include *My Kingdom*, *Covert Operation* and *One Fine Day*.

He was regarded as one of the father figures of Nollywood, as Nigeria's film industry in known, commanding widespread respect and admiration across the country.

"We call on all bloggers and social media influencers to respect our family's privacy at this time," Silva said in a statement.

Born on 11 July 1942, Jacobs was trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London before embarking on a career that included appearances in

British television productions and international films.

He later became one of the defining figures of Nigeria's film industry, appearing in numerous Nigerian productions and earning recognition for his commanding screen presence and versatility.

His career spanned more than five decades, during which he received several major honours, including the African Movie Academy Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role and lifetime achievement honours.

In 2011, Jacobs was conferred with the national honour of Member of the Order of the Federal Republic (MFR) in recognition of his contribution to the Nigerian film industry.

Jacobs and Silva jointly established the Lufodo Group and Lufodo Academy of Performing Arts, contributing not only to film and television but also to developing and training performing artists in Nigeria.

In recent years, Jacobs had largely stayed away from the public spotlight due to ill-health.

Saudi Arabia says it shot down Houthi drone south of Mecca

Saudi Arabia intercepted and destroyed a Houthi drone south of the Islamic holy city of Mecca on Tuesday evening, according to the spokesman of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

Turki al-Maliki said the targeting of Mecca, which is the home of Islam's most sacred shrine and the focal point of the Hajj pilgrimage, was a "disgraceful act".

The 57-nation Organisation of Islamic Cooperation said attacks on Mecca and Medina

province, where Islam's second holiest shrine is located, constituted an "unacceptable and intolerable transgression".

But the Houthis, an Iran-backed armed group that controls much of western Yemen, denied targeting Mecca and accused Saudi Arabia of "fabrications and lies".

"There is no threat whatsoever from Yemen to the holy sites. Our operations target their oil facilities and military bases, and are far removed from the holy places," military spokesman

Yahya Sarea said.

Sarea added that the Houthis had launched drones and missiles at Saudi Arabia in retaliation for more than 450 Saudi air strikes on their territory over the past week.

He also said they had shot down a Saudi fighter jet over Marib province.

There was no immediate response from the Saudi-led coalition, but Maj Gen Maliki did say that its forces would "not hesitate to take the necessary and deterrent measures against the terrorist Houthi militia and its hostile and terrorist behaviour".

On Tuesday, Saudi authori-

ties issued a series of brief security alerts for incoming projectiles in a number of western areas, including Mecca and Jeddah, the kingdom's second largest city.

Meanwhile, the US embassy in Saudi Arabia issued a "reconsider travel" advisory, warning that Houthi attacks had targeted cities, infrastructure, airports, military bases, diplomatic facilities and energy facilities.

The Houthis have recently seized control of large swathes of Yemen's Red Sea coast from Saudi-backed pro-government forces.



VISIT:

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman in Cairo for talks with President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

Kosovo's former president sentenced to 25 years for war crimes

The former president of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, has been sentenced to 25 years in prison after being found guilty of war crimes.

A hearing at The Hague on Wednesday sentenced the 58-year-old for crimes during Kosovo's independence war against Serbia in the 1990s, in which more than 10,000 people died.

He was convicted after a three-

year trial of crimes including murder, illegal arrests, torture and cruel treatment. A number of other allegations against him were not proven.

Thaci was a co-founder and commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a group that fought for independence. He is regarded as a hero in Kosovo.

He was accused of killing nearly 100 people and of committing other atrocities including

enforced disappearances.

Thaci was facing trial alongside three former commanders of the KLA who faced similar charges.

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was set up in the early 1990s as a militant group of ethnic Albanians, in what was then a province of Serbia, and during the war is alleged to have carried out attacks on the region's ethnic Serb minority.

Thaci became Kosovo's first

prime minister when it declared independence in 2008. He later became president but resigned in 2020 to face the charges in The Hague.

Thousands of people gathered in Kosovo to watch the verdict on large screens as they were handed down.

In the capital, Pristina, photographs and videos showed people in tears as they learned of the verdict.

Riyadh and Cairo call for free and secure shipping in Red Sea

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi called for free and secure navigation in the Red Sea during talks in Cairo on Tuesday, as the kingdom vowed to respond "firmly" to attacks by Yemen's Houthis.

The regional powers discussed the threat posed by the Iran-backed group's control over the Bab al-Mandab Strait, a key shipping route vital to both Saudi oil exports and Egypt's Suez Canal revenues.

They called for "ensuring the freedom and security of maritime navigation" through the straits of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandab, the Egyptian presidency said, adding that Sisi affirmed Egypt's support for

measures taken by the kingdom "to protect its security and stability."

The Bab al-Mandab, the southern gateway to the Red Sea and the Suez, has become essential to Saudi oil exports this year after Iran blocked the Strait of Hormuz during the Middle East war, throttling shipments via the Gulf.

Last week, the Houthis seized control of all of Yemen's Red Sea coast and the Bab al-Mandab, threatening the last direct route to Asian markets for the world's largest oil exporter.

Since the Houthis declared a naval blockade on Saudi Arabia in July, the kingdom has relied more heavily on Egypt to export oil, chiefly through its Sumed pipeline.

Crude is transported from the Saudi Red Sea port of Yanbu to Egypt's Ain Sokhna, and carried overland through the pipeline to the eastern Mediterranean at Sidi Kerir.

But a recent drone attack, which Riyadh said was launched from Iraq, forced it to shut the East-West pipeline that feeds Yanbu, pushing global oil prices above the \$100 threshold.

'Reassurance'

Disruption to shipping through Bab al-Mandab could hit Egypt with heavy losses too, with Cairo reliant on Suez Canal tolls for crucial foreign revenue.

Revenues from the waterway are currently around half of what they were before the Houthis first started attacking ships in the Red Sea in 2023, a campaign they said

was in solidarity with Palestinians during Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza.

Egypt recorded \$4.67 billion in Suez Canal revenues for the 2025/2026 fiscal year, down from \$8.8 billion in 2022/2023.

IMF PortWatch data analysed by AFP also showed that average daily transits through the Suez remain at little more than half their pre-Gaza War level.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty said last week that Cairo's Suez Canal losses stood at \$11 billion.

According to Mirette Mabrouk of the Washington-based Middle East Institute, the Saudi crown prince "will be looking for reassurance that, if necessary, he will have Egypt's support" in securing Bab al-Mandab.

FOREIGN

NEWS



Mark Carney (left) walks alongside European Parliament President Roberta Metsola (middle) and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (right)

Iran war has led to US munitions shortfalls, Pentagon inspector confirms

The US defence department's inspector general says the war with Iran has led to "shortfalls" in munitions and a bottleneck in re-supply, contradicting President Donald Trump who has repeatedly denied the US is facing shortages.

Trump has claimed US munitions supplies are "virtually unlimited" and said reporting otherwise is "fake news".

But the independent watchdog said the US spent more than \$22 billion on munitions from February through to June, leading to "strategic inventory shortfalls".

When asked about the watchdog's report, the White House said the US had "more

than enough" munitions.

The report provides a first-of-its-kind, independent glimpse into US weapons stockpiles, data that is typically classified.

Previous estimates have painted a dire picture of the US shortages.

Over the course of the war, US forces have expended vast quantities of both long-range ground attack systems and the air and missile defences used to intercept incoming Iranian attacks.

A late July estimate from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, or CSIS, found that stocks of some interceptors - such as the Patriot missile and Terminal High Altitude Area

Defense, or THAAD - were significantly depleted, in some cases by more than half.

The inspector general's report did not disclose exactly how many of the weapons remain.

It did, however, note the inventory shortfalls and reveal "industrial base bottlenecks" for munitions resupply.

The report added that the defence department is now working to "streamline procurement processes and production lead times" to address the shortages and "respond rapidly to a contingency".

The White House has rejected the watchdog's assessment.

"The United States military

has more than enough munitions, ammo, and stockpiles to serve all of the Commander-in-Chief's strategic goals and beyond," spokeswoman Anna Kelly said in a statement on Tuesday.

Trump and other administration officials have also sought to cast reports of shortages as false and "treasonous".

EU chief backs plan for Canada to become 'associate member'

The president of the European Commission has backed proposals for Canada to become the EU's first "associate member".

Ursula von der Leyen told the European Parliament on Wednesday she wanted to work on "opening the door" for Canada, which would involve closer ties on various key sectors.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney last week spoke of seeking a "unique alliance" with the EU. The country currently faces tense relations with the US, compounded by an intensifying dispute over trade.

Without mentioning US President Donald Trump by name, von der Leyen said offering Canada some sort of EU membership was "not a partnership against anyone else, but for our common strength".

She added: "Partnerships are a strategic choice for Europe. But they also respond to the fracture in the international rules-based system".

Carney was in attendance at the annual key note speech in Strasbourg, and is due to address the parliament on Thursday.

Trade talks between Canada and the US collapsed last month, sparking a series of new tariff measures. Trump's repeated talk of making Canada a "51st state" has also helped to fuel the feud between the North American neighbours.

Carney's new love-in with

EU has everything to do with Trump

Von der Leyen told the EU's State of the Union address that the bloc and Canada "see the world with the same eyes", including on topics ranging from AI, to climate change and geopolitics.

"And we have stood together: on Ukraine, on defence, on raw materials and on supply chains. But above all... Europe and Canada believe in democracy."

She did not give specific details on how any Canadian membership would work, but listed manufacturing, technology, AI, defence, energy, critical minerals and economic security as key areas for cooperation.

Von der Leyen said it was time to bring the EU's relationship with Canada to "the highest level possible"

Both she and other European leaders have found a reliable ally in Carney as they deal with similar problems.

In particular, they have faced Trump's aggressive use of tariffs and his threat to annex Greenland which is a sovereign territory of EU member Denmark.

But "associate membership" of the EU does not currently exist and the process, if agreed, could take years.

Earlier this year, Germany's Chancellor Friedrich Merz suggested - to a mixed reaction - that Ukraine could be granted this new status.

Journalist and pilot among three killed after news of helicopter crash in LA

Photojournalist Eliana Moreno and pilot George Marciniw have been named as being among three people killed after an NBC Los Angeles helicopter crashed in the city's suburbs, the station has confirmed.

NBC Los Angeles said its NewsChopper4, which also operated for Telemundo 52, was in the area on Tuesday reporting on a deadly bus crash which killed two people.

Fire officials said an unidentified pedestrian was also killed, and two others were taken to hospital.

Tributes, including from the local news community, have started to come in led by the station's hosts, who called the victims "valued friends and colleagues". One CBS editor said their "hearts are shattered".

"That helicopter community is a small group of people, and

it's just devastating to know that this has happened to one of those people, to our friends and our colleagues at NBC4," said Mike Rogers, CBS Los Angeles assignment editor.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass said she was "absolutely devastated by the loss of life in Chatsworth tonight".

"My heart is with the families and loved ones of those we lost in the tragic bus collision and helicopter crash," she wrote on X, while the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) similarly extended its "thoughts and prayers" to all those affected.

The news helicopter was in the area to report on a bus crash in which two people were killed and six others were injured.

The aircraft went down just before 19:00 local time (01:00 BST) between two commercial buildings in the Chatsworth neighbourhood, an

LAFD spokesperson told the BBC.

Fire from the crash spread to four vehicles and two storage containers, and more than 70 firefighters were deployed to the scene, the LAFD added.

During emotional live coverage on NBC4, veteran news anchor Colleen Williams confirmed it was the local news station's helicopter that crashed.

"We knew it was a news chopper. We knew we'd lost contact with our people out there, and we've just received confirmation," Williams said.

Earlier, LAFD Captain Branden Silverman told the local affiliate of the BBC's US partner CBS that the third victim in the crash appeared to have been on the ground.

"That person was declared deceased on scene," Silverman said.

At least 20 killed after war-damaged Gaza building collapses

At least 20 people have been killed, including five children, and dozens are missing after a war-damaged building collapsed in the Gaza Strip, according to rescue teams.

Videos showed the search for bodies and survivors continuing in the rubble of the six-storey building in the Tal al-Hawa area of Gaza City.

Locals said some 10 families had been living in the apartments despite warnings that they were unsafe.

Members of the Hamas-run Civil Defence rescue service said they had initially been working with "empty hands" due to tight Israeli restrictions on equipment allowed into Gaza.

However, they have since been able to borrow some heavy machinery from UN agencies and Egyptian relief workers.

"We are still hearing voices from under the rubble, so there is still hope to find people," said Raed al-Dahshan, the director of the Civil Defence in Gaza City.

He added: "The limited availability of shelter options forced residents to move into this building, believing it was safe. However, at one point it col-

lapsed entirely, tragically crashing down on people as they slept."

A woman living in a tent nearby, Umm Mohammed Bakrun, said she had been talking to her son when the building collapsed suddenly in the early hours of Wednesday.

"It felt like an earthquake. There was a loud sound and I couldn't stand up. Stones rained down on us and when I looked outside I saw a lot of dust," she told the BBC. "Within minutes, there were screams everywhere."

Another witness, Mansour Abu Mohammed, said the building collapsed "in a few seconds".

"Every day, a stone or a few stones would fall from it, but the people inside couldn't find anywhere else to live. I used to live next door to it and you could see that it was tilting to one side."

The head of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Gaza office, Alessandro Mrakic, told reporters at the scene that between 70 and 100 people were believed to be trapped under the rubble.

"The situation, as you see, is tragic because we don't have the equipment and machinery that

is needed. There are actually people digging with their bare hands," he said.

Mrakic also warned that approximately 400 other war-damaged buildings across Gaza were at imminent risk of collapse, particularly as winter approaches.

"We need support, most importantly with machinery, equipment, among others. Our colleagues here don't have [engine] oil and spare parts to continue to work with all the equipment that is still in Gaza."

The UN's humanitarian relief co-ordinator, Ramiz Alakbarov, also called on Israeli authorities to approve deliveries of heavy machinery for rescue operations, as well as tents, tarpaulins and other non-food items for displaced people ahead of the winter rains.

Israel says its restrictions are meant to keep equipment out of the hands of Palestinian armed groups.

About 1.2 million people in Gaza are currently living in tents or makeshift shelters

An estimated 80% of all structures in Gaza have been destroyed or damaged during the war between Israel and Hamas, according to the UN.

FEATURES

Beyond Social Media: Why youth must read again

Salihu Rukayya Saidu

The habit of reading, once regarded as a cornerstone of learning and personal development, appears to be declining among many Nigerian youths. While technology has made information more accessible than ever before, it has also changed how young people spend their time. Instead of reading books, newspapers and other educational materials, many now devote hours to social media, entertainment and short-form digital content. This trend has raised concerns among educators, parents and policymakers about its long-term impact on education and national development.

Reading is more than an academic exercise. It broadens knowledge, improves communication skills, develops critical thinking and exposes individuals to different ideas and cultures. Students who cultivate the habit of reading regularly are better positioned to perform well in school and make informed decisions in everyday life.

However, the growing attraction to social media has made it difficult for many young people to maintain concentration for long periods. Platforms that provide short videos, quick messages and constantly changing content can make a lengthy book appear less attractive. As a result, some youths may find it difficult to sit down and read for an extended period without checking their phones.

Several factors have contributed to the decline in reading culture. One major cause is the growing influence of social media and digital entertainment.

Many young people spend a significant portion of their free time on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and X, leaving little time for books or educational materials. The widespread use of smartphones has also made instant entertainment more attractive than sustained reading.

Another challenge is the pressure of Nigeria's education system has also played a role. Many students read mainly to pass examinations rather than to gain knowledge or develop lifelong learning habits. Once examinations are over, reading often becomes less of a priority.

Another challenge is the pres-

increasingly important. A strong reading habit can help young people develop the analytical skills needed to question information instead of accepting everything they see online.

Reversing this trend requires a collective effort. Parents should cultivate reading hab-

the solution. E-books, educational websites, digital libraries and audiobooks provide convenient and affordable access to learning materials. Young people should be encouraged to use digital platforms not only for entertainment but also for education and self-development.



Students reading

Another contributing factor is the high cost of books and limited access to well-equipped libraries. In many communities, public libraries are either unavailable or poorly maintained, making it difficult for students to access quality reading materials. Some schools also lack functional libraries, while many homes do not encourage regular reading beyond classroom assignments.

The examination-oriented na-

ture faced by young people in their daily lives. Academic demands, work, family responsibilities and financial difficulties can leave little time for leisure reading. For some students, getting the required textbooks for school is already difficult, making it harder to develop an interest in reading other materials.

The consequences of this decline are far-reaching. Poor reading habits can weaken students' writing and communication skills, reduce creativity and limit their ability to think critically. It may also affect academic performance and reduce opportunities for innovation and research. In the long run, a society with a weak reading culture may struggle to produce professionals capable of driving scientific, technological and economic development.

A weak reading culture can also affect how young people understand information online. In an era when false information spreads rapidly through social media, the ability to read carefully, compare information and identify reliable sources has become

its at home by providing books and encouraging children to read from an early age. Parents can also lead by example. When children see their parents reading newspapers, books or other useful materials, they are more likely to develop an interest in reading.

Schools should strengthen library services, organize reading clubs and literary competitions, and encourage students to read beyond their prescribed textbooks. Teachers can also introduce discussions about interesting books and allow students to recommend materials to their classmates. This can make reading feel less like punishment and more like an enjoyable activity.

Government at all levels should invest in public libraries and ensure that educational resources are accessible to learners across the country. Libraries should be properly equipped with current books, internet facilities and comfortable reading spaces that can attract young people.

Technology, which is often blamed for the decline in reading, can also become part of

Social media itself can also be used to promote reading. Book reviews, literary discussions, educational videos and online reading communities can encourage young people to discover new books. Authors, schools and youth organisations can take advantage of these platforms to make reading more appealing to the younger generation.

Young people themselves must also take responsibility. Developing a reading habit does not require spending many hours with a book every day. Starting with 15 or 20 minutes daily can gradually build the habit. Choosing subjects that genuinely interest the reader can also make the process easier and more enjoyable.

Reading should not be seen as something meant only for students preparing for examinations. It is a lifelong habit that can benefit people in almost every profession. Entrepreneurs need knowledge, journalists need strong language skills, professionals need to keep learning, and leaders need the ability to understand different perspectives.

" Reading is more than an academic exercise. It broadens knowledge, improves communication skills, develops critical thinking and exposes individuals to different ideas and cultures. Students who cultivate the habit of reading regularly are better positioned to perform well in school and make informed decisions in everyday life.

Sports

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

Rangers Ladies will play in NWFL – Amobi Ezeaku

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Rangers International General Manager, Amobi Ezeaku, has announced that the club's female team will participate in the upcoming season of the Nigerian Women's Football League (NWFL).

He made the disclosure during a press briefing in Enugu yesterday, saying the club will soon commence open screening for players interested in making the women's team ahead of the new season.

He also confirmed that Coach Favour Anieke, will continue to take charge of the female team. Anieke previously

guided the side during the championship but could not lead the team to qualification.

According to the Rangers General Manager, the club has also acquired the league slot of Dannaz ladies of Lagos, with about 80 percent of the discussions surrounding the deal already concluded.

Ezeaku assured that the female team would enjoy the same level of attention, support and recognition given to the Rangers men's team, stressing that the club's ambition is to build a strong and competitive women's side.

He further disclosed that the Awka city Stadium in Awka, Anambra State, remains an op-

tion for the team's home matches, but maintained that the club's preference is for the women to play at the same venues as the men wherever possible.

Ezeaku added that Rangers are also making plans to fully integrate the women's team into the club's structure once the renovation of the Nnamdi Azikiwe Stadium, popularly known as the Cathedral, is completed.

The development marks a major step in Rangers International's plans to expand its football structure and establish a competitive women's team capable of representing the club at the highest level of Nigerian women's football and the continent of Africa.



RANGERS INTERNATIONAL

Volleyball: Nigeria records first win at 2026 African Nations Championship

Nigeria began their campaign at the 2026 African Men's Volleyball Nations Championship on a winning note after defeating Chad 3-0 (25-17, 25-17, 25-6) in Tunisia yesterday.

Nigeria are targeting the sole ticket for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games, while also aiming to secure qualification for the 2027 FIVB World Championship.

The Zone 3 champions dominated the opening set, defeating Chad 25-17 before repeating the same scoreline in the second set.

The team completed the job in the third set, winning 25-16 to seal their first victory of the championship.

Speaking after the victory, head coach of Nigeria's men's volleyball team, Ryan Masajedi praised his players for executing the game plan against Chad.

The Japanese coach said the team would not be carried away by the victory as they shift their attention to their next group game against Algeria.

Masajedi said: "I am excited that the players played according to the instructions given to them; it shows our training programme worked out."

"They executed the game plan, and we had no issues beating Chad in our first match."

"We'll shift focus to our next match against Algeria tomorrow (Thursday) and will not be carried away by the victory. We have to top our group to have a favourable pairing in the next round."

Masajedi also applauded Nigerians back home for their support and cooperation towards the team.

He urged the supporters to continue believing in the players as Nigeria pursue their targets at the championship.

Powered by: Nigeria Customs Service, National Sports Commission and Nigeria Volleyball Federation.



NIGERIA VOLLEYBALL TEAM

PremiumTrust Bank Abuja City International half Marathon returns November 7 as registration opens Sept. 18

The third edition of the PremiumTrust Bank Abuja City International Half Marathon is set to hold on Saturday, November 7, 2026, with registration for participants scheduled to open on Friday, September 18.

Organised by Nilayo Sports Management Limited, the 2026 edition promises another exciting display of athletics, fitness and sports tourism as runners from across Nigeria and beyond

converge on the nation's capital. Registration will be available online, while runners who prefer physical registration can do so at the Old Parade Ground, Abuja.

The organisers are encouraging prospective participants to register early once the portal opens, giving them sufficient time to train and prepare for the 21-kilometre race.

The event continues the successful partnership between PremiumTrust Bank, the sole

sponsor of the marathon, and Nilayo Sports Management Limited, one of Nigeria's leading road race organisers.

Since its inception, the partnership has helped establish the Abuja City International Half Marathon as one of Nigeria's leading road racing events, attracting elite athletes, recreational runners, fitness enthusiasts and corporate organisations.

The November 7 race will once again turn Abuja into a celebration of athletic excellence, healthy living and sports tourism, with organisers promising enhanced athlete services, world-class race logistics, entertainment, medical support, security and spectator engagement.

Speaking on the upcoming event, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of PremiumTrust Bank, Mr. Emmanuel Efe Efemienim, CON, FCIB, reaffirmed the bank's commitment to sports development and nation building.



PREMIUMTRUST BANK MARATHON

Dutch Pundit blown away with Arokodare success at Ajax

Former Netherlands midfielder, Marciano Vink has been impressed with Nigeria forward, Tolu Arokodare achievements since joining Ajax in the summer.

Arokodare joined Ajax on a season loan deal from Wolves after falling out of favor with the English side manager in the summer.

Vink said Arokodare surprised him with his masterclass performance after joining the club which he never expected such instant impact at the club.

"I didn't expect him to make such an immediate impact," he said.

The football pundit expects Arokodare to improve with his headers while he commends his ball playing ability despite being a towering striker.

He however recalled a game where the Super Eagles star controlled the ball with his chest and used his left leg to have a shot at goal which went wide.

"Only the heading could be a bit better, but that move reveals

a lot. He can really play football well for such a strong, big player.

"That chance for Tolu, which he controlled on his chest and then shot wide with his left. He took it a bit too much on the outside of his foot this time, causing it to go wide."

Vink hailed the big forward fierce approach to goal which reveals the striker's footballing class.

"But that is really impressive, in tight space for such a big and strong guy. It's a good thing the ball didn't go straight into the top corner, because then it would be the goal of the year."

"That whole move reveals so much footballing class."

Arokodare has found the back of the net five times in eight matches across all competitions this season for Ajax.

The Dutch giants have played five matches this season and have gotten three wins, one loss and a draw. Their recent win was the 5-1 humiliation of Willem II in the Eredivisie.



TOLU AROKODARE

SPORTS



U-20 Women W/Cup: We are ready for England, Falconets' hat-trick heroine Ramotalahi

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Nigeria's female youth national team, Falconets' striker, Ramotalahi Olaitan Kareem is talking



FALCONETS

tough ahead of the squad's potentially explosive clash with England at the ongoing FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup in Poland, as she declared that they are ready for the game.

The squad is buoyed by memories of how Nigeria defeated England en route to a spot in the 2010 competition's final, which they lost to Germany, while still basking in the euphoria of their stunning 10-1 demolition of New Caledonia.

Kareem, who hit a hat-trick during that encounter (17th minute penalty, 27th and 64th), led the way for other goals for Moses Aduku's team from Rebecca Adegbemile (19, 74), Seimeyeha Janet Akekoromowei (23), Winner Onajite David (pen 60, 75) and Tosin Rafiu (70).

The Falconets dominated from the outset and made the breakthrough when Rafiu

tricked her way past three opponents to win a penalty, which Kareem converted, after which headers from Adegbemile and Akekoromowei took the game beyond New Caledonia.

Kareem soon added a fourth for Aduku's squad, then sealed her hat-trick, while David and Adegbemile completed their braces, following which Rafiu scored a beauty from outside the box, all setting tongues wagging in Poland, with many fans now tipping Nigeria to shock England.

As Thursday's game draws closer, Kareem has affirmed that she and her colleagues have nothing to be scared of, as the



HON. OBINNA ONYEOCHA

AFN president Tonobok Okowa calls for smooth Visa processes ahead of International competitions

President of the Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN), Chief Tonobok Okowa has made a clarion call to foreign missions in the country to make processing of entry visas to their nations smooth for athletes who are qualified to participate in competitions there.

Okowa spoke against the backdrop of difficulties faced at Hungary's Embassy by Nigerian athletes billed to attend the recent World Athletics Ultimate Championship in Budapest, as visa issues eventually led to the 100m mixed relay team missing out.

Okowa, who is also a senior vice-president of Confederation of African Athletics (CAA), noted that it started with a delay by the local organising committee in sending visa-support letters to the Hungarian Embassy in Nigeria, and all efforts by officials failed to save the day.

He acknowledged interventions from National Sports Commission (NSC) chairman, Mallam Shehu Dikko, Nigeria Olympic Committee (NOC) president, Engineer Habu Gumel and prominent Nigerian sports personalities, who tried to solve the impasse, but all to no avail.

However, the AFN president enthused that, on the whole, Nigeria's outing at the championship in Budapest was satisfying, because of what he described as an encouraging performance by a contingent of some young athletes alongside already established ones.

Okowa also promised that lessons learnt from the visa processing hiccups and other logistics matters will help

in guiding against any recurrence, especially heading into next year's World Athletics Championship, which he declared is the AFN's priority.

"I am very proud of the athletes and the way they represented Nigeria in Budapest. They showed courage, determination and the right competitive spirit, despite the circumstances surrounding the team's participation.



TONOBOK OKOWA

States FA chairmen reject normalisation committee as Gombe FA Chairman speaks after FIFA/CAF meeting

The position of State Football Association chairmen has taken a significant turn as delegates representing the states reportedly rejected the proposed idea of a Normalisation Committee for Nigerian football.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting with the FIFA/CAF delegation, Gombe State FA Chairman, Yakubu Sarma, addressed the concerns surrounding the current situation and the future administration of Nigerian football.

The position coming from the State FA leadership is significant

because State Football Associations remain an important part of the football administration structure, responsible for grassroots development, competitions and the identification of young talents across the country.

The rejection of a Normalisation Committee also raises important questions about the need to preserve the established football governance structures and ensure that any transition or intervention complies with the statutes and regulations governing Nigerian football and the international

football system.

For many stakeholders, the meeting with FIFA/CAF provides an opportunity for the concerns of Nigerian football administrators to be heard directly and for the future of the game to be handled through due process, consultation and respect for football governance principles.

Yakubu Sarma's statement therefore adds another important voice to the ongoing debate, particularly as State FA chairmen seek clarity on their roles and the direction Nigerian football should take.



FIFA/CAF delegation, with Mallam Shehu Dikko at Gombe State FIFA/CAF meeting

Imo sports commissioner releases strategic restructure plan as unbeaten Heartland Comets FC present NLO trophy

It was a moment of triumph and celebration at the Ministry of Sports Development as the management and players of Heartland Comets FC formally presented their recently won Nationwide League One (NLO) Division Two championship trophy to the Honorable Commissioner for Sports Development, Hon. Obinna Onyeocha.

On behalf of the Executive Governor of Imo State, His Excellency Distinguished Senator Hope Uzodinma, the Commissioner commended the squad for their outstanding performance and confirmed that arrangements are under-

way for a formal presentation of the trophy to the Governor.

Hon. Onyeocha noted that Heartland Comets FC built on their previous success as state league champions and playoff victors in Ekiti State by delivering an exceptional, unbeaten campaign in this year's NLO Division Two competition.

The team executed a flawless 7-match run without a single defeat, gathering 15 points, scoring 25 goals, and conceding only 5. Their dominant run featured convincing victories over top-tier opposition, including a 3-0 win over Phase One FC, 3-0 against Emmanuel FC, 6-0 against

Bayelsa United ex-players donate Jerseys ahead of NNL season, urge stakeholders, IOCs to support club

Former players of Bayelsa United have donated a set of jerseys to the club to support its preparations for the 2026/27 Nigeria National League (NNL) season.

Presenting the jerseys, leader of the ex-players and former Chairman of Bayelsa United, Dr. Ebiki Timitimi, said the gesture was their little way of contributing to the club's campaign as it gears up for pre-season activities, including friendly matches.

Dr. Timitimi said the former players remain committed to the growth and development of the club and appealed to critics

to be constructive in their assessments.

"As ex-players of the team, we deemed it fit to support the team in our own little way. So, we decided to give a set of jerseys to the club because very soon they will start their pre-season friendlies," he said.

"Everyone is entitled to their opinions, but we should criticize constructively by engaging the management to hear their side of the story before jumping to conclusions and criticizing them publicly without proper knowledge of the subject matter," he added.