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# ngateNews

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## SGF Supports E-Registration As Benue APC Membership Swells

The membership of the All Progressives Congress, APC in Benue State has surged dramatically following a directive from the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Senator George Akume, on Thursday, instructing party stakeholders to mobilise members for registration. The spokesperson for

the Austin Agada-led State Working Committee loyal to the SGF, Daniel Ihomun, told reporters on Sunday that the surge followed Akume's intervention. "The exercise started early January, but only about 33,000 members had registered because party members were initially reluctant. In some wards, state government agents were

members in their respective wards. Between Thursday and Saturday, the number of registered members on the portal jumped to over 122,000, and the figure continues to rise," Ihomun said. Confirming the figures, the spokesperson for the state caretaker committee loyal to Governor Alia, James Ornguga, said the portal recorded 122,000 registrations by

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## Three Benue Govt. Officials, Two Others In EfCC's Net Over N4.6 billion.LG Funds



At least, five officials of Benue State Government have been arrested and detained by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission for allegedly diverting N4.6 billion belonging to local government in the state. The EFCC has not

issued an official statement to this effect but a reliable source from within confirmed that the officials, including the Permanent Secretary Bureau for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Ayu Terna, and Bishop Dzungwe, Director of Finance and Administration,

alongside two consultants, Abba Adaudu and Nongomi Ter Joshua, have been in EFCC'S custody for the past two weeks for misappropriating N4.6 billion. The funds were allegedly siphoned through the consultants under the guise of consultancy fees for auditing local

government officials, pensioners and Primary Health Care personnel across all 23 local government councils in the state. Also, picked up was the Chairman of the Benue State chapter of Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON) and Chairman of Kwande

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## Army Blocks Cross-Border Bandit Routes Between Benue, Nasarawa

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# SGF Supports E-Registration As Benue APC ...

*Cont. from fp*

even chased out. Everything changed three days ago when our leader, the SGF, ordered stakeholders to mobilise Saturday night, adding that the number had likely increased by Sunday

afternoon. Ornguga also dismissed rumours of parallel registration exercises. "There is only one portal, and all data is consolidated there. The state government

deployed 870 agents, and the SGF sent 552 agents. There is no parallel registration; we are working together," he said. Both spokespeople confirmed that

Governor Alia and SGF Akume provided registration equipment to facilitate the process, including printers, laptops, phones, power banks, and Internet connections.

The exercise was flagged off on January 12, 2026, by Governor Hyacinth Alia, who registered first with number 001 at his country home in Vandekiya Local

Government Area. Five days later, on January 17, the party's caretaker committee chairman in the state, Benjamin Omale, also registered in Ohinmi LGA.

# Three Benue Govt. Officials, Two Others In EfCC's Net Over ...

*Cont. from fp*

Local Government Council, Hon. Vitalis Neji, who was also grilled for several hours at the EFCC zonal office. It was gathered that all 23 local government chairmen

had been invited to account for their roles in the scandal, while Directors of General Services and Treasurers have already been questioned. Further investigation

showed that one of the consultants is at large, while the government officials have promised to do restitution and return the funds they embezzled. It was also, gathered

that several calls were made to the fleeing consultant, but all he tells the commission is "I will come around." He has promised to be around on Wednesday (today).

The State Commissioner for Justice and Public Order and Attorney-General, Yangien Ornguga was instructed to secure release of the detained officials but all his efforts proved

abortive as the Commission insisted they must answer questions for their acts. However, the inside source said their bail was being processed on Monday even as they may face prosecution.

# NARD Threatens To Take BSUTH Crisis To Gov.'s Forum

## ...Says Govt, Hospital's Leadership Inaction Undermining Medical Training

The Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) has raised alarm over a deepening welfare and governance crisis at the Benue State University Teaching Hospital (BSUTH), Makurdi, warning that the situation threatens healthcare delivery, medical training, and industrial stability in Benue State.

In a press statement issued on 24 January 2026, NARD disclosed that resident doctors at BSUTH have been on industrial action since 1st November 2025, following the failure of the hospital management and the Benue State Government to pay 18 months' salary arrears, spanning June 2023 to November 2024.

According to the Association, the unpaid salaries are "legitimate earnings for services already rendered" and remain outstanding despite repeated engagements, formal correspondences, and assurances from relevant authorities. NARD accused the

management of BSUTH of worsening the crisis through what it described as "administrative actions that have worsened tensions, deepened hardship, and eroded trust within the institution," instead of addressing the core issues in dispute.

Among the actions highlighted is the issuance of eviction notices to resident doctors occupying staff quarters, which NARD said were served "under the pretext of renovation, at a time when salary arrears remain unpaid, thereby compounding the hardship faced by already distressed doctors."

The Association also condemned severe salary deductions in the January 2026 payroll, revealing that some resident doctors were left with "shockingly low take-home pay, reported as little as ₦158,660 and ₦27,326.59." NARD described the development as "unacceptable and indefensible."

Beyond welfare concerns, NARD

warned that the crisis is undermining BSUTH's mandate as a teaching hospital. It cited the suspension and disruption of postgraduate training accreditation processes, noting that such actions

"undermine the core academic and clinical mandate of a teaching hospital."

The Association further raised concerns over threats to terminate or truncate residency training on allegations of overstaying, without

due consideration for "systemic delays, manpower shortages, and prevailing national workforce challenges." Other grievances listed include the selective and arbitrary payment of allowances, the withholding of statutory

and earned entitlements, and the issuance of an internal memo directing the recovery of allowances allegedly paid in error, "even though many of these allowances are statutory components of resident doctors' remuneration."

NARD also faulted threats by management to apply the "No Work, No Pay" principle while the labour dispute remains unresolved, warning that such a move would further strain "already fragile

industrial relations."

In response to the situation, NARD said its leadership has resolved to formally write to the Governor of Benue State, escalate the matter to the Nigerian Governors' Forum (NGF), and

caution the Chief Medical Director of BSUTH against further actions "capable of worsening the situation."

The Association is demanding the immediate restoration

of all deducted allowances, prompt settlement of the 18 months' salary arrears, and a clear, verifiable commitment by BSUTH management to prioritize the welfare, remuneration, and retention of resident doctors. It also called for the immediate reversal of all actions aimed at terminating or truncating residency training.

NARD warned that failure to act could lead to escalation beyond the state level, including coordinated national protests, adding that while it remains open to dialogue, it will not waver in its obligation to protect its members.





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# State Of Rural Roads In Benue

**G**ood roads most often enhance economic growth, increased safety risks and social development. In the rural areas, good roads encourage massive transportation of farm produce to the markets for onward transportation to urban areas.

The absence of good roads on the other hand, exposes the people to challenges of poverty and insecurity.

Overtime, rural roads in Benue State are in pitiable conditions, begging for attention from the government that has since turn a deaf ear on them, focusing more on urban centres.

Our search reveals that, if not the people of Mbalom, Ikyorgbajir in Gwer Local Government struggling to connect with the markets to sell their products, it is the people of Mbakpa, Mbagwem in Gwer West Local Government Area, navigating the bad roads to locate the markets to sell farm products

vis-à-vis the rural communities in Otukpo, Gboko, Buruku, Guma, Kwande, Konshisha, Agatu, Obi Local Government Areas among others.

This has long reduced trade activities, minimized productivity, limited access to health care and education, and has put the affected communities on higher risk of insecurity.

The economic and social inequities have not only thwarted development of the rural areas but eroded the public trust of the rural people on public officials hence the rural voters' apathy in recent times in Benue State.

It is therefore, our opinion that the Benue State government should beam her searchlight on rural roads to connect the rural dwellers with the markets and towns as that alone would reduce the wave of insecurity and enhance the growth of the rural communities.

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## VISION

To stimulate sustainable development and progress through dissemination of balanced and truthful information.

## MISSION

We are positioned to become a leading national daily newspaper that sets agenda for national development by upholding best journalistic ethics so as to be objective in our reportage and accommodation of diverse views; also being fair to all so as to provide balanced and truthful information that will stimulate sustainable development.

# Benue Govt Enforces Strict Safety Rules On Waterways

The Benue State Government has announced a sweeping clampdown on unsafe practices on its waterways as part of efforts to curb the rising cases of boat accidents across the state.

Water transport remains a critical mode of movement for residents of Buruku, Guma and Agatu Local Government Areas, where rivers serve as major transit routes for both people and goods.

On Friday, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Security and Internal Affairs, Joseph Har, formally flagged off a strict enforcement drive aimed at improving safety standards on inland waterways.

The decision followed a heartbreaking incident on River Buruku, where a boat conveying students back to school capsized, leading to the death of six learners.

According to the state government, the new safety framework was jointly developed with the Buruku Local Government Council, relevant security agencies and the Traditional Council, with a view to standardising river transportation and protecting commuters.

Under the revised rules, wearing of life jackets has been made compulsory for every passenger, while operators have been warned against transporting more than one vehicle at a time, a practice blamed for frequent overloading and instability.

Explaining the policy, Har said, "The new protocols establish a rigorous safety standard for all river commuters and operators.

Under the revised guidelines, the use of life jackets is now strictly mandatory for all passengers, while boat operators are prohibited from carrying more than one vehicle at a time to prevent overloading."

The state government has also reviewed operating hours on the waterways, directing that all river movements must end by 8:00 p.m. daily. This represents a two-hour extension beyond the 6:00 p.m. limit earlier prescribed by the federal authorities.

Har further stressed the importance of safety consciousness, adding, "These measures also demand strict adherence to weather safety protocols and the adoption of internationally recognised standard practices for water transport to mitigate the risks of further tragedies".

Speaking to community leaders, marine workers and security operatives at the riverbank, the security adviser said the enforcement measures were designed to

rebuild public trust in ferry services pending the completion of an ongoing bridge project in the area.

As part of immediate actions, Har directed that all access roads to the riverbanks on both sides should be blocked

allow time for the procurement of sufficient equipment." The adviser lamented that life jackets

danger.

He therefore called on the council chairman and public-spirited individuals to support the initiative by donating new life jackets to safeguard lives.

To guarantee strict compliance, Har proposed the formation of a joint task force involving the Department of State Services (DSS), the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), the National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA) and the state-owned Civil Protection Guards (CPG).

Reacting, the Chairman of the Marine Union and the Tyoor Mbaapen both welcomed the government's intervention, admitting that earlier community-driven safety measures failed due to weak enforcement.



He disclosed that the decisions were reached during a high-powered security meeting presided over by the Special Adviser on Security and External Liaison, retired Col. Alex Igbaya Anshingu.

after 8:00 p.m. to enforce the new travel restrictions.

He also announced a grace period before full implementation, stating, "Full enforcement of the life jacket mandate will begin on February 1 to

previously provided through personal efforts, local government contributions and donations from private individuals had been destroyed by former union leaders, leaving commuters exposed to

## Bandits Kill Two Benue Community Guards As Residents Flee Buruku

Two personnel of the Benue State Community Volunteer Guards have been killed following an attack by suspected armed bandits in the Ugbema axis

of the Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State.

The assailants, believed to have stormed the community from the neighbouring Shitile axis of Katsina-Ala Local Government Area (LGA) of the state, also abducted some residents during the raid.

A community source said the attackers, allegedly led by a known local militia leader, had for months

unleashed repeated attacks on the area, dispossessing residents of their belongings and creating fear among locals.

the community and shared phone numbers for residents to call in case of another attack," he said.

According to him, the

"They came shooting and shouting, daring the people to call the police. In the process, they killed two Community Volunteer Guards and took some residents away, though

account, the wife of one of the slain guards, who asked not to be named, said her husband and his colleague were captured during the attack.

"They tied the hands of one of the officers behind, and after torturing him, they killed him and also killed my husband. After killing them, they returned back to Shitile," she said.

It was further gathered that following the latest attack, many residents have begun fleeing the community to nearby villages for fear of further violence.

Efforts to get a reaction from the Benue State Police Command were unsuccessful, as the Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Udem Edet, could not be reached as of press time.



"The attacks became too frequent and unbearable, so the people cried out to security agencies. Because of the persistent raids, the police visited

bandits appeared to have become aware of the arrangement with the police and returned in large numbers days later.

they were later released. Several people were beaten, and others sustained injuries," he added.

Corroborating the

# Family Of Benue Man Demands Whereabouts Of Relative In Army Custody For 3 years

About three years after Nigerian Army personnel abducted Otokpa Cosmos Onmonya in Benue State, his family says his whereabouts remain unknown, leaving them trapped in grief and uncertainty. "Onmonya was taken on March 14, 2022, while heading home. He was detained at the Nigerian Army base in Igumale, Ado LGA headquarters. Since then, his family hasn't seen or heard from him," according to his younger brother. Agate News Editor who has been monitoring the investigations of the Foundation For Investigative Journalism, FIJ discovered that On December 19, 2025, FIJ tried to get a comment from Onyinyechi Appolonia Anele, Nigerian Army spokesperson, about his ongoing detention and disappearance, but she didn't respond to the phone calls or messages.

On January 12, FIJ contacted Anele, seeking an official response from the Nigerian Army regarding Onmonya's unlawful detention and unexplained disappearance. "He was arrested in 2022 and this is 2026. So you think the Nigerian Army would detain someone for such a long period of time? For what?" Anele asked. "Well, send the detainee's name to me and other details. Let me see what I can do." "This issue has been ongoing since 2022, which is 4 years ago now. I need some time to look into it. Your messages are making it hard for me to focus on work." Speaking with Agate News on Thursday, Vitalis Onmonya, the detainee's younger brother, said the family was overwhelmed by the situation as they have been unable to trace Onmonya or

confirm his well-being. "We cry every time," Vitalis said. "It is very painful that till now, we do not know the whereabouts of Onmonya." According to him, the prolonged silence surrounding his brother's fate has deepened the family's anguish. "We want to know whether he is still alive or not. How can we be kept in this perpetual pain without knowing the whereabouts of my brother?" he asked.



"The Nigeria Army's silence doesn't help us. We want to know the whereabouts of Onmonya. We want to know whether he is still alive or not. He has a wife and children. The children keep asking after their father. Isn't this saddening?"

The News Editor also discovered that on Friday, FIJ tried contacting Anele again for an update on Onmonya's whereabouts, but she didn't answer the call. A WhatsApp message was sent, but there was no response. On December 19, 2025,

FIJ published a story, detailing how Otokpa Cosmos Onmonya, a resident of Agila community in Ado Local Government Area of Benue State, was abducted by Nigerian Army personnel on March 14, 2022. Onmonya had been involved in community-organised border guard activities amid a long-running boundary dispute between Benue and Ebonyi states. After returning from one of such duties, soldiers

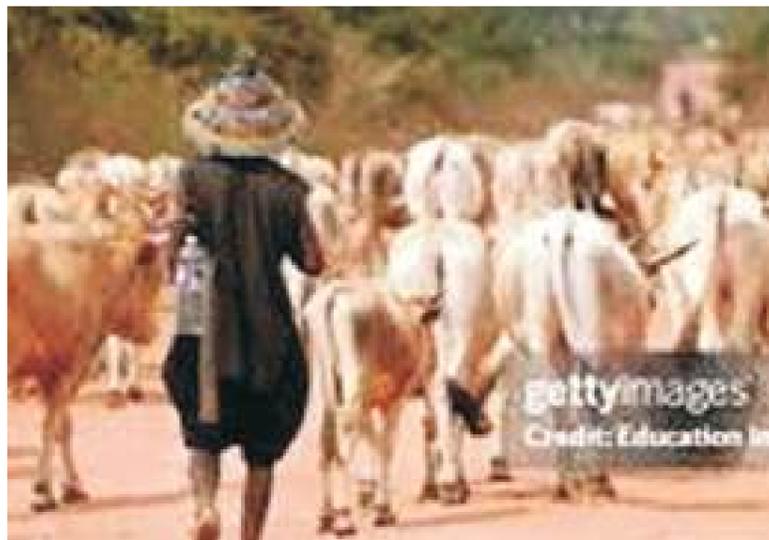
attached to the Igumale Army base, led by an officer simply identified as Captain Lashima, arrested him. FIJ reported earlier that family members said that the soldiers later demanded money for his release. The family raised N500,000, but complications arose when the intermediary conveying the money failed to deliver the full amount to the soldiers. The soldiers became angry upon discovering the shortfall and subsequently moved Onmonya to an undisclosed location. Since then, he has neither been released nor formally charged, and his whereabouts remain unknown. Efforts by the family to secure justice, including approaching the court, yielded no results, as the case suffered repeated adjournments.

# Armed Herdsmen Deliberately Killed Their Relative In Guma Not Tiv – Security Officer Debunks Rumour

A Benue-based security officer, Akir Abel, has dismissed as false and misleading a report circulating on social media alleging that Tiv residents were responsible for the killing of a Fulani man in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State. In a statement shared on his Facebook page, Abel described the report, published by a page identified as Nigerian Military Gallery, as "fake news" and an act of blackmail aimed at inciting ethnic tension. According to the officer, the deceased, identified as Saduna Lasar, was a Fulani cattle owner and businessman who was killed on 17 January 2026 by suspected Fulani bandits operating in the area, not by Tiv communities as claimed in the viral

post. Abel explained that on the morning of the incident, Lasar had travelled to Magungu Fadama to purchase cattle. After negotiating unsuccessfully for four cows due to the high price, he reportedly left the area on his motorcycle, heading towards Gbajimba. He stated that the same herdsmen he had earlier negotiated with allegedly followed him on another motorcycle and intercepted him near a Tiv settlement known as Abaushaw. During a struggle over his bag, one of the attackers reportedly shot Lasar in the head, killing him instantly before fleeing with his motorcycle and belongings.

"The intention was to blackmail Tiv people and cause further crisis," Abel claimed. He further alleged that



the suspects, identified as Haruna Jando, Musa Haruna, and Abdullahi Maiseje, are currently on the run following the incident. The officer also accused the same criminal gang of being responsible for multiple attacks in the area, including the

killing of two Tiv farmers on their farms in Lordye village and the murder of a woman during an attack on

Gbajimba on January 18, 2026. Abel added that, in an attempt to further escalate tensions, the group allegedly blocked the Akhor-Tomanin road at a later time and killed two Fulani herdsmen to frame Tiv communities.

He urged the public to verify information before sharing it and called on community leaders, including Fulani elders in Guma, to help expose criminal elements exploiting ethnic identities to fuel violence. As of the time of filing this report, security authorities had not issued an official statement on the incident. However, residents have continued to call for decisive action to arrest those responsible and curb the spread of misinformation capable of worsening the fragile security situation in Benue State.

# FG Pledges Timely Completion Of Otukpo Multipurpose Dam In Benue

Hope has been rekindled for residents of Otukpo and surrounding communities in Benue State following assurances by the Federal Government on the timely completion of the Otukpo Multipurpose Dam.

The Minister of Water Resources and Sanitation, Prof. Joseph Terlumun Utsev, gave the assurance during an inspection of the dam project located at Otobi Akpa in Otukpo Local Government Area, as part of his nationwide tour of dams, irrigation, water supply, and sanitation facilities.

Prof. Utsev said the inspection was in line with the directive of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to assess water infrastructure across the country, identify challenges, and fast-track solutions aimed at improving access to water and sanitation for Nigerians.

According to him, the President had given a clear mandate to ensure that outstanding and critical water projects are completed to make life more meaningful for citizens.

He explained that the ongoing inspection tour was designed to evaluate dams yet to be completed, facilities affected by siltation, and projects facing structural or operational risks, with a view to initiating urgent interventions where necessary.

The Minister noted that upon completion, the Otukpo Multipurpose Dam would deliver far-reaching benefits to the region, including a reservoir capacity of about 130 million cubic metres, a 3.3-megawatt hydroelectric power plant, potable water supply, irrigation for about 2,000 hectares of farmland, and the construction of 13 kilometres of internal access roads.

He added that the

project would also generate employment, boost agricultural productivity, support power generation, and enhance tourism.

He disclosed that the

concrete spillway and bridge, inlet and outlet structures, hydroelectric power facilities, and a 13.3-kilometre access road.

Prof. Utsev further

the area's water challenges. He added that water from the dam would not only serve communities in Zone C but would also be extended to parts of

their concerns.

He stressed that the inspection was aimed at determining the level of outstanding works to enable the immediate resumption and completion of the project. He urged the people to continue supporting the administration, assuring them that all necessary measures would be put in place to ensure the project's timely delivery. During the visit, the Minister and his delegation paid a courtesy call on the Chairman of the Traditional Rulers of Akpa District, Otukpo Local Government Area, Chief Wilson Ahola, where he reiterated that the President had specifically directed him to visit the dam in view of the prevailing water challenges in the area and to ensure lasting solutions.

He also assured the community that issues

hindering the speedy completion of the project, including security concerns, would be vigorously addressed, while encouraging residents to participate actively in the ongoing national e-registration exercise.

Responding, the Head of Otobi Ward, Chief Pius Aholah, commended the Minister and his team for the visit and appreciated the President's message of goodwill to the people.

He, however, raised concerns over repeated attacks by unknown gunmen in the area and appealed for the urgent establishment of a police post to improve security. The Minister was accompanied on the inspection by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Dr Emanso Umobong, directors of relevant departments, and other senior officials.



scope of work covers the construction of a 22-metre-high earth-fill embankment spanning over 2.4 kilometres, ground exploration works, a stepped

stated that technical assessments of the aquifer system in Zone C of Benue State had shown that completing the Otukpo Dam remained the most sustainable solution to

Zone B.

Reassuring residents, the Minister said President Tinubu is responsive to the needs of Nigerians and is committed to addressing

## Yelewata :: Benue Receives N1.275b Donations, Approves Resettlement For Victims

The Benue State Government said it has received a total of N1.275 billion as donations to support victims of the June 13, 2025 armed herdsmen attack on Yelewata community, Guma Local Government Area, with N1 billion contributed by Nigeria's First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, through her Renewed Hope Initiative.

The Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Mrs. Deborah Aber, disclosed this while briefing journalists at the end of the first State Executive Council (EXCO) meeting of the year held in Makurdi.

She said "following the Yelewata incident, the state received donations amounting to about N1.275 billion,

including N1 billion from the First Lady of Nigeria," Aber said, describing the EXCO meeting as "robust and focused on the well-being of Benue people." She announced that the Council approved the flag-off of resettlement construction in Yelewata, noting that Governor Hyacinth Alia had constituted a committee, chaired by her, to ensure transparent and effective utilization of the funds.

According to the SSG, consultations with displaced persons led to interventions grouped into immediate, mid-

term and long-term needs, many of which have been addressed, including schooling for children in IDP camps. On resettlement, Aber

of displaced persons to their ancestral homes once security improves," she said, adding that solar-powered boreholes have already been

warning that the influx of herdsmen posed new concerns.

"Security is a collective responsibility. Citizens must share timely and credible information with security agencies," Egbodo said.

On health, the Commissioner Dr. Paul Ogwuche said Governor Alia had directed an urgent resolution of the ongoing strike by resident doctors and nurses at the Benue State University Teaching Hospital to ease patients' suffering.

Meanwhile, Director-General of Budget and Economic Planning, Prof. Jerome Andohol, said the Council approved the reviewed N695.1 billion 2026 budget and introduced quarterly accountability briefings by Ministries, Departments and Agencies, MDAs, to enhance transparency.



said the state adopted a United Nations model, adding that 62 two-bedroom housing units with sanitary facilities would be built in the first phase at a site within Yelewata. "The long-term goal remains the safe return

completed at the site. Also speaking, the Commissioner for Information and Orientation, Mr. Peter Egbodo disclosed that the Council also reviewed the state's security situation and acknowledged improvements, while

# Army Blocks Cross-Border Bandit Routes Between Benue, Nasarawa

Troops operating under Operation Whirl Stroke (OPWS) have shut down key border corridors between Nasarawa and Benue states that were allegedly used by bandits to infiltrate rural communities, carry out attacks, and flee across state boundaries. The development was made known by the Commanding Officer of the COAS Intervention Battalion XI, Lt. Col. Donatus Otobo, during an operational inspection of military units stationed in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State.

Otobo explained that the battalion was deployed to Guma on July 12, 2025, after sustained banditry had transformed the council into a major security hotspot.

According to him, troops encountered fierce resistance immediately upon arrival, including multiple ambushes, but have since made significant progress in degrading criminal networks and reclaiming large portions of the area. "From the day we entered this area, it was one form of attack or another. On our first day alone, we encountered over ten attacks. But today, we have been able to push the bandits out of our area of responsibility," Otobo said.

He noted that Guma borders Awe, Keana and Doma local government areas in Nasarawa State, describing the axis as a notorious transit route used by bandits who exploit the rugged terrain and sparsely populated border

settlements to launch surprise assaults. According to the officer, continuous offensive patrols, permanent ambush positions and effective collaboration with military units in Nasarawa State have greatly limited the mobility of the criminals operating along the border.

"Whenever there is pressure from the Nasarawa axis, they

attempt to move into Guma. We have blocked those routes and pushed them back. As of today,

Otobo further disclosed that joint operations between troops in both states recently resulted

communities, adding that intelligence-driven operations remain central to maintaining security gains.

He also revealed that prior to the battalion's deployment, residents were unable to access the Nasme axis or their farmlands due to frequent attacks.

With the improved security situation, however, normal

economic activities have resumed, as farmers and traders now move freely along routes that were once deserted.

The commanding officer credited the progress recorded to sustained logistical and operational backing from the Chief of Army Staff, describing the unit as a rapid-response intervention force tasked with stabilising troubled areas before redeployment.

"Guma used to record an average of ten killings weekly. Today, we sometimes go three months without a single attack. That is the result of sustained military pressure," he said.



we have achieved about 80 per cent security within our area of responsibility," he said.

in the arrest of a suspected criminal who crossed into Benue to attack local

## Soldiers Kill Two Suspected Bandits On Naka-Makurdi Road

Troops of Operation Whirl Stroke Joint Task Force have neutralised two suspected bandits along the Naka/Makurdi road. Local sources newsmen on Monday that the suspected bandits were reported to have stormed the highway before locals sent distress calls to the troops who responded swiftly and engaged the suspected bandits in a gun duel, leading to death of two.

The Naka-Makurdi road was, in the past, notorious for kidnapping and killing by suspected armed bandits, which made motorists abandon the road.

With the deployment of more security operatives to the state, especially after the Yelwata massacre in June last year, the security on the road has been beefed up, necessitating motorists to return to the road.

But the suspected bandits were reported to have stormed the road on Monday, January 26, in an attempt to wreak havoc before the residents of Ahume in

in a statement issued on Monday. Zubairu said, "Two suspected armed bandits were neutralised during a snap ambush operation

regarding the presence of armed bandits operating within the area. The statement read in parts, "Consequently, troops tactically laid an

with a gunshot wound." The OPWS spokesperson said that one AK-47 rifle loaded with six rounds of 7.62mm special ammunition was recovered at the scene.

He added that following the encounter, troops have continued aggressive fighting patrols within the general area to further deny criminal elements freedom of action.

He said that the Force Commander of Operation Whirl Stroke, Major General Moses Gara, who commended the troops, stated that the success reflected the effectiveness of intelligence-driven operations and the professionalism of the troops.

The commander reaffirmed the commitment of the Joint Task Force to sustain operational momentum and continue coordinated operations aimed at ensuring improved security across the Joint Operations Area.



Gwer West Local Government Area of the state sent a distress call to the troops.

The Acting Media Information Officer of the OPWS, Lieutenant Ahmad Zubairu, confirmed the incident

conducted on 26 January 2026 along the Naka-Ahume-Makurdi road in Benue State.

He stated that the troops, deployed at Naka, were on routine patrol when they acted on credible intelligence

ambush along the identified route and made contact with the criminals.

"During the encounter, three suspected armed bandits were sighted. Two were neutralised, while the third escaped

# Fubara's Defection Endearred Rivers People To Our Party - APC

The All Progressives Congress, APC, has stated that the defection of the Governor of Rivers State, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, has endeared people of the state to the party.

This was as the committees constituted by the National Working Committee (NWC) of the APC to conduct delegate congresses and party primaries ahead of the February 21 House of Assembly bye-elections in Rivers State have concluded the process.

Members of the committees for Ahoada East State Constituency II and Khana State Constituency II spoke in a joint press briefing after the successful conduct of the exercises in both constituencies on Sunday.

Chairman of the Congress and Primary Committee for Ahoada East State Constituency II, Shehu Dange, said the entry of Governor Siminalayi Fubara into the APC has further united and endeared the party to the people of Rivers State.

Danga said the reactions of residents across the constituency reflect renewed confidence in the party's leadership.

He said, "As we moved around the constituency, we saw the reactions of the people. They are happy with the new development and the emergence of a new leader of the APC in the state."

"Governor Fubara's leadership has further united the APC family. The party is getting stronger in Rivers State because it now has a leader with focus and direction."

However, the Secretary of the Delegate Congress and Party Primary Committee for Ahoada East State Constituency II,

Barrister Smart Iheanazor, attributed the excitement witnessed during the exercise to the trust the people have in the governor.

He said, "Most importantly, while they



were chanting 'Renewed Hope' in support of President Bola Tinubu's re-election in 2027, there was no doubt about their commitment. As we

saw, the entire Ahoada area turned out massively."

Meanwhile, the Chairman of the Delegate Congress and Party Primary Committee for Khana State Constituency II,

2027 general elections under Governor Fubara's leadership.

He said, "Despite the distance between wards and the time it took to reach some of them, party members waited eagerly. We saw their

congresses in Ahoada-East State Constituency II and Khana State Constituency II to elect delegates who will vote in the party's primaries ahead of the bye-elections.

In Ahoada East State Constituency II, the exercise was monitored by the Congress and Primary Committee chaired by Shehu Dange, with Barrister Smart Iheanazor as Secretary, alongside members of the party's appeal committee.

Observers from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), led by the Assistant Electoral Officer in charge of Operations for the Local Government Area, Okogbule Emilia, and security agencies, including the Department of State Services (DSS) and the Nigeria Police Force,

also monitored the process.

The congress was conducted with party members participating through a voice vote.

Similarly, the APC congress in Khana State Constituency II was held concurrently, with party officials supervising the election of delegates through an open ballot system.

The exercise was chaired by Ayoala Peter and monitored by INEC officials and security agencies, including the DSS and the Nigeria Police Force.

Five delegates were elected from each ward in the constituencies.

The elected delegates from both constituencies will now participate in the APC primaries to elect the party's candidates for the February 21 House of Assembly bye-elections in Ahoada East State Constituency II and Khana State Constituency II.

were chanting 'Renewed Hope' in support of President Bola Tinubu's re-election in 2027, there was no doubt about their commitment. As we

Ayoala Peter, said the enthusiasm displayed by party members indicates that the APC is well-positioned for victory in the February 21 bye-elections and the

happiness and willingness to participate in the process."

Meantime, the APC committees had earlier conducted ward

## Police Arrest Man For Allegedly Defrauding 175 Job Seekers In Kebbi

The Kebbi Police Command has arrested a suspect for allegedly defrauding 175 job seekers under the pretext of securing school feeding jobs for them.

The Command spokesman, SP Bashir Usman, disclosed this in a statement on Monday in Birnin Kebbi.

Usman said preliminary investigations revealed that the suspect falsely presented himself as having the authority to facilitate employment in government-approved primary and secondary schools.

He explained that the victims, acting in good faith, were induced to pay N30,000 each as

investigations further established that the suspect, a resident of the KCC area of Birnin

victims. Ads by Usman added that no such employment

government agency to recruit on its behalf.

He said the suspect was currently in police custody while the investigation was ongoing, with a view to charging him in court upon conclusion.

Usman warned members of the public to be vigilant and avoid falling victim to fraudulent employment schemes.

He reiterated the commitment of the Command to intelligence-led policing, assuring that it would continue to arrest and prosecute offenders in accordance with the law.



"processing fees" for the purported jobs. According to him,

Kebbi, fraudulently obtained a total of N5.2 million from the

opportunities existed and the suspect had no authorisation from any

# Gunmen Shoot Ogoni Monarch, Police Begin Manhunt

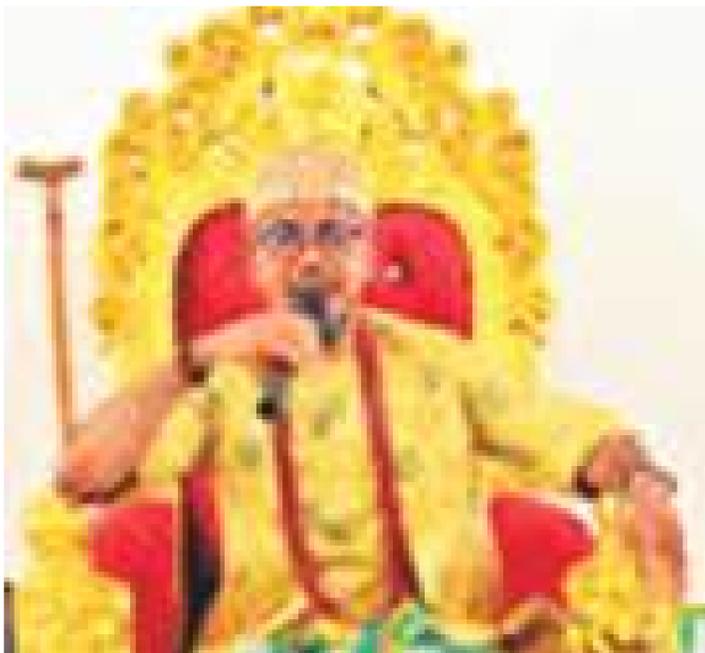
The king of the ancient Bangha Kingdom in Khana Local Government Area of Rivers State, His Royal Majesty Suanu Baridam, escaped death after being shot by gunmen on Sunday. It was gathered that Baridam, a first-class monarch, was shot between Taabaa Junction and Sogho while returning from an engagement in Okwale community, all within Khana LGA. Sources said the gunmen ambushed his vehicle and tried to stop it, but the driver refused to halt. The assailants then opened fire, injuring the monarch in the leg, while the driver also sustained gunshot wounds. Though the motive for the attack could not be confirmed at the time of filing this report, initial indications suggest that the gunmen intended to assassinate the traditional ruler. This marks the second time King Baridam has survived an assassination attempt. He is currently receiving treatment in an undisclosed hospital in Port Harcourt. Reacting to the attack, the Chairman of Khana LGA, Mr Thomas Bariere, condemned the assault on the monarch. Bariere said the incident was not linked to any gang-related crisis. He explained that a group of criminals has been attempting to instil fear in residents of Khana. "Their intention is to cause intimidation and create an atmosphere that looks like there is a crisis in Khana, which could drive away businesses and investors. "We have faced this before, we understand

their antics, and we are on top of our game. All security formations in this environment have been providing credible intelligence and know the source of this scourge," he said. He warned that the council would no longer tolerate attacks on residents and assured that those responsible would be identified and brought to justice. "Those doing business in Khana should continue with their lawful activities. The government is on top of the situation. "We know the source of these attacks, and in the coming days, security operatives will do their job and bring the perpetrators to book," Dr Bariere added. Meanwhile, the Youth and Environmental Advocacy Centre called for a thorough investigation into the incident. Responding swiftly to a

In a statement issued in Port Harcourt on Monday, the Executive Director, Mr Fyनेface Dumname, condemned the attack as not only targeting the king but the traditional institution in Rivers State. "The Youths and Environmental Advocacy Centre strongly condemns the assassination attempt on His Royal Majesty, Dr Suanu T. Baridam, First-Class King of the Ancient Bangha Kingdom, on Sunday, January 25, 2026, at the

Ogoni axis of the East-West Road in Rivers State. "This heinous and cowardly act is not only an attack on the King's person but also an affront to the traditional institution in Rivers State and a threat to the peace of Bangha Kingdom, Khana, Ogoni, and the State Commissioner of Police to leave no stone unturned in bringing the perpetrators to justice. "We also urge the Governor of the State, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, to ensure adequate

Niger Delta region. "We demand a thorough investigation and call on the Rivers security for the King and the safety of all citizens. "Our thoughts and prayers are with the King, and we wish him a swift recovery," the statement read. When contacted on Monday, the spokesperson of the State Police Command, Grace Iringe-Koko, confirmed the incident and said the investigation is ongoing. "Yes, I confirm the attack. He sustained gunshot injuries. "However, he is responding to treatment, and investigation is ongoing," Iringe-Koko, a Chief Superintendent of Police, stated. Our correspondent reports that the monarch was seen in a hospital ward with a bandage on his right ankle, while blood was still seeping from the wound.



# Troops Repel Bandits Attack In Benue

Nigerian Army troops, in collaboration with other joint security forces and supported by military air assets, have successfully repelled an attack by suspected armed herders on Edikwu Ankpali village in Apa Local Government Area of Benue State. According to security sources, the incident occurred on 24 January at about 1:00 p.m., when a large group of armed men operating with cattle stormed the community, attacking residents.

distress call, troops of the Nigerian Army, alongside personnel of Zenda, and the Counter-Terrorism Unit (CTU) of the Benue Police

The sources said that the combined superior firepower forced the bandits to retreat into the surrounding forest. Military air support was immediately deployed, with an attack helicopter conducting precision strikes on two

points along the Opaha-Ojapu axis, where the fleeing bandits were reportedly heading. The extent of the damage caused by the air strikes is still being assessed as several bandits met their Waterloo. The troops have maintained a strong presence in Edikwu Ankpali, while troops continue to hold the Opaha axis with aerial surveillance, carrying out clearance operations and monitoring the area to prevent further attacks and reassure residents of their safety.



the 80 Police Mobile Force (PMF), Operation

Command, engaged the assailants.

helicopter conducting precision strikes on two



**FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA  
GOVERNMENT OF BENUE STATE  
MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE  
AGRO-CLIMATIC RESILIENCE IN SEMI-ARID LANDSCAPES PROJECT (ACRESAL)  
Credit No.: IDA-70150  
Request for Bids -Works**

**(Two-envelope Bidding Process, Without Prequalification)  
CONSTRUCTION OF ACHUSA FLOOD AND EROSION CONTROL WORKS AND ADOKA ICHO WATER CONSERVATION STRUCTURE PROJECT IN BENUE STATE  
(RFB Reference No.: NG-BENUE STATE ACRESAL-510993-CW-RFB)**

- The Federal Government of Nigeria has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the **Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes Project (ACRESAL)** and intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the contract for **Construction of Achusa Flood and Erosion Control Works and Adoka Icho Water Conservation Structure Project in Benue State.**
- The *Ministry of Water Resources, Environment and Climate Change, represented by the Benue State Project Coordination Unit (SPMU) of Agro-Climatic Resilience in Arid and Semi-Arid Landscapes Project* now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for:

Description	Reference No	Location	Bid Security (NGN)	Contract Duration
Construction of Achusa Flood and Erosion Control Works and Adoka Icho Water Conservation Structure Project in Benue State.	NG-BENUE STATE ACRESAL -510993 -CW- RFB	Makurdi and Otukpo LGA	600,000,000.00	15 months

- Bidding will be conducted through national competitive procurement using Request for Bids (RFB) as specified in the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers- Procurement in Investment Projects Financing" *Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers* September 2023 fifth Edition ("Procurement Regulations"), and is open to all eligible Bidders as defined in the Procurement Regulations.
- Bids will be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation process set out in the bidding documents. The following weightings shall apply for Rated Criteria (including technical and non-price factors): 70%. and for the Bid cost: 30 %.*
- Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from Benue State Project Coordination Unit (SPMU) of Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes Project (ACReSAL) and inspect the Bidding document during office hours of 09:00 to 17:00 hours at the address given below.
- The Bidding document in English may be purchased by interested eligible Bidders upon the submission of a written application to the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of One Hundred and Fifty Thousand Naira (N150,000.00). The method of payment will be Bank draft in favor of The Project Coordinator, Benue State - Nigeria Agro-Climatic Resilience in Arid and Semi-Arid Landscapes Project or pay directly into this bank account; Benue State ACReSAL, Polaris Bank, Account Number: 4060015438 and bring the payment evidence to the address below. The bidding document will be sent to the bidder by courier on request at the cost of the bidder.
- Bids must be delivered to the address below, on or before **11:00am, Wednesday, March 11, 2026**. Electronic Bidding will not be permitted. Late Bids will be rejected. The outer Bid envelopes marked "ORIGINAL BID", and the inner envelopes marked "TECHNICAL PART" will be publicly opened in the presence of the Bidders' designated representatives and anyone who chooses to attend, at the address below at **BN- ACReSAL Conference room, 11:00am, Wednesday, March 11, 2026**. All envelopes marked "FINANCIAL PART" shall remain unopened and will be held in safe custody of the Employer until the second public Bid opening.
- All Bids must be accompanied by a (i) Bid Security of N600,000,000.00. (ii) Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and/or Sexual Harassment (SH) Declaration; and (iii) Local Labour Method Statement.
- Attention is drawn to the Procurement Regulations requiring the Borrower to disclose information on the successful bidder's beneficial ownership, as part of the Contract Award Notice, using the Beneficial Ownership Disclosure Form as included in the bidding document.
- The address (es) referred to above is:*

*Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes Project (ACReSAL), Benue State Project Coordination Unit, Ministry of Water Resources & Environment, Opposite N.T.A Network Centre, Ahmadu Bello Way, Old G.R.A, Makurdi, Benue State.  
Electronic mail address: benueacresal@gmail.com; procurement.benueacresal@gmail.com*

# Why Phones Are Restricted In Police Stations – Ogun PPRO

The Ogun State Police Command has explained that the restriction of mobile phones within police stations is lawful and primarily driven by security considerations, following public concerns raised over the practice at the Igebeba Police Station in Ijebu Ode. The clarification came after an X user, Salami Quadri, questioned the legality of asking

members of the public to drop their mobile phones before gaining access to the police station. Reacting in a post on X on Tuesday, the Ogun State Police Public Relations Officer, Oluseyi Babaseyi, said Nigerian laws permit such restrictions where they are necessary to protect investigations, suspects, and police operations. "Yes, it's legal to restrict phones in police

stations. This ensures the safety of suspects, protects their identities, and prevents operational assets from being compromised," Babaseyi stated. He stressed that the Nigeria Police Force remains committed to respecting the fundamental rights of citizens, including the presumption of innocence guaranteed under Section 36(5) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), as well as safeguards for suspects under the

Administration of Criminal Justice Act, 2015. Babaseyi noted, however, that the Constitution itself recognises that certain rights may be lawfully regulated in the interest of public safety and order. "However, the Constitution itself, under Section 45, recognises that rights may be lawfully regulated in the interest of public safety, public order, and the protection of others," he said. He further explained

that the Police Act, 2020, empowers the police to regulate activities within police facilities to prevent security breaches and the compromise of investigations. According to the spokesman, restrictions on phone use in sensitive areas of police stations are precautionary measures and not an attempt to suppress citizens' rights. "Restrictions on phone use in sensitive areas of police stations are

purely security-driven, precautionary measures designed to protect investigations, suspects, officers, and the public interest," Babaseyi said. He added that the policy is aimed at balancing individual rights with the need to maintain safety in a democratic society, insisting that the police remain guided by the Constitution, statutory laws, and professional ethics in their

# Utsev Inspects World Bank Power, Irrigation Site, Water Projects In Benue

**P**rofessor Joseph Utsev, Minister of Water Resources and Sanitation, has inspected the proposed World Bank and Federal Government-supported Sustainable Power and Irrigation in Nigeria (SPIN) Project in Katsina-Ala, the ongoing Federal Government construction of the Ugbema Semi-Urban Water Project, and the upgrading of the Buruku/Gboko Water Supply Scheme in Benue State.

Speaking at the proposed World Bank/FG supported SPIN site in Katsina-Ala, Utsev stated that the inspection exercise was in line with the directive of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, to assess all water supply facilities and dams across the country in order to ascertain areas requiring government intervention.

He said the 5,000-hectare Katsina-Ala irrigable farmland, when completed, will generate gainful employment for teeming youths and significantly boost food production through year-round farming with improved yields.

He further disclosed that the Federal Government intends to concession the dam component of the project under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement to ensure faster and seamless project delivery.

While calling on residents of Katsina-Ala Local Government Area to support the initiatives of President Bola Tinubu, the minister noted that the project, when fully developed, would generate employment opportunities for about 2,000 youths in the area. He urged other state governments to leverage the opportunities provided by the World Bank-supported SPIN

Programme and key into the initiative without delay.

The Minister also highlighted other ongoing dam and irrigation projects in Benue State, including Wannune, Amgbo, Atee, Dura, and Amla dams, as well as the hectares of irrigable farmland in Makurdi.

Also speaking on the Katsina-Ala Irrigation Project, the National Project Coordinator of SPIN, Engr. Ipinlaye Olaiya stated that the project is specifically designed to increase food production, create employment for youths, and contribute to national development through increased Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

He disclosed that implementation would begin as soon as clearance is received from the development partner.

Speaking during the inspection tour, Katsina-Ala farmers, Jude Oke and Ugbema Godfrey, commended President Bola Tinubu for the proposed irrigation project in their community and appealed for support in the provision of farm tools, fertilizers, and other farm inputs to enhance productivity, especially during the dry season.

The Minister, accompanied by the Permanent Secretary,

Dr. Emanso Umobong, and some Technical Directors of the Ministry, also inspected the ongoing Federal Government's 30,000-litre capacity Semi-Urban Water Project at Ugbema, Mbaakura Ward, Buruku Local Government Area, which was flagged off few months ago.

The inspection covered the generator house, step-down transformer, and ground and overhead tanks reservoirs.

Prof. Utsev noted that the project has attained about 80 percent completion, with the remaining 20 percent covering water reticulation to the community.

While appreciating President Tinubu for the initiative, the Head of Ugbema Mbaakura Ward, Chief Zaki Dzer Ager, who spoke in Tiv, said the water project would not only provide potable water to the community but also permanently address the long-standing water challenges previously faced by residents.

The inspection team also visited the Federal Government's ongoing upgrading of the Buruku/Gboko Water Supply Scheme at Ameladu Community in Gboko Local

quality of work done and ensuring compliance with approved specifications.

He added that electro-mechanical components are currently being installed at the intake

1.2million cubic meters of water.

He noted that the dam will have both water supply and irrigation components and, upon completion, will generate employment

opportunities for youths, serve as a tourist attraction, and supply water to the Federal Polytechnic, Wannune, thereby addressing the Institution's water challenges.

Utsev further revealed that construction



Government Area.

According to the Minister, the Ameladu Water Scheme, when completed, will supply water to about four local government areas, including parts of Tarka and Ushongo Local Government Areas.

He stated that the rehabilitation and upgrade works, which commenced about nine months ago, have reached about 90 percent completion, adding that the contractor has been directed to adhere strictly to the 18-month completion timeline.

The Minister explained that the inspection was aimed at assessing the

point along the River Benue axis.

The team concluded the inspection tour at the Amgbo Dam in Wannune, Tarka Local Government Area of the state.

This was contained in a statement issued by Mrs. Funmi Imuetinyan, Director, Information and Public Relations, Federal Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation.

Speaking at the site, the Minister disclosed that the Amgbo Dam, currently measuring about 400 metres in length, will be upgraded and expanded to 1,000 metres with a reservoir storage capacity of

n of the access road to the dam site would soon commence to facilitate the movement of equipment.

He also reiterated the importance of the ongoing e-registration exercise and encouraged residents to participate actively.

In his response, the Rector of the Federal Polytechnic, Wannune, Dr. Tyover Ashinya, commended President Bola Tinubu for the planned commencement of work on the project, noting that its benefits to the institution and its students were immeasurable.

# Armed Bandits Kill Motorcyclist, Injure Woman In Apa LGA

**O**ne person has died and another sustained injuries following an assault by suspected armed bandits in Apa Local Government Area of Benue State.

According to sources, the attack took place on January 24 around 4:00 p.m. along the Amoke-Odugbo road in Ukpogo Village, Edikwu Ward.

The victims,

identified as Mr Joseph Okoh and Miss Aneh Sunday, both from Ogodumo, Adoka in Otukpo LGA, were reportedly riding a motorcycle when the assailants struck.

"They were rushed to the Comprehensive Health Centre, Ugbokpo, where Mr Okoh was confirmed dead while receiving

treatment. Miss Sunday is currently admitted and responding to treatment," the source stated.

Nigerian troops were quickly deployed to the area, and a search operation in the surrounding bushes is ongoing to apprehend the attackers.

"The Criminal Investigation Department has commenced an investigation into the incident," the source added.



# Beatrice Ekweremadu Returns To Nigeria After UK Prison Release

The wife of former Nigerian Deputy Senate President, Ike Ekweremadu, Beatrice, has returned to Nigeria after being released from a prison in the United Kingdom. Her arrival in the country on Tuesday, January 21, 2026, followed the completion of the custodial portion of her sentence for her

role in a high-profile organ-harvesting conspiracy. Mrs Ekweremadu was received by family members and close associates at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in Abuja, marking her first time on Nigerian soil since the legal saga began in mid-2022. While her return has sparked celebrations in her hometown of Mpu, in the Aninri

Local Government Area (LGA) of Enugu State, it came amid the continued incarceration of her husband in London. The return of the former Deputy Senate President's wife followed her May 2023 conviction by the Old Bailey in London. She was sentenced to four years and six months in prison for conspiring to facilitate the travel of a 21-year-old Lagos Street trader to the UK for the purpose of

harvesting his kidney. The organ was intended for the couple's daughter, Sonia, who suffered from a chronic kidney condition. The case, which was prosecuted under the UK's Modern Slavery Act 2015, marked the first time the legislation was used in a human organ-harvesting prosecution. Under UK law, non-violent offenders are typically eligible for release on license

after serving half of their custodial term. Reports indicated that Mrs. Ekweremadu's release was further facilitated by her good conduct record and by a broader UK government initiative to address severe prison overcrowding. Despite his wife's return, Senator Ekweremadu remains in a UK correctional facility serving a significantly longer sentence. In May 2023, the

former lawmaker was handed a nine-year and eight-month term, as the court deemed him the primary driver of the conspiracy. Efforts by the Nigerian federal government to secure his release or repatriation have so far been unsuccessful. In late 2025, a high-powered diplomatic delegation visited London to explore a Prisoner Transfer Agreement (PTA) that would allow the Senator to serve the remainder of his term in a Nigerian facility. However, the UK Home Office reportedly rejected the proposal in November 2025, citing concerns over the guarantee of the sentence's continued enforcement if transferred to the Nigerian jurisdiction. The third convict in the case, Dr. Obinna Obeta, who was described by the prosecution as the medical "middleman," continues to serve a 10-year prison sentence in the UK. Meanwhile, the couple's daughter, Sonia, who was cleared of all criminal charges during the 2023 trial, remains in the United Kingdom, where she is reportedly receiving ongoing medical treatment for her condition.

# Diezani Alison-Madueke's Corruption Trial Begins In London

Diezani Alison-Madueke, former Nigerian minister of petroleum resources and immediate past president of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), is scheduled to appear before a London court on Monday as her long-awaited corruption trial formally begins. The opening stage of the trial will take place this week, starting with preliminary proceedings such as technical matters and jury selection. These steps mark the first substantive courtroom phase of a case that has lasted almost a decade. Alison-Madueke was physically present in court last week as the process commenced, ahead of the full trial during which extensive evidence is expected to be presented. The 65-year-old, who served as Nigeria's petroleum minister from 2010 to 2015 under former President

Goodluck Jonathan, is facing six counts of bribery linked to her time in office. She has pleaded not guilty to all the charges. Alison-Madueke made history as Nigeria's first female petroleum minister and the first woman to serve as OPEC president. However, her tenure has been overshadowed by corruption allegations both within Nigeria and abroad since she left office in 2015. She was first arrested by British authorities in London in October 2015 as part of a major corruption investigation and has remained on bail since then while inquiries continued. In 2023, the United Kingdom's National Crime Agency (NCA) formally charged Alison-Madueke, alleging that she

accepted bribes between 2011 and 2015, a period when she wielded significant influence over Nigeria's oil sector. At the time, the NCA said it suspected that Alison-Madueke "abused her power in Nigeria and accepted financial rewards for awarding multi-million-pound contracts". Prosecutors allege that she benefitted from at least £100,000 in cash, alongside other luxury

advantages, including chauffeur-driven vehicles, private jet flights and the use of high-end properties in London. The charges also accuse her of receiving luxury furniture, funding for property renovations, household staff services, private school fees, and expensive designer items, including gifts from brands such as Louis Vuitton. The prosecution is expected to argue that

these benefits were bribes exchanged for influence over oil contracts and strategic decisions within Nigeria's petroleum sector, which controls billions of dollars in annual revenue. The trial is expected to last between 10 and 12 weeks, with the court set to hear from multiple witnesses and review financial records, property transactions and other evidence linked to the alleged bribery scheme. Two other defendants are standing trial alongside Alison-Madueke. Doye Agama, who appeared via video link, and Olatimbo Ayinde, who was present in court, are also facing bribery charges related to the case.



# Police Warn Citizens Against Assaulting Officers

The Adamawa State Police Command has urged members of the public to report cases of police misconduct rather than engage in physical confrontation with officers.

The call was made by the Police Public Relations Officer, SP Suleiman Nguroje, in a statement shared on Facebook on Tuesday.

In the statement, Nguroje warned that fighting a police officer could expose individuals to multiple criminal charges, even if they believe they are innocent.

“What is the essence of you fighting a police officer?” the statement read.

He reminded the public that police officers are law enforcement agents and that physical resistance could attract serious legal consequences.

“Police officers are law enforcement agents. If

you fight them physically, you're opening yourself to multiple charges,” he

“obstructing a police officer while executing his lawful duty/justice.” Nguroje explained that

of the law, you automatically create a legal justification for your arrest,” he stated.

alone can... land you in jail, weaken your evidence, minimum force, and/or refusal of

official means.

“Therefore, report any police misconduct to the command's Complaint response unit,” Nguroje said.

It was recalled that in 2025, the Nigeria Police Force had issued a stern warning to citizens, emphasising the importance of cooperating with public officers in the discharge of their lawful duties.

The police had highlighted relevant provisions of the Criminal Code Act and the Police Act 2020, which outline penalties for resisting or obstructing public officers.

According to Section 197 of the Criminal Code Act, any person who obstructs or resists a public officer in the execution of their duties is liable to imprisonment for up to two years.

Similarly, Section 42 of the Police Act 2020 states that citizens are bound to assist judges, magistrates, police officers or other authorised persons in arresting suspects or preventing their escape. The police also cited Section 98 of the Police Act 2020, which provides that assaulting, obstructing or resisting a police officer in the discharge of lawful duty attracts a fine of ₦ 500,000, imprisonment for six months, or both.

In addition, Section 99 of the same Act states that refusal or neglect to aid and assist a police officer in danger may attract a fine of ₦ 100,000, imprisonment for three months, or both.



said.

According to the police spokesperson, such charges include “assault on a law enforcement officer,” “resisting arrest,” and

once a person raises their hands against an officer, it automatically provides legal grounds for arrest.

“Once you raise your hands against an officer

He added that even when a person is right or innocent, the charges alone could still have serious consequences.

“You may be right and innocent, those charges

bail,” the statement said.

The police spokesperson, therefore, advised residents to channel complaints through

## Kano Commissioner Resigns, Cites Deviation From Founding Political Ideals

Kano State Commissioner of Science and Technology, Yusif Ibrahim Kofar Mata has announced his resignation from office, citing what he described as a departure from the political principles upon which the current administration was established.

The resignation was disclosed in a statement posted on his official Facebook account.

In the statement, the

former commissioner said his decision was guided by conscience and loyalty to the original vision that informed the formation of the government.

“I stepped down from my position as commissioner in order to distance myself from a political direction that deviates from the ideals and struggle upon which this government was founded,” he said.

He expressed gratitude to God and

to key political leaders for the opportunity to serve, specifically acknowledging the leader of the Kwankwasiyya movement, Senator Dr. Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso, and the Governor of Kano State, Alhaji Abba Kabir Yusuf.

“I thank Almighty Allah, our revered leader, Sen. Dr. Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso, and the Executive Governor of Kano

State, Alhaji Abba Kabir Yusuf, as well as the good people of Kano, for the support and cooperation extended to me during my tenure,” the statement read.

The former commissioner noted that he served in the Ministry of Higher Education and later in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, where he contributed to several key initiatives aimed at advancing education and innovation in the

state.

“I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the people of Kano through the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, and other critical assignments entrusted to me,” he added.

He concluded the statement with a note of appreciation and resignation to faith, saying, “Alhamdulillah.” As of the time of filing this report, the Kano State Government has not issued an official response to the resignation.

# Why We Still Pay Homage To Nwobodo 43 Years After — Anambra Indigenes In Enugu

The Anambra State Indigenes Living in Enugu have explained why they continue to hold former Governor of the old Anambra State, Senator Jim Nwobodo, in high esteem more than four decades after his administration, attributing it to what they described as his pragmatic, inclusive and non-discriminatory style of governance.

The group said Nwobodo, while governing the old Anambra State—now comprising Anambra, Enugu and Ebonyi states—gave equal attention and development to all parts of the state, without favouritism or sectional bias.

They stated that it was in recognition of these qualities that they have sustained a cordial relationship with the former governor, whom they described as a “living legend.”

The Anambra indigenes made the remarks during a courtesy visit to Nwobodo at his ancestral home in Amechi-Uno, Enugu South Local Government Area, where he recently relocated.

Leading the delegation, the President of Anambra Indigenes Living in Enugu, Chief E.U. Adimora, said the visit was to appreciate Nwobodo for his leadership and enduring legacy in the old Anambra State.

“We are thanking God for our lives and for the long relationship we have had with His Excellency, Senator Jim Nwobodo, since his time as Governor of Anambra State. We appreciate the deep sense of fairness and concern he showed for Ndi Anambra and Ndigbo in general,” Adimora said.

He noted that the group has continued to maintain the

relationship with Nwobodo wherever he resides, adding that the affection and goodwill he demonstrated during

decided to visit him and share in the joy of his housewarming,” he added.

Adimora further

Anambra State, stressing that he governed with a sense of unity and inclusiveness.

with him,” he said. In his response, Nwobodo thanked the group for their loyalty and friendship, noting

living in Enugu for their peaceful conduct and positive contributions to the development of their host communities. “I have many friends in Anambra, and we have always been close. Your visit is a show of love, and I truly appreciate it,” Nwobodo said, while offering prayers for the delegation.

Also speaking, the Deputy National President of Ohanaeze Ndigbo, Chief Omeife Omeife, reminisced about Nwobodo's tenure as governor, highlighting the social and infrastructural developments recorded during that period.

Chairman of Enugu South Local Government Council, Hon. Calab Ani, said the council values the contributions of non-indigenes, particularly Anambra State indigenes, whom he described as partners in the development of the area.



his time in office have remained unforgettable. “When we heard that he had relocated to his ancestral home, we

recalled that as governor, Nwobodo did not discriminate among the various ethnic groups within the old

“That relationship did not end because he left office. As long as he is alive, we will continue to honour and associate

that he maintains close ties with many people in Anambra State. He also commended the Anambra indigenes

## FG To Pilot Communal Ranches In Benue, Adamawa, FCT, 3 Other States

The Federal Government has announced plans to pilot national communal ranches in Benue, Adamawa, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

The announcement was contained in a press release issued by the Presidency on Wednesday. Minister of Livestock Development, Idi Mukhtar Maiha, made the plan known during a meeting with the ILRI-GATES Livestock Feed and Nutrition Project Team.

According to the press release, the communal ranches are part of a broader effort to modernize livestock production, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and improve productivity.

The initiative will

prioritize climate-smart feeding systems, emphasizing a shift from high-fibre feeds to protein-rich, climate-resilient alternatives.

The government also plans to support large-scale fodder production through solar-powered irrigation, micro earth dams, and improved grazing reserves.

“The Minister disclosed plans for large-scale fodder production supported by solar-powered irrigation, micro earth dams, and improved grazing reserves, with Adamawa, Benue, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, and the Federal Capital Territory selected as pilot locations for

national communal ranches,” the statement read in part.

More insights These interventions, the federal government

expected to provide technical support, enhance livestock nutrition, and guide the implementation of climate-smart strategies

communities. The announcement of the communal ranches comes barely two months after President Bola Tinubu revealed plans to modernize livestock farming to reduce tensions between farmers and herders.

For years, violent clashes between farmers and herders in agricultural regions, particularly in the Middle Belt, have caused casualties, displacement, and economic losses.

In March 2025, the Federal Government announced a plan to partner with Brazilian firm JBJ Brazil to establish a 100,000-hectare cattle ranch in Niger State. The state also pledged 1.2 million hectares to support livestock development, aiming to transform conflict-prone areas into productive hubs.



noted, aim to strengthen food security, increase milk production, create jobs, and ensure sustainable livestock management.

The ILRI-GATES collaboration is

across the pilot states.

Through these measures, the FG intends to link livestock development with climate action while promoting economic opportunities in rural

# Lassa Fever Claims 2 Lives In Benue As Cases Rise To 9

**T**wo persons have reportedly died of Lassa fever in Benue State, just a week after seven cases of the viral disease were reported.

The State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Paul Ogwuche, disclosed this on Thursday in Makurdi, noting a rise in Lassa fever cases over the past two weeks. According to him, two additional cases were recently added to the state's disease surveillance dashboard, bringing the total number of suspected cases to nine. Of these, five tested positive, with two resulting in fatalities.

"As we speak now, there are nine suspected cases of Lassa fever on our dashboard. About five are positive, and unfortunately, two have resulted in deaths," Ogwuche said.

He revealed that the cases were largely concentrated in Buruku and Makurdi Local Government Areas (LGAs), with two health workers among those infected.

"The cases involved are in Buruku and Makurdi LGAs. Two cases came from Buruku but were diagnosed in Makurdi. There are also cases involving two health workers," he added.

The commissioner assured that the state government has activated emergency response mechanisms to contain the outbreak.

"As a ministry, we have responded appropriately. We have our incident rapid response team, activated our Public Health Emergency Operations Centre, and put in place all necessary measures," he stated.

Ogwuche advised residents to observe proper hygiene and sanitation and avoid contact with rodents, especially rats. "During the dry season, when grasses are burnt,

rodents seek shelter in homes. If food, especially raw food

surveillance has been heightened across all LGAs to ensure early

treatment. We have disease surveillance officers in all LGAs, and

cases, he explained that although the patients were not yet showing symptoms, they would

want to take them into isolation so we can commence all management protocols," he said.



The commissioner also urged residents to promptly report symptoms such as prolonged fever, weakness, fatigue, and bleeding from any part of the body.

He disclosed that the ministry would convene a stakeholders' meeting to strengthen containment efforts, involving key health institutions and partners. "We are involving the Federal Medical Centre, which hosts the molecular laboratory

items, is left uncovered, they can contaminate it," he warned.

He further noted that

detection and treatment. "One of the best ways to manage Lassa fever is early diagnosis and

we have heightened their level of suspicion," Ogwuche said.

On the newly diagnosed

be isolated as a precaution. "The two cases are not symptomatic, but we

# AGF Takes Over Ozekhome's ICPC Prosecution As Court Adjourns Arraignment

**T**he High Court of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, on Monday, granted the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Lateef Fagbemi (SAN), approval to review the fraud charges filed by the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission against constitutional lawyer, Mike Ozekhome (SAN).

Following the development, the court shifted Ozekhome's arraignment, earlier fixed for Monday, to February 24, 2026, to allow the AGF's office study the case file.

At the proceedings, the Director of Public Prosecution of the Federation, Mr Rotimi Oyedepo (SAN), announced his appearance for the AGF and informed the court that the Attorney-General had taken over

the prosecution from the ICPC, pursuant to Section 174 of the 1999 Constitution.

Oyedepo said the decision was guided by public interest and the need to ensure effectiveness, diligence, fairness and strict compliance with due process, assuring the court that the defendant's rights would be fully protected.

Counsel for the ICPC, Dr Osuebeni Akpos, did not oppose the takeover, pledging the commission's cooperation. Meanwhile, former

Attorney-General of the Federation, Kanu Agabi (SAN), led 15 other Senior Advocates of Nigeria in the defence. Justice Peter Kekemeke thereafter adjourned the matter till February 24 for arraignment.



It was reported that the ICPC filed a three-count criminal charge against Ozekhome at the FCT High Court in Abuja, accusing him of alleged fraud, forgery and use of false

documents in connection with a disputed property in London.

Prosecutors alleged that the senior lawyer knowingly received a property located at 79 Randall Avenue,

provisions of the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act and the FCT Penal Code.

The case follows a petition to the ICPC by Mr Olanrewaju Suraj, the head of the Human

and Environmental Development Agenda. The petition referenced a British court judgment that accused Ozekhome and others of conspiring with corrupt Nigerian

officials to procure fake national identity documents to "fraudulently claim ownership" of a property in North London.

London NW2 7SX, which he claimed was gifted to him, and then allegedly used a forged Nigerian passport in support of that claim. They argued that both acts contravened

# Adeleke Condemns APC Chairmen, Councillors' Illegal Tenure Extension

**G**overnor of Osun State, Nurudeen Adeleke has condemned the continued occupation of local government secretariats by All Progressives Congress chairmen and councillors, describing their self-awarded tenure extension as illegal and unconstitutional.

In a post by the Spokesperson to the governor, Olawale Rasheed, on X on Monday, Adeleke stated that the tenure of elected officials in Nigeria cannot be extended beyond the legally mandated period, citing Supreme Court precedents.

"It is a settled matter of law, that the tenure of elected officials in Nigeria cannot be extended for a single day after the expiration of their tenure," he said. Adeleke referenced the Supreme Court ruling in the case of former Oyo State Governor Ladoja, where the court held that a governor's tenure cannot be extended even after being unlawfully removed from office for 11 months.

The Lounge: Should Household Chores and Childcare Be Shared Equally in Marriage? He noted that court filings, including documents filed at the Supreme Court, show that the APC chairmen and councillors, through their lawyers and the Attorney-General of the Federation, admitted that they had no claim to office beyond October 22, 2025.

To further emphasise his point, the governor said the APC officials approached the Federal High Court seeking an extension of their expired tenure. He described this move as a clear admission that their tenure had ended. "Assuming, without

conceding, that the APC chairmen and councillors had any tenure, the tenure expired on October 22, 2025.

"I sometimes wonder if we are really under a democratic system of government.

"In Osun State, it seems that the APC chairmen and councillors, whose so-called tenure have expired, are above the law," he said.

He said he has written to the heads of relevant federal security agencies regarding

actions that threaten peace and order in Osun State.

The governor urged Nigerians and democracy advocates to join in demanding an immediate end to what he described as a siege on local governments.

"I therefore call on Nigerians and all those who sacrificed so much for our democracy, to join us in demanding an immediate end to the siege on our local governments," he said



# Not Personal Ambition, Kano DG Defends Yusuf's Exit From NNPP

**T**he Director General of the Kano State Signage and Advertising Agency, Kabiru Dakata, has dismissed claims that Governor Abba Yusuf's exit from the New Nigeria Peoples Party was motivated by personal ambition.

Speaking on Channels Television's The Morning Brief on Monday, Dakata said the governor's planned move to the All Progressives Congress was intended to align Kano State with the federal government.

"APC states benefit more from the Federal Government compared to states controlled by the opposition.

"The neighbouring states that are in the APC are benefiting more from the centre than Kano State, and I don't see it as something wrong for

the centre to favour states that are under the political party, that is the APC.

"So it is not an indictment," Dakata said.

He added



d that the defection would attract more funding and federal interventions.

"It's an opportunity for the party to do better in the state controlling. If a political leader believes that he can perform better on a particular platform, I think he should be

encouraged to take that step.

"That's all about it; it is not about his personal ambition," he stated.

Governor Yusuf resigned from the

2026, Yusuf cited persistent internal crises and the need to safeguard the overall interests of the people as his reasons for leaving.

The governor had previously belonged to the APC between 2014 and 2018 before moving to other political

platforms.

Ahead of his official defection ceremony and registration into the party on Monday, APC flags have been hoisted at the Kano State Government House, signalling the formal return of the governor to the ruling

party.

Dakata further cited a major state project that had stalled due to insufficient funds, which has now received federal support following Yusuf's alignment with the centre.

"All three past governors tried their best; His Excellency Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau, Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, and Abdullahi Umar Ganduje.

"When His Excellency Abba Yusuf came, he did part of the project and completed part of it.

"Because of this alignment, the Federal Government has approved more than ₦46 billion for the Wuju-Wuju project," he explained.

# Angola Beat Nigeria In African Handball Championship

**N**igeria's bid to continue their remarkable run at the 2026 African Men's Handball Championship suffered a setback on Sunday as they were narrowly defeated by Angola in their opening match of the main round.

The Golden Arrows, who had topped Group A with commanding victories over Algeria, Zambia, and hosts Rwanda, went down 24-27 at the Kigali BK Arena yesterday, leaving their hopes of a semi-final berth and early qualification for the 2027 IHF Men's World Championship hanging in the balance.

The match began with Nigeria struggling to contain a determined Angolan side. At half-time, the Arrows trailed 11-14 after conceding a series of well-taken goals.

Despite their best efforts in the second half, including converting five of seven seven-metre throws, Nigeria could not overturn Angola's lead, who were perfect from the penalty spot with six successful attempts out of six.

Nigeria's campaign had begun in impressive fashion. In Group A, they stunned seven-time champions Algeria 25-23 after taking the lead in the 14th minute thanks to a 4-0 scoring run.

This was followed by comprehensive victories over Zambia (36-18) and hosts Rwanda (30-20), which saw them finish first in the group, positioning them as strong contenders for the semi-finals.

A win against Angola would have cemented their place and guaranteed qualification for the 2027 IHF Men's World Championship.

The match saw Nigeria receive two yellow cards and one red card,

while Angola remained disciplined throughout. Both teams used timeouts strategically, with Nigeria calling theirs at 13:08 and 48:37, while Angola used theirs at 19:18, 52:29, and 58:19.

Angola's victory highlighted the competitive nature of the main round, which began on Sunday and will conclude on Tuesday.

The top two teams from each group will progress to the semi-finals, securing

automatic qualification for the 2027 IHF Men's World Championship in

team, determined through placement matches, will earn a

Nigeria's World Championship hopes alive despite the defeat.

Looking ahead, Nigeria now face defending champions Egypt in their final main round match on Tuesday.

The encounter will be crucial in determining whether the Golden Arrows can maintain their momentum

and secure a semi-final position in the first



Germany. Even the fifth-placed

spot at the global tournament, keeping

## Help Boost Grassroots Sports, Benue Monarch Urges SWAN

**T**he paramount ruler of the Idoma Nation and Vice-Chairman of the Benue State Traditional Council, His Royal Majesty, Agaba'idu Elaigwu Odogbo Obagaji, the Och'Idoma, has urged the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria to strengthen its advocacy for grassroots sports development across the country.

The royal father also called for closer collaboration between sports journalists and traditional institutions as a means of mobilising communities and fostering peace through sports.

He gave the advice on Saturday during a courtesy visit by the National Executive Committee of SWAN to his palace in Otukpo, Benue State.

The SWAN delegation was led by its President, Mr Isaiah Benjamin, who presented a letter of appointment to the monarch, naming him National Patron of SWAN.

Sunday and made available to journalists in Makurdi by the Secretary of the Idoma Area Traditional Council, Adegbe Uloko.

According to the statement, the Och'Idoma, while accepting the appointment, said he regarded it not merely as an honour but as a responsibility.

"I accept this appointment not merely as an honour, but as a responsibility to support initiatives that promote unity, discipline and excellence through sports and the media," he said.

He urged the association to intensify its efforts in grassroots sports advocacy, youth mentorship and ethical journalism, as well as policy reforms aimed at

improving athlete welfare and sports administration in Nigeria.

"Let me further urge you to strengthen advocacy for grassroots sports development, youth mentorship, ethical journalism and

there should be closer collaboration between sports journalists and traditional institutions. This is one of the means of mobilising communities and fostering peace through sports," he added.

While expressing

cohesion and nation-building, noting that the media plays a critical role in shaping values, inspiring excellence and preserving Nigeria's sporting heritage.

Earlier, the SWAN President, Benjamin, said the decision to appoint the Och'Idoma as National Patron was informed by his commitment to peace, youth empowerment and national development.

He noted that the association looked forward to benefiting from the

monarch's wealth of experience, moral authority and leadership. Benjamin reaffirmed SWAN's commitment to professionalism, responsible journalism and the use of sports as a vehicle for positive social change across the country.



policy reforms that would enhance athlete welfare and sports administration in Nigeria," he said.

The monarch also stressed the need for synergy between traditional institutions and sports journalists.

"It is also my desire that

appreciation for the honour, the royal father commended SWAN for its over six decades of contributions to sports promotion, youth development and national unity since its establishment in 1964.

He described sports as a powerful tool for youth empowerment, social

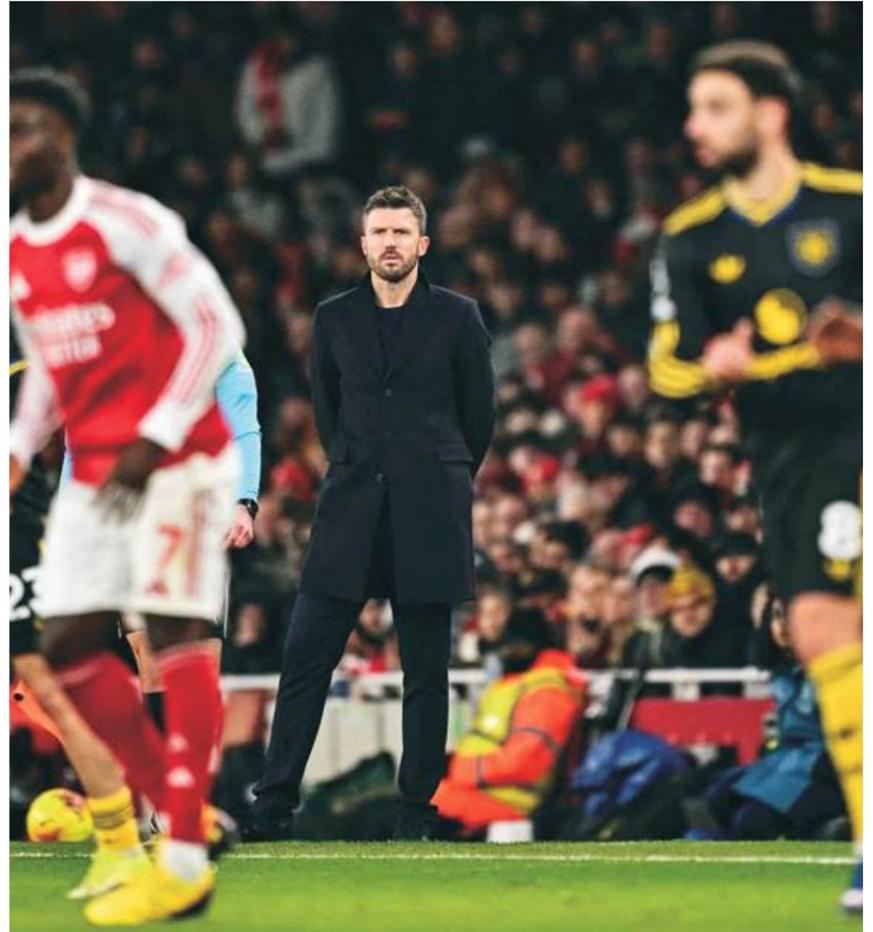
# Carrick Makes Case For Man UTD Job After Perfect Start

**R**oy Keane shut down suggestions that [Michael Carrick](#) be given the role of [Manchester United](#) manager on a permanent basis following the 3-2 victory over [Arsenal](#) at the [Emirates Stadium](#). Carrick took over from the sacked [Ruben Amorim](#) on a contract until the end of the current suggestion with the executives at Old Trafford currently searching for a new manager to hire permanently. In his first game in charge Carrick orchestrated a 2-0 derby win over Pep Guardiola's Manchester City before masterminding United's victory over the league leaders.

Keane was quick to praise the impact Carrick and his staff have had on the players and results but revealed that his preference for the next manager be someone "bigger and better" than Carrick. Asked for his opinion on the result and the performance from Manchester United, Keane echoed the words of Harry Maguire who was awarded the player of the match trophy. "Harry makes a good point, they've got a lot of their players back now, it's a full group, they've got full weeks together and there's no other distractions," Keane replied. "They can focus on the league form and they're producing. "But, as we know you win one, two games for Man Utd, fantastic.

Particularly to beat City, and come to Arsenal. I felt United would get a result today, I was thinking a draw but I felt United would turn up. "They've got enough quality players and they've got momentum into their season and all of a sudden you're thinking it's a great chance for top four. If they play with that confidence and belief, you give the manager and the staff credit." Keane was then pressed by fellow Sky Sports pundit Micah Richards on whether Manchester United should hire Carrick on a permanent basis already given he

has led the team to wins against first and second in the league. "The [job](#)? You're being silly now," Keane responded. "No, he's had two great performances but anybody can win two games. It's what he does until the end of the season. "Even if they do get into fourth I still wouldn't be convinced he's the man for the job. Absolutely not. I still think they need a bigger and better manager. "But, he's got the opportunity, what a chance it is for him and, do you know what, he's taking it so fair play to him."



# AFCON 2025: Pape Gueye Admits Senegal's Final Walk-Off Was A Mistake

**S**enegal's AFCON 2025 match-winner, Pape Gueye, has admitted that the [Lions of Teranga made a mistake by walking off the pitch during their final against Morocco](#). Speaking on a French programme, *Téléfoot*, on Sunday, January 25, the 26-year-old midfielder reflected on the chaotic scenes in Rabat that saw Senegal temporarily abandon the field in protest at a 98th-minute penalty awarded to the hosts. Gueye went on to score

the decisive goal in extra time as Senegal edged Morocco 1-0 in a dramatic and ill-

The match was overshadowed by controversy after Morocco were awarded

walk off and causing a delay of around 20

forward Sadio Mané, who stayed on the pitch during the standoff and convinced his teammates to return so the penalty could be taken. "He found the right thing to say at the right moment, and it shows just how important he is to us," Gueye said. "We owe him a big thank you." Senegal's frustration had been heightened moments earlier when a goal was ruled out for what appeared to be a soft foul, further inflaming tensions late in normal time.



tempered final to claim their second Africa Cup of Nations title.

a late penalty, prompting the Senegalese players to

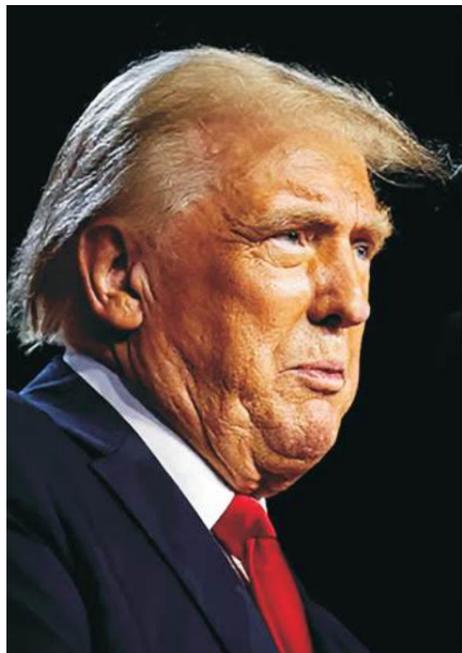
# US Christmas Day Strikes In Nigeria Targeted ISSP-Linked Militants — US Official

Christmas day strikes in northwest Nigeria targeted militants connected to the [Islamic State Sahel Province \(ISSP\)](#), a top US Africa Command official has said. Lieutenant General John Brennan told AFP the operations hit areas used as staging points by groups operating across the Sahel, based on intelligence from Nigerian authorities. "The most recent information we received from the Nigerians was it was ISIS Sahel-related," Brennan said on the sidelines of a US-Nigeria security meeting. Analysts have expressed concern over ISSP's potential spread from the Sahel into coastal West African countries, including Nigeria.

[President Donald Trump](#) confirmed the strikes, describing them as "powerful and deadly" and suggesting he ordered the operation as a "Christmas present," a claim that contrasts with Nigerian government statements. Nigerian officials described the operation as a "joint effort" with prior planning and intelligence provided by the country. Nigerian Foreign Minister Yusuf Maitama Tuggar said the strikes were not linked to Christmas or any religious observance and emphasised that the operation had the "full involvement of the armed forces of Nigeria." Some missile debris reportedly landed in the villages of Jabo in Sokoto State and Offa in Kwara State, but no civilian casualties

were reported. Local residents in Jabo described seeing a fireball streak across the sky on the night of the strikes, with some debris landing in fields. "We live peacefully, and there is no conflict between us and Christians," said eyewitness Umar Jabo. Other residents said they had seen no evidence of casualties among militants. The strikes targeted camps operated by a smaller group locally known as Lakurawa, which Nigerian authorities say is linked to jihadist networks in Mali and Niger. The group has reportedly settled in

border communities, recruited youths, and imposed strict controls over local populations. Residents in Tangaza,



the area where most camps were located, described the group as having restricted everyday activities and

enforced harsh punishments. US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth thanked Nigeria for its



cooperation in the operation, while the Pentagon released footage appearing to show a missile launch

from a vessel in the Gulf of Guinea. US officials have said assessments of the strike are ongoing, and further

operations may be possible with Nigerian collaboration. Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, has

faced jihadist violence for more than a decade, particularly in the northeast from Boko Haram and IS-linked factions. Recent reports suggest that militants in northwest states are seeking to establish new bases, a shift that has prompted both local and international responses. Residents near the strike sites have expressed concern and caution. "I'm hopeful and pray to God this doesn't happen again," said Mohammed Abubakar, a herder from Zamfara State who visited Jabo after the strikes. Others noted that while militants may have fled, the operation's impact on farmland and livestock has already been felt.

# Israel Recovers Remains Of Last Gaza Hostage

The Israeli military said it has retrieved the body of the last remaining hostage in Gaza. It had been searching for Master Sgt Ran Gvili since the ceasefire with Hamas began in October. Hamas was meant to return all hostages, alive and dead, within 72 hours of the ceasefire taking effect. Twenty living Israeli hostages and the bodies of 27 dead Israeli and foreign hostages were handed over but for the past few weeks Hamas said it had not yet been able to locate Gvili. On Sunday, Israel said it would reopen Gaza's key border crossing with Egypt once the operation to find and return Gvili was complete.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called Gvili's return "an extraordinary achievement". "We promised and I promised to bring everyone back. We brought them all back, down to the very last captive," he said. Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said the discovery of the body "confirms Hamas's commitment to all the requirements of the ceasefire agreement". The retrieval of Gvili clears the way for Israel and Hamas to advance to the second phase of US President Donald Trump's peace plan. Phase two is meant to involve the reconstruction and full demilitarisation of Gaza, including the disarmament of Hamas

and other Palestinian groups. Israel had resisted moving forward until Gvili was found. In a statement, the Israel



Defense Forces said: "According to the information and intelligence available to us, Sgt Maj (res) Ran Gvili... a Yamam commando fighter, aged 24 at the time of

his death, fell in battle on the morning of October 7, 2023, and his body was abducted to the Gaza Strip. "The IDF shares in the

family's grief. The IDF will continue to accompany the families and the returned hostages and to act to strengthen the security of Israel's citizens. "With this, all of the hostages from the Gaza

Strip area have been returned." Some 251 hostages were taken in the Hamas-led attack on Israel on 7 October 2023 in which about 1,200 people were killed. Most of the hostages were released alive over the course of the next two years in exchange for 250 Palestinian prisoners and 1,718 detainees from Gaza. Israel's military campaign in Gaza, launched in response to the attack, has killed 71,660 Palestinians, the Hamas-run health ministry has said.

# US Steps Up Military Action, Intelligence Sharing With Nigeria

The US military is increasing materiel deliveries and intelligence sharing with Nigeria, Africom's deputy commander told AFP, as part of a broader American push to work with African militaries to go after Islamic State-linked militants.

The Pentagon has also kept open lines of communication with militaries in the junta-led Sahel countries of Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali, Lieutenant General John Brennan said.

The increased cooperation with Abuja follows Washington's diplomatic pressure on Nigeria over jihadist violence in the country, but also as the US military is becoming "more aggressive" in pursuing IS-linked targets on the continent. Under the Trump administration, "we've gotten a lot more aggressive and (are) working with partners to target, kinetically, the threats, mainly ISIS," Brennan said in an interview on the sidelines of a US-Nigeria security meeting in the Nigerian capital last week.

"From Somalia to Nigeria, the problem set is connected. So we're trying to take it apart and then provide partners with the information they need," he added.

"It's been about more enabling partners and then providing them equipment and capabilities with less restrictions so that they can be more successful."

Last week's inaugural US-Nigeria Joint Working Group meeting came roughly a month after the US announced surprise Christmas Day strikes on IS-linked targets in northwest Nigeria.

Though both militaries seem keen on increased cooperation after the joint strikes, hanging over it all is diplomatic pressure by Washington over what Trump claims is the mass killing of Christians in Nigeria.

Abuja and independent analysts reject that framing of Nigeria's myriad, overlapping conflicts, which has long been used by the US religious right.

Charged politics were on display at the Joint Working Group meeting in Abuja, where Allison Hooker, the number three at the State Department, pushed the Nigerian government "to protect Christians" in a speech that did not mention Muslim victims of armed groups.

Africa's most populous country is roughly evenly split between a mostly Muslim north and mostly Christian south. Though millions live peacefully side by side, religious and ethnic identity remains a sensitive topic in a country that has seen sectarian violence throughout its history.

Brennan told AFP that US intelligence would

not be limited to protecting Christians.

He also said that following the US strikes in northwestern Sokoto state, American support going forward would focus on intelligence sharing to aid Nigerian

the country in recent months, though some have questioned whether air support alone can push back armed groups that thrive amid widespread poverty and state collapse in rural areas.

typically active in neighbouring Niger, Brennan said.

Analysts have voiced concerns about ISSP's spread from the Sahel into coastal west African countries like Nigeria.

widely, Brennan said "we still collaborate" with the junta-led governments in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, which have broken away from their west African neighbours and largely shunned the West.

Security cooperation has been curtailed since coups toppled civilian governments across the three countries from 2020 to 2023.

"We have actually shared information with some of them to attack key terrorist targets," he said. "We still talk to our military partners across the Sahelian states, even though it's not official."

Brennan also said the US is not seeking to replace its bases in Niger after its troops were pushed out by the ruling junta.

"We're not in the market to create a drone base anywhere," he said, referencing the shuttered US drone operations in Agadez.

"We are much more focused on getting capability to the right place at the right time and then leaving. We don't seek long-term basing in any of the western African countries."



air strikes there, as well as the northeast, where a jihadist insurgency by Boko Haram and rival breakaway ISWAP has raged since 2009.

Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) is "our most concerning group", he said.

Analysts have been tracking US intelligence flights over

US - Nigerian cooperation going forward will involve "the whole gamut of intel sharing, sharing... tactics, techniques, and procedures, as well as enabling them to procure more equipment," Brennan said.

The initial strikes targeted militants linked to Islamic State Sahel Province,

The impact of those strikes so far has been unclear, however, with local and international journalists unable to confirm militant casualties.

Asked about their effectiveness, Nigerian information minister Mohammed Idris said last week it was "still a work in progress".

In the Sahel more

## China Says Canada Deal Not Aimed At US After Tariff Threat

China said on Monday that a preliminary trade deal with Canada "does not target any third parties" after the United States threatened to impose 100-percent tariffs on Canadian products if the agreement were finalised.

Under the deal, announced this month, Beijing is expected to reduce tariffs on Canadian canola imports and grant Canadians visa-free

travel to China.

But over the weekend, the United States, Canada's traditional ally threatened to impose 100-percent tariffs on Canadian products if the deal were to go ahead, saying it would allow China to "dump goods".

China's foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said on Monday that the trade deal was not aimed at Washington.

"China and Canada

have established a new type of strategic partnership... it does not target any third party," China's foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun told a regular press conference.

"China advocates that nations should approach state-to-state relations with a win-win rather than zero-sum mindset, and through cooperation rather than confrontation," he

added.

The deal was announced during Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's visit to Beijing this month, as he seeks to distance himself from a volatile United States under President Donald Trump.

Canada and the United States have been caught in a trade war since the Trump administration imposed import duties on its northern neighbour.

On Sunday, Trump wrote on social media that negotiations between Ottawa and Beijing amounted to China "successfully and completely taking over the once Great Country of Canada".

Following the president's comments, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told US media that "we can't let Canada become an opening that the Chinese pour their cheap goods into the US".

# Reps Opposition Lawmakers Question Non-Implementation Of 2025 Budget ...Consider Sack of Finance Minister, Accountant-General

Members of the Opposition Caucus in the House of Representatives have raised serious concerns over the alleged non-implementation of the 2025 Appropriation Act, with indications that they may call for the removal of key finance officials over what they described as failed assurances to the legislature.

In a statement jointly signed by the Caucus Leaders, Hon. Fred Agbedi and Hon. Afam Ogene, the opposition lawmakers announced that a strategic meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday night at 8:00 p.m. to deliberate on pressing national and legislative issues.

According to the statement, discussions at the meeting will focus

on fiscal governance, legislative oversight, and the performance of the minority leadership in the House.



A major item on the agenda, the caucus said, is the reported failure to implement the 2025 budget for an entire

fiscal year, despite the House approving all loan requests submitted by the Executive. Members are expected

to scrutinise claims that funds appropriated for capital projects were not released as promised. The caucus is also

considering demands for greater accountability in the finance sector, including a possible call

for the removal of the Minister of Finance and the Accountant-General of the Federation. The officials are

accused of giving assurances to the House that the capital components of the 2025 budget would be

implemented and that outstanding payment obligations would be cleared before the end of the

year—commitments the caucus alleges were not fulfilled.

In addition, the opposition lawmakers plan to demand copies of all bills passed by the 10th Assembly, as well as the votes and proceedings of both chambers and all gazetted laws. The caucus said this step has become necessary in light of recent alterations to tax laws.

The meeting will also review the performance of the minority leadership amid concerns that some leaders may not have met the expectations of caucus members. Possible corrective measures are expected to be considered.

The venue of the meeting, the statement added, will be communicated to members on Tuesday.



# gateNews

The People's Voice

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# AGATE LITERATURE

With Msenhamba Nyiyongu Yonguhime

## Poems

**1. A Smile To Remember**  
we had goldfish and they circled around and around in the bowl on the table near the heavy drapes covering the picture window and my mother, always smiling, wanting us all to be happy, told me, 'be happy Henry!' and she was right: it's better to be happy if you can but my father continued to beat her and me several times a week while raging inside his 6-foot-two frame because he couldn't understand what was attacking him from within.

my mother, poor fish, wanting to be happy, beaten two or three times a week, telling me to be happy: 'Henry, smile! why don't you ever smile?'

and then she would smile, to show me how, and it was the saddest smile I ever saw

one day the goldfish died, all five of them, they floated on the water, on their sides, their eyes still open, and when my father got home he threw them to the cat there on the kitchen floor and we watched as my mother smiled  
*Charles Bukowski*

**2. A Prayer In Spring**  
Oh, give us pleasure in the flowers to-day;  
And give us not to think so far away  
As the uncertain harvest; keep us here  
All simply in the springing of the year.

Oh, give us pleasure in the orchard white,  
Like nothing else by day, like ghosts by night;  
And make us happy in the happy bees,  
The swarm dilating round the perfect trees.

And make us happy in the darting bird  
That suddenly above the bees is heard,  
The meteor that thrusts in with needle bill,  
And off a blossom in mid air stands still.

For this is love and nothing else is love,  
The which it is reserved for God above  
To sanctify to what far ends He will,  
But which it only needs that we fulfil.  
*Robert Frost*

**3. Bridal Ballad**  
The ring is on my hand,  
And the wreath is on my brow;  
Satin and jewels grand

But he spoke to re-assure me,  
And he kissed my pallid brow,  
While a reverie came o'er me,  
And to the church-yard bore me,  
And I sighed to him before me,  
Thinking him dead D'Elormie,  
'Oh, I am happy now!'

And thus the words were spoken,  
And this the plighted vow,  
And, though my faith be broken,  
And, though my heart be broken,  
Here is a ring, as token  
That I am happy now!

Would God I could awaken!  
For I dream I know not how!  
And my soul is sorely shaken  
Lest an evil step be taken,-  
Lest the dead who is forsaken  
May not be happy now.  
*Edgar Allan Poe*

**4. The Giving Tree**  
Once there was a tree...  
and she loved a little boy.  
And everyday the boy would come  
and he would gather her leaves  
and make them into crowns  
and play king of the forest.  
He would climb up her trunk  
and swing from her branches  
and eat apples.  
And they would play hide-and-go-seek.  
And when he was tired,  
he would sleep in her shade.  
And the boy loved the tree....  
very much.  
And the tree was happy.  
But time went by.  
And the boy grew older.  
And the tree was often alone.  
Then one day the boy came to the tree  
and the tree said, 'Come, Boy, come and  
climb up my trunk and swing from my  
branches and eat apples and play in my  
shade and be happy.'  
'I am too big to climb and play' said  
the boy.  
'I want to buy things and have fun.  
I want some money?'  
'I'm sorry,' said the tree, 'but I  
have no money.  
I have only leaves and apples.  
Take my apples, Boy, and sell them in  
the city. Then you will have money and  
you will be happy.'  
And so the boy climbed up the  
tree and gathered her apples  
and carried them away.  
And the tree was happy.  
But the boy stayed away for a long  
time....  
and the tree was sad.  
And then one day the boy came back  
and the tree shook with joy  
and she said, 'Come, Boy, climb up my  
trunk  
and swing from my branches and be  
happy.'  
'I am too busy to climb trees,' said the  
boy.  
'I want a house to keep me warm,' he  
said.  
'I want a wife and I want children,  
and so I need a house.  
Can you give me a house?'  
'I have no house,' said the tree.

'The forest is my house,  
but you may cut off  
my branches and build a  
house. Then you will be happy.'

And so the boy cut off her branches  
and carried them away  
to build his house.  
And the tree was happy.  
But the boy stayed away for a long time.  
And when he came back,  
the tree was so happy  
she could hardly speak.  
'Come, Boy,' she whispered,  
'come and play.'  
'I am too old and sad to play,'  
said the boy.  
'I want a boat that will  
take me far away from here.  
Can you give me a boat?'  
'Cut down my trunk  
and make a boat,' said the tree.  
'Then you can sail away...  
and be happy.'  
And so the boy cut down her trunk  
and made a boat and sailed away.  
And the tree was happy  
... but not really.

And after a long time  
the boy came back again.  
'I am sorry, Boy,'  
said the tree, 'but I have nothing  
left to give you -  
My apples are gone.'  
'My teeth are too weak  
for apples,' said the boy.  
'My branches are gone,'  
said the tree. 'You  
cannot swing on them -'  
'I am too old to swing  
on branches,' said the boy.  
'My trunk is gone,' said the tree.  
'You cannot climb -'  
'I am too tired to climb' said the boy.  
'I am sorry,' sighed the tree.  
'I wish that I could give you  
something...  
but I have nothing left.  
I am just an old stump.  
I am sorry...'  
'I don't need very much now,' said the  
boy.  
'just a quiet place to sit and rest.  
I am very tired.'  
'Well,' said the tree, straightening  
herself up as much as she could,  
'well, an old stump is good for sitting  
and resting  
Come, Boy, sit down. Sit down and rest.'  
And the boy did.  
And the tree was happy.  
*Shel Silverstein*

**5. Ode On A Grecian Urn**  
Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
Thou foster-child of silence and slow  
time,  
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
A flowery tale more sweetly than our  
rhyme:

What leaf-fring'd legend  
haunts about thy shape  
Of deities or mortals, or of  
both,  
In Tempe or the dales of  
Arcady?  
What men or gods are  
these? What maidens loth?

What mad pursuit? What struggle to  
escape?  
What pipes and timbrels? What wild  
ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those  
unheard  
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes,  
play on;  
Not to the sensual ear, but, more  
endear'd,  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:  
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou  
canst not leave  
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be  
bare;  
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou  
kiss,  
Though winning near the goal yet, do  
not grieve;  
She cannot fade, though thou hast not  
thy bliss,  
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot  
shed  
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring  
adieu;  
And, happy melodist, unwearied,  
For ever piping songs for ever new;  
More happy love! more happy, happy  
love!  
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,  
For ever panting, and for ever young;  
All breathing human passion far  
above,  
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and  
cloy'd,  
A burning forehead, and a parching  
tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?  
To what green altar, O mysterious  
priest,  
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the  
skies,  
And all her silken flanks with garlands  
drest?  
What little town by river or sea shore,  
Or mountain-built with peaceful  
citadel,  
Is emptied of this folk, this pious  
morn?  
And, little town, thy streets for  
evermore  
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell  
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with  
brede  
Of marble men and maidens  
overwrought,  
With forest branches and the trodden  
weed;  
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of  
thought  
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!  
When old age shall this generation  
waste,  
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other  
woe  
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom  
thou say'st,  
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,--that is  
all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to  
know."  
*John Keats*

In the imaginary Yelona State, Governor Thobias Elanga appointed his cousin, Tony Elanga, as Commissioner for Works and Infrastructure. Tony had only a diploma in business administration and no experience in engineering or public works. His appointment, widely seen as an act of nepotism, quickly led to stalled projects and poorly executed road contracts. Critics accused the governor of valuing family loyalty over competence, while the public lost confidence in his administration's ability to deliver on its promises. Nepotism, the practice of favouring or hiring family members because of their relationship with someone in authority, comes from the Italian word *nepotismo*, which is derived from the Latin term *nepos*, meaning "nephew". Nepotism literally means the practice of granting jobs, contracts, or special privileges to relatives and close associates regardless of their



## KANDID SENTIMENTS

with Igba Ogbole

### Nepotism: The Silent Killer Of Governance

By Terver Akase (Guest Writer)

qualifications or competence.

In every society where leadership carries the sacred duty of service, fairness, competence, and merit should be the guiding principles. However, when personal relationships and family ties are allowed to dictate decisions in governance and public service, a dangerous form of corruption takes root. Nepotism is one of the most subtle yet destructive vices that erode the foundations of good governance, weaken public trust, and stall social progress.

In today's world, it manifests in political appointments, public service recruitment, and even in the private sector, where individuals are rewarded not for their merit, but for their personal

their personal connections. What begins as an act of loyalty or trust often degenerates into institutional decay and inefficiency.

When nepotism becomes a norm in governance, the consequences are far-reaching. Leaders who appoint friends and family members to key positions often do so at the expense of capable

*“When nepotism becomes a norm in governance, the consequences are far-reaching. Leaders who appoint friends and family members to key positions often do so at the expense of capable professionals. This practice erodes the spirit of meritocracy and replaces competence with mediocrity”*

professionals. This practice erodes the spirit of meritocracy and replaces competence with mediocrity. In such an environment, policy decisions are influenced not by sound judgment or expertise, but by personal interests and the need to protect those close to power. Public

to power. Public institutions that should serve citizens become tools for personal enrichment and patronage, while the quality of governance declines steadily.

One of the greatest dangers of nepotism is the destruction of public trust. Citizens quickly lose confidence in their leaders when they perceive that

through nepotism often see themselves as untouchable. They misuse public resources with impunity, secure in the knowledge that their family or personal ties to those in authority will shield them from accountability.

Beyond government, nepotism is equally damaging in the wider society. In the corporate world, it kills innovation and productivity by placing unqualified individuals

in strategic positions. In academia, it discourages talented students and researchers when opportunities are given based on connection rather than merit. In communities, it destroys the moral fabric by teaching young people that success depends not on hard work or

excellence, but on whom they know. In the long run, a society built on favouritism will inevitably lag behind those that promote fairness and equal opportunity.

Curbing nepotism requires deliberate effort and strong institutional safeguards. Governments must enforce transparent recruitment and appointment processes that emphasize merit over personal ties. Civil service systems should be insulated from political interference, while anti-corruption agencies such as EFCC and ICPC must be empowered to hold everyone accountable regardless of status or relationship. More importantly, citizens themselves must reject and speak out against the culture of favouritism!

For true development to take root, merit must triumph over mediocrity, and service must be driven by commitment to the public good rather than loyalty to family or friends. Every community is blessed with competent individuals!