

# Ramat Park flyover nears completion, says Okpebholo

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo has apologized to residents and motorists for the inconvenience caused by the ongoing construction of the flyover at Ramat Park in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of the state.

Okpebholo made the apology during an unscheduled inspection of the project on Thursday,

## ● Apologises for traffic disruption

noting that the flyover was about 90 per cent completed.

The governor expressed satisfaction with the quality and pace of work on the project, commending the progress made so far on the Ramat Park flyover.

"The work is progressing well,

and we are satisfied with the quality and speed so far. About 10 per cent of the project is left.

"In the next one or two months, it should be fully completed," he said.

"We are doing our best for the people of Edo. The contrac-

tor is meeting our expectations in terms of quality and delivery.

"We will continue to ensure that every project executed meets the required standards."

He acknowledged the temporary traffic challenges caused by the construction but commended residents for their patience and support.

"in spite of the gridlock caused by the construction, the people of Edo have remained supportive. They are happy because they can see the impact of what we are doing.

"This is a project many have not seen before in the state," he added.

Okpebholo also expressed

gratitude to President Bola Tinubu for supporting the state's development efforts.

"We thank President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his support. The resources we are deploying for this and other projects are made possible through that

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**Senate moves to cut N58.47trn 2026 budget over 'Unrealistic' projections**

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# 31 dead as Nigeria records 165 Lassa fever cases in 5 weeks

## ABUJA

Nigeria has recorded no fewer than 165 confirmed cases of Lassa fever and 31 deaths within the past five weeks, as health authorities intensify containment measures and regional efforts to fast-track vaccine development gather momentum across

West Africa.

The alarming figures were disclosed amid fresh updates from the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), which reaffirmed ongoing collaboration to develop a viable vaccine against the viral haemorrhagic disease that remains endemic in parts of the region.

Speaking at a high-level regional briefing, the Director of Science and Innovation at Africa CDC, Dr Mosoka Papa Fallah, said that vaccine research had advanced to Phase 2A clinical trials in Nigeria following the successful completion of Phase 1 trials in Liberia.

He noted that several institutions, including the Coalition for

Epidemic Preparedness Innovations and the African Vaccine Regulatory Forum (AVAREF), are supporting the development of candidate vaccines.

Fallah explained that the high mutation rate of viruses such as Lassa has made the search for a permanent cure complex, while limited commercial incentives have slowed pharmaceutical in-

vestment in diseases largely concentrated in specific regions. Although ribavirin has been used for decades in treating Lassa fever, he said its side effects and limited effectiveness underscore the urgent need for a safe and reliable vaccine.

He described the vaccine initiative as a product of coor-

dated regional commitment, with African governments and development partners pooling funding and expertise to ensure long-term public health security.

According to him, Africa CDC continues to monitor the vaccine pipeline closely while

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## AWARD PRESENTATION:

Director, Induction and Orientation, APC Dynamic Women for Tinubu 2027, Hon. Esther Simi Dusu (right), presenting an Award of Excellence to the Coordinator, Office of the First Lady, Edo State, Mrs Edesili Okpebholo Anani, who received it on behalf of Governor Monday Okpebholo in Abuja recently.

PHOTO: OMOYE AMINU.

## Capital releases to begin as Senators challenge revenue projections

### ABUJA

The Federal Government has announced that payments for the 2024 and 2025 capital budgets will commence immediately, even as lawmakers raised sharp concerns over what they described as weak revenue performance and unrealistic projections underpinning future spending plans.

The Minister of State for Finance, Doris Anite-Uzoka, disclosed this on Thursday while defending the ministry's 2026 budget proposal before the Senate Committee on Appropriation in Abuja.

Her assurance followed persistent queries from senators who noted that almost all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) appearing before various Senate panels had reported zero releases for their 2024 and 2025 capital

allocations.

Responding to the concerns, Anite-Uzoka revealed that she had convened a high-level stakeholder engagement with Permanent Secretaries and Accounting Officers across MDAs to resolve the funding bottlenecks.

She said the meeting was called to formally notify the agencies that the ministry was ready to begin capital disbursements, subject to the submission of their respective cash plans.

According to her, outstanding payments under the 2024 capital budget would begin immediately, as all necessary financial approvals had been secured.

She added that payments for the 2025 capital budget would also commence once MDAs upload their cash plans for processing.

"As of today, all outstand-

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# Democracy about people's choice, not ethnic sentiment

## — APC chieftain

**ABUJA**

**A**chieftain of the All Progressives Congress, Princess Nikky Onyeri, has declared that democracy must remain anchored on the people's free choice rather than ethnic sentiment or coercion.

Onyeri, who is the National Convener of the Forum of APC Female Aspirants 2027 (FA-FAN), spoke at a press briefing in Abuja on Thursday, where she condemned what she described as the growing trend of ethnic politics in the country.

Her remarks followed a purported message allegedly circulated by a group known

as the Igbo Elders Consultative Forum, urging Ndi Igbo in Abuja to vote for the candidate of the Social Democratic Party in the forthcoming Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) chairmanship election scheduled for February 21.

Onyeri said it had come to their notice that certain groups were encouraging Igbos in Abuja to vote solely for an Igbo candidate of the SDP, describing such a move as undemocratic and divisive.

"The message being circulated online claims that Ndi Igbo in Abuja have endorsed the candidate of the SDP for AMAC chairmanship. We condemn

that brand of politics. There is no such thing as Igbo stakeholders collectively endorsing any candidate," she said.

She stressed that Nigerians should vote for candidates of their choice without basing their decisions on religion or ethnic-

ity, noting that the credibility of any election depends on the collective resolve of citizens to exercise their franchise freely.

According to her, democracy thrives on credibility, transparency and accountability, warning that elections that are not free, fair

and transparent weaken the very foundation of governance.

"No group has the right to endorse any individual in the name of Ndigbo in Abuja. Who gave them the mandate to speak for all Igbos? Who was consulted before that decision

was reached?" she queried.

Onyeri cautioned that when political pluralism is removed from the electoral process, whether overtly or covertly, authoritarian tendencies begin to creep in, diminishing the legitimacy of outcomes.

## 31 dead as Nigeria records 165...

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strengthening laboratory systems and epidemic preparedness across the continent.

In Nigeria, the rising caseload has heightened concern within the health sector.

Among the confirmed infections are nine health workers, underscoring the occupational risk faced by frontline medical personnel.

In Kano State, authorities confirmed that a recent outbreak which resulted in one death and two infections has been contained. The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has meanwhile urged healthcare facilities nationwide to enforce strict infection prevention and control measures

to protect staff and patients.

Several states have also intensified environmental sanitation enforcement, particularly targeting food handlers, as part of efforts to curb rodent-to-human transmission.

Lassa fever, an acute viral haemorrhagic illness, is primarily transmitted through contact with food or household items contaminated by infected rodents, and can also spread between humans where proper precautions are not observed.

Outbreaks typically peak during the dry season between November and April, with poverty-related conditions such as poor housing and inadequate sanitation contributing significantly to its spread.

## Capital releases to begin as...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

ing payments for the 2024 and 2025 capital budgets will commence," the minister declared.

However, the funding debate took a deeper turn as the Chairman of the Nigeria Revenue Service, Zacch Adedeji, attributed persistent budget implementation challenges to what he described as unrealistic revenue assumptions.

Adedeji maintained that the true measure of a budget's strength lies not in its size but in the government's ability to fund and execute it.

He warned that overestimating revenue inevitably results in spending plans that cannot be financed, regardless of the payment framework adopted.

He disclosed that the government was shifting towards more credible and performance-based revenue projections anchored on actual earning capacity.

In particular, he stressed that oil revenue estimates must reflect net returns available to government rather than gross production figures.

Citing the operational structure of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited, Adedeji explained that the company now functions as a limited liability entity rather than a federal corporation, meaning government earnings are restricted

to taxes and royalties rather than total production output.

"Oil revenue estimates must be based on realistic production costs and net returns, not gross output," he stated.

Chairman of the Senate Committee on Appropriation, Solomon Adeola, expressed concern over what he described as widening gaps between actual performance and projected figures.

He cited a case where revenue performance stood at 18 percent in one fiscal year, yet projections for 2025 were put at 36.5 percent.

Adeola questioned whether the economic management team had sufficient confidence in its assumptions and suggested that the proposed N58.472 trillion 2026 budget may need to be reviewed downward if revenue realities do not support it.

He further warned that mounting debt-servicing obligations demand urgent fiscal discipline, including consideration of asset sales to curb borrowing and reduce future interest burdens.

Earlier in the session, the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, presented an overview of the 2025 budget performance alongside a detailed breakdown of the proposed 2026 expenditure framework, setting the stage for intense legislative scrutiny in the weeks ahead.



**ASH WEDNESDAY MASS:**

Rev. Fr. Richard Ojedeji of St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Oke-Ado, Ibadan, Oyo State on Wednesday rubbing ash on a parishioner's forehead during Ash Wednesday Mass.

## Anambra Assembly reinstates suspended lawmaker after apology

**AWKA**

**T**he Anambra State House of Assembly on Thursday unanimously adopted the report of its Committee on Rules, Business, Ethics and Privileges, approving the reinstatement of suspended lawmaker, Mr Bernard Udemezue.

Udemezue, who represents Anyamelum State Constituency, had been suspended over al-

leged unparliamentary conduct.

The committee, chaired by the Majority Leader, Mr Ikenna Ofo-deme, recommended the lifting of restrictions placed on the lawmaker's allowances and directed that he should resume receiving his entitlements from March.

It further recommended that Udemezue be granted full access to the Assembly complex and allowed to participate fully in all legislative activities.

According to the committee's report, the lawmaker submitted a letter of apology dated

November 7, 2025, addressed to the Speaker with reference number ANHA/014/032. T1

The letter was received within five days of his suspension, in line with House rules.

The report also noted that Udemezue complied with the terms of his suspension, as he was not seen within the Assembly premises during the three-month period.

The motion for the adoption of the committee's recommendations was moved by Mr Noble Igwe, representing Ogbaru State

Constituency 1, and seconded by Mr Tony Muobuikwe, representing Aguata 2 State Constituency.

Speaker Dr Somtochukwu Udeze read out the recommendations, which were unanimously adopted by members.

Udemezue was initially suspended on August 28, 2025, and later handed an additional three-month suspension on November 26, 2025, for failing to comply with the initial directives of the House.

The extended suspension is expected to lapse on February 26.

## Nigeria produces 67% of global yam output —FG

**ABUJA**

**T**he Federal Government says Nigeria accounts for 67 per cent of global yam production, producing 67.2 million metric tonnes annually.

Sen. Aliyu Abdullahi, Minister of State for Agriculture and Food Security, disclosed this at the National Yam Advocacy Summit on Thursday in Abuja. It was convened by the In-

ternational Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in partnership with the ministry.

The summit, themed "Catalyzing a National Agenda for Yam Value Chain Transformation and Improved Seed Technologies," aimed to promote modernisation and increased productivity in the sector.

Abdullahi noted that in spite of the impressive output, Nigeria meets only part of its esti-

mated national demand of 120 million metric tonnes, leaving a shortfall of over 50 million metric tonnes.

"This shortfall underscores both the untapped potential of the sector and the urgent need to modernise the yam value chain, increase productivity and leverage Nigeria's leadership to capture greater domestic and international market opportunities," he said.

The minister commended IITA for strengthening the yam value chain, describing yam as a crop that embodies prosperity, rural enterprise and national resilience for millions of Nigerians.

He said agricultural transformation is a national priority under the Renewed Hope Agenda, noting that President Bola Tinubu in 2023 declared a State of Emergency on Food Security, calling for data-driven and coordinated interventions.

## Ramat Park flyover nears completion, says...

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support. Edo is achieving a lot," he said.

There was jubilation at Ikpoba Hill in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area as residents trooped out in large numbers to welcome the governor.

The atmosphere was carnival-like as market women, traders, motorists, residents and busi-

ness owners cheered and sang in appreciation of what many described as a landmark infrastructure project aimed at easing traffic congestion along the busy axis.

Some residents who spoke during the visit praised the governor for embarking on what they described as people-focused projects.

A trader, Josephine Isaac, said the flyover would bring

major relief to business owners and commuters in the area.

"We have not seen anything like this before. This administration has shown that the people are the priority. We appreciate the governor's good work," she said.

Similarly, a commercial bus driver along the Ikpoba Hill route, Mr Frank Ojekata, said the project would permanently

address the long standing traffic congestion in the area.

"With this flyover, the traffic problem we have suffered for years will be reduced. This is a legacy project," he said.

The Ramat Park flyover, when completed, is expected to significantly improve traffic flow and boost economic activities around Ikpoba Hill and adjoining communities in Benin City.

## NEWS

# Edo govt demolishes building linked to cult killings, seals suspect's properties

• Moves to stem erosion, flooding as FEWMA inspects high-risk sites

WINIFRED INARUMEN

The Edo State Government has demolished a building in Amagba allegedly linked to suspected cult members, as part of a renewed crackdown on violent cult activities across the state.

The property, where two members of the Aye confrater-

nity were arrested while five others escaped in connection with recent cult-related killings, was pulled down by the Special Security Squad codenamed "Operation Flush Out Cultists and Kidnappers in Edo State," led by the Principal Security Officer to Governor Monday Okpebholo.

Briefing journalists after the demolition, the Squad's spokes-

person, Mr Eribo Enwanta, said the state's anti-cultism law would be strictly enforced to rid Edo of violent groups.

"The governor has given us a clear mandate and we will pursue it, no matter who is involved. No one is above the law.

Those who escaped and have been declared wanted, include Koko, Enas, Sparol and others re-

main wanted. We will arrest them to answer for the atrocities committed, especially Sparol," he said.

On the directive for certain Okiagheles to submit themselves for scrutiny, Enwanta disclosed that two of the three invited had complied and were being profiled, while the seven-day ultimatum issued to the Okiaghele of Obagie, Ken Dada, was still running.

He warned that failure to honour the invitation would attract further action.

"When the seven days expire, we will take the necessary steps. The law must take its course," he added.

In a related development, the Squad sealed off a residence in the Upper Uwa area of Benin City, described as the last known address of Etiosa Akhiombare Joshua, alias Baba Josh, a suspected member of the Maphite Confraternity and alleged mastermind and financier of last week's killing at Wire Road.

Enwanta said intelligence reports indicated that the suspect had relocated to Canada, prompting the state government to involve Interpol to facilitate his arrest and extradition.

"All properties linked to him will remain sealed until he presents himself. There is no hiding place for anyone involved in cult killings.

"We have activated the necessary international channels and will ensure justice is served," he stated.

He reaffirmed the government's resolve to end cult-related violence, stressing that the security agencies were working in close coordination to execute

the governor's directive.

Meanwhile, in a renewed push to confront worsening environmental challenges, the Edo State Flood, Erosion and Watershed Management Agency (EdoFEWMA) has undertaken a comprehensive inspection of critical flood and erosion sites across Edo North and Edo Central Senatorial Districts.

The Chief Executive Officer of the agency and Project Coordinator of the Edo State NEWM-AP-EIB, Hon. Mohammed Bawa Okoyomoh, led a technical team on the assessment tour, describing it as a strategic response to persistent gully erosion and seasonal flooding affecting several communities.

The inspection commenced in Etsako West Local Government Area, where the team visited high-risk locations including Sabo Iyakpi Road, Ogwode Judge Inni/Small London gully, Ovia River Road and Ibiense.

At the various sites, the team identified a combination of factors driving erosion and flooding, notably inadequate drainage systems to intercept stormwater, loose sandy soils with little vegetation cover, and poorly terminated drainage channels.



## CLOSING OF A 2-DAY ETHICS TRAINING:

L-R (first row): Head of Corporate Communications, Solid Minerals Development Fund (SMDF), Mrs Idowu Jokpeyibo; Lead Coach and Founder of Coaching Consulting and Allied Services (CCAS), Hajija Amina Jambo; Personal Assistant to the Executive Secretary of SMDF, Mr Abdullahi Odeh, with participants, during the closing of a 2-Day Ethics and Personal Effectiveness Training for Presidential Artisanal Gold Mining Development Initiative (PAGMI) and SMDF staffers in Abuja on Thursday.

## EDOHERMA seeks media partnership with EBS to boost health regulation awareness

### BENIN CITY

The Edo State Health Regulation and Monitoring Agency (EDOHERMA) has sought strategic collaboration with the Edo Broadcasting Service (EBS) to deepen public awareness on health regulation and compliance across the state.

The Chief Executive Officer of EDOHERMA, Dr Adesuwa Urhoghide, made the request during a visit to the Managing Director of EBS, Mr Sulaiman

Aledeh, at the station's corporate headquarters in Aduwawa.

Urhoghide stressed that regulation without adequate public awareness could breed resistance, noting that compliance improves when facility owners understand requirements, citizens are aware of their rights and patients know expected safety standards.

She reiterated that EDOHERMA is the statutory agency responsible for licensing, inspection, monitoring and enforcement of health stand-

ards across public and private health facilities, as well as public spaces with health risks.

She emphasised that the agency's focus is on raising standards rather than punitive enforcement, describing safe healthcare as a shared responsibility.

Responding, Aledeh welcomed the proposed partnership, describing it as innovative.

He lamented that inadequate information had led many Nigerians to abandon indigenous alternative medicines in favour

of similar foreign products.

He expressed readiness to collaborate with the agency, noting that EBS television signals extend to Akure in Ondo State, while its radio broadcasts have global reach via the internet.

Both organisations agreed on sustained publicity for compliance education, patient rights advocacy, responsible health advertising, verification of health-related advertisements, rapid media coordination during emergencies and joint messaging to curb misinformation and encourage public reporting of health hazards.

## LIFE-ND trains 655 Edo beneficiaries on export standards, product certification

### BENIN CITY

The Edo State office of the Livelihood Improvement Family Enterprises in the Niger Delta (LIFE-ND) has commenced a capacity-building programme for 655 beneficiaries across the state, with focus on international best practices in product packaging, branding and standardization to enhance export readiness.

The initiative, designed to improve product quality and position beneficiaries for competitiveness in both local and global markets, was flagged off in Edo South Senatorial District.

Speaking at the event, the State Coordinator of LIFE-ND, Mr John Omoruyi, represented by the State Agribusiness Promotion Officer, Mrs Grace Iredia, said the training would be implemented in phases across the three senatorial districts, beginning with 20 incubates per district in the first round.

Omoruyi explained that the programme targets beneficiaries engaged in cassava, fish and poultry value chains, with emphasis on measurement standards, product certification processes and compliance requirements.

He noted that although LIFE-ND had trained beneficiaries

between 2021 and 2025, the new phase aims to upscale existing enterprises to meet export targets and required certifications.

According to him, officials of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) were invited to equip participants with practical guidelines on certification, regulatory compliance and proper packaging to enable them access external markets.

Beneficiaries in Edo South are being trained in cassava, fish and poultry value chains; those in Edo Central in cassava

and poultry; while participants in Edo North will cover cassava, poultry and rice value chains.

Omoruyi disclosed that Edo is the first among the six participating states to implement the activity under the current phase.

He added that 4,337 persons benefited in the first phase of the programme, while 665 persons were captured in the additional financing phase.

Presentations at the training were delivered by NAFDAC and SON officials on registration processes, regulatory compliance, product standardisation and certification for manufacturers and distributors.

## Edo govt conducts safety drills for BNCL staff

### BENIN CITY

The Edo State Ministry of Public Safety and Security (MPSS), in collaboration with the Edo State Fire Service and the Nigerian Red Cross, has conducted comprehensive safety drills for staff of Bendel Newspapers Company Limited (BNCL), publishers of The Observer titles.

The exercise was aimed at strengthening emergency preparedness among civil and public servants and promoting a safety-conscious culture in workplaces across the state.

The MPSS team, led by the Permanent Secretary and represented by the Director of Inter-Agency and Operations, Mr Thompson Erhomonsele, included key directors of the ministry.

Officials of the Edo State Fire Service, led by Mr Godfrey Akuli, and the Red Cross, led by Mr Christian Ndukwu, also participated.

Speaking during the session, Director of Safety, Engr Ighodalo Uzama, said the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo considered it necessary to institutionalise regular fire drills across public service institutions.

He noted that emergencies could occur despite preventive measures and stressed the need for workers to understand evacuation procedures, identify exit routes and assemble at

designated muster points during emergencies.

"The essence of safety drills is to test preparedness and improve response time. We must build a strong safety culture in our workplaces," he said.

Erhomonsele, in his presentation, sensitised participants on modern tactics used by fraudsters and kidnappers, urging residents to remain vigilant and report suspicious movements in their neighbourhoods.

He emphasised that security was a collective responsibility and not limited to uniformed personnel.

The Fire Service team warned against unsafe practices such as keeping gas cylinders indoors, using camping gas inside homes and handling electrical gadgets in kitchens during cooking.

Participants were also taken through practical demonstrations on how to extinguish fires safely and prevent electrocution during fire outbreaks.

The Red Cross team provided hands-on training in first aid, demonstrating how to assist and evacuate victims during emergencies, including fire incidents and road accidents.

Mr Ndukwu explained that first aid involves the immediate assistance given to a casualty before professional medical help arrives, urging participants to always act responsibly and support one another in times of emergency.

# Traditional ruler shot dead by gunmen in Ondo State —Police

## KADUNA

The Police Command in Ondo State has said that gunmen have killed a traditional ruler, Oba Kehinde Falodun, the Alagamo of Agamo community in Akure North Local Government Area of the state.

DSP Abayomi Jimoh, the command's Spokesperson, who confirmed this in a statement made available to newsmen on Thursday in Akure, said the incident occurred on Wednesday at about 7:10 p.m.

Jimoh said the information was received by the divi-

sion at about 7:50 p.m. from a community leader, High Chief Ajewole Clement of New Town, Itaogbolu,

He said the information indicated that approximately six armed men stormed the residence of the traditional ruler, forcibly took him from his compound, and subsequently fled the scene.

"The victim was later found a few metres away with gunshot wounds. He was confirmed dead at the scene.

"Upon receipt of the report, the Divisional Police Officer (DPO), alongside tactical teams from the command,

promptly mobilised officers in collaboration with local security outfits.

"Atuluse Security, local hunters, and Amotekun operatives also assisted to comb adjoining bushes and surrounding areas

in a bid to apprehend the perpetrators. Efforts are ongoing to track down and arrest the fleeing suspects.

"Monitoring and surveillance activities have been intensified across the area to en-

sure the safety of residents and prevent further breakdown of law and order.

"The public are assured that no stone will be left unturned in bringing those responsible for the heinous act to justice,"

he said.

According to him, members of the public with credible and actionable information are urged to report to the nearest police station or contact the command.

## Police detain alleged murder suspect in Anambra

### ONITSHA

The Police Command in Anambra said it has detained a 52-year-old man suspected murderer who was handed over to the command by soldiers of the 302 Artillery Regiment, Onitsha.

The Command's Public Relations Officer (PPRO) SP Tochukwu Ikenga, confirmed the detention in a statement to newsmen on Thursday in Onitsha.

Ikenga explained that the detention was in connection with ongoing investigation into a case of conspiracy, attempted kidnapping, grievous bullet injuries and murder in Urum Community in Awka North Local Government Area (LGA).

According to him, the suspect allegedly conspired with

others currently at large, to sponsor armed men for a violent ambush along the road in Urum, targeting unsuspecting members of the public.

He said that during interrogation, the suspect who mentioned some names, confessed that the sum of ₦500,000 was paid to hire four gunmen from Ayamelum LGA of the state.

The PRO noted that the suspect was currently undergoing interrogation as investigations were still ongoing.

He said the command had intensified efforts to apprehend other suspects at large, and assured members of the public that further developments would be communicated in due course.

He reiterated the command's commitment to maintaining law and order and ensuring that justice is served.

## Optional electronic transmission of election results dangerous —Yiaga Africa

### LAGOS

The Executive Director of Yiaga Africa, Samson Itodo, has said that the lack of mandatory real-time electronic transmission of election results will betray public trust and weaken electoral reforms.

Itodo spoke in an interview with newsmen on Thursday in Lagos.

He reacted to Nigerian Senate's decision that electronic transmission of election results should not be mandatory.

The Senate recently passed amendments to the Electoral Act 2022 (Repeal and Enactment Bill 2026), rejecting a clause that would have made real-time electronic transmission to the INEC Result Viewing (IREV) portal compulsory.

Itodo said the Senate's decision was a setback to gains made in the Electoral Act of 2022.

He said that the compressed timelines for elections would increase the risk of logistics problems.

"What the Senate passed is not a reform," he said.

## Kogi Govt. unveils new tax rates to boost fiscal reform

### LOKOJA

The Kogi State Government has introduced new tax rates for its Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) for an effective tax regime.

The Chairman, Kogi State Internal Revenue Service (KGIRS), Dr Sule Enehe, disclosed this at a stakeholders' engagement meeting on Thursday in Lokoja.

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### NEWS CONFERENCE:

L-R: Bursar, European University of Nigeria (EUN) Abuja, Mrs Oludayo Balogun; Registrar of EUN, Dr Nelson Obetta; Vice Chancellor of EUN, Prof. Emmanuel Ibezim; representative of the Chancellor of EUN, Pastor Daniel Nwokedi; Member of the EUN Council, Dr Jude Nwabueze and the Liberian of EUN, Prof Charles Omekwu, after a news conference on the University's accomplishments and the forthcoming maiden matriculation, at the EUN Auditorium in Abuja recently.

## Bode George faults exclusion of PDP, ADC, LP from Rivers by-election

### LAGOS

A former Deputy National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Olabode George, has expressed concern over the exclusion of the PDP, African Democratic Congress (ADC) and the Labour Party (LP) from Saturday's Rivers State House of Assembly bye-election.

It would be recalled that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had announced that the three political parties would not participate in the Feb. 21 bye-election in Rivers, citing various reasons.

The Resident Electoral Commissioner of INEC in the state,

Gabriel Yomere, made the announcement while speaking with representatives of security agencies in Port Harcourt last Friday.

He said 12 candidates from seven political parties were cleared to participate in the election scheduled to hold in the two constituencies –Ahoada East Constituency 2 and Khana Constituency 2.

According to him, out of these 12 candidates, seven are participating in Ahoada East Constituency 2 and five candidates are participating in Khana Constituency 2.

Yomere, who explained that ADC's expulsion was due to the party's failure to upload prima-

ry results to the INEC portal at headquarters within a given period, said PDP did not even take part in the primaries, while LP said it had litigation.

Reacting, George, who described the development as worrisome, called for more clarity on the reasons behind the exclusion.

He stressed the importance of transparency and adherence to due process in the conduct of elections.

"I strongly believe the question Nigerians should ask now is this: why were major political parties disqualified from participating in the election?"

"How can political parties be disqualified in this manner? Nigerians deserve clear explanations on the criteria applied and how the decisions were

reached," George said.

The PDP chieftain noted that political parties play a vital role in democratic governance and should be given fair opportunity to participate in the electoral process, in line with the law.

He referenced past political developments in Nigeria, urging stakeholders to learn from history and ensure that democratic institutions are strengthened.

"What happened between 1962 and 1966 taught us that political disagreements, if not properly managed, can escalate.

"It is important that we handle issues with caution and responsibility," he said.

George encouraged leaders and institutions to act in ways that promote national unity, fairness and confidence in the democratic process.

## FAAN bans cash transactions for revenue payments effective Feb. 28

### LAGOS

The Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) has banned cash transactions for all services nationwide effective Feb. 28,

This was contained in a statement signed by the Director of Public Relations and Consumer Protection at FAAN, Mr Henry Agbebi on Thursday in Lagos.

FAAN said the reaffirmation became necessary after executives of the various aviation unions visited the FAAN management to seek clarification on the cessation of cash transactions at airports on Wednesday.

The unions represented at the

session were the National Union of Air Transport Employees (NUATE); Air Transport Services Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (ATSSSAN); and Association of Nigeria Aviation Professionals (ANAP).

He said engagement provided an opportunity for robust dialogue, reflecting FAAN's open-door policy and commitment to inclusive stakeholders consultation.

The Managing Director of FAAN Mrs Olubunmi Kuku, expressed her resolve to fully implement a cashless system across all airports' payment points nationwide.

Kuku emphasised that the

transition to a cashless system was not only in line with global best practices in aviation management but also consistent with Federal Government directives.

She added that the directive was aimed at enhancing transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency.

She referenced a Treasury Circular dated November 24, 2025, issued by the Office of the Accountant-General of the Federation and signed by the Accountant General, Shamseldeen Ogunjimi.

She noted that the circular mandated the cessation of cash transactions in all government dealings.

Kuku also said that the di-

rective followed approval by the Federal Executive Council for Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to discontinue physical cash collections and payments as part of broader public finance reforms.

"There is no going back on this decision. The cashless initiative aligns FAAN with national financial management reforms.

"While positioning Nigeria's airports for greater operational integrity, improved service delivery, and stronger revenue assurance," she said.

Kuku noted that the reform also forms part of FAAN's broader strategic agenda to deepen stakeholder engagement.

## NEWS

# Use Ramadan, Lent to strengthen national unity, Shettima urges Nigerians

ABUJA

Vice-President Kashim Shettima has urged Nigerians to use the concurrent observance of Ramadan and the Christian Lenten season to strengthen national unity and demonstrate practical compassion toward fellow citizens.

In a statement on Thursday,

Shettima, described the period as an opportunity for both spiritual renewal and collective nation-building.

The vice-president, who said the sacred month required more than religious rituals, called for active engagements in addressing the nation's seemingly formidable challenges.

"Let us not only feed the hungry, but uplift the weary;

not only give charity, but extend kindness; not only pray for peace, but work for justice.

"This is the true essence of Ramadan," he said.

Shettima also described Ramadan as "a journey of the soul and a time for deep reflection, for self-purification, and for embracing the true essence of Islam—peace, patience, sacrifice, and service to humanity."

He paid glowing tributes to Nigeria's religious leaders across faiths, whom he described as "the moral and spiritual com-

pass of the nation."

Shettima also acknowledged their invaluable role in shaping the country's ethical foundation during this period when both major religious communities are engaged in spiritual disciplines.

The vice-president called for prayers for national stability during the holy season, even as he said, "We must strengthen the bonds that unite us and reject the forces that seek to divide us."

He also requested fervent prayers for President Bola Tinubu's leadership, asking

that divine guidance grant the president "wisdom, strength,

and foresight to pilot the affairs of our great nation."

## Police assure FCT residents of peaceful election on Saturday

ABUJA

The Nigeria Police Force, Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Command, has enjoined residents in the area councils to come out to vote on Saturday without any fear of attack.

The Commissioner of Police (CP) FCT, Dantawaye Miller, said this at the enlarged stakeholders' forum organised by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Abuja ahead of the area council election.

Miller said that each polling unit would have a reasonable number of security personnel, adding that adequate security measures had been put in place in identified high risk areas.

The CP also urged political actors to play by the rules to allow for peaceful and credible election.

"I expect a very high level of decorum, every stakeholder doing things the right way. I would expect that we don't allow the arm of the law to go after us," he said.

Miller said that on the part of police and other security agencies, they were ready for the election.

According to him, there will be massive deployment of policemen and support from other security agencies.

He said that the police and other security agencies would work with INEC to ensure a credible and peaceful election.

Also, INEC National Commissioner in-charge of FCT, Muhammad Haruna, emphasised the need for secured environment to ensure the election was successful.

Haruna said that without security, the commission could not conduct the election.

The National Commissioner said that the FCT election was very important to Nigerians and the commission, hence the need to ensure it must be successful.

He said that by the Constitution of Nigeria, the FCT Area Council election remained the only election conducted by INEC and it has become reference point for conduct of local government elections in the country.

"We all testify to the fact that since 1999, it's only this council election that has been consistent," Haruna said.

On his part, the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), FCT Coordinator, Ateli Samson, assured INEC that corps members were ready for the election.

"We will continue to ensure that our elections are successful," he said.



**RETIREMENT, 60TH BIRTHDAY CEREMONY:**

L-R: Vice Principal, Ansar-ud-Deen (AUD) Comprehensive High School Ikere Ekiti, Mr Bello Oladele; Celebrant, Mr Aromasodu Sunday; Principal AUD Comprehensive High School Ikere Ekiti and Vice Principal (Admin) AUD School Ikere Ekiti, Mrs Ajayi Adelanke, during the Retirement and 60th Birthday ceremony of Mr Aromasodu in Ado Ekiti recently.

## Alia inaugurates 5,000 cubic-metre water plant for Naka IDPs

NAKA (BENUE)

Governor Hyacinth Alia of Benue has inaugurated a 5000 cubic-metre per day water treatment plant for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Naka, Gwer West Local Government Area.

Alia, represented by his deputy, Dr Sam Odeh, said that the water project, provided by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and other partners, aligned with the state

government's priorities.

The governor assured that the state government would join hands with Gwer West LGA Chairman, Mr Victor Ormin, to ensure proper reticulation of the water across Naka.

He said that the reticulation would do away with residents clustering in one location to access the facility.

Alia further called for the excavation of the dam to a deeper level to increase its capacity and accommodate more water to serve the growing population.

The governor disclosed that the Benue State Government

had shown strong interest in expanding the project and invited development partners to contribute towards increasing its capacity too.

The Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction, Dr Bernard Doro, said in his remarks that the treatment plant represented more than physical infrastructure.

Doro described the project as a restoration of dignity, protection against waterborne diseases and a reinforcement of community resilience.

The minister further disclosed that lack of clean water supply increased the risk of

disease outbreaks and deepened hardship, especially for women and children who bear the burden of water collection.

"When communities have access to clean water, they are healthier and productive, and when they are productive, dependency reduces and recovery accelerates," Doro said.

The minister commended the European Union and other partners for their support in mitigating humanitarian challenges, reiterating that access to clean water would improve health outcomes, boost productivity and accelerate recovery in affected communities.

## Fatal midnight collision claims 2 in Lagos —LASTMA

LAGOS

The Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) has said that a driver and one other, died in a midnight collision involving two laden 40-foot containerised trucks, along Cele inward Oshodi-Apapa Expressway, Lagos.

The General Manager of LASTMA, Mr Olalekan Bakare-Oki, disclosed this in a statement in Lagos, signed by Director, Public Affairs and Enlightenment Department of LASTMA, Mr Taofiq Adebayo.

Bakare-Oki said the fatal impact claimed the life of one of the truck (T-392 LA) driver and another whose presence within the operational perimeter of the articulated vehicles could not be immediately established at the time of response.

"The ferocity of the collision left the deceased driver severely entrapped within the steering compartment of his truck, thereby necessitating painstaking extrication by operatives of the authority's rescue and recovery team.

"LASTMA personnel under-

took meticulous rescue procedures to retrieve the driver's remains, while the lifeless body of the miscreant was evacuated from beneath one of the trucks following an intensive search and recovery exercise.

"The operation was conducted in seamless operational synergy with the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA), whose specialised technical intervention proved indispensable in facilitating the complex recovery undertaking," he said.

He said that security reinforcement was simultaneously provided by personnel of the Nigeria Police Force attached to the Ilasa Police Division, ensuring effective perimeter control and the preservation of evidentiary integrity at the scene.

"Further exemplifying robust inter-agency collaboration, the State Environmental Health Monitoring Unit (SEHMU) promptly evacuated the remains of both victims upon notification by LASTMA.

"This enabled the progression of recovery activities and the gradual restoration of vehicular flow along the strategically vital logistics corridor.

## Nwosu lauds Nigeria-U.S. security collaboration

AWKA

Mr John Nwosu, the candidate of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) in the 2025 governorship election in Anambra has lauded the security partnership between Nigeria and the United States of America.

Nwosu in a statement issued in Awka described the synergy as a timely step toward strengthening the country's counter-terrorism capacity.

The tech expert said the

recent announcement by the defence headquarters of the arrival of U.S. military personnel and equipment in Nigeria was a welcome development.

According to him, this is laudable as the country continues to find solution to its perennial security challenges.

He recalled that the Director, Defence Information, Maj.-Gen. Samaila Uba, recently in a statement said the U.S. personnel were technical specialists serving strictly in advisory and training capacities.

Nwosu said the partnership underscored the growing importance of technology-driven security architecture in modern warfare.

He said that in the contemporary security environment, technological innovation plays a crucial role in intelligence gathering, surveillance, and operational efficiency.

"Any nation that neglects this reality places its citizens at risk," he said.

The former governorship hopeful applauded the international collaboration between the

federal and state governments toward addressing insecurity.

He said beyond foreign partnerships, Nigeria needed comprehensive structural reforms, improved intelligence coordination, enhanced accountability, and sustained investment in modern equipment and personnel training.

"The protection of lives and property is the primary constitutional responsibility of the government.

"I call on authorities at all levels to adopt more decisive and measurable strategies to restore public confidence in the nation's security framework," he said.

# Counter-terrorism: UK, German defence attachés visit theatre command in Borno

## MAIDUGURI

The Defence Attachés of the United Kingdom in Nigeria, Brig.-Gen. Tom Harper and his counterpart of Germany, Col. Boris Bovecamp, have reaffirmed their countries' commitment to the fight against terrorism in Nigeria.

This is contained in a statement on Thursday by Lt. Col. Sani Uba, the Media Information Officer of the Operation HADIN KAI (OPHK).

Uba said the attaches made the commitment in Maiduguri during their visit to the headquarters of the Joint Task Force (North East), Operation HA-

DIN KAI (OPHK).

"The Defence Attachés of the United Kingdom and Germany to Nigeria, Brig. Tom Harper and Col. Boris Bovecamp, have reaffirmed continued support and collaboration in the fight against terrorism and insurgency.

"The assurance came during their historic visit to the Headquarters of the Theatre Command, Operation HADIN KAI (OPHK), in Maiduguri on Wednesday."

He said that Harper highlighted the strong mutual respect and enduring relationship between Nigeria and the United Kingdom, emphasising their shared commitment to the rule of law,

democracy, and human rights.

Harper also commended the Nigerian Armed Forces' efforts in tackling terrorism in the North East region, particularly through Operation HADIN KAI, and expressed the UK's

commitment to providing further training support through the British Military Advisory Team (BMATT).

Similarly, Bovecamp said he was in the Theatre to explore possible areas of future collaboration especially in the area of capacity building as well as possible interventions through regional cooperation arrange-

ments to enhance operational effectiveness and collaboration to defeat terrorism.

In his remarks, the Theatre Commander of OPHK, Maj. Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar, lauded the significant contributions of the UK and German Defence Attachés to counter-insurgency efforts.

Abubakar noted that train-

ing initiatives have enhanced troops' skills and proficiency in responding to evolving security challenges in the Theatre emphasizing the mutual benefit of the partnerships.

The commander highlighted areas of future collaboration to include technical expertise as well as equipment and logistics support.

## Osinbajo celebrates Otti at 61, applauds Abia Senior Citizens' law

### NVOSI (ABIA)

Former Vice-President, Yemi Osinbajo has said that the Abia Senior Citizens' Law signed by the Abia Governor, Alex Otti, is a landmark initiative that will protect vulnerable senior citizens of the state.

Osinbajo spoke while felicitating with the governor on his 61st birthday celebration in Nvosi, Isiala Ngwa South Local Government Area of the state.

He said that the law reflected the state government's concern for the elderly, noting that it also embodied transformative values of compassion and social responsibility inspired by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"I was quite particularly touched by the new law for Senior

Citizens in Abia State and I think it is one of those very important issues that we have to address.

"The gospel of Jesus Christ transformed nations because of the concern for the poor and vulnerable.

"The great welfare schemes around the world all came from the teachings of the gospel on taking care of the least of those in our society.

"I am personally impressed and happy that you were able to pass the Law; and of course, I have seen so many other things, the roads and all that," Osinbajo said.

He congratulated the governor on his birthday and wished him continued success, strength, wisdom and favour in the months and years ahead.

## Agency tasks building materials dealers on quality assurance

### LAGOS

The Lagos State Materials Testing Laboratory Agency (LSMTL) has urged building materials dealers in the state to prioritise quality assurance to safeguard lives and property.

The General Manager of LS-MTL, Mrs Olayinka Abdul, said this in a statement issued by the agency's Director, Public Affairs Unit, Mrs Salehu-Badejo Abimbola, on Thursday in Lagos.

The statement quoted Abdul as saying this during a sensitisation campaign at the Odunlade Building Materials Dealers Market, Coker, Lagos.

Abdul, who was represented by the Director of Business De-

velopment Unit 1, Mrs Omolara Awosanya, said materials testing remained the foundation of any construction process.

She said failure to test materials before use often resulted in structural defects and building collapse.

"Materials testing is the foundation of any construction process. When drilling a borehole, the water, soil and granite must be tested as part of proper building procedures.

"Compromising on quality at the point of purchase can lead to serious structural failure," she said.

According to her, many building collapse cases recorded in the state are linked to the use of substandard materials.



### GOVERNOR'S SPOUSE FORUM VISIT MAKINDE:

L-R: Secretary to Oyo State Government, Prof. Musibau Babatunde; Member Oyo State House of Assembly, Comfoter Olajide; Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State; his wife, Tamunominini; Chief Whip, Oyo State House of Assembly, Gbenga Oyekola and Head of Service, Mrs Olunmi Oni, during a visit of the Governor's Spouse Forum in partnership with Ford Foundation on a visit to Governor Makinde in Ibadan recently.

## FCT polls: Mixed reactions as Bwari PDP chairmanship candidate endorses APC opponent

### BWARI (ABUJA)

Mixed reactions have trailed the decision of the PDP chairmanship candidate in Saturday's FCT area councils election, Mr Julius Adamu, to step down for his APC opponent, Mr Joshua Ishaku.

Some residents, who expressed their views in separate interviews with newsmen on Thursday in Bwari, said they were worried about true democracy, while others lauded the move.

Adamu, who was contesting on the PDP platform, had, on Wednesday, announced his withdrawal from the race and

declared support for the APC candidate.

He stated that the decision followed consultations with the FCT Minister, Nyesom Wike.

Adamu further stated that the move was taken "in the interest of unity and peace", while also calling on his supporters to rally behind the APC candidate to ensure victory at the polls.

A resident of the area, Mr James Ambo, said that such decisions barely three days to the election could mean that it was only beneficial to the politicians rather than the people.

"It could either be about money, position or for the in-

terest of some high and mighty which, unfortunately, is at the detriment of the grassroots people who are hopeful that true democracy prevailed.

"It is quite unfortunate that no one cares about how we supporters and electorate feel in all these. They only think of their own interests," Ambo said.

Similarly, Mr Elekwachi Stephen, another resident, said that democracy in politics "is meant to bring hope to the people and not a game of power and control to a particular group or persons."

"Apparently, this might have been planned from the begin-

ning as had been rumoured, and it obviously shows we already have a winner for the election.

"Adamu's decision, whether personal or a collective one, has wounded many hearts with genuine support for constitutional rights but obviously, the masses views or interests do not count," he said.

Stephen also expressed concern that the move might demoralise some electorate and stop from coming out to vote on Saturday, with the fear that their votes might not count.

Another resident, Miss Abigail Dauda, said that she had been frustrated by the entire process and was now indifferent about who ends up as the chairman of the area council.

## Ramadan: KEDCO injects ₦500m to boost power supply in Katsina

### KATSINA

The Kano Electricity Distribution Company (KEDCO) says it is investing ₦500 million to revive the IBB Way Injection Substation and other critical power infrastructure in Katsina.

Mr Sani Bala-Sani, Head, Corporate Communication, KEDCO, disclosed this in a statement issued in Katsina on Thursday.

According to him, the development is in a strategic move aimed at boosting supply capacity, improving network sta-

bility, and delivering more reliable power to their customers in the Katsina metropolis.

"Since the acquisition of KEDCO by Future Energies Africa (FEA) in 2024, the company has consistently implemented a special annual Ramadan intervention.

"This initiative includes re-directing and boosting electricity supply to residential areas by up to 20 per cent throughout the holy month, with further improvements typically recorded during the Eid celebration period.

"Recent power supply chal-

lenges experienced across Kano, Katsina, and Jigawa States were largely due to failures on the national grid," he said.

Bala-Sani added that the two transmission lines supplying bulk power from Shiroro to these states were affected, resulting in temporary back-feeding from Jos.

The corporate communication head revealed that KEDCO promptly raised concerns with the Minister of Power and the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC).

He said, "We are pleased to report that one of the affected lines

has now been restored, leading to noticeable improvements in power supply across the region.

"Other challenges include the recent fire incident involving a 15MVA TR3 power transformer at the IBB Way Injection Substation.

"As an interim measure to prevent total blackout for affected customers, the 11kV GRA feeder was merged with the 11kV Army Barracks and 11kV Low-Cost feeders to ensure continued, though limited, power supply, while the damaged transformer is currently being taken care of under the project."

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as OGHOGHO IYOBOSA, now wish to be known and called UHUNAMURE DESMOND IYOBOSA. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

### CHANGE OF NAME/ DATE OF BIRTH

The general public is hereby notified that UWAGBOE STEPHEN OSAMWONYI and UHUNAGHO STEPHEN UWAGBOE are one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known and called UHUNAGHO STEPHEN UWAGBOE, also my correct date of birth is 5/5/1978 and not 5/5/1987 or 5/5/1975 that was wrongly written on my First Bank account. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

## NEWS

## JUDICIARY

# Court frees welder accused of stealing wheelbarrow

ABUJA

Chief Magistrates' Court in Life Camp, Abuja on Thursday dis-

charged a 26-year-old welder, Friday James, accused of stealing a wheelbarrow.

The police had charged James, of Tipper garage Gwar-

inpa, Abuja, with theft.

Chief Magistrate Musa Jobbo discharged James following an application by the Prosecuting Counsel, Mrs Charity

Nwachukwu, to strike out the case for lack of interest by the complainant, Faruk Umar.

Jobbo, therefore, struck out the case.

"The defendant is hereby discharged, and the First Information Report (FIR) is withdrawn," he said.

The defendant had pleaded not guilty to the charges and was granted bail.

Nwachukwu blamed Umar and his sole witness who reported the matter at Gwarinpa Police Station, Abuja since Sept. 26, 2025 but had refused to appear before the court to testify.

According to the FIR, the

complainant alleged that the defendant criminally made away with his wheelbarrow valued N 31,000 kept at the frontage of Bashir Aliyu's shop in Tipper garage Gwarinpa.

The complainant had alleged that the defendant was caught in the process of taking the said wheelbarrow away and it was recovered from him.

The prosecutor had also said that the offence contravened the provisions of Sections 287 of the Penal Code.



NEMA DG VISITS UBEC:

The Executive Secretary, Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), Dr Aisha Garba (L) and Director General, National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Mrs Zubaida Umar, during the visit of NEMA DG to UBEC headquarters in Abuja on Thursday.

## Cell phone analysis implicated Owo church attackers —DSS witness tells court

ABUJA

Department of State Services, (DSS) witness, on Wednesday, told the Federal High Court in Abuja how cell phone analysis of four defendants who allegedly carried out the terror attack on Owo church placed them at the crime scene.

The suspected terrorists were alleged to have perpetrated the act on June 5, 2022 at St. Francis Catholic Church, Owo in Ondo State, where at least 40 persons died and over 100 oth-

ers sustained injuries.

The witness made the disclosure while giving his evidence as 10th prosecution witness (PW-10) before Justice Emeka Nwite of the Federal High Court in Abuja.

The PW-10, who was identified as "SSJ" for security reasons, told the court that phone calls by the defendants – Idris Abdulmalik Omeiza (25 years), Al Qasim Idris (20 years), Jamiu Abdulmalik (26 years), Abdulhaleem Idris (25 years) and Momoh Otuho Abubakar (47 years) – about the time of the attack, put

them in the vicinity of St. Francis Catholic Church, Owo.

He disclosed that the DSS had sufficient technical evidence to show that the 1st to 4th defendants were around the church premises during the attack.

The DSS officer explained that the technical evidence showed that their phones and conversations were around the telecommunications cell site location around the attack.

Besides the phone records' analysis conducted by the DSS, said the witness, the defendants voluntarily made confessional statements linking them to the attack.

He said the statement-taking session was witnessed by the Director of the Legal Aid Council of Nigeria when the defendants said they could not afford to have either their lawyers or family members around to witness the session.

He identified the five defendants, giving details of how he obtained the confessional statements from the 1st to 4th defendants, which he said they offered voluntarily.

An objection raised by the defence lawyer, Abdullahi Muhammad, to the admissibility of the defendants' statements was overruled by the trial judge.

## Police arraign 8 men for alleged cultism, attack on police station

IKEJA

Eight men on Thursday appeared before the Ikeja Magistrates' Court over alleged cultism and attack on a police station.

The defendants are — Idris Dauda, 20; Quadri Fadipe, 22; Nurudeen Adeniyi, 23; Selim Tunde, 19; Afolabi Kundus, 19; Ojo Michael, 37; Ahmed Azeez, 20; and Nurudeen Dare, 39.

They are facing a three-count charge bordering on conspiracy, membership of unlawful society and conduct likely to cause breach of peace.

The prosecutor, SP Josephine Ikhayere alleged that the defendants and others now at large, on Feb. 1, at about 3.00 a.m. at Ijaniki area of Lagos, conspired to commit felony to wit: unlawful society and conduct likely to cause breach of

peace.

Ikhayere further alleged that the defendants belonged to the proscribed Eiye Confraternity.

She told the court that the defendants also allegedly conducted themselves in a manner likely to cause breach of peace by attacking Ijaniki Police Station with stones, sticks, iron and other dangerous weapons.

The offences, the prosecution said, contravened Sections

411 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015, and 2(3)(a) (b)(c)(d), of the Unlawful Societies Prohibition and Cultism Law of Lagos State, 2021.

The court declined to take the defendants' pleas.

The Magistrate, Mr Lateef A. Owolabi, ordered that they be remanded in a correctional facility and adjourned the case until March 24, for further proceedings.

## Man docked over alleged membership of unlawful society

IKEJA

A 27-year-old man, Damola Tajudeen, on Thursday, appeared before an Ikeja Magistrates' Court in Lagos, charged with membership of an unlawful society.

Tajudeen is standing trial on a two-count charge of conspir-

acy and membership of an unlawful society.

The Prosecutor, SP Josephine Ikhayere, alleged that the defendant and others now at large, on Dec. 26, 2025, at 11.00 a.m. at Imoru Street, Idi-Oro, Mushin, Lagos, conspired to commit felony to wit: membership of unlawful society.

He was also alleged to have belonged to the Eiye Confraternity, a group said to be proscribed by law.

According to the charge, the offences contravene Section 411 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015, and Section 2(3)(a) (b)(c)(d) of the Unlawful Societies Prohibition and Cultism

Law of Lagos State, 2021.

The defendant pleaded not guilty to the charge.

The Magistrate, Mr L.A. Owolabi admitted the defendant to bail in the sum of N500,000 with two sureties in like sum.

The case was adjourned until March 23, 2026, for mention.

## Alleged fraud: Court orders final forfeiture of N70m Abuja property to FG

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja has made an order for final forfeiture of an Abuja property worth N70 million to the Federal Government.

Justice James Omotosho gave the order on Tuesday following a motion on notice for final forfeiture moved by Emenike Mgbemele, counsel to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

Justice Omotosho held that the EFCC's application was meritorious, having complied with the earlier court order to publish the interim forfeiture order in a national daily for interested person(s) to show cause why the final order should not be made with respect to the property.

The property in question is located at No. 12, 5th Avenue, 59 Crescent, Gwarinpa in Abuja.

The anti-graft agency had, in the motion on notice marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/2431/2025, sought an order of final forfeiture of the property to the Federal Government of Nigeria.

It said the property, comprising one unit of 4 bedroom detached bungalow with pent house and two-room boys quarters, was reasonably suspected to be proceeds

of unlawful activities.

In the motion dated Feb. 9 but filed Feb. 10 by Ekele Iheanacho, SAN, the lawyer gave six grounds why the motion should be granted.

Iheanacho argued that the court had the statutory powers under the provision of Section 17 of the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Fraud Related Offences Act, 2006 to grant the relief sought.

He said the property sought to be forfeited is reasonably suspected to be proceeds of unlawful activities.

According to him, on 13th of January, 2026, the honourable court made an interim order, forfeiting the property to the Federal Government of Nigeria.

He said the order had been published in Business Day Newspaper of Jan. 23.

The lawyer, who stated that no cause had been shown why the property subject of the order of interim forfeiture should not be finally forfeited to the Federal Government, said this was a non-conviction based asset forfeiture proceeding.

In the affidavit attached to the application and deposed to by Alozie Andrew, an EFCC investigator, he said a petition was received from the Anti-Corruption Network.

He said on receipt of the petition, it was assigned to his team for discreet investigation.

## Kogi Govt. unveils new tax rates...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 4

Enehe gave a comprehensive overview of the new tax law and its implications for Federal, State and Local Governments' revenue streams.

According to Enehe, the meeting aims to unveil the harmonised tax rates under the Tax Administration Act of 2025, a step towards transparency and efficiency.

He stressed that the initiative was part of efforts to boost the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) to achieve fiscal sustainability in the state.

Enehe emphasised the national significance of the new rates, describing them as a critical step towards a more transparent, equitable, and efficient tax system.

"To secure our economic future, we must strengthen our IGR base, making it the central pillar of our state's sustainability," he said.

Mrs Hassanat Salawu, Director of MDAs, KGIRS, delivered a technical briefing on the new tax rates compiled by the Joint Revenue Board (JRB).

She stated that KGIRS has adopted and domesticated the rates, tailoring them to Kogi's economic realities, while maintaining national consistency.

Meanwhile, Mr Timothy Ojomah, the state Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Security, expressed the stakeholders' support for the new tax regime.

Ojomah commended KGIRS' leadership and pledged collaboration for smooth implementation.

# Senate moves to cut N58.47trn 2026 budget over 'Unrealistic' projections

ABUJA

The Senate has intensified scrutiny of the Federal Government's fiscal framework, signalling a possible downward review of the proposed N58.472 trillion 2026 budget over what lawmakers described as unrealistic revenue assumptions and persistent lapses in budget execution.

Concerns were raised during an oversight session be-

tween the Senate Committee on Appropriations and members of the executive economic management team, as lawmakers demanded clarity on the implementation capacity of the 2026 proposal.

Chairman of the committee, Senator Solomon Olamilekan Adeola, pressed the executive on timelines for completing capital components of the 2024 and 2025 budgets, insisting that both must be fully implemented by March 31, 2026.

Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, told the panel that funding for outstanding capital projects under the 2024 and 2025 budgets was ongoing. His response, however, failed to satisfy committee members.

The Executive Chairman of the Nigeria Revenue Service, Zacch Adedeji, argued that weak budget performance often stems from projections that do not reflect prevailing economic realities.

He warned that spending plans anchored on inflated revenue expectations inevitably create financing gaps when actual receipts fall short.

In response, Adeola reminded the revenue chief that the budget framework was prepared by the executive, stressing that the disparity between projected and realised oil revenues remains troubling.

He cited a year in which performance stood at about 18 per cent, yet projections for the following year rose to roughly 36.5 per cent despite persistent underperformance.

The committee chairman said lawmakers must now determine whether to scale down the N58.472 trillion proposal or proceed with major revisions, noting that mounting debt obligations already pose significant fiscal risks.

He added that disposal of certain government assets could help reduce debt exposure and future borrowing costs.

Minister of State for Finance, Doris Nkiruka Uzoka-Anite, assured senators that the remaining capital components of the 2024 and 2025 budgets would be fully implemented be-

fore the March 2026 deadline.

She disclosed that payments for outstanding 2024 capital projects had commenced, while ministries, departments and agencies had been directed to upload their cash plans to facilitate 2025 releases.

According to her, the government's financial management platform is now fully operational, enabling disbursements once documentation requirements are completed.

The session ended with a closed-door meeting between the committee and the economic team lasting nearly two hours.

## Senate demands transparency as BPP seeks ₦32.1bn, reports ₦3.3trn savings

ABUJA

The Senate Committee on Public Procurement has called for stricter transparency and accountability in public spending as the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) presented its ₦32.1 billion 2026 budget proposal to lawmakers.

Chairman of the committee, Senator Olajide Ipinsagba, stressed that transparent procurement processes are critical to guaranteeing value for money and strengthening public confidence in government expenditure.

Presenting the proposal, Director-General of BPP, Adedokun, outlined

reforms introduced under his leadership, including community-based procurement systems and frameworks extended to state and local governments.

He said the initiatives have broadened economic participation and contributed to national growth.

Adedokun disclosed that the agency saved over ₦3.3 trillion in 2025 through its oversight and regulatory interventions, underscoring its role in curbing financial leakages.

He also revealed plans to propose amendments to the Public Procurement Act by 2027, including stricter contractor classification to ensure only qualified firms execute government projects.

On budget performance, the BPP boss said the agency received ₦4.032 billion in 2025 but only 30 per cent was released, limiting programme implementation.

He explained that the proposed ₦32.1 billion allocation for 2026 would fund expanded responsibilities, including full digital transformation of procurement processes, with submissions to be processed electronically to boost efficiency and transparency.

While commending the agency's performance, the committee reiterated the need for prudent management and sustained accountability as the National Assembly continues its review of 2026 budget proposals.

## Delta HoS receives neonatal equipment donated by OPTS

ASABA

The Head of Service of Delta State, Dr. (Mrs.) Minimin Oseji, has formally taken delivery of neonatal equipment donated by the Oil Producers Trade Section (OPTS) in Asaba.

Oseji commended the donation as part of OPTS' corporate social responsibility and announced that the body would be listed as the first organisation in the state's database of philanthropists for development, which is being compiled by her office, in collaboration

with the Ministry of Humanitarian and Community Support Services and Girl Child Development.

She assured that the equipment would be handed over to three beneficiary primary health centres: Comprehensive Health Centre, Idumuje-Unor in Aniocha North Local Government Area (LGA); Warri South LGA Health Centre and Gana Primary Health Centre in Sapele LGA.

The donation supports a neonatal healthcare improvement project initiated by the late neonatology icon, Professor Angela Okolo, to be implemented

by the Federal Medical Centre, Asaba in partnership with the Delta State Hospitals Management Board, Delta State Primary Health Care Development Agency and the Medical Women Association of Nigeria.

Oseji called on other organisations to support healthcare delivery in the state.

Representatives of OPTS, Mr. Gwueke Ajaifia, Dr. Jide Obosi and Lola Adelere, thanked the state government for its collaboration and commitment to improved healthcare services, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## APC Congress: Idahosa pushes for 100% votes in Edo South

Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, has charged newly elected executives of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Iguobazuwa East Ward 1 and Iguobazuwa West Ward 2 to work towards delivering 100 per cent votes for the party in Ovia South West Local Government Area in the forthcoming elections.

Speaking during the APC ward congress, Idahosa said that the calibre of leaders elected to steer party affairs in Iguobazuwa would position

the APC to secure the highest votes in Edo South.

He congratulated the executives on their emergence and commended party faithful for the peaceful conduct of the congress in Ovia South West.

At Iguobazuwa East Ward 1, ward leader Erhauyi Ogbayagbona urged the new executives to reposition the party and ensure no opposition foothold remained in the constituency.

Barrister Kelvin Adesotu, who conducted proceedings at West Ward 2, similarly charged

the executives to prioritise party unity and progress.

In his acceptance speech, Chairman of Iguobazuwa West Ward 2, Benjamin Ekhaton, thanked the deputy governor and party members for the opportunity to serve, pledging his loyalty and dedication.

Chairman of Ovia South West Local Government Area, Hon. Nosakhare Edobor, also commended the peaceful exercise.

The APC ward congress was conducted across the 192 wards in Edo State.

## Okpebholo appoints Mercy Johnson-Okojie as Special Adviser

BENIN CITY

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State has approved the appointment of acclaimed Nollywood actress and philanthropist, Mercy Johnson-Okojie as Special Adviser on Public Engagement and Advocacy.

The appointment was unveiled in a statement by Secretary to the State Government, Umar Musa Ikhilor



JOHNSON-OKOJIE



UNIVERSITY OF BENIN TEACHING HOSPITAL  
BENIN CITY

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**DISPOSAL OF UNCLAIMED CORPSES  
IN U.B.T.H MORGUE**

This is to inform the general public that the Management of the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH) has concluded plans to dispose off all unclaimed corpses that have been in the hospital mortuary for a long time.

Such corpses include that of adults and children/ infants that have been in the morgue since January 2023 up till June 2025. We hereby request that owners of such corpses should come forward and claim them as they can no longer be accommodated in the hospital morgue.

Consequently, owners of such corpses are hereby given six weeks' notice from the date of this publication/announcement to claim their corpse(s).

Any unclaimed corpse(s) at the expiration of the six weeks period shall be disposed off through mass burial or any other manner considered appropriate.

Signed:  
**Management**

## NEWS

## Foreign

## South Korea's ex-president jailed for life over martial law attempt

South Korea more polarised than ever

South Korea's ex-president Yoon Suk Yeol has been jailed for life for masterminding an insurrection by trying to impose military rule.

Yoon attempted to subvert the constitution by deploying military troops to seal off the National Assembly and ordering the arrest of politicians on 3 December 2024, a Seoul court ruled. His actions fundamentally damaged South Korea's democracy and deserves a harsh punishment, presiding judge Ji Gwi-yeon told the court.

Prosecutors had sought the death penalty.

Though it was short-lived, Yoon's martial law order left the nation more polarised than ever, and those deep divisions were on full display as the sentencing took place.

Huge crowds of Yoon's sup-

porters gathered outside the court hours before the hearing, holding banners reading "Yoon, again". Many of them broke down in tears following the verdict.

Also present were anti-Yoon protesters, rallying for him to be sentenced to death.

Yoon himself showed no emotion as he learned of his fate. His lawyers alleged that the verdict was not backed by evidence and accused the judge of following a "pre-written script".

If either side launches an appeal, the case will go up to the Supreme Court, which means it could be months before the verdict is finalised.

Yoon shocked his nation on 3 December 2024 by declaring martial law on live television.

He claimed it was to protect the country from "anti-state" forces that sympathised with North Korea, but it soon became clear he was driven by do-

mestic troubles: the opposition which held a parliamentary majority left him a lame duck president, while his wife Kim Keon Hee was at the centre of various corruption allegations.

He rolled back the order within hours, after lawmakers fought their way into the National Assembly to overturn it.

What followed were months of political chaos, Yoon's impeachment, and a string of indictments against him and other top officials.

Former prime minister Han Duck-soo was handed a 23-year jail term last month for his part in the insurrection, while ex-defence minister Kim Yong-hyun, who advised Yoon to impose martial law, was jailed for 30 years on Thursday.

Former interior minister Lee Sang-min, former intelligence commander Roh Sang-won, and ex-police chief Cho Ji-ho were

among the other officials jailed for what judges have described as "an insurrection from the top".

Many of Yoon's supporters broke down in tears following the verdict

Security was tight outside the court on Thursday, with dozens of police buses forming a cordon to restrict public access. Some 1,000 officers were deployed for security operations, local media reported.

Inside the court, judge Ji called Yoon the "insurrectionist leader", although the judging panel found insufficient evidence to rule that he'd planned the martial law order a year before his announcement.

Yoon defended his actions throughout his trial, arguing that as president he had had the authority to declare martial law, sounding the alarm over opposition parties' obstruction of government.

## Sudan atrocities are 'hallmarks of genocide', UN says

A UN fact-finding mission has determined that evidence of atrocities carried out during the siege and takeover of the Sudanese city of el-Fasher points to genocide.

The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) captured el-Fasher, located in the western region of Darfur, at the end of October after an 18-month blockade.

It was one of the most brutal chapters in Sudan's nearly three-year civil war and triggered widespread international outrage.

This is the closest the UN has come to declaring that genocide is being carried out by RSF fighters in Darfur during the current conflict. The RSF has not commented on the report but has denied previous such accusations.

"The body of evidence we collected — including the prolonged siege, starvation and denial of humanitarian assistance, followed by mass killings, rape, torture and enforced disappearance, systematic humiliation and perpetrators' own declarations — leaves only one reasonable inference," said fact-finding mission expert Mona Rishmawi. "The RSF acted with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, the Zaghawa and Fur communities in El-Fasher. These are the hallmarks of genocide."

The report concludes that

at least three underlying acts of genocide were committed, including killing members of a protected ethnic group; causing serious bodily and mental harm; and deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the group's physical destruction in whole or in part.

The investigators were not able to visit el-Fasher but based their report on more than 320 interviews with survivors, statements from RSF commanders and verified videos and satellite images.

A simple guide to what is happening in Sudan

"Our job is only killing" - how Sudan's brutal militia carried out a massacre

Calling the findings "truly horrific", UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper said she would take the report's conclusions to the UN Security Council on Thursday.

In a statement she said there must be international criminal investigations to ensure accountability for perpetrators and justice for victims, and an end to the arms flow feeding the conflict.

Sudan's civil war erupted in April 2023 out of a power struggle between the regular army and the RSF over how and whether the paramilitaries would integrate into the security forces. It evolved into a country-wide conflict fuelled by longstanding local grievances and ethnic divisions.



**SIEGE OF EL-FASHER:**

During the long siege of el-Fasher, this school where people were sheltering was shelled

## White House presses Iran to make deal, while ramping up military presence

The White House has warned Iran would be "very wise" to make a deal with the US, amid reports that President Donald Trump is weighing fresh military action against the Islamic Republic.

Press secretary Karoline Leavitt told a news briefing that Trump was still hoping for a diplomatic resolution over Tehran's nuclear programme.

Her comments come as the US moves a second battleship into the region, and a day after progress was reported at US-Iran talks in Switzerland.

US media reported on Wednesday that Trump had discussed attack options with advisers, and that a US strike could take place as early as Saturday. Last summer the US military launched strikes on three Iranian nuclear facilities.

Trump had not yet made a final decision about whether to attack and ongoing conversations were described as fluid, sources have told the BBC's US partner CBS News.

Leavitt told reporters on Wednesday there were "many reasons and arguments that one could make for a strike against Iran".

She referred to US strikes in June, adding: "Iran would be very wise to make a deal with President Trump and with his administration."

US build-up of warships and fighter jets tracked near Iran

Although no breakthrough seemed to have emerged from Tuesday's indirect talks in Geneva, both sides indicated that there had been steps in the right direction.

Iran said an understanding

had been reached with the US on the main "guiding principles" that will frame efforts to resolve the dispute around Tehran's nuclear programme. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi added that work still needed to be done.

The US said "progress was made" and Badr Albusaidi, the foreign minister of Oman, which is mediating the talks, said the negotiations "concluded with good progress" on common aims and technical issues.

Asked about the Geneva negotiations, the White House press secretary said that Washington and Tehran were still "far apart" on some key issues.

"I think you heard from the administration and the state department yesterday that there was a little bit of progress made, but we're still very far apart on

some issues," Leavitt said.

"I believe the Iranians are expected to come back to us with some more detail in the next couple of weeks, and so the president will continue to watch how this plays out."

Leavitt declined to say whether Israel would be involved in the US decision.

Earlier in the week, Iran said it had reached an understanding with the US on the main "guiding principles" to resolve their dispute over Tehran's nuclear programme.

Iran has said it wants to focus discussions on its nuclear programme and the potential lifting of economic sanctions, while Washington indicated previously it wanted Iran's missile development to be part of any talks.

## Eight skiers found dead after California avalanche

Rescue teams combing through the backcountry of California's Lake Tahoe region say they have found the bodies of eight skiers who went missing in an avalanche on Tuesday.

The search for a final missing skier continues but that person is presumed dead, Nevada County Sheriff Shannan Moon said at a news conference on Wednesday.

Officials said one of the deceased was the spouse of someone on one of the search-and-rescue teams, making continued rescue efforts "challenging emotionally".

Fifteen skiers were reported missing on Tuesday after a "football-field" sized avalanche came barreling down in the Castle Peak area around 11:30 local time (19:30 GMT). Six have been rescued.

"I want to offer my condolences to the family in this very trying time," Placer County Sheriff Wayne Woo said on Wednesday.

The bodies of the eight dead skiers were still trapped in the snow and could not yet be recovered due to "pretty horrific" conditions, officials said.

Since the avalanche, another 3ft (90cm) of snow has fallen on the area, Tahoe National Forest supervisor Chris Feutrier said.

"The hazard remains high," he said.

Once the bodies are recovered, they will be transported to the Placer County morgue.

Families of the deceased have been notified. Authorities have not yet released any of their names.

Officials say the victims are seven women and two men.

Sugar Bowl Academy, a ski school in Placer County, California, said multiple members of its community had died in the avalanche.

"Emergency responders are still working to recover all of the victims and are not at this time sharing the personal details of the victims and the survivors out of respect for the families affected," the academy said.

"We are an incredibly close and connected community," executive director Stephen McMahon said. "This tragedy has affected each and every one of us. The depth of support for the families whose lives have been changed forever reminds us of how special this community is."

Sheriff Woo said the rescue operation was a joint effort involving two teams and roughly 50 crew members who had to traverse "extreme weather conditions" using specialised equipment.

## Foreign

## NEWS

## Over 1,000 Kenyans enlisted to fight in Russia-Ukraine war, report says

A total of 1,000 Kenyans have been recruited to fight for Russia, according to a Kenyan intelligence report that details a network of rogue officials allegedly colluding with human trafficking syndicates.

The report, submitted to parliament on Wednesday by Kenya's National Intelligence Service (NIS), said 89 Kenyans were on the front lines of the Russia-Ukraine war as of February this year.

At least one Kenyan has died, while several others have returned home injured or traumatised, it added.

The Kenyan government, which previously estimated that about 200 of its nationals had been recruited to fight for Russia, wants Moscow to bar the conscription of Kenyan soldiers.

Presenting the report to MPs, parliament majority leader Kimani Ichung'wah, revealed what he termed a "deeply disturbing" network of rogue state officials allegedly colluding with human trafficking syndicates to recruit and transport Kenyans to fight in the Russia-Ukraine war.

The spy agency detailed how recruitment agencies have allegedly been colluding with rogue Kenyan airport staff, immigration officers, officers at the Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI), anti-narcotics officers and National Employment Authority officers to facilitate recruits' travel.

Ichung'wah alleged that the agencies had also been colluding with staff at the Russian embassy in Nairobi and the Kenyan embassy in Moscow to help recruits get Russian visas.

In a statement on Thursday, the Russian embassy in Nairobi dismissed the allegations as "dangerous and misleading", saying that its staff has never been involved in "rogue schemes" or engaged in illegal enlistment.

"At no point in time throughout the ongoing crisis in Ukraine [has] the Embassy ever issued visas to Kenyan citizens who sought to travel to Russia with the stated pose of participating in the Special

Military Operation (SMO) in Ukraine.

"Nor the Embassy been encouraging any Kenyan citizen to do so."

The embassy added that while it does not recruit foreigners, Russian law allows foreign nationals who are legally in Russia to voluntarily enlist in their armed forces.

While in parliament, Ichung'wah said that Kenya's ambassador to Moscow "must be able to identify the officers within the embassy that may have colluded with these criminals. Our embassy must be beyond reproach. It must be the place where Kenyans can seek refuge, not exploitation."

"Government offices are not to be used for criminal activities," he added.

The BBC has asked the Kenyan foreign ministry for comment.

The report did not say what had happened to the majority of the recruits but said that in addition to those on the front line, another 35 had been sent to military camps in Russia, 39 are injured and 28 are missing.

According to the investigation, ex-military personnel, ex-police officers and unemployed Kenyans aged 20-50 are the main targets of the recruiters.

Recruits are promised a monthly pay of up to 350,000 Kenyan shillings (\$2,400; £2,000), with bonuses ranging from KSh 900,000 to KSh 1.2 million (\$6,200-£8,300; £5,200-£7,000).

However, upon arrival, many reportedly find themselves deployed to front-line combat roles after minimal military training.

"They are told you are going to work as a guard... only to get there and you are taken to military camps," Ichung'wah said.

"You've only trained for three weeks. They are basically just giving you a gun to go and die," he added.

Those undergoing explosives and weapons training are only required to attend training for nine days before being sent to the front line, the report said.



### REASSERTING CONTROL:

Hamas is reasserting control in Gaza after the start of the ceasefire with Israel.

## Hamas is reasserting control in Gaza despite its heavy losses fighting Israel

When a US-imposed ceasefire halted the Gaza War last October, Hamas's war for survival against Israel switched into a battle for control at home.

The war had left the group's disciplined military units shattered into guerrilla forces, and most of its leaders killed; Gaza's buildings and infrastructure were largely destroyed, its population displaced, and its economic life in ruins. More than 72,000 Gazans were killed by Israeli attacks during the conflict, the Hamas-run health ministry says.

Four months on, Gazans say Hamas is again extending its control over security, tax revenue, and government services, raising questions about its long-term strategy, and whether it is prepared to give

up its weapons and authority, as now required under the second stage of Donald Trump's peace plan.

"Hamas regained control of more than 90% of the areas where it is present," said Mohammed Diab, an activist in Gaza.

"Its police and security agencies have returned, and are now present in the streets, controlling crime and pursuing those it labels as collaborators and people with opinions. Citizens must go to the Hamas authorities for identity cards or health procedures, and it is also reasserting control over the judiciary and courts."

At markets across Gaza, stallholders describe regular police patrols – and a renewed iron grip on official fees and taxes.

"The markets are quiet, but

the municipality keeps pursuing us for rent," one stallholder said. All those we spoke to there about Hamas control in Gaza asked that we hide their identity.

"Every single day they come to us aggressively, with the same demands and the same determination, saying if we don't pay they'll throw us and our goods into the street. They're asking for 700 shekels (\$225; £167) – none of us can afford that."

The stallholder, who spoke to our colleague in Gaza City, said he and his family of 12 had been displaced from Shujaiya to the east of the city, where he used to run a shop. Shujaiya today is a flat wasteland of rubble.

"Every day, the municipality comes," said another man selling cigarettes nearby. "Let

them count the stock and the sales, cigarette by cigarette, and tell me: should I pay them, or feed my children?"

Since the ceasefire, food and some other basic goods are flowing into Gaza more freely. The few key traders with a licence to bring them in from Israel say Hamas have reimposed strict control over taxing the imports.

One trader, who agreed to share details anonymously, told us force was used against those who refused to pay.

"The taxes imposed by Hamas depend on the type and quantity of goods, but prices start at 20,000 shekels and above," he said. "If a trader refuses to pay, force is used and in some cases he is kidnapped or threatened. No one can avoid paying taxes on goods."

## Islamist militants accused of killing 34 in raids on Nigerian villages

At least 34 people have been killed in coordinated attacks by sus-

pected Islamist militants on several villages in north-western Nigeria, officials have said.

The gunmen launched simultaneous assaults on multiple communities in a remote border district of Kebbi state on Tuesday, overwhelming local defences and forcing residents to flee their homes.

Survivors described the attackers as highly organised, saying they swept through villages firing indiscriminately at residents.

Officials have blamed the relatively new insurgent group Lakurawa, which is known to operate in the area. It was targeted by US air strikes in December further north, in Sokoto state.

Security forces have now moved into the area to protect

communities and assist survivors. Tracking operations are under way to cut off the militants' escape routes.

Authorities are yet to officially comment on the attacks, although images of shrouded corpses being prepared for burial have been circulating on social media.

The attack has sparked outrage among Nigerians online, with many calling on the government to end the violence that has become all too common in parts of the country.

Nigerian authorities officially declared Lakurawa a terrorist organisation last year and banned it across the country after reports emerged that its fighters were flogging people for listening to music.

Officials say Lakurawa is

affiliated with jihadist factions in Mali and Niger. Its militants have for years settled in communities along the Nigeria-Niger border, marrying local women and recruiting young people into their ranks.

The group has previously carried out similar raids in Kebbi, using coordinated simultaneous attacks to swamp local defences.

The emergence of Lakurawa adds to Nigeria's already complex security challenges, as the government continues to battle multiple armed groups, from Boko Haram Islamists in the north-east to heavily armed kidnapping gangs operating across the north-west and central states and separatists in the south-east.

## Son of Robert Mugabe arrested in South Africa on suspicion of attempted murder

Police in South Africa have arrested the youngest son of Zimbabwe's late former President Robert Mugabe, who is facing a charge of attempted murder after a reported shooting at a property in an upmarket suburb of Johannesburg.

Bellarmino Mugabe, 28, was taken into custody after a 23-year-old man, believed to be a gardener, was shot and injured.

Officers searching the house in Hyde Park, where Mugabe was staying, have found bullet cartridge

es but no firearm, police have said.

Bellarmino Mugabe is the youngest son of Robert and his second wife Grace Mugabe. Robert Mugabe, who died in 2019, led Zimbabwe for 37 years before being forced out of power at the age of 93 in 2017.

One other man has been arrested alongside Bellarmino Mugabe as investigators continue their work, police spokesperson Col Dimakatso Nevhuhulwi said.

The pair are expected to appear in court "soon", according

to a police statement.

Police are not yet officially naming Bellarmino Mugabe as one of those arrested, but reporters at the scene saw him in handcuffs and he has been widely named by local media.

The victim is in hospital and in a critical condition after being shot once, the spokesperson added.

In a briefing outside the property, Nevhuhulwi said the two suspects have not "told us where the gun is, they are not saying anything about the gun".

# Entertainment

— with Davidson Imosime Izegaegbe —

## Film: Nigeria must put its mouth where its money is

Like one in the land of fantasy, quietly imagine a grand, silky velvet-draped gallery where the air is taken over by a thick scent of oil paint and the hushed whispers of high commerce. Still imagine, hanging on the walls are the frozen brilliance of master canvases, though static, silent, and safe. Yet, imagine in the center of this same opulent room stands boldly a flickering projector, relentlessly casting a vibrant, restless light that the patrons mistook for aesthetics to oil paintings on canvases or pointedly just ignore as distraction. In all, the screen breathes steadily; it attempts continuously to weeps the history of a people, part of who make up the people captured only by paintings on the walls, and shouts the dreams of a nation fighting to be heard, yet its reel spins thin, starving for the same exact patronage that embraces the frames on the wall. Such is the story of conflict in investment in the ART FORMS. Sadly, to ignore the cinema is to preserve the mask while the soul of the culture remains uncaptured, like a ghost in the machine of progress waiting for a benefactor to turn the lens toward the bitter truth. Such is the painful reality of film and its cinema culture.

In almost similar business halls of Nigerian high society, "investment" has a very specific aesthetic. This might sound odd, but it looks like any rich sprawling real estate in Banana Island, diversified portfolios in fintech, or perhaps a loud silent stake in the booming oil and gas sector. In all these, lie the difference in intentional perspectives. Do you know that whenever our billionaires look to the arts, they often look toward the canvas; the deliberate and intentional collection of visual art, which to them has become a sophisticated status symbol. Yet, there remains a glaring, cinematic void in this philanthropic and strategic landscape, simply because the projector, though hanging on the wall like any other oil on canvass, decided to join all its crafted pictures into telling a single story instead of hanging each scene on the wall for the highest bidder to take home as a prize.

While the world watches "Nollywood" with a mix of curiosity and awe at its sheer volume, the Nigerian elite largely treat film as a casual snack rather than a main course for nation-building. To the some who decide to pass time, they take seats with their girl-friends once in a lifetime in private VVIP of the cinema with bodyguards big enough to contest for Mr. USA. To put this miscalculation in perspective, one may need to borrow a colloquialism, that it is time for our high-net-worth individuals to "put their mouth where their money is. That is re-directing their eyes to film culture and film business." We truly need to understand that film appreciation is not merely a hobby for the high-brow or venue middle-class to make their girl friends or family catch fun only. They should know too that film culture is a cultural practice that remains tragically underdeveloped in our society.

Have you noticed if you walk into the home of a Nigerian billionaire, you are likely to find a Ben Enwonwu or a Bruce Onobrakpeya hanging on their walls? I might be wrong, but I feel there is an understanding in Nigeria billionaires that art is an asset, both financially and culturally. However, ask any of these same individuals how many independent documentaries they have funded or which film archives they support, and you will likely be met with a blank stare. Some may go further to quote their bankers that film is not a bankable product without asking why it is called an INDUSTRY.

In Nigeria, engagement with film is largely limited to its entertainment value. We go to the cinema to laugh, to be distracted, or to see the latest glamorized version of ourselves or socialize. There is little or no recognition of film's broader intellectual, cultural, and socio-political significance, and sadly this is a missed opportunity of historic proportions.

To understand what we may or are missing, we must look at the American model. After all, our film structure is model in many ways like the Americans or better put, a shadow of the reality. In the United States, billionaires do not just buy yachts; they buy the narrative. High-net-worth individuals exert significant influence on global society through the strategic ownership of production companies and the targeted funding of specific narra-

tives, which is completely missing in our own terrains.

Take for instance the coinage "American Dream," it wasn't just a spontaneous biological phenomenon; but rather a meticulously crafted narrative, understood and then exported to the world through Hollywood. Did the Nigeria film industry do same after gaining independence from the colonialists? From the strategic use of documentaries for advocacy to the power of streaming platforms like Netflix and Amazon—often spearheaded by tech moguls—media content is often used to shape public opinion on everything from climate change to political ideologies.

When Jeff Bezos purchased The Washington Post or when Laurene Powell Jobs' Emerson Collective invests in film projects that tackle immigration and education, they were not just looking for a Return on Investment (ROI) in dollars. They were rather looking for a Return on Influence. They understood that media ownership is highly concentrated, and by controlling capital and distribution, they can normalize certain worldviews and marginalize others. Are we surprised hearing billionaires spending so much billions to purchase existing social apps and turning them around to achieve their Return on Influence which however is followed so closely by Return on Investment?

To understand our predicament and wherein lies our problems, we must first understand that film is far more than a medium of amusement. We must know that film is a powerful tool for education, cultural preservation, and social critique. In a country like ours Nigeria, which is grappling with complex identities and a fragmented national history, film ought to be our primary tool for shaping consciousness within and amongst us as a people. Are we even aware that our indigenous languages and oral traditions are boldly faced with the threat of extinction? To preserve and sustain whatever we can as Nigerians, film at this point acts as a living archive to Nigeria. Films like The Milkmaid or Eyimofe offer glimpses into the Nigerian condition that even standard news reporting cannot reach. This is fact. They humanize statistics easily, and thereafter make us to see film as a tool for social society.

Are even even worried about the rampant terrorism, banditry, kidnapping and war disguised in protest gab? Are we thinking as Nigerians to find out what cultural or national identity mean to us? Nigeria once had a civil war. Who tells an unbiased story of the Nigerian Civil War to Nigerians? Who defines the "Nigerian Dream"? Where do we even start in all these? What is the Nigeria government position in the "Nigerian Dream"? Do they believe in it? These are many questions begging for answers. If our billionaires or trillionaires do not fund these stories, they will one day be told by their co-billionaires from other countries or disappointed outsiders or, worse, not even be told by anyone at all.

The current sad reality is that our cultural narratives are not organic. In the absence of local patronage, the vacuum is filled by foreign interests or purely commercial entities that prioritize virality over veracity. This concentration of narrative power means that the stories being told about Nigeria often lack depth, nuance, or a long-term vision for national development, but their own parochial narrative of whatever story they think of us.

When entertainment functions merely as leisure, it becomes a passive experience. But when it is used as a tool, weaponized for societal benefits, it can influence public consciousness. If the Nigerian elite, billionaires, as it seems, continue to ignore the cinematic medium, without their knowing it, they are essentially ceding the right to define our nation's future to any foreigner who holds the loudest megaphone.

It is therefore incumbent upon us, a task for us as scholars, practitioners, and cultural stakeholders to enlighten our society on the critical importance of weaponizing film for nationalism. We must articulate the diverse purposes it can serve. Similar to the Ford or MacArthur Foundations, we need such Nigerian-led funds specifically for "impact cinema"—films that aim to change laws, minds, and hearts. We have historical names from nationalists, traditionalists, social crusaders that government can use to influence donations for the "Nigerian Dream" project for filmmakers.

## TATAFO

### How film fit born de "Naija" dream

Walahi, I don miss una tire, sotey e com be laik say we neva see since long time.

Eniways, how una de? Hope say kasala far from una side? If na so, na baba God get pawa. E get wetin don de worri mai belle for sometime now. Maybe if I yan una, evribodi go see say de mata nor far from awa mind dem. Una don de hia about de "American Dream" since dem even born awa grandpapas dem, and if una rison dis mata, una go see say tru tru, dis Americanas don de liv dem American Dream. Wetin happen to awa own since we get indipendence from Oyinbos dem wey kolonise us? Wetin rily be Naija dream or we nor sabi dream big?

If Una take una minds back since Afta we fight to gain indipendence from de kolonialis dem since many years now, e come be laik say awa own "Nigerian Dream" na to carry bag enter Lagos or Abuja airport, find eniway to japa. Abi na only me de see am laik dat?

If Una also de see am as I de see am so, dat nor show say wahala de shele inside awa minds as Naija pipo and for awa kontri? E come be laik say, since oda kontris get big dreams and we nor sabi dream, dat is to say, na japa be de only ansa. Dat one no be koret kasala for us as naija pipo so?

Nor be say to travel to oda kontri to relax, study and com back to helep devel-op Naija na bad tin at all, but dat one different from wen person hail all him properties to liv Naija not to come back again. Na dat be japa. Una nor sure say na bicos we nor get "Nigerian Dream" naim cause am? Una don see farmer wey clear big farmland, plant different tins put, den wen e don de reach time for harvest, him go come abandon am go anoda land wey him nor no enitin about to start anoda fresh farm again? Una nor go call de person ogbonge mumunatu?

Dis na wia gofment need to come in with ogbonge fushur plans wey fit konvins Naija pipo by giving dem hope. Na hope de make life sweet. Na hope go make you see death and dodge am. If America fit use film to give Americans hope through de "American Dream", wai we nor go fit do am? Na wen gofment open eye kro kro to use film pipo and dem films to show and tell Naija pipo about de "Nigerian Dreams", japa nor go come de make sense. Even dose wey don turn Akatarians, go come bigin tink of how to come back to Naija to invest and settle down. If gofment cross-mind rily use film and film pipo, as America gofment do to konvins Americanas about de "American Dream", to let dem no say America na God's own land and to rotect dem flag with dem life, instead of Naija pipo to de luk for green grass de go for abroad, awa filmmakers go don already start to use de "Nigerian Dream" to plant better green grass for Naija. By de

time awa projector light from awa diffrent cinemas, difrent film platforms, televisions, radios, billboards, evriwia for awa kontri dey show us something new laik de "Nigeria Dream": say the dream nor be to japa or get rich by tiffy-tiffy jankoriko, but to gada build awa own kontri de way we want am, awa minds must to change.

Una fit nor bilif me sha, but Nollywood don pass dat level of "manage-managing" low budget to do ogbonge films. We don level up to kontris wey de do big-time storytelling.

Nawadays, movie production no be just for fun again; na him dey design wetin we wan be and wia we wan to dey go. Movie or film na weapon wey strong pass nuclear bombs to fit take change eni kontri to Wetin de kontri wan be.

Movie-making nor be just acting again, na ogbonge engine to increase awa economy. Eni time big film crew land for Enugu, Edo, Ibadan, Delta or Lagos, evriwia de soft as kuza must to flow laik wota for dat state.

Una even no say, one movie fit employ hundreds of pipo, from dose wey dey nail wood, sew clothes, paint, do sculpture, carve woods, do hair, make up, sell food, wey get hotel, transport, wey get houses and to even sound engineers and pipo wey de edit films?

Inside dis film so, pipo wey get intrest fit learn new "techies" and digital work from de professionals wey come de state come work. Laik play laik play, de persons don learn new work wey dem fit take better for life be dat. Tell me, dat kain tin no de stop eni type of kasala for places? Afta all na oyinbo say mind wey nor de busy for work naim devil de use.

De strongest pawa wey filmmaker get na to change how pipo de see us. Bifor-bifor, de world de tink say Naija na place for only "suffer-suffer." But all de plenti new movies from Naija don change dat tune.

Awa "Nigerian Dream" na to get de mind to no say excellence fit happen for awa kontri.

Na to show us say, we be beta pipo wey fit use awa mind to de beta tins for awa kontri without magomago. To make all dis awa yanings to work mean say, awa gofment must to readi to do de right tin to invest for film pipo, drag all Naija billionaires, all foreign 10companies, all Naija companies to join am to invest for film with beta platforms to package and sell de "Nigeria Dream" to Naija pipo and de rest of de world. All dis na to sell de idea of a beta Naija to Naija pipo. We all need to no say "Cinema na about wetin you put for inside de frame and wetin you liv out." — Martin Scorsese.

To make dis awa "Nigerian Dream" work go mean say, we don finally decide to cross awa minds to put awa potential, awa soft life, and awa bright light for de center of de frame.

# ArtsWorld with Francis Odupute 08023680030

## A way with Information Graphics in Development Communication

As a social worker actively involved in youth outreaches for several year now, experience on the job has taught me that young people learn best when you engage them in the whole teaching process for them in a fun and creative way. When they are creatively involved in the very process of information communication or knowledge sharing with others, it is easier for them to fully understand the information and assimilate retain the knowledge as a way of life and to pass same on their friends and colleagues as peer educators. This worked like magic in BFI, a faith-based organization I have headed for some fifteen years now.

I deployed that strategy somehow via non-verbal communication in this mega length advocacy open cartoon report. I envisioned a comedic and satirical public art piece which final product is the result of public input and audience engagement, i.e. the target audience playing a critical role in supplying meaning, context, dynamism and aesthetic/visual force. I planned to leave a good part of the 30 feet long cartoon painting somewhat unfinished. I was going to leave a very large expanse of white space on the long cartoon, as a metaphor for Earth yet undefiled in its natural purity and aesthetics. Every viewer or visitor to the exhibition was expected to willingly be part of the production symbolically adding his or her voice on the consequences of further degradation of the environment though industrial pollutions and other climate crimes in Nigeria. How? By helping me to deface the canvas...!

Take a critical look at the three-in-one artwork above. The gloom of dark smoke enveloping the entire atmosphere and horizons of our lives and our environments is progressively "LOADING"... no thanks to gas flaring, oil explorations and exploitations in the Niger Delta, responding to a written request pasted on the wall close to the half plain canvas (the third canvas) each visitor or viewer, if interested, takes the paint brush placed on top of a tin of black paint on a corner close enough to the hanging artwork on exhibition, and adds a brush stroke or two that further defaces the white canvas; and symbolically, the "LOADING" pollution and environmental degradation emanating from the oil rig on the first canvas continues. The message is being passed as regards the consequences...

**HUMOUR IS GOOD FOR OUR HEALTH:** There is so much bad news around that people need a break for some form of comic reliefs. No wonder in Nigeria today the comedy industry thrives more than any other in the entertainment world. What happens when you lace a bitter truth with the coat of humour? Your message will pass through without hurting your target much. What happens when you take a simple idea or a popular Art form out of its familiar environment and context? It assumes a fresh meaning far beyond



the traditional terrain, and reaches for new frontiers and aesthetic contemplations that engage a new kind of audience and imbue fresh thinking, actions and reactions.

Why Injecting Humour into Your Story? Although not that every successful story must be humorous to be taken to the appellation, methinks a good storyteller or communicator is one who is able to hold his audience spellbound, make them laugh, enthused, laugh again, adjust their positions, and take action immediately. There is so much bad news around that people need a break for some comic relief. No wonder in Nigeria today the comedy industry now thrives like the "pure water" business - always

in hot demand!

What happens when you lace a bitter truth with a coat of humour? Your message will sail through without necessarily hurting your intended target. It was the graphic humour and the interactive content of the mega-length open cartoon, Oil Wise, WASH Foolish, that provoked every Dick and Harry desire to identify with it at the NAC2012 grand finale exhibition in Lagos.

Firstly, I purposeful employed circular design and delineated the work in a way that leads the observer from the first canvas to the last canvas in a satirical story line predicated on the multifarious and interconnected development problems facing us as a people.

An investigative study of the first

canvas tells volumes of the issues graphically discussed. Then deploying the popular computer icon people are used to seeing while downloading documents online, I created a satirical conjunction linking the myriad of problems in the first canvas to the endless gloom to be expected...

Particularly foreigners, tourists and expatriates working in Nigeria, most of the respondents to (the "LOADING" process of that advocacy public art approached me laughing and excited. Some said things like: "This is great idea. I love it"; "this is innovative"; "can I, too, paint on it please?" These and many other imbuing comments made me feel that my efforts weren't in vain. I could sense

the literal excitement on each their faces for being given the privilege to be an "artist" for that vital moment in time. And to keep the memories alive, some had their colleagues take photo shots of them loading the mega length "open cartoon". Tell me they would easily forget that creative encounter of staining their hands with the black gloss paints that dripped off the brush onto their fingers! Tell me they would easily forget the "LOADING..." issue at stake! After all, I made the visual legible enough for all to read in-between the lines and then draw their personal conclusions. This is what graphic communication entails - shaping public opinions with illustrated storytelling!



# Friday Sermon

## RAMADAN IS HERE A time for self renewal

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. We praise Him, we seek His help, we seek His forgiveness, and we seek refuge in Allah from the evil of our souls and the consequences of our deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides, none can misguide, and whomsoever He leaves astray, none can guide. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah alone, without partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad, peace be upon him is His servant and Messenger. May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, his family, his companions, and all who follow them in righteousness until the Day of Judgment.

Servants of Allah, I advise you and myself to have taqwa, consciousness and fear of Allah, openly and secretly, in ease and in hardship, for taqwa is the provision that never runs out and the key to every goodness.

### UNDERSTANDING THE GIFT OF RAMADAN

Beloved brothers and sisters, Allah, in His mercy, has blessed this Ummah with seasons of goodness, and among the greatest of them is the month of Ramadan which we are witnessing already.

Allah says in the Qur'an: "O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may attain taqwa." (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:183)

Ramadan is not merely a month of hunger and thirst. It is a school of taqwa, a training ground for the soul, a time when hearts are softened, sins are forgiven, and ranks are raised.

The Prophet peace be upon him said: "When Ramadan comes, the gates of Paradise are opened, the gates of Hell are closed, and the devils are chained." (Bukhari and Muslim)

If the gates of mercy are opened, then preparation is required to benefit fully from what Allah has opened for us.

### PREPARING THE HEART

The first and most important preparation for Ramadan is preparing the heart. And the following steps are required to prepare our hearts.

**SINCERE INTENTION (NIYYAH):** Enter Ramadan with a sincere intention to worship Allah alone. Do not fast to follow tradition, lose weight, or impress others. Fast because Allah commanded it and because you seek His pleasure.

**REPENTANCE (TAWBAH):** Ramadan is a guest that may not return. How many were with us last year but are no longer alive today? Before Ramadan arrival, we are expected to turn to Allah with sincere repentance. Leave sins, restore broken relationships, and purify your heart from



hatred, envy, and arrogance.

**FORGIVING OTHERS:** Whoever hopes for Allah's forgiveness should forgive people. Clean your heart so that Ramadan finds you ready, not burdened with grudges.

### PREPARING THE BODY AND HABITS

Islam is a religion of balance. Preparing for Ramadan also includes physical and practical readiness.

**Training The Body:** Begin to reduce excessive eating, sleeping, and distractions. The body that is disciplined before Ramadan will worship better during Ramadan. If you have not done this, it is not late. We are just starting. You can still do so.

### GUARDING THE TONGUE AND EYES:

Fasting is not only from food and drink. The Prophet peace be upon him said: "Whoever does not give up false speech and acting upon it, Allah has no need of him leaving his food and drink." (Bukhari)

Therefore, fast while also controlling your speech, avoiding gossip, lies, insults, and harmful content.

**ORGANIZING TIME:** Plan your days around salah, Qur'an, and good deeds. Ramadan rewards those who value time, not those who waste it.

### READING THE QUR'AN AND WORSHIP

Ramadan is the month of the Qur'an. Allah says: "The month of Ramadan in which the Qur'an was revealed as guidance for mankind." (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:185)

**RECONNECT WITH THE QUR'AN:** Start reading and listening to the Qur'an as Ramadan begins. Set realistic goals, whether completing it once or more and focus on understanding and reflection, not speed alone.

**STRENGTHENING SALAH:** Be consistent with the five daily prayers in congregation where possible. Prepare your heart for Taraweeh and Qiyam, knowing that standing before Allah in Ramadan is a great honour.

**DU'A AND DHIKR:** Ramadan is a month when du'a is accepted. Train your tongue to remember Allah often, so that during this Ramadan your heart flows naturally with supplication.

### CHARITY AND GOOD CHARACTER

Ramadan is also a month of generosity and mercy.

**CHARITY (SADAQAH):** The Prophet, peace be upon him was the

most generous of people, and he was even more generous in Ramadan. Prepare by planning how you will help the poor, support the needy, and contribute to good causes throughout the Ramadan.

**GOOD MANNERS:** Let Ramadan be a turning point in your character. Be patient, gentle, truthful, and kind. True fasting is seen in how we treat others.

Servants of Allah, Ramadan is here. We will be fasting for 29 or 39 days as the case may be. Whoever prepares early will gain much, and whoever has entered it unprepared, still has the opportunity to prepare, because, he may leave it unchanged if not. Prepare your hearts, your habits, your worship, and your intentions, so that Ramadan transforms you, not temporarily, but permanently.

I say these words of mine, and I seek forgiveness from Allah for me and for you. Seek His forgiveness; indeed, He is the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.

All praise is due to Allah, abundant and pure praise as He loves and is pleased with. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah, and that Muhammad, peace be upon him is His servant and Messenger.

O believers, remember even as Ramadan is already here, completion of Ramadan is not guaranteed. If Allah allows you to fast it, then protect it. If HE allows you to complete it, then honour it and preserve its lessons after it ends.

Ask Allah to help us fast Ramadan with faith and hope, to stand in prayer during it sincerely, and to accept our deeds.

O Allah, allow us to earn the reward for fasting Ramadan.

O Allah, forgive our sins and purify our hearts.

O Allah, help us remember You, thank You, and worship You in the best manner.

O Allah, accept our fasting, our prayers, our charity, and our supplications.

Indeed, Allah commands justice, excellence, and giving to relatives, and He forbids immorality, wrongdoing, and oppression. He admonishes you that you may take heed.

Remember Allah, the Most Great, and He will remember you. Thank Him, and He will increase you. And the remembrance of Allah is greater, and Allah knows what you do.

*Abdul-Kadir Abdullah is the president, Muslim Media Practitioners of Nigeria (MMPN), Edo State Chapter.*

# Feature



## The challenges and opportunities of sub-editing in modern media

OTONO MOMODU

A sub-editor is often described as the backbone of a publication, ensuring that every piece is accurate, clear, and engaging. Responsible for editing articles, crafting headlines, and designing page layouts, the sub-editor's role in the contemporary media landscape can be likened to a maestro conducting a symphony. Amid the daily cacophony of news, features, and editorials, the sub-editor brings harmony and order, shaping the final product into a polished gem that captivates the audience.

In today's fast-paced, 24/7 news cycle, the sub-editor's role has grown even more critical. With the proliferation of digital media, the pressure to produce content quickly and accurately has intensified. The sub-editor is the gatekeeper, ensuring that news is not only correct but also engaging, informative, and relevant.

A good sub-editor is a master of language, possessing a keen eye for detail and a deep understanding of subject matter. Often working tirelessly behind the scenes, they are the unsung heroes of the newsroom, shaping the news agenda and setting the tone for public discourse.

Despite the rise of digital media, one key aspect of the role remains unchanged: sub-editors are custodians of quality and accuracy. In an

era where misinformation spreads rapidly, they serve as the last line of defense, guaranteeing that content is trustworthy and reliable.

The sub-editor's responsibilities go beyond correcting grammar or verifying facts; they shape narratives, provide context, and add depth and perspective. They are the story's architect, crafting headlines, writing introductions, and ensuring smooth flow from start to finish.

In the digital age, the sub-editor's remit has expanded to include search engine optimisation, ensuring stories reach the widest possible audience. They act as the bridge between journalists and readers, understanding the needs of both and shaping content to meet them.

A good sub-editor is also a mentor, guiding young journalists in the craft of writing and storytelling. They preserve journalistic standards, passing their expertise to the next generation.

The role demands creativity and imagination. Sub-editors devise catchy headlines, clever introductions, and eye-catching graphics that make stories stand out. They are also adept technologists, using digital tools to ensure content is optimised for mobile, tablet, and desktop platforms.

Attention to detail remains paramount. Legendary Nigerian journalist Dr. Babatunde Jose, former Man-

aging Director of the Daily Times, once demonstrated this when about

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*As the media landscape evolves, the sub-editor's role grows increasingly vital. With citizen journalism and user-generated content on the rise, they ensure that news remains accurate, reliable, and trustworthy.*

5,000 copies were destroyed due to a missing cover price—an enduring reminder of the consequences of poor editing.

Modern technology, including AI-powered editing tools and Google's suite of productivity apps, has made the process more efficient and accurate, raising the bar for editorial standards. Today, newspapers are printed with fewer errors, and online content is more discoverable and engaging.

In Nigeria, veteran sub-editors such as Mayeni Jones and Tomi Oladipo of BBC Africa demonstrate the critical role meticulous editing plays in producing high-quality journalism.

Sub-editors often go beyond newsroom duties, becoming influential voices in their own right. Investigative journalists like Zainab Usman have contributed to prestigious publications such as The New York Times and Al Jazeera. In broadcast journalism, figures like Mike Hanna and Lucia Newman have brought critical stories to global audiences through precise editing and production.

Yet, the role is not without challenges. The pressure to produce content quickly, coupled with constant scrutiny, makes it one of the most

stressful jobs in media. A single lapse can expose organisations to defamation, libel, or slander lawsuits. The vigilant sub-editor safeguards both the publication's credibility and its legal standing.

To succeed, sub-editors require a rare combination of skills: meticulous attention to detail, creativity, technical expertise, and the ability to perform under pressure. They must think on their feet and communicate effectively with the team.

As the media landscape evolves, the sub-editor's role grows increasingly vital. With citizen journalism and user-generated content on the rise, they ensure that news remains accurate, reliable, and trustworthy.

In conclusion, the sub-editor is the newsroom's backbone, the unsung hero who brings order to the chaos of news production. Their contribution is invaluable, and their expertise essential. The future of sub-editing looks bright, with technology enhancing the craft, but the human eye, judgment, and creativity of the sub-editor remain irreplaceable. Indeed, while every editor can sub-edit, copyedit, or proofread, not every reporter can—a testament to the greatness of the sub-editor.

Otono Momodu is a former Editor of the NCMM Digest and lectures in the Department of Mass Communication, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi.

## FEATURE

# What Edo People's Cheers Mean for Governor Okpebholo's Infrastructure plan

DR. PATRICK AKHERE EBOJELE

When Edo residents line the streets, to wave, chant; and applaud during Governor Monday Okpebholo's project inspection, it is no longer a routine spectacle. It is civic feedback in its purest form. The repeated scenes of jubilation during his inspections of major road and flyover projects reveal something deeper than excitement — they signal validation of the infrastructure component of his S.H.I.N.E agenda and growing public acceptance of his development philosophy.

Two recent inspections bring this reality lower home. A few days ago, residents of Benin City gathered around the Temboga-Ekiuwa-University of Benin (UNIBEN) Road project and the Oba Erediauwa Road, off Upper Mission Road, to welcome the governor. Chants, applause, and cheers greeted him as he toured the site with the project engineers, witnessing firsthand the progress of road construction. Few days later, at Ikpoba Hill in the Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area, residents again trooped out in large numbers for his unscheduled inspection of the Ramat Park flyover, which is now confirmed, about 90 per cent completed. Market women, traders, motorists, and business owners cheered and sang in appreciation of what they described as a landmark infrastructure project aimed at easing long-standing traffic congestion.

Many students of public administration see infrastructure often as the most visible and measurable indicator of performance. Roads, bridges, and flyovers are not abstract policies; they are physical assets that touch daily lives. When citizens cheer at construction sites, they are responding to tangible change. They can see the gravel mixed with cement before asphalt is laid, the pillars rising, and traffic patterns gradually being redefined. That visibility builds credibility in a way speeches rarely can.

The clear implication of public applause is trust in delivery. Edo people are not reacting to Governor Okpebholo's promises; they are reacting to progress. Projects that once existed in imagination or as proposals are now nearing completion. When a flyover moves toward 90 percent completion or a strategic road begins to reshape connectivity, citizens interpret that as evidence of determination, commitment, and seriousness. The cheers, therefore, reflect confidence that Governor Okpebholo commitments are being translated into outcomes.

There is also a practical dimension to this public endorsement. Traffic congestion, poor road networks, and limited urban connectivity have long constrained productivity in key parts of Benin City and surrounding communities. Gridlock costs time and money. Businesses suffer when customers struggle to access markets. Commercial drivers lose income when trips take longer than necessary. By prioritizing transport infrastructure, the administration is targeting economic bottlenecks directly. The Edo people who cheered at the



EDO STATE GOVERNOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO DURING HIS INSPECTIONS OF MAJOR ROAD AND FLYOVER PROJECTS

project sites, in effect, acknowledged relief. They are expressing optimism that daily frustrations will soon ease. For traders, it means smoother customer flow. For motorists, it means shorter travel time. For residents, it means improved accessibility and potentially higher property values. Infrastructure, in this context, becomes both a social and economic catalyst.

The other critical meaning behind the applause is acceptance of vision. Governor Okpebholo's infrastructure plan appears structured around connectivity and long-term urban planning rather than scattered interventions. Strategic roads linking major corridors and flyovers addressing chronic congestion reflect an attempt to modernize movement within the state capital and beyond. The public reaction suggests that citizens recognize this pattern and are aligning with it.

Leadership visibility further amplifies this effect. Governor Monday Okpebholo's physical presence at inspection sites sends a message of oversight. The leader stepped onto project grounds, engaging contractors, and publicly assessing quality and timelines, signals accountability. Citizens often interpret such actions as evidence that projects will not be abandoned or compromised. The cheers, therefore, represent reassurance — a belief that supervision is active and standards are being enforced.

There is also a psychological component at play. Infrastructure development influences public mood. In

environments where cynicism about government projects is common, visible and sustained progress can reverse skepticism. When residents who once doubted see concrete pillars rising and roads expanding, perceptions shift. Applause becomes a sign that doubt is giving way to belief.

Politically, the implications are equally significant. Public endorsement strengthens legitimacy. When citizens voluntarily demonstrate sup-

port during inspections, it suggests that infrastructure policy is resonating at the grassroots. That grassroots validation can create a reinforcing cycle: visible projects generate approval; approval encourages continuity; continuity sustains development.

It is also worth noting that infrastructure projects often bring temporary inconveniences — diversions, traffic slowdowns, and construction noise. The fact that residents at Tem-

boga-Ekiuwa-UNIBEN Road, Oba Erediauwa Road, and Ramat Park still cheered despite short-term disruptions indicates patience and long-term thinking. They are willing to endure temporary discomfort because they anticipate lasting benefits. That level of public cooperation is critical for successful implementation.

Ultimately, what Edo people's cheers mean for Governor Okpebholo's infrastructure plan is simple but profound: the projects are being experienced, not merely announced. Citizens are responding to what they can measure in their daily lives. They are acknowledging progress that touches mobility, commerce, and urban structure.

The applause echoing across Temboga-Ekiuwa-UNIBEN Road, Oba Erediauwa Road, and Ramat Park reflects more than approval of construction work. It reflects a collective endorsement of direction — a sign that the infrastructure plan is not just technically sound but socially accepted.

That alignment between leadership intent and public expectation, sustained, could prove decisive. Infrastructure thrives where there is trust, and trust thrives where there is delivery. For Governor Okpebholo, the cheers from Edo streets suggest that, at least for now, the two are moving in the same direction.

• Ebojele is the Chief Press Secretary to Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo of Edo State.

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*In environments where cynicism about government projects is common, visible and sustained progress can reverse skepticism. When residents who once doubted see concrete pillars rising and roads expanding, perceptions shift. Applause becomes a sign that doubt is giving way to belief.*

# Sports

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

## 2nd Niger Delta Games: Organizers lineup Pato Ranking, Gospel Singer, Eben, DJ Phyna for glamorous Opening Ceremony in Benin today

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

It promises to be a glamorous opening ceremony on Friday evening at the famous Samuel Ogbemudia

stadium as organizers of the Niger Delta Games Dunamis Icon Ltd and partners have perfected their plans for the commencement of the second edition of the games, holding

in Benin city from 20th to 27th of February, 2026.

The ceremony will feature a cultural showcase and special performances, as popular musical artists Pato Ranking, gos-

pel singer, Eben and DJ Phyna have been confirmed to be on stage to spice up the occasion.

The Opening Ceremony of the 2nd Niger Delta Games, 'Edo 2026' is scheduled to begin at 5pm inside the main bowl of the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium in Benin as the Governor of Edo State Senator Monday Okpebholo, the Deputy Governor Rt Hon Dennis Idahosa and other top government functionaries will be gracing the occasion just as the management team of the games sponsors and organizers Niger Delta Development Commission, Dunamis Icon Ltd are already in Benin for the big event. The management of the Edo State Sports Commission led by Hon Amodin Desmond Enabulele will be also on ground to begin

the celebration of talent, culture, sporting brilliance and youth development beyond oil the region is known for.

On Thursday evening, the stage for the entertainment was already set as finishing touches were being put to already made plans for a successful opening ceremony of the 2nd Niger Delta Games at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin, Edo State.

The premises of the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium already wore a new look with the branding, reflecting the colours of the nine states that make up the oil rich region and their heros.

State contingents and officials for the Games arrived in succession at the Benson Idahosa University Games camp for athletes and coaches.

Media professionals and Committee members have also arrived as accreditation followed. Delta and Bayelsa states were the early birds.

Speaking ahead of the opening ceremony, the Chairman of Dunamis-Icon

Limited, owners of the Niger Delta Games trademark, Sir Itiako Malik Ikpokpo expressed confidence and satisfaction with the efforts made so far and the effects.

"We have come far into the preparations and while I am hugely satisfied and excited with what we have lined up, you can't let down your guards at such crucial time", Ikpokpo told the media after the draws for the ball games. Sir Ikpokpo said.

The Chairman of the Cultural and Entertainment Committee Edi Lawani who was all over the main bowl of the stadium where sound checks, visual displays and choreography were being perfected also assured that the ceremony will be grand..

"It is going to be two hours to remember as we have lined up A-list musical and comedy performances", Lawani, the country's foremost entertainment impresario disclosed.

"The opening ceremony will feature lead performance by Pato Ranking and gospel singer, Eben". Lawani enthused.



2ND NIGER DELTA GAMES: ORGANIZERS AT THE OPENING CEREMONY IN BENIN

## NCF set to host 7th National U-17 cricket Championship

The Nigeria Cricket Federation has unveiled the 7th edition of the National U-17 Cricket Championship set to begin with the zonal qualifications across the country.

The federation's Public Relations Officer (PRO), Musa Bodie, made this known in a statement on Thursday in Lagos and made available to newsmen.

He said that this year's edition would witness 36 states, across the country, participating in the zonal qualification.

He said that the best from the states would be selected to form a team that would represent the zone in both Boys' and Girls' categories.

Bodie said that the National U-17 championship is the biggest age grade tournament in Nigeria and North West Africa.

He added that the championship serves as a platform to identify the next generation of national team players for the country.

"The current senior Men and Women's National team comprised of 70 per cent players that have passed through the system.

"About 100 per cent of the national Under-19 players in both Male and Female categories are products of this tournament," Bodie said.

He further said that action would begin across the zones with scheduled dates as follows: North Central from Feb. 26 to March 1, South West from Feb. 25 to March 1.

The North East is from Feb. 25 to March 1, South West from Feb. 18 to Feb. 21, South East from Feb. 18 to Feb. 22, while South-South is scheduled from Feb. 25 to March 1.

The PRO noted further that in the North Central, zonal qualification will take place at the twin cricket oval, M.K.O Abiola Stadium, Package B Abuja, while Kaduna State will host the North West region.

"Adamawa will play host to all the states from the North East, while Edo State will host the South-South.

"Government College Owerri will host the South East while Ogun State will be the home to all states in the South West Zone," he said.



U-17 CRICKET TEAM

## Gordon scores four as Newcastle hammer Qarabag to move to brink of last 16



ANTHONY GORDON CELEBRATE WITH TEAM MATE

Anthony Gordon struck four times in the first half as Newcastle United thrashed Qarabag 6-1 away in their Champions League playoff first leg on Wednesday, to all but book their place in the last 16.

Gordon opened the scoring in the third minute and Malick Thiaw headed in from a corner six minutes later to earn an early two-goal lead.

The 24-year-old Englishman made it 3-0 from the spot in the 32nd minute following a handball.

He added his third a minute later after a defensive error and converted another penalty in added time before the break, when keeper Mateusz Kochalski brought him down inside the box.

It was Gordon's 10th goal in this season's Champions

League, more than Harry Kane (8) and Erling Haaland (7), with only Kylian Mbappe (13) ahead of him.

Elvin Jafarguliyev pulled one back in the 56th minute before substitute Jacob Murphy's deflected strike in the 72nd minute sealed a dominant win for the Premier League side in Baku.

Eddie Howe's injury-hit side, the only Premier League team not to qualify directly for the last 16, arrived in Azerbaijan on the back of successive away wins over Tottenham Hotspur in the Premier League and Aston Villa in the FA Cup.

They made it three on the spin in style, in spite missing eight first-team players including captain Bruno Guimaraes.

Wasting no time on what was the longest journey ever undertaken by an English club for a Champions League away match, the 2,529-mile trip from Newcastle upon Tyne to Baku.

## Diri urges IOCs to invest in sports devt

Gov. Douye Diri, of Bayelsa has urged multinational oil firms and other corporate organisations in the state to invest in sports development.

Diri made the call on Thursday when the Central Organizing Committee of the Bayelsa Governor's Football Tournament presented branded jersey to him.

The governor expressed joy at how the tournament had progressed since its debut edition in 2015.

"From a modest competition in 2015, the Prosperity Cup had grown to become one of Nigeria's biggest grassroots competition.

"We can all see the number of teams participating in the competition. I commend the organisers for the great job

they are doing," he said.

The governor said that the government required the support of private sector players such as oil companies to develop the sports sector.

"I call on oil companies, other corporate organisations and well-meaning Bayelsa people to support this tournament, and make visible sports sector-based investments," he said.

Diri said that his administration would continue to remain committed to youth engagement and empowerment through sports.

He commended the competition's lead sponsors such as, Premium Trust Bank, Linkage Assurance, NDDC, among others for supporting sports development.



GOV. DOUYE DIRI



# Dr. Abu: Kidnapping, justice, and the test for the Nigeria Police Force

On 9 January 2026, my column examined the tragic kidnapping of two siblings — Dr. Babatunde Abu and Dr. Tahir Abu, both medical practitioners whose commitment to saving lives tragically placed their own lives in danger. They were abducted along City Pride Road, Igbira Camp, Auchi, Edo State, on January 2, 2026 in an incident that soon evolved from a criminal act into a national outrage.

What began as a cruel abduction degenerated into a horrifying tragedy when the younger sibling, Dr. Tahir Abu, was brutally murdered by trigger-happy hoodlums. To compound the cruelty, the kidnappers reportedly demanded a staggering N200 million ransom, a figure that starkly illustrates both the brazenness of criminal syndicates and the growing commodification of human lives in Nigeria.

The grief, anger, and disbelief that followed were inevitable. This was not merely the kidnapping of two individuals; it symbolised the wider insecurity ravaging the nation, where even professionals devoted to preserving life are no longer safe from violent crime. The eventual release of Dr. Babatunde Abu, reportedly after the payment of a substantial ransom, brought relief, but not closure. Instead, it raised unsettling questions about accountability, justice, and the capacity of the state to deter kidnapping-for-ransom.

Fast-forward to last Sunday 8 February, 2026 when a dramatic and widely circulated viral video reignited public attention on the case. According to reports, while Dr. Babatunde Abu was on duty at the Specialist Hospital, Auchi, two suspected members of the kidnapping syndicate, Idris Abubakar and Sani Abubakar allegedly brought their child in for medical treatment.

Fate, irony, and perhaps providence converged at that moment. The doctor reportedly recognised the suspects believed to be connected to his traumatic ordeal and swiftly alerted the management of the hospital and the Nigeria Police Force, leading to their arrest at about 9.00 a.m. The police in collaboration with the local vigilante and hunters had earlier arrested a suspected member of the kidnapping gang, Samuel Kawujie on February 3, during a security operation in Warake forest near Auchi.

The episode reads like a crime thriller, yet it is a sobering reflection of Nigeria's lived reality. It reveals both the audacity of criminals and the resilience of victims. However, beyond the sensational appeal of the viral footage lies a far more pressing question: Will justice finally prevail, or will this case follow Nigeria's troubling pattern of high-profile arrests that quietly dissolve into silence?



DR. ABU

This forms the crux of my appeal — a humble, but urgent call on the Nigeria Police Force and relevant authorities to treat this matter with the seriousness it deserves. The arrest of these suspects is not merely procedural; it is a litmus test for law enforcement credibility, institutional integrity, and the state's commitment to justice.

Nigeria has witnessed too many instances where arrests dominate headlines, suspects are paraded before cameras, and assurances of diligent prosecution fill the air, only for the public to hear nothing thereafter. Case files mysteriously disappear. Investigations stall. Suspects quietly regain their freedom. Victims are left betrayed. Public trust continues to erode. This case must not become another entry in that shameful catalogue of failed justice.

This is a clarion call to all sons and daughters of the Auchi Community and indeed, Nigerians to remain vigilant, closely monitor the case, and ensure that the police uphold justice without any external interference that could allow the kidnappers to go free.

The kidnapping and killing of Dr. Tahir Abu constitutes a capital crime, one that demands a thorough, transparent, and uncompromising investigation. It is insufficient to apprehend a few suspects; the entire criminal network behind the operation must be uncovered, dismantled, and prosecuted. From financiers and informants to logistics coordinators and foot soldiers, no stone should be left unturned.

If Nigeria is genuinely committed to curbing kidnapping, then impunity must end. Criminals operate with boldness largely because they believe often correctly that they can evade long-term consequences. Each unresolved case emboldens the next offender. Each unpunished kidnapping fuels the next ransom demand. Hence, kidnapping-for-ransom as a criminal enterprise in Nigeria has remained unabated.

The public nature of this arrest significantly raises the stakes. This is no longer a hidden or obscure investigation. The case already resides in the national consciousness, amplified by traditional media and social media platforms alike. Journalists, civil society groups, digital activists, and ordinary citizens will monitor developments closely. Any attempt to sweep the matter under the carpet will provoke justified outrage.

Indeed, media vigilance must serve a constructive purpose here. The press, both mainstream and digital has a responsibility to track investigative progress, follow court proceedings, and hold authorities accountable. Public memory in Nigeria is often short; this case must not fade into obscurity once the initial excitement wanes.

It is also crucial to recognise the symbolic weight of this case. The Abu family represents thousands of Nigerian families traumatised by kidnapping. Their ordeal mirrors the collective anxiety of citizens who fear

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for their safety on highways, in their homes, and even at their workplaces. Delivering justice in this case will send a powerful message that the state can still act decisively and that victims are not abandoned.

Conversely, failure to secure justice will deepen cynicism and reinforce the perception that Nigeria's criminal justice system is weak, compromised, or selectively enforced.

There is also a profound moral dimension. Dr. Tahir Abu was not merely another statistic; he was a healer, a professional, a son, a brother, and a citizen whose life was violently cut short. His memory deserves more than condolences and fleeting headlines. It deserves justice — real, tangible, and enforceable.

The Nigeria Police Force must therefore resist any temptation toward institutional lethargy, political interference, or compromise. Every stage — from interrogation and evidence gathering to forensic analysis and prosecution must meet the highest standards of professionalism.

There must be no instance of substitution, whereby a suspect is allegedly exchanged for an innocent person. Any such occurrence would constitute a grave miscarriage of justice.

Furthermore, there must be no sacred cows. If influential individuals are linked to the syndicate, their status must not shield them. The law must apply equally to the powerful and the powerless, the connected and the forgotten. Anything less will only reinforce the belief that Nigeria operates a two-tier justice system.

This case also highlights the psychological burden borne by kidnapping survivors. That Dr. Babatunde Abu could recognise his alleged abductors while performing his professional duties speaks volumes about trauma, memory, and emotional resilience. Survivors often carry invisible scars long after physical captivity ends. The state owes them not only protection but the closure that comes with justice.

At a broader level, this incident re-opens the conversation about kidnapping-for-ransom as a thriving industry in Nigeria. What was once sporadic has become systemic. Syndicates now operate with alarming coordination, crossing state lines, exploiting weak policing, and leveraging technology. Addressing this menace requires more than reactive arrests; it demands intelligence-driven policing, inter-agency collaboration, community engagement, and judicial efficiency.

Yet, meaningful reform must begin with individual accountability starting with cases such as this.

If these suspects are indeed guilty, they must face the full weight of the law. If there are accomplices, they must be tracked down. If institutional failures exist, they must be acknowledged and corrected. Justice delayed or diluted will only perpetuate Nigeria's insecurity crisis.

The Nigeria Police Force stands at a crossroads. This case presents an opportunity to restore public confidence, demonstrate operational competence, and reaffirm commitment to the rule of law. It is a chance to show Nigerians that law enforcement can rise above the entrenched culture of impunity.

Let this not become another case where suspects "escape," investigations "stall," or prosecutions "collapse." Let it instead mark a turning point, where criminal accountability triumphs over corruption, negligence, and political compromise.

The eyes of the nation are watching. The memory of Dr. Tahir Abu demands justice. The survival of Dr. Babatunde Abu deserves justice. And the conscience of Nigeria calls for a decisive end to the habitual pattern of arrest today, silence tomorrow.

This case must be different. It must be thoroughly investigated.

It must lead to comprehensive arrests. And it must culminate in real justice.

Anything less would not only dishonour the victims, but further erode the fragile trust Nigerians still place in their institutions.

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