

# Nigeria records 5% increase in energy access in 2024, says Minister

Nigeria's Minister of Power, Adebayo Adelabu, has announced a significant improvement in energy access, which increased from 59% at the end of 2023 to 64% by December 2024.

The minister attributed the growth to enhanced grid expansion, renewable energy investments, and targeted infrastructure development.

Speaking during a committee address, Adelabu outlined

the strides made in power generation, transmission, and distribution.

Nigeria's power generation capacity rose by 30%, with peak output increasing from 4,100 MW in 2023 to 5,528 MW in 2024. A key contributor to this growth was the commissioning of the Zungeru Hydroelectric Power Plant, which added 700 MW to the national grid.

Existing facilities like the Kainji, Shiroro, and Dadinko-

wa plants also underwent significant upgrades.

Additionally, plants operated by the Niger Delta Power Holding Company (NDPHC), such as Olorunsogo, Omotosho, and Sapele, played an instrumental role in the increased capacity.

However, the government fell short of its 6,000 MW target due to grid challenges.

Adelabu reported that eight grid collapses occurred in 2024—

five total and three partial.

He blamed three total collapses on generation issues and two on vandalism. Key transmission lines, including the Kaduna-Shiroro-Mando and Ugwuachukwu-Bauchi-Makurdi lines, suffered damage from vandalism, causing prolonged disruptions.

Security concerns have delayed repairs on the Kaduna-Shiroro-Mando line, leaving northern Nigeria reliant on

a single transmission line.

Efforts to stabilize the grid are ongoing, with improvements in distribution infrastructure ensuring better power supply to consumers in Band A, who now enjoy 20-24 hours of electricity daily under cost-reflective tariffs.

The minister emphasized the government's commitment to expanding renewable energy sources, including solar, wind, and small hydropower projects,

as part of Nigeria's energy transition plan. For 2025, the focus will shift to revamping the national grid through the Presidential Power Initiative, strengthening infrastructure, reducing outages, and expanding access.

Adelabu concluded by reaffirming the administration's dedication to delivering stable and reliable electricity, promising that "significant improvements will soon be felt across all regions of the country."

# The Nigerian Observer



**Alaafin's stool not for sale —Makinde**

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...that the people may know

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# Leadership crisis: Police presence sparks tensions at PDP Hqts

Abuja witnessed a heightened police presence at the national headquarters of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on

Monday, as a leadership dispute between Samuel Anyawu and Ude Okoye escalated

The controversy centers on the position of National

Secretary, with Anyawu challenging Okoye's recognition by the Court of Appeal as the legitimate holder of the office. Anyawu, who vacated the role to contest the Imo State governorship election, seeks to reclaim the position after his electoral defeat.

Supporters of Anyawu staged a protest outside the secretariat, chanting slogans in his favor. Despite the demonstration, Anyawu entered the premises and resumed office duties, addressing reporters to assert that the matter was now before the Supreme

Court. He dismissed the PDP's announcement recognizing Okoye as a personal opinion of the National Publicity Secretary.

The PDP National Working Committee (NWC), however, last week reaffirmed Okoye's position, citing the Court of

Appeal's judgment. The NWC underscored its commitment to respecting judicial decisions, further complicating the standoff.

As the dispute unfolds, both camps remain firm in their positions, leaving the party's leadership and unity in question.

## Edo Guber: Election Petition Tribunal to commence full hearing Jan 15

IDAHOUSA MUSA

### BENIN CITY

The Edo State Governorship Election Petition Tribunal (EPT) has scheduled the commencement of full hearings for Wednesday, January 15, 2025, on the petition filed by Dr. Asue Ighodalo and his party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), challenging the declaration of Governor Monday Okpebholo as the winner of the September 21, 2024, gubernatorial election.

The adjournment followed an application by the lead counsels representing the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and Governor Okpebholo, the 1st and 2nd respondents in the case, who requested the postponement.

Dr. Ighodalo, the first petitioner, and the PDP, the second petitioner, are challenging the results of the election, in which INEC declared Okpebholo as the victor with 291,667 votes,

defeating Ighodalo, who garnered 247,274 votes.

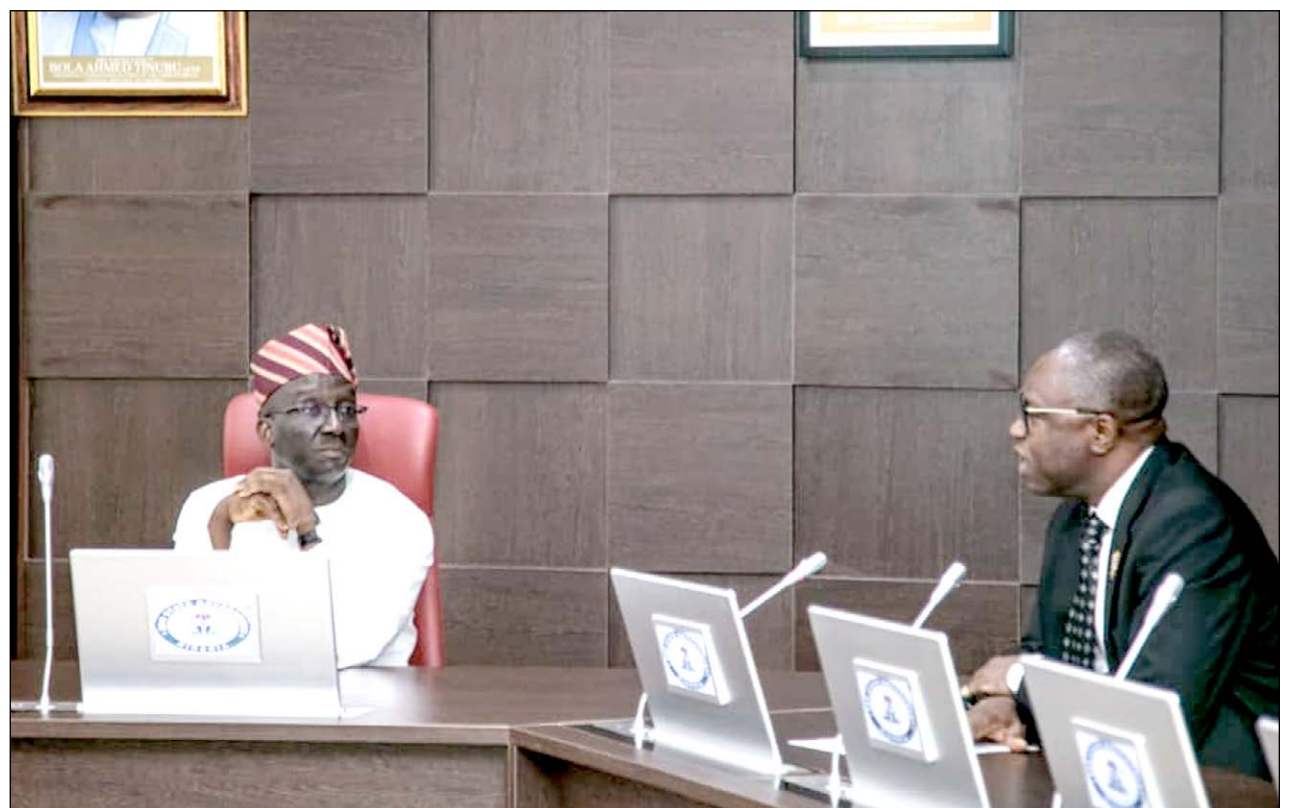
The tribunal had initially adjourned to January 13, 2025, for the hearing on the petition, following the conclusion of pre-hearing sessions on all pending cases.

However, during the resumption of hearings in Benin City on Monday, the Assistant Secretary to the Tribunal, Dayo Dahunsi Esq., informed the court about the pending application for an adjournment filed by the 1st and 2nd respondents.

The request was based on the need for their lead counsel to attend a Supreme Court session scheduled for Tuesday, January 14, 2025.

Dahunsi indicated that the respondents also sought an adjournment for other petitions before the tribunal.

In response, Oladipo Oshinowo, standing in for the petitioners' lead counsel, Ken



**COURTESY VISIT:**

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo (left), and the State Chief Judge, Justice Daniel Okungbowa, who led Judges in the state on a courtesy visit to Government House, Benin City.

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# Alaafin's stool not for sale —Makinde

Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State has reiterated his administration's commitment to transparency in appointing traditional rulers, emphasizing that the Alaafin of

Oyo's stool is not for sale. Speaking on Monday while presenting the instruments of office to the newly selected Alaafin, Oba Akeem Abimbola Owoade, at the Executive

Chamber of the Governor's Office in Ibadan, Makinde disclosed that he met the new Alaafin for the first time on January 12, 2025.

"The Alaafin stool is of im-

mense importance not just to Oyo Town or Oyo State, but to the entire Yoruba race. Under my administration, I made it clear that this stool would not be a subject of polit-

ical or financial manipulation," Makinde said.

He explained that he deliberately stayed away from the selection process to ensure fairness and neutrality. "I didn't know the profile of the other contenders because I didn't want my opinion to influence the process," he added.

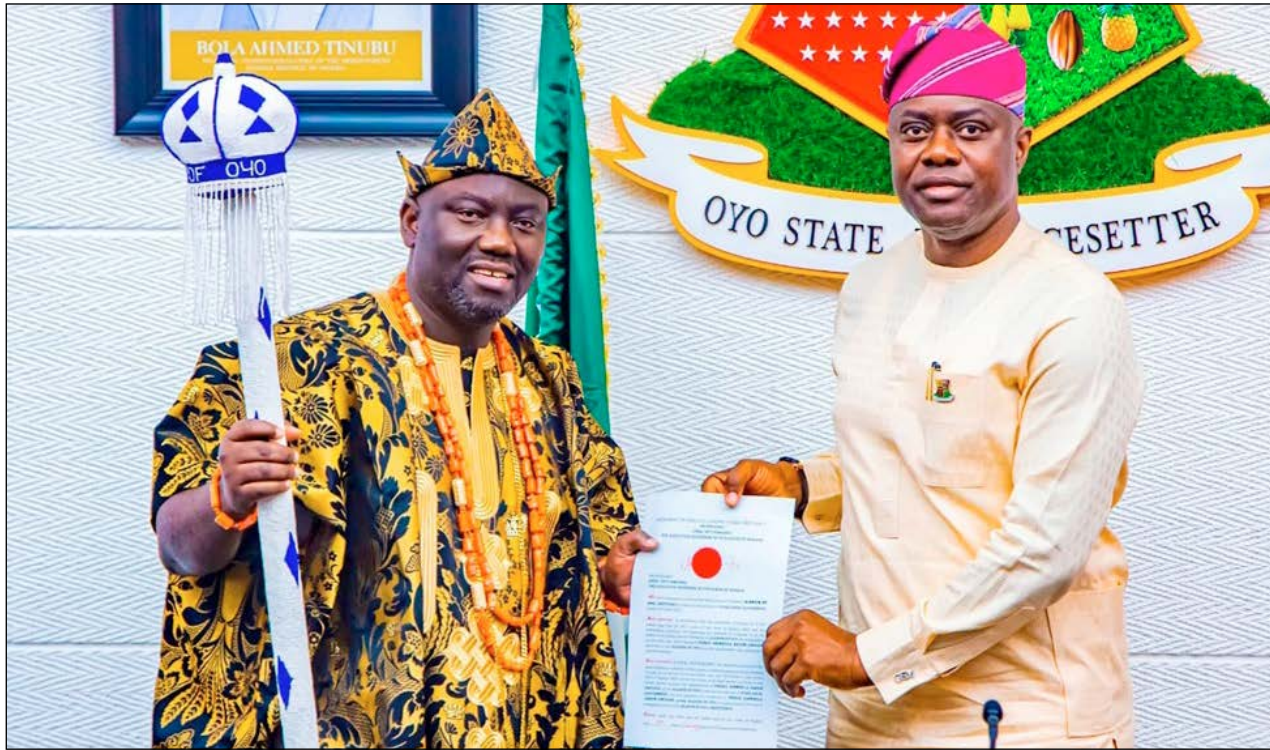
The governor also shared how his administration resolved past conflicts in Ibadan's traditional institutions and highlighted his commitment to prioritizing governance over politics.

"Governance is serious business, and decisions must be made in the best interest of the

people, not based on political considerations," he stated.

Makinde warned against attempts to destabilize the traditional institution in Oyo, assuring that those who engaged in fraudulent activities related to the stool would face prosecution unless pardoned by the new Alaafin.

"The Alaafin stool became vacant in 2022. Despite pressure to fill the position before the 2023 elections, I insisted on doing what was right, and the people of Oyo rewarded us with their votes. Oyo will continue to support me because we prioritize integrity and fairness," he concluded.



**NEW ALAAFIN OF OYO:**

Oyo State Governor, Engr. Seyi Makinde (right), presenting staff of office to the new Alaafin of Oyo, Abimbola Akeem Owoade, in Ibadan on yesterday.

## AAU Ekpoma disclaims unauthorized advertorial, fake certificate scheme

The management of Ambrose Alli University (AAU), Ekpoma, has refuted claims of involvement in an unauthorized advertorial currently circulating online. The false advert invites the public to apply for non-existent positions purportedly available at the university.

Speaking on the matter, Otunba Mike Aladenika, Prin-

icipal Assistant Registrar and Head of Information, Public Relations, and Protocol, stated: "AAU Ekpoma did not issue or authorize the said advertorial."

"We advise the public to exercise caution and avoid falling victim to this fraudulent scheme likely perpetrated by scammers."

He further clarified that the university would not bear any

responsibility for losses or damages incurred by individuals engaging with the fake platform.

In a separate but related issue, the university has uncovered the activities of a syndicate involved in the illegal issuance of fake certificates bearing AAU's name.

"Intelligence reports have revealed that this group specializes in issuing counterfeit certificates

to unsuspecting Nigerians, and AAU's certificates are among those being used fraudulently," Aladenika disclosed.

He assured the public that the university has notified relevant security agencies to apprehend those responsible for the criminal activities, reiterating that AAU dissociates itself entirely from the syndicate and its operations.

## Gov Oborewori sacks Commissioner for Information

AJUWA VICTOR

**ASABA**

Delta State Governor Sheriff Oborewori has terminated the appointment of the Information Commissioner, Ifeanyi Osuza, citing poor performance during his brief tenure.

The move, it was gathered, followed widespread complaints about the commissioner's effectiveness.

The governor has directed Charles Aniagwu, the Com-

missioner for Works (Rural Roads), to oversee the Ministry of Information temporarily.

Aniagwu will manage both portfolios until a permanent replacement is announced.

Dr. Fred Latimore Oghenisebe, Director General of the Delta State Bureau for Orientation and Communication, confirmed the development.

"The former commissioner, Ifeanyi Osuza, has been duly informed of the situation," he said, adding that an official statement from the governor's

office is forthcoming.

Aniagwu's appointment reflects the governor's trust in his abilities. Having served as Chief Press Secretary and Commissioner for Information under former Governor Ifeanyi Okowa, Aniagwu is no stranger to managing public communication.

His dual role will include overseeing rural road projects while addressing challenges in the state's information sector.

Insiders suggest that Osuza's dismissal stems from his

inability to meet expectations, particularly in managing government communications and public outreach.

Aniagwu is expected to stabilize the ministry and implement a strategic communication plan to enhance the state's public image.

Governor Oborewori reiterated his commitment to fostering an efficient and responsive administration, stating, "Every official must be held accountable for delivering results that align with our vision for a prosperous Delta State."

## Delta to scale up infrastructural devt in 2025 —Oborewori

AJUWA VICTOR

The Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborewori, has promised to accelerate infrastructure development across the state in 2025.

Speaking during a project inspection tour in Asaba, the state capital, Governor Oborewori emphasized his administration's commitment to delivering impactful projects.

At the proposed Asaba International Market, the governor said the visit was to personally assess progress on various initiatives.

"We won't just sit in the office and approve projects; we need to see how these initiatives are performing on the ground," he said.

The governor revealed plans to break ground at the Asaba International Market before

the end of January, describing it as part of efforts to revitalize the capital territory. The market, formerly known as Abraka Market, was relocated to Oko to address criminal activities in the area.

In partnership with Efab Properties Limited, the state government will provide land while the developers handle construction, with the government receiving 20% of the

proceeds.

Governor Oborewori also inspected the Gerald Onianwa Crescent, Odigwe Juwa Avenue, and the storm drainage project near the Asaba Specialist Hospital.

Additionally, he reviewed road networks in Oshimili South Local Government Area, noting that many roads in the region require maintenance or overlays due to age.

## Oborewori urges Nigerians to uphold unity, honour fallen heroes

AJUWA VICTOR

The Delta State Governor, Hon. Sheriff Oborewori, has called on Nigerians to prioritize peace, unity, and national development while honoring the sacrifices of the country's fallen heroes.

Speaking at an interdenominational thanksgiving mass to commemorate the 2025 Armed Forces Remembrance Day, held at Emmanuel the Savior Catholic Church, Asaba, the governor, represented by Deputy Governor Sir Monday Onyeme, emphasized the need to shun divisive tendencies.

"We owe it to our fallen heroes to emulate their examples of sacrifice and pursue the path of peace, unity, and justice," he said. He also urged Nigerians to pray for global peace, citing ongoing conflicts like the Israel-Palestine and Russia-Ukraine wars.

Governor Oborewori highlighted the importance of the Armed Forces Remembrance Day, describing it as

a time for sober reflection on the nation's past, present, and future.

He praised the bravery and patriotism of soldiers who paid the ultimate price for Nigeria's sovereignty and unity.

The governor reaffirmed his administration's commitment to supporting legionnaires, their widows, and children beyond the annual celebrations. He also encouraged the ex-servicemen to engage in meaningful projects that complement government efforts to improve their welfare.

Earlier, Monsignor John Aduba, Rector of Saint Joseph Pro Cathedral, urged attendees to remember the sacrifices of armed forces members and prioritize the welfare of families left behind by fallen heroes.

The thanksgiving service included scripture readings by Deputy Governor Onyeme and Delta State House of Assembly Speaker Rt. Hon. Emomotimi Guwor. Service commanders, legionnaires, and other dignitaries participated in special thanksgiving offerings.

## Edo guber: Election Petition Tribunal to commence full...

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Mozia SAN, did not oppose the adjournment, emphasizing cooperation.

Oshinowo added, "While we are ready to proceed today (yesterday), we received a late request for adjournment yesterday, and in the interest of cooperation, we agree to the postponement with the understanding that such requests should not be repeated in the future."

Counsel for the All Progressives Congress (3rd respondent), Josephine Ogagaworia, also did not oppose the adjournment, and Justice Wilfred Kpochi, who chairs the tribunal, agreed to reschedule the hearing for Wednesday, January 15, 2025.

The tribunal had earlier, on December 21, 2024, outlined the process for the petition, noting that a total of 290 witnesses would be called by the petitioners.

The tribunal also set specific timeframes for witness examinations, with 40 minutes allo-

cated for examination-in-chief for each star witness, 30 minutes for cross-examination by the petitioners, and 20 minutes for cross-examination by the respondents. Additionally, re-examination of each star witness will be limited to 10 minutes.

The petitioners are expected to present their witnesses within 21 days, with respondents having 10 days each to call their witnesses.

The tribunal is expected to sit daily at 10 a.m., except on Sundays and public holidays, as per the legal calendar.

Justice Kpochi confirmed that the petition would not be consolidated with any other case and that only witnesses whose statements had been pre-filed would be called.

Subpoenaed witnesses may also be called if necessary. Furthermore, the tribunal will provide interpreters for witnesses who need translation from English to local languages such as Benin, Esan, and Auchi dialects.

## NEWS

# Oborewori's media aide urges content creators to promote Delta's image

AJUWA VICTOR

Content creators and social media influencers have been urged to use their creativity to enhance the image of Delta State and con-

tribute to national development.

The Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Media, Miss Henrietta Enwereaku, gave the charge during the inaugural Delta Creators and

Influencers Hangout at Unity Hall, Government House, Asaba.

Miss Enwereaku highlighted the importance of using social media positively, thanking Governor Sheriff Oborewori

for supporting initiatives aimed at youth development in the creative industry.

She assured participants of her office's commitment to fostering their careers in content creation.

The Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs, Community Support Services, and Girl Child Development, Miss Orode Uduaghan, noted that positive content could reshape public perceptions of Delta State. She encouraged the program's organizers to sustain their efforts.

Keynote speakers Dr. Ella Ezeadilije and Mr. Onye Ubanatu advised content creators to focus on truth, creativity, consistency, and vision. They emphasized the importance of building legacies and avoiding

counterproductive practices on social media.

Other speakers stressed the need for synergy between comedians and content creators in combating the misuse of social media and promoting Delta's strengths in creativity, education, sports, entertainment, and tourism.

A panel discussion featured notable contributors, including Delta State Police Public Relations Officer Mr. Bright Edefe and comedian Frank De Don, who discussed the role of social media in global awareness and education.



ABU DHABI:

President Bola Tinubu (right), greets UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Shakhboot Nahyan Al Nahyan, upon arrival in Abu Dhabi on Sunday.

## Discipline erring teachers or face consequences, Commissioner warns head teachers

AJUWA VICTOR

The Delta State Commissioner for Primary Education, Dr. Kingsley Ashibogwu, has urged head teachers across the state to uphold discipline among teachers, warning that failure to act appropriately will attract strict sanctions.

Dr. Ashibogwu issued the directive during a meeting with Chief Inspectors of Education (CIEs), Local Education Secretaries (ES), and head teachers from Oshimili-South, Oshimili-North, Aniocha-South, Anio-

cha-North, Ika-North East, and Ika-South LGAs. The meeting, held at St. Patrick College, Asaba, focused on addressing challenges in primary education.

He emphasized the current administration's zero tolerance for unproductivity and indiscipline, stressing that such issues hinder educational progress. The commissioner also assured participants that all raised concerns would receive immediate attention to improve performance.

Dr. Ashibogwu advised head teachers to collaborate with their host communities

to safeguard government infrastructure, noting that neglect would result in wasted resources. He directed them to document their challenges with supporting photographs and submit them through appropriate channels.

The commissioner reiterated that external candidate registration must be cleared by the ministry and warned against unauthorized levies, as primary education is free across the state.

Speaking at the meeting, the Director of Examinations and Standards, Mrs. Clementina Oju-

mah, announced that pupil enrollment is now fully online to resolve issues related to certificates.

In her welcome address, the Director of Schools, Mrs. Winifred Ighavbota, highlighted the importance of the gathering in supporting the MORE Agenda of the current administration.

Head teachers appealed for government support in improving infrastructure, amenities, and funding for schools.

The meeting was attended by ministry directors, six CIEs, and over 225 head teachers from the six LGAs.

## SERAP sues Tinubu, govts over alleged cybercrime law abuse

The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has filed a lawsuit against President Bola Tinubu's administration and Nigeria's 36 state governors at the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice in Abuja. The suit challenges what SERAP describes as the misuse of the Cybercrimes (Amendment) Act 2024 to suppress freedom of expression and violate human rights, particularly those of activists, journalists, bloggers, and social media users.

In a statement released on January 12, 2025, SERAP's Deputy Director, Kolawole Oluwadare, criticized the amended Act for its vague and repressive provisions, which he argued enable authorities to criminalize legitimate expression and re-

strict media freedom. According to Oluwadare, the law adopts a harsh punitive approach without providing adequate safeguards against abuse, undermining the peaceful exercise of human rights.

The ECOWAS Court had previously ruled in March 2022 that Section 24 of the original Cybercrimes Act 2015 was "arbitrary, vague, and repressive."

It had ordered the Nigerian government to repeal the provision to align with its obligations under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

While the 2024 amendment repealed Section 24, SERAP argues that the reworded provisions remain inconsistent with

international standards. In its court filing, SERAP highlighted that terms like "causing a breakdown of law and order" in Section 24(1)(b) are ambiguous and undefined, creating opportunities for misuse and arbitrary enforcement.

SERAP also cited several cases where the law has reportedly been used to target individuals critical of the government.

Among these is journalist Agba Jalingo, who faced cyberstalking charges after reporting on alleged misconduct by a relative of a former Cross River governor. Social media user Chioma Okoli was arrested for commenting on the sugar content of a tomato paste brand, while four bloggers were re-arrested, and a popular singer was arrest-

ed for allegedly harassing the Benin Crown Prince. SERAP described these incidents as examples of how the law has been weaponized to stifle dissent and factual reporting, leaving a chilling effect on human rights and media freedom.

The organization further argued that the amended Act violates international human rights law, which mandates that restrictions on freedom of expression must serve a legitimate purpose and be proportionate. SERAP emphasized that freedom of expression is the cornerstone of democracy and indispensable for a thriving civil society, urging Nigerian authorities to refrain from interfering unduly with human rights and to actively protect and facilitate these rights.

## Tinubu approves ban on homosexuality in military

Nigeria's military personnel are now expressly prohibited from engaging in homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality, cross-dressing, and other acts deemed contrary to the ethics of the armed forces.

The personnel are equally barred from body piercing, tattooing, disorderly behaviour, and drunkenness on or off duty.

This directive is contained in Section 26 of the revised Harmonised Armed Forces Terms and Conditions of Service signed by President Bola Tinubu on December 16, 2024.

A copy of the document obtained at the weekend partly read, "An officer must not engage in homosexuality, lesbianism, and bestiality.

"He/she is not to belong to, or engage in activities of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Trans, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual or Agen-

der, Two-Spirit (LGBTQIA2S+) group and cross-dressing, amongst others.

"An officer must not engage in body piercing and tattooing of any part of his body. An officer shall not engage in any form of disorderly behaviour, brawl, or any action of public disgrace. An officer must not at any time be drunk whether on or off duty."

The condition of service also forbids the involvement of officers in amorous relationships with subordinates or their spouses.

"An officer shall not engage in any amorous relationship with any soldier/rating/airman/airwoman, fellow officer's or soldier's/rating's/airmen's/air women's spouse," it stated.

The military personnel are obligated to pay financial dues, including vehicle licenses and insurance on time, while they are prohibited from joining secret societies or political parties.

## Prioritise constructive criticism, avoid incitement, APC chieftain urges opposition

Achieftain of the All-Progressives Congress in Osun State, Olatunbosun Oyintiloye, has urged opposition parties in Nigeria to refrain from making statements that could incite the public against the government.

He urged them to focus on constructive criticism instead.

Speaking to journalists in Osogbo on Sunday, Oyintiloye, a former lawmaker, emphasised that while opposition parties have the constitutional right to hold the government accountable, their criticism should not destabilise the country or create unnecessary distractions for the Federal Government.

"The truth is that we don't have any other country except Nigeria, and that is why we need to play the role of opposition reasonably.

"Making comments that could incite the masses against

the government in the name of politics is unpatriotic and should be avoided," Oyintiloye said.

In a statement on Sunday, he noted that unchecked negative comments and criticisms from the opposition could sow division and foster bitterness among Nigerians, which, he said, would do little to promote national unity.

He stressed that constructive criticism, rather than destructive rhetoric, was essential for fostering good governance.

"Members of opposition parties have the right to criticise the government, but such criticism should be constructive to assist the government in achieving its best for the people.

"Constructive criticism is about appreciating good policies and highlighting drawbacks—not despising the policies and programmes of the government."

# The truth behind your \$12 dress: Inside the Chinese factories fuelling Shein's success

The hum of sewing machines is a constant in parts of Guangzhou, a thriving port on the Pearl River in southern China.

It rattles through the open windows of factories from morning until late at night, as they finish the t-shirts, shorts, blouses, pants and swimwear that will be

shipped to fill wardrobes in more than 150 countries.

This is the sound of Panyu, the neighbourhood known as the "Shein village", a warren of factories that power the world's largest fast fashion retailer.

"If there are 31 days in a month, I will work 31 days," one worker told the BBC.

Most said they only have one day off a month.

The BBC spent several days here: we visited 10 factories, spoke to four owners and more than 20 workers. We also spent time at labour markets and textile suppliers.

We found that the beating heart of this empire is a work-

force sitting behind sewing machines for around 75 hours a week in contravention of Chinese labour laws.

These hours are not unusual in Guangzhou, an industrial hub for rural workers in search of a higher income; or in China, which has long been the world's unrivalled factory.

But they add to a growing list of questions about Shein, once a little-known Chinese-founded company that has become a global behemoth in just over five years.

Still privately-owned, it was valued at about £54bn (\$66bn) in a fundraising round in 2023. It is now eyeing a potential listing on the London Stock Exchange.

Its meteoric rise, however, has been dogged with controversy about its treatment of workers and allegations of forced labour.

Last year it admitted to finding children working in its factories in China.

The company declined to be interviewed but told the BBC in a statement that "Shein is committed to ensuring the fair and dignified treatment of all workers within our supply chain" and is investing tens of millions of dollars in strengthening governance and compliance.

It added: "We strive to set the highest standards for pay and we require that all supply chain partners adhere to our code of conduct. Furthermore, Shein works with auditors to ensure compliance."

Shein's success lies in volume - the inventory online runs into the hundreds of thousands - and deep discounts: £10 dresses, £6 sweaters, prices that hover below £8 on average.

Revenue has soared, outstripping the likes of H&M, Zara and the UK's Primark. The cut-price sales are driven by places like the Shein village, home to some 5,000 factories, most of them Shein suppliers.

The buildings have been hollowed out to make way for sewing machines, rolls of fabric and bags brimming with cloth scraps. The doors to their basements are always open for the seemingly endless cycle of deliveries and collections.



The White House is pushing for a deal as Biden ends his term in office this week

## AfD embraces mass deportation of migrants as German election nears

Germany's far right is in a buoyant mood.

On Saturday, while its conference was under way in the eastern city of Riesa, in Saxony, Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) laid out ambitions to close Germany's borders, resume buying Russian gas and, in effect, dismantle the EU.

German media reported that party's agreed manifesto includes plans to quit the Paris climate deal, exit the Euro currency and create a new confederation of states.

The AfD's leader, Alice Weidel, even publicly embraced the term "remigration" - a word that's widely understood to mean the mass "return" or deportation of people with a migrant background.

Thousands of anti-AfD protesters swarmed the streets in Riesa on Saturday, seeking to obstruct access to the conference venue.

When Alice Weidel eventually took to the stage, she described the activists outside as a "left-wing mob."

And, in front of a delighted conference hall of delegates, spoke of "large-scale repatriation."

"And I have to be honest with you: if it's going to be called rem-

igration, then that's what it's going to be: remigration," she said.

It's a striking departure from just a year ago when she sought to distance herself from a scandal that centred on the highly controversial concept.

There were nationwide anti-AfD demonstrations after it emerged that senior party figures had been among those at a meeting where "remigration" was allegedly discussed with Martin Sellner, an Austrian far-right activist who has a neo-Nazi past.

Sellner has written about "remigrating" asylum seekers, some foreigners with residency rights and "non-assimilated" citizens.

A buzzword in Europe's far-right, some claim legal residents wouldn't be forced to leave. Critics say "remigration" is simply a euphemism for an overtly racist mass deportation plan.

But Alice Weidel's decision to personally coin the term, weeks out from a snap federal election, demonstrates her party's growing radicalism and confidence.

She also pledged to tear down wind farms which she called "windmills of shame," leave the EU's asylum system and "throw out" gender studies professors.

The AfD is consistently poll-

ing second in Germany and made gains in recent regional elections in the country's east - where the party is strongest.

However, it's highly unlikely to win power because other parties won't work with the AfD.

Sections of the AfD have been classed by domestic intelligence as right-wing extremist.

In 2024, a talisman of the AfD's hard-right - Björn Höcke - was fined twice for using a banned Nazi SA paramilitary phrase, "Alles für Deutschland" (everything for Germany).

He's called it an "everyday sentence" and denied being aware of its origins, despite formerly being a history teacher.

Reports that members of the conference in Riesa this weekend chanted "Alice für Deutschland" drew quick comparisons in German media.

However, AfD figures have frequently complained that they are demonised and persecuted by a biased media and establishment.

And Alice Weidel's party - of which she is the co-leader and now Chancellor candidate - has ridden out repeated storms to now hover around or even above 20% in national polls.

The 45-year-old economist,

who previously worked for Goldman Sachs and is in a same-sex relationship, has sought to polish the rougher edges of her party.

But for those strongly opposed to the AfD she is a fig leaf or - as one Social Democrat put it - a "wolf in sheep's clothing."

Regardless, she's enjoying a new spotlight after being invited by tech billionaire - Elon Musk - for a live talk on his X platform last week, where he wholeheartedly endorsed the party.

Her declaration during this discussion that Adolf Hitler was, in fact, a communist sparked condemnation, given the Nazi leader's well-known anti-communism.

Critics warned of Nazi revisionism - something the AfD has been accused of before.

Björn Höcke once called for a "180-degree turnaround" in Germany's handling of its Nazi past while a former co-leader, Alexander Gauland, described the Nazi era as "just a speck of bird's muck in more than 1,000 years of successful Germany history".

Nevertheless, the AfD's anti-establishment, anti-immigration and anti-"woke" agenda is finding followers in Germany who go to the polls on 23 February.

## South Korea's impeached president gets pay rise

South Korea's suspended president Yoon Suk Yeol will receive his annual pay rise despite his impeachment for briefly placing the country under martial law, the government has said.

Yoon's salary will increase by 3% to 262.6 million won (\$179,000; £147,000), in line with the standard for government officials.

Since his impeachment in December, Yoon has resisted attempts to investigate and arrest him for alleged insurrection and abuse of power, placing the country deeper in political turmoil.

While suspended from his duties, Yoon remains in office until South Korea's constitutional court upholds his impeachment.

Yoon cited threats from "anti-state forces" and North Korea to justify his martial law declaration. However, it soon became clear that his move had been spurred not by external threats but by his own domestic political troubles.

News of Yoon's salary increase has drawn criticism among South Koreans, some of whom say they cannot believe he is still getting paid - let alone getting an increment - while he is suspended.

Some on social media pointed out that the Yoon's 3% salary rise is nearly double the increase in the country's minimum wage.

"Minimum wage increased by 1.7% while [Yoon gets] 3% for what?" reads a post on X which has received thousands of likes.

Earlier this month, Yoon's security blocked investigators from reaching him at the

presidential residence. The stalemate saw an initial arrest warrant expire at midnight on 7 January, but a local court extended it.

Investigators are preparing for another attempt to arrest Yoon and have requested assistance from the police.

On Monday, authorities said any attempt to arrest Yoon would make sure to avoid "any casualties or bloodshed." They also warned that security staff and lawmakers could be arrested if they obstruct the arrest.

Yoon's lawyers said assigning police officers and investigators to arrest the president was "a betrayal of the public." They have claimed that the arrest warrant was "illegal."

They also demanded that personnel on the arrest team not wear a mask to "prevent rioters from breaking into a national secret site and impersonating police officers."

In the capital Seoul, thousands have joined large-scale protests, both in support of and against Yoon.

While his critics want to see the disgraced president impeached and arrested over his martial law attempt, Yoon supporters see his short-lived martial law order as justified to protect the South Korea's democracy.

Han Duck-soo, who became acting president after Yoon's impeachment but has since been impeached by parliament himself, will also see his annual salary increase by 3% to 204 million won (\$138,000; £114,000).

For comparison, the US president is paid \$400,000 (£329,000) and the UK Prime Minister's salary is around £172,000 (\$209,000).

## News

## Foreign

# Landslides kill at least 10 in Brazil's Minas Gerais state

At least 10 people have died after landslides swept through two cities in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, state officials have said.

The Bethania neighbourhood in the city of Ipatinga was the worst affected by the mudslides, which were triggered by torrential rain.

The mayor's office said that 204mm (8in) of rain fell in Ipatinga on Sunday morning.

Landslides following torrential rains are not uncommon in the rainy season, with neighbourhoods precariously built on steep hillsides the worst hit.

Ipatinga Mayor Gustavo Nunes declared a state of emergency.

At least 150 people have been left homeless in the city, which is located some 570km north of Rio de Janeiro.

The mayor said the city had been surprised by the intense

rains. "There was no time for people to prepare," according to Nunes.

At least nine people are confirmed to have died in Ipatinga, while another body was found half-an-hour's drive north in Santana do Paraíso.

Local media reported that two youths managed to escape alive from a home where five of their relatives died buried under the mud.

The city's health centre was

also damaged by the landslides, Ipatinga's health minister said.

"At this time, the health centre is in no state to attend to people and all the patients who were here waiting to be transferred have been moved," Walisson Medeiros said.

He thanked neighbouring cities for offering to help.

The governor of Minas Gerais, Romeu Zema, said he would visit the affected area later on Monday.

## Norway on track to be first to go all-electric

Norway is the world leader when it comes to the take up of electric cars, which last year accounted for nine out of 10 new vehicles sold in the country. Can other nations learn from it?

For more than 75 years Oslo-based car dealership Harald A Møller has been importing Volkswagens, but early in 2024 it bid farewell to fossil fuel cars.

Now all the passenger vehicles for sale in its showroom are electric (EV).

"We think it's wrong to advise a customer coming in here today to buy an ICE [internal combustion engine] car, because the future is electric," says chief executive Ulf Tore Hekneby, as he walks around the cars on display. "Long-range, high-charging speed. It's hard to go back."

On the streets of Norway's capital, Oslo, battery-powered cars aren't a novelty, they're the norm. Take a look around and you'll soon notice that almost every car has an "E" for "electric" on its licence plate.

The Nordic nation of 5.5 million people has adopted EVs faster than any other country, and is on the cusp of becoming the first to phase out the sale of new fossil fuel cars.

Last year, the number of electric cars on Norway's roads outnumbered those powered by petrol for the first time. When diesel vehicles are included, electric cars account for almost a third of all on Norwegian roads.

And 88.9% of new cars sold in the country last year were EVs, up from 82.4% in 2023, data from the Norwegian Road Federation (OFV) showed.

In some months sales of fully electric cars were as high as 98%, as new petrol or diesel car purchases almost fizzled out.

By contrast, in the UK electric cars made up only 20% of new car registrations in 2024. Although this was a record high, and up from 16.5% in 2023.

In the US, the figure was just 8% last year, up from 7.6%.

Norway is undoubtedly an EV pioneer, but this electric revolution has been three dec-

ades in the making.

"It started already in the early 1990s," says Christina Bu, the secretary general of the Norwegian EV Association, as she took me for a spin around Oslo in an electric minivan.

"Little by little taxing petrol and diesel engine cars more, so they have become a lot more expensive to purchase, whereas electric cars have been exempted from taxes."

The support for electric vehicles was first introduced to help two Norwegian manufacturers of early EVs, the Buddy (previously Kewet) and TH!NK City. While they went out of business, the incentives for greener vehicles remained.

"It's our goal to see that it's always a good and viable choice, to choose zero emission," says Norway's Deputy Transport Minister, Cecilie Knibe Krogglund.

Even though it's a major oil and gas producer, Norway aims for all new cars sold to be "zero emission", starting at some point in 2025. A non-binding goal was set back in 2017, and that milestone now lies within reach.

"We are closing up on the target, and I think that we will reach that goal," adds Krogglund. "I think we have already made the transition for passenger cars."

Key to Norway's success has been long-term and predictable policies, she explains.

Rather than banning combustion engine vehicles, the government has steered consumer choices. In addition to penalising fuel fossil vehicles with higher taxes and registration fees, VAT and import duties were scrapped for low-emission cars.

A string of perks, like free parking, discounted road tolls and access to bus lanes, then followed.

By comparison, the European Union plans to ban sales of new fossil-fuel cars by 2035, and the UK's current government wants to prohibit their sale in 2030.

Petrol and diesel car sales are still permitted in Norway. But few are choosing to buy them.



The Mahakumbh Mela is taking place in the northern city of Prayagraj

## Biden and Netanyahu discuss Gaza ceasefire talks as momentum builds

US President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have spoken by phone - in Biden's final week in office - as momentum builds towards a Gaza ceasefire and hostage deal.

Israel and Hamas are understood to be making progress but uncertainty remains over key aspects of the potential agreement.

The White House said Biden discussed the "fundamentally changed regional circumstances" following Israel's ceasefire with Hezbollah in Lebanon, the fall of the Assad regime in Syria, and the weakening of Iran's power in the region.

Netanyahu's office said he had updated Biden on instructions he had given to senior negotiators in Doha "in order to advance the release of the hostages".

During Sunday's call, which was the first to be publicly announced since October, Biden "stressed the immediate need

for a ceasefire in Gaza and return of the hostages with a surge in humanitarian aid enabled by a stoppage in the fighting under the deal".

It came a day after Netanyahu sent a top Israeli security delegation, including the directors of the Mossad spy agency and Shin Bet security service, to indirect negotiations in Qatar's capital mediated by Qatari, US and Egyptian officials.

Israeli media reported that Netanyahu was meeting members of his cabinet opposed to a ceasefire deal to persuade them not to resign.

And UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy met his Israeli counterpart in Jerusalem to discuss progress on a deal.

On Saturday, Donald Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff met the Israeli prime minister amid efforts to try to reach a deal before the president-elect's inauguration on 20 January.

Trump has previously said that "all hell would break

loose" if the hostages were not released before he returned to the White House.

Last Thursday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said an agreement was "very close" and that he hoped to "get it over the line" before Trump took office. Any deal would be based on the proposals Biden set out in May, he added.

Despite the apparent heightened activity, a lack of clarity on several key issues - including whether an initial truce will lead to a permanent ceasefire and whether the Israeli military will agree to fully withdrawing from Gaza - remain.

Anshel Pfeffer, Israel correspondent for The Economist, said he was doubtful that a deal would be achieved quickly.

"We've been here so many times before," he told the BBC's Today Programme.

"There is a bit more room for optimism, but until there is an official announcement or a truce or ceasefire and we start seeing hostages coming out,

I'm going to remain sceptical."

But he added that it was in both Israel and Hamas's interest to strike a deal before Trump entered office.

"There is a fear [from Hamas] that Trump will somehow give Israel permission to unleash devastation that hasn't yet been unleashed on Gaza."

"Both sides feel so invested, they've suffered so much."

The war was triggered by Hamas's attack on southern Israel on 7 October 2023, in which about 1,200 people were killed and 251 others taken back to Gaza as hostages. Israel launched a military offensive in Gaza to destroy Hamas in response.

Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry says more than 46,500 people have been killed during the war.

Israel says 94 of the hostages remain in Gaza, of whom 34 are presumed dead, as well as another four Israelis who were abducted before the war, two of whom are dead.

## World's biggest religious festival begins in India

Millions of people are gathering in the northern Indian city of Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh state to participate in the Mahakumbh Mela, the world's largest gathering of humanity.

Devout Hindus from all parts of the world have arrived here (and will continue to do so) over the course of six weeks to take a holy dip at Sangam - the confluence of India's most sacred Ganges river with the

Yamuna river and the mythical Saraswati.

Hindus believe taking a dip in the sacred waters cleanses people of sins.

Authorities have set up a sprawling tent city spread across 4,000 hectares of open land along the banks of the rivers to accommodate the visitors, who are arriving at the grounds in colourful large processions, singing and dancing along the way.

# Sports

● Football ● Athletics ● Gulf ● Basketball ● Tennis ● Boxing

## NWFL Approves Honey Badgers' name change for Benue Queens

The Nigeria Women Football League (NWFL) has approved the renaming of the Honey Badgers of Makurdi for Benue Queens, following the successful takeover of the club by the Benue State Government.

The approval, conveyed in a letter signed by NWFL Chief Operating Officer Modupe Shabi, followed a rigorous ver-

ification process confirming that the Benue State Government met all requirements for the takeover and name change.

Effective immediately, Benue Queens will take over all fixtures, points, and standings previously held by Honey Badgers in the NWFL Premiership.

Commenting on the development, Shabi said: "After

submitting to the very rigorous process put in place to ensure that only serious, business-minded individuals and corporate groups are admitted to club ownership, the NWFL is satisfied that the Benue State Government has substantially met all requirements and has been granted approval to take over Honey Badgers."

She further lauded the po-

tential positive impact of the transition: "The Benue State Government has demonstrated its commitment to operating and funding the club in line with NWFL regulations, which are designed to protect the integrity of the league and safeguard the interests of players and other stakeholders involved in the NWFL."

The takeover comes as Honey Badgers celebrate a historic milestone, having earned promotion to the NWFL Premiership this season, marking their rise from the lower divisions to the top tier of Nigerian women's football.

The Makurdi-based outfit will face tough competition from seasoned teams, including Naija Ratels, Ibom Angels, Adamawa Queens, Delta Queens, Bayelsa Queens, and Rivers Angels in Group B.

Their campaign will kick off with a highly anticipated clash against the formidable Robo Queens in Lafia, Nasarawa State, on January 15, 2025, marking their debut in Nigeria's top-flight women's league.



@EdoQueensFC crowned the Nigeria Women's Football League Premiership champions for the first time in their history!

## Edo Sports Commission to unveil Bendel Insurance, Edo Queens FC players, GM, Coaches

● **As Edo Queens host Abia Angels In NWFL curtain raiser Wed Jan 15**

The Executive Chairman of Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele and other top government functionaries will unveil the newly appointed General Manager of Edo Queens Football Club, Rollanson Aituari Odeh on Tuesday January 14, 2025 at the new Festival Hall, Government House, Benin City, beginning from 10 00AM

Others to be unveiled include the newly appointed Austin Iyamu and Peter Obanor as Technical Director and Team Manager respectively for Bendel Insurance Football Club, with Greg Ikhenoba as substantive Head Coach.

The Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo is expected to be the Special Guest of Honour, while his deputy, Hon Dennis Idahosa is the Guest of Honour.

These newly appointed officers are expected to bring their expertise to bear in ensuring accelerated progress and development of the clubs.

As defending champions of the Nigeria Women Football League NWFL, Edo State government has recruited 13 new players to beef up the team for the new season.

Insurance, on their part are also busy in the NPFL transfer market in their quest to fortify

the team for the second round of the competition.

The players and coaches of the team will also be unveiled at the ceremony.

According to the Chairman of Edo State Sports Commission, the Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has given him the mandate to ensure a turn around in the sports sector.

He insisted that the two teams needed effective and efficient management and technical crew hence the appoint-

ment of ex-players and football legends who have distinguished themselves in the game of football to add value to the clubs.

Meanwhile, all is now set for the commencement of the Nigeria Women Football League for the 2025 season as Edo Queens prepares to host Abia Angels Football Club of Abia State on Wednesday January 15 at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin City. Kick off time is 6pm.

The NWFL league opener will attract football personalities in NFF and NWFL to Benin City.

## NPFL25: Nasarawa Utd Charged For Misconduct

Nasarawa Utd have been charged for breaching the NPFL Framework & Rules in the course of their Matchday 18 fixture vs Rivers Utd on December 22, 2024.

The Lafia club breached #NPFL25 rules following encroachment onto the field of play in the course of the match.

Nasarawa Utd also failed to ensure proper conduct of their team & supporters which led to the assault on the away team.

The club's supporters also assaulted one of the match officials (centre referee Musibaudeen Ibrahim).

Nasarawa Utd will pay a fine

of N3 million, being N1 million each for encroachment onto the pitch, failure to ensure proper conduct of their team & supporters & failure to provide adequate & effective security.

3 points & 3 goals shall be deducted from Nasarawa Utd's accrued points & goals for the assault on centre referee Musibaudeen Ibrahim.

Nasarawa Utd have been ordered to identify & prosecute the individual(s) involved in assaulting the away team with details of their progress submitted to NPFL within 7 working days of this notice.



## Guardiola Reveals Stand On Walker's Potential Exit

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has admitted that the club's veteran right-back Kyle Walker is set to leave the Premier League giants.

Guardiola revealed that while Walker has expressed a desire to leave the Etihad Stadium and pursue opportunities abroad, any transfer will only happen under the right circumstances and conditions.

According to sources, Walker communicated his intentions to Guardiola last week, indicating his wish to seek a new challenge in a different league.

Guardiola acknowledged Walker's aspirations but emphasized that his departure hinges on multiple factors,

including the current transfer market conditions and the necessity for an agreement that satisfies all parties involved.

Guardiola stated, "He wants to go... now it depends on the market and the agreement between all parties. He's a top-class player!"

There is increasing speculation that Walker could make a move to AC Milan as early as the ongoing January transfer window.

Renowned football transfer expert Fabrizio Romano has reported that negotiations between the Serie A club and Walker are currently underway, suggesting that a transfer could materialize soon if both sides reach a satisfactory agreement.

## Fury announces retirement from boxing after consecutive defeats

In a surprising turn of events, heavyweight boxing champion Tyson Fury has announced his retirement from the sport, effective immediately.

This decision comes just two days after promoter Eddie Hearn disclosed that Wembley Stadium had been earmarked for a highly anticipated match between Tyson Fury and fellow Briton heavyweight fighter Anthony Joshua, set to take place this summer.

Recall that Joshua had said he was looking forward to fighting Fury this year even though the

two fighters are currently holding no official belts. Recall that Joshua lost his last fight to Daniel Dubois just as Fury lost his last two fights to Oleksandr Usyk.

Despite that, Fury's retirement from the sport came as a surprise to most boxing enthusiasts, given the hype his potential bout with Joshua is already generating.

"I'd like to announce my retirement from boxing," the British boxer said in a video he posted on his Instagram page.

"It's been a blast. I have loved every single minute of it and

I'm going to end with this - Dick Turpin wore a mask!"

While the last part of his message was not clear, the consolation is that this is not the first time Fury announced his retirement. Recall that in April 2022, after a triumphant victory over Dillian Whyte, the British boxer declared that he would be stepping away from the ring for good.

However, he made a comeback just six months later, engaging in a trilogy bout against Derek Chisora at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, reigniting excitement among his fans.



# Solving Nigeria's unending sports development challenge, by Segun Odegbami

Everyone is expecting my comment on the recent engagement of a foreign coach for the country's national football team, the Super Eagles. I am sorry that I am going to disappoint those expecting me to criticize or praise the appointment. I am numb!

Like every other Nigerian, I knew a search was on for a foreign coach for the national team. I assumed the search would be quick, thorough and limited to Europe where most of the best coaches in the world are found. That should be expected considering that Nigerians have lofty ambitions – to play against all the odds and still qualify for the 2026 World Cup; to do better than the last time and win the African Cup of Nations this year in Morocco; and to leave a major mark on the 2026 World Cup as an authentic outside contender.

Those are the goals that would satisfy Nigerian football fans after sacking the last two European coaches, both disasters; after rejecting their own indigenous coaches that could not deliver expected results; and not even considering other qualified Nigerians as an option.

It was clear that the NFF was not inclined to anyone but the best White-skinned coach from Europe as good enough for the Super Eagles. Hence, the long search and long wait.

Meanwhile, tired of singing my hollow minority song of support for any one of several Nigerian ex-international players with good reputation as players, good paper qualifications after retiring, and varied experiences limited only because of the general practice of discrimination against African coaches in Europe, I decided to join the wait for the NFF's messianic coach from Europe that many of my colleagues insisted must be the only way.

So, whilst waiting for the NFF to do their job and to announce the name of one of several known, qualified and experienced European 'World-Class' coaches being touted as best for Nigeria and must be hired otherwise the world will end, I turned to other pursuits in life.

The waiting has been long, and the people, impatient.

Early this week, the NFF finally pulled the chest nut out of the fire. Since then, even amongst some of the most virulent critics of the NFF have been stunned into the silence of disbelief.

What did the NFF see that the rest of the world did not see in this unusual choice of a coach? It was expected that he would be the product of a meticulous and thorough scrutiny of criteria needed to identify a 'World Class' coach with often-padded wages well-secured against previous shenanigans.

This time, a wiser NFF was expected to avoid, by all means, even the slightest whiff of a scandal.

Those were the thoughts of Nigerians when the lingering dragged on for a long time. With all eyes trained on the process, expectations were high that there would be no dubiousness in ascertaining the records, credentials, experiences, qualifications and reputation of anyone chosen since no excuses would be acceptable, given the precarious position of the Super Eagles on the Group Table.

In short, the NFF must hire a coach whose choice can be easily justified.

Suddenly, from the quiet of the graveyard came the announcement that has now left a large chunk of the

country's football eggheads in a state of stupor, unable to understand the rationale and the motivation for such a bizarre choice of a coach.

Even I did not accept as true the initial reports. I half-expected to wake up from a bad dream.

Eric Chelle is such an audacious choice that the NFF must have seen what the rest of the country did not.

I reason that the NFF must have chosen to follow the road less travelled in order to depart from the failed processes of the past, destroy the norm, and chart a completely new route to the future with a classic 'shock and awe' strategy.

If that was their plan, the NFF may have succeeded. The country is in animated suspense, everyone unsure of what to make of this seeming period of 'madness'.

I have been listening to various reactions to it and, like me, many people have been silenced by the audacity of the process and the eventual choice.

In football, realistically and by all known parameters, Eric Chelle, almost does not 'exist'. His career as a player was ordinary, played in France only, and was mostly in the obscurity of the lower leagues. His international experience can be counted on the fingers of one hand – 5 international caps for Mali, an African country that has never won anything in football, and never even qualified for the World Cup.

Eric finished his playing career and embarked on a coaching regimen that is so lean that everything and the best of what he did can be summed up in one item – leading Mali to the quarter-finals of the last AFCON about a year ago. That's it. That's all. That's who Nigeria finally settles for as the 'world class' coach that will take the country and the country's football to El Dorado? That's who 'the Giant of Africa' chooses ahead of its legion of retired ex-internationals with experiences and qualifications that make Eric's look like kindergarten stuff.

Forgive me, but I am still trying to stop myself from thinking this is the



greatest disrespect of a Nigerian in any field of endeavour. I am struggling to take it all in and see the side I may not be seeing through my pained eyes.

I initially told myself it must be some 'deep fake' news. I have since called up one of the bosses in the NFF and he confirmed it as true. I asked him what the process of selection was and the motivation to make such a hard-to-justify choice. He advised me to call and ask Victor Ikpeba, one time Africa's Best Player, a great football analyst on television, my good friend and a member of the Technical Committee that recommended the Malian coach to the NFF board.

I respect the 'Prince of Monaco', so I chose not call to ask him, give the NFF

every benefit of doubt and then, 'Sidon-look' the drama that will unfold.

Meanwhile, I am thinking and wondering at the sheer audacity of the NFF in choosing to take this difficult route to success. There must be something I am missing and failing to see and appreciate in this their choice.

So, I am NOT going to comment on it at all. I shall wait and watch and learn. There may be something to take away from this.

After all, in 1990, when a coach was to be hired for the Nigerian national team at the time, the NFA hired a man, whose qualifications have been the least in Nigeria's football history.

Yes, Clemens Westerhof, may be the most successful coach to date in Nige-

ria's football history, but going through his credentials at the time he was hired, he has also been the least qualified coach in Nigeria's football history.

Eric Chelle's qualifications are even a notch higher statistically than Westerhof's in 1990. So, is the NFF drinking from the Westerhof model? Can that be what the NFF sees and thinks will repeat itself again in 2025?

That is a question only time and the next few months will tell.

So, it makes sense for me to sit and observe the drama, either way. Nigerians should be prepared to cry or to laugh. The choice of Eric Chelle presents the stage for an epic drama. It will turn out to be the product of either 'Wickedness' or 'Genius'.

## Ancelotti expresses sadness over Spanish Super Cup loss against Barcelona



Real Madrid's manager, Carlo Ancelotti, said he is saddened over how his team overwhelmingly lost 5-2 to Barcelona in the Spanish Super Cup final held on Sunday in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Despite the heavy loss, Carlo Ancelotti took a moment to shine a spot-

light on forward Kylian Mbappe, who delivered a standout performance amidst the chaos.

However, the momentum quickly shifted as Barcelona responded forcefully. Young talent Lamine Yamal leveled the score for Barca in the 22nd minute, igniting a wave of goals from

the Catalan side.

Robert Lewandowski followed suit, capitalizing on defensive lapses from Real Madrid, while Raphinha and Alejandro Balde each added to the tally, constructing a staggering 4-1 lead for Barcelona by halftime. Raphinha secured the fifth goal immediately after the break, cementing their dominance in the match.

Rodrygo managed to find the back of the net for Real Madrid, pulling one goal back, yet the damage was already done as the match concluded with a disappointing 5-2 scoreline for Ancelotti's squad.

In his post-match interview, Ancelotti lamented the lack of defensive cohesion of his team, stating, "The game was not good from the first minute to the last. With an extra man, we were not able to find solutions. I'm sad about the game as a whole. I can't take anything away from it except Mbappé's performance, who scored a great goal in a good move. We have to forget about the rest and look forward."

The Real Madrid boss emphasized the importance of improving their defensive strategy, asserting that his side struggled both in high-pressure situations and when set up in a low block.

## NFF unveils Éric Chelle as Super Eagles' 37th coach

The Nigerian Football Federation (NFF) has officially unveiled Éric Chelle as the new head coach of the Super Eagles of Nigeria.

The unveiling ceremony, held on Monday, 13th January 2024, at the conference room of the Moshood Abiola Stadium in Abuja, was attended by prominent figures in Nigerian football, including Shehu Dikko, Chairman of the National Sports Commission (NSC), NFF President Ibrahim Gusau, and Secretary General Mohammed Sanusi.

Chelle, 47, recently stepped down from his managerial role at the Algerian club MC Oran to assume leader-

ship of the Super Eagles. He brings with him a full complement of back-room staff, featuring First Assistant Hadi Taboubi, Fitness Trainer Thomas Gornourec, and Goalkeeper Trainer Jean Daniel Padovani.

The NFF had previously confirmed that Chelle will oversee preparations

for the 2024 African Nations Championship (CHAN), set to be co-hosted by Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania.

This assignment presents an early opportunity for Chelle to evaluate domestic talent and gain momentum as he prepares the team for the World Cup Qualifiers in March.



# OPINION

## Democracy, human rights, and governance in Nigeria: The role of civil society and media

EMU OGHENETEGA

There are roadblocks to a strong democracy in Nigeria at all levels of government. Conflict—triggered by political competition, impunity, and communal, ethnic, religious or resource allocation rivalries poses a major threat to democracy. Corruption pervades the daily lives of Nigerians.

Many government institutions are not accountable to citizens, exclude engagement with the private sector, or lack the technical and administrative capacity to carry out their mandates.

Further, civil society has limited capability to effectively engage the government to advocate for change.

Civil Society and Media, although elites, dominate the political structure.

Civil society organizations are becoming a voice for democratic reform and government accountability.

Their efforts to push for inclusive governance have been successful in many ways, but they lack the capacity and resources to function optimally.

International organizations, like USAID, work directly with a diverse representation of Nigerian civil society organizations, building their

**USAID is providing life-saving food, shelter, nutrition, protection, WASH, and other sector assistance to at-risk communities across the country. USAID funding also mitigates the effects of climatic shocks on vulnerable populations in Nigeria and works to improve communities' resilience to shocks. The role of the media in all of this is to interrogate the progress made and report them**

internal management capacity and strengthening their ability to engage with the government on issues of fiscal accountability, budget monitoring and transparency in governance.

### ELECTIONS

In 2015, Nigerians participated in what were arguably the most credible and transparent elections since the country's independence. International

organizations, including USAID capitalized on this positive momentum to improve elections by supporting the organizational development of political parties and the independence of the electoral commission, and by increasing civil society input into electoral and constitutional reform dialogue.

From 2015, the Independent National Electoral Commission working with civil society organizations—which

ran parallel vote tabulations- helped usher in the first peaceful, democratic transition of power between two parties. Additional engagement in this space saw an amendment of the electoral law in 2022, a surge of youth participation in the 2023 election process, and increased accessibility of election materials for marginalized populations.

### WORKING IN CRISIS AND CONFLICT

Our programs strengthen the capacity of civil society groups, government officials and religious leaders in select states to mitigate and manage conflict in their communities. Using a multiple sector, community-based approach, projects draw on the expertise of religious and traditional leaders, women and youth groups, government officials, and civil society to develop an early warning system, protocols, and reference materials to improve responses to outbreaks and threats of violence.

Ongoing conflict, organized armed group (OAG) and organized criminal group (OCG) activity, recurrent climatic shocks, and internal and regional displacement have generated significant humanitarian needs across Nigeria. OAG attacks since 2013 and

subsequent clashes with government forces have resulted in high levels of insecurity in northern Nigeria, displacing approximately 2.3 million people and generating severe protection risk for civilians.

In 2024, approximately 7.9 million people in northeastern Nigeria are expected to require humanitarian assistance, including emergency food assistance, safe drinking water, and relief commodities, as well as health, nutrition, protection, shelter, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) interventions.

Separately, in northwestern Nigeria, OCG activity and intercommunal conflict have generated widespread humanitarian needs, displacing an estimated 1 million people within the region.

In response, USAID is providing life-saving food, shelter, nutrition, protection, WASH, and other sector assistance to at-risk communities across the country. USAID funding also mitigates the effects of climatic shocks on vulnerable populations in Nigeria and works to improve communities' resilience to shocks.

The role of the media in all of this is to interrogate the progress made and report them.

## SOCIETY

### Media Mogul Oprah Winfrey reveals her biggest regret

JESSICA STILLMAN

For his book, the Power of Regret, best-selling author Daniel Pink surveyed more than 20,000 people about their biggest regrets. I am sure he heard some interesting and heart-rending stories. But recently he added one more truly fascinating example to his collection of missed chances and bad decisions — the deepest regret of Oprah Winfrey.

The media mogul's confession isn't just interesting as a bit of celebrity self-revelation. It turns out her biggest regret contains an important bit of wisdom anyone thinking of making a big life change needs to remember.

Even billionaire moguls have regrets too.

When Winfrey interviewed Pink for The Oprah Podcast, most of the conversation was centered on the main thrust of Pink's book: how to leverage regret to improve your life. But near the end of the podcast, the discussion veered into more personal territory.

"My deepest, deepest regret is that I didn't take the time when I ended The

Oprah Show before I started the next thing," Oprah reveals.

Why has not taking a breather after ending one phase of her life and starting another haunted her for 14 years?

"The reason why it carries and holds such power for me is because I thought about it and thought about it and thought about it and I didn't listen to my own inner voice, my own instinct about it, and I listened to everybody else," she continues.

"Every time I've ever made a mistake that I regretted, either large or small, and this was the biggest one," Oprah concludes, "I diverted from listening to the still, small voice that lives inside of all of us."

To prioritize your own inner truth over the expectations of others is certainly an excellent lesson to take away from reflecting on a regret like Oprah's. Plenty of thinkers (including those whose professional life revolves around listening to deathbed regrets) agree with this advice. It's even backed up by research into the most common types of regrets.

The other big takeaway from Oprah's biggest regret.



WINFREY

So, yes, definitely do listen to your inner voice over outside noise. But hearing Oprah's biggest regret also

reminded me of another important truth — big life changes tend to go much better if you leave yourself time and mental slack between your last phase and your new one.

Veteran journalist Manoush Zomorodi, for instance, has interviewed many, many successful professionals about the arc of their careers. On the TED Ideas blog, she wrote about a consistent pattern she noticed in these conversations.

Those who successfully managed to tack and change course when they faced some kind of personal or professional roadblock didn't rush from one phase to the next. After concluding they needed to make a major change, they did, well, not much of anything for a while. Zomorodi calls this spending time in the "neutral zone."

"Before we take the first job offer or move across the country or take out a big loan to start a company or even consider what we want to do next, we need to make peace with the old chapter ending and sit dormant for a bit," she insists.

And if we don't give ourselves that

space, Zomorodi warns, "we run the risk of repeating — even possibly regretting — where we end up."

What's true of Oprah is true for the rest of us.

Which seems to be something like what happened with Oprah. She rushed into her next phase of her career and has been regretting it for nearly a decade and a half. If this happened to a mogul with her kind of resources, it's highly likely that rushing a big life change will cause regrets for the rest of us non-billionaires too.

Of course, that isn't to say it's easy to rest and regroup before making a big change. The neutral zone can be an uncomfortable (and expensive) place to be in. We crave the income, identity, and security of a clear new path. But rushing to grab onto these things can deprive us of other things time in the neutral zone provides — self-knowledge, renewed clarity, a fresh wellspring of energy.

So if you want to make a big, positive change in your life that actually sticks, make sure you give yourself the time to reset and reflect on what Oprah skipped.