

# Bauchi Under Pressure: EFCC Trial, Power Struggles and the Politics of Prosecution

By Mijinyawa Ahmed

The ongoing prosecution of Bauchi State Commissioner for Finance, Yakubu Adamu, by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has transcended the confines of the courtroom and evolved into a defining political moment for Bauchi State.

What initially appeared as a high-profile anti-corruption case has now become deeply entangled with questions of political power, opposition politics, federal-state relations, and the future trajectory of governance in the state.

At the heart of the controversy is not only the gravity of the allegations ranging from alleged N5.7 billion money laundering to terrorism financing claims but also the political context in which they have emerged.

Bauchi State, governed by Senator Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), has long been one of the most politically competitive states in northern Nigeria. The latest developments have, therefore, been widely interpreted through a political lens rather than viewed solely as a criminal prosecution.

## A Commissioner, a Governor, and a Political Environment

Yakubu Adamu is not just another public



Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed CON, Governor Bauchi State

official. As Commissioner for Finance and Economic Development, he occupies a strategic position at the nerve centre of Bauchi State's governance—overseeing revenue, expenditure, and the financial architecture that sustains government operations. His arrest, arraignment, and continued detention have inevitably sent shockwaves through the political structure of the state.

Supporters of the Bauchi State Government argue that the timing and layering of the charges raise troubling questions. Within 48 hours, Adamu was arraigned on separate cases first on alleged money laundering linked to his previous role as a bank manager, and then on far more explosive

terrorism financing allegations tied to state finances.

To many within Bauchi's political establishment, this sequence has reinforced the belief that the case is not merely legal, but deeply political.

Although Governor Bala Mohammed is not an accused person, his repeated mention in the charge sheets has fuelled perceptions that the prosecution is designed to politically damage his administration.

The Bauchi State Government has openly described this as an attempt to conduct a "trial in the court of public opinion," particularly sensitive given the constitutional immunity enjoyed by sitting governors.



Olanipekun Olukoyede Executive Chairman, EFCC

## Opposition Politics and the Federal Question

Bauchi's political tension cannot be divorced from national politics. The state is governed by the opposition PDP, while the federal government is controlled by the All Progressives Congress (APC).

In this context, allegations of selective justice have gained traction among political actors, civil society groups, and youth organisations within the state.

Groups such as the Concerned Bauchi Citizens (CBC) and the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN) have publicly argued that anti-corruption agencies are increasingly perceived as instruments of

political pressure against opposition-led states. They contend that while corruption must be fought, the appearance of partisanship undermines public trust in institutions like the EFCC.

For many in Bauchi, the introduction of terrorism financing allegations is particularly alarming. The state has, by most accounts, remained relatively peaceful compared to other parts of the North. Political leaders fear that branding Bauchi with terrorism-related accusations could stigmatise the state, discourage investment, and erode the narrative of stability that the current administration has worked to project.

## Governance Disruption as a Political Cost

One of the most potent political arguments raised by the defence during bail hearings was the impact of Adamu's detention on governance. The claim that over 60,000 state workers were affected by delays in salary payments resonated strongly within the state. In Bauchi's political culture—where civil servants, teachers, and local government workers form a significant voting bloc—any disruption to salaries quickly becomes a political issue.

Whether or not this argument holds legal weight, it has amplified public anxiety and fed into the broader narrative that the prosecution is destabilising governance.

For the ruling PDP in Bauchi, this situation presents both a challenge and an opportunity: a challenge in managing public perception of accountability, and an opportunity to rally political support around a narrative of resistance against perceived federal overreach.

## Governor Bala Mohammed's Political Response

Governor Bala Mohammed's recent public statements reflect a careful but firm political stance. While affirming confidence in the judiciary, he has accused the federal government of intolerance and warned against the misuse of institutions to harass

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## Issues

# From Sambisa to Kainji: How B'Haram, Bandits, JNIM are driving a cross-regional terror alliance in Nigeria

By Zagazola Makama

**E**merging security assessments identifying specific commanders, bomb-makers and facilitators point to a deepening, evidence-based pattern in which Boko Haram's Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS), organised bandit groups and Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) elements are increasingly functioning as a loose but lethal coalition across Nigeria's North-East, North-West and North-Central zones.

At the core of the emerging threat is a JAS suicide-bombing network traced to the Ali Ngulde camp, with technical direction allegedly provided by veteran IED expert Munzir Abu Ziyadah. Intelligence indicates that Abu Ziyadah's team prepared up to 10 person-borne IED (PBIED) attacks, routed through the Ngoshe Mountains, transiting Gazuwa and Ngom, before infiltrating towns across Borno State.

The Dec. 24 suicide bombing at Gamboru Market mosque in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) is assessed by Zagazola Makama as one execution point within this wider plan, rather than a stand-alone operation. Subsequent intelligence specifically flagged Gwoza and Pulka, particularly on market days, as prospective targets, with reports confirming that one female Boko Haram member was embedded among the PBIED elements an operational detail consistent with past JAS tactics in soft targets.

Deep sources further sheds light on JAS' internal Militant structure. Before his reported death, Ustaz, the Amir al-Jaish in

Barwa, served as the de facto number two to Bakura Doro, overseeing the security of JAS' headquarters. Alongside him, JAS maintained a decentralized command arrangement under three principal terrorist leaders: Ali Ngulde (Mandara Mountains axis), Sadikku (North-West and North-Central axis), and Ustaz (Barwa).

Recent clashes point to how rivalry within jihadist factions can intensify violence. Following a surprise JAS attack on ISWAP positions around the Lake Chad islands, ISWAP reportedly retaliated by killing Ustaz, signalling that internecine conflict remains a driver of high-impact attacks as factions seek to reassert dominance.

While the North-East continues to face the classic Boko Haram suicide threat, developments in the North-West reveal a dangerous mutation. Intelligence linking bandit kingpins to former Sambisa-based IED experts marks a significant escalation in the character of violence in Zamfara and neighbouring states.

Sources names Alhaji Beti, identified as the younger brother of slain JAS/Ansaru leader Alhaji Bello, as a central facilitator of terror-bandit collaboration. Bello was killed in Rijana Forest, Kaduna State, in 2024, but his network appears to have survived.

According to the sources, Alhaji Beti is hosting Sambisa-linked IED experts inside Gando Forest, Zamfara State. These specialists are reportedly

fabricating IEDs intended for deployment along critical access routes in Bukkuyum Local Government Area, with spillover risk into Sokoto and Kebbi States. The fabrication of roadside and vehicle-borne IEDs for deployment along major supply routes in Bukkuyum, parts of Sokoto and Kebbi represents a strategic shift aimed at disrupting movement, strangling commerce and stretching military response capacity.

As of Dec. 25, intelligence and community confirmations indicated that about 25 IED couriers had laid road-side IED (RSBIED) lanes along the Kyarum-Kairu MSR in Bukkuyum.

This evolution manifested starkly on Dec. 27 along the Dansadau-Gusau corridor, where coordinated IED detonations against a civilian convoy, followed by an attempted ambush on military elements, killed eight civilians.

The attack bore hallmarks of jihadist doctrine: layered explosives, exploitation of panic, and a follow-on armed engagement. Zagazola describe it as a clear departure from traditional bandit hit-and-run tactics. It pointed to how banditry is evolving beyond ransom-driven crime into terror-style warfare.

This intelligence also aligns with the Dec. 27 incident near Mai-Ayaya Village, Magami District, Gusau LGA, where multiple IEDs struck a civilian convoy escorted by troops, killing eight civilians. The follow-on ambush against an Army tanker reflects tactics

commonly associated with jihadist groups rather than traditional banditry, lending weight to assessments that Boko Haram expertise is being exported into the North-West theatre.

Baba Adamu, also known as Kachallah Sadikku, was actively training the Dogo Gide-led group in IED construction to escalate attacks in the North-Central zone. This training pipeline coincides with reported collaboration between JNIM, Ansaru and JAS elements.

A case in point was the Dec. 22 attack on an NSCDC checkpoint at Ibrahim Leteh Village, along the Wawa-Luma MSR in Borgu LGA, Niger State. The attackers suspected JNIM fighters operating with Ansaru/JAS elements escaped through the Kainji National Park axis after seizing a rifle. The outpost's proximity about 3 km to Wawa town and 9 km to the 221 Armoured Brigade barracks illustrate the strategic intent behind the assault.

Zagazola Makama identify Kainji National Park as a critical sanctuary, repeatedly referenced as a rear base for insurgents operating across the Niger-Kwara corridor. Communities such as Nuku, Durumma, Woro, Wawa and Babanna have formed a ring of recent attack sites around the park, reinforcing concerns that jihadist groups are methodically making preparation for more ambitious operations. The most recent attacks coordinated by Boko Haram terror networks was the abduction of 130 students from the St. Mary's Catholic School, Papiri in November 24 and 26, 2025.

Taken together, the intelligence paints a picture of a multi-zonal, adaptive and increasingly lethal threat. The convergence of JAS suicide expertise, bandit mobility networks and JNIM operational doctrine represents a qualitative escalation that blurs the line between insurgency and organised crime.

This convergence reflects a deliberate strategy: JAS supplies suicide bombing and IED know-how; bandit leaders provide terrain access and logistics; JNIM contributes regional connectivity and combat experience. The result is a hybrid threat capable of mass-casualty attacks on highways, markets and places of worship.

For Nigeria's security architecture, the implications are profound. The prioritisation of EOD-led route clearance on vulnerable MSRs, intensified surveillance of forest sanctuaries, and proactive intelligence fusion across theatres are no longer optional, they are strategic imperatives. Equally critical is sustained community engagement, without which early warning and HUMINT pipelines will remain fragile.

Zagazola Makama therefore calls for the need for anticipatory action rather than reactive deployments. As extremist actors seek to widen their operational depth and geographic reach, the cost of delayed or fragmented responses will be measured not only in disrupted trade and insecurity, but in civilian lives.

Zagazola Makama is a Counter Insurgency Expert and Security Analyst in the Lake Chad region.

## More than 22 million older Americans live alone

*\* They are unmarried and don't have kids*

*\* But they're struggling with rising costs*

By Salihu Makera with agency's report

**A**s inflation continues to reshape the American economy, a quiet demographic shift is compounding the financial pressure on older adults.

"Solo-agers," or adults who are growing old without spouses, partners, or adult children to rely on, are facing more precarity, more anxiety and a greater likelihood of living in poverty.

Before the mid-twentieth century, aging was often a communal or familial process. Starting in the 1980s, the landscape shifted dramatically.

According to KFF Health News, roughly 28% of Americans 65 and older now live alone, a stark increase from about 10% in 1950. (1) For these individuals, the margin for error in retirement planning is shrinking.

The Society of Actuaries (SOA) generally defines solo-agers as older adults who are single, living alone, and lack

traditional family support, such as a spouse or nearby adult children.

While widowhood was once the primary driver of this demographic, the modern solo-ager population is more diverse.

Demographic trends including lower marriage rates, higher divorce rates in later life (often called "gray divorce") and the decision not to have children among younger boomers and Gen Xers mean the share of solo agers is rising compared to older generations.

Solo living was made possible by the economic expansion of the 20th century and the advance of rights for women, but one unforeseen consequence of that freedom is potential financial vulnerability.

Older adults who live alone shoulder the full cost of housing, utilities, transportation, and food. In

personal finance, this is often referred to as the "singles tax."

A couple living together needs only one internet connection, for example, one heating bill, and often only one vehicle. A solo-ager pays the same rate for these essentials but with only one income stream.

For this reason, solo retirees often need significantly larger retirement resources to sustain the same lifestyle as couples.

This problem is worse for women, who, on average, live longer than men and may have lower lifetime earnings due to wage gaps or caregiving interruptions. After age 75, 43% of women live solo, while only 21% of men do, primarily because of women's longer lifespans.

Housing is the largest line item in most retirees' budgets, and for solo-agers, it can be the most difficult expense to meet.

Rising rents, property taxes, and homeowners'

insurance can quickly overwhelm a single income, particularly in high-cost regions where older adults may have deep community roots they don't want to give up by relocating or downsizing.

Health care costs are also daunting. Without a spouse to provide unpaid care at home, solo-agers may face immediate out-of-pocket costs for home health aides, assisted living, or nursing home stays as their health declines, and these services can cost thousands of dollars per month.

According to data compiled by CareScout, the costs of in-home care, assisted living community costs and private room nursing home costs have risen 9% since 2022.

Costs differ depending on location, but the national average for annual in-home costs was \$77,796 in 2024. For assisted living communities, the cost was \$70,800, and for private room nursing homes it was \$127,752.

Standard retirement rules

of thumb like saving enough to replace 70% to 80% of pre-retirement income, and the 4% rule, may not be applicable to solo-agers. Because they cannot rely on a partner's pension, Social Security, or "free" caregiver labour, their financial bar is higher.

A solo-ager's retirement budget must account for paying professionals for tasks that spouses or children often do for free, such as transportation, grocery trips and household repairs.

And they will need trusted professionals to handle their legal affairs, arrangements like health care proxies, and power of attorney before a crisis hits.

Solo agers face higher per-person costs and heavier planning burdens than their partnered peers. For this growing demographic, thoughtful financial and care planning is a necessity, not a luxury. (MoneyWise)



## AHBN Urges Bauchi Stakeholders to Review Zero Dose Learning Hub for Stronger Immunisation Delivery in 2026

By Ahmed Ahmed

The African Health Budget Network (AHBN) has called on key stakeholders in Bauchi State to undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Zero Dose Learning Hub (ZDLH) as part of efforts to strengthen immunisation service delivery and reduce the number of zero-dose children in 2026.

The call was made on Thursday in Bauchi by the Chief Executive Officer and Convener of AHBN, Dr. Aminu Magashi Garba, during a strategic engagement meeting with media executives and Executive Directors of non-governmental organisations drawn from across the state.

Dr. Magashi commended the Bauchi State Government, members of the Zero Dose Learning Hub Community of Practice (CoP), development partners, and other high-level stakeholders for the notable achievements recorded in the immunisation sector in 2025. He described the progress as a reflection of sustained collaboration, political will, and evidence-driven advocacy.

According to him, the Zero Dose Learning Hub has provided a structured platform that brings together government institutions, civil society organisations, the media, academia, and development partners to jointly address challenges affecting routine immunisation in the state.

He stressed that strengthening collaboration through the Community of Practice framework would further enhance immunisation outcomes, particularly in underserved and hard-to-reach communities.

"The gains recorded so far show that when stakeholders work together and use data effectively, meaningful progress can be achieved. However, to sustain and improve these outcomes in 2026, there is a need to critically review the implementation of the Zero Dose Learning Hub and identify areas that require strengthening," Dr. Magashi said.

He challenged members of the Community of Practice from academic and research institutions to play a more active role by conducting operational and policy-relevant research capable of generating credible evidence to guide decision-making.

Dr. Magashi emphasized that evidence-based advocacy remains central to addressing



persistent gaps in immunisation financing, reducing the burden of zero-dose children, and improving the overall quality of health service delivery in Bauchi State.

"Research findings must translate into actionable recommendations that policymakers can adopt. This is critical to ensuring that no child is left behind in immunisation coverage," he added.

Earlier in his remarks, the Co-Chairman of the AHBN Board, Hon. Usman Mohammed, highlighted the strategic role of the legislature in ensuring sustainable immunisation financing at both state and local government levels.

He stressed the need for increased budgetary allocation to immunisation, timely release of approved funds, and effective legislative oversight to guarantee accountability in the utilisation of public resources.

Hon. Mohammed also called for the continued use of the AHBN-supported Accountability Framework, particularly the Immunisation Financing Scorecard developed for 2023, 2024, and 2025, describing it as a vital tool for evidence-driven planning and decision-making.

The Immunisation Financing Scorecard has proven to be effective in tracking commitments, monitoring releases, and assessing performance. Sustaining its use will help policymakers make informed decisions that positively impact immunisation outcomes," he said.

In his contribution, the Bauchi State Focal Person of AHBN, Dr. Hassan Shuaibu Musa, acknowledged that the implementation of the Zero Dose Learning Hub in the state has significantly improved the timely release of immunisation funds over the years.

He attributed these successes to sustained advocacy by civil society organisations, strong collaboration among

stakeholders, and the commitment of the Bauchi State Government.

Dr. Musa specifically commended the Bauchi State Government and the State Primary Health Care Development Board (SPHCDB), under the leadership of its Executive Chairman, Dr. Rilwanu Mohammed, for prioritising immunisation financing.

He noted that Bauchi State has gained national recognition for the early release of 100 percent of its budgeted immunisation funds, a development he described as a model for other states to emulate.

"The timely release of funds has helped improve planning, reduce service disruptions, and strengthen immunisation delivery across health facilities in the state," Dr. Musa said.

The Co-Chair of the Zero Dose Learning Hub Community of Practice also shared insights on the need to deepen collaboration among stakeholders to improve immunisation coverage, reduce zero-dose cases, and address vaccine stock-outs in health facilities.

The Co-Chair stressed that addressing supply chain challenges, strengthening data use, and sustaining community engagement would be critical to achieving the state's immunisation targets in 2026.

Speaking on behalf of media professionals, Ms. Elizabeth Kah reaffirmed the commitment of journalists in Bauchi State to supporting efforts aimed at improving immunisation coverage.

She said journalists would continue to raise public awareness, promote accountability, and amplify evidence-based messages to ensure the reduction of zero-dose children across the state.

The meeting concluded with a renewed commitment by all stakeholders to strengthen collaboration, deepen evidence-based advocacy, and sustain gains recorded in immunisation financing and service delivery in Bauchi State.

## Kanem-Borno Heritage: Culture as a Bridge for Healing and Peace in Post-Insurgency Maiduguri

By Alkali Muhammad Musa, Maiduguri



Still emerging from the scars of over a decade of insurgency, Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, is reclaiming its historic identity as a centre of civilisation, culture and unity. This renewed spirit was on display as the city hosted descendants of the ancient Kanem-Borno Empire and participants from more than ten countries for a cultural summit aimed at healing, reconciliation and peacebuilding.

The gathering drew Kanuri communities and cultural delegates from across Africa and beyond, including the United States, Saudi Arabia and the Central African Republic, reflecting the far-reaching legacy of an empire that once unified vast parts of the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin.

At the heart of the celebration was the Kanem-Borno Cultural Summit, hosted by Borno State Governor, Professor Babagana Umara Zulum, who received thousands of Kanuri kinsmen from at least ten countries in Maiduguri. The summit brought together 161 emirs, traditional rulers, senior government officials and Kanuri delegates from Ghana, Sudan, Gabon, Niger, Central African Republic, Senegal, Libya, Chad, Cameroon and Benin.

Beyond festivity, the summit symbolised a deliberate effort to reconnect fractured transnational kinship ties disrupted by conflict, displacement and insecurity. By reviving shared heritage, language and traditions, the gathering sought to strengthen a collective identity capable of supporting post-conflict recovery, regional cooperation and long-term development.

Colourful cultural

performances, traditional dances and exhibitions by contingents from different countries highlighted the richness of Kanem-Borno civilisation, one of Africa's longest-lasting empires, which thrived for over a thousand years from the 9th to the 19th century.

Speaking in the Kanuri language, Governor Zulum emphasised the importance of cultural heritage as a tool for rebuilding societies affected by violence. He called for stronger educational exchanges, entrepreneurial partnerships and socio-economic initiatives to uplift Kanuri communities across borders. As part of this commitment, the governor announced scholarships for 150 students from countries that historically formed the Kanem-Borno Empire.

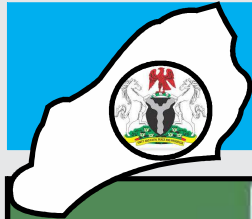
The summit also attracted high-profile dignitaries, including a representative of Chadian President Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, the Governor of Lac Province, Major General Saleh Haggat Tidjani; Yobe State Governor Mai Mala Buni; former Vice President Babagana Kingibe; the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammadu Sa'ad Abubakar III; Senators Mohammed Tahir Monguno and Mohammed Ali Ndume, as well as Barrister Kaka Shehu Lawan.

Others in attendance were members of the National Assembly, speakers of the Borno and Yobe State Houses of Assembly, emirs and chiefs from across Nigeria, commissioners and senior officials of the Borno State Government.

For a city long defined by conflict headlines, the cultural summit marked a powerful statement: that Maiduguri is not only surviving but reconnecting with its deep-rooted heritage to shape a peaceful and united future.



## Advertorial



### Office of the Executive Chairman Bali Local Government Council



HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. AGBU KEFAS  
GOVERNOR, TARABA STATE

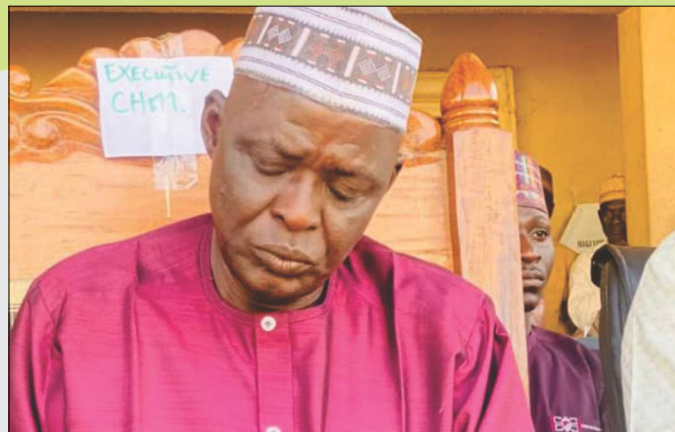
### Wishing our Governor blissful Yuletide

**I** Hon. Habila Bala Balasa, Executive Chairman of Bali Local Government Council of Taraba State, on behalf of the entire Management and staff, joyfully join the good people Taraba State to celebrate with His Excellency, Dr. Agbu Kefas, Governor of Taraba State on this memorable Yuletide.

Our facilitation goes to, Alh. Aminu Abdullahi Alkali, Deputy Governor of Taraba State, the Speaker, Taraba State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. John Kizito Bonzena, Honourable Members of the State Assembly, Taraba State Executive Council and the Good people of Taraba State on this spiritual season of Christmas & New Year.

Your Excellency, the situation in the state today shows that, your five Finger agenda is a template for transparency and infrastructural development.

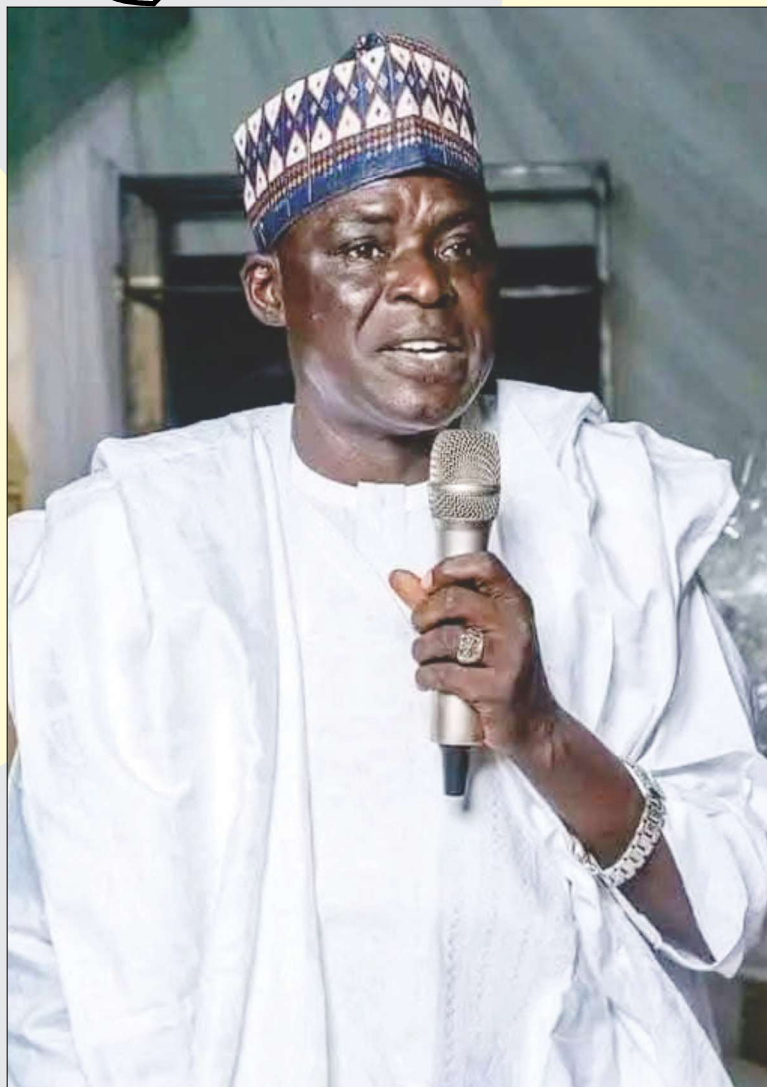
As you join other world leaders to celebrate with the Christian faithful across the Lord God should continue to strengthen your leadership capacity and give you good health so that you achieve your objective of making Taraba a Better State for all.



Hon. Habila Bala Balasa,  
Executive Chairman,  
Bali Local Government Council



### Office of the Executive Chairman Bali Local Government Council



### Wishing My Good People of Bali LGA, a Blissful Yuletide

**A**s we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, I, Hon. Habila Bala Balasa, Executive Chairman of Bali Local Government Council, extend my warmest Christmas greetings to all Christians in Bali LGA and beyond.

This special day is a time for reflection, renewal, and rejoicing. It's a moment to cherish the values of love, kindness, and generosity that Jesus Christ embodied.

To our Christian brothers and sisters, I wish you a Merry Christmas filled with laughter, cheer, and precious moments with loved ones. May the joy of the season fill your hearts and homes.

As we celebrate, let's remember those in need. Let's extend a helping hand, share a smile, and spread love and kindness throughout our community.

May our community continue to thrive in unity, prosperity, and harmony. May God bless Bali, Taraba State, and Nigeria with peace, stability, and progress.

Hon. Habila Bala Balasa,  
Executive Chairman,  
Bali Local Government Council



## Northeast News

### Maternal mortality: Gombe Govt, UNICEF Launch Health Centres Revitalization in 3 LGAs

By Najib Sani, Gombe

The Gombe State government and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have handed over three primary health centres in Gombe State to contractors, marking the start of a major revitalisation project aimed at improving child and maternal healthcare in the state.

The health centres, located in Akko, Kwami, and Dukku local governments, would undergo significant upgrades to enhance healthcare services for women and children in the rural areas.

In his speech during the handing over of the sites to the contractors held at the state ministry of health headquarters, the state commissioner for Health, Dr Habu Dahiru, said the project would upgrade the facilities to level 2, with good physical structures, staff quarters, water supply and electricity using solar power.

"UNICEF is supporting the



project in three local governments and the sites have been handed over to contractors with a three-month completion deadline" he said.

Dr Dahiru explained that the centres were chosen due to their location in hard-to-reach areas, with the aim of reducing maternal mortality.

He urged the benefiting communities to protect the facilities from vandalism, ensuring the successful completion of the project.

In her remarks, the chief of Bauchi Field Office of UNICEF in charge of Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa, Taraba and Plateau States, Dr Nuzhat

Rafique, emphasised the importance of quality healthcare facilities in reducing maternal and child mortality rates.

She stated that the organisation is committed to supporting efforts to improve primary healthcare in Gombe State, particularly in hard-to-reach areas.

Dr Rafique praised the Gombe State government for its commitment to enhancing primary healthcare and expressed optimism that the revitalisation of the health centres would significantly improve healthcare services for women and children.

### Ex-Bauchi SSG Kashim denies fraud allegations, dares Gov. Bala to take him to court

By Mijinyawa Ahmed

A political storm appears to be brewing in Bauchi State following strong reactions from the immediate past Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Barrister Ibrahim Mohammed Kashim, over allegations leveled against him by Governor Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed.

Kashim, who recently resigned his position as the Chief Scribe of the state, has categorically denied claims by the governor that he was removed from office over alleged financial impropriety.

In a strongly worded statement released on Friday, the former SSG described the allegation as "unfortunate, misleading, and entirely untrue," insisting that his record in public service remains clean and unblemished.

A visibly angered Kashim challenged Governor Bala Mohammed to take him before

any competent court of law if there is evidence linking him to fraud.

He maintained that at no point during his tenure was he indicted, queried, investigated, or found culpable by any audit report, panel of inquiry, or anti-corruption agency.

"At no time during my service as Secretary to the State Government was I involved in, or accused of, any act of fraud or financial misconduct," Kashim stated.

"No law enforcement agency or oversight institution has ever established or even insinuated such allegations against me. Any suggestion otherwise is a blatant distortion of facts and a calculated attempt to divert attention from more pressing issues."

He further clarified that his exit from office was not based on any proven wrongdoing, stressing that he served the Bauchi State

Government with diligence, transparency, and fidelity to the law. According to him, he remains proud of his stewardship and contributions to governance in the state.

Kashim also expressed readiness to account for his time in office at any moment, stating that he is willing to present a full and detailed explanation of his tenure to any competent authority or to the Nigerian public.

Describing the allegations as troubling, he warned against the growing trend of projecting false narratives to justify political developments. He said such actions undermine personal reputations and erode the principles of fairness, accountability, and truth that should guide public discourse.

The former SSG assured that he would soon address the media and the public to comprehensively clarify the issues. "In the coming days, I will respond in detail to this cowardly deflection of issues and place verifiable facts before the court of public opinion," he declared. "Talk is cheap; facts are sacred."

The unfolding exchange has sparked intense political debate in Bauchi, with many observers awaiting Kashim's promised media engagement for further revelations.



### From Outcry to Custody: Inside the Alleged Rape Case of a Five-Year-Old Pupil in Maiduguri

By Alkali Muhammad Musa, Maiduguri

Maiduguri was gripped by outrage and fear in recent weeks following reports of the alleged rape of a five-year-old girl in the State Low-Cost area of the Borno State capital. The incident, which reportedly occurred on November 13, sparked a wave of public concern, intense online debates, and growing calls for accountability, transparency, and justice.

The matter formally drew public attention after a petition was submitted to the Borno State Police Command on November 24. The allegation involved a young schoolgirl who was said to have been attacked on her way to school, sending shock waves across communities and triggering fears over the safety of children in the city.

As the story circulated online, social media became a space of intense discussion, with initial reports claiming the alleged suspect had been arrested and secretly released. These claims immediately fueled public distrust, with many residents questioning the integrity of law enforcement and expressing frustration.

However, the Borno State Police Command swiftly refuted the rumours, stating that no arrest had been made at the time. According to ASP Nahum Kenneth Daso, the police public relations officer, the case was promptly assigned to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), while the suspect identified as Abdulsalam M. Adakwaki had fled shortly after the petition was filed.

The clarification did little to calm public tensions. Many residents, activists, civil society groups, and parents demanded a more visible and urgent police response. Community conversations grew louder. For many, the case became symbolic not just of one family's tragedy, but of broader concerns about child protection, security, and justice in Maiduguri.

In an effort to broaden the search and strengthen

community involvement, police authorities enlisted the support of local leaders and members of the Civilian Joint Task Force. The development added pressure to the already unfolding manhunt, as residents continued to call for clarity and action.

A major breakthrough emerged on Thursday when the suspect, after days in hiding, voluntarily reported to the police. His surrender marked a turning point in the tense public atmosphere. Police confirmed that Adakwaki is now in custody and undergoing interrogation at the State Criminal Investigation Department in Maiduguri.

According to the Command, the investigation is being handled with "professionalism and sensitivity," given the age of the alleged victim and the trauma associated with such cases. To reinforce public trust, authorities have opened the process to scrutiny from civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the National Human Rights Commission.

The police have meanwhile cautioned residents against circulating photographs or personal details of the child or suspect, warning that such actions could compromise the investigation and violate legal protections.

As the inquiry progresses, the Command has assured the public that every step will be taken to ensure justice is served in line with the law.

For many in Maiduguri, the case has become a mirror reflecting broader social questions about the safety of children, the responsibility of communities, and the fragility of trust in criminal justice institutions. While the arrest has brought some relief, residents say their attention will remain fixed on the outcome of the investigation, determined that this case, unlike others, must not fade quietly from public memory.





## Issues

# How Justice Minister, NBA other rejected death penalty for kidnapping

The move by the Senate to impose the death penalty for kidnapping by classifying the offence as an act of terrorism has suffered a major setback, as the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Lateef Fagbemi (SAN), has kicked against it, warning that capital punishment would not deter kidnapping and could, in fact, worsen Nigeria's security challenges.

Other stakeholders like ex-NU Envoy Uchenna Emelonye, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the Nigerian Financial Unit (NFIU), the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), and the DSS, among others, were against it.

They all expressed principled and evidence-based reservations about the proposed expansion of the death penalty, particularly as a response to kidnapping and related violent crimes.

According to the NHRC, before any bill is passed into law by legislative bodies at the Federal or State level, it must first undergo and successfully pass a human rights impact assessment test and Prohibition Act.

"This means that the proposed legislation must improve the general enjoyment of the human rights of Nigerians and must be in tandem with internationally recognised human rights norms and best practices. This is a general examination of the above-referred bill to ensure that it complies with the highest human rights standards."

The One-Day Public Hearing organised by the Senate Committees on Judiciary, Human Rights and Legal Matters, chaired by Senator Adeniyi Adegboire, SAN, APC, Ondo Central, was on 'A Bill for an Act to Amend the Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act to designate kidnapping, hostage taking, and related offences as acts of terrorism to prescribe the death penalty for such offences without option of fine or alternative sentence and for related matters 2025'.

It is a bill to amend the Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act as it seeks to



**Lateef Fagbemi (SAN), Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice**

designate kidnapping, hostage-taking and related offences as terrorism and to prescribe the death penalty without an option of a fine or alternative sentence.

Fagbemi, who was the first to speak and reject the bill, said that the inclusion of the death penalty risks creating a "martyrdom effect", especially in cases linked to extremist ideologies, where executions are viewed as validation rather than punishment.

"While we share the National Assembly's determination to eliminate terrorism and violent crime, we must avoid measures that are emotionally appealing but strategically counterproductive."

The AGF, who cautioned that the proposal could weaken international cooperation, said that many countries would refuse to extradite suspects facing the death penalty, thereby allowing high-profile suspects

to evade justice, adding that Nigeria has long-standing challenges with implementing capital punishment, including governors' reluctance to sign execution warrants, prison congestion and the danger of radicalisation within correctional facilities.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) also faulted the Bill, calling for a mandatory human rights impact assessment for all legislation before passage.

While acknowledging the legislature's concern over rising kidnappings and violent crimes, the Commission recognised the efforts of the legislature to put an end to escalating tension in the country resulting from violent crimes, mindless killings, kidnappings and religious extremism in Nigeria. It was of the view that the "Bill has serious legal, constitutional, and policy problems based on Nigerian constitutional law and criminal jurisprudence

and the principles of justice which are set out here seriatim."

On its part, the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) urged the Senate to adopt a more measured approach, recommending that kidnapping be classified as terrorism only in cases involving organised criminal or terrorist networks or where there is clear intent to intimidate the public or coerce the government.

According to the NBA, the mandatory death penalty should be replaced with discretionary sentencing, including life imprisonment, and graduated penalties that reflect the degree of harm, the offender's role and the outcome of the offence.

Other organisations, including the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU), the Nigerian Law Reform Commission, the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) and the Department of State Services (DSS), also raised reservations about the proposed amendment.

In his remarks, former United Nations Human Rights Envoy and Professor of Human Rights Law at Bournemouth University, Professor Uchenna Emelonye, who described the submissions at the hearing as a

significant moment in Nigeria's legislative discourse, said, "Expanding the death penalty will not stop kidnapping." "What Nigeria urgently needs are institutional reforms, intelligence-led policing, effective prosecutions, improved border security, arms control and victim-centred justice."

He warned that widening the scope of capital punishment in a criminal justice system prone to investigative gaps increases the risk of wrongful convictions without delivering real security benefits.

Speaking in reaction to the convergence of institutional positions on the subject matter, Professor Emelonye said,

"I welcome the courage and clarity demonstrated today by Nigeria's key justice and human rights institutions. Their submissions reaffirm what empirical evidence, comparative global experience, and Nigeria's own history clearly show—that expanding capital punishment will not stop kidnapping. What Nigeria urgently needs are institutional reforms, intelligence-led policing, effective prosecutions, border security, arms control, and victim-centred justice."

Professor Emelonye has consistently argued that Nigeria's kidnapping crisis is rooted not in the absence of harsh penalties, but in systemic weaknesses within policing, investigation, prosecution, and criminal justice administration, compounded by the proliferation of small arms, porous borders, poor intelligence coordination, and socio-economic vulnerabilities.

He has further warned that expanding the scope of the death penalty within a criminal justice system marked by investigative gaps and a high risk of wrongful convictions creates an unacceptable risk of irreversible miscarriages of justice, while offering little measurable security benefit.

At the end of the hearing, the Senate committees assured that all submissions would be carefully reviewed and reflected in their report as deliberations on the Bill continue.





# I Do Not Think APC Is Responsible for The Internal Problems of Any Political Party - Says Hajiya Zainab

By Usman Shehu Gungura, Bauchi

**H**ajia Zainab Abubakar Ibrahim, the Deputy National Women Leader of the All Progressives Congress (APC), has rejected accusations suggesting that the ruling party is responsible for the internal conflicts currently affecting some opposition political parties.

In an interview reported by the Nigerian Tribune on Tuesday, December 16, 2025, Ibrahim described such claims as baseless. Her comments came amid ongoing leadership disputes within several opposition parties that have attracted widespread public attention in recent weeks.

She stated that the APC is not involved in the internal disagreements facing rival

parties, emphasizing that the ruling party remains focused on its own governance and political obligations. According to her, issues of leadership and party cohesion within opposition platforms are matters that should be resolved internally.

Recently, parties such as the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the Labour Party (LP), and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) have been grappling with leadership crises that have exposed divisions within their ranks. These challenges have sparked heated exchanges among party stakeholders and raised broader concerns about internal party democracy.

Tensions escalated further after leaders of the African



Democratic Party accused the APC and the presidency of deliberately encouraging discord within opposition parties as part of a broader political strategy. Responding to these allegations, Ibrahim insisted that the accusations

were misleading and unfounded.

She reiterated that the APC does not meddle in the affairs of other political parties and has no interest in destabilizing competing platforms. She added that

every party has established mechanisms for addressing internal disputes and should rely on those processes rather than attributing blame externally.

She argued that politicians who defect from opposition parties do so of their own free will, often after assessing performance and aligning with what they perceive as effective leadership.

According to her, such movements are driven by the policies and achievements of the APC, which she believes naturally attract individuals seeking a more stable political environment. Summarizing her position, she said the internal challenges facing any political party remain the responsibility of that party alone.

## Borno Unveils ₦1bn Youth Fund to Drive Entrepreneurship and Economic Growth

By Alkali Muhammad Musa, Maiduguri

**B**orno State Governor, Prof. Babagana Umara Zulum, has launched a ₦1 billion youth empowerment programme in Maiduguri aimed at promoting entrepreneurship, job creation and long-term economic growth across the state.

Speaking during the unveiling, Governor Zulum described the initiative as a deliberate effort to strengthen human capital development and support young people to build sustainable businesses capable of stimulating economic recovery. He explained that the programme goes beyond short-term relief, noting that beneficiaries are expected to use the funds as seed capital to establish ventures that will create jobs

and mentor others.

The Governor said the real value of the scheme lies in harnessing the creativity and entrepreneurial potential of youths, whom he identified as critical to the state's economic transformation.

The empowerment project is part of a wider development agenda under the Zulum administration, which includes the establishment of vocational centres, mass youth recruitment into the State Transport Management Agency, and the ongoing rural empowerment scheme that has reached thousands across Borno. The government has also sponsored over 400 youths for postgraduate study abroad, including specialised training in aeronautical

engineering and aircraft piloting.

The current phase targets more than 5,000 direct beneficiaries and thousands of apprentices. It combines financial support with training in digital skills, customer relations, financial literacy and modern business practices.

Under the disbursement structure, 28 beneficiaries received ₦1 million each for scalable ventures, while 189 received ₦300,000. Another 835 start-ups and about 3,500 apprentices were given ₦100,000 each to support business take-off. The scheme also provided ₦451.9 million for equipment and ₦31.86 million for logistics and resource packs.



Zulum confirmed that fund distribution has already begun, reiterating his administration's commitment to economic empowerment and livelihood restoration across the state.

Commissioner for Youth Empowerment, Comrade Sainna Buba, commended the

initiative, stating that the programme covers almost all local government areas to ensure fairness and inclusivity. The Governor also disclosed that additional youth groups, including transport associations, will be included in subsequent phases.

## Unicef collaborates Adamawa Govt. to rehabilitate six primary health care facilities in 5 LGA's

By Umar Dankano, Yola

**T**he Adamawa state government is collaborating with the United Nations Children Education Fund, Unicef in addressing child and maternal mortality by improving access to primary healthcare services in the state.

This came to play at the signing of memorandum of understanding, MOU and official handover ceremony of Six (6) primary health care facilities by officials of state government (Adamawa) to the officials of Unicef for rehabilitation at the state Ministry of health on Friday in Yola, the state capital.

Commissioner of Health, Hon. Felix B. Tangwami

expressed delight with the complimentary roles being played by development partners especially the Unicef which he described as "a viable partner to the Adamawa state government".

Represented by the permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Pharm. Zira Mathias, Tangwami said all necessary support would be given to the Organization urging the contractors to adhere to the required contract specifications with a view to ensure quality of the renovation exercise.

Also Speaking at the brief ceremony, the Executive Chairman of the Adamawa state Primary health care development Agency,

ADSPHCDA, Dr. Suleiman Bashir Sa'idu said that the handover ceremony symbolized transition to improved health care delivery services in the state.

Dr. Saidu who was noticed visibly glad commended the Unicef for the gesture reiterating the commitment of the Governor Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri's mantra of carrying everyone alone and living no place untouched in his urbanization drive.

In her remarks, Dr. Nuhzat Rafique, Chief of field office Unicef Bauchi stressed that the handover was for a primary health care development revitalization project where service delivery of primary health care

components is going to be strengthen and rehabilitated.

Dr. Rafique said that, solarization, water supply and sanitation are the main components where Unicef will focused urging the facilities in charge to vacate the premises so that the contractors can mobilize to sites with immediate effect.

Rafique advised those in charge of the facilities to provide alternate arrangements for Continuation of service delivery to the people in their various local government areas noting that these facilities are meant to save lives of mothers and children much more important than anything in the world.

"There are six (6) facilities in the five (5) local government areas to be renovated including, Shelleng, Gombi, Michika and Mubi with one PHC facility to be revitalized while Fufore council has two facilities for the rehabilitation exercise.

"This is the fifth (5th) state, we are have embarked on such rehabilitation exercise and I request the facilities in charge to make arrangements to handover these facilities to the contractors as soon as possible because we only have three (3) months left. By end of March 2026, we need these facilities to be completely rehabilitated.



# The Untold Story of The Taraba Assembly Speaker, Rt. Hon. Bonzena, As Constituents Reveals His Achievements

By Sane Yarima, Jalingo

The constituents of the member representing Zing State Constituency in the Taraba State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. John Kizito Bonzena are overflowing with joy as they applaud him for remarkable achievements in their communities.

The people shared the essence of their rejoicing while speaking to journalists, who were on tour to various communities within Bonzena's Constituency.

Rt. Hon. John Kizito Bonzena is the current speaker of the Taraba State House of Assembly from the Zing Local Government Area of the state.

Bonzena was elected to the Taraba State House of Assembly to represent Zing State Constituency in the 6th Assembly in 2007 and was re-elected to the 7th Assembly (2011), 8th Assembly (2015), 9th Assembly (2019) and 10th Assembly (2023), a testament of good representation.

The tour was aimed at enabling the team of newsmen to see for themselves some of the projects an aide to the speaker claimed that the member had executed across communities in his constituency.

At all the communities visited, people, including women and children, were extremely excited to see journalists in their midst, and community leaders were eager to air their minds.

The investigation began with Tavinkwa, among other communities, including Dopah, Lamma, Dinding, Bitako, Monkin, Zing 'A', and Yakoko, which is the hometown of the Speaker.

Coincidentally, the tourist journalists, on Wednesday, 31st December 2025, a few hours before the New Year, met people in some of the communities during a grand celebration, marking the beginning of 2026 with the newly constructed bridges, courtesy of Rt. Hon. Bonzena.

The people of various communities gathered to express their heartfelt gratitude to Rt. Hon. Bonzena for his tireless efforts in bringing development to their area.

The construction of bridges has connected previously isolated communities, making it easier for farmers to transport their produce and for residents to access essential services, according to members of the



communities.

During the event, some of the completed bridges were commissioned by the Executive Chairman of Zing, Hon. Davoro Titus, who was represented by his Vice, Hon. Cletus Yohanna, while the Pkanti Lanyuu, who is the Chief of Monkin, His Highness Bitrus Adamu Sajo also commissioned other bridges in Dinding and Lamma, linking many communities under Bonzena's constituency.

Speaking at the commissioning ceremony, Hon. Yohanna disclosed that the Speaker had done a lot of people-oriented projects and impacted the lives of the people of Zing, citing awards of scholarships to students, employment and empowerment, reconstruction of culverts, construction of corps lodges, among many others, assuring him of their total support come 2027.

In a remark, described Rt. Hon. John Kizito Bonzena is a problem solver, a true servant leader who is dedicated to improving the lives of his constituents.

"These projects are highly commendable. I have never approached him with a problem without having a solution. Recently, he gave me two motorcycles, which I gave two military personnel who are here with us. All we have to say is to thank him and pray for God to continue protecting him and guiding him. May God bless him the more.

"Rt. Hon. Bonzena doesn't discriminate, whether you are a Muslim or a Christian; he carries everybody along. Therefore, the people of all the benefitting communities and I are happy with these bridges, and we remain

grateful. I am calling on my subjects to continue supporting him and let us also reciprocate his gestures when the time comes," His Highness Sajo added.

Also commenting on the construction of Lamma Bridge, the District Head of the area, Alhaji Usman Tanko described Bonzena's developmental projects and impactful representation, as the first of its kind in the history of Zing, while the APC chairman of Lamma Ward, Hon. Sale Misa was overwhelmed with the impactful projects executed by Rt. Hon. John Kizito Bonzena and urged him to answer their calls for continuity come 2027.

A Maternity was established at Tunavo, equipped with some facilities, and providing quality healthcare services to the people, while appreciating Bonzena, a community leader, Mr Jimma Victimvo urged him to provide more fertility and drugs, adding that about six (6) neighbouring communities are also benefiting.

The newly constructed examination hall by the speaker is boosting the educational sector, enabling students to sit comfortably to prepare for WAEC, NECO, NABTEC, and other exams, according to Hon. Hammawa Yohanna Musa, who is an SA to Governor Agbu Kefas, describes it as a time-born project that will benefit the unborn generation.

He appealed for more teaching staff to schools in the area.

Rt. Hon. Bonzena's commitment to education is further evident in the renovation of schools, providing a conducive learning environment for

pupils.

The Corps Lodge with a hall of about 100 people capacity, is a welcome relief for young graduates serving in the area, offering them a comfortable place to stay, according to some Corps members, Taibat Halilu from Niger State and Haruna Abdul'aziz from Kebbi State, describing Rt. Hon. Bonzena is a true democrat and nationalist.

"This Corps lodge is one among many, which were constructed by the speaker and named after the Executive Governor of Taraba State, Dr Agbu Kefas. The people of Zing and Taraba State as a whole will not benefit from it, but people from other states, like us, are the ones benefiting. Therefore, we must commend Rt. Hon. Bonzena and also appreciate our host community for hospitality. Our only challenge now is water, which we heard that the speaker had promised to address it," the Corpers testified.

The provision of transformers has brought electricity to some communities, powering homes, businesses, and schools, and transforming the lives of the people, as testified by Markus Minka'ilu, a resident of the Yukwa community and appreciated the speaker for the construction of bridges linking communities and the provision of boreholes, among other social amenities.

"He has listened to our cries and brought development to our doorstep. We are proud to have him as our representative. Before the installation of this transformer, we have to go to

Zing Town for granding, charging handsets, and many other vital services. Therefore, we appreciate him so much, and God will continue to uplift him," Minka'ilu added.

Also, in an interview with newsmen, the Executive Chairman of Zing Local Council, Hon. Davoro Titus said Rt. Hon. Bonzena is a people's servant, describing him as a role model, whose impactful projects will never be forgotten and pledged their unflinching support for the speaker.

The Chairman reiterated his loyalty to the speaker and promised to join hands with him and the government of Dr Agbu Kefas in providing the dividends of democracy to the people of Zing, urging them to continue supporting the present administration and remain peaceful.

However, during an interface with journalists in Jalingo, the speaker, Rt. Hon. John Kizito Bonzena described himself as a messenger of his constituents, saying that he is doing what they have sent him to do and thanked God for the feedback he had gotten from them, reflecting that they are satisfied with his representation.

The speaker revealed that most of the projects he executed were from the little he was getting and saving, announcing that early this year, the major road to communities would be constructed by the state government, as Governor Agbu Kefas had already promised him.

While revealing his plan to connect other communities with the electricity, Rt. Hon. Bonzena pointed out that presently, he had selected two communities that would soon get solar power supply from the state government and thanked his constituents for their unflinching support and prayers, promising to do more to uplift their living standard.

Rt. Hon. Bonzena's achievements have brought hope and optimism to the people of his constituency, demonstrating that with effective representation, positive change is possible.

His constituents, who remain appreciative, are also eagerly looking forward to his continued efforts in transforming their community.



# MACBAN writes open letter to Tinubu, demands protection of herders in the Plateau

The Plateau State chapter of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, MACBAN, has written an open letter to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, calling for more protection for herders and their livestock in the state especially in places like Bokkos, Barkin Ladi, Riyom, Jos South and Mangu local government areas where they claim to have lost many of their people and cows.

In the letter, which was signed by MACBAN State Chairman Ibrahim Yusuf Babayo, the herders' group noted that despite what he described as skewed and one-sided reportage, the herdsmen have lost many of their members. At the same time, their cattle have been stolen by local militias in those places and other crisis-prone communities in the state.

In the letter which was made available to selected journalists on Saturday, Babayo stated that Fulani herders have been facing serious difficulties in the state, and feel it is imperative to reiterate the problems they have been experiencing, in the hope that President Tinubu will understand their plight and come up with a solution to stop the attacks against the Fulani people in Plateau State.

The letter reads in part:

"Dear President Bola Ahmed Tinubu,

"We, the members of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), Plateau State chapter, humbly write to bring to your attention the challenging situation we are facing in various communities



in the state.

"You have consistently promised, as President of Nigeria, to treat every citizen equally, regardless of ethno-religious background, and to ensure all faiths and ethnic nationalities are protected wherever they are in the country. We trust you act on assurances.

"As Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, you may be aware, Fulani herders have been facing serious difficulties in the state, and we feel it is imperative to reiterate the problems we have been experiencing, in the hope that, as a proactive leader for all Nigerians and who listen to everyone, you can gain a deeper understanding of our predicament as citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and address our concerns."

Insisting that they are also indigenes of the state and should not be made to face vicious and violent attacks by those who claim to own the

lands, Babayo continued:

"We have endured relentless attacks, cattle shooting, and poisoning, as if our status as Plateau indigenes and Nigerian citizens counts for nothing. This dire situation has forced us to draw your attention, hoping for relief from these atrocities.

"As Fulani herders, our wealth is connected to our animals that embody our livelihood. We are never privileged to gain government jobs like other ethnic groups in the state, and that is why we concentrate on our lawful business of herding.

"The relentless attacks on our herds, the poisoning of our water sources, and the brutal violence against our cattle and people have dealt devastating blows to our economic backbone.

"Our lives, wherever we are – in communities, grazing fields, markets, and other places – are no longer safe. We cannot move a kilometer from

our houses for grazing without herders or cattle being attacked or killed. Often, we and our cattle are either killed, or the cattle are rustled or shot dead.

"Hundreds of millions of naira worth of cattle were deliberately shot dead by sponsored militias within various communities in the state. We are reeling from these losses, our ability to sustain ourselves and our families severely crippled.

"It is a stark reality that our way of life, our very survival, hangs in the balance, imperiled by the persistent threats to our lives and livelihoods, and the Plateau State government appears to have ignored our plight with no regard, as if nothing is happening to us.

"Because of our identity as Fulani herders, the media have remained conspicuously silent on all the atrocities committed against us; instead, they are used to blackmail us. We

believe that, despite the media's refusal to acknowledge these atrocities, the security forces under your leadership are fully aware of what has happened and what's happening to us over the last four months of 2025.

"Mr. President, to briefly convey our plight, between September and December, 2025, our members endured relentless attacks in communities of Jos South, Riyom, Barkin Ladi, Bokkos, and Mangu. Countless assaults were recorded, resulting in the loss of millions of naira worth of cattle to militia attacks across these five local government areas. A good number of herders rearing the cattle were killed.

"We appeal to Mr. President to protect our lives and livelihoods. Cattle worth billions are being killed, and herders are being attacked. We are not asking for money, but peace.

"We are indigenes, but aren't given government jobs or opportunities to serve in the state despite having qualified persons among us. Since we are not given such opportunities, we should, at least be allowed to pursue our lawful business (herding and farming) without harassment. We seek peace, coexistence, and protection.

"We believe in your leadership and your influence as the Number One Citizen can help address the issues affecting our members and promote peaceful coexistence among all stakeholders in the state. We would be grateful if you could lend your support to help resolve these matters," Babayo concluded.

## Zamfara Unveils #169 Billion Health Roadmaps For 2026

By Usman Shehu Gungura

The Zamfara State Ministry of Health has launched its 2026 Health Sector Annual Operational Plan, a 169.3-billion-naira strategic roadmap designed to overhaul healthcare delivery and improve patient outcomes across the state.

Speaking at the Polio Emergency Operations Centre in Gusau, Health Commissioner Dr. Nafisa Muhammad Maradun described the plan as a "Covenant with the people" aimed at building a more resilient health system.

The ambitious plan carries a total price tag of 169.3 billion

naira, with the Zamfara State Government committing 76.4 billion naira to cover 48.4 percent of the total AoP budget.

Dr. Maradun stated that the remaining 51.6 percent, totaling 92.9 billion naira, is expected to be sourced from development partners and private sector stakeholders.

She emphasized that this financing model reflects a shared responsibility between the government and its partners.

The 2026 plan is anchored on the Health Sector Strategic Blueprint and includes 226 swap-specific interventions mapped, out of the 262

priority interventions. These initiatives focus on several key areas, including governance, health service quality, health financing, data digitalization, health security, and human capital development.

"These interventions are structured across four strategic pillars, 3 enablers and 18 strategic priorities to ensure a comprehensive approach to state-wide medical care", she said.

Adding that the 2026 roadmap includes 762 programmed activities, many of which carry over from 2025 to ensure continuity and sustained impact.

Maradun urged all government agencies, health

facility managers, and development partners to adopt the plan as the single reference document for all health operations and reporting in the coming year.

To ensure the funds are used effectively, the ministry has embedded a robust monitoring and evaluation framework within the plan to track progress, identify challenges, and maintain accountability.

The Commissioner expressed confidence that the effective implementation of the plan will significantly improve the health and well-being of the people of Zamfara, praising the technical teams and the SWAp Coordination Office for their

dedication to drafting the document.

In his welcome remarks, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health, Malam Bashir Sirajo Gusau, NIPSS Ambassador of Integrity and Leadership, informed that the plan is the product of extensive analysis and consultation, serving as a formal handover of the state's collective roadmap.

He noted that the gathering of health leaders and agencies underscored a spirit of collaboration and shared responsibility, describing the various technical teams as a "united force" dedicated to translating health policy into community action.



## Issues

# Police withdrawal from VIPs: Can NSCDC, private guards fill the gap?

President Bola Tinubu recently ordered the withdrawal of police personnel from protecting very important persons (VIPs) in order to free up more operatives for deployment amid spike in insecurity across the country.

The order, along with declaring a state of emergency on security, is part of measures marking a significant attempt to reallocate scarce law enforcement resources back to core public policing duties.

The president also mandated the police to recruit more personnel, to the tune of 50,000, to deliver more efficient police services in security-challenged areas of the country.

Analysts say Tinubu's move, which has seen thousands of officers recalled, has created an immediate security void for the elite, thereby posing a critical question.

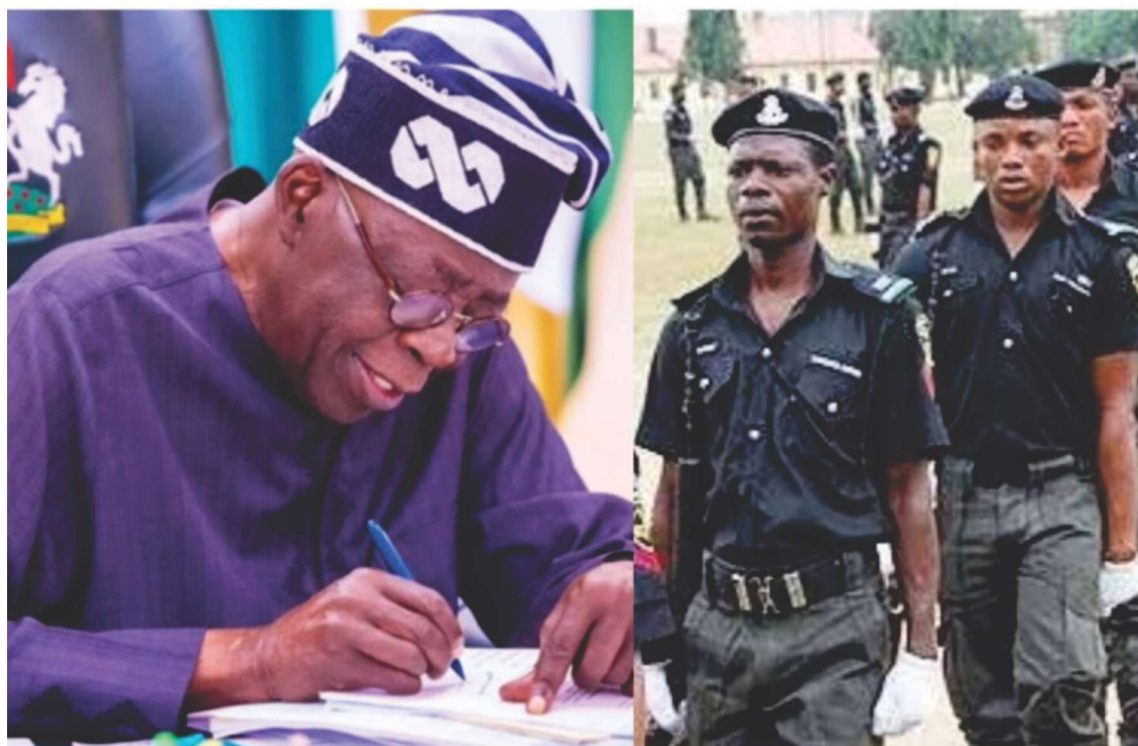
The question is: Can Nigeria's growing private security industry effectively take over the mantle of VIP protection?

Initially, the president's Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, said that, going forward, VIPs requiring protection would be assigned armed operatives from the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC).

"In view of the current security challenges facing the country, Tinubu is desirous of boosting police presence in all communities," Onanuga said.

However, a former Director of the Department of State Services (DSS), Mike Ejiofor, argued that the NSCDC lacked the capacity to take over such a responsibility.

In an interview on national TV, Ejiofor said, "The NSCDC does not have the capacity;



they are not trained for it.

"They do not have the numbers to deploy, and their statutory function is to provide security for critical infrastructure.

"That means you would also have to train them for VIP protection; so it is a very dicey situation."

Some analysts say the presidential order aims to address the long-standing problem of misallocated manpower.

They cited several cases in which a substantial portion of the nation's police force was deployed to serve politicians, business executives, and celebrities.

Some reports estimate the figure to be as high as one-third of the police's strength.

For years, this practice has been widely criticised for draining manpower from communities battling high crime rates, banditry, kidnapping, and terrorism.

In light of this, the president's directive is generally viewed as a courageous step with the political will necessary to

failed attempts initiated by former police chiefs.

Therefore, judging by stakeholders such as Ejiofor's take that the NSCDC lacks the capacity to step in, the private security sector is poised for an inevitable surge in demand.

Experts say the private security industry in Nigeria, which already comprises more than 3,000 licensed companies regulated by the NSCDC, is positioning itself as the immediate solution.

Mr Okechukwu Nwanguma, Executive Director of the Rule of Law and Accountability Advocacy Centre (RULAAC), said that the growth of the private protection industry was both "natural and even desirable", provided the sector was appropriately regulated.

He said that private protection for the wealthy was standard practices globally, not the responsibility of publicly funded police.

A security expert who simply identified himself as Ikule said that the industry was well-positioned to absorb the increased demand,

companies already secure critical infrastructure like banks.

Maj.-Gen. Elvis Njoku (retired), Chairman of the Association of Licensed Private Security Practitioners of Nigeria, also confirmed that the industry was ready to fill the operational gap.

He said that the sector had "come of age".

According to him, applications for new security arrangements are already being submitted to the NSCDC.

However, other analysts and security experts are urging cautious enthusiasm, saying any transition to private security for VIPs is troubled with challenges, primarily centered on capacity, regulation, and the law on arms carriage.

The most critical constraint, they pointed out, is that private security guards in Nigeria are not permitted to carry firearms under current laws.

This contrasts sharply with the armed protection previously provided by police officers and the high-risk environment VIPs operate in.

Njoku, of the security practitioners' association, acknowledged the legal barrier.

He said that that the association was not pushing for an immediate change, given the proliferation of small arms in the country.

This limits private guards to a purely defensive, unarmed role, a key distinction from state-provided armed escorts.

Security experts have also consistently urged the government to strengthen laws governing private guard companies and ensure strict oversight to prevent abuse or unprofessional conduct.

A 2022 survey on private security challenges highlighted issues such as illiteracy among guards, poor equipment, low wages, and inadequate training, which must be addressed rapidly if the industry is to handle high-stakes VIP protection.

There is also the significant concern that the lucrative, informal economy built around police VIP attachments, which experts estimate at up to N108 billion annually, could simply re-emerge in new, opaque forms.

Security analysts warn that without robust transparency and strict enforcement, the incentives driving illegal deployment may persist, with senior officers or brokers potentially profiting through informal subcontracting or the use of off-duty police.

"The fact that the police had to deploy a Special Enforcement Team to ensure full compliance with the directive tells you that there is an incentive driving it," an analyst said.

There is an acknowledgment that Tinubu's order is a pivotal moment intended to redefine Nigeria's security architecture.

While the withdrawal of police from VIP duties is largely seen as a necessary and commendable step towards strengthening community policing, stakeholders say its success depends heavily on rigorous enforcement.

They also say that the rapid, qualitative scaling up of the private security industry is crucial to that success.

They say, for the private sector to truly take over, an urgent and comprehensive review of the 38-year-old Private Guard Companies Act is required to professionalise the sector, standardise training, and integrate them effectively.

There have been calls for a review of the directive, including by lawmakers, for it to exempt politically and legally exposed key figures like justices and policymakers.

However, the true measure of success will not be the protection of the few, but the enhanced safety of the majority.

Ultimately, stakeholders say, going by the latest presidential directive, it has become imperative to review the extant legal mechanism regarding licencing of military grade rifles so that private, well-trained security guards can effectively fill the gap in VIP protection.





# US Lawmakers Ruled Out Plan to Deploy Troops to Nigeria

By Salihu Makera

The United States Congress has ruled out any plan to deploy troops to Nigeria following the country's designation as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC).

Lawmakers said the decision is not a step toward military intervention but a diplomatic move aimed at encouraging reforms and accountability.

Members of a bipartisan U.S. Congressional delegation made this clear during a press briefing in Abuja after a visit to Nigeria.

The lawmakers said Washington has no intention of sending soldiers to Nigerian soil, despite growing concerns over insecurity and religious freedom.

The delegation was led by Rep. Bill Huizenga and included Reps. Michael Baumgartner, Keith Self, and Jefferson Shreve. They explained that while Nigeria faces serious security challenges, the United States believes solutions should come through cooperation, dialogue, and institutional reforms, not foreign troops.

"Nigeria does need help, but that does not mean U.S. troops," Huizenga said. "The CPC designation is a tool to motivate action, not a prelude to military deployment."

The lawmakers said the CPC decision was influenced by persistent violence affecting communities across the country. They expressed concern about attacks in different regions, particularly the Middle Belt, where religion is believed to play a role in some conflicts.

They stressed that no faith group should be subjected to violence or



fear. According to the delegation, protecting citizens, regardless of religious belief, remains the responsibility of the Nigerian government.

Nigerian Air Force to Compensate Sokoto Air Strike Victims

"It is unacceptable that anyone—Muslim or Christian—is experiencing this level of violence," one of the lawmakers said during the briefing.

The delegation revealed that the CPC designation has already triggered discussions within Nigeria's government. They described this response as encouraging and said it shows the move is achieving its purpose.

They clarified that the designation is not meant to punish Nigeria or its people. Instead, it is designed to push for reforms, accountability, and stronger protection of religious freedom.

The lawmakers also pointed out that Nigeria's security challenges differ by region. They distinguished

terrorism in the North-East, linked to Boko Haram and other extremist groups, from communal or religiously influenced violence in states such as Plateau and Benue.

"There are different regional realities," one lawmaker said. "What works in Borno State may not work in Plateau or Benue."

According to the delegation, Nigeria's CPC status is not permanent. They said it will be reviewed based on clear progress in reducing violence and improving religious freedom across the country.

They dismissed claims that the designation could harm U.S.-Nigeria relations. Instead, they described it as a difficult but honest engagement between partners.

"True friends don't walk away," Huizenga said. "They stay engaged, even when the conversation is difficult."

"Enough Is Enough" — Kabba-Bunu Chairman Vows to Hunt Bandits After Ihale, Olle Bunu Attacks

While ruling out military

deployment, the lawmakers expressed support for non-military assistance. This includes humanitarian support, diplomatic engagement, and capacity-building efforts. They described the approach as putting "shoes on the ground, not boots."

The delegation said they would brief officials in Washington on Nigeria's strategic importance to Africa and global stability. They warned that insecurity in Africa's most populous nation has wider regional and international consequences.

During the visit, the lawmakers met with government officials, religious leaders, civil society groups, and private sector stakeholders. They said the meetings reflect the long-standing partnership between both countries.

Speaking on the visit, U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria, Richard Mills, said it highlighted the importance Washington places on its relationship with Nigeria.

He noted that discussions focused on security, democracy, economic growth, and the issues that led to the CPC designation.

Huizenga also said the CPC issue has been under discussion in Congress for years, including during the Trump administration. He explained that the visit was meant to allow for direct and honest conversations with Nigerian leaders.

The visit comes amid renewed international attention on Nigeria's security and human rights situation. U.S. officials said continued dialogue, transparency, and reforms could lead to a review of Nigeria's CPC status and a stronger partnership going forward.

# Notorious Bandit Leader Terrorising Benue-Taraba, Gayama In Army's Net

By Sane Yarima, Jalingo

Troops of Forward Operating Base (FOB) Wukari in Taraba State, under the 6 Brigade Nigerian Army / Sector 3 Operation Whirl Stroke (OPWS), have recorded a major operational breakthrough with the arrest of a notorious bandit leader responsible for multiple kidnapping and armed robbery incidents along the Benue-Taraba axis.

This was contained in a press release signed by Lieutenant Umar Muhammad, the Acting Assistant Director of Army Public Relations for the 6 Brigade Nigerian Army.

The arrest was carried out on 21 December 2025 during a precision, intelligence-driven operation at Vaase Community, Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State.

The operation resulted in the

arrest of Fidelis Gayama, a high-value suspect long sought by security agencies.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the suspect is closely linked to Aka Dogo, a wanted armed group leader, and is believed to be the ringleader of a criminal network that has terrorised travellers and communities along the Kente-Wukari Road and adjoining border areas between Benue and Taraba States.

Further validation by personnel of the Nigeria Police Force at the Vaase Outpost confirmed that the suspect is among individuals declared wanted by the Beji Police Division, Ukum Local Government Area.

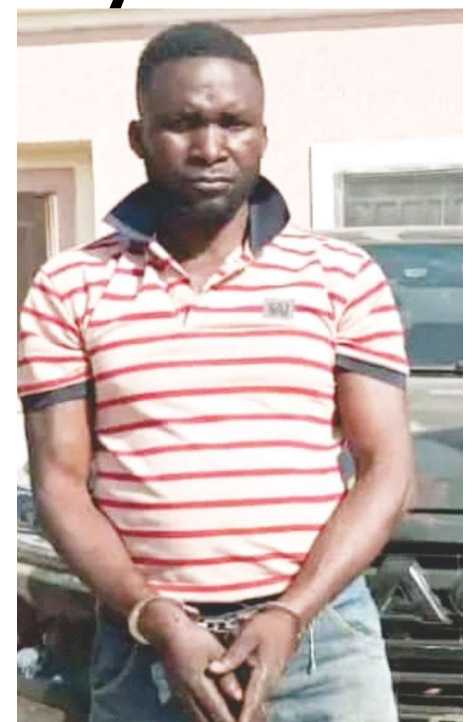
The suspect is currently in military custody and will be handed over to the appropriate authority for

comprehensive investigation and prosecution in line with extant laws.

Commending the troops for their professionalism, discipline and operational precision, the Commander 6 Brigade Nigerian Army / Sector 3 OPWS, Brigadier General Kingsley Chidiebere Uwa, described the arrest as a significant blow to criminal networks operating within the area.

He reaffirmed the Brigade's unwavering commitment to sustaining offensive operations and ensuring the safety of lives and property.

The Commander further called on members of the public to continue providing timely and credible information to security agencies in support of ongoing security efforts.





## Security

# Troops intercept notorious criminal kingpin's wife with large cache of arms in Taraba

By Salihu Makera

Troops of Operation Whirl Stroke have intercepted the wife of a notorious criminal kingpin, John Ngata and recovered a large cache of arms and ammunition in Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State.

Actionable intelligence indicated the suspect's wife was moving from Amadu Village through Wukari, Kyado, and Zaki-Biam toward Gboko on Sunday, January 4, 2025, News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reported.

The troops of Sub Sector 1A promptly established a snap roadblock at Zaki-Biam, successfully intercepting the woman.

Acting Media Information Officer, HQ JTF Operation WHIRL STROKE, Lieutenant Ahmad Zubairu Zubairu, who confirmed the arrest in a statement said the suspect voluntarily led the troops to a concealed armoury belonging to the criminal network at Amadu village where they recovered 13 AK-47 rifles, 39 AK-47 magazines, six hundred



and ninety rounds of 7.62mm special ammunition and hand grenades.

"Troops of Operation WHIRL STROKE have recorded a major operational success following a well-coordinated intelligence-led operation that led to the recovery of a large cache of arms and ammunition in Takum LGA, Taraba State,"



the statement read.

"The operation, conducted on 04 January 2026, was initiated after actionable intelligence was received regarding the movement of an associate of a notorious criminal kingpin, John Ngata.

"Acting swiftly on the intelligence, OPWS troops deployed at Zaki-Biam immediately established a snap

roadblock along the suspected route. The suspect was successfully intercepted at Zaki-Biam without incident.

"Upon preliminary interrogation, the suspect voluntarily led the troops to a concealed armoury belonging to the criminal network at Amadu Village in Takum Local Government Area.

"Subsequent exploitation of the location resulted in the recovery of a significant cache of arms and ammunition, comprising thirteen AK-47 rifles, thirty-nine AK-47 magazines, six hundred and ninety rounds of 7.62mm special ammunition, and quantity four hand grenades.

"Following the successful recovery, the armoury was professionally destroyed to prevent further use and the troops safely withdrew to base.

"The Force Commander, Joint Task Force Operation WHIRL STROKE, Major General Moses Gara, has commended the troops for their professionalism, swift response and effective utilisation of intelligence,

which culminated in the disruption of a criminal supply chain and the recovery of lethal weapons.

"Major General Gara reiterated his commitment to sustaining high troop morale by prioritising welfare, logistics support and operational readiness.

He further appreciated members of the public for their continuous cooperation and provision of credible intelligence, noting that community support remains a critical enabler in the ongoing fight against criminality within the Joint Operations Area.

"He urged residents to continue to provide timely and actionable information to security forces, assuring them of confidentiality and prompt response, as Operation WHIRL STROKE remains resolute in ensuring peace, stability and the protection of lives and property across its area of responsibility.

"The Force Commander also expressed his appreciation to the Chief of Defence Staff for his strategic guidance and the Service Chiefs for their sustained support to OPWS."

## Tinubu orders security clampdown after terror attack in Niger community

By Mijinyawa Ahmed

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has ordered an immediate intensification of security operations following a deadly terrorist attack on Kasuwan Daji community in Niger State, where several villagers were killed and women and children abducted.

The directive was issued after reports emerged that armed terrorists stormed the rural settlement, unleashing violence that left residents traumatized and the community destabilized.

Security sources suspect the attackers may be fleeing from neighbouring Sokoto and Zamfara states in the wake of the United States' air strike carried out on Christmas Eve, which reportedly targeted terrorist enclaves in the North-West.

Strongly condemning the attack, President Tinubu described the incident as a direct affront to the authority of the Nigerian state and a challenge to the collective resolve of the nation.

He expressed deep sympathy to the families of

those killed and conveyed his condolences to the Government and people of Niger State over the tragic loss of lives.

"These terrorists have tested the resolve of our country and its people.

They must, therefore, face the full consequences of their criminal actions," the President said.

"No matter who they are or what their intent is, they must be hunted down.

They, and all those who aid, abet, or enable them in any form, will be caught and

brought to justice."

President Tinubu assured residents of Niger State that security agencies have been mandated to scale up surveillance and military operations, particularly around vulnerable communities located near forests that have long served as hideouts for criminal elements.

He emphasised that the Federal Government remains committed to restoring peace and preventing further attacks.

The President also appealed to Nigerians to

remain united and resolute in the face of the tragedy, cautioning against divisive rhetoric that could undermine national cohesion and security.

"These times demand our humanity. We must stand together as one people and confront these monsters in unison.

United, we can and must defeat them and deny them any sanctuary," Tinubu said.

He reaffirmed his administration's determination to reclaim peace and security in affected communities.

## Troops recover arms cache in Taraba after intelligence-led operation

Troops of the Joint Task Force, Operation Whirl Stroke, OPWS, have recorded a major breakthrough in the fight against criminality with the recovery of a large cache of arms and ammunition in Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State.

According to a statement on the official X account of the Nigerian Army, the success followed an intelligence-driven operation carried out on January 4, 2026, after security forces received credible information on the movement of an associate linked to a notorious criminal kingpin, identified as John Ngata.

Acting on the intelligence,

OPWS troops deployed from Zaki-Biam mounted a snap checkpoint along the suspected route and successfully intercepted the suspect without resistance.

During preliminary interrogation, the suspect reportedly cooperated with the troops and led them to a hidden armoury belonging to the criminal network at Amadu village in Takum LGA.

A search of the location led to the recovery of 13 AK-47 rifles, 39 AK-47 magazines, 690 rounds of 7.62mm special ammunition and four hand grenades.

Military sources said the recovered armoury was

subsequently destroyed to prevent further use, after which the troops safely returned to base.

The Force Commander of Operation Whirl Stroke, Major General Moses Gara, commended the troops for what he described as their professionalism, swift response and effective use of intelligence, noting that the operation dealt a significant blow to the criminal supply chain in the area.

Gara reaffirmed his commitment to sustaining operational effectiveness through improved troop welfare, logistics and readiness, while also

appreciating residents for providing timely and credible intelligence.

He urged members of the public to continue to support security agencies with useful information, assuring them of confidentiality and prompt action.

He stressed that Operation Whirl Stroke remains

determined to ensure peace, stability and the protection of lives and property across its area of responsibility.

The OPWS commander also expressed appreciation to the Chief of Defence Staff and the Service Chiefs for their continued strategic guidance and support.





## National News

## Gov Bala Pays Last Respects to Late CJN Ibrahim Tanko in Giade

By Mijinyawa Ahmed



**B**auchi State Governor, Senator Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed, has paid a condolence visit to Giade, the hometown of the late former Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Justice Ibrahim Tanko Muhammad (GCON), following his death after a brief illness.

During the visit, the governor commiserated with members of the bereaved family, traditional rulers, community leaders, and residents of Giade, describing the late jurist as an illustrious son of Bauchi State and a distinguished Nigerian whose life was defined by justice, integrity, and selfless service to the nation.

Governor Mohammed said Justice Tanko Muhammad's remarkable journey through the ranks of the judiciary from the High Court to the Court of Appeal, the Supreme Court, and ultimately as Chief Justice of Nigeria between 2019 and 2022 reflected uncommon discipline, professional excellence, and unwavering commitment to the rule of law.

According to him, the late CJN's contributions to Nigeria's justice system would remain enduring and worthy of emulation by present and future generations of legal practitioners.

He prayed for the repose of the soul of the departed jurist, asking Almighty Allah to forgive his shortcomings and grant him Al-Jannatul Firdaus.

The governor also urged

the family to find comfort in the remarkable legacy and national respect Justice Tanko Muhammad left behind.

The death of the former Chief Justice has continued to attract tributes from government officials, members of the judiciary, legal practitioners, and Nigerians from across the country, all acknowledging his immense contributions to the growth of the nation's legal system.

Born on 31 December 1953 in Giade, Bauchi State, Justice Ibrahim Tanko Muhammad received his early education in Giade and Azare before proceeding to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, where he obtained his LL.B in 1980, LL.M in 1985, and a Ph.D in Law in 1998.

His judicial career, spanning over four decades, began as a Magistrate in Bauchi State and culminated in his appointment as Chief Justice of Nigeria.

As CJN, he presided over landmark election petition cases, championed judicial discipline and ethical conduct, and played key roles in constitutional interpretation and the advancement of Sharia jurisprudence within Nigeria's legal framework.

Justice Ibrahim Tanko Muhammad will be remembered as a beacon of integrity whose life and service strengthened Nigeria's judiciary and upheld the ideals of justice and fairness.



## Tax Laws Alterations Amount to Constitutional Breach - Hon Mansur Soro

By Salihu Makera

*\* Call for suspension*

**A** member of the House of Representatives, Hon. Mansur Manu Soro (Bauchi State), has called for the immediate suspension of the Tax Laws, 2025, citing what he described as the existence of material discrepancies between the bills duly passed by the National Assembly and the versions subsequently gazetted.

In a statement released on Sunday, Hon. Soro said his review of the Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly, the harmonised versions of the tax bills passed by lawmakers, and the Official Gazette revealed "material discrepancies" between the bills approved by the legislature and the versions that were later gazetted.

According to him, the differences are neither minor nor accidental. He alleged that the altered provisions removed key oversight and reporting mechanisms that were expressly approved by the National Assembly, while introducing new coercive and fiscal powers for the executive that were not approved by lawmakers.

"These are deliberate alterations," Soro said, warning that they amount to a constitutional breach, as legislative authority is vested solely in the National Assembly under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

## FG's 2026 budget proposal is 'building a house on quicksand' – ADC

**T**he African Democratic Congress (ADC) has criticised the 2026 budget proposal presented by President Bola Tinubu to the national assembly, describing it as a "copy and paste budget from previous years".

Tinubu presented a record N58.18 trillion 2026 appropriation bill to a joint sitting of the national assembly.

In a statement issued on Monday, Bolaji Abdullahi, national publicity secretary of the ADC, said the party's team of economists conducted a preliminary review of the spending plan.

Abdullahi said despite being branded the "Budget of Consolidation, Renewed Resilience and Shared Prosperity", the proposal



Hon. Mansur Manu Soro

The lawmaker called for the suspension of the Tax Laws, which are scheduled to take effect on January 1, 2026, until all post-passage changes are identified, removed, and properly addressed by the National Assembly.

Soro acknowledged the decision of the House of Representatives to set up an ad hoc committee to investigate the allegations, describing it as a "commendable step." However, he raised concerns that the committee's one-week reporting deadline falls on Thursday, December 25, Christmas Day, which is a public holiday when the House does not sit.

Given the proximity of the implementation date, Soro said he was working with other lawmakers to raise the matter on the floor of the House on Tuesday, December 23, 2025, the final legislative sitting before the Christmas recess, as a Matter of Urgent National

Importance.

He stressed that the House must take a clear and definitive position on the issue before proceeding on its Christmas and New Year break, in order to safeguard the integrity of the legislative process and uphold the Constitution.

He stressed that the House must take a clear and definitive position on the issue before proceeding on its Christmas and New Year break, in order to safeguard the integrity of the legislative process and uphold the Constitution.

A member of the House of Representatives, Rep. Abdulsammad Dasuki (Kebbe/Tambuwal Federal Constituency, Sokoto State), had last Wednesday raised a matter of privilege on the floor of the House, alleging that the gazetted tax laws did not reflect what lawmakers debated and passed.

represents a continuation of fiscal recklessness and wishful thinking.

The ADC spokesperson warned that the budget would only result in deeper debt and increased hardship for Nigerians if approved as it is.

Abdullahi noted that the proposal mirrors the structure of the 2024 and 2025 budgets, which he described as poorly implemented and largely ineffective.

He said the government is proposing a new fiscal framework shortly after repealing and re-enacting the 2025 budget, describing the development as evidence of fiscal chaos and administrative incompetence.

He accused the Tinubu administration of postponing difficult fiscal decisions while relying on unsustainable borrowing that mortgages the

future of the next generation.

Abdullahi said economic recovery cannot be achieved through monetary adjustments alone without fiscal discipline and credible budgeting.

He also criticised what he described as the attempt to operate multiple national budgets simultaneously, calling it unprecedented fiscal disorder.

He said that although revenues rose to about N20 trillion in 2024, the deficit expanded to N23.85 trillion, with most capital projects expected to be financed through high-interest bo

He added that debt servicing costs are projected to rise from N12.63 trillion in 2024 to N15.52 trillion in 2026, warning that the trajectory is unsustainable.



## Northeast News

# Oxfam, European Union & German Cooperation trains 30 officials on CDP inclusion in budgeting in Adamawa

From Umar Dankano, Yola

In an effort to encourage community oriented good governance, Oxfam Nigeria in collaboration with European Union and German Cooperation (GIZ) have conducted a three-day capacity building training workshop for thirty (30) officials of Guyuk local government area in Adamawa state.

The thirty participants selected from the finance, administration and legislative departments of the council were trained on LGA budget preparation and community Development Plan (CDP) inclusion techniques from 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2025 in Numan town.

Participants were engaged in interactive sessions focused on inclusive planning, priority setting, and strategies for improving social cohesion at the community level.

Speaking at the occasion, Samuel Lashon, Project Coordinator of Oxfam Nigeria explained that, the consultative workshop aimed to strengthening participatory governance by ensuring that Community Development Plans are effectively integrated into Local Government Area budget preparation processes.

Lashon said that the training also gives the community a platform for them to know how to identify their priorities and needs and the development strategies to solving their problems.

"The workshop provides a platform for stakeholders to share experiences, identify common challenges, and



propose actionable solutions aligned with local development priorities.

"We emphasized on the importance of collaboration between communities and local authorities in promoting sustainable development and peaceful coexistence in North-East Nigeria". Lashon reiterated.

Lashon stated that, the 3-day workshop brought together key stakeholders from the participating LGAs, including local government officials, community leaders, civil society organizations, women and youth representatives, and other relevant partners.

He expressed optimism that the citizens engagement policy of the Adamawa state government backed by the community development plans document will no doubt give birth to meaningful

projects in the community.

He noted that challenges like insecurity, interference of external forces to hijack the process and lukewarm attitude of the people are being setbacks to the process but was quick to say that they can be tackled. He calls on stakeholders to collaborate with development partners to ensure inclusive development approach in governance.

In her remarks, Blessing Yakubu Ahmadu, a facilitator and Consultant with the Bantex Synergy Consults Ltd. said that, the project inclusion workshop was designed to enable priority and needs of the people are captured in community development plans (CDP) in to 2026 budget.

Ahmadu added that the process is to ensure that, a bottom - top approach in decision making and budgeting for local government are attained

expressing satisfaction with CDP technique which dwells on coding and tracking needs of the community.

"CDP is an all- inclusive process which once it is used, we are sure of working with the people's voice or acceptance as we have done in other local government areas including; Maiha, Mubi-North, Mubi South, Michika, Gombi, Demsa, Hong and now in Guyuk Council respectively". She advocated.

Speaking also, Ahmad Buba Jalo of the Ministry for local government Affairs said that the state government always collaborate with development partners in giving governance impactful meaning which be owned by the people.

Jalo attested that, the ministry has been working assiduously in involving people from communities to participate in activities concerning them and their

welfare noting that the training is apt and timely.

"And as we know the CDP plan lasts for five years and we started implementing it in 2018 and we have reached nine local government areas so far. We also have a standing committee which follows up to monitor implementation of the CDP policies as sixty to seventy percentage been recorded in most councils undertaken". Jalo stressed.

In their separate responses, participants at the training, Philgo Valdema, Director, Works. Guyuk local government area and Hon. Ali Audu, Supervisory Counselor on Education, Guyuk local council viewed the training as "a right step in the right direction" considering the impact and importance of the knowledge acquired.

They both pledged to becoming good ambassadors in changing the narrative

as it concerns inputs in planning and execution of budgets including gender - responsive neutrality in the council.

Our Correspondent reported that, the workshop with the theme: "The Support to Improving Social Cohesion through Community Development Planning in Three Local Government Areas (LGAs) in North-East Nigeria Project co-funded by the European Union and the German Cooperation (GIZ) concluded with resolutions to strengthen stakeholder engagement and ensure that identified community priorities are reflected in the forthcoming LGA budgets.

## ADC Will Rescue Nigeria, Gombe From Insecurity, Poor Infrastructure-Barde

By Najib Sani, Gombe

Chieftain of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) in Gombe State and 2023 gubernatorial candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Mohammad Barde, has vowed that the party was poised to winning the presidential and governorship elections in 2027 in Nigeria and the state.

In an interview with journalists on Wednesday, Barde lamented insecurity in the country and alleged poor infrastructure in the state saying ADC would salvage the situation.

Barde expressed confidence in the party's ability

to bring about positive change, citing its commitment to inclusive leadership and equal opportunities for all.

"We are united, and we are fully committed to rescuing the electorates. The level of insecurity, the death of infrastructure, and the crumbling nature of our healthcare and education systems are issues we aim to address", he boasted.

The ADC chieftain revealed the party's plans to hold congresses across the states and a national convention in February, 2026 and urged members and supporters to participate in the revalidation of membership and mobilise others to join the

party before the congresses.

He asserted that ADC would wax stronger and Nigerians would feel the wind of change after the convention and states congresses.

"ADC is a party that prides itself on one man, one vote, with no imposition. We welcome everyone to join us in this movement to save and salvage the country from its current challenges.

"We want to provide purposeful leadership that will provide and give everybody an equal opportunity to succeed and provide education, healthcare, and infrastructure that will benefit all," he said.

Barde also lamented the current state of affairs in



Gombe State, citing examples such as the lack of electricity at the Federal Teaching Hospital, Gombe which has led to a staff strike, and "the suffering of patients".

According to him, the party's message of hope and change has resonated with many Gombe residents, "who are eager for a better future".



# Wike, Please Turn Abuja City to Kigali

By Yusuf Musa & Ibrahim Babandada

Abuja was conceived as an idea before it became a city. It was imagined as Nigeria's neutral ground, a planned capital that would escape the congestion, disorder, ethnic capture, and historical baggage of Lagos. Abuja was to be functional, elegant, disciplined, and inclusive—a city that reflected the promise of Nigeria rather than its failures. Decades later, the idea remains noble, but the execution has faltered. Abuja today stands at a crossroads: it can either drift further into chaotic sprawl or deliberately transform into a model African capital.

This is why the call must be made clearly and without apology: Wike, please turn Abuja into Kigali.

Not Kigali as geography, not Kigali as history, but Kigali as discipline, intentional governance, urban order, civic pride, and institutional seriousness. Kigali represents what an African city can become when leadership chooses coherence over confusion and enforcement over excuses.

This is not flattery. It is a challenge.

Abuja's Paradox: Planned, Yet Disorderly

Abuja is one of the few African capitals that was planned from scratch. Its master plan accounted for population growth, land use, transportation corridors, green areas, and administrative zoning. Yet today, Abuja suffers from the very problems it was designed to avoid: unregulated settlements, traffic gridlock, environmental degradation, uneven service delivery, and elite capture of public space.

Data from urban development assessments consistently show that over 60 percent of Abuja's growth has occurred outside the original master plan. Informal settlements have expanded faster than infrastructure provision. Road networks have not kept pace with vehicle growth. Waste management remains fragmented. Green areas have been encroached upon. Enforcement agencies oscillate between overreach and absence.

This contradiction—a planned city governed in an unplanned manner—is Abuja's deepest problem.

Kigali confronted a similar challenge two decades ago. The difference is that Kigali chose discipline.

Kigali's Lesson: Governance Is a Daily Act

Kigali did not become orderly by accident. It became orderly because the Rwandan state decided that

urban chaos is not culture and that disorder is not destiny. Policies were not merely announced; they were enforced. Institutions were not decorative; they were functional. Citizens were not treated as spectators; they were made stakeholders.

Kigali's cleanliness is not cosmetic. It is institutional. Monthly community service (Umuganda) is not symbolism; it is civic education. Strict zoning laws are not authoritarian reflexes; they are planning tools. Data-driven land administration is not elitist; it is efficient governance.

The result is measurable. Kigali consistently ranks among Africa's cleanest and safest cities. Property values are stable. Public transport is predictable. Environmental standards are enforced. Informal settlements are upgraded or relocated through structured frameworks, not arbitrary demolitions.

The city works because the system works.

Abuja's Urgent Imperative: From Power to Purpose

Minister Nyesom Wike arrived in Abuja with a reputation—decisive, forceful, impatient with bureaucracy. That reputation alone is not enough. What Abuja needs now is not just political muscle, but urban philosophy.

Power must be converted into purpose.

Abuja does not need random demolitions. It needs predictable rules.

It does not need episodic enforcement. It needs consistent governance.

It does not need personal bravado. It needs institutional credibility.

Turning Abuja into Kigali does not mean copying Rwanda blindly. It means embracing five foundational principles.

## 1. Urban Order Is Non-Negotiable

A city without rules is not democratic; it is cruel. Disorder always punishes the poor first. In Abuja, unregulated transport increases commuting time and economic loss. Poor waste management leads to health crises. Illegal land conversions destroys environmental buffers.

Data from urban economics show that African cities lose between 2–5 percent of GDP annually to congestion, inefficiency, and poor urban planning. Abuja is no exception.

Kigali understood that order is economic policy. Abuja must reach the same conclusion. Traffic management, land use enforcement, signage regulation, and street

trading policies must be coherent and humane—but firm.

Order must be normalized, not dramatized.

## 2. Institutions Must Speak Louder Than Individuals

One of Abuja's weaknesses is the personalization of authority. Decisions are often perceived as coming from individuals rather than systems. This undermines legitimacy and creates uncertainty. Kigali institutionalized urban governance. Rules outlast personalities. Data guides decisions. Agencies coordinate.

For Abuja, this means strengthening—not sidelining—the F C D A, urban planning departments, transport authorities, and environmental agencies. Digital land registries, transparent permitting systems, and public dashboards for city projects should replace opaque discretion.

When institutions are strong, citizens comply voluntarily.

## 3. Environmental Discipline Is Development, Not Luxury

Abuja's green belts were not decorative. They were ecological safeguards. Their erosion has increased flooding risks, heat stress, and air pollution.

Kigali treated environmental protection as central to national survival. Plastic bans, drainage systems, hillside protections, and waste segregation were enforced because leadership understood that climate vulnerability is governance failure.

Abuja must reclaim its environmental logic. Urban forestry, waste-to-energy initiatives, flood control systems, and strict penalties for environmental abuse are not optional extras—they are survival strategies.

A capital city cannot preach sustainability while suffocating in refuse.

## 4. Transport Is the Soul of the City

Abuja's transport system remains car-dependent, inefficient, and socially unequal. Public transport coverage is inconsistent. Pedestrian infrastructure is weak. Cycling is nearly nonexistent.

Kigali invested early in organized bus systems, route rationalization, and traffic discipline. The result is reduced congestion and predictable mobility.

Abuja must think boldly: integrated mass transit, dedicated bus lanes, digital ticketing, pedestrian-first design in city centers, and land-use policies that reduce travel distances. A city that moves well produces more, wastes less, and stresses fewer lives.

## 5. Civic Culture Must Be Cultivated

Cities are not built by bulldozers alone. They are sustained by habits. Kigali invested heavily in civic education. Cleanliness, queueing, respect for public property, and community responsibility were taught, enforced, and rewarded.

Abuja's residents—elite and informal alike—must be brought into a new social contract. Public enlightenment campaigns, school curricula, community participation frameworks, and incentives for compliance must complement enforcement.

When citizens internalize order, policing becomes secondary.

The Political Courage Question

Turning Abuja into Kigali will not be painless. Interests will resist. Elites will complain. Beneficiaries of chaos will scream persecution.

But leadership is tested precisely at the point of resistance.

Minister Wike must decide whether he wants to be remembered as a disruptor of disorder or merely a loud custodian of confusion. History does not reward noise; it rewards transformation.

Kigali's reforms were not popular at inception. They became popular through results.

A Capital City Is a Statement

Abuja is not just a city. It is Nigeria's diplomatic face, administrative brain, and symbolic heart. When Abuja is chaotic, Nigeria looks unserious. When Abuja is orderly, Nigeria regains credibility.

Foreign investors read cities before they read policy documents. Diplomats assess traffic before speeches. Tourists remember sanitation before slogans.

A functioning capital is soft power.

## Conclusion: A Plea, Not a Provocation

This is not an attack. It is a plea.

Wike, Abuja does not need to become Paris or Dubai. It needs to become disciplined, predictable, humane, and governed. Kigali shows that this is possible in Africa, by Africans, within African realities. Turn Abuja into a city where rules are clear, services function, institutions endure, and citizens are proud.

Turn Abuja into a city that works.

Turn Abuja into Kigali—not in accent, not in history, but in intent, courage, and coherence.

Nigeria deserves a capital that reflects its potential, not its paralysis.

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## News

# Nigeria has Highest Number of Grounded Aircraft in the World

Nigeria's aviation sector faces a striking paradox: while airlines like Air Peace, United Nigeria, and a few others are adding more aircraft to their fleets, domestic airfares have reached record highs—in some cases surging by 130% – 250% in the final quarter of the year. Despite these acquisitions, Nigeria currently has one of the highest rates of aircraft groundings in the world. Investigation by New Telegraph shows that over 70% of the domestic fleet is currently overseas for maintenance (C-Checks) or grounded due to a global shortage of spare parts and engines.

Across Nigeria's airports, millions of dollars' worth of airplanes lay abandoned, slowly rusting away. A recent survey revealed Nigeria was first in the world for unserviceable aircraft.

This means up to 70 per cent of its aircraft are either abandoned or grounded. A lot of this is down to a poor economy, bad management, and a lack of maintenance. A lack of local MRO (Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul) facilities means airlines must fly planes abroad for "C-Checks", which are currently delayed by a global shortage of spare parts and engines.

The "flood" of aircraft, intended to drive prices down through competition, is currently being



neutralised by a perfect storm of structural and seasonal factors. Some have alleged the flooding of the market by Air Peace and United Nigeria as a decoy to kill competition, likening what Air Peace and United Nigeria Airlines were behaving like a 'cabal'. Chief Commercial Officer of ValueJet, Trevor Henry, while speaking with New Telegraph, said:

"That's why I give it to you straight. It's just unfortunate that, and you know, if I were to be specific, it's one or two airlines that are flooding the market with capacity. 'And you know, that is where the authority should step in. Unfortunately, Nigeria doesn't share it publicly when it does. December is no higher than the rest of the year.

Air Peace and United Nigeria Airlines work closely together. There is a cabal. Unfortunately, there's no collaboration among airlines. It's, let me kill you." Some airlines have continued to take delivery of aircraft.

Additionally, the government's recent success in moving Nigeria off the "Aviation Working Group" watchlist has allowed the first dry-leases in a decade, potentially bringing in 40+ aircraft by 2026. Some operators use the term "overcapacity" to describe the concentration of aircraft on popular "Trunk A Routes" (Lagos-Abuja), while secondary airports remain underserved.

Stakeholders stated that the notion that the Nigerian aviation market is "flooded" is a technical reality in

aircraft orders but a practical myth for travelers on the ground.

They, however, asked that if the market is "flooded," why are one-way tickets costing N350,000 to N700,000 this December? As new planes arrive, old ones are being retired or failing. In October 2025, the total number of active domestic aircraft actually dropped compared to the previous year. Some industry insiders, including Henry, have argued there is "too much capacity" on specific routes, but this is a market distortion rather than an actual surplus.

Almost every airline flies the same Lagos-Abuja-Port Harcourt triangle. While there are many flights on these routes, secondary cities (such as Akure, Ilorin, and Calabar) remain sparsely served. Speaking on high fares, the ValueJet chief said: "Fares do go up because all of a sudden there is a high demand. Now, that high demand is directional.

In December, everybody's going to Owerri, and in the first half of January, everybody's coming out. Now, while you may have, why do I use the directional way? It's because, from today through tomorrow or yesterday, all our flights are full. We are operating daily when we don't usually fly daily."

(Called from New Telegraph).

## Air power, national security and the fight against terrorism in 2025

By Sumaila Ogbaje, News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)

In a security environment increasingly shaped by asymmetric threats, Nigeria's air power capability has emerged as a decisive element in the country's fight against terrorism and violent criminality, with the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) playing a central role in operational successes recorded in 2025.

From the insurgency-ravaged North-East to bandit-infested forests of the North-West and parts of the North-Central, air assets have provided speed, reach and precision, reshaping the dynamics of joint military operations and strengthening national security outcomes.

Security experts say the effectiveness of air power in 2025 reflects sustained investment in platforms, personnel training, intelligence integration and inter-service cooperation, all of which have enhanced the armed forces' ability to respond rapidly to evolving threats.

Nigeria's security challenges in 2025 remained complex and multi-dimensional, ranging from terrorism and banditry to kidnapping, separatist violence and transnational criminal activities.

These threats, often characterised by mobility, concealment within civilian populations and exploitation of difficult terrain, have reinforced the relevance of air power as a strategic enabler.

According to defence analysts, air operations provide situational awareness and rapid strike capability that ground forces alone cannot achieve, particularly in vast, forested or inaccessible areas.

Against this backdrop, the Nigerian Air Force sustained a high operational tempo throughout the year, deploying fighter aircraft, attack helicopters, transport platforms and unmanned aerial vehicles across multiple theatres.

The Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Sunday Aneke, has consistently underscored the importance of air power as a force multiplier in contemporary warfare.

Aneke noted that air assets enable the Armed Forces to shape the battlespace, disrupt enemy logistics and deny hostile elements freedom of movement, thereby reducing risks to troops on the ground.

He highlighted precision engagements, tactical mobility, and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) as key strengths of air power that have significantly strengthened joint operations across the country.

"We must fly smarter and strike harder not only to neutralise threats but also to protect the lives and properties of Nigerians.

In 2025, NAF aircraft were actively engaged in operations such as Operation HADIN KAI, Operation FANSAN YAMMA, Operation ENDURING PEACE and Operation WHIRL STROKE, providing close air support and conducting interdiction missions.

Military assessments indicate that sustained air strikes and reconnaissance operations degraded terrorist infrastructure, forced criminal elements to disperse and limited their capacity to conduct coordinated attacks.

A defining feature of NAF operations in 2025 was the expanded deployment of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities.

Persistent aerial surveillance enabled the identification of terrorist hideouts, tracking of movements and timely support to ground operations.

A look at the NAF's operational engagement during the year under review indicates that the air components of the various operations executed a number of precision airstrikes, destroying several terrorists' hideouts and logistics bases as well as killing scores of terrorists and bandits.

Following the recent U.S led precision airstrikes on identified terrorists' encampment in Sokoto State on Dec. 25, the NAF successfully launched massive strikes on two key bandits' enclaves in Zamfara on Dec. 29, eliminating dozens of the criminals.

In the North East, more than 80 terrorists have been eliminated including key commanders, in a series of ground-to-air coordinated onslaughts against the Boko Haram/ISWAP fighters between Dec. 25 and Dec. 29, in Banki and Bama axis of Borno.

Operational successes recorded during the year were largely attributed to improved synergy among the Army, Navy and Air Force.

NAF aircraft provided close air support during clearance operations, troop insertions and extraction missions, often under challenging conditions.

The Minister of Defence, retired Gen. Christopher Musa, had during his stint as defence chief, repeatedly

stressed that modern security threats require a unified approach, with each service contributing its unique strengths.

Analysts describe air mobility as a key advantage in counter-terrorism operations, where speed and flexibility are often decisive.

In line with its constitutional mandate, the NAF also undertook humanitarian and civil support missions during the year.

Aircraft were deployed for medical evacuation, disaster response and delivery of relief materials to displaced populations, balancing combat operations with civil support, thereby strengthening public trust and national resilience.

Military Chiefs had always emphasised that military operations must always be guided by the protection of civilians and support to civil authorities.

Operational gains in 2025 were underpinned by ongoing modernisation and capacity development within the Air Force, such as fleet upgrades, improved maintenance practices and enhanced training programmes increased aircraft availability and mission readiness.

The CAS, Air Marshal Aneke, had stated that investment in human capacity remains central to sustaining air power effectiveness, stressing the importance of professionalism and discipline.

International partnerships and training exchanges with friendly nations further strengthened operational standards and technical expertise.



# Customs Issues Fresh Warning to Smugglers as FOU Zone 'D' Steps Up Crackdown in Bauchi

By Mijinyawa Ahmed

The Federal Operations Unit (FOU) Zone 'D' of the Nigeria Customs Service has renewed its warning to smugglers and dealers in prohibited and uncustomed goods, declaring that there will be no safe haven for those determined to undermine the nation's economy through illegal trade.

The warning was issued during a media briefing in Bauchi by the Comptroller of the Unit, Abdullahi Shuaibu Kaila, following a series of coordinated anti-smuggling operations carried out between December 8 and 19, 2025.

The operations led to the interception of prohibited and uncustomed goods with a cumulative duty paid value of ₦82,114,567, underscoring the Unit's intensified enforcement posture.

Comptroller Kaila stated that the operations were in line with the Nigeria Customs Service Act, 2023, and reflected the resolve of the Service to enforce compliance with customs laws across its jurisdiction.

He reiterated that upon assuming office, he declared zero tolerance for smuggling, adding that the recent seizures clearly demonstrated that the Unit was backing its words with decisive action.

FOU Zone 'D' covers a vast operational area comprising Adamawa, Taraba, Bauchi, Gombe, Borno, Yobe, Plateau, Benue and Nasarawa states.

According to the Comptroller, the wide



Bauchi Unit Comptroller, Abdullahi Shuaibu Kaila

coverage has not deterred the Unit from maintaining constant surveillance, aggressive patrols and intelligence-driven interventions aimed at disrupting smuggling routes and networks.

Items seized during the period under review included 15,100 litres of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), 34 bales and six sacks of second-hand clothing, 150 cartons of foreign spaghetti, 80 sacks of used shoes, 390 jerrycans of vegetable oil and 20 cartons of foreign washing soaps.

Kaila explained that these items were intercepted at different flashpoints across the Zone through well-coordinated operations by officers and men of the Unit.

He warned smugglers to desist from illegal activities, stressing that Customs now maintains an "eagle eye" on all known and emerging smuggling corridors.

According to him, the combination of intensified patrols, improved intelligence

gathering and closer collaboration with sister security and regulatory agencies has significantly tightened the noose around smuggling syndicates.

The Comptroller noted a marked decline in cases of wildlife trafficking, narcotics, controlled drugs and PMS smuggling within the Zone, attributing the development to sustained enforcement, professionalism and commitment of Customs personnel.

He emphasized that the Unit would not relent, as smugglers often seek new methods and routes to evade detection.

Kaila assured that all operations of FOU Zone 'D' were conducted strictly within the ambit of the law, particularly Sections 226 and 245 of the Nigeria Customs Service Act, 2023, which empower Customs officers to intercept, seize and prosecute cases involving prohibited and uncustomed goods.

He stressed that respect

for human rights and professionalism remained core values guiding the Unit's operations.

Beyond enforcement, the Comptroller disclosed that the Unit would intensify public sensitization through sustained media engagement and community outreach.

He explained that smuggling causes significant economic damage, undermines local industries, deprives the government of revenue and poses security and environmental risks.

He said educating the public was critical to changing attitudes and discouraging complicity in smuggling activities.

Kaila urged Nigerians to

rid of the menace or suppressing it to the barest minimum.

He also commended the Comptroller-General of Customs, Bashir Adewale Adeniyi, MFR, for his leadership, strategic direction and the provision of critical logistics and equipment that have enhanced operational efficiency across Commands and Units.

According to Kaila, the support from the Customs headquarters has boosted the morale of officers and strengthened the Unit's capacity to confront smugglers head-on.

The Comptroller reassured the public that FOU Zone 'D' remains resolute in



support the Nigeria Customs Service by providing credible intelligence and reporting suspicious movements and activities within their communities.

He called on citizens to change behaviours that encourage or tolerate smuggling, noting that effective intelligence sharing was key to completely getting

securing Nigeria's borders, protecting the economy and ensuring that smugglers are brought to book.

He concluded with a stern message that the era of impunity for smugglers was over, as Customs will continue to deploy intelligence, technology and manpower to deny criminals any hiding place within the Zone.

## Gombe Students Give Gov Inuwa Pass Mark for Education Initiatives

By Najib Sani, Gombe

The Gombe State Students' Association (GOSSA) has lauded the state governor, Inuwa Yahaya, for "taking a significant step to improve access to tertiary education with the establishment of two new campuses of the Gombe State University (GSU) in Malam Sidi, Kwami local government and in Dukku, Dukku local government of the state.

GOSSA made the commendation in a press release signed by its president, Alamin Ibrahim Bako, and issued to newsmen on Saturday in Gombe.

According to the

association, the new campuses have reduced pressure on existing institutions in the state and brought higher education closer to grassroots communities.

"We appreciate the establishment of the Malam Sidi and Dukku campuses, which have expanded access to tertiary education, reduced pressure on existing institutions and brought higher education closer to grassroots communities", he said.

The association noted that aside addressing the overstretching of existing tertiary institutions in the state, the establishment of the new campuses would make learning easy, more accessible

and affordable to students in other parts of the state.

The association also praised the governor's other initiatives to boost education, including "the consistent payment of scholarship to all indigent students of the state studying in various institutions across the country, establishment of modern model schools, payment of SSCE examination fees for secondary school students".

It described the policies as meaningful ones that eased financial pressure on parents and improved school retention and completion rates.

In addition to that, GOSSA hailed the state government's commitment to Almajiri



reformation in the state through "inclusive programmes that integrate formal, moral and vocational training to the children".

This approach, the association pointed out, is crucial in equipping Almajiri children with a holistic education, enabling them to

break the cycle of poverty, begging and contribute positively to society.

"This comprehensive approach can help transform the Almajiri system, providing a brighter future for these children and fostering a more educated, skilled and harmonious society".



## Politics

# Electoral Act: Reps back 2-year jail term, N5m fine for vote buyers, sellers

The House of Representatives has approved far-reaching amendments to the Electoral Act, introducing stiffer penalties for vote buying and selling, including a minimum of two years' imprisonment or a N5 million fine, or both, alongside a 10-year ban from contesting elections.

The decision was taken during the clause-by-clause consideration of the report of the House Committee on Electoral Matters at the Committee of the Whole, presided over by the Deputy Speaker, Benjamin Kalu.

Under the amended Clause 22 (a and c), individuals involved in the buying or selling of votes and voter cards now face significantly tougher sanctions than previously provided, where penalties were capped at N500,000 or a maximum of two years' imprisonment.

In a move aimed at enhancing the transparency and credibility of elections, the House also adopted an amendment to Section 60(3) of the Electoral Act, mandating the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, to electronically transmit results from polling units to the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IREV) in real time, alongside



physical collation of results.

The new provision states that result transmission must be carried out simultaneously with physical collation, strengthening safeguards against manipulation.

Lawmakers further amended the sanctions for presiding officers who deliberately breach procedures on counting, announcement, and transmission of polling unit results. A new Section 60(6) prescribes a minimum fine of N500,000 or at least six months' imprisonment, or both, for any presiding officer who willfully contravenes the provisions.

The House also approved

a clause mandating the release of election funds to INEC at least one year before a general election, in a bid to enhance early planning and efficient conduct of polls.

To curb electoral fraud, lawmakers increased penalties for multiple voter registration. Under the amended Clause 12(3), offenders now risk a minimum fine of N100,000 or at least one year's imprisonment, or both.

In another adjustment, the House extended the deadline for political parties to submit their list of candidates to INEC from 180 days to 210 days before an election, allowing the commission more time for processing.

The House further approved provisions allowing the use of electronically generated voter identification, including downloadable voter cards with unique QR codes, or any other identification prescribed by INEC, for voter accreditation and voting.

Consideration of the remaining clauses of the Electoral Act amendment bill is still in progress.

Briefing journalists after the consideration, Chairman of the House Committee on Electoral Matters, Adebayo Balogun, said that the House has shelved plans to repeal the Electoral Act 2022, resolving instead to pursue targeted amendments after far-

reaching reform proposals failed to secure broad consensus among lawmakers and key stakeholders.

The Electoral Bill 2025 was initially introduced as a bill to repeal the Electoral Act 2022 and enact a new electoral law. According to the committee, the proposal was driven by the desire to build on recent electoral gains and address emerging challenges in Nigeria's electoral system.

Among the major reforms canvassed were provisions for early voting, inmate voting, replacement of the Permanent Voters' Card (PVC) with more technology-driven or downloadable voter accreditation mechanisms, and adjustments to election timelines.

However, the committee said those proposals did not enjoy sufficient support across both chambers of the National Assembly or among stakeholders consulted during the process.

"As the legislative process progressed, it became evident that many of these far-reaching proposals did not command the support of the majority of members across the two Chambers, nor did they enjoy sufficient consensus among key stakeholders," the committee chairman said.

## ADC faction distances party from Tinubu re-election support

A faction of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) has distanced the party leadership from recent remarks by Hon. Leke Joseph Abejide, who publicly endorsed President Bola Tinubu's re-election bid.

The announcement was made on Sunday in Abuja by the factional National Chairman, Nafiu Gombe, during a press conference.

"That statement does not reflect the position of the African Democratic Congress as a determined opposition party. We clearly reject any association with it and reaffirm our stance as a strong force in Nigeria's political space," Gombe stated.

Abejide, representing Yagba Federal Constituency in Kogi State, had argued during a Channels Television interview that opposition parties could not defeat the APC in 2027 by simply combining their 2023 vote totals. He also dismissed fears among Northern Christians about Tinubu's

presidency, saying such concerns had proven unfounded.

Despite leadership disputes, Abejide maintained that the ADC remains open to new members, provided they join through proper channels.

The ADC also inaugurated zonal, state, and appeal congress committees across the country as part of efforts to strengthen party structures and ensure smooth congresses ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Gombe explained that the committees will oversee congresses at zonal, state,

local government, and ward levels, ensuring strict compliance with the ADC constitution and the Electoral Act.

"These committees are tasked with enforcing constitutional compliance, implementing congressional guidelines, and upholding electoral regulations, including voting procedures, ballot handling, and the declaration of results," he said.

Gombe urged members to remain united in building a credible opposition platform despite ongoing internal disputes.



## Stop dropping NSA's name, group tells Adamawa APC governorship aspirants



A group, Emmanuel Musa Awareness Forum, has asked all governorship aspirants under All Progressives Congress (APC) in Adamawa State to pursue their aspiration on individual integrity.

The group, which speaks for a top governorship aspirant, Dr Emmanuel Musa, asked all aspirants to the office of Governor to desist from trying to gain political mileage by dropping the name of National Security Adviser (NSA), Mallam Nuhu Ribadu.

Chairman of the forum, Annas Balla who led his members to a press briefing in Yola Saturday afternoon, said aspirants using Ribadu's name are dragging the NSA into the mud and heating up the polity.

"He is the Leader and father to all of us in the Progressive fold in Adamawa State, so we must accord him respect that he deserves and defend his name for our collective good," Balla said.

He asserted that contemporary politics is a popularity contest in which one's antecedents speak louder than his name.

"Ribadu holds a much-revered position which must be protected, especially as he regards everyone as his own irrespective of sentiments of religion, ethnic or other inclinations," Balla said.



## Nigeria records decline in Lassa fever cases but fatalities remain high — NCDC

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) has reported a slight decrease in new Lassa fever infections in epidemiological week 47, even as fatalities from the disease continue to surpass last year's figures.

In its latest situation report for 17–23 November 2025, the agency said 17 new confirmed cases were recorded across Ondo, Bauchi, Edo and Taraba states, a drop from the 19 cases reported the previous week.

Cumulatively, Nigeria has confirmed 1,012 Lassa fever cases and 185 deaths as of week 47.

This represents a case fatality rate of 18.3 per cent, which is higher than the 16.4 per cent recorded within the same period in 2024.

The report shows that 21 states have recorded at least one confirmed case this year, with infections spread across 102 local government areas.

The burden remains concentrated, as 87 per cent of all confirmed cases originated from Ondo, Bauchi, Edo, and Taraba states.

Ondo accounted for the highest proportion with 37 per cent, followed by Bauchi with 21 per cent, Edo with 17 per cent and Taraba with 12 per cent.

The report shows that the disease continues to affect young adults the most. The predominant age group is 21–30 years, with a median age of 30. The male-to-female ratio among confirmed cases is 1:0.8.

The NCDC also reported that no healthcare worker was infected in week 47.

### Case numbers remain lower than last year

The agency noted that both suspected and confirmed cases are fewer than those reported at the same time in 2024.

However, it warned that delays in seeking care remain a



**Lassa fever** Rats are a major source of the disease, as illustrated by the story.

Poor health-seeking behaviour, coupled with the high cost of treatment, continues to push many patients to present late at health facilities, reducing their chances of survival.

### National and state response activities

The situation report detailed a wide range of response activities implemented during the week.

These include behavioural assessments in high-burden states, ongoing infection prevention and control work, a series of After-Action Reviews for the 2024/2025 outbreak season and continued training of Lassa fever clinical management fellows.

National Rapid Response Teams were also deployed to multiple states to support surveillance and treatment, while essential supplies such as personal protective equipment, ribavirin, body bags and thermometers were distributed to treatment centres.

The NCDC also highlighted ongoing collaboration with partners on clinical trials, environmental response campaigns, updated risk communication strategies and digital learning platforms for infection control.

Several states, including Ondo, Edo, Ebonyi and Lagos, continued state-level interventions ranging from

clinician sensitisation to temperature monitoring of contacts.

### Persistent challenges

Despite these efforts, the NCDC acknowledged persistent challenges affecting the national response.

It said late presentation remains one of the most significant barriers to reducing fatalities.

It also noted that conditions in many high-burden communities remain poor, with inadequate sanitation and limited awareness contributing to sustained transmission.

The high cost of treatment, according to the agency, continues to discourage timely care-seeking.

### Sustained vigilance

The agency urged state governments to intensify community engagement and sustain prevention campaigns throughout the year.

It also encouraged healthcare workers to maintain a high index of suspicion for Lassa fever and ensure timely referral and treatment of suspected cases.

The NCDC and its partners said they would continue to strengthen state-level capacity to prevent, detect and respond to outbreaks more efficiently.

### Lassa fever

Lassa fever is an acute viral haemorrhagic illness caused by the Lassa virus, which is transmitted to humans primarily through contact with food or household items contaminated by the urine or faeces of infected rats.

It can also spread from person to person through contact with bodily fluids.

The disease often begins with fever, weakness, and headache, and may progress to more severe symptoms such as bleeding, difficulty breathing, swelling, and organ failure.

Early diagnosis and prompt treatment with Ribavirin are critical for improving survival.

## Expert links unsafe abortion to rising maternal mortality

*The organisation also estimates that 1.8 million abortions occur annually in Nigeria, with nearly 60 per cent classified as unsafe because they are performed by unskilled providers, in unhygienic conditions, or using harmful methods*

Reproductive health experts have warned that unsafe abortions continue to drive Nigeria's high maternal mortality burden due to restrictive laws, stigma, poor access to safe services, and persistent misinformation.

The experts made this known during a three-day media training on women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, held in Keffi, Nasarawa State between 2–4 December.

Talemoh Dah, CEO of the Soteria-Afrique Rural Healthcare Initiative, explained the medical mechanisms through which unsafe procedures lead to preventable deaths.

Mr Dah noted that the uterus and surrounding organs contain major blood vessels, meaning that “if an untrained person introduces an instrument wrongly, heavy bleeding can occur and the woman may die before getting help.”

He added that infections are another major cause of death.

“The vagina and bowel contain billions of bacteria. If an instrument pushes these organisms into the bloodstream, infection can set in, and when it progresses to sepsis, we may not be able to reverse it,” he said.

Mr Dah further highlighted other fatal pathways, including embolism, where amniotic fluid or fat enters the bloodstream and obstructs blood vessels, and organ damage such as kidney or liver failure arising from untreated complications.

The training, organised by the Ipas Nigeria Health Foundation, brought together journalists, reproductive health advocates, and content creators to strengthen reporting on reproductive rights, unsafe abortion, and maternal health.

### Maternal mortality in Nigeria

According to Ipas Nigeria, the country's maternal mortality ratio has risen sharply, from 576 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015 to

1,047 per 100,000 live births, placing Nigeria as the source of 20 per cent of all maternal deaths worldwide.

The organisation also estimates that 1.8 million abortions occur annually in Nigeria, with nearly 60 per cent classified as unsafe because they are performed by unskilled providers, in unhygienic conditions, or using harmful methods.

These unsafe procedures account for between 13 and 40 per cent of all maternal deaths.

The rising scale of maternal deaths is closely linked to Nigeria's extremely low use of modern contraception.

Only 12 per cent of women of reproductive age use modern family-planning methods, resulting in high rates of unintended pregnancies that often end in unsafe abortion.

According to the 2023 Maternal Mortality Estimates released by the World Health Organisation (WHO), one in every five women who die from pregnancy-related causes globally is Nigerian.

### VAPP Act not enough to protect women's reproductive health

Emannuella Azu, a development legal practitioner, warned that despite its popularity, Nigeria's Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP Act) remains insufficient in protecting women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, particularly in the areas of consent, access to care, and justice for survivors of sexual violence.

Ms Azu noted that many Nigerians wrongly assume the Act addresses all GBV-related issues, but several areas, including marital rape recognition, access to post-abortion care, and referral pathways for survivors, remain inconsistently implemented across states.

“The VAPP Act does not fully protect women's reproductive health. It addresses violence but does not holistically cover the scope of sexual and reproductive health rights,” she said.





## Agriculture

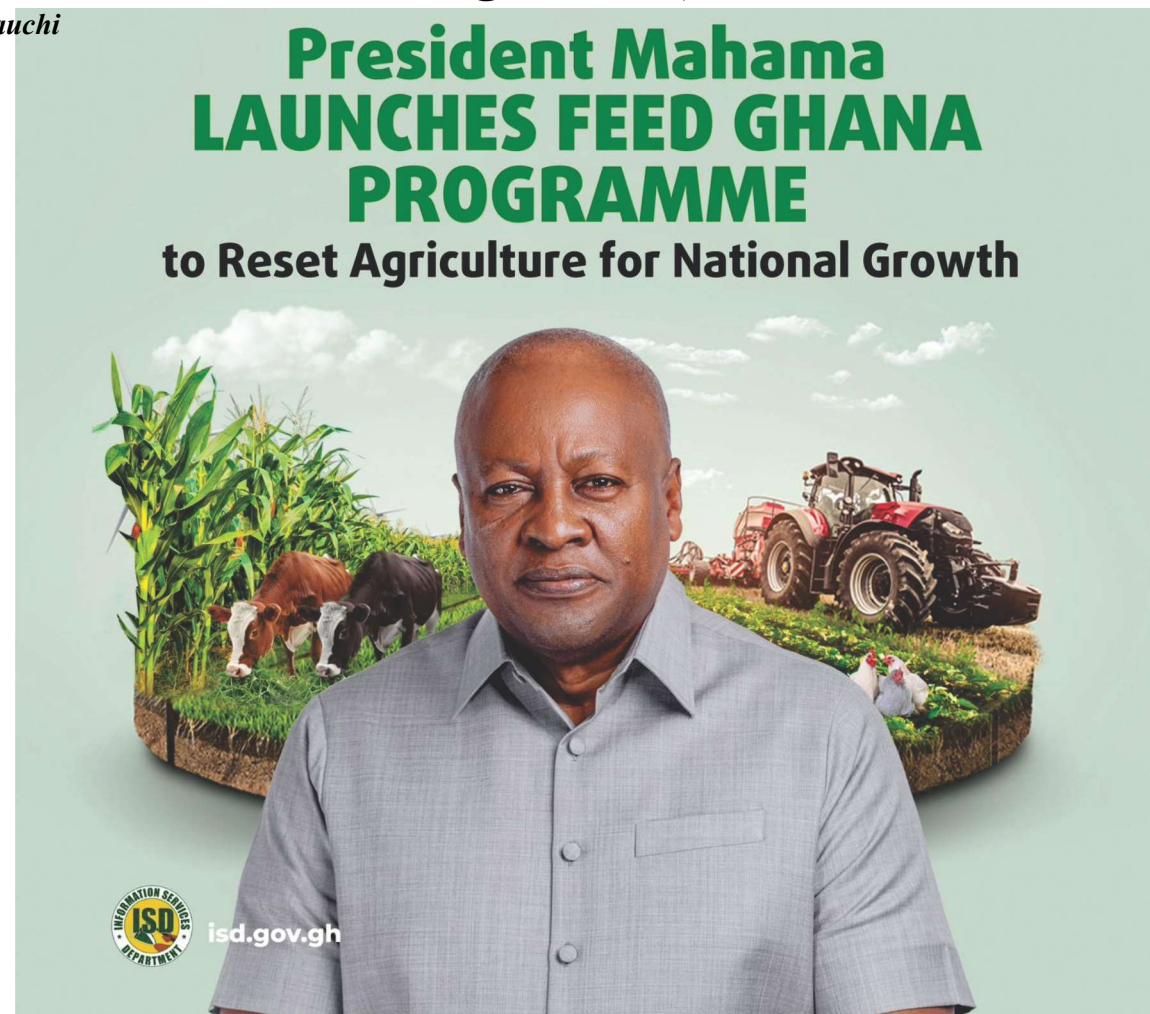
### The government's Feed Ghana Programme, Farmers investment at risk -- PFAG

By Usman Shehu Gungura, Bauchi

The Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana (PFAG) has warned that a severe grain glut threatens the livelihoods of thousands of farmers nationwide, with more than 200,000 metric tonnes of unsold paddy rice and maize from last season still stuck in warehouses and fields. Some rice farms remain unharvested, exposing farmers to bird invasions, bushfires, and inadequate harvesting equipment.

In a statement signed by PFAG National President Wepia Addo Awal Adugwala, National Secretary Isaac Pabia, and Acting Executive Director Bismark Owusu Nortey, the association cautioned that the crisis has placed both farmer's investments and the government's Feed Ghana programme at risk. They warned that without urgent intervention, many farmers, particularly young people, may abandon cultivation next season due to mounting frustration and financial hardship.

Earlier this year, the National Food Buffer Stock Company (NAFCO) announced the release of 100 million Ghana cedis to purchase excess produce and establish minimum guaranteed prices for maize,



rice and gari. While farmers welcomed the move as better than what middlemen offered, despite considering the prices low, the PFAG noted that farmers have yet to witness any actual purchases by approved buying companies.

The association stated that no information or data exists on which districts have benefited, raising concerns about accountability and

transparency. PFAG Executive Director Bismark Owusu Nortey expressed concern over the lack of visible impact, noting he had received no reports from farmers confirming they had sold produce to NAFCO.

Responding to continued appeals, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture recently announced an additional 100 million Ghana cedis to tackle

the crisis. PFAG welcomed this swift action but called for greater transparency and efficiency to restore farmer confidence.

The association is demanding immediate publication of the companies, locations and quantities of grains procured with the initial funding, along with clear timelines for grain purchases under the new allocation. It

also requested publication of a comprehensive list of all approved licensed buying companies, millers and aggregators, with their assigned operational areas, to enable direct engagement with farmers.

PFAG reiterated its call for legislation mandating all state institutions, including schools, hospitals and security services, to procure only locally produced rice and maize.

The association urged stronger border controls to prevent smuggling of inferior rice and recommended a temporary ban on rice imports until the local market stabilises.

The association proposed coordinated public campaigns by relevant ministries and stakeholders to promote consumption of locally produced rice. It stressed that immediate implementation of these measures would help ease farmers' distress and safeguard national food security, warning that failure to act could reduce rice production and derail Ghana's goal of achieving self-sufficiency in rice.

PFAG called on the government and stakeholders to develop a comprehensive, long term national strategy to address marketing challenges across all crops, including vegetables, cereals and legumes, to prevent similar crises in the future.

## FG assures of sustaining drop in prices of foods across the country

The Federal Government says it will sustain the recent drop in prices of staple foods across the country through continuous interventions along agricultural value chains.

The Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Sen. Abubakar Kyari, made this known at the 47th Regular Meeting of the National Council on Agriculture and Food Security (NCAFS) in Kaduna.

The 2025 NCAFS has "Food Sovereignty and Food Security, An Era of Renewed Hope", as its theme.

Kyari said operations at the National Strategic Grain Reserve Silos in Zamfara, Katsina, Nasarawa, Adamawa, Niger, Osun, Edo, and Kwara States were being enhanced for greater efficiency and capacity.

He said the effort was aimed at strengthening national food security and stabilising prices of essential food items.

According to him,

integrating these facilities into the national food distribution framework would help build a responsive system that ensures timely interventions during shortages and supports long-term food stability.

"Nigeria is charting a new course towards all-year-round farming and self-sufficiency in wheat production, bringing us closer to meeting our national demand," he said.

Speaking on the theme, Kyari explained that food sovereignty involves control over what the nation grows, how it is grown, and how it is consumed.

He added that food security ensures that every household has access to safe, affordable, and nutritious food.

"Together, they define the pathway toward an inclusive and resilient agricultural system that leaves no one behind," he said.

Kyari informed that the country was already witnessing a decline in food prices across several

commodities as a result of ongoing targeted market interventions.

He identified consistent, high-yield production supported by timely access to quality and affordable inputs as a key step toward achieving food sovereignty.

Kyari said the ministry, in collaboration with the African Development Bank (AfDB) and state governments, had strengthened the National Agricultural Growth Scheme-Agro-Pocket (NAGS-AP) as Nigeria's flagship programme for input delivery and productivity expansion.

"Through this programme, wheat production has continued to expand across the country from 15 participating states in the 2023/2024 dry season to broader coverage in the 2024/2025 farming season.

"The increase in scale reflects our ongoing efforts to enhance production capacity and boost self-sufficiency in key staples," he said.

### BSADP director technical services expresses concern over rising rate of farmers post-harvest losses

The Bauchi State Agricultural Development Programme (BSADP) has expressed concern over the rising rate of post-harvest losses among farmers.

Rafilawus Iliya, the director of agricultural technical services at BSADP, stated this in an interview with journalists on Thursday in Bauchi.

Mr Iliya said that poor handling practices continued to undermine farmers' hard-earned gains, resulting in significant annual losses.

He noted that many farmers lose a substantial portion of their produce annually due to carelessness and failure to follow proper post-harvest procedures.

According to him, post-harvest activities, from harvesting to processing and storage, play a crucial role in determining how much of a farmer's effort translates into actual yield.

He identified the inability of farmers to determine the correct maturity stage of crops as a major cause of loss.

"Most farmers still rely on guesswork to decide when to harvest. Without checking moisture content, they store crops that are not ready, leading to rot and spoilage," he explained.

Mr Iliya added that using blunt or poorly maintained harvesting tools often causes grains to scatter or spill in the field, a factor frequently overlooked but contributing to high wastage.

He said substantial losses also occur during transportation, as rickety vehicles drop large quantities of produce enroute to storage or markets.

The director warned that the cumulative effect of these losses posed a serious threat to food security and farmers' income.

He urged farmers to adopt standard post-harvest handling methods, including proper drying of crops for 24 to 72 hours, depending on the type, using the right tools, and maintaining clean storage conditions.

"With simple practices such as checking grain moisture and ensuring proper drying, farmers can save a large portion of what they currently lose," he advised.



# Landing Cost: Free at Last

It depends where your lens is at: whether you are viewing the Dangote/formerly Faruk of NMDPRA saga from a patriotic lens or from another type. I have long been an enthusiast of the arrival of a new entrant in the oil industry and a refiner at that after decades of fraudulent importation regimes. The late President Muhammadu Buhari (PMB) laboured to have Dangote Refinery completed, bullishly providing foreign exchange as a federal government investment for the completion of the project. There was a memorandum too in place which stipulated how the relationship would work. But somehow the NNPC withdrew from the investment and pegged its stake at the already committed funds value. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu continued to complement fPMB's efforts as the Dangote Refinery would never have come to light without his vision, anyway.

The free trade zone at the Ibeju Lekki area where Dangote Refinery is housed and the re-enactment or facilitation of the naira for crude deal between Dangote Refinery and the federal government are some of President Tinubu's efforts. Now, after over three decades of importation and subsidy fraud we finally have the much-needed energy security we have always yearned for; a world class refinery with huge and expanding capacities. Alas, just the way federal government refineries were run aground and left underground, the power players in the oil industry came for Dangote Refinery. Concerted efforts both foreign and local were losing their golden fleece and the importation routine that guaranteed billions like wildfire for them, was facing a death knell and they initiated frantic efforts to frustrate it. From insinuations of being incomplete, to rubbishing its quality to aspersions of its supply capabilities, it was one joker after the other as they reeled out hoops for the smooth take off and running of the refinery. But like the biblical Noah's arc the refinery was built and built strong enough to weather the storm.

Those arguing monopoly are taking us for dunces. Dangote as a manufacturer is not on the same value chain level as the importers/distributors of petrol. There are different kinds of monopolies and the Dangote Refinery in Nigeria is a natural monopoly and at worse a government monopoly.

Unfortunately for Nigeria, the government owned refineries had been driven aground and so oil refining is resultantly in private hands which one would have thought of as a blessing, and a masterstroke that consolidates on less government participation and more private sector inclusion in business. But the economists or digital experts on everything are egging govt on to continue to participate at levels they have no business doing. Dangote is the only producer that can supply the country at the finest prices and has evidently continued to drive down prices and that is a natural monopoly. Those importers are opportunists and spoilt brats at best who enjoy privileges and opportunities to get licenses, access slightly cheaper foreign exchange as "preferential importers", and then go ahead to supply unscrutinised substandard petrol to the market while also charging consumers for premium quality products. The rip-offs pile up as profits for them since subsidy is officially gone. We, the consumers, have become their new subsidy purse and we pay heavily to sustain their lifestyles. Don't forget the bridging receipts industry which is another fraud mine as it hardly reflects in harmonised prices across the market. You find that arbitrary price differences are prevalent the further away you are from the Lagos vicinity. Then, you have several unions that charge millions per truck before you see this golden product.

The people are usually up in arms against government policies and implementation. Ironically, the people are for stricter regulation. They are in support of erroneous and extremist regulatory tendencies against Dangote Refinery which could eventually cripple a N33 trillion investment. Licences were given to oil industry players to build refineries. Where are the refineries? Aside the upcoming BUA Refinery, which other refinery can you name that can produce 10 million litres a day or process 200,000 barrels a day? Are the current importers with licences not enough in collaboration with the Dangote Refinery? Are we going to continue to encourage foreign exchange flight out of the country for things we have locally? Are we not celebrating a trade surplus of N6 trillion now? Why are we subsidising fuel import by dropping 15% tax on it thereby losing government revenue? Dangote Refinery will not be charged the

15% for import because his is a local product. If the tax is charged on oil imports the petrol from importers will hit N1000 in the streets while that of Dangote will be N200 cheaper! Even as it is, motorists are buying from Dangote-petrol dispensing outlets for better quality and lower prices. The Dangote CNG buses transportation model makes for cheaper distribution and the importers want the federal government to continue to pay for transportation or distribution via bridging. We cannot take one step forward and two steps backward all in the name of fighting monopoly. It is a big fat error and we know it deep down our skin. Refineries can become competitors to Dangote not importers, come on! The US and the UK protect their local car manufacturers and discourage or disrupt foreign car manufacturers using policies and specifications to drive up prices of imported brands. If they encouraged imports, cheaper and less qualitative models and brands would flood their market and weaken their GDP even further. NVIDIA and chips, Tiktok, Huawei, were all muscled out or muscled down for the sake of indigenous companies in the US. So, how can we be promoting refined products from foreign refineries plus transportation costs into our country all in the name of avoiding a monopoly? You have to build a refinery to compete with one; not by short-circuiting through unethical importation practices. Please...let's shelve the embarrassing economy based arguments for the benefit of the country and the common man. Issuing new import licences is not a genuinely positive development in our quest for economic emancipation. It is very regressive, actually.

As a fall out and a long overdue overhaul, the oil industry has now gone through a complete shake up with or without Dangote's petition. It has been a long time coming. It is also not so surprising that an IPMAN official has come forward to cast aspersions on the accountability of the management of NMDPRA over some refundable deposits they've been owed for a very long while. Revelations from the previous administration's power play and how institutions were weakened for private gain have not helped matters either, and the new appointments in the NMDPRA and NUPRC are obvious moves on the oil industry chess-board. Before the climax of these reforms, Dangote was roughened up really bad and one cannot blame him for toughening up. He was readied for



By Tahir Ibrahim Tahir

the fight you know as he was severely warned by the Saudi minister of power (oil) that the industry he was rushing into could only be sustained by government resources. On several accounts before the refinery hit the ground running, Alhaji Aliko Dangote was effusive with allegations of cabalism in the industry which he had referred to as more dangerous than drug cartels. He has faced so much sabotage but never fazed by it. We all as Nigerians complain about sabotage from our own domestic staff and employees in private businesses as well as public offices but when it comes to Dangote? No! We insist they are fabricated accounts of sabotage and theft at his refinery.

The biggest employer aside the federal government, the largest tax payer in the country and the most generous philanthropist in Nigeria is facing a lot of jealousy and envy and as an African you just know why. Typically, Nigerian biases are based on either political, tribal or religious sentiments and rarely on patriotism. If Dangote supposedly stole all of the N33 trillion from public till to build a refinery, by God, he is an angel amongst us; what with the new discoveries of stolen millions and billions of dollars by public officials to offshore havens. And, of course, that is not even the case. Well, courtesy the man you love to hate, the landing cost of petrol is no longer calculated from around the world to our cars – ramping up all sorts of charges along the way – but from Lekki free trade zone, powered by cheaper transportation to our vehicles. This promises to graduate to a door to door model as we go on. Happily, today's fuel is not only free from landing cost, but of better quality as it has the lowest ppm of sulphur compared to our imported "abi" imported and blended fuel. All thanks to the Dangote battles, we had no idea that the quality of imported fuel was basically hogwash.

*Culled from Blue Print*



## Northeast News

# Foundation donates N10 million to Gombe timber market fire victims

By Najib Sani, Gombe

A Gombe State-based charitable organisation, Velocity Humanitarian Foundation, has donated N10 million to victims of the recent devastating fire at Gombe's timber market (Kasuwar Katako).

Founder of the foundation, Engineer Aliyu Mohammed Kombat, represented by the Secretary of the foundation, Mr Safiyanu Existing, presented the cheque of the donation to the market leaders on Friday.

He said the gesture was meant to ameliorate the losses incurred by the traders as a result of the fire incident.

He extended the foundation's sympathy to the business community of Kasuwar Katako, over the tragic fire incident that destroyed goods and properties worth hundreds of millions of naira.

"We are deeply pained by this unfortunate event, which has brought hardship to many diligent traders and families whose livelihoods depend on this market.

"In the spirit of compassion and solidarity, Velocity Humanitarian Foundation wishes to inform all affected



victims that the foundation is providing financial assistance of ₦10,000,000 to support relief and recovery efforts", he said.

The foundation secretary assured that he would engage the market leaders to ensure proper sharing of the support.

"Though no assistance can fully replace what has been lost, it is our sincere hope that this intervention will help ease the burden and restore hope to the victims.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with all the affected victims during this difficult period. We pray that Almighty God grants you strength, comfort, and the grace to

recover from this loss.

"May Almighty God replace what was lost with greater blessings and protect us all from future tragedies", he said.

Responding, the market leaders expressed gratitude to Velocity Humanitarian Foundation for donating N10 million to the victims of the recent fire incident saying it would bring succour to them.

"The donation is a timely relief to our members who lost their properties in the fire. We appreciate Velocity Humanitarian Foundation's generosity and support during this difficult time."

## BACCIMA Raises Alarm Over Deepening Governance Crisis, Economic Hardship in Nigeria

By Mijinyawa Ahmed

The Bauchi Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (BACCIMA) has voiced serious concern over what it described as a deepening governance crisis in Nigeria, warning that persistent economic hardship, worsening insecurity, and policy disconnection are pushing citizens to the brink.

In a civic reflection released in Bauchi, the President of BACCIMA, Alhaji Aminu Mohammed Danmaliki, expressed disappointment with the performance of the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, arguing that its much-publicised reform agenda has yet to translate into meaningful relief for the majority of Nigerians.

Danmaliki noted that since the current government assumed office, the country has witnessed a sharp rise in inflation, unprecedented increases in fuel prices, continued depreciation of the naira, and soaring costs of food, transportation, and basic services.

According to him, these developments have significantly eroded the purchasing power of households, leaving many families struggling to meet their daily needs.

He observed that while economic reforms may be necessary in the long term, the manner in which they have been implemented has imposed severe short-term burdens on ordinary citizens, particularly the poor and vulnerable.

The BACCIMA president stressed that governance must strike a balance between economic theory and human realities, insisting that policies should be anchored on the protection of human dignity, survival, and social stability.

Beyond the economic challenges, BACCIMA also raised red flags over Nigeria's security architecture.

The chamber expressed concern about what it described as the country's increasing dependence on foreign powers for intelligence gathering, logistics, and strategic support in addressing security threats.

While acknowledging that

international cooperation is a normal aspect of global security engagement, the chamber warned against over-reliance on external actors for core national security responsibilities.

It questioned whether such dependence reflects weaknesses in Nigeria's sovereign security capacity and called for renewed investment in homegrown intelligence and security systems.

The statement further touched on concerns surrounding economic governance, particularly perceptions that some fiscal reforms and advisory frameworks may be influenced by foreign interests.

BACCIMA argued that while global best practices are important, Nigeria's economic policies must be shaped primarily by national realities and interests.

The chamber called on governments at all levels to re-engage with citizens, review existing policies with a human-centered approach, and restore public confidence through transparent and inclusive governance.

## Young Leaders Network Sensitises Gombe Youth on Digital Skills

By Najib Sani, Gombe



The Young Leaders Network (YLN) has sensitised Gombe State youth on digital skills to enhance their employability in today's digital world.

Speaking at the Gombe Employability and Digital Skills Summit 2025 held in Gombe on Wednesday, YLN's Executive Director, Seun Justin Onarinde, said the initiative aimed to inspire 180 participants to acquire digital skills and succeed in the changing job market.

"Empowering youth with digital skills is key to building a brighter future for Gombe and Nigeria", he said.

According to him, the summit, themed "Future of Work: Unlocking employability through digital skills", focused on educating the participants on remote work, digital opportunities, and soft skills to make them more employable.

The summit also featured a sobering message from the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), delivered by John Loko, representing the zonal director.

Loko emphasised the importance of digital literacy for national development but

## Sabon Layi Community in Bauchi gets newly reconstructed Juma'at Mosque, courtesy of Governor Bala Mohammed

By Usman Shehu Gungura, Bauchi

Governor Bala Mohammed in his usual character and commitment to responding to people's need donated a Brand New Juma'at Mosque to the people of Sabon Layi Community.

Handing over the Juma'at Mosque to sheikh Ibrahim Sheikh Dahiru Usman Bauchi, the executive chairman Bauchi local government area Hon Mahmood Babamaji Abubakar, said Governor Bala Mohammed decided to modernize the mosque to a modern standard where a new structure was erected to facilitate effective prayers and other Islamic activities.

He charged the benefiting community to make the best use of the mosque and that they should continue to pray for Governor Bala Mohammed and his administration.

The contractor Alhaji Abubakar Ladan Yari said the mosque was constructed in line with the Governor's directives and guidance requesting the beneficiaries to make the best use of the worship center and assist the administration with prayers and wishes.

Receiving the keys, Sheikh Ibrahim Sheikh Dahiru Usman Bauchi appreciate Governor Bala Mohammed for the donation praying Allah to reward him abundantly.

He assured that the mosque would be properly maintained and use for the propagation of Islamic knowledge and prayers.

warned participants against using these skills for illicit activities like cyber fraud, popularly known as 'Yahoo'.

He said cybercrime is on the rise, and it is destroying young people's lives.

The EFCC official added that the commission is taking proactive steps to educate young people on the dangers of this path.

He urged them to use their digital skills for good, not greed, citing the risks of jail terms and other severe consequences.

The Special Adviser to Gombe State governor on youths, urged the state's youth to take proactive steps to enhance their employability, as jobs are scarce.

He encouraged youths to acquire skills and engage in volunteer work and community service, saying it would not only boost their resumes but also contribute to the state's development.

"In these challenging times, take ownership of your future. By acquiring skills and giving back to the community, Gombe youth can position themselves for success and drive positive change in the state", he said.



## Europe, India top buyers as crude oil keeps Nigeria's export engine running

By Salihu Makera

Nigeria earned about ₦12.81 trillion from crude oil exports in the third quarter of 2025, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). Crude oil made up 56.14% of the country's total exports during this period, showing a recovery in oil export earnings.

While this is slightly lower than the ₦13.41 trillion recorded in Q3 2024 (a 4.47% drop), it is higher than the ₦11.97 trillion earned in Q2 2025, a 7.03% increase. This highlights the continued importance of oil in Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings.

Exports of mineral products, including crude oil and petroleum gases, totaled ₦20.01 trillion, accounting for 87.71% of all exports in Q3 2025. Other oil-related exports reached ₦7.01 trillion, up 51.72% from ₦4.62 trillion in Q3 2024, though slightly lower than ₦7.74 trillion in the previous quarter.

Total merchandise trade rose to ₦38.94 trillion in Q3 2025, up 8.71% from the same period last year and 2.36%



from Q2 2025. Exports made up ₦22.81 trillion (58.59%), while imports were ₦16.12 trillion (41.41%). The trade balance remained positive at ₦6.69 trillion, though slightly lower than the previous quarter.

Major exports included natural gas, petroleum gases, and refined products like kerosene-type jet fuel. These helped offset weaker performance in some non-oil sectors, especially agriculture.

Europe was Nigeria's largest export market at ₦8.71 trillion (38.16% of exports), followed by Asia at ₦6.40 trillion (28.07%), and Africa at

₦4.90 trillion (21.49%). India was the top single export destination with ₦2.26 trillion, followed by Spain, France, the Netherlands, and Italy.

Within Africa, exports to ECOWAS countries were strong, with crude oil alone worth ₦1.32 trillion, representing 42.14% of exports to the sub-region.

However, non-oil exports struggled. Agricultural exports fell 11.69% to ₦786.62 billion, and manufactured goods exports dropped 6.03% to ₦978.53 billion, showing Nigeria's continued reliance on oil.

## Group vows to build 1m agrifood entrepreneurs across Africa

A non-governmental organisation, African Food Changemakers (AFC), has expressed its commitment to building one million entrepreneurs across Africa's agrifood landscape.

Dr Temi Adegroye, Executive Chair of AFC, gave the assurance on Friday in Abuja at the organisation's 2025 End-of-Year Agri-Food Entrepreneurs Mixer.

It was themed "From Celebration to Strategy: Strengthening Africa's Agri-Food Future".

Adegroye said the initiative would enable Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to thrive while strengthening food security and climate resilience across the continent's food ecosystem.

He said AFC aims to build a community of one million agrifood entrepreneurs across Africa, noting that the organisation currently has over 8,500 members drawn from 49 African countries.

According to him, the organisation focuses on supporting smallholder farmers, youth-led agribusinesses and women in



agriculture, adding that strategic partnerships and programmes would help AFC achieve its ambitious target.

Adegroye said agriculture remains a critical national and continental priority, stressing that the mixer was more than a social gathering but a platform to spotlight people, policies and enterprises shaping food security, employment and economic resilience in Africa.

"There are many SMEs in the agrifood space that require this kind of network. By bringing them together, they can share knowledge, leverage one another's strengths and turn challenges into opportunities," he said.

He explained that AFC was established to provide African agrifood SMEs with access to networks, information, funding

opportunities and policy engagement needed to scale their businesses.

Adegroye outlined the mixer as an annual event designed to celebrate agrifood entrepreneurs, promote collaboration and highlight the often-overlooked contributions of SMEs to Africa's food systems.

Also speaking, Dr Michael Adeoye, Group Head, Finance Facilitation at the Nigeria Incentive-Based Risk Sharing System for Agricultural Lending (NIRSAL), said Nigeria has about seven million hectares of arable land, with only 3.7 million hectares currently under cultivation.

"If we open up more land, farmers can operate across different locations, productivity will increase and insecurity will be reduced," he said. (NAN)

## 10 important things to know about new tax law

By Salihu Makera

As Nigerians prepare for the official implementation of the new tax reforms, workers and non-workers alike must understand the changes to avoid falling foul of the law.

From pay slips to business profits and digital transactions, the new tax framework is set to reshape daily economic life.

Taking effect from January 1, 2026, the reforms consolidate multiple outdated tax laws into four acts: the Nigeria Tax Act (NTA), Nigeria Tax Administration Act (NTAA), Nigeria Revenue Service (Establishment) Act (NRSA), and Joint Revenue Board (Establishment) Act (JRBA). These acts redefine tax obligations, streamline collection, and enforce compliance. While low-income earners benefit from relief, high earners, large companies, and digital players face tighter rules.

Here are 10 important things we should know:

### Start Date: January 1, 2026

The new tax regime takes effect on January 1, 2026, giving individuals and businesses time to adjust systems and seek guidance. Most new rates, exemptions, and rules apply from this date, with official guidelines expected from the Nigeria Revenue Service.

### Full Tax Relief for Low-Income Earners

Individuals earning ₦800,000 or less annually are fully exempt from Personal Income Tax. This replaces the old relief structure and aims to protect low-income workers while boosting household spending.

### Higher Burden on High Earners

Personal Income Tax becomes more progressive, with a top rate capped at 25 per cent. Some previous allowances are removed, meaning higher earners may see increased PAYE deductions from 2026.

### Changes to Corporate Taxes

Large companies continue to pay a 30 per cent Corporate Income Tax, while small companies below specified turnover thresholds are exempt. A new Development Levy replaces multiple old levies, simplifying payments while funding national development.

### VAT Remains at 7.5%

VAT is unchanged, but businesses can now claim input VAT on more items, including services and fixed assets. Basic food items, education, healthcare, and exports remain zero-rated.

### Wider Capital Gains Tax Scope

Capital Gains Tax rises to 30 per cent for companies and now covers digital assets such as cryptocurrencies, NFTs, and offshore share transfers linked to Nigeria. Low-value and reinvested gains remain exempt.

### Nigeria Revenue Service Replaces FIRS

The Federal Inland Revenue Service will be replaced by the Nigeria Revenue Service, which will manage federal taxes and some non-tax revenues using stronger digital systems and enforcement tools.

### Stricter Digital and Non-Resident Taxation

Non-residents with a significant economic presence in Nigeria, digital platforms, and virtual asset operators now face clearer taxation rules. Crypto assets are explicitly taxable.

### Minimum Tax for Big Companies

Large Nigerian companies and multinationals must pay at least 15 per cent effective tax on Nigerian income. A top-up tax applies if they fall below this level, reducing opportunities for profit shifting.

### Stricter Compliance and Penalties

E-filing, e-invoicing, real-time VAT reporting, and wider use of TINs become mandatory. Penalties increase, though new tools like advance tax rulings and a Tax Ombuds office aim to reduce disputes.

Overall, the reforms aim to simplify Nigeria's tax system, reduce multiple taxation, and align it with global standards.

Low- and middle-income earners gain the most relief, while businesses benefit from clearer, more predictable rules. However, stricter digital compliance means preparation is essential.



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Full Page	250,000	18,750	268,750	200,000	15,000	215,000	Page 2 or 3	500,000	37,500	537,500
Half Page	150,000	11,250	161,250	125,000	9,375	134,375	Page 4 of 5	450,000	33,750	483,750
Quarter Page	100,000	7,500	107,500	75,000	5,627	80,625	Front Page Strip	312,000	23,437	335,937.05
10 x 5 Cols	225,000	16,875	241,875	212,000	15,900	227,900	Front Page Solus	225,000	20,625	295,625
10 x 4 Cols	200,000	15,000	215,000	186,000	13,950	199,950	Back Page Strip	200,000	15,000	215,000
10 x 3 Cols	175,000	13,125	188,125	152,000	11,400	103,400	Centre Spread	925,000	69,375	994,375
9 x 5 Cols	215,000	16,125	221,125	200,000	15,000	215,000	Double Spread	650,000	48,750	683,750
9 x 4 Cols	195,000	14,625	209,625	140,000	10,500	150,500	ROP Strip B & W	75,000	5,625	80,625
9 x 3 Cols	130,000	9,750	139,750	125,000	9,375	134,375	ROP Strip Colour	100,000	75,000	107,500
8 x 5 Cols	170,000	12,750	182,750	165,000	12,375	177,375	Front Earpiece	200,000	15,000	215,000
8 x 4 Cols	140,000	10,500	150,500	135,000	10,125	145,125	Back Page Earpiece	150,000	11,250	161,250
8 x 3 Cols	120,000	9,000	129,000	100,000	7,500	107,500	Front Page Cover	6,000,000	NEGOTIABLE	
7 x 5 Cols	135,000	10,125	145,125	120,000	9,000	129,000	Wrap Around	10,000,000		
7 x 4 Cols	125,000	9,375	134,375	90,000	6,750	96,750	POSITION	SIZE	RATE	VAT 7.5%
6 x 5 Cols	130,000	9,750	139,750	85,000	6,375	91,375	CLASSIFIED	3 x 2 Cols	15,000.00	1,125.00
6 x 4 Cols	120,000	9,000	129,000	80,000	6,000	86,000	CLASSIFIED	2 x 2 Cols	7,500.00	582.50
6 x 3 Cols	115,000	8,625	123,625	70,000	5,250	75,250	Change of Name	Per Word	100	NIL
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3 x 3 Cols	55,000	4,125	59,125	38,000	2,850	40,850				
2 x 2 Cols	37,000	2,775	39,775	27,100	2,032	39,132.50				
1 x 1 Cols	8,500	637.50	9,137	6,100	457.50	6,557				



## At least 35 people have been killed and 1,200 detained in Iran's economic protests

The death toll in violence surrounding protests in Iran has risen to at least 35 people, activists said Tuesday, as the country's theocracy acknowledged the unrest in one western province where security forces reportedly raided a hospital.

The figure came from the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which said more than 1,200 people have been detained in the protests, which have been ongoing for more than a week.

It said 29 protesters, four children and two members of Iran's security forces have been killed. Demonstrations have reached over 250 locations in 27 of Iran's 31 provinces.

The group, which relies on an activist network inside of Iran for its reporting, has been accurate in past unrest.

The semiofficial Fars news agency, believed close to Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, reported late Monday that some 250 police officers and 45 members of the Guard's all-volunteer Basij force have been hurt in the demonstrations. However, Iran's government has offered no overall statistics or information about the unrest.

Late Monday, Iranian

President Masoud Pezeshkian assigned the country's interior ministry to form a special team for a "full-fledged investigation" of what had been happening in Ilam province. Malekshahi County in Iran's Ilam province, some 515 kilometers (320 miles) southwest of Iran's capital, Tehran, has seen protesters killed as online videos purported to show security forces firing on civilians.

The presidency also acknowledged an "incident in a hospital in the city of Ilam." Online video showed security forces wearing riot gear raiding a hospital, where activists said they were seeking demonstrators.

The hospital assault drew criticism from the U.S. State Department, which in Iran's Farsi language called the incident "a crime."

"Storming the wards, beating medical staff and attacking the wounded with tear gas and ammunition is a clear crime against humanity," a post on the social platform X read. "Hospitals are not battlefields."

A report by Fars earlier alleged without offering evidence that demonstrators carried firearms and grenades. Firearms are more prevalent in western Iran, along the border

with Iraq, but there's been no clear evidence provided by the government to support allegations of demonstrators being armed. Ilam has hundreds of kilometers (miles) of border with Iraq.

Iran's rural Ilam province is mainly home to the country's Kurdish and Lur ethnic groups and faces severe economic hardship.

The growing death toll carries with it the chance of American intervention. U.S. President Donald Trump warned Iran on Friday that if Tehran "violently kills peaceful protesters," the United States "will come to their rescue."

While it remains unclear how and if Trump will intervene, his comments sparked an immediate, angry response, with officials within the theocracy threatening to target American troops in the Mideast. The comments took on new importance after the U.S. military on Saturday captured Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, a longtime ally of Tehran.

But the protests do not appear to be stopping, even after Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Saturday said "rioters must be put in their place."

## 10,000 Nigerians benefit from China's exchange programmes — Envoy

Chinese Ambassador to Nigeria, Yu Dunhai, says no fewer than 10,000 Nigerians cutting across different sectors of the nation's economy have benefited from various Chinese government sponsored exchange training programmes.

Yu disclosed this at the first Annual China-Nigeria Government Exchange Programme Alumni Reunion Gala in Abuja.

According to him, the initiative has strengthened individual capacity, institutional effectiveness, and contributed to Nigeria's national development.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the event brought together many Nigerians, who had previously studied or received various trainings in China.

Ambassador Yu explained that the event aimed to sustain engagement among alumni and provide a platform for collaboration, idea-sharing, and continued contribution to China-Nigeria relations.

Yu said China has over the

years offered training in diverse areas, including governance, poverty reduction, manufacturing, agriculture, public health, trade, investment, science, technology, innovation, blue economy, and digital economy.

He emphasised that the programmes had strengthened the capabilities of individuals while contributing to Nigeria's economic and social development.

The ambassador noted that the alumni were spread across major Nigerian cities, including Abuja, Lagos, Ibadan, and Maiduguri, reflecting the nationwide reach of the initiative.

He described Nigeria and China as "natural partners" with over half a century of evolving friendship, noting that their mutual support on core national interests.

Yu cited China's recent opposition to potential external military threats against Nigeria as an example of this partnership.

He also highlighted China's support for Nigeria's

international role, including backing its return to the International Maritime Organisation and aspiration to join the G20.

On Nigeria's stance regarding China's territorial integrity, he affirmed that the Federal Government upholds the One-China principle, which recognises only one indivisible China in its foreign policy.

On economic cooperation, the ambassador revealed that bilateral trade between China and Nigeria had surpassed 22 billion dollars in 2025.

Yu added that China's direct investment in Nigeria increased by 130 per cent, while Nigeria's exports to China rose by over 200 per cent.

He also announced China's zero-tariff policy for 100 per cent of products from all 53 African countries, including Nigeria.

NAN reports that at the end of the event, participants shared their unique experiences while they were in China during the exchange programmes. (NAN)

## Meet the 94-year-old American who has been in prison for 71 years



Have you ever paused to think about what it feels like for someone who is sentenced to life in prison and told they will spend the rest of their days behind bars? Many people have served more than half a century in jail, with some even dying before they ever get another taste of freedom.

This is the story of the man believed to hold the record for the longest prison sentence served by a living inmate anywhere in the world.

At just 23 years old, Francis Clifford Smith received a life sentence that would define the rest of his life. Born in 1924 in the United States, Smith was convicted in 1950 for the murder of a security guard during a nighttime robbery. Although he was initially sentenced to death, the ruling was later changed to life imprisonment.

What is astonishing is that Smith is still alive today — 71 years after he first entered

prison. Now 94 years old, he is regarded as the world's longest-serving inmate. Despite his advanced age, he is expected to remain incarcerated for the rest of his life. He is currently held at the Osborn Correctional Institution in Connecticut.

Smith is not the only person globally who has spent decades behind bars. Many long-term inmates have lived most of their lives in confinement, unable to walk freely, work, return home, or simply enjoy life outside prison walls. Their freedom was taken away because of the crimes they committed, and their punishment continues day after day.

Imagine, even for a moment, spending more than seventy years locked away. It highlights how important it is to avoid trouble and understand the life-changing consequences of certain actions.

## Bombing Sovereign Nation, Kidnapping the President is the Behaviour of a Cowboy State - Jeremy Corbyn

By Salihu Makera



Former UK Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn has strongly condemned the United States' military action in Venezuela, describing it as illegal and reckless while criticizing the British government for refusing to denounce the operation.

In a statement posted on his verified Twitter account, Corbyn said the bombing of a

sovereign country and the capture of its president amounted to "the behaviour of a cowboy state."

He argued that the U.S. operation, which followed President Donald Trump's announcement that Washington would "run" Venezuela until a transition is achieved, represents a blatant violation of international law.



## News

# PDP: Tinubu's 2026 budget will renew Nigerians' suffering

*Tinubu presents 2026 budget to national assembly*

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has criticised President Bola Tinubu's 2026 budget, describing it as a document that will "renew Nigerians' suffering".

Tinubu presented N58.18 trillion as the budget estimates for the 2026 fiscal year before the joint session of the national assembly.

In the appropriation bill titled 'Budget of Consolidation, Renewed Resilience and Shared Prosperity', Tinubu earmarked N5.41 trillion for defence and security, representing approximately 9.3 percent of total expenditure.

He projected the total revenue of N34.33 trillion, expenditure of N58.18 trillion, recurrent (non-debt) expenditure of N15.25 trillion, and capital expenditure of N26.08 trillion.

In a statement, Ini Ememobong, PDP spokesperson, said the budget failed to reflect the lived realities of Nigerians grappling with economic hardship.

"We see it rather as a budget of consolidated renewed sufferings, because what Nigerians have witnessed since the birth of this administration is nothing but unmitigated hardship on the people, while the governing class relishes in affluence," the statement reads.

Ememobong rejected Tinubu's claim that the economy is stabilising, saying Nigerians had experienced "nothing but unmitigated hardship", while the governing class relishes in affluence.

"Nigerians have suffered greatly from many economic

woes under this administration," Ememobong said.

The opposition party faulted the president's reliance on a reported 3.98 percent GDP growth rate as evidence of economic progress, arguing that growth figures alone do not translate to improved living standards.

Ememobong said the 2025 World Bank Poverty & Equity Brief shows that "more than 30.9% of Nigerians live below the international extreme poverty line", noting that it exposes the disconnect between macroeconomic indicators and the everyday experience of citizens.

"This shows that there is growth without prosperity for our citizens, meaning that despite GDP growth, poverty remains endemic," the statement reads.

The party also criticised the president for failing to explain the drivers of the reported growth or identify those who benefitted from it.

"The president stated that the economy under his watch grew by 3.98% without stating the sectors that stimulated the growth or identifying those who benefitted from it," Ememobong said.

On security, the PDP acknowledged the allocation made in the 2026 budget but warned that funding alone would not address the country's security challenges.

"We must remind the government and Nigerians that allocation alone is insufficient," he said.

The spokesperson claimed that "security operatives were engaged across multiple theatres of conflict where criminal non-state actors are alleged to possess superior arms compared to our security

forces".

"We therefore demand effective and transparent execution to ensure that security funding translates into tangible improvements—modern equipment, adequate ammunition, improved intelligence capabilities, and better welfare for security personnel who are currently engaged in different theatres of armed conflict, where criminal non-state actors are alleged to possess superior arms compared to our security forces," he said.

The PDP further expressed concern over Tinubu's admission that the execution of the 2024 capital budget had been extended to December 2025, while the 2025 budget was still in operation.

"This confirms the long-standing rumours of the concurrent operation of multiple budgets," he said, arguing that such a practice undermines fiscal discipline, transparency and accountability.

"This cannot be described as best practice, as every budget has a defined period of operation and no two budgets should operate concurrently," he said, describing the situation as "yet another unprecedented negative feat by this APC Bola Tinubu-led administration".

Ememobong called for greater transparency and accountability in the management of public finances, saying these values had been "conspicuously absent so far under this administration".

"Financial accountability and transparency are critical to public trust-building and effective public administration," the statement added.

## Time to Revisit Nigeria's Health Insurance

Nigeria's National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) was established with a clear mandate: to drive the country toward Universal Health Coverage (UHC) by 2030. With a stated vision of becoming a leading agency committed to achieving financial access to quality healthcare for all Nigerians, the scheme was designed to remove cost barriers and protect citizens from catastrophic health spending. Yet, nearly two decades after its conception in different forms, that vision appears increasingly distant from reality.

For many Nigerians enrolled under the NHIA, the reality of care is marked by frustration, neglect, and systemic inefficiency. Across the country, patient experiences suggest a scheme that exists more on paper than in practice. While access to healthcare is meant to be guaranteed, the lived experiences of insured patients tell a different story—one that raises serious questions about the credibility and effectiveness of the system.

The situation is particularly troubling in many private hospitals, where NHIA patients are often treated as second-class citizens. Reports abound of healthcare providers paying little or no attention to patients simply because they are enrolled under the insurance scheme. Instead of benefiting from the protections promised by the NHIA, patients are frequently subjected to long delays, limited services, and outright neglect.

A striking example can be found in a popular hospital located in Garki, Abuja, where a separate pharmacy exists solely for NHIA patients. This pharmacy reportedly hardly boasts of any essential drugs or medicines. Patients are routinely asked to source their prescribed medications from outside the hospital, defeating the very purpose of insured care and placing additional financial and emotional burdens on already vulnerable individuals. Even more distressing is the harrowing process of status confirmation by Health Maintenance Organisations (HMOs). NHIA patients are often made to wait for hours, and in some cases days, before approval codes are issued. During this time, treatment is delayed, regardless of the

severity of the patient's condition. In a healthcare system where time can mean the difference between life and death, such delays are indefensible.

Tragically, there have been cases where patients with emergency conditions either died or suffered worsening health outcomes while awaiting HMO approvals. Rather than providing urgent care and resolving administrative issues afterward, many facilities choose to delay treatment entirely. This approach reflects a dangerous prioritisation of bureaucracy over human life.

In addition, several hospitals routinely refer patients elsewhere solely because they are under the NHIA scheme. These referrals are not based on lack of capacity or expertise but on an unwillingness to engage with NHIA processes. As a result, many patients have lost faith in the system and now choose to present themselves as direct, self-paying patients in order to receive prompt and comprehensive care.

These poor practices, entrenched over the years, have significantly undermined NHIA services in both public and private hospitals. This is despite the huge sums of money paid by government as healthcare subsidies under the scheme. The persistent gaps between funding, service delivery, and patient outcomes have left the NHIA struggling with a serious credibility crisis.

The federal and state governments must act decisively. There is an urgent need for strict monitoring and regulation of all healthcare providers participating in the NHIA scheme to ensure compliance and accountability. HMOs must also be made more accessible, with seamless systems that eliminate prolonged waiting times for status confirmations. Universal Health Coverage cannot be achieved through promises alone. The time to act is now.





## New Wikki Tourists Boss Vows Turnaround as Club Battles in NPFL

By Mijinyawa Ahmed

The newly appointed Chairman of Wikki Tourists Football Club, Alhaji Salmanu Abubakar, has assured supporters of a renewed drive to reposition the club for better performance in the ongoing 2025/2026 Nigerian Premier Football League (NPFL) season.

Speaking at a news conference on Monday in Bauchi, Abubakar expressed concern over the club's current 14th position on the league table but pledged decisive action to improve results.

He disclosed that the management is already working on reinforcing the squad, particularly through the recruitment of proven professional goal scorers to boost the team's attacking strength.

The chairman noted that the club has adopted a new playing style aimed at enhancing performance and competitiveness in the league.

According to him, early signs from the ongoing season are encouraging, adding that patience and collective support are required to achieve the desired turnaround.

Abubakar assured supporters and stakeholders that his leadership would ensure a level playing ground for all,



Alhaji Salmanu Abubakar

stressing that professionalism, transparency, and discipline would guide the club's operations.

He urged fans to remain calm, steadfast, and supportive, while also calling for prayers to back the management and technical crew.

The Chairman highlighting his administrative approach pledged a clear division of labour and shared responsibilities within the club's structure.

He explained that key officials, including the camp commandant and team management, would be assigned defined roles to enhance efficiency and accountability.

Abubakar further

emphasised that Wikki Tourists FC is neither a political, tribal, nor regional club, but a unifying team that belongs to all citizens of the State.

Abubakar said in line with his inclusive vision, pledged to actively involve the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN) in the club's activities to promote transparency and collective success.

The chairman also expressed gratitude to Bauchi State Gov. Bala Mohammed, and the Commissioner for Youth and Sports Development, Alhaji Babayo Gabarin, for finding him worthy of the appointment, pledging not to disappoint the government and people of the state.

## FIFA Releases Nigeria's 2026 International Referees List as 30 Officials Earn Global Approval

FIFA has officially released Nigeria's Refereeing International List for 2026, confirming 30 Nigerian match officials approved to officiate international competitions across various refereeing categories.

The annual list, published by FIFA, comprises referees and assistant referees who are qualified, vetted, and authorized to handle international fixtures under CAF and FIFA assignments. Nigeria's representation cuts across men's and women's football, futsal, and beach soccer, underlining the country's growing strength and consistency in football officiating.

Nigeria's FIFA International Match Officials for 2026

1. Samuel Pwadutakam – Assistant Referee (CAF) – 2014 – Male
2. Ukah Ndubuisi Odigomma – Futsal Referee (CAF) – 2014 – Male
3. Musa Dung Davou – Futsal Referee (CAF) – 2015 – Male
4. Basheer Salisu – Referee (CAF) – 2016 – Male
5. Digbori Tejiri – Assistant Referee (CAF) – 2016 – Male
6. Fawole Olawale Adeolu –

Beach Soccer Referee (CAF) – 2016 – Male

7. Hannah Elaigwu – Referee (CAF) – 2017 – Female

8. Ogabor Joseph Odey – Referee (CAF) – 2017 – Male

9. Usman Abdulmajeed Olaide – Assistant Referee (CAF) – 2017 – Male

10. Abdullahi Abubakar – Referee (CAF) – 2018 – Male

11. Olajide Olayinka – Beach Soccer Referee (CAF) – 2018 – Male

12. Nurudeen Abubakar – Referee (CAF) – 2019 – Male

13. Abibatu Iyadunni Stockl – Assistant Referee (CAF) – 2019 – Female

14. Rabiuh Ahmad – Beach Soccer Referee (CAF) – 2019 – Male

15. Mustapha Grema Mohammed – Referee (CAF) – 2020 – Male

16. Olufunmilayo Abigael Alaba – Referee (CAF) – 2020 – Female

17. Mfon Akpan – Assistant Referee (CAF) – 2020 – Female

18. Bello Zuru Alhassan – Futsal Referee (CAF) – 2020 – Male

19. Akintoye Yemisi – Referee (CAF) – 2021 – Female

20. Terah Kabeda Beauty – Assistant Referee (CAF) – 2021

– Female

21. Abdulsalam Kasimu Abiola – Referee (CAF) – 2022 – Male

22. Ahmad Mustapha Tijjani – Assistant Referee (CAF) – 2023 – Male

23. Muhammad Muhamud Yakubu – Assistant Referee (CAF) – 2023 – Male

24. Egba Patrick John – Referee (CAF) – 2024 – Male

25. Agbons Faith – Assistant Referee (CAF) – 2024 – Female

26. Omada Emmanuel – Assistant Referee (CAF) – 2025 – Male

27. Ojeleye John Tope – Futsal Referee (CAF) – 2025 – Male

28. Adejoh Noah – Beach Soccer Referee (CAF) – 2025 – Male

29. Omotoye Tomilayo Oluwatosin – Referee (CAF) – 2026 – Female

30. Lawal Ridwan Temitope – Assistant Referee (CAF) – 2026 – Male

"Their inclusion places them in line to officiate major international tournaments, continental championships, and qualification matches throughout the 2026 football calendar, further strengthening Nigeria's footprint on the global refereeing stage."

## THE TRUMPSPORTS

With  
Usman Abbas Shehu



## Toptier Sports Management Launches ₦40 Billion, 10-Year Partnership to Transform Nigerian Football

Toptier Sports Management has announced a groundbreaking ₦40 billion, 10-year investment partnership with the Nigeria Women's Football League (NWFL) and the Nigeria National League (NNL), setting a new benchmark for sustainable football development in Africa.

The strategic initiative aims to transform Nigeria's domestic leagues into professionally managed, commercially viable, and globally visible platforms.

Speaking on the vision, Chichi Nwoko, Founder of Toptier Sports Management, emphasized the importance of building lasting systems.

"This is about building systems that will outlive us," Nwoko said. "If African football is going to command global respect, we must start by strengthening our domestic leagues, especially women's football and development pathways."

Hon. Bukola Olopade, Director General, National Sports Commission (NSC) said "this ₦40 billion commitment is a clear vote of confidence in the reforms taking place across Nigerian sports. At the Commission, we are intentional about creating an environment

where credible private investors can partner with government to build sustainable leagues, protect athlete welfare, and grow the sports economy."

In his remarks, Ahaji Ibrahim Gusau, President, Nigeria Football Federation stated that "the NFF welcomes this collaboration because it strengthens our domestic football ecosystem, improving player welfare, enhancing club operations, and creating clear development pathways, particularly for women and emerging talents. This is how we build a future-ready Nigerian football system."

Nwoko expressed gratitude to national leaders for their support, saying, "we thank the Director General of the National Sports Commission and the President of the Nigeria Football Federation for their stewardship and commitment to opening Nigerian football to transformative private-sector partnerships."

The decade-long partnership has garnered significant attention, with stakeholders across Africa hailing it as a blueprint for sports investment and development on the continent.





## Bauchi Appoints 142 District Heads to Strengthen Traditional Governance

By Mijinyawa Ahmed

The Bauchi State Government has appointed 142 individuals as District Heads across the Twenty Emirates and One Chiefdom in the state. The appointees have been issued with appointment letters, enabling them to assume their roles immediately.

Alhaji Abubakar Muhammad Wabi, Chairman of the Local Government Service Commission, said the appointments are part of efforts to strengthen traditional governance and grassroots administration in the state.

"The exercise is in line with the Bauchi State Chieftaincy (Appointment and Deposition) Law 2025, which provides a framework for restructuring and recognizing traditional institutions in the state.

"The law led to the creation of 20 Emirate Councils and Chiefdoms, necessitating the

appointment of qualified District Heads to manage local affairs effectively," he said.

Wabi explained that the appointments will enhance coordination between traditional rulers and government authorities, particularly at the grassroots level.

The Commission Chairman commended Governor Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed for his leadership and support for reforms in traditional institutions.

He also thanked stakeholders for their cooperation in implementing the law.

Wabi urged the newly appointed District Heads to uphold fairness, accountability, and service to their communities, emphasizing the state government's commitment to promoting peace, unity, and sustainable development through strong traditional institutions.

## Islamic Scholar Detained Over Alleged Coup Plot Against Tinubu

By Salihu Makera

A prominent Zaria-based Islamic scholar, Sani Khalifa, has been in detention for 23 days over an alleged link to a purported coup plot against President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, multiple sources familiar with the matter have disclosed.

The cleric was reportedly arrested by security operatives in Abuja shortly after travelling from Zaria to resolve an unexplained freeze placed on his bank account.

His continued detention comes despite repeated public denials by the Federal Government that any coup plot against the Tinubu administration existed.

According to Premium Times, sources said Khalifa's ordeal began when his bank account was suddenly blocked without written notice.

After failing to resolve the issue at the bank's Zaria branch, officials allegedly directed him to the institution's headquarters in Abuja.

It was upon his arrival in the capital, sources said, that security agents picked him up and placed him in custody.

According to people

briefed on the interrogation, Mr Khalifa's detention is linked to a ₦2 million transfer made into his account by one of the military officers accused of plotting the coup.

Family members and associates, however, insisted the cleric had no personal relationship with the soldier.

A family source said the transfer was facilitated indirectly through one of Mr Khalifa's disciples who knew the officer.

"The only contact was a brief phone greeting," the source said.

"The soldier later requested the Sheikh's account number through the disciple and sent money for prayers and blessings, as many people do with religious scholars. There was no political discussion, no agreement."

The suspects, led by a brigadier-general, Musa Sadiq, included 14 Nigerian Army officers, one naval officer and one Nigerian Air Force officer.

The residence of former Bayelsa State governor Timipre Sylva was also raided during investigations, though he denied any involvement.

## Troops Arrest Eight Suspects Linked to Gamboru Market Mosque Bombing

By Mijinyawa Ahmed

Troops of Operation HADIN KAI (OPHK) have arrested eight suspects, including two key figures believed to be major facilitators in the suicide bombing that struck the Gamboru Market Mosque on Christmas Eve.

The arrests were made in Adamawa State following intensified intelligence-led operations aimed at tracking down those responsible for the deadly attack.

In a press statement issued by the Media Information Officer of the Joint Task Force (North East), Operation HADIN KAI, Lieutenant Colonel Sani Uba, the military said the suspects were apprehended during a coordinated cordon-and-search operation in the Yan Lemo area of Mubi South Local Government Area.

According to the statement, the operation was carried out in the early hours of January 5, 2026, after sustained surveillance on locations

linked to the bombing network.

A search of the suspects' residence led to the recovery of cash, mobile phones, identification documents, ATM cards, jewelry and other personal items.

The recovered materials, the military said, are currently undergoing forensic analysis to strengthen ongoing investigations.

Preliminary identification procedures revealed that one suspect already in custody positively identified the two principal suspects as individuals who supplied materials used in assembling the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) deployed in the mosque attack. Other occupants of the residence were also found to have links to the terror network.

"All suspects remain in military custody and are undergoing detailed interrogation to facilitate further intelligence gathering before being handed over for continued investigation," the statement added.

In a related operation,



Lieutenant General Waidi Shaibu

OPHK troops on January 4, 2026 intercepted 45 jerrycans of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), estimated at about 1,125 litres, in Mayo Nguli, Maiha Local Government Area of Adamawa State.

The fuel was suspected to have been smuggled for terrorist logistics. The suppliers reportedly fled on sighting troops,

abandoning the consignment.

The military said the operations reflect OPHK's determination to dismantle terrorist networks, disrupt supply chains and prevent future attacks, while urging members of the public to remain vigilant and cooperate with security agencies to sustain peace across the North East.

## Bauchi Under Pressure: EFCC Trial, Power Struggles and the Politics of Prosecution

From Front Page

political opponents. His remarks widely circulated and debated signal a shift from cautious silence to open political confrontation.

Within Bauchi, these statements have energised party loyalists and supporters who see the EFCC case as part of a broader struggle for political survival and relevance ahead of future elections. For critics, however, the Governor's rhetoric risks escalating tensions and framing legitimate anti-corruption efforts as persecution.

### Public Opinion and the Battle for Narrative

Perhaps the most significant political impact of the case lies in the battle for public opinion. While the EFCC insists that it is merely enforcing the law, the Bauchi State Government and allied groups are framing the prosecution as



selective, politically motivated, and procedurally flawed.

This contest of narratives is playing out across press conferences, statements, and media platforms. Civil society organisations, youth groups, and professional associations have all entered the debate,

reflecting the deep polarisation of opinion. In Bauchi's political landscape, perception often matters as much as legal outcomes.

### What This Means for Bauchi Politics

As the trials proceed, their political implications will likely outlive the legal

process. If the prosecution secures convictions, it could significantly weaken the current political structure in Bauchi and reshape power dynamics within the state.

Conversely, if the cases collapse or are perceived as unjust, they may strengthen Governor Bala Mohammed's standing as a political figure resisting external pressure.

Either way, the EFCC case against Yakubu Adamu has become more than a criminal matter. It has evolved into a political test of institutional neutrality, federal-state relations, and democratic tolerance in Bauchi State.

In a state where politics is deeply personal and governance outcomes directly affect daily life, the unfolding drama is being watched not just as a court case, but as a referendum on power, justice, and political fairness in Nigeria's democracy.