

Edo State has reaffirmed its commitment to peacefully resolving the decades-long boundary dispute with Kogi State, following a high-level meeting convened by the National Boundary Commission (NBC) in Abuja.

The session, presided over by NBC Director-General Sur. Adamu A. Adaji, brought together

Edo, Kogi move to end decades-long boundary dispute

● **As Benue elders urge FG to declare state of emergency in Sankera**

federal agencies and state representatives to review progress and restart the stalled boundary monumentation exercise.

Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dr. Dennis Idahosa, cited the 2006 mutually agreed boundary alignment as a strong

legal and technical foundation for concluding the process.

The meeting resolved that the Surveyor-General of the Federation and the NBC would provide Edo State with large-scale maps to guide the exercise.

In addition, targeted com-

munity sensitization and enhanced security arrangements will precede the full resumption of monumentation, ensuring a lawful and smooth conclusion to the dispute.

The collaborative effort aims to finally end a conflict that has

lingered for decades.

Meanwhile, elders from Benue State have called on the Federal Government to immediately declare a state of emergency in Sankera following renewed violence and escalating insecurity in the area.

Speaking at a news conference in Abuja on Thursday, President of the African Leadership Institute, Prof. Iyorwuese Hagher, who addressed journalists on behalf of the group, urged the Federal Government to restore order and protect em-

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The Nigerian Observer



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Edo security sweep: 113 suspected kidnappers nabbed in dawn raid

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Okpebholo hails Edo's grit as state ends 24-year wait with Niger Delta Games title

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

BENIN CITY

Governor Monday Okpebholo has hailed the resilience, discipline and unity of Team Edo after the state was crowned overall champions of the second edition of the Niger Delta Games, tagged 'Edo 2026,' ending a 24-year wait for a major multi-sport tournament title.

Edo topped the medal table with an impressive haul of 52 gold, 34 silver and 25 bronze

medals, amassing a total of 111 medals to surge past traditional powerhouses, Delta and defending champions Bayelsa in a keenly contested week-long regional fiesta.

The triumph marks Edo's first major tournament victory since hosting and winning the 2002 National Sports Festival, breaking a title drought that had lingered for over two decades.

Receiving the overall winners' trophy on behalf of Governor Okpebholo at the closing

ceremony held at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, the Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, commended the athletes for making the government and people of the state proud.

He reaffirmed the administration's commitment to grassroots sports development, describing the games as a spectacular celebration of talent, unity and excellence across the Niger Delta.

According to him, beyond medals and records, the com-

petition embodied the spirit of cohesion and shared progress that defines the oil-rich region.

"With the array of gifted athletes, dedicated officials, committed organisers and supportive fans gathered here, I boldly reaffirm that sport remains one of the most powerful unifying forces in our society," he said.

He noted that sports serve as a strategic tool for curbing social vices and violence by channeling youthful energy into productive ventures, while also creating economic opportu-

nities, fostering entrepreneurship and opening pathways for growth and development.

The deputy governor charged the athletes to carry forward the lessons of discipline, teamwork, integrity and fair play demonstrated throughout the Games.

"You have shown, not only talent, but character. Let the values you have displayed here propel you to greater heights. Continue to inspire your communities and serve as shining examples of what dedication and hard work can achieve," he added.

Governor Okpebholo also expressed appreciation to the

Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), sponsors, partners and organisers for delivering what he described as a resounding success, and congratulated the athletes on their achievements, expressing optimism that the exposure gained would serve as a springboard to national and international laurels.

Earlier, the Executive Chairman of the Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele, attributed the victory to meticulous preparation, improved athlete welfare and a renewed belief in winning on home soil.



NIGER DELTA GAMES CLOSING CEREMONY:

The Managing Director/CEO, Niger Delta Development Commissions (NDDC), Mr Samuel Ogbuku (right), presenting the overall winner's trophy won by Edo State in the 2nd edition of the Niger Delta Games to Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon Dennis Idahosa, during the closing ceremony at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin City yesterday.

OFFICIAL MEDAL TABLE FOR THE 2ND NIGER DELTA GAMES

Rank	State	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	Edo	52	34	25	111
2	Delta	39	29	34	102
3	Bayelsa	25	24	26	75
4	Akwa Ibom	16	17	22	55
5	Abia	9	20	17	46
6	Cross River	9	7	22	38
7	Ondo	7	13	14	34
8	Rivers	6	16	24	46
9	Imo	5	8	18	31

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Russia and Ukraine exchange more than 1,000 soldiers' bodies

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Nigeria Customs Service supports athletes training grant programme

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CAC dares Senate as lawmakers seek Magaji's sack over budget snub

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

Tension escalated at the National Assembly on Thursday as the Senate moved against the Registrar-General of the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), Hussaini Ishaq Magaji, over his repeated failure to appear before the Senate Committee on Finance for budget defence sessions, with lawmakers calling on President Bola Tinubu to terminate his appointment.

The confrontation unfolded during the Ministry of Finance's budget defence and interactive session with members of the Federal Government's economic team in Abuja. Senators expressed outrage that despite several invitations, the CAC boss allegedly failed to honour legislative summons, instead delegating junior officers to represent him.

Senator Orji Uzor Kalu (Abia North) moved a motion calling for Magaji to be summoned and for his appointment to be terminated, describing his conduct as unacceptable and disrespectful to the legislature.

"Since I came to this Senate, he has consistently failed to appear before this committee when invited," Kalu said.

"He is fond of sending junior officers to represent him as if he is above the law. This can no longer continue."

The motion was seconded by Senator Adams Oshiomhole (Edo North), who warned that the National Assembly could refuse to appropriate funds for the commission in the 2026 budget if the situation persisted.

Chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance, Senator Mohammed Sani Musa (Niger East), described the development as a serious violation of legislative authority and a breach of constitutional responsibility.

He stressed that the committee exercises constitutional oversight over Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), and that compliance with legislative summons was not optional.

"I must address institutional responsibility," Musa said. "The Senate Committee on Finance exercises constitutional authority to oversight MDAs. It is, therefore, unacceptable that some MDAs delay submissions, ignore legislative inquiries or refuse to honour invitations. Oversight is not an optional courtesy. It is a constitutional requirement."

The session, which was attend-

ed by the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, as well as the Accountant-General of the Federation, Shamsudeen Babatunde Ogunjimi, highlighted broader concerns about fiscal discipline and accountability among government agencies.

While Edun attributed funding challenges facing MDAs to revenue shortfalls and exchange rate fluctuations, he urged agencies to prioritise critical projects and strengthen internal revenue generation to ease pressure on government finances.

However, members of the

committee insisted that transparency and accountability in budget planning and execution must not be compromised.

They warned that continued defiance of legislative oversight by any agency head would attract sanctions, including the possible invocation of the Sen-

ate's full constitutional powers.

With the call now formally made for presidential intervention, the standoff signals a deepening clash between the legislature and the leadership of the CAC, as lawmakers vow to enforce compliance and protect the integrity of the budget process.



ADDRESSING REPS PRESS CORPS:

Member representing Orhionmwon/Uhunmwonde Federal Constituency, Edo State, Billy Osawaru (L), addressing members of the House of Representatives Press Corps, denouncing the alleged attack on Mr Peter Obi in Benin City at the instance of Edo State government, at the National Assembly complex in Abuja on Thursday.

Residents laud Okpebholo over road upgrades in Oredo

BENIN CITY

Residents of Ogba-Evbua, Uholor, and Irhue Obagie communities have lauded Governor Monday Okpebholo for extensive road infrastructure improvements under the SHINE Agenda.

The ongoing Upper Airport Road project, which will connect multiple communities to Upper Ekenwan Road, is seen as a major boost for economic activity and local development.

Residents, including traders and landlords, said the road has eased movement, improved commercial activity, and enhanced investor confidence after years of neglect.

Contractor Engr. Tamiyu Ibrahim of Gladtrico International Ltd confirmed that most concrete works are complete, with earthworks and asphalt paving underway, promising timely completion and lasting impact for the communities.

Iguoshodi-NiKpemaba residents unanimously back leadership, call for community devt

OVIA NORTH EAST

The people of Iguoshodi-NiKpemaba have thrown their full support behind the leadership of the community, affirming the authority of Pa Johnson Ahanor as Odionwere, Prince Peter Eweka as Chairman of the Elders Council, and Kenneth Omorogbe Okaighele.

The endorsement came during an enlarged meeting of elders, youth, and women at the community's Oguedion, convened to address misinformation circulating online.

Speaking to journalists, Pa

Matthew Igbinosun said the meeting aimed to counter a misleading social media video that sought to tarnish the community's reputation and create divisions.

"The video circulating is false and should be disregarded," Pa Igbinosun said.

"Pa Johnson Ahanor remains our Odionwere. There was never any removal, and anyone suggesting otherwise is misinformed."

Other community leaders echoed this sentiment.

Pa Henry Onaghino stressed that harmony prevails in the community, and Kenneth Omorogbe remains the duly appointed Okaighele.

Ohen Lewis Igbinosun added, "Anybody claiming ambition to take over as Okaighele is lying. Kenneth Omorogbe will remain our Okaighele until the Odionwere decides otherwise."

Women of the community also affirmed their support.

Mrs. Joy Ehigiorator stated, "We are very satisfied with the leadership of Pa Johnson Ahanor and Kenneth Omorogbe. There is no dispute or quarrel in this community."

Prince Peter Eweka, Chairman of the Elders Council, highlighted the development efforts led by Okaighele, particularly road construction, and called on residents to join hands in com-

munity development.

In his remarks, Prince Kenneth Omorogbe urged well-meaning individuals and developers to invest in the community, assuring that safety and peaceful coexistence are guaranteed.

"With God and the community's support, good things will continue to come to Iguoshodi-NiKpemaba. There is no land dispute here; everyone is welcome to contribute to development," he said.

The meeting ended with a unified pledge from residents to maintain peace, support the leadership, and work collectively toward the growth of Iguoshodi-NiKpemaba.

Okpebholo hails Edo's grit as...

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He praised the athletes for their courage, unity and fighting spirit, dedicating the triumph to Governor Okpebholo for providing the necessary support and resources.

"Edo is back on track. This is just the beginning of a new dawn. Our catch-them-young and grassroots talent discovery policy is working. In the coming years, more dividends will be delivered. We are focused and determined to change the narrative. We did not just win; we set a new standard for excellence," Enabulele said.

Over 3,000 athletes from nine states competed in 17 sports at the Games, delivering standout performances in weightlifting, athletics, boxing and swimming, with the title race going down to the final

day before Edo surged clear.

Delta State mounted a strong challenge to finish second with 39 gold, 29 silver and 34 bronze medals, while Bayelsa slipped to third place with 25 gold, 24 silver and 26 bronze medals.

Akwa Ibom placed fourth, followed by Abia, as Cross River, Ondo, Rivers and Imo completed the standings in the highly competitive regional sports fiesta.

The ceremony drew the curtain on a memorable week of sporting excellence and cultural exchange, with participants commending the hospitality of the Edo people and the high standard of organisation.

The governor wished all contingents safe journeys back to their respective states and invoked blessings on Edo State, the Niger Delta region and the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Edo, Kogi move to end decades-long boundary...

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battled communities through decisive intervention.

Hagher called for the deployment of sufficient, rights-respecting security forces to take full control of Sankera and halt the activities of bandits and terrorists. He also proposed the establishment of an independent judicial peace and reconciliation commission to investigate the root causes of the crisis, document atrocities, ensure accountability, and provide both retributive and restorative justice for victims.

He further urged the government to guarantee the safe return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Sankera to their ancestral homes and safeguard them from further attacks.

According to him, authorities must secure the vast

ungoverned stretch between Kasar and Agu-centre by establishing a robust Army battalion in Kasar to deter criminal elements operating in the area.

Hagher also advocated a comprehensive resettlement programme, including the construction of new, modern towns in Sankera equipped with essential amenities such as schools, hospitals and police stations to rebuild shattered communities.

While pressing for urgent action, he commended the administration of President Bola Tinubu for partnering with the United States government to provide relief to victims of terrorism.

The group also appealed to international and regional bodies to intervene.

Hagher called on the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States to undertake an inde-

pendent fact-finding mission to unravel the underlying causes of the Sankera crisis.

He further urged the United Nations Human Rights Council to urgently review the situation in Benue State, particularly in Sankera, and called on international humanitarian agencies to scale up assistance to displaced persons and host communities.

Citing Nigeria's commitment to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which the country signed on July 27, 2009, Hagher warned against silence and complicity in the face of mass atrocities.

"Official silence and denial of the Sankera crisis have deepened the wounds. Inadequate documentation has obscured the scale of the suffering, and political hesitation has prolonged it," he said.

He disclosed that more than one million people have been displaced across Benue State, naming Gwer West, Gwer East, Guma and Agatu as among the worst-hit local government areas.

He described the devastation in Kwande Local Government Area as "a separate chapter of terror."

Hagher also lamented that border communities such as Abande and Anwase, near the Cameroon border, had been overrun by armed bandits, forcing hundreds of thousands of residents into IDP camps or precarious host communities.

According to him, the humanitarian fallout has been severe.

He noted that UNICEF has reported alarming levels of malnutrition and stunted growth among children affected by the crisis.

NEWS

Edo security sweep: 113 suspected kidnappers nabbed in dawn raid

BENIN CITY

Joint security operatives in Edo State have arrested 113 suspected kidnappers and

their collaborators during a coordinated early-morning operation in Agbede and Iruokpen communities.

ASP Eno Ikoedem, Police

Public Relations Officer, said the arrests followed intelligence-driven raids on settlements believed to be operational and financial hubs for kidnapping activities.

The operation, conducted around 3 a.m., involved the

Nigeria Police Force, Nigerian Army, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), vigilante groups, and local hunters. Operatives acted on credible intelligence that ransom payments were being coordinated within the

communities.

"The coordinated raids targeted locations where suspects received ransom payments, regrouped, and blended with unsuspecting members of the public," Ikoedem said.

The 113 suspects are undergoing screening and profiling to determine their roles in kidnapping and related crimes. Commissioner of Police Monday Agbonika reaffirmed the command's commitment to dismantle kidnapping net-

works, stressing that operations will also target individuals providing logistical and financial support.

"The command's onslaught against organised kidnapping networks will remain relentless, and those found culpable will face prosecution," Ikoedem added.

Residents were urged to remain vigilant and support security agencies with credible information, which will be treated confidentially.



IG VISITED OKETOLA:

Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Dr Adegboyega Oketola (left), and Inspector-General of Police, Tunji Disu, when IG visited the Minister in Abuja on Thursday.

Tax expert urges NRS to open temporary waiver window on penalties, interest

An economist and tax practitioner, Dr Ernest Abegbe, has urged the nation's tax authorities, including the Nigeria Revenue Service (NRS), to introduce a temporary waiver on Late Returns Penalty (LRP) and accrued interest to encourage companies to regularise outstanding tax filings and payments.

Abegbe's appeal is anchored on Section 66 of the Nigeria Tax Administration Act 2025 and aligns with ongoing reforms aimed at deepening compliance and expanding the national tax base.

He observed that while many businesses are willing to meet

their statutory obligations, accumulated penalties and interest, particularly those generated under automated tax platforms such as Taxpromax have created financial and operational hurdles for companies attempting to clear tax backlogs.

"The current reform climate offers a rare opportunity to reset the compliance landscape," he said.

"However, legacy penalties and accrued interest discourage voluntary disclosure and timely settlement of outstanding liabilities."

According to Abegbe, a structured and time-bound

waiver window limited strictly to LRP and interest, without affecting the principal tax due would deliver multiple gains.

These include increased voluntary compliance, clearance of backlog filings by thousands of companies, higher immediate revenue inflows, improved long-term tax culture and trust, and reduced enforcement and litigation costs.

He stressed that such a measure would strike a balance between government revenue objectives and the practical compliance challenges faced by businesses.

"This is not a request for tax



DR. ABEGBE

forgiveness," he clarified.

"It is a strategic compliance enhancement measure designed to accelerate revenue collection while fostering goodwill between taxpayers and the tax authority."

Oyetola, I-G pledge strong maritime security partnership

LAGOS/ABUJA

The Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Dr Adegboyega Oyetola, on Thursday received newly appointed Inspector-General of Police, Mr Tunji Disu, in Abuja, underscoring a commitment to

enhanced maritime security.

Oyetola congratulated Disu, describing him as well-equipped to strengthen the country's security architecture.

He highlighted the importance of inter-agency synergy for securing Nigeria's waters, which he said are critical for

economic diversification and job creation.

Disu pledged full cooperation, promising intelligence-led policing and coordinated operations across coastal and inland waterways.

Both leaders agreed on sustained dialogue and operational

collaboration to improve surveillance, response capacity, and inter-agency information sharing.

"The maritime sector holds enormous promise, and safety and order must be guaranteed through seamless cooperation among relevant agencies," Oyetola said.

FCT Polls: CSOs commend INEC, security agencies over peaceful exercise

ABUJA

Coalition of Civil Society Groups has commended the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and se-

curity agencies on the peaceful conduct of February 21 FCT elections.

The coalition described the exercise, especially in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), as peaceful, credible

and a reflection of the people's will.

Mr Boluwaji Adeyemi, Head of the Coalition, gave the assessment while presenting the group's observation report on the exercise at a news confer-

ence on Thursday in Abuja.

Adeyemi said that in spite of a generally low voter turnout across the 12 wards of the council, the election was

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Don urges FG to prune exclusive list, empower states

OSOGBO

Prof. Olumide Ekanade of Redeemer's University, Ede, has called for urgent reform of Nigeria's fiscal federalism to empower states and geopolitical zones to generate revenue and drive growth.

Speaking at the university's 21st inaugural lecture titled "From Fiscal Federalism to Feeding Bottle Federalism," Ekanade criticised the over-centralisation of fiscal powers and called for prioritising productivity over revenue sharing.

He advocated pruning the Exclusive Legislative List to allow states and local govern-

ments greater responsibility for social services, infrastructure, and taxation.

Ekanade also suggested restructuring Nigeria along the six geopolitical zones to promote innovation, competition, and self-reliance, with zones funding the Federal Government rather than the reverse.

On regional equity, he proposed raising the Niger Delta derivation from 13% to 50% and removing offshore/on-shore distinctions.

He advised against creating more states, stressing that development efforts should focus on infrastructure and equitable socio-economic opportunities.

U.S. commends Nigerian Air Force, strengthens defence ties

ABUJA

The United States has commended the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) for its preparedness ahead of the delivery of AH-1Z attack helicopters.

The praise followed a three-day engagement between a U.S. delegation from PMA-276, led by Robert Galan, and senior NAF officials in Abuja.

Discussions focused on a Programme and Support Plan to ensure seamless integration and operational effectiveness of the incoming helicopters.

Air Commodore Ehimen Ejodame, NAF Director of Public Relations, said the engagement underscored growing U.S.-Nigeria defence co-operation based on mutual trust and shared security objectives.

"The commendation boosts the NAF's modernisation drive and enhances airpower capability in support of national security," he said.

NAF has prepared infrastructure and personnel for the AH-1Z induction, ensuring immediate combat readiness upon delivery.

Ughelli South chairman urges community leaders to foster peace

AJUWA VICTOR

UGHELLI

Executive Chairman of Ughelli South Local Government Council, Olorogun Dr. Lucky Avweromre, has called on community leaders to promote unity and peaceful coexistence across their domains.

The call came during a meeting with the leadership of Gbaregolor Federated Communities led by Pastor Peter

Avwenayerin Udoma. Avweromre commended ongoing local projects, including school renovations and scholarships, while pledging to consider requests for improved health centres, police posts, and a Delta State Maritime Polytechnic campus in the area.

He emphasised that harmonious relationships between Ughelli South's six traditional kingdoms and neighbouring councils are crucial for sustainable peace and development.

Police arrest 6 pastors over alleged fake miracle scam

AKURE

The Police in Ondo State have arrested six pastors over an alleged fake miracle scam in Idanre, Idanre Local Government Area of the state.

The Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Abayomi Jimoh, disclosed this in a statement on Thursday in Akure, identifying the suspects as Fadahunsi, Kolade, Tijani, Iyanuoluwa, Arijesulola and Ademola.

Jimoh said operatives of the command's tactical teams, in collaboration with Community Safety Officers (CSOs), carried out a coordinated, intelligence-driven operation on February 16 following credible information about the activities of a suspected fraud syndicate operating within Idanre and its environs.

According to him, the operation led to the arrest of the six

suspects alleged to have organised and executed fraudulent schemes targeted at unsuspecting members of the public.

Preliminary investigations, he said, revealed that the suspects posed as pastors and religious leaders, staging fake miracles and spiritual interventions to gain the confidence of their victims.

He added that they allegedly exploited the faith and vulnerabilities of individuals by promising divine solutions to financial difficulties, health challenges and other personal problems, thereby defrauding them through obtaining by false pretence and related scams.

"During interrogation, it was gathered that the suspects operated in a coordinated manner, assigning specific roles to members of the group to create a convincing façade of legitimacy," Jimoh said.

He noted that investigations were ongoing to ascertain the total number of victims, determine the financial magnitude of the fraud and

identify other collaborators still at large.

The suspects are currently in police custody and will be charged to court upon conclusion of investigations.

Jimoh urged residents to exercise due diligence and avoid falling prey to individuals who use religion or false promises

of miracles as cover for criminal activities, assuring that the command remained resolute in ridding the state of criminal elements.



2026 BREAKFAST MEETING:

L-R: Executive Secretary, Nigeria-South Africa Chamber of Commerce (NSACC), Iyke Ejimofor; former Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Ministry of Health, Segun Ogboye; NSACC Chairman, Ije Jidenma and Director, Hunta Corporate Solutions, Richard Daniels, during the Chamber's February 2026 Breakfast meeting in Lagos on Thursday.

Okah-Donli congratulates Akpe, urges Godly service

ABUJA

Dame Julie Okah-Donli, former Director-General of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAP-TIP), has congratulated Pastor Peter Akpe on his confirmation as Deputy Governor of Bayelsa State.

Akpe was confirmed on February 24 following his nomination by Governor Douye Diri.

His confirmation followed the death of the former Deputy Governor, Sen. Lawrence Ewruhadjakpo, on December 11, 2025.

An ordained pastor of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Akpe previously served as Chief of Staff to the governor before his elevation.

In a congratulatory message issued on Thursday, Ok-

ah-Donli described his emergence as timely and divinely ordained, urging him to approach the office with humility, dedication and a strong sense of service.

She prayed that God would grant him wisdom and discernment to effectively support the governor in delivering good governance, stressing that leadership demanded accountability and selfless service.

Okah-Donli also urged the deputy governor to promote unity across political and ethnic divides, noting that Bayelsa needed stability and continuity.

She expressed confidence that Akpe's experience in the civil service, legislature and pastoral ministry had prepared him for the assignment and advised him to remain people-oriented and transparent in office.

BEDC announces month-long daily power outages in Benin

BENIN CITY

The Benin Electricity Distribution Company (BEDC) Plc has announced that residents and businesses in parts of Benin City will experience daily electricity outages for more than one month starting Friday due to planned transmission maintenance.

In a public notice, BEDC said the disruption would enable the Transmission Company of Nigeria to undertake critical construction works on the 330kV Benin-Ajaokuta Transmission Line 2 at the Ihovbor Transmission Station.

The maintenance exercise, scheduled from February 27 to March 31, is expected to affect electricity supply across mul-

multiple communities served by key feeders connected to the Ihovbor transmission facility in Edo State.

According to the company, power supply will be interrupted daily from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. throughout the construction period, with electricity restored at the end of each day's work.

Areas along the University of Benin axis, Ugbowo, Oluku, Upper Sakponba, Ihovbor and Egba corridors are expected to be affected due to the tem-

porary shutdown of feeders linked to the project.

BEDC clarified that the outage was not related to service faults but formed part of efforts to strengthen transmission infrastructure and improve long-term electricity reliability across its franchise area.

The company appealed for customers' patience and cooperation, assuring that normal supply would resume daily once construction activities were suspended each evening.

Scarcity of day-old chicks crippling productivity —Poultry farmers

LAGOS

The Poultry Association of Nigeria (PAN), Lagos State Chapter, has lamented that the unavailability of day-old chicks is crippling productivity in the sector.

The state Chairman of PAN, Mr Mojeed Iyiola, said in an interview on Thursday in La-

gos that the scarcity posed a major threat to poultry production and export potential.

He noted that the issue dominated discussions at the association's recent monthly meeting, with many members complaining about difficulty in accessing quality day-old chicks.

Iyiola warned that the shortage had led to the emergence

of substandard hatcheries producing low-quality chicks detrimental to the business.

He attributed the scarcity to limited parent stock, which is imported and regulated by the Federal Government, noting that import licences were granted to only a few hatcheries that could not meet national demand.

According to him, the national body of PAN is engaging hatchery operators and government authorities to address the shortfall.

He added that negotiations were ongoing to increase production and expand access to import licences for parent stock in order to boost output and stabilise the industry.

FRSC raises alarm over early morning drunk driving in C'River

CALABAR

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) has raised concern over increasing cases of drunk driving in Cross River State, with incidents reported as early as 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

The FRSC Sector Commander in the state, Mr Innocent Etuk, raised the alarm during a visit to the Palace of the Obong of Calabar on Thursday.

Etuk said recent patrols and breath tests conducted in the last three weeks revealed that some commercial drivers consumed alcohol between 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. before picking up passengers.

He described the trend as dangerous, noting that it en-

dangered passengers, pedestrians and other road users.

The corps, he said, would intensify advocacy, enforcement and community engagement to address the menace, while urging motorists to prioritise safety over profit.

A member of the Obong's Council, HRH Ekpenyong Okpo, urged the FRSC to improve its equipment, including towing vans, to remove broken-down vehicles causing traffic obstruction and crashes.

The Obong of Calabar, Edidem Ekpo Okon Abasi Otu V, represented by Etubom Otu Otu, commended the FRSC for engaging traditional institutions in promoting road safety and assured continued support.

FCT Polls: CSOs commend INEC, security agencies over peaceful...

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conducted without any form of disruptions or violent incidents.

"Observers arrived as early as 7:10 a.m. to monitor opening procedures, accreditation, voting, and counting.

"We observed that the Bi-modal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) machines worked perfectly, and the voters' registers were available in all polling units visited.

"The conduct of INEC

showed significant improvement when compared to previous elections. Cases of vote-buying and security breaches were minimal," he said.

Adeyemi also lauded the professionalism and neutrality displayed by security agencies, including the Police and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC).

According to him, the results announced by INEC and cited by the coalition, the All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate, Christopher Mai-

kalangu, emerged winner after polling 40,295 votes.

"The results for other top contenders showed the African Democratic Congress (ADC) scored 12,109 votes, while the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) got 3,398 votes.

"The Social Democratic Party (SDP) and New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) polled 2,185 and 1,694 votes, respectively," he said.

He, however, urged INEC to further improve its logistics arrangements and ensure early

commencement of polls in future exercises.

"INEC should carry out extensive education to raise voter awareness, while political parties must actively engage in voter mobilisation to address the trend of diminishing turnout.

"The overall conduct of this election is well-accepted by the residents of AMAC," he said.

He also recommended continuous training for polling officials on the effective configuration and use of accreditation devices to sustain the gains recorded.

NEWS

Tinubu seeks Senate backing for State Police, hails reform gains

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu has urged the leadership of the 10th Senate to initiate constitutional amendments that would pave the way for the establishment of state police, describing decentralised policing as an urgent response to Nigeria's evolving security threats.

The President made the appeal during an interfaith breakfast with senators at the Presidential Villa, Abuja, according to a statement by his

Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Mr Bayo Onanuga.

Tinubu said the creation of state police had become imperative in confronting terrorism, banditry and insurgency across the country, noting that decentralised policing would enhance grassroots security and enable faster response to threats within states.

"We are facing terrorism, banditry and insurgency. But we will never fail to make the right response," the President said. "What I will ask for to-

night is for you to start thinking how best to amend the Constitution to incorporate State Police."

He added that the reform would help secure forests from criminal elements and free citizens from fear, while commending the cordial working relationship between the executive and the National Assembly.

"It is a good thing that we are working in harmony, looking forward to a country that protects all," he said, thanking the Senate for supporting key

economic reforms of his administration.

Tinubu maintained that the removal of fuel subsidy had ended what he described as monumental corruption and foreign exchange arbitrage, insisting that the country was now enjoying a more stable economy.

"Prosperity is beckoning us. We need to work hard," he said.

President of the Senate, Godswill Akpabio, commended the President for hosting the interfaith engagement and noted that the administration's re-

forms had boosted revenues to sub-national governments for infrastructure development.

He also offered prayers for peace and prosperity in the country.

Bishops demand tech-driven security, swift terror trials

ABUJA

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria has called on the Federal Government to deploy modern surveillance technology and end delays in prosecuting terror suspects, warning that insecurity continues to inflict "endless tears and grief" on Nigerians.

In a communiqué issued at the close of its First Plenary Meeting for 2026 in Abuja, and read by Most Rev. Peter Chikwe, Bishop of Abakaliki, the bishops expressed deep concern over escalating violence despite the national security emergency declared by President Tinubu.

They cited the recent massacre of over 200 people in Woro and Nuku villages in Kwara State and decried persistent attacks in parts of the North and Middle Belt, where students, worshippers and farmers have been targeted.

The bishops urged the government to deploy drones and

Artificial Intelligence to monitor remote mining sites, alleging that proceeds from illegal gold and lithium mining were being used to finance terrorism.

They also warned that delayed prosecution of arrested terrorists, or the reintegration of "repentant" insurgents into security forces, created a dangerous perception of complicity.

On electoral reforms, the conference demanded real-time transmission of results from the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System to the INEC Result Viewing portal ahead of the 2027 general elections, citing low voter turnout in recent polls as evidence of growing public distrust.

The conference announced the election of Most Rev. Matthew Man-Oso Ndagoso, Archbishop of Kaduna, as its new President, alongside other national officers, and urged Nigerians not to succumb to despair, insisting that a better nation was possible if leadership prioritised the common good.



INAUGURATION:

L-R: Former General Manager, Productions, Hebn Publishers, Chief Matthias Williams-Euban; Commissioner for Health, Oyo State, Dr Oluwaserimi Ajetunmbi; Group Managing Director, First Health, Mrs. Temitope Alonge; her husband, Prof Temitope Alonge, during the inauguration of the Centre for Osteoporosis and Bone Health by First Health Limited in Ibadan on Thursday.

Lagos records 12m prank calls in 2025, warns of risk to lives

LAGOS

The Lagos State Emergency Command and Control Centre has raised alarm over the surge in prank and nuisance calls to its toll-free emergency lines, revealing that more than 12 million such calls were recorded in 2025 alone.

General Manager of the centre, Mr Femi Giwa, disclosed in Lagos that the volume of false and abandoned calls was severely hampering effective emergency response across the

state.

"In 2025 alone, we recorded over 12 million nuisance calls and more than three million abandoned calls. These calls consume valuable time meant for genuine emergencies and, in some cases, delay life-saving interventions," he said.

Giwa explained that the centre serves as a central coordination hub for first responders, managing real-time communication and deployment for agencies including the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency, Rapid Response

Squad, Lagos State Ambulance Service, Lagos State Traffic Management Authority, and the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency.

Residents can access emergency services through the toll-free numbers 112 and 767, which connect directly to the centre.

Calls are processed and escalated within two minutes to the relevant agency for dispatch.

However, Giwa warned that prank calls often lead to unnecessary deployment of ambulances, fire trucks and security personnel, diverting scarce resources from real incidents.

With Lagos' population estimated at over 20 million, the state has decentralised its response infrastructure, including more than 230 ambulance points and over 230 fire stations, to ensure rapid intervention.

First responders are able to arrive at incident scenes within five to 10 minutes in many cases, he said, stressing that such efficiency depends on responsible use of emergency lines.

He urged residents to desist from prank, test or abusive calls and to provide accurate information during emergencies, warning that misuse of emergency numbers could cost lives.

INEC reschedules 2027 general elections

ABUJA

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has brought forward the dates for the 2027 general elections by more than one month, announcing a major revision to its previously released timetable in compliance with the Electoral Act, 2026.

Under the new schedule, the Presidential and National Assembly elections will now hold on Saturday, January 16, 2027, instead of the earlier date of February 20, 2027.

Similarly, the Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections have been shifted from March 6, 2027, to Saturday, February 6, 2027.

The Commission said the decision followed the repeal of the Electoral Act, 2022 and the enactment of the Electoral Act, 2026, which introduced new statutory timelines for the conduct of elections and related activities.

INEC explained that a comprehensive review of its electoral calendar became necessary to ensure that every stage of the electoral process aligns strictly with the new legal framework.

According to the Commission, the revised timetable covers all critical pre-election activities, including party primaries, submission of nomination forms, publication of candidates' particulars, campaigns,

and other statutory processes required before election day.

By moving the election dates forward, INEC said it has created a timeline that guarantees full compliance with the provisions of the Electoral Act, 2026, as well as the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended).

The electoral umpire emphasised that the adjustment was not arbitrary but the outcome of a legal and procedural review aimed at safeguarding the credibility, transparency and legality of the 2027 electoral process.

It noted that adherence to statutory timelines is critical to avoiding post-election disputes and ensuring that all political parties and stakeholders operate within clearly defined legal parameters.

INEC assured political parties, candidates and the electorate that further details of the revised schedule of activities would be made available to guide preparations for the polls.

It also urged stakeholders to familiarise themselves with the new timetable and comply strictly with all deadlines as stipulated under the Electoral Act, 2026.

The 2027 general elections will usher in a new President and members of the National Assembly, as well as governors and state lawmakers across the federation, making the revised timetable a crucial roadmap for Nigeria's next political transition.

Lafarge Africa crosses N1trn revenue mark, profit jumps 173%

LAGOS

Lafarge Africa has crossed the N1 trillion revenue threshold for the first time, posting a 53 per cent increase in net sales to N1.07 trillion in 2025 from N696.76 billion in 2024.

In its audited financial results released to the Nigerian

Exchange Ltd., the cement manufacturer attributed the growth to higher sales volumes, improved plant stability and enhanced distribution efficiency.

Profit before tax surged 170 percent to N411 billion, while operating profit rose 103 percent to N392.1 billion, lifting operating margin to 37 per cent from

28 per cent in the previous year. Profit after tax climbed 173 per cent to N273.12 billion.

Fourth-quarter performance also remained strong, with net sales rising 32 percent year-on-year to N285.82 billion and profit after tax increasing 63 percent to N65.34 billion.

Chief Executive Officer, Lolu Alade-Akinyemi, described the

results as a historic milestone, crediting disciplined execution of the company's four-point strategy, operational efficiency and a sustained focus on shareholder value.

He expressed optimism about 2026, pledging prudent capital allocation and cost management to sustain growth momentum.

Reprisal attack: Lakurawa gunmen kill 5 worshippers in Kebbi mosque

BIRNIN KEBBI

Suspected Lakurawa terrorists have killed five worshippers and injured three others in an attack on a mosque in Dadinkowa community, Maiyama Local Government Area of Kebbi State, in what au-

thorities described as a reprisal following a failed ambush on troops of the Nigerian Army. The attackers stormed the community mosque on Wednesday evening while congregants were observing prayers and opened fire indiscriminately. Confirming the incident, the

Police Public Relations Officer of the Kebbi State Command, SP Bashir Usman, said the assault was retaliation for an earlier military operation that foiled an ambush by the group. "The attack was a reprisal by suspected Lakurawa terrorist elements following a failed ambush on troops of the Nigerian Army attached to the 8 Division," he said. Usman explained that on February 24, the General Officer

Commanding (GOC), 8 Division, and Commander, Sector 2, Operation FANSAN YAMMA, Maj.-Gen. Bemgha Koughna, came under heavy gunfire while en route to visit frontline troops

near Mayama Hill.

According to him, troops responded with superior firepower, engaged the assailants in a fierce gun duel and neutralised five of them, foiling the ambush.

He added that five worshippers later died from gunshot wounds sustained in Wednesday's mosque attack, while three others were evacuated to medical facilities for treatment.

FRIN, NESREA deepen partnership on environmental protection

IBADAN

The Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria (FRIN) and the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) have strengthened collaboration aimed at enhancing environmental sustainability and forest conservation. The renewed partnership

followed a courtesy visit by NESREA's South-West Zonal team, led by Acting Zonal Director Mr Peniel Jack, to FRIN's Director-General, Prof. Zachariah Yaduma, in Ibadan. Jack commended FRIN's leadership in climate change mitigation through tree-planting initiatives and expressed optimism about deeper collaboration between the two agen-

cies to promote environmental protection across the South-West and the country at large. FRIN's Director of Research and Coordinating Department, Dr Osikabor Benson, also welcomed the renewed synergy, noting its potential to advance shared environmental goals. Responding, the Director-General of FRIN pledged sustained cooperation to bolster conservation efforts and regulatory compliance nationwide.

Ramadan: Etsu Nupe urges patience, prayers for nat'l peace

BIDA

The Etsu Nupe and Chairman, Niger Council of Traditional Rulers, Alhaji Yahaya Abubakar, has urged Muslims and Nigerians to rededicate themselves to devotion, patience and prayers for peace during the holy month of Ramadan. Speaking at a Ramadan Tafsisir

at the Etsu Usman Zaki Central Mosque in Bida, Niger State, the royal father stressed the need for discipline, sincerity and total submission to the will of Allah throughout the sacred month. He cautioned the faithful against actions capable of diminishing the spiritual value of fasting, describing Ramadan as a period of renewal, self-restraint and heightened devotion. "If God grants us what we desire, we should be patient and

grateful. And if it has not yet happened, we must remain patient and trust that it will come at the time destined by God," he said. He prayed for lasting peace and stability in Nigeria, noting that national development could only thrive in an atmosphere of security and unity. The event was attended by Islamic scholars, traditional title holders and members of the Muslim community in Bida and neighbouring areas.

Nasarawa community alleges lithium spill, seeks Fed intervention

LAFIA

Residents of KAMA community in Udege Development Area of Nasarawa Local Government have raised concerns over alleged lithium mining spillage affecting farmlands, waterways and the environment. The residents accused Avatar New Energy Materials Co. Ltd. of producing dust, wastewater and chemical residues during lithium extraction, which they claim have polluted rivers and reduced agricultural yield. Lithium, widely used in bat-

teries for electric vehicles and renewable energy systems, is economically valuable but may pose environmental risks if poorly managed. Some residents alleged that exposure to the community river had caused health challenges, while others reported vibrations from mining activities and whitish residues floating in tributaries. Civil society organisation Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa (CAPPA) called for stricter government regulation of industrial-scale lithium mining, warning that poor oversight could

endanger host communities. Environmental specialist Abang Johnson emphasised that lithium processing must be carefully managed to prevent airborne and wastewater pollution that could contaminate soil and underground water sources. However, the Public Relations Manager of Avatar New Energy Materials, Benny Modey, denied the allegations, insisting that Environmental Impact Assessments and routine regulatory inspections confirmed compliance with safety standards. He described claims of pollution as unfounded and urged critics to provide verifiable evidence.

Forgery allegation: Hearing in ex-Minister Nnaji's suit against UNN adjourned

ABUJA

Hearing in a suit filed by former Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology, Uche Nnaji, against the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) and others was on Thursday stalled at the Federal High Court, Abuja. The matter, slated before Justice Hauwa Yilwa, was adjourned until April 20 to allow parties to regularise their processes following an oral application for adjournment by counsel to UNN and four other defendants. Nnaji's counsel, Sebastian Hon, SAN, and N.H. Oba, who represented the National Universities Commission (NUC), did not oppose the request, prompting the court to fix April 20 for hearing. The judge also directed that a hearing notice be issued and

served on the Minister of Education, who was not represented in court. Nnaji instituted the suit after allegations of certificate forgery were levelled against him. In an ex-parte motion, he sought leave to issue prerogative writs restraining the university and its officials from allegedly tampering with his academic records. In the suit marked FHC/ABJ/CS/1909/2025, he listed the Minister of Education, the NUC, UNN and Prof. Ortuanya as 1st to 4th respondents, and joined the Registrar of UNN, Ujam, and the Senate of the university as 5th to 7th respondents. He is seeking an order of mandamus compelling the university to release his academic transcript and urging the Minister of Education and the NUC to exercise supervisory powers

to ensure compliance. He also prayed for an interim injunction restraining UNN from tampering with his records pending determination of the substantive suit. However, in a preliminary objection, the 3rd to 7th defendants asked the court to strike out the suit for lack of jurisdiction, arguing that the application was filed outside the three-month period stipulated under Order 34 Rule 4(1) of the Federal High Court (Civil Procedure) Rules 2019 and contrary to Section 2(a) of the Public Officers Protection Act 2004. They further contended that the action was incompetent and that the court lacked jurisdiction over matters relating to student academic records and transcripts, insisting that no reasonable cause of action was disclosed against them.

PUBLIC NOTICE

LOSS OF DOCUMENT

The general public is hereby notified that I, **AKHIGBE AUGUSTINE EHRAHIEME** is the rightful owner of the property situated at **No 60 Gapiona Avenue GRA Benin (Princess IGHIWIYISI EWEKA ESTATE), Oredo Local Government Area Benin City, Edo State.**

That the original certificate of occupancy with Title No. **BDSR 6058** is missing and all efforts to locate it has proved abortive, hence this notification.

All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.



Signed:
MR CHARLES AKHIGBE
Authorized Representative of
Mr Augustine Ehrahieme Akhigbe

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly know and addressed as **MISS OTULUGBU BEAUTY IFELUNWA**, now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS. EBINUM BEAUTY IFELUNWA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known and addressed as **MR DARE OLUSEGUN AKINNUWA**, now wish to be known and addressed as **MR ESEMUDE DARE IYEGBEKEDO**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please note.

RECONCILIATION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **ONOHWAKPOR DENNIS IGHODAFE**, **ONOHWAKPOR DENNIS I**, **ONOHKIAPOR DENNIS** and **ONOHWAKPOR DENNIS IGHO**, are one and the same person as appeared in some of my documents. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as **ONOHWAKPOR DENNIS IGHODAFE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please note.

ADDITION OF NAME

I, formerly known as **HENRY AKPAN**, now wish to be known and addressed as **HENRY SIMON AKPAN**. All former document remain valid. Concerned authorities, banks and general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known and addressed as **AUSTINE GLORY**, now wish to be known and addressed as **UBOGUN GLORY**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known and addressed as **MISS DEBORAH MAGIC**, now wish to be known addressed as **MRS. DEBORAH EDEWI**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please note.

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NEWS

JUDICIARY

DSS witness alleges *facebook* blackmail plot against EFCC chairman

ABUJA

A witness from the Department of State Services (DSS) on Thursday told the Federal

High Court, Maitama, Abuja, how a defendant allegedly blackmailed the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) through a Facebook publica-

tion.

The witness, Yusuf Adams, who testified before Justice Joyce Abdulmalik, said the allegation emerged after investigators examined the defendant's mobile phone and Facebook page.

Adams, a DSS operative attached to the Economic In-

telligence and Investigation Department, said videos were discovered in which the defendant, Moses Oddiri, accused EFCC Chairman, Ola Olukoyede, of intercepting and stealing N4 billion in royalties allegedly released by Heritage Operational Services Limited for the Orogun Community in

Delta State.

According to him, the DSS received a petition from the EFCC on September 23, 2025, alleging that Oddiri had circulated false claims on social media accusing the anti-corruption chief of embezzlement. "Based on the petition, my director instructed my team to investigate," Adams said.

He told the court that the defendant was arrested in Lagos on November 10, 2025, and subsequently interviewed

at the DSS office in the presence of legal aid counsel, with the session audio-visually recorded.

Adams said investigators downloaded the videos, obtained bank statements from First City Monument Bank and Zenith Bank, secured incorporation documents from the Corporate Affairs Commission relating to community entities linked to OML 30, and retrieved correspondence between the defendant and



SWEARING-IN:

Governor Douye Diri of Bayelsa State (L) congratulating the new Deputy Governor, Dr. Peter Akpe, after the swearing-in of the Deputy Governor in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

Driver arraigned for knocking down LAWMA worker

BADAGRY (LAGOS)

A 37-year-old bus driver, Chukwuebuka Ogbodo, was on Thursday arraigned before a Badagry Chief Magistrates' Court for allegedly driving recklessly and injuring a staff member of the Lagos Waste Management Authority (LAWMA).

The prosecutor alleged that the defendant drove a yellow Volkswagen bus in a reckless

manner along Badagry Expressway and knocked down the worker, who sustained fractures on both legs.

Ogbodo pleaded not guilty to charges of reckless driving and driving without valid licence and vehicle particulars.

The court granted him bail in the sum of N1 million with two responsible sureties, one of whom must be a company director. The case was adjourned until March 26.

Court remands man over alleged drug trafficking

IBADAN

A Federal High Court in Ibadan has remanded Seyi Oluwasina in a correctional facility over alleged unlawful possession of drugs.

The prosecutor told the court that operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement

Agency (NDLEA) arrested the defendant with 12.522kg of Cannabis Sativa and eight grammes of methamphetamine in November 2025.

Justice Nkeonye Maha ordered his remand at Agodi Correctional Facility and adjourned the matter until March 20 for trial.

Court stays execution of judgment in AMNI debt dispute

LAGOS

A Federal High Court in Lagos on Thursday granted an order staying execution of its earlier judgment in a suit filed by Cenroc FPSO Solutions Nigeria Ltd against AMNI International Petroleum Development Company Ltd.

Justice Chukwujekwu Aneke granted the order while ruling on a motion for stay of execution of the judgment delivered on February 13 in suit No. FH-C/L/L/CS/1454/2025.

The dispute arose from a commercial relationship between the parties, with Cenroc alleging that AMNI was unable to pay outstanding

debts and seeking the appointment of Mr Sam Aiboni as administrator.

The court had earlier granted the reliefs and appointed Aiboni as administrator. Dissatisfied, AMNI filed an appeal and applied for a stay of execution pending its determination.

In his ruling, Justice Aneke held that the applicant had

made a case warranting a stay of execution pending appeal.

He also clarified the distinction between receivership and administration under the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA) 2020, noting that the court's order related to administration proceedings aimed at corporate rescue rather than receivership.

CJN urges judicial courage as Supreme Court hits full complement

ABUJA

The Chief Justice of Nigeria, Kudirat Kekere-Ekun, has reaffirmed the Supreme Court's commitment to strengthening public confidence in the administration of justice.

She gave the assurance at the

swearing-in of Justice Kayode Oyewole as a Justice of the Supreme Court in Abuja.

Kekere-Ekun urged the new justice to uphold moral courage, judicial independence and fidelity to the Constitution, noting that scrutiny at the apex court level is intense and constant.

"At this level of adjudication, scrutiny is intense and commentary often instantaneous. Your compass must remain fixed upon the Constitution and the law," she said.

She emphasised that principled dissent, expressed with intellectual honesty, contributes to the growth of juris-

prudence and does not undermine unity.

The CJN noted that with Oyewole's elevation, the Supreme Court now has its full constitutional complement, enhancing its capacity to manage its docket efficiently and reinforce the stability of its jurisprudence.

Apprentice arraigned over alleged N39m theft

IBADAN

A 25-year-old apprentice, Mubarak Salawu, was on Thursday arraigned before an Iyaganku Chief Magistrates' Court in Ibadan over

alleged theft of N39 million from his employer.

The prosecutor, ASP Tunji Olaniyi, alleged that between January 2023 and January 2025, the defendant sold building materials belonging

to his employer and converted the proceeds to personal use.

Salawu pleaded not guilty to the charge of stealing.

Magistrate Moshood Mudadshiru granted him bail in

the sum of N10 million with two sureties in like sum, one of whom must be a blood relative who has paid taxes to the Oyo State Government for the past three years. The case was adjourned until April 1.

'Estate agent' docked over alleged N1.6m accommodation scam

IBADAN

A 30-year-old self-acclaimed estate agent, Timothy Adedeji, has been arraigned before an

Iyaganku Chief Magistrates' Court in Ibadan over alleged N1.6 million fraud.

The prosecutor alleged that the defendant fraudulently obtained the sum from a student

of Lead City University under the pretext of securing hostel accommodation.

Adedeji pleaded not guilty to the charges of fraud and stealing.

Magistrate A.T. Oyediji admitted him to bail in the sum of N600,000 with two sureties in like sum and adjourned the case until March 25.

Man docked for alleged forgery, impersonation as surveyor

ABEOKUTA

A 40-year-old man, Samson Ola, has appeared before an Abeokuta Magistrates' Court sitting in Isabo over alleged forgery and impersonation.

The prosecution alleged that between 2021 and 2024, the defendant forged the seal, stamp and signature of Zucams Nig. Ltd., a survey consulting

firm, and impersonated a licensed surveyor.

Ola pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Magistrate A.K. Araba granted him bail in the sum of N200,000 with one licensed bondsman as surety and ordered his remand pending perfection of bail conditions. The matter was adjourned until March 18 for hearing.

Presidency cautions opposition against disinformation

ABUJA

The Presidency on Thursday cautioned opposition parties against what it described as disinformation on the amended Electoral Act and the APC-led Federal Government.

Presidential spokesperson, Mr Bayo Onanuga, disclosed this in a statement titled "Opposition parties should stop constant lamentation and un-

warranted outrage against the Electoral Act and the APC government."

Onanuga stated that some opposition figures, including members of the ADC and NNPP, made allegations against President Bola Tinubu and the APC-led Federal Government.

He described the claims as misleading and aimed at discrediting the National Assembly and the administration.

The closing ceremony of the 2nd Niger Delta Games at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin City in pix



NEWS

Foreign

Danish PM calls snap election with Greenland issue centre-stage

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has announced early elections - hailing the next four years as "decisive" for her country.

"We as Danes and as Europeans will really have to stand on our own feet," Frederiksen told parliament. "We need to define our relationship with the United States," she added.

The past few months of Danish politics have been dominated by US President Donald Trump's threats to annex Greenland - a semi-autonomous Danish territory.

Last month, Trump dropped threats to use force against the

fellow Nato ally to seize the Arctic island he argues is necessary to defend against possible attacks from Russia and China.

Announcing the decision to call early elections, Prime Minister Frederiksen told parliament that security "is and will remain the very foundation of Danish politics for many, many years to come".

"We must rearm to ensure peace on our continent," she said. "We must stick together in Europe, and we must secure the future of the Danish Commonwealth" - Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

"Whether I will continue to be your prime minister depends on how strong a mandate you give the Social Democrats," Frederiksen said mentioning her party, the lead partner in the current Danish coalition.

Greenland is sparsely populated but its location between North America and the Arctic makes it well placed for early warning systems in the event of missile attacks.

Trump has claimed without evidence that it is "covered with Russian and Chinese ships all over the place".

More than 100 US military personnel are permanently sta-

tioned at a US base in Greenland's north-western tip - a facility that has been operated by the US since World War Two.

Under existing agreements with Denmark, the US has the power to bring as many troops as it wants to Greenland.

But Trump has not abandoned his plans - he has said previously that the US needs to own Greenland to properly defend it - and talks continue over ways of establishing US control over the entire island.

Both Denmark and Greenland have said they will not agree to cede sovereignty to the US. Their European allies have rallied to their support.



DANISH PM METTE FREDERIKSEN:

Trump's plans to seize control of Greenland have dominated Danish politics

Hillary Clinton appears before US House panel investigating Epstein

Hillary Clinton is appearing before a panel of the US House of Representatives that is investigating the crimes of late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

The former Democratic secretary of state and presidential candidate recently agreed, along with her husband, former President Bill Clinton, to testify to the House Oversight Committee.

Both had previously resisted demands to appear, describing them as politically motivated. Their agreement to testify warranted off potential contempt-of-Congress proceedings against them.

Hillary Clinton has said she does not recall meeting or speaking to Epstein. Her husband, who did know Epstein, has denied any wrongdoing or knowledge of Epstein's crimes.

Bill Clinton has said he cut off ties with Epstein two decades ago, and has voiced regret that he was ever associated with

the financier, who died in 2019.

He is expected to provide testimony of his own on Friday.

In an interview with the BBC last week in Berlin, Germany, Hillary Clinton said the deposition was a Republican ruse to divert attention from questions about Trump's association with Epstein.

"We have nothing to hide," she said. "We have called for the full release of these files repeatedly. We think sunlight is the best disinfectant."

She maintained that she never met Epstein, but did meet his convicted associate, Ghislaine Maxwell, "on a few occasions". Maxwell attended the wedding of the couple's daughter, Chelsea Clinton, in 2010 in New York.

The couple's announcement in recent weeks that they would provide testimony after all marked a reversal of their defiant position, and came as a potential contempt vote loomed in the House.

Some Democratic members of the committee voted in favour of initiating contempt proceedings.

The Clintons have previously accused the panel's Republican leader, James Comer, of "partisan politics" in his handling of the investigation. They described the legal summonses as "nothing more than a ploy to attempt to embarrass political rivals, as President Trump has directed".

They insisted that they had already submitted sworn statements that covered the "limited information" they had on Epstein.

Nonetheless, they would appear, said a spokesperson for Bill Clinton, and "they look forward to setting a precedent that applies to everyone".

For his part, Comer said the effort to secure a deposition from both of the Clintons was a bipartisan move to show that "no-one is above the law".

Bill Clinton appears in text

and photos that have recently been released in stages by the US Department of Justice (DOJ) in its disclosure of material that was uncovered during federal investigations into Epstein's crimes.

The files more broadly reveal the extent of Epstein's connections with multiple high-profile individuals, including after he was convicted of sex crimes.

As with others who appear in the files - including the current president Donald Trump, who previously had his own association with Epstein - appearing in the documents does not imply any wrongdoing.

The Clintons' hearings will take place in Chappaqua, New York, near their home. Such depositions normally occur behind closed doors, though the Clintons fought for their own testimony to be public so that selective portions of their evidence could not be leaked to the media.

Israeli soldiers shot a Palestinian boy and stood around as he bled to death

Last November, a 14-year-old Palestinian boy named Jad Jadallah was shot at close range by Israeli soldiers in a refugee camp in the occupied West Bank.

As Jad lay collapsed in an alley, the soldiers created a cordon around him and blocked two Palestinian ambulances from reaching him.

According to video footage and eyewitness testimony, the soldiers - 14 in total - then stood around Jad casually for at least 45 minutes while he bled from one or more gunshot wounds.

All Israeli soldiers receive training in trauma treatment, and any Israeli combat unit should contain a specifically trained medic, but none of the soldiers appeared to give Jad life-saving medical aid. At points, they appeared to ignore repeated attempts from Jad to get their attention.

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) told the BBC that soldiers had provided "initial medical treatment", but a spokesperson refused to give any details about the nature or timing of the treatment.

The IDF has also accused Jad of throwing a rock, which, under their rules of engagement, can permit soldiers to use lethal force.

But the footage of the incident shows an IDF soldier dropping an object next to Jad after he was shot, then taking a photograph of it - an action Jad's family and a leading human rights group say appears to be an attempt to frame him.

The soldiers eventually loaded Jad into the back of an Israeli military vehicle, but at some point, either before or after they did, he died. It is still unclear where on his body or how many times he was shot, because the Israeli military has refused to return his body to the family and declined to answer any questions about his injuries.

Jad was born and raised in al-Far'a, a refugee camp in the West Bank that is home to about 10,000 Palestinians. Along with other similar camps in the occupied territories, it is subject to frequent Israeli military raids, which Israel says are necessary to counter armed groups operating there.

US justice department accused of withholding Trump-related Epstein files

The top Democrat on the congressional committee investigating Jeffrey Epstein has accused the US justice department of withholding files containing allegations of sexual abuse of a minor made against President Donald Trump.

Robert Garcia, who sits on the House Oversight Committee, said he had personally viewed documents containing the allegation that had not been made public.

In response, the justice department said "NOTHING has been deleted", adding that documents were withheld only if they were "duplicates, privileged, or part of an ongoing federal investigation".

Trump has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing in relation to the Epstein case and has recently said he has been "totally exonerated".

The justice department has also previously said that some of the files contain "untrue and sensationalist claims against President Trump".

White House spokeswoman Abigail Jackson said on Tuesday that "by releasing thousands of pages of documents, cooperating with the House Oversight Committee's subpoena request, signing the Epstein Files Transparency Act, and calling for more investigations into Epstein's Democrat friends, President Trump has done more for Epstein's victims than anyone before him."

Epstein, the late convicted sex offender, appears to have

been friends with Trump for a number of years. They later fell out - which happened in the early 2000s, according to Trump, two years before Epstein was first arrested.

The justice department has released millions of files that show what the federal investigations into Epstein uncovered. The staged releases were prompted by an act signed off by the president, who had earlier resisted the release of the material.

Some files were redacted, and officials have acknowledged that other files were not released at all. The legislation allowed the justice department to withhold certain files to secure active investigations or prosecutions, and to protect the identities of victims.

Garcia said the files he had seen "make it clear" that a woman "made additional, specific allegations" against Trump that "are not reflected" in the records that have been made public by the department.

He said he had written to US Attorney General Pam Bondi demanding that they be published.

In its response, Bondi's justice department accused Democrats on the committee of "misleading the public while manufacturing outrage from their radical anti-Trump base".

In a separate statement posted on X, the department also said it would review whether any files had been improperly withheld.

Foreign

NEWS

At least 10 FBI staffers connected to Trump investigations fired

The FBI has fired roughly 10 members, all of whom participated in a probe into Donald Trump's handling of classified documents after his first term.

Their termination on Wednesday, confirmed by the BBC's media partner CBS News, was announced shortly after FBI director Kash Patel told Reuters that federal agents subpoenaed his phone records when he was a private citizen during the documents probe.

Susie Wiles, now White House chief of staff, also had her phone records subpoenaed when she was a private citizen as part of the investigation.

Patel did not offer any ev-

idence of wrongdoing by the FBI staffers who were fired.

After Trump left the White House in 2021, Special Counsel Jack Smith led two federal investigations into now-President Trump. One case was focused on whether Trump tried overturn the 2020 election results. The other case focused on classified documents Trump brought back to his Mar-a-lago residence in Florida and his efforts to obstruct the justice department from later retrieving them.

The FBI staffers who were terminated on Wednesday all participated in the classified documents case.

BBC News has reached out to the FBI for comment.



US AND IRAN HOLD TALKS:

Omani Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi said the US and Iran had shown "openness to new and creative ideas" after meeting Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff

DRC: At least nine killed in drone strike that killed M23 spokesperson

Sources have told various press agencies that the drone strike near the Rubaya mining site on 24 February that killed M23 military spokesperson Willy Ngoma also killed nine other people. It however missed the movement's military commander.

On 24 February, the Congolese armed forces conducted a drone strike on the strategic mining hub of Rubaya, in the country's east. The target: the M23/AFC rebel movement.

While the strike killed M23 military spokesperson Willy Ngoma, the movement's military commander escaped unharmed.

Sources have now revealed that at least nine other people

however also perished in the attack.

According to information by the press agency Reuters, there could be seven more deaths associated with the strike, but no further bodies have so far been retrieved from the site.

The M23 has so far not commented on the attack.

The Rubaya mining site produces 15 to 30% of the world's supply of coltan, a key rare earth for computer technology and smartphones.

The M23 had been in control of the mining site since its rapid offensive against the Congolese armed forces last year, when it captured vast swathes of eastern DRC.

Kenyan man arrested for allegedly luring citizens to fight in Ukraine

Police in Kenya have arrested a man accused of tricking Kenyans into fighting in Ukraine under the promise of skilled work in Russia. Festus Omwamba was caught in the northern town of Moyale and charged in Nairobi with trafficking 25 Kenyans last year. Authorities say he tried to flee after returning from Russia.

Omwamba was identified by recruits who spoke to The Associated Press, after families began demanding answers about missing relatives sent to the front lines. The Kenyan government says over 1,000 Kenyans were recruited to fight for Russia, at least 89 remain on the battlefield, dozens are hospitalized, 28 are missing, and one has been confirmed dead.

An intelligence report presented to Parliament suggested rogue recruitment agencies colluded with Kenyan and Russian officials to lure recruits. The Russian Embassy denied issuing combat visas, saying foreigners may volun-

tarily enlist.

For the recruits, the promise of jobs turned into a nightmare. John Kamau, who escaped and sought refuge at Kenya's embassy in Moscow, says Omwamba ran the visa applications and travel plans. One recruit explained he was told he'd get a plumbing job, only to have his passport confiscated and be sent to a military camp before hitting the front lines. Omwamba's arrest marks a major step in Kenya's effort to stop this dangerous pipeline.



FESTUS OMWAMBA

US and Iran hold talks seen as crucial to prevent conflict

US and Iranian officials have met in Geneva for a third round of indirect talks seen as crucial to averting conflict, with President Donald Trump threatening to strike Iran if a nuclear deal is not reached.

The discussions come amid the largest US military build-up in the Middle East since the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, and with Iran vowing to respond to an attack with force.

Thursday's talks were adjourned after three hours. Oman's Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi, who is acting as the mediator, said negotiators had exchanged "creative and positive ideas" and would return after taking a break. "We hope to make more progress," he added.

But the chances of an agreement remain unclear.

While Trump has said he prefers to solve the crisis through diplomacy, he has also said he is considering a limited strike on Iran to pressure its leaders to accept a deal.

The president, however, has done little to explain what he is demanding in the negotiations and why there could be the need to take military action now, eight months after the US bombed Iranian nuclear facilities during a war between Israel and Iran.

Iran has rejected the US demand to stop the enrichment of uranium in its territory, but there have been indications that it is prepared to offer some concessions about its nuclear programme.

As in the previous two rounds of discussions earlier this month, the Iranian delegation

is being led by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, while the US is represented by special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner.

In recent weeks, the US has sent thousands of troops and what Trump has described as an "armada" to the region, including two aircraft carriers along with other warships, as well as fighter jets and refuelling aircraft.

Trump first threatened to bomb Iran last month as security forces brutally repressed anti-government protests, killing thousands of people. But since then, his focus has turned to Iran's nuclear programme, which has been at the centre of a long-running dispute with the West.

For decades, the US and Israel have accused Iran of trying to secretly develop a nuclear

weapon. Iran insists its programme is only for peaceful purposes, though the country is the only non-nuclear-armed state to have enriched uranium at near weapons-grade level.

In his State of the Union speech to Congress on Tuesday, Trump briefly and vaguely talked about the tensions with Iran, without clearly laying out the case for strikes.

He said Iran was working to build missiles that would "soon" be capable of reaching the US, without giving details. He also accused the country of trying to "start all over again" with a nuclear weapons programme following last year's strikes, and said he could not allow the "world's number one sponsor of terror... to have a nuclear weapon".

Russia and Ukraine exchange more than 1,000 soldiers' bodies

Russia says it has handed over the remains of 1,000 soldiers to Ukraine and has received the bodies of 35 Russian soldiers in return.

It comes as Ukraine's chief negotiator met US President Donald Trump's envoys in Geneva to discuss economic plans for the reconstruction of Ukraine after the war.

Negotiators were also preparing a third round of US-led talks aimed at ending the conflict which has entered its fifth year - a trilateral meeting involving the Russian side, too.

Hours before the Geneva talks, Russia launched 420 drones and 39 missiles in six different regions of Ukraine, injuring dozens of people, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said.

Vladimir Medinsky, a top aide of Russian President Vladimir Putin, announced the

exchange of bodies in a short announcement on Telegram. He gave no details, but included an image showing bodies being unloaded from a truck.

Hours later, Ukraine said it had received 1,000 bodies which, "according to prior information from the Russian side, may belong to Ukrainian defenders".

The two sides have exchanged thousands of soldiers' bodies over the course of the conflict that began with Putin's decision to launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

The exchange is based on an agreement reached by the two sides during negotiations in Istanbul in June 2025. Moscow and Kyiv agreed to return the bodies of up to 6,000 soldiers each, as well as all sick and heavily wounded prisoners of war and those aged under 25.

Kyiv and Moscow regularly

publish estimates of the other side's losses, but do not detail their own.

Zelensky recently admitted 55,000 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed on the battlefield - a figure Western observers describe as an underestimate as it does not include those missing.

And from public sources, the BBC has confirmed the names of almost 186,000 people killed fighting on Russia's side in Ukraine. The true death toll is generally accepted to be much higher, as many deaths on the battlefield are not recorded.

So even though estimates suggest more Russians are dying every day, Moscow has returned more bodies to Ukraine overall than it has received.

No-one has explained the discrepancy, even though Russia has previously accused Ukraine of not abiding by the Istanbul agreement, and

Ukraine has alleged Russian body returns were irregular and sometimes included Russians' remains - a charge Moscow has rejected.

One possible explanation is that Russia captures more Ukrainian bodies given its troops have been on the attack most of the time and, therefore, more able to retrieve them from the battlefield.

On the eve of the Geneva talks, President Zelensky had a telephone conversation with Trump and said he expected the Geneva meeting would lead to trilateral negotiations at the beginning of March - thus creating "an opportunity to move talks to the leaders' level".

"President Trump supports this sequence of steps," Zelensky said, adding: "This is the only way to resolve all the complex and sensitive issues and finally end the war."

Entertainment

— with Davidson Imosime Izegaegbe —

Is film Quality Control a blessing or a curse for African cinema?

"Let's make quality and originality our watchword as filmmakers while Igodo.tv connects your films with the world."

—Davidson Imosime Izegaegbe—

Taking a deep look into the high-stakes world of global streaming for various film contents, where content is king, the Nigerian film industry stands at a transformative crossroads, and this is where Igodo Motion Pictures, the powerhouse behind over 70 percent ready new streaming platform igodo.tv, a rising force in film distribution will open roads to return on investments.

Filmmakers who once understood the strength of distribution, the need for great storylines to keep their diverse audiences at their film outlets, are the ones in the Board of this new streaming platform. Igodo isn't just looking for "content", it is looking for creative excellence. From high-stakes dramas of all genres to culturally rich animations, dances, documentaries and so on. As seasoned filmmakers themselves who are still in the frontline of the film industry in Edo State and beyond, their message to fellow filmmakers across the globe is loud and clear: Quality is the only passport to the global stage.

Setting the Bar For filmmakers eyeing a spot on igodo.tv, is a key to opening the door to a floodgate of African movies encased in revealing cultural philosophy, which therefore make the entry requirements to getting a film slot in the streaming company no longer a suggestion but a mandate.

We all know that there are never perfect movies convincing enough to detach any audience from its creation, but the focus by Igodo Motion Pictures from Edo State would deliberately and intentionally look out for and take out those unpardonable errors, whether technical or otherwise, that would affect consumption by the audience or the lifespan of the film title.

The major problem in the Edo State creative space is the continuous braindrain to Lagos where streaming platforms or opportunities to them abound. It is sad to know that key players in the Nigeria film Industry are from Edo State but taken by Lagos State. Most filmmakers presently in Edo State are marking time to also be taken by Lagos and other states prepared to utilize their creative talents. Every creative content is like any other product desirous of attention and financial appraisal from the

public. The problem in Edo State is not content or talent but viable streaming avenue for potential investors and buyers. Therefore, for filmmakers in Edo State or extraction to survive the Igodo Motion Pictures litmus test, submissions in hitting high-water marks certainly would not be a problem.

I have always opined that the film industry is more lucrative than the oil and gas sector because it is not a business for the few but for all. There is the need for states to look inward in investing on all areas to make the creative business an attractive world class industry. There is no oil industry without at least a rig, so why can't Edo State or others have a functional international studios as their own rig to meet up global standards, and then follow up with streaming platforms as a marketing and distributing entity to sell local contents globally?

But as an upcoming streaming platform from Edo State, Igodo Motion Pictures has tighten the screws on talents approaching to creative works and technical requirements in the bid to set standards that can compete globally as well as generate revenue for Edo State. A polarizing debate has emerged in the halls of Nollywood: Is this rigorous Quality Control (QC) a blessing that elevates the craft, or a curse that stifles the creative spirit? The answer is not far fetched.

For decades, African cinema—specifically Nollywood—before our eyes battled a reputation for "quantity over quality." This led to a drop in sales then as buyers had to wait for other to buy, be sure the movies were good before attempting purchase on certain movies. This even led to some production companies standing tall amongst others in terms of quality. Therefore, the rigorous quality control (QC) acted as a much-needed filter. According to industry analysts, strict technical standards protect the Return on Investment (ROI). This may sound absurd until you become an investor. Have you asked why some banks today have more customers than others even without an advertisement? Institutional self regulation against lowering standards has stood them out.

By ensuring a film meets international broadcast standards, distributors ensure the movie re-

mains viable on global platforms for decades. As the Igodo team suggests, that While awards and critical acclaim are needed, cinematic and global appeal from well crafted visual storytelling is a must. If a film product is not attractive, it won't survive in the cinema or any other streaming platforms.

Conversely, some analysts or young investors and filmmakers argue that the obsession with "4K and above or nothing" creates a financial wall for grassroots storytellers. They argue that shooting in 4K and above with professional sound design, equipments and crew requires a budget many emerging filmmakers and investors simply don't have. Critics also raised the bar of fear that by chasing global appeal, unique, raw, and experimental styles might be polished away to fit a safe commercial mold.

Is streaming platform as a distributing service a blessing or a curse? Most evidence points toward a blessing. In the modern era, where television, laptops, GSM screens and sound are high tech, poor technical quality is no longer tolerated or seen as charming but a liability. Research suggests that "perceived technical quality significantly impacts viewer retention and brand loyalty in SVOD (Subscription Video on Demand) services" (Lotz, 2017).

Furthermore, as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) opens its doors, Nigerian films from its diverse filmmakers with diverse cultural influences must compete with high-budget imports. Without QC, local films risk being sidelined.

As Igodo Motion Pictures moves to commission new genres, they are not just acting as critics; they are acting as brand managers for African culture against the backdrop of Edo State cultural diversified heritage. By demanding that Edo state government look towards the direction of its film sector for social-economic investment, Igodo Motion Pictures through igodo.tv with strict demand for quality and originality, would ensure that when the world clicks 'Play' on a Nigerian story, they will see it in its most brilliant light. As filmmakers of films of various genres, let's make quality and originality our watchword as filmmakers, while Igodo.tv connects our films with the world.

TATAFO



How Nigeria folklores fit take over world cinema

Wetin de happen, my people? My kwesion fit make una laff but If you grow up for Naija, you go sabi say awa tori nor jus start today, infact e don tey e nack leg for road. Bifor all dis diffrent wey we take de wosh film com, and social media, even bifor television com be laik pure water for evri house, we get wetin we dey call "Tales by Moonlight" dat time. If you rimemba, onda eni tree for village or for de small veranda for eni yard, Papa or Mama go sidon and start to yan us about Mami Wota, Sango, the clever Tortoise, about awa Ogisos, Obas, warriors and how de oyinbos even yan us opata say na dem discover river Naija. Dis tori no be just for fun; na awa history, awa korshora filosofi, awa magic, and awa soul. But see as tins com be today na, de level don change. Oyinbos don helep us trowey awa own history and com replace with dem own kain tori about who we be. As de mata com be now, we don learn lesson and we don also no how to oprate camera and oda tins wey dem do to don take de yan dem own tori plus change awa own. We do kukuma stop to de tell awa tori for onda village trees or veranda for yards. Na for us to get awa own kain platform to de also use to tell dis oyinbos dem awa true tori.

Anoda ogbonge kwesion be say, na how we fit take turn awa local folklores into global cinematic bangers? See as de grammar "global cinematic bangers", sweet my belle! Wetin e mean na how to make awa own tori cause gbege for evriwia, sotey, evribodi go de strungle to wan go wosh dis films.

If nor be home trouble or awa village pipo de worri us, how Nigeria wey get over 250 ethnic groups, inside ova 250 million pipo, and evri ethnic group get their own "Avengers", neva fit show am to de world? Na who say as de Oyibo pipo dey hala Thor and Wonder Woman, we nor fit cause gbege with awa own, Sango, Ogun, Olokun, Orumila, Eziza, Aruan, and many odas?

I neva enta odas on romance ooo! Na who do us?

Make we talk true, una neva tire to de see dia superman, spiderman. Batman and so on? Sotey dem don even de use film to de yan us say none to bone beta pass man to marry woman. Wetin awa ears no hia or awa eyes see? If we awa gofment nor gree support

and begin invest in films, bery soon de same gofment go de kolet duties on films about awa Sango and odas wey dis Oyinbos go do and sell to us. Dat time, even we go com de belif say Sango and Aruan na oyinbo spiritual deities and nor be awa own. Dem don use Black Panther take do experiment. Na so e de start. Na small small and with style monkey take de enta market.

Bifor-bifor, if you wan wosh "Juju film," de quality fit make eye turn you and faint or make ya de pain you. De film fo be laik say na torchlight dem take light de film for camera to vidio. Abi na de ghost we go wia white jialiabia, luk him left and right bifor him cross road make motor nor kpai am? But if una compare Naija films today with dose days, una go see say tins don true true change!

E no just reach to carry camera go bush say you dey act folklore. To make the world gree watch your film, you gidi to follow some "international standard" levels:

Awa gofment need to invest inside awa film industri so dat awa film pipo fit leave imitation and face awa real identity. We get awa own Naija English and we com get pidgin join. Abi na locations? We get dem jabrata plus de actors and evritin. Awa film industri na motor wey jus need constant fuel supply from gofment to take take-off.

Imagine a movie about de Benin Empire or the various popular festivals inside Edo State. Jus rison am say awa tradishonal tori dem com get de say budget laik oyinbo Gladiator? We fit neva onstand my yanings, but make una try to onstand say awa folklores be laik crude oil wey we neva tap at all. If we use sense, use technology, and tell awa diffrent tori with pride, wetin go make awa Nollywood nor soon bicom de "Koshora Headquarters" of the world? We no need to beg for space again, bicos de world go com luk for us.

Las las, as we don agree to de move go front so, make we no forget awa roots. Eni tree wey forget him roots go fall yakata when breeze blow. Awa tori na awa power. I no say one day you go enta game Centre or cinema go wosh awa folklores and superheroes for 3D cinema with popcorn for hand. Na for eye e de tey, but rimemba say yansh near hand pass as you tink am.

Na wen you wan wosh am you go com no.

ArtsWorld

with Francis Odupute
08023680030

WHW Foundation celebrates successful graduation of vocational trainees in Benin City

BENIN CITY

The Women Helping Women for a Sustainable Tomorrow Foundation (WHW Foundation) proudly celebrated the graduation of its latest vocational training cohort in a vibrant ceremony held at the John Odigie-Oyegun Public Service Academy (JOOPSA), marking another milestone in its mission to empower women toward economic independence.

Dozens of women successfully completed intensive training in Fashion Designing and specialized entrepreneurial skills under WHW's flagship empowerment program. The ceremony showcased the graduates' creativity, craftsmanship, and readiness to transition from trainees to business owners and job creators.

The event reflected the bold vision of WHW Founder, CEO & Global President, H.E. Apostle Prof. Elizabeth Pedro, whose leadership continues to position the foundation as a catalyst for women's economic transformation across Nigeria and beyond.

In her keynote address, Prof. Pedro stated: "Empowering a woman empowers a nation. It was not just about certificates; it was about the birth of new legacies. These women are no longer just trainees—they are entrepreneurs and drivers of local economic growth."

The ceremony was attended by representatives from the Office of the Governor of Edo State, the Office of the First Lady, honourable commissioners, Permanent Secretaries, the Director of BT/VET, Local Government officials, traditional and community leaders, development partners, international representatives from Senegal and the United States, NGOs, and WHW management staff.

A testimonial segment allowed graduates to share personal stories of transformation—highlighting how the program restored dignity, renewed hope, and created viable pathways to financial stability for themselves and their families.

The graduation also served as a call to action for expanded public and private sector col-

laboration. Prof. Pedro emphasized the need for continued support—particularly industrial equipment such as sewing machines—to ensure graduates can scale their enterprises sustainably.

This milestone underscores WHW Foundation's measurable impact at the grassroots

level, reinforcing its commitment to bridging innovation with financial self-reliance for women and girls.

Women Helping Women (WHW) Foundation is a global, award-winning nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering women and girls through education, entrepre-

neurship, STEM initiatives, vocational skills acquisition, and micro-grants for startup businesses.

By providing access to resources, mentorship, and opportunity, WHW strengthens economic participation, promotes gender equity, and fosters sustainable communi-

ty development. Governed by a robust leadership structure including the Founder/CEO & Global President, Board of Trustees, and Global Executive Council, WHW operates chapters across North America, Africa, the United Kingdom, Europe, Sweden, and the Caribbean.



A celebration of Art, Culture, and Heritage opens at the National Museum

An evocative celebration of artistic expression, culture, and heritage will unfold this March as a new exhibition opens at the National Museum, Ring Road, Benin City, offering audiences a compelling exploration of creativity rooted in history, identity, and contemporary thought.

Scheduled to open on 5 March 2026 at 11:00 a.m., the exhibition is presented in collaboration with the Nation-

al Museum, Benin, situating artistic practice within one of Nigeria's most historically significant cultural spaces. The exhibition brings together works that reflect the enduring dialogue between tradition and modern expression, highlighting art as both a preserver of heritage and a medium for reinterpretation.

Set against the backdrop of Benin City's profound cultural legacy, the exhibition examines

how artists respond to history, memory, and lived experience. Through diverse visual expressions, the showcased works engage themes of identity, continuity, transformation, and cultural pride, inviting viewers to reflect on the role of art in shaping collective consciousness.

The National Museum setting provides a powerful context for the exhibition, reinforcing the connection be-

tween contemporary artistic practices and the preservation of cultural heritage. Visitors can expect an immersive experience where art functions not only as aesthetic expression but also as cultural documentation and social commentary.

According to the organisers, the exhibition is conceived as a meeting point for artists, historians, cultural practitioners,

and the wider public, creating space for dialogue, learning, and appreciation. It underscores the importance of sustaining artistic platforms that honour the past while encouraging creative innovation for the future.

By situating contemporary works within a museum environment, the exhibition challenges audiences to reconsider how heritage is experienced,

interpreted, and passed on. It affirms art's capacity to bridge generations and serve as a living archive of cultural values.

The exhibition is open to members of the public, cultural stakeholders, art professionals, students, and enthusiasts, and promises a meaningful encounter with art that speaks to Nigeria's rich cultural narrative and evolving artistic voice.



Gallery opening: Moonlight Umbrella Art Gallery (MUG) to bridge gaps in the art market

On February 15, 2026, a new beacon for creativity arrived in the heart of Edo State. Moonlight Umbrella Art Gallery (MUG) proudly opened in Benin City. The gallery aims to become a premier destination for art enthusiasts, collectors and the local creative community.

Under the mission of "Bridging the gap between the visual artist, art collectors, and the art market," MUG offers a diverse range of artistic services and products. The gallery's debut will showcase a stunning collection of sculptures and paintings, alongside specialized

packages like adire, vintages wears, beautiful sun dresses for the ladies and some Ankara.

Supporting events included "Sip & Paint" sessions and vintage art showcases; games and fun activities.

"We aren't just opening a gallery; we are creating a home for visual storytelling in Benin City," says the MUG management team. "Our goal is to make high-quality art accessible while providing a platform where local talent can thrive and connect directly with the global market."

To celebrate the launch, MUG offered an exclusive 20% discount on all purchases

made during the opening day. Attendees had the opportunity to view original works, meet the artists, and explore the gallery's unique retail offerings.

Moonlight Umbrella Art Gallery is a contemporary art space based in Benin City, dedicated to the promotion of visual arts and the empowerment of artists. Under our umbrella, we protect the artist interest and the collectors' interest as well. We are a sanctuary. Through exhibitions, custom commissions, and creative lifestyle products, MUG serves as a vital link between the creator and the collector.

Friday Sermon

Ramadan is the time to salvate ourselves from fire!

IMAM MY BABANGIDA

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful
 All praise be to Allah, the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Appreciative, who bestows abundant rewards upon His servants and forgives their shortcomings through His mercy—thereby saving them from calamity and torment. I bear witness that there is no deity except Allah, alone without any partner, and I bear witness that Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is His servant and Messenger. May Allah send abundant peace and blessings upon him, his family, and his companions until the Day of Resurrection.

Dear brothers and sisters! In just a few hours the entire cosmos prepares for a magnificent event. As soon as the sun of the last day of Sha'aban sets and the first night of Ramadan appears, the universe itself undergoes a profound transformation.

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) said:

"When the first night of the month of Ramadan comes, the devils are chained, the jinn are subdued, and the gates of the Fire are locked—none of them being opened—while the gates of Paradise are opened, with none being closed. And a caller is heard proclaiming: 'O seeker of good, come in, and O seeker of evil, desist.' And there are those whom Allah will deliver from the Fire. This happens every night." [Narrated by Tirmidhi]

Respected brothers and sisters! If Allah has bestowed upon you the honour of witnessing Ramadan, then praise Him for granting you this magnificent opportunity for salvation!

You may ask: From what is this salvation derived? Ramadan is an opportunity to break free from the bondage of one's own desires and to resist the lure of baser inclinations. The supreme objective of fasting is piety. As our Most Merciful Lord declares:

"O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous." [Surah al-Baqarah: 183]

The servants of Allah who cultivate piety are those whose hearts are enkindled by faith in Allah, who are firm in their conviction through His knowledge, who witness His signs, who love and revere Him, and who fear and hope in Him—all while being acutely aware of the Hereafter with its rewards and its retribution. Such believers erect for themselves a protective barrier between their souls and the punishment of Allah by diligently observing His commands and abstaining from that which is forbidden.

Fasting instills and fortifies this piety. It liberates the individual from the enslavement of his own desires, making him a master over his self—he governs his inner being rather than being ruled by it. In doing so, he becomes patient against his cravings and steadfast before his whims. For this reason, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon



him) called Ramadan the "month of patience." If you emerge from your fast having subdued the whispers of your own self, then rejoice in the promise of Paradise with your Lord. Allah Almighty reminds us:

"But as for one who fears standing before his Lord and restrains his soul from its desires, Paradise will be his refuge." [Surah al-Nazi'at:40-41]

And what of the one who spends his day fasting yet provokes the anger of the Mighty? What benefit is there in a fast if a person does not guard his heart and his limbs against that which Allah has forbidden? Did not the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) say:

"He who does not forsake false speech and wrongful deeds does not need Allah to forsake his food and drink." [Narrated by al-Bukhari]

It is also narrated from the noble companion Jabir Ibn Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him) that he said:

"When you fast, let your hearing, sight, and tongue also fast from lying and that which is forbidden. Avoid the harm of those who serve you, and maintain dignity and tranquility throughout your fast. Do not treat the day of breaking your fast the same as the day of fasting." [Narrated by Ibn al-Mubarak]

Dear brothers and sisters! Ramadan is a precious opportunity for salvation from the peril of sins. Sins are like wounds in the heart—barriers that repel Allah's mercy. Yet many persist in neglect, increasing their transgressions and misdeeds. When Ramadan comes, however, Allah's bounty increases; He opens the widest doors of mercy for His servants and bestows upon them His magnificent forgiveness, pardon, and mercy—indeed, He is the Bestower and the Acceptor of repentance.

Reflect upon these three great authentic sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) as follows:

"Whoever fasts during Ramadan out of sincere faith and with the hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven." [Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim]

"Whoever stands in prayer during

Ramadan with faith and in hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven." [Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim]

"Whoever stands in prayer on the Night of Decree (Lailatul-Qadr) with faith and in hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven." [Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Fasting, nightly prayers during Ramadan, and worship on Lailatul-Qadr—if these acts are performed with the sincere belief that Allah alone ordained them and that He has promised immense reward, then Allah will forgive all your sins out of His mercy and grace. Truly, the greatest loss is that of the one who is deprived of the blessings of this season; the door is opened to him, yet he does not enter. It is reported that the angel Gabriel (AS) once said:

"Let the servant's nose be deprived, if he enters Ramadan, he may not have his sins forgiven." Then the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) supplicated on his behalf, and his prayer was answered with, "Ameen." [Narrated by al-Bukhari in al-Adab al-Mufrad]

Dear servants of Allah! Ramadan is also an opportunity for salvation from the lightness of our deeds on the Day of Judgment. For on that Day, every servant's deeds will be weighed. Allah Almighty says:

"And the weighing that Day will be the truth. So, whoever's scales are heavy, those are the successful. And whoever's scales are light, those are the ones who have lost their souls for what they used to earn." [Surah al-A'raf: 8-9]

Among the most significant deeds that will add weight to your scale is a fast observed in the true spirit for Allah. The Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) said:

"Every deed of the son of Adam is multiplied: a good deed is rewarded tenfold up to seven hundred times. But Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, said: 'Except for fasting, for it is Mine, and I shall reward it. He leaves his desires and his food for My sake.'" [Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Indeed, the reward of fasting with Allah is far greater than even seven

hundred times any other deed. In truth, only Allah knows the extent of its reward, favour, and blessing.

Consider this beautiful narration: Talha Ibn Ubaidullah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that two men came to the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) that converted to Islam sincerely, yet one exerted himself far more than the other. The one who strove with greater intensity was martyred in battle, while the other lived for a year thereafter before passing away. Talha said: "I saw in a dream that I was standing at the gate of Paradise with them. Then, a person emerged from Paradise and gave permission for the one who died later, and afterward another came out and gave permission for the one who was martyred, and then he returned to me and said: 'Return, for your time has not yet come.'"

The people marveled at this, and when the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) heard of it, he asked: "What is it that you marvel at?"

They replied: "O Messenger of Allah, this man exerted himself more, was martyred in the way of Allah, yet the other entered Paradise before him!"

The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) then asked:

"Did not the latter remain a year after him?"

They answered: "Yes." He then inquired: "And did he observe Ramadan by fasting?"

They said: "Yes." "And did he perform such and such prayer with prostrations during that year?"

They affirmed: "Yes." Then the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) said:

"The distance between their rewards is greater than the distance between the heavens and the earth!" [Narrated by Ahmad and Ibn Majah]

He who reaches Ramadan and fasts is elevated by Allah and granted precedence. So, do you not praise Allah for bestowing upon you this blessed month and for enabling you to fast?

Respected servants of Allah! Have you heard about the so-called "Hell-

fire People"? The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) said:

"There will come a time when groups of people will be struck by the Fire for the sins they have committed, and then Allah will admit them into Paradise by the virtue of His mercy. They will be known as the 'Hellfire People.'" [Narrated by al-Bukhari]

Some of the Muslim believers, because of their sins, will fall into Hell, where the Fire will seize them. And what is the nature of that Fire? It is an overwhelming deluge that erases every pleasure of this world. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) said:

"On the Day of Resurrection, the best of the delights of the people of this world will be brought from among the dwellers of the Fire; then the Fire will stain them, and it will be said: 'O son of Adam, have you ever experienced any good? Have you ever known any bliss?' They will reply: 'No, by Allah, O my Lord.'" [Narrated by Muslim]

Thus, the advice of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) to his beloved daughter Fatimah (may Allah be pleased with her) was:

"O Fatimah, save yourself from the Fire." [Narrated by Muslim]

In Ramadan, you are granted approximately thirty opportunities to secure a guarantee of deliverance from the Fire. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) said:

"Indeed, with every breaking of the fast there are those who are freed, and this occurs every night." [Narrated by Ibn Majah]

These are but a few of the abundant outpourings of Allah's mercy upon the earth and the heavens. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) also said:

"Do good throughout your lives and expose yourselves to the blessings of Allah's mercy, for indeed, Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, has blessings of His mercy with which He grants favour to whomever He wills among His servants." [Narrated by al-Tabarani]

O Allah, support Islam and exalt the Muslims; destroy the enemies of Islam and Muslims. O Allah, send down tranquility into the hearts of those striving in Your cause, save Your oppressed servants, and raise high the banner of Your religion by Your might, O Strong, O Steadfast.

O Allah, grant us safety in our homelands, reform our leaders and those entrusted with our affairs, and enable our allegiance to be with those who fear You, who are conscious of You, and who follow Your pleasure.

Our Lord, grant us goodness in this world and goodness in the Hereafter, and protect us from the torment of the Fire, ameen Ya Hayyu Ya Qayyum.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. Prayers, peace and mercy are upon our beloved master, Muhammad, the son of Abdullah (Peace be upon him), his family and Companions.

**Major Muhammad Yusuf Babangida
 Chief Imam 4 Brigade Central Mosque
 GRA Benin.**

Sports

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

Solaja secures fresh four-year mandate in Badminton Federation of Nigeria

The 2019 Africa Women in Badminton Award winner, Oby Solaja, has been returned for another four-year tenure in the Badminton Federation of Nigeria (BFN), reaffirming her enduring influence in the sport's development.

Solaja's re-election came during the BFN zonal election held in Enugu, where she emerged as the representative for the South East zone. Delegates affirmed her return in recognition of what officials described as her meritorious contributions to grassroots badminton development across the region.

A former multiple African champion, Solaja was among the global pioneering badminton players to feature at the Olympic Games, carving her name into the sport's history before transitioning into administration.

Oby Solaja receives a new mandate to contribute to the development of badminton in Nigeria.

After retiring from competitive play, she equipped herself for sports governance by completing the six-module sports administration programme for the CIES/FIFA diploma at Cairo University — a move that strengthened her credentials in sports organisation and leadership.

Over the past four years, Solaja has championed badminton development in South-eastern Nigeria through an annual championship organised in partnership with the Bet9ja Foundation. The tournament, held on a rotational basis across states in the region, has provided a competitive platform for emerging talents and reinforced grassroots participation.

Enugu State Commissioner for Youth and Sports Development, Lloyd Ikechukwu Ekwere, congratulated Mr Peter Akpe on his swearing-in as Deputy Governor of Bayelsa State.

Her efforts have been widely credited with expanding the sport's reach and encouraging



THE 2019 AFRICA WOMEN IN BADMINTON AWARD WINNER, OBY SOLAJA

youth engagement in badminton within the zone.

Speaking after her confirmation, Solaja pledged renewed vigour in spreading what she described as the "gospel of badminton," emphasising continuity, talent discovery

and structured development pathways.

She also expressed appreciation to Kunle Soname, whose Bet9ja Foundation has supported the propagation of badminton in the Southeast.

With her fresh mandate,

stakeholders expect Solaja to consolidate existing programmes while strengthening institutional structures within the federation — a continuation of a journey that began on the court and now thrives in the boardroom

Bayelsa Queens, FC Robo Queens lead NWFL premiership groups



BAYELSA QUEENS VS FC ROBO QUEENS

Bayelsa Queens and FC Robo Queens finished first in Groups A and B respectively after the conclusion of Match Day 9 in the Nigeria Women Football League (NWFL) Premiership.

Both teams secured 21 points each, highlighting consistent performances across

the first round, with a total of 29 goals scored across all stadiums, underscoring the growing competitiveness of the league.

In Yenagoa, Bayelsa Queens defeated Ekiti Queens 2-0 thanks to goals from Sofiat Bankole and Delight Isaac, leaving Ekiti Queens in sixth place in Group A. Rivers Angels edged Edo

Queens 2-1 at home, with Abasi-son Uwah scoring twice, including a penalty, while Atume Doosuur pulled one back for Edo Queens, who now sit third with 18 points.

In Makurdi, Adamawa Queens beat Heartland Queens 2-1, with Omon Afensimi scoring twice and an own goal by Immaculate Paul briefly equalising; Adamawa move to fourth with 13 points, Heartland remain fifth with 11.

In Abuja, Naija Ratels secured a narrow 1-0 win over Pacesetter Queens via Omeje Chukwube, moving to five points, while Pacesetter remain bottom of the table with one point from eight matches.

Nasarawa Queens shocked FC Robo Queens 4-3 in Lafia, conceding four goals in the first 46 minutes, but Robo Queens still finish top of Group B with 21 points despite the heavy defeat.

Nigeria Customs Service supports athletes training grant programme

The Nigeria Customs Service, under the leadership of Comptroller General, Bashir Adewale Adeniyi has thrown its weight behind the National Sports Commission's athletes training grant programme as Nigeria intensifies preparations for the upcoming Commonwealth Games.

The NCS provided critical support to the Commission's initiative designed to boost elite athletes' readiness ahead of major international competitions.

Two weeks ago, 26 elite athletes drawn from different sports received training grants worth millions of naira under the programme. The intervention is targeted at strengthening athletes' preparation through improved access to quality coaching, enhanced nutrition, modern training equipment and exposure to competitive events.

The National Sports Commission noted that the backing of the Customs Service comes at a crucial time, as athletes enter the final stretch of preparations for global competitions. The grants are expected to ease financial pressures that often hinder optimal performance and allow beneficiaries to fo-

cus squarely on training.

Beyond institutional support, the Customs boss is widely regarded as a passionate sports administrator. Adeniyi also serves as President of the Nigeria Wrestling Federation, where he has consistently advocated structured funding, grassroots development and athlete welfare.

His commitment to Nigerian sports was visible during the recent Africa Cup of Nations in Morocco, where he rallied support for the Nigeria national football team, reinforcing morale and national backing for the squad.

This week, that passion translated into infrastructure development with the commissioning of the Wale Adeniyi Sports Arena in Ibadan, Lagos. The facility, executed as a Corporate Social Responsibility initiative of the Nigeria Customs Service, was formally inaugurated by the Comptroller-General.

The arena is expected to serve as a hub for community sports development, talent discovery and youth engagement, further underlining the Service's expanding footprint beyond its statutory mandate.



ATHLETES TRAINING



MR PETER AKPE

Bayelsa SWAN congratulates Akpe as Deputy Governor

The Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN), Bayelsa Chapter, has congratulated Mr Peter Akpe on his swearing-in as Deputy Governor of Bayelsa State.

The congratulatory message is contained in a statement issued on Thursday and signed by Mrs Timinepre Ohia, Chairman of SWAN, Bayelsa Chapter.

The association described Akpe's emergence as a well-deserved elevation, citing his

longstanding dedication to public service, administrative competence and commitment to the development of Bayelsa State.

According to the statement, Akpe's inauguration marks a significant milestone in the political and socio-economic advancement of the state.

SWAN said his wealth of experience, visionary leadership style and strong grassroots connection inspired confidence in a more prosperous

and inclusive Bayelsa.

The association acknowledged the vital role of government in promoting sports as a tool for youth empowerment, social cohesion and economic development.

It expressed optimism that the new Deputy Governor would support policies and initiatives aimed at strengthening sports development across the state.

SWAN also commended Gov. Douye Diri for repos-

ing confidence in Akpe and pledged continued partnership in promoting the state's sporting achievements nationally and internationally.

The association prayed for wisdom, strength and divine guidance for Akpe as he assumed the responsibilities of his new office.

It expressed confidence that his tenure would contribute meaningfully to the growth, stability and overall development of Bayelsa State.

LGAN appoints Onoja as patron, all Africa Challenge Trophy Ambassador

The Ladies Golf Association of Nigeria (LGAN) has appointed Chief Dr Ogwu Onoja as Patron and Ambassador of the forthcoming 2026 All Africa Challenge Trophy (AACT).

Onoja was also presented with a plaque in recognition of his steadfast support and commitment to advancing women's golf in Nigeria and across Africa.

G Chief Onoja is a Senior Advocate of Nigeria as well as the Ajenyi-Attah of Igala Kingdom.

Presenting the appointment letter on Thursday in Abuja, LGAN President Lami Ahmed said the association was honoured to have Onoja serve as Patron and AACT Ambassador.

She noted that the championship would hold from Nov. 1 to Nov. 7 at the IBB International Golf and Country, Abuja, with over 30 African countries expected to participate.

Ahmed described Onoja as a respected leader whose influence, integrity, and men-



THE LADIES GOLF ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (LGAN) HAS APPOINTED CHIEF DR OGWU ONOJA AS PATRON AND AMBASSADOR

torship would strengthen partnerships and boost confidence among stakeholders.

"As Patron, you will provide strategic guidance, attend key events, and promote LGAN's objectives.

"As AACT Ambassador, you will mobilise national support, promote the tournament's values, and align with President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope sports agenda."

She emphasised that Nigeria previously hosted the AACT in

1996 and 2010, adding that 2026 would further showcase national capacity and leadership.

Responding, Onoja described sports as a powerful unifying force in Nigeria and across the world.

"Sport brings people together beyond ethnicity and politics. It is one platform where we see a truly united Nigeria and Africa," he said.

He added that beyond recreation, sports promote health, discipline, and social development.

Onoja noted that he had been a member of the IBB International Golf and Country Club for 12 years, affirming his longstanding passion for golf.

"I have always identified with golf. It builds character, patience, and strategic thinking."

Describing the AACT as significant, he said women's participation in sports deserved strong encouragement and institutional backing.

"When women compete at continental level, they represent excellence, resilience, and national pride. That must be supported," he said.

He commended LGAN's leadership for laying a solid foundation and working selflessly for national glory.

"Hosting Africa will shine a positive light on Nigeria and give us an opportunity to showcase our organisational strength.

"I pledge goodwill and partnership to ensure a successful championship.



GABON TEAM

Gabon shortlists three candidates for head coach role

The Gabonese Football Federation has unveiled a three-man shortlist for the vacant head coach position of the Panthers.

The federation confirmed that it received a total of 605 applications for the national team job.

After a comprehensive review process, which included an initial screening and individual interviews with selected candidates, three finalists have emerged.

The profiles of the shortlisted coaches will now be forwarded to the Minister of Sports, Paul Kessany, for final consideration.

The three candidates still in contention are Régis Boagert, former assistant to Aliou Cissé with Senegal; Frédéric Bompard, who recently managed Nîmes and Sochaux; and Anthony Da Silva, who served as assistant coach of Cameroon between 2019 and 2022.

DG, NSC, Hon. Bukola Olopade, hails Niger Delta as Bedrock of Nigeria's Sporting Excellence

The Director General of the National Sports Commission (NSC), Hon. Bukola Olopade, has reaffirmed the Niger Delta's historic and strategic importance to Nigeria's sporting dominance, describing the region as "the bedrock of Nigeria's sport."

Hon. Olopade made this declaration while delivering a keynote address at the Niger Delta Cultural Expo, held as part of the ongoing Niger Delta Games at Cathlea Suites & Convention, 2 Aiyanyor Omoigui Way, Off 2nd Ugbor Road, GRA, Benin, Edo State. The Games will culminate later today, 26 February 2026, with a grand closing ceremony.

The event attracted an array of distinguished personalities from across Nigeria's sporting and corporate landscape, including Barrister Seyi Akwunmi, Dr. Tandoh Kwaku, Nigerian athletics icon Mary Onyali, President of the Athletics Federation of Nigeria Chief Tony Okowa, respected sports administrator Solomon Ogba, veteran sports journalist Mitchell Obi, and football administrator Davidson Owumi, among others.

Speaking with conviction, the NSC Director General underscored the region's long-standing contribution to elite sport:

"The event of recent days goes to show the huge history of sport that is embedded in the Niger Delta. Without a doubt, this is the bedrock of Nigeria's sport."

Reflecting on his experience marketing the National Sports Festival years prior, Olopade revealed that a significant percentage of Team Nigeria athletes

at the time emerged from the Niger Delta, with Delta State contributing a remarkable share.

"Today I'm the custodian of that record. I make bold to say that what Dunamis Icon Limited and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) are doing is not just to confirm what I knew as a private person but to cement the fact that without the Niger Delta, Nigeria's sporting pool would be bereft of talent."

Hon. Olopade paid glowing tribute to Dunamis-Icon Limited, organisers of the Games, and its Managing Consultant, Sir Itiako Ikpokpo KSM, fondly referred to as "Malik," for delivering what he described as a world-class sporting and



HON. BUKOLA OLOPADE

cultural spectacle.

He applauded the organisation's integration of sports tourism, youth empowerment, cultural heritage promotion, grassroots talent identifica-

tion, and sports entrepreneurship, noting that the initiative exemplifies the evolving sports industry model driven by strategic public-private partnerships (PPP).

Galatasaray advance after extra time to deny stunning Juventus comeback



VICTOR OSIMHEN

Galatasaray were beaten 3-2 at Juventus on Wednesday but reached the last 16 of the Champions League 7-5 on aggregate.

Thanks to two extra-time

goals after the hosts came agonisingly close to pulling off a great escape despite playing with 10 men.

Left with a mountain to climb after a 5-2 loss in Istanbul, Juventus forced the tie

into the extra 30 minutes and looked to have the upper hand before Victor Osimhen struck at the end of the first half of extra time and Baris Alper Yilmaz netted late on.

Manuel Locatelli opened the scoring for the home side from the penalty spot eight minutes before the break. Juventus had Lloyd Kelly sent off three minutes after the interval before Federico Gatti scored with 20 minutes left.

Galatasaray were unable to capitalise on their numerical advantage and Weston McKennie headed in eight minutes from the end.

The Turkish side who will meet either Liverpool or Tottenham Hotspur in the round of 16 with the draw on Friday.

PSG scrape through in thrilling Monaco clash

Holders Paris St Germain reached the Champions League last 16 after a 2-2 home draw with 10-man Monaco, advancing 5-4 on aggregate.

Monaco struck on the stroke of halftime through Maghnes Akliouche, but PSG equalised in the 60th minute via Marquinhos, taking the lead six minutes later through Khvicha Kvaratskhelia.

Substitute Jordan Teze scored in stoppage time to level 2-2, while Wout Faes missed a last-gasp header that could have forced extra time.

In March, PSG will face either Barcelona or Chelsea in the last 16, keeping the Parisians on course for another European campaign.

PSG were tested by Ligue 1 rivals, with Monaco almost taking the lead inside ten minutes when Akliouche assisted Coulibaly, who missed from close range.

Four minutes before halftime, Bradley Barcola hit the crossbar, and in stoppage time

Akliouche scored off the up-right to give Monaco the lead.

Caio Henrique's skillful cross found Akliouche via Coulibaly, handing Monaco a halftime advantage and putting PSG under pressure.

Monaco, 20 points behind PSG domestically, went down to 10 men in the 58th minute after Coulibaly received a second yellow for a late challenge on Hakimi.

Vitinha's resulting free kick found Marquinhos, who touched in from less than a metre to level the score for PSG.

A set piece led to PSG's second in the 66th minute, as Hakimi's shot was parried into Kvaratskhelia's path for the finish.

Monaco almost completed a comeback when Teze equalised in stoppage time, but Faes' glancing header failed to find the net.

"At the end, when they scored, we felt stressed and it was scary," said PSG's Desire Doue, who scored twice in the first leg.



PARIS ST GERMAIN VS MONACO



UBTH: Facts over falsehood

In the life of every public institution, there are moments when silence is no longer golden. There are times when clarity becomes a duty, and when leadership must confront misinformation not with anger, but with facts. That moment has come for the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH).

Recent narratives circulating in certain quarters, particularly across informal and digital platforms have sought to cast aspersions on the integrity of the hospital's Chief Medical Director, Professor Idia Enibokun Ize-Iyamu. These claims, bordering on allegations of extortion and profiteering in connection with laboratory services, are not only unfounded but profoundly misleading, according to the Management of the hospital.

As a matter of public relations, institutional credibility and responsible journalism, it is essential to address these issues head-on, with sobriety and factual precision. To appreciate the gravity of the allegations and their implausibility, one must first understand the terrain within which tertiary healthcare institutions in Nigeria operate.

UBTH is not a neighbourhood clinic. It is a referral centre, a training ground for medical professionals, a research institution, and a lifeline for complex cases across Edo State and neighbouring regions. Managing such an institution in today's economic climate requires resilience, prudence and reform-driven leadership.

Professor Ize-Iyamu's tenure has been characterised by institutional strengthening, improved service coordination and strategic capacity enhancement. These reforms, by their very nature, require difficult decisions, particularly in the face of rising costs of medical consumables, laboratory reagents, energy, utilities and equipment maintenance.

The recent review of certain service charges must be viewed within this context. No tertiary hospital can function sustainably if operational costs skyrocket while service pricing remains static. The adjustment, as clarified by Management, followed due process and relevant government guidelines. It was neither arbitrary nor whimsical.

Responsible leadership demands foresight. It demands that institutions are not allowed to decay quietly under financial strain. In such circumstances, reform is not profiteering; it is preservation.

Another area of controversy concerns the engagement of a private laboratory partner to augment UBTH's diagnostic capacity. The facts are straightforward. The partnership was designed to complement existing laboratory services particularly in specialised testing areas requiring advanced technology and faster



UNIVERSITY OF BENIN TEACHING HOSPITAL (UBTH)

turnaround times. It does not replace UBTH's internal laboratory operations. It enhances them.

Public-private partnerships in healthcare are globally recognised mechanisms for bridging resource gaps. In an environment where funding constraints are real and specialised diagnostic equipment is expensive, collaboration can improve efficiency without compromising institutional control.

What matters in such arrangements are three pillars: transparency, accountability and patient-centred care. According to UBTH Management, the engagement passed through appropriate institutional channels and adheres strictly to these principles.

It is therefore misleading to portray a strategic capacity-enhancement initiative as a commercial conspiracy. Such framing ignores both global best practice and local necessity.

The most serious claims circulating against Professor Ize-Iyamu suggest extortion of patients and profit-sharing from laboratory services. These allegations are grave. They question personal ethics and institutional governance. Yet, they are entirely devoid of substantiated evidence.

At no time has the Chief Medical Director engaged in extortionary practices. At no time has she participated in profiteering schemes connected to hospital services. These claims are baseless and malicious.

Lending its voice, the Edo State branch of the Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) has refuted the malicious social media posts directed

at the management and clinical operations of the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH).

In a statement signed and made available to journalists in Benin City, the Edo NMA Chairman, Dr Eustace Oseghale, urged members of the public to disregard the unverified allegations, which insinuated mismanagement and the purported engagement of a private laboratory within UBTH. He emphasised that the claims were unfounded and should not be taken seriously.

Public relations, at its core, is about protecting truth and institutional reputation. But it is also about reinforcing public confidence. UBTH's Management has made it unequivocally clear: the CMD's conduct remains guided by the highest standards of professionalism and ethical responsibility.

In a digital age where misinformation spreads faster than verification, reputational damage can occur before facts are examined. A whisper becomes a headline. A rumour becomes "public opinion". Yet leadership cannot be judged by viral speculation. Integrity is not established by noise; it is demonstrated through record.

Professor Idia Enibokun Ize-Iyamu's professional trajectory reflects decades of dedication to medicine, academic advancement and institutional service. Her appointment as Chief Medical Director was not accidental; it was the product of competence, experience and peer recognition.

Under her leadership, UBTH has pursued service expansion, improved

coordination and strengthened stakeholder engagement. These initiatives are measurable and visible within the institution's operational framework.

To suggest that such a leader would jeopardise her professional legacy for illicit gain is not merely speculative, it is implausible. Public officers deserve scrutiny. But scrutiny must be grounded in evidence, not conjecture. When allegations are raised without proof, they cease to be instruments of accountability and become tools of defamation.

Beyond the individual, there is a larger concern. False narratives do not harm only one person; they weaken institutions. In healthcare, weakened public confidence can have dangerous consequences.

Patients must trust their hospital. Medical trainees must believe in the integrity of their leadership. Partners and donors must feel assured of ethical governance. When malicious claims are amplified without verification, institutional morale suffers. Professional reputations are strained. Public confidence erodes.

UBTH has therefore taken a firm and principled stance, not merely to defend its Chief Medical Director, but to safeguard the institution's credibility. The hospital has also indicated its readiness to pursue lawful means to protect its leadership and reputation from defamatory attacks. This is not a threat; it is a statement of institutional responsibility.

History teaches that reform often encounters resistance. Change unset-

tles comfort zones. Capacity-building initiatives sometimes disrupt entrenched patterns. When service processes are tightened, when partnerships are introduced, when operational reviews are conducted, some interests may feel threatened. However, reform should not be mistaken for wrongdoing.

Professor Ize-Iyamu's leadership reflects a commitment to institutional sustainability. Sustainability requires courage—the courage to make decisions that secure long-term service quality, even when those decisions are misunderstood. That courage must not be punished by misinformation.

The public has a right to question. The media has a duty to investigate. But both also carry responsibility: the responsibility to verify before amplifying.

In an era where digital platforms blur the line between fact and speculation, critical thinking becomes essential. Responsible communication strengthens democracy and public institutions; reckless dissemination weakens them.

If there are genuine concerns about hospital operations, established channels for inquiry exist. Due process remains the cornerstone of accountability. What must be rejected, however, is trial by rumour.

UBTH remains unwavering in its mandate: to deliver quality, affordable and ethical healthcare services to Nigerians. The hospital's Management has reaffirmed its commitment to transparency, stakeholder engagement and continuous improvement.

The CMD's leadership continues to be anchored in service, integrity and institutional strengthening. Those who work within the hospital understand the complexity of her task. Those who benefit from its services recognise the importance of stable leadership. It is therefore imperative that the public separates fact from fiction and resists narratives designed to undermine confidence.

Public relations is not about cosmetic image management. It is about truth, clarity and trust-building. In addressing the allegations against Professor Idia Enibokun Ize-Iyamu, the facts are clear: Service charge reviews followed due process and economic necessity. The private laboratory partnership is complementary and capacity-enhancing.

Allegations of extortion and profiteering are false and malicious.

UBTH stands by its Chief Medical Director. And until credible evidence suggests otherwise, fairness demands that the public does too.

Odaro, a columnist, lectures in the Department of Mass Communication, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi.