

Specimen costs, data gaps undermine Lassa fever fight —NCDC raises alarm

ABUJA
The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) has raised fresh concerns over the country's battle against Lassa fever, warning that high specimen transportation costs, weak data validation

systems and reporting inconsistencies are slowing detection and response efforts in several states. Director-General of the agency, Dr Jide Idris, disclosed in Abuja on Monday that the movement of samples from remote communities to designated laboratories remains both expensive

and logistically challenging, particularly in hard-to-reach areas. He explained that transporting specimens from local health facilities to state hospitals is increasingly costly, with rising fuel prices and broader transportation hurdles affecting turnaround time for laboratory results.

While noting that zonal laboratories have significantly improved testing timelines compared to previous years, Idris admitted that performance varies widely across states. "Some states are doing better than others. We monitor parameters such as detection

timelines, reporting within 24 hours and response within 48 hours under the 7-1-7 surveillance benchmark," he said. The 7-1-7 target framework requires suspected cases to be detected within seven days, reported within one day and responded to within seven days.

Idris stressed that although the NCDC coordinates outbreak management nationally through its Incident Management System (IMS), effective containment ultimately depends on execution at the state level.

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The Nigerian Observer

...that the people may know

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Edo Assembly backs Okpebholo, passes vote of confidence

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Wike commissions 54 heavy-duty machines for Edo LGAs

Backs Okpebholo's grassroots drive

BENIN CITY
The Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, on Monday commissioned 54 construction machines procured by the Edo State Government for the 18 local government councils, describing the initiative as a decisive investment in grassroots economic development. The commissioning ceremony, held in Benin City,

drew top government officials, lawmakers, party leaders and council chairmen from across the state. Speaking at the event, Wike lauded Governor Monday Okpebholo for prioritising rural development and strengthening local government administration. "You have demonstrated that you love the economy of the local government. You have demonstrated that development must go to the rural

areas. You have laid the foundation for Mr President to be re-elected," Wike said. In a politically charged remark, the minister contrasted what he described as governance performance at the federal level with opposition politics, citing electoral outcomes in the FCT to underscore support for the ruling party. In his address, Governor Okpebholo described the handover of the equipment as a strategic step aligned with his

administration's SHINE Agenda and its commitment to decentralised development. "Today marks a significant step in our commitment to grassroots development in Edo State," the governor said. He stressed that development must not be concentrated at the centre but extended to every ward and community across the state. According to him, empowering local councils with the right tools is essential to delivering practical governance.

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COMMISSIONING CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT: Federal Capital Territory Minister, Nyesom Wike (3rd left) commissioning 54 construction equipment procured by the Edo State Government for the 18 Local Government Councils in the State in Benin City yesterday. He is flanked by Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo (right) and Senator representing Edo North Senatorial District, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole (2nd left); Chairman of All Progressives Congress (APC), Edo State, Jaret Tenebe (left); Speaker, Edo State House of Assembly, Hon. Blessing Agbebeku (right), and Deputy Governor, Dennis Idahosa (2nd right).

Edo storm to top of Niger Delta Games medal table

As Enabulele urges athletes to stay focused as hosts extend early dominance

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE
Host state, Edo, has surged to the top of the medals table at the ongoing second edition of the Niger Delta Games, tagged, Edo 2026, after a commanding display in swimming and weightlifting. As at 7pm on Day Four, Team Edo had amassed 22 gold, 12 silver and 13 bronze medals, bringing its total to 47 and placing it firmly ahead of its closest rivals. Delta follows with 14 gold, 19 silver and 11 bronze medals (44 overall), while Bayelsa sits third with 13 gold, seven silver and 11 bronze medals, totalling 31. The hosts also dominated events such as chess, traditional wrestling, athletics, para powerlifting and taekwondo, further consolidating their lead. Executive Chairman of the Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele, attributed the strong outing to strategic planning, discipline and early preparation. He revealed that a 12-day closed camping exercise featur-

ing intensive training sessions played a crucial role in building team cohesion and sharpening the athletes' competitive edge. "Our decision to embark on a 12-day closed camping was deliberate and strategic. It gave our athletes the opportunity to bond, train rigorously and cultivate the winning mentality required for a competition of this magnitude," Enabulele said. "What we are witnessing today is not accidental. It is the product of careful planning, technical discipline and the resilience of our athletes." While commending the team's performance, he warned against complacency, noting that the Games are still ongoing. "This is only Day Four. We must not celebrate too early. I urge our athletes and coaches to remain focused, stay disciplined and continue to harvest gold medals for Edo State. The mission is not just to lead, but to finish strong," he said, expressing confidence that Team Edo would sustain its momentum.

EIRS unveils enhanced billing platform after N109bn IGR windfall

BENIN CITY
The Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS) has commenced the roll-out of an enhanced Central Billing System (CBS), signalling a fresh push to consolidate the state's record-breaking revenue performance and further tighten its revenue assurance framework. The upgraded platform, integrated into the existing Edo

Revenue Administration System (ERAS), was formally presented during a one-day technical demonstration attended by representatives of various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) across the state. The initiative comes on the heels of the state's historic Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) performance of over N100 billion in 2025. Executive Chair-

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Transporters demand visible security as S'East Mon travel set to resume —Pg 5

El-Rufai files N1bn suit against ICPC, others over alleged unlawful invasion of residence —Pg 7

Trade and hope return to Uvira after DRC-Burundi border reopens —Pg 9

Nigerian-born teen sensation breaks U18 60m Hurdles World Record —Pg 14

Edo Assembly backs Okpebholo, passes vote of confidence

KEN ABU

BENIN CITY

The Edo State House of Assembly on Monday passed a resounding vote of confidence on Governor Monday Okpebholo, reaffirming its support for his administration and ongoing develop-

ment drive across the state.

Moving the motion during plenary, Majority Leader, Jonathan Ibhama commended the governor for sustained infrastructural expansion, disclosing that the flyover under construction at Ramat Park is about 90 percent completed.

He added that five of the 17

recently approved road projects were sited in his constituency.

Lawmakers, in separate contributions, praised the governor's developmental interventions in their respective areas and expressed satisfaction with his commitment to good governance.

The motion was unani-

mously adopted.

The House also received two letters from the governor, including 30 copies of a bill seeking to establish a Directorate of Education Quality and Accountability aimed at improving educational standards statewide. The second correspondence requested the confirmation of Mr

Andrew Momodu as commissioner-designate.

Speaker Blessing Agbebaku urged members to sustain harmony in the discharge of their legislative duties.

He condemned what he described as epileptic power supply and alleged exorbitant billing by the Benin Electricity Distribution Company, warning that the firm's management would be summoned to appear before the House.

Agbebaku further commended the governor for security improvements and the recent commissioning of 54

earth-moving machines distributed across the 18 local government areas.

He also decried the unlawful covering of vehicle number plates by unauthorised persons, noting that the Assembly would soon enact legislation specifying those permitted to do so.

The House adopted its business calendar for the third quarter, fixing five sitting days in February, 22 in March and 13 in April, totalling 40 legislative days.

Plenary was adjourned to March 2, 2026, at 10 a.m.



1-DAY CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP:

L-R: Chairman, House of Representatives Press Corps (HoR PC), National Assembly, Malam Gboyega Onadiran; Director-General, National Automotive Design and Development Council (NADDC), Otunba Joseph Osanipin, Chairman House Committee on Media and Public Affairs Hon Akin Rotimi Jnr and Chairperson, Nigeria Union of Journalist (NUJ), Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Comrade Grace Ike, during a 1-Day Capacity Building Workshop on Strengthening Sectorial Policy Communication and Legislative Reporting on Nigeria's Automotive Industry Development for members of House press corps in Abuja yesterday.

PHOTO BY OMOYE AMINU

Delta moves to digitise devt permits to boost revenue

AJUWA VICTOR

ASABA

The Delta State Government has commenced steps to digitise its development permit issuance and payment processes in a bid to strengthen Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) and improve transparency.

The initiative followed a formal presentation by ICT experts from Infobyte Technologies Ni-

geria Limited to the Commissioner for Physical Planning and Urban Renewal, Hon. Sunday Tatabuzogwu, at the Prof. Chike Edozien Secretariat in Asaba.

The session was attended by the Permanent Secretary, Dr Mrs Charity Ehimen, directors, deputy directors and town planning officers of the ministry.

Welcoming the ICT team, Tatabuzogwu expressed readiness to collaborate under a Public-Pri-

vate Partnership arrangement, noting that the proposal aligns with Governor Sheriff Oborevwori's MORE Agenda, which prioritises modernisation, transparency and revenue optimisation.

Dr Ehimen described the digitisation drive as a welcome development capable of significantly enhancing the ministry's IGR performance.

In his presentation, Mr Nwosu Ejikeme explained that the project would transition the current

manual system to a comprehensive web-based platform covering application submissions, review processes and approval of development permits, with automated generation of demand notices.

He highlighted benefits including faster turnaround time, elimination of revenue leakages, enhanced payment tracking, improved regulatory compliance, reduced operational costs and data-driven planning for better decision-making.

Senate queries poor SDGs budget release, demands review of 2025 allocation

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

The Senate Committee on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has raised alarm over what it described as poor implementation of the 2025 SDGs budget, revealing that only ₦3.8 billion has been released from the ₦348.7 billion appropriated for the year.

Chairman of the committee, Senator Danjuma Goje,

expressed concern during a budget defence session.

The Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGs, Adejoke Orellope-Adefulire, was absent due to bereavement and was represented by the Administrative Head and Secretary of Programmes, Mohammed Bala.

Bala told lawmakers that despite the substantial allocation, only ₦3.8 billion had so far been released.

He acknowledged discrep-

ancies in some figures contained in the 2025 budget documents and assured the committee that corrections would be submitted.

Committee members also decried the high number of uncompleted projects linked to the SDGs office and raised concerns over alleged substandard execution of some interventions.

Bala apologised for delays, attributing them to contractors' failure to supply materials

on schedule, and pledged efforts to fast-track completion.

On the 2026 proposal, the office presented a budget of ₦67.4 billion, but the committee queried several components and directed a comprehensive review before resubmission.

Goje reaffirmed the panel's resolve to ensure accountability and transparency in the management of public funds dedicated to sustainable development.

EIRS unveils enhanced billing...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

man of EIRS, Otunba Oladele Bankole-Balogun said that the deployment of the enhanced CBS was a deliberate policy decision approved by Governor Monday Okpebholo, as part of broader efforts to strengthen revenue governance.

Bankole-Balogun disclosed that Edo State recorded N109 billion in IGR in 2025, describing the figure as a significant improvement on the previous year's collection. He attributed the growth to focused leadership, institutional reforms and the collective commitment of stakeholders within the state's revenue ecosystem.

According to him, the upgraded CBS is designed to deepen transparency, block leakages and improve efficiency in assessment, collection and accounting processes.

He stressed that the reform aligns with the administration's vision of building a financially resilient and economically vibrant Edo State.

The EIRS chairman noted that the Service remains committed to continuous reform and technological innovation to keep pace with modern revenue administration standards. He urged MDA officials to align fully with the new system, embrace digital processes and uphold strict accountability in revenue management.

Participants at the session commended the Revenue Service for the initiative and pledged their support for the seamless integration of the enhanced billing system across government institutions, while also calling for sustained engagement and capacity-building to maximise its impact.

Specimen costs, data gaps undermine Lassa fever...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

"If states do not coordinate properly, there will be chaos. Case management is done at the hospital level. Doctors are there, but the system must function," he said.

He also expressed concern over parallel reporting systems, revealing that in some instances, teaching hospitals had confirmed cases without notifying state authorities.

"In one instance, suspected cases were recorded in a teaching hospital, with one confirmed

case, without the state government being informed. That created a gap in surveillance," he said.

According to him, discrepancies often arise when institutions collect and publish data independently, leading to differences between federal and state figures.

"We rely on validated data. If information is circulated without proper validation, it gives a wrong picture and can cause confusion," he warned.

The NCDC boss further highlighted operational challenges at facility level, including poor inter-

net connectivity and limited funds for data procurement, which hamper real-time reporting.

"In some facilities, there is poor internet connectivity or lack of funds to procure data. These are operational realities that affect reporting timelines," he added.

On community engagement, Idris said awareness materials had been translated into local languages to improve public understanding, but funding constraints in some states continue to limit sustained outreach.

He emphasised that stronger

dialogue with Commissioners for Health and closer coordination between state governments and tertiary institutions are critical to improving outbreak control.

"We must ensure data flows through the proper reporting line. Without accurate data, response efforts are weakened," he said.

Idris maintained that while federal authorities provide coordination and technical backing, effective containment of Lassa fever outbreaks requires clear ownership, prompt reporting and validated data at the state level.

NEWS

Commissioner demands stronger prevention systems to protect children

ABUJA

The Edo State Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Hon. Eugenia Abdallah has called for strengthened prevention mechanisms to curb rising threats to children's safety and wellbeing.

Speaking at a Coordinated Meeting of the state Child

Rights Implementation Committee (CRIC), urged members of the committee and stakeholders to prioritise early intervention over reactive measures.

Addressing a gathering of committee members, partners and representatives, the Commissioner stressed that safeguarding children requires proactive systems capable of identifying and addressing risks before harm occurs.

She said that prevention must form the backbone of child protection efforts anchored on the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

According to the Commissioner, early intervention frameworks, robust family support services and sustained community awareness campaigns are critical pillars in preventing abuse, neglect, exploitation and other violations.

She warned that waiting until

children suffer harm before responding undermines the spirit of the convention, which recognises children as rights holders entitled to protection, development, participation and survival.

While acknowledging progress in advancing child welfare, he noted that poverty, inequality, child labour, trafficking, limited access to quality healthcare and education, and emerging digital risks continue to expose many children to danger.

"Our responsibility extends

beyond policy documents," the Commissioner said, insisting that prevention strategies must be measurable, coordinated and sustained to achieve meaningful impact.

She further emphasised the need for stronger collaboration among government institutions, civil society organisations, educators, healthcare providers, law enforcement agencies and families, describing child protection as a shared obligation.

The Commissioner also un-

derscored the importance of focusing on vulnerable groups, including children with disabilities, those in rural and marginalised communities, migrant children and those in conflict with the law.

She disclosed that the Child Rights Law recently reviewed to accommodate emerging realities is presently with the State Governor for and waiting for his presentation to the State Executive Council and finally to the State House of Assembly for passage into law.

Iguovbiobo community denies land grabbing, extortion allegations

Elders and residents of Iguovbiobo Community in Uhumwonde Local Government Area of Edo State have dismissed allegations of land grabbing, extortion and involvement in outlawed community development associations, describing the claims as baseless and orchestrated by detractors.

The denial was made at an enlarged meeting held at the community town hall, where leaders addressed journalists.

Speaking on behalf of the community, the Okaighele (Youth Head), Mr Augustine Evbuomwan, said such unlawful practices do not occur in Iguovbiobo.

"We have lands that people bought here more than ten years ago and they remain intact. We respect our father, the Oba Ewuare II, Oba of the Benin Kingdom, and we cannot engage in anything contrary to the customs and traditions of the land," he said.

He urged members of the

public to disregard the allegations and freely transact business in the community, insisting that the rumours were being spread by individuals bent on causing disaffection.

Evbuomwan assured landowners that their properties were safe and that there was no cause for alarm.

He also dismissed reports of a leadership tussle in the community, stating that the Palace of the Oba of Benin had resolved issues surrounding the Odionwere position.

According to him, due process would be followed at the appropriate time, while the status quo remains.

"As Okaighele, my duty is to ensure peace at all times, because without peace there can be no meaningful development," he said.

He called on indigenes at home and in the diaspora to unite and contribute to the development of the community.



EU DELEGATION VISITS UDEH:

Director-General, National Board for Technical Incubation (NBTI), Dr Kazeem Raji; Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Innovation, Science and Technology (FMIST), Mr Philip Ndiomu-Ebiogeh; Leader of Delegation of the European Union to Nigeria, Amb. Gautier Mignot; Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology, Dr Kingsley Udeh; Head of Unit, EU Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Ms Nienke Buisman and Facilitator, Mr Tope Togo, during the visit of EU delegation to the minister's office in Abuja on Monday.

2026 hajj: Edo secures accommodation, catering as cleric lauds ramadan support

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has intensified preparations for the 2026 Hajj pilgrimage, securing accommodation and catering services for intending pilgrims and completing necessary documentation in line with national and Saudi guidelines.

Chairman of the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Mallam Musa Muhammad Uduimoh, disclosed this during the ongoing Ramadan Tafsir at the Palace of the

Ogieneni of Uzairue Kingdom.

He said the board had concluded arrangements to ensure a seamless and spiritually fulfilling exercise for Edo pilgrims in the Holy Land.

"Insha Allah, we have secured accommodation for our pilgrims and arranged catering services to ensure local meals are available throughout their stay.

"We have also completed the upload of intending pilgrims' information to the NUSUK platform in line with the guidelines of the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria and the

Saudi Hajj authorities," he said.

Uduimoh noted that the early preparations reflect the commitment of the state government to improving the welfare and comfort of pilgrims.

He urged intending pilgrims to use the Ramadan period for spiritual preparation and to pray for Edo State and Nigeria.

He also appreciated Governor Monday Okpebholo and the Secretary to the State Government, Umar Musa Ikhiloh, for their support to the board.

In a related development, the Chief Imam of South Ibie

Kingdom, Sheikh Amin Abass Abdulqadir Danesi, commended government assistance to Muslims during Ramadan.

Describing Ramadan as a month of generosity and compassion, the cleric urged well-to-do Muslims to support the less privileged and called for fair distribution of palliatives sent to communities.

He appealed for contributions towards the ongoing construction of the Muzdalifah Mosque in South Ibie, stressing the need for collective effort in advancing community development.

Court adjourns cyberstalking case against Ex-NBA Benin Chairman for settlement talks

BENIN CITY

A Federal High Court sitting in Benin City has adjourned until April 13, 2026, the hearing of a cyberstalking charge filed against a former Chairman of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Benin Branch, Ede Asenoguan.

The case, marked FH-C/C/117/2025, was instituted by the Federal Government against Asenoguan. Presiding judge, Justice B. Quadri, granted the adjournment to allow parties to explore the possibility of an out-of-court settlement.

At the mention of the matter, E. O. Afolabi (SAN), lead counsel to the nominal complainant, Mr Francis Omoruyi Oloton, Chief Executive Officer of Uyi Technical Company Ltd., moved an oral application seeking adjournment.

He was supported by D. Ogbankwa and N. O. Okeke.

Afolabi informed the court that the request was to enable him to obtain a proper brief from Mr Osarenkhoe, who has

expressed interest in intervening in the matter.

The police prosecutor, P. O. Odion, told the court that he had been notified by counsel to the nominal complainant that steps were being taken towards an amicable resolution of the dispute.

He added that parties would report back on the outcome of the settlement discussions or proceed with arraignment should negotiations fail.

Counsel to the defendant, F. I. Esegine, who led I. E. Iguodala, D. E. Otikiti and Asesuwa Ediae, did not oppose the application for adjournment.

Asenoguan is standing trial alongside one Jessica Iguodala Oghomwen, who is said to be at large, on a four-count charge bordering on alleged cyberstalking, cyberbullying and perversion of justice.

He is also accused of perverting the course of justice by allegedly entering into a bond to produce Oghomwen for trial on a charge of aiding suicide, a condition he reportedly failed to fulfil.

World Bank hails Edo as 56 of 61 PHCs upgraded under IMPACT Project

EDWARD OSEGHE

BENIN CITY

The World Bank has commended Edo State for significant progress in the upgrade of primary healthcare centres under the IMPACT Project, with 56 of the 61 facilities earmarked for renovation already completed and in use.

This commendation came during an Implementation Support Mission to the state by a delegation comprising officials of the World Bank, the National Project Implementation Unit (NPIU) and the Federal Ministry of Health.

Leading the state delegation on a field visit to Oghede Primary Healthcare Centre in Ovia North East Local Government Area, the Commissioner for Health, Dr Cyril Adams-Oshiomhole, said the joint assessment reviewed service delivery, infrastructure, staffing, data management and patient utilisation.

Oghede PHC is among the 61 facilities being upgraded under the World Bank-supported IMPACT Project.

While noting that the facility was in good condition, Dr Oshiomhole expressed concern over low patient turnout

and urged residents of Oghede and neighbouring communities to take full advantage of the improved services.

Speaking with journalists, the World Bank Task Team Lead for the project, Dr Onoriode Ezire, described the standard of work at the facility as impressive.

"Having visited many states, I can say the quality here ranks among the best," he said, expressing confidence that the upgraded centres would significantly improve access to quality healthcare across Edo State.

The Chairman of the Edo State Primary Health Care Development Agency (EDSPHC-

DA), Dr Odiase Ehiabhi, also urged the community to utilise the centre, noting that health workers have been adequately trained to deliver essential services.

He explained that services such as normal delivery, antenatal care, immunisation, health education, malaria testing and treatment are provided free of charge under the project.

The Executive Secretary of EDSPHCDA, Dr Coulson Oahimire Osoikhia, expressed satisfaction with the pace and quality of work, stating that the facility meets World Bank standards.

Vandalism: C’River suspends scrap-related activities

CALABAR

The Government of Cross River has ordered the suspension of all scrap-related activities across the state as a result of an increase in vandalism and other forms of crimes.

The suspension was announced in a statement in Calabar on Monday by the state Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Mr Ededem Ani.

In the statement, the government expressed concern over the alarming rise in vandalism, theft, and the destruction of public infrastructure and private property across the state.

It noted that critical assets, including public utilities, road installations, and essential community facilities, have been deliberately targeted, resulting in service disruptions,

economic losses, and heightened threats to public safety.

According to the statement, investigations and security reports established a direct nexus between these destructive acts and the activities of scrap dealers, scavengers, and their agents operating within the state.

“Given the urgency and severity of the situation, the Governor has directed the immediate review of all laws, policies, and regulatory frameworks governing scrap-related activities in the State.

“As an urgent interim measure to halt further damage, restore order, and safeguard State and private assets, His Excellency has further approved the immediate suspension of all scrap-related activities across the state for an initial period of six months.”

The statement said that the suspension applies compre-

hensively to all forms of scrap dealing, including but not limited to tading, scavenging, transportation, and any related operations within, into, or out of the state.

It asserted that any individu-

al, group, or entity found in violation of this directive shall be dealt with in accordance with the law and shall face the full force of legal sanctions.

“All law enforcement bodies and relevant security agencies

are hereby mandated to ensure strict compliance and enforcement without exception.

“The Cross River State Government remains resolute in its duty to protect public infrastructure, defend private prop-

erty, and ensure that residents feel safe and secure.

“These measures are necessary to prevent further sabotage of critical assets and to maintain public confidence,” the statement added.

Catfish farmers lament monopoly by middlemen, traders

LAGOS

The Lagos State Catfish Allied Farmers Association of Nigeria (LAS-CAFAN) has lamented the monopoly of produce sales by traders and middlemen in the sector.

The LASCAFAN Chairman, Mr Olatoye Fajimi, said this in an interview with newsmen on Monday in Lagos.

Fajimi decried the inability of local fish farmers to sell their produce at a price that is most beneficial to them.

He disclosed that traders and middlemen determine the price of the produce.

“We are not in charge of the sales of our catfish produce, the market women traders associa-

tion has monopolised the sales.

“Our members are fish farmers, not fish marketers, and we are not allowed to sell in the market. The only sales we can do as fish farmers is to sell processed fish.

“We are not allowed to sell the raw catfish produce. It has been a running battle between the farmers and the marketers for a number of years. It is a serious issue that we have,” the chairman said.

He said the development was affecting the profitability of the farmers in spite of their efforts.

“The sales of our produce and the factors that determine the price are not in our hands and it is affecting the profitability of the farmers’ efforts.”

Ondo: Police arrest 2 suspected kidnappers, recover motorcycles

AKURE

The Police Command in Ondo State says it has arrested two suspected kidnappers and recovered motorcycles used by the suspects in the state.

This is contained in a statement made available to newsmen on Monday in Akure by the command’s Spokesperson, DSP Abayomi Jimoh.

Jimoh said the arrest reaffirmed the command’s unwavering commitment to the protection of lives and property.

According to him, the suspects were arrested by the operatives of the command’s Anti-Kidnapping Unit on Feb. 11, 2026 using credible tracking analysis and technical intelligence.

“The tracking lead to the arrest of Abubakar Sindiku (M), 25 years, and Oliver Okoh (M), 35 years in Sabo Sango, Ado Road, and Ilado Community, respectively.

“Both suspects were apprehended in connection with an ongoing investigation into a kidnapping case within the state.

“Upon arrest, their statements were duly recorded, and they are currently assisting the police with useful information. Preliminary investigation revealed that the suspects belong to a kidnapping syndicate.

“They reportedly used their motorcycles for reconnaissance, gathering information about potential targets.

“Both suspects also provided logistics support, including supplying food and other operational accessories to members of the syndicate.

“The motorcycles and relevant tools used in facilitating their criminal activities were

recovered. Investigation is ongoing to apprehend other members of the syndicate and ensure they are brought to justice,” he said.

The spokesperson also said the state Commissioner of Police (CP) reassured residents that the command remained resolute and would leave no stone unturned in ensuring the security of lives and property throughout the state.

Jimoh, therefore, called on members of the public to remain vigilant and continue to provide timely, credible and actionable information to security agencies.

NEMA distributes relief materials to C’ River’s communal clash, windstorm victims

CALABAR

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) Uyo Operations Office has commenced distribution of relief materials to victims of windstorm and communal clashes in Cross River Central Senatorial District.

The distribution exercise held simultaneously on Monday in Obubra and Ikom Local Government Areas over security concerns in parts of the district.

The exercise was conducted in collaboration with the Nigerian Red Cross, local government leaders, security agencies and other stakeholders.

Speaking during the distribution, Mrs Zubaida Umar, Director-General of NEMA, sympathised with affected communities and urged proper use of the items.

Represented by Mrs Mmandu Aisueni, Head of Operations, NEMA, Uyo Operation Office, Umar advised beneficiaries to adopt disaster risk reduction strategies to strengthen resilience and embrace peaceful coexistence.

“It is important that as communities, you promote dialogue, mutual respect and peaceful conflict resolution at all times.

“Also, the leaders must address grievances early, discourage misinformation, and encourage unity to prevent tensions from escalating into communal clashes,” she urged.

On his part, Sen. Eteng Williams, representing Cross River’s Central, Senatorial District commended the Federal Government and NEMA for the prompt intervention.

The senator, who was represented by his Senior Legislative Adviser, Mr Emmanuel Elemi, noted that the materials would bring relief to the impacted households.

Mrs Ada Oyiem, a beneficiary, appreciate NEMA for the support extended to the communities and prayed for peaceful coexistence among

residents and indigenes of the communities.

Similarly, Mr Okey Bartholomew, another beneficiary commended the Federal Gov-

ernment for the gesture while appealing for more support especially for people whose properties were destroyed by windstorm.

PUBLIC NOTICE

VOLUNTEER EDO LANGUAGE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (VELTAN)
The general public is hereby notified that the above named Association has applied to the Corporate Affairs Commission for registration under Part F of the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA), 2020.

TRUSTEES
Asoro Kingsley — Chairman
Dr. Irredia Osemwegie-Ero — Secretary
Prof. Omoregbe Esohe — Trustee
Engr. Dr. Isibor — Trustee
Prof. Mrs. Doreen Yusuf — Trustee
Chief Osayomwanbo Osemwegie — Trustee
Mrs. Edobo-Uzamer — Trustee
Mrs. Nosakhare Joy Osasumwen — Trustee
Mr. Andrew Isuekebhor Odiagbe — Trustee
Deacon Alex O. Guobadia — Trustee

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
To promote teaching and learning of the Edo language; support its standardization and research;

Signed:
Secretary, VELTAN

and promote the preservation and transmission of Edo and related Edoid languages.

REGISTERED OFFICE
11, Uwasota, Ugbowo, Benin City, Edo State.

Any objection to this application should be forwarded to the Registrar-General, Corporate Affairs Commission, Plot 420, Tigris Crescent, Off Aguiyi Ironsi Street, Maitama, Abuja, within 28 days of this publication.

CHANGE OF NAME

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **HOSEA ONOBERHIE EDWIN**, now wish to be known and address as **MRS. HOSEA CHIDUBEM OKOYEAGU**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **VINCENT ENARINMWIAN**, now wish to be known and address as **VINCENT ENOGHOMWANYEKE**, and that I am the rightful owner of the name on my NIN number (19317754285). All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and general public please take note.

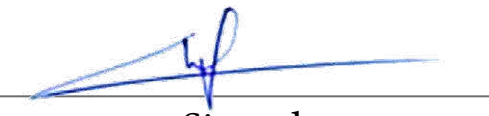
Classified
Advert Space
for Sale

PUBLIC NOTICE

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 (C of O) with title no **BSSR 6058** is missing and all efforts to locate it have proved abutive hence this notification.

All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.



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

Army Chief orders tech-driven battle plans to tackle modern threats

IBADAN

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt.-Gen. Wai-di Shaibu, has directed officers to integrate advanced technological tools with enduring operational planning principles to keep troops adaptable and resilient against evolving security threats.

Declaring open the 2026 Operational Planning Cadre for officers of the 2 Division of the Nigerian Army in Ibadan on Monday, Shaibu said commanders must become masters of operational planning

and fluent in the language of technology to remain combat-ready and decisive in today's complex battlespace.

He noted that the training was structured to reinforce the Army's foundational planning doctrines while equipping officers to meet the demands of modern warfare.

Represented by the Commandant of the Nigerian Army Signals School, Maj.-Gen. Emmanuel Mustapha, the COAS said participants would be trained to deploy technology not merely as a support tool but as a central driver of prac-

tical and decisive operational plans.

He urged officers to approach the course with seriousness and an open mind, engaging fully in lectures, practical exercises and syndicate work to optimise planning processes, enhance situational awareness and strengthen interoperability with sister services and other security agencies.

In his remarks, the General Officer Commanding (GOC) 2 Division, Maj.-Gen. Chinedu Nnebeife, described the training as a strategic investment in the professional development

of officers.

According to him, successful military operations are anchored on foresight, meticulous planning and deliberate execution by staff and field commanders, especially at the tactical and mid-career levels.

"As senior non-commissioned officers and mid-career officers, you are the indispensable bridge between strategic intent and tactical realities on the front lines," he said, stressing that every operational plan has direct implications for troop safety and mission success.



SAND-CARRYING MOTHER:

Woman carrying sand with her baby on her back at a building site at Kurudu in Abuja on Sunday.

Transporters demand visible security as S'East Mon travel set to resume

ABUJA

Transport operators have called for strengthened and coordinated security deployment to restore confidence in interstate travel following the cancellation of the long-running Monday sit-at-home order in the South-East.

The appeal comes after Nnamdi Kanu, leader of the outlawed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), directed the total cancellation of the directive across the region.

In separate interviews in Abuja, transporters urged both the Federal Government and South-East state governments

to intensify security along highways and within major cities to guarantee safe operations to and from the region.

The Monday sit-at-home, which began in August 2021 to protest Kanu's detention, severely disrupted transport services from Lagos, Abuja and other cities into the South-East and vice versa. Many passengers avoided travel over safety concerns, resulting in low patronage, cancelled trips, revenue losses and occasional attacks on interstate vehicles.

Drivers frequently encountered roadblocks and intimidation, while markets and motor parks were often shut, leading

to fare hikes and hardship for travellers reliant on Monday journeys.

Reacting to the development, Mr Kanayo Frankly, Branch Manager of ABC Transport, Utako, described the cancellation as welcome but stressed that government must make it workable through enhanced security architecture in the region.

"Presently, people prefer to travel on Tuesdays to stay alive rather than risk travelling on Mondays," he said, noting that past incidents, including the burning of buses with passengers, had instilled deep fear.

Similarly, Mr Chike Okoro, General Manager of Jokinma Motors Ltd., Jabi, said improved security was essential to restoring normalcy, adding that his

company was yet to receive directives to resume Monday departures from the South-East.

He cautioned that resumption might not be immediate, given the lingering fears among travellers, and called on government to address broader grievances within the region.

Mr Ikenna Omode, Utako Terminal Manager of First Anambra Comfort Line, also stressed that visible security presence would be crucial in convincing passengers to resume Monday travel.

He noted that while some operators had continued journeys from Abuja to the South-East on Mondays — arriving after curfew relaxation around 5 p.m. — the greater challenge remained outbound travel from the region.

Lagos cracks down on open defecation, arrests 46 in Island sweep

LAGOS

The Lagos State Government has arrested 46 persons during coordinated early morning operations targeting open defecation hotspots across Lagos Island.

The arrests were carried out by the Anti-Open Defecation Squad under the Lagos Waste Management Authority (LAW-MA).

Managing Director of LAW-MA, Dr Muyiwa Gbadegesin, said the suspects were apprehended between February 20 and 22 during monitoring exercises around Ebute Ero and adjoining areas, including Marina, CMS, Obalende and Adeniji Adele.

According to him, 20 offenders were arrested on February 20, 15 on February 21 and 11 on February 22 during sustained surveillance operations.

All suspects have been trans-

ferred to the headquarters of the Lagos State Environmental Sanitation Corps in Oshodi for investigation and prosecution in accordance with state environmental laws.

Gbadegesin said the enforcement drive forms part of government's commitment to eliminating open defecation, protecting public health and maintaining sanitation standards across the metropolis.

He warned that the practice violates environmental regulations and poses serious health risks, particularly in densely populated commercial corridors, adding that sustained monitoring and enforcement would continue.

Residents and business operators were urged to utilise approved public sanitation facilities and comply with environmental regulations, as offenders would face arrest and prosecution.

NPC sets March 1 deadline to end manual birth, death registration

AJUWA VICTOR

To National Population Commission (NPC) has fixed March 1, 2026, as the deadline for ending analogue processing of birth and death registrations nationwide.

National Commissioner representing Delta State, Mrs Blessyn Brume Ataguba, announced this in Asaba during the state-level launch of the Electronic Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (e-CRVS) system.

She explained that the digital platform, developed in collaboration with local and international partners, marks a complete departure from paper-based recording of vital events, aligning Nigeria with global best practices.

According to her, the system

will cover birth, death, migration, divorce and marriage notifications, providing a modern framework for tracking and analysing civil data to support socio-economic planning.

State Director of NPC, Jane Odigwe, said the commission had strengthened collaboration with the National Identity Management Commission to simplify registration, ensuring that once a child's birth is registered, a National Identification Number is automatically generated and printed on the birth certificate.

NPC controllers from the 25 local government areas received initial gadgets to facilitate implementation, while residents were encouraged to register at NPC offices, health facilities or through the commission's online portal.

Okpanam youths protest alleged land claim over Cubana Millennium City

AJUWA VICTOR

Tension simmered in Delta State as youths of Okpanam staged a peaceful protest over alleged land claims by the Issele-Azagba community on the site of Cubana Millennium City.

The President-General of the Okpanam Youth Organisation, Comrade Lucky Okolo, led the demonstration at the project site, insisting that the land was duly acquired from original owners in Ogbesozoma Village, Okpanam.

He urged the neighbouring community to desist from what he termed encroachment and called on the developer

to amend the project signage to reflect "Cubana Millennium City, Okpanam, Oshimili North Local Government Area," rather than Asaba.

Chief Felix Okafor, the Ikejiani of Okpanam Kingdom, described claims linking the land to Issele-Azagba as misleading and urged Governor Sheriff Oborevwori to permanently delineate the boundary between the communities.

Other youth leaders said the protest was peaceful and aimed at safeguarding the interests of Okpanam, recalling that government representatives had acknowledged the land as belonging to the community during the project's unveiling.

TCN restores Shiroro-Mando 330kV Line 2, boosts power supply to Kaduna axis

ABUJA

The Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) has restored the 330 Kilovolt Shiroro-Mando Transmission Line 2 following the completion of critical repair works.

The company's General Manager, Public Affairs, Mrs Ndidi

Mbah, disclosed in a statement that the line was successfully energised after engineers concluded extensive technical interventions aimed at reinforcing the integrity and reliability of the infrastructure.

With both Line 1 and Line 2 now operational, the entire Shiroro-Mando 330kV transmission corridor is fully functional.

Mbah said the restoration would strengthen bulk electricity transmission to the Kaduna Electricity Distribution Company franchise area, enhance network flexibility and improve overall system reliability.

She described the return of both lines as a major milestone in TCN's efforts to rein-

force the national transmission backbone and ensure more dependable electricity delivery.

The company expressed appreciation to customers and stakeholders for their understanding during the outage period and reaffirmed its commitment to building a resilient and efficient national grid.

NEWS

ECOWAS Naval chiefs synergise against growing threats in Gulf of Guinea

ABUJA

Chiefs of the Naval Staff of ECOWAS member states recently converged in Accra, Ghana, to strengthen the Combined Maritime Task Force (CMTF) against growing threats in the Gulf of Guinea.

This was contained in a statement by the Acting Director of Information, Nigerian Navy, Capt. Abiodun Folorunsho, made available to newsmen Abuja on Monday.

Folorunsho said that the fifth meeting of the ECOWAS Sub-Committee of Chiefs of the Naval Staff, which held between February 16 and 20, addressed escalating maritime insecurity, including terrorism, drug trafficking, and Illegal, Unreported and Unregu-

lated (IUU) fishing.

He also said that the ECOWAS Naval leaders stressed the urgent need for deeper regional cooperation, adding that the Nigeria's Chief of Naval Staff (CNS), Vice Adm. Idi Abbas, led the discussions.

He said this was alongside ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Amb. Abdel-Fatau Musah, directors of regional maritime security centres, and Multinational Maritime Coordination Centres (MMCC) Zones E, F and G.

He added that representatives from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the European Union-African Chamber of Commerce, and the Commander of the CMTF were also present.

According to him, Musah

commended strides made under the ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Strategy, highlighting Operation SAFE DOMAIN in Zone E, Operation ANOUANZE in Zone F, and Joint Maritime Patrols in MMCC Zone G.

He also sued for stronger coordination with landlocked countries like Burkina Faso,

Mali, and Niger to combat terrorism and transnational organised crime.

The Navy spokesman said that the meeting spotlighted environmental-security concerns in the Lake Chad Basin and lauded Nigeria's FALCON EYE Surveillance System for enhancing maritime situational awareness in the Gulf of

Guinea.

"A key outcome was the renewed momentum to operationalise the CMTF through a coalition of willing nations, with Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone formally expressing interest in joining Nigeria.

"The flag-off of the task force is scheduled to hold in Lagos

between May 31 and June 1, with Nigeria, as host nation, contributing three ships, one helicopter, eight vehicles, and a temporary furnished office to support the CMTF.

"The task force is designed as a rapid-response, coordinated maritime force leveraging intelligence from the Yaoundé Architecture to tackle evolving

Niger govt offsets patients' bills to mark Bago's 52nd Birthday

MINNA

The Niger government has offset the medical bills and donated cash to vulnerable patients as part of activities marking Governor Mohammed Bago's 52nd birthday.

The gesture administered by the Ministry of Health, benefited patients at the Minna General Hospital and the Neonatal Wing of Jummai Babangida Hospital, Minna.

Chief Press Secretary, Bolog Ibrahim, said in a statement that the initiative formed part of activities commemorating the governor's birthday.

According to Ibrahim, beneficiaries included patients in the paediatric ward, paediatric surgical ward, emergency paediatric unit, C and A wards, and the gynaecology emergency ward.

Commissioner for Health, Dr Murtala Bagana, presented the donations alongside senior ministry officials during a hospital visit.

"Offsetting these bills and offering tokens for other needs is our modest way of celebrating the governor's birthday," Bagana said.

He added that the gesture reflected the governor's "compassion, vision and people-centred leadership," noting that beneficiaries were carefully selected.

Bagana acknowledged prevailing economic hardship, which he said had denied many vulnerable citizens access to lifesaving healthcare.

He urged residents to enrol in the state's Contributory Health Scheme, NiCare, to ease the burden of medical costs.

"With an annual contribution of ₦16,100, residents can access quality healthcare services at designated facilities across the state," he explained.

The commissioner reaffirmed the administration's commitment to revitalising the health sector across the state.

He also advocated third-party management for cleaning, maintenance and security at the General Hospital to improve service delivery.

Bagana presented cash gifts to outstanding medical personnel, urging them to sustain their dedication and inspire greater productivity.



BUDGET DEFENSE:

Director General Bureau of Public Procurement, Mr. Adebowale Adedokun (Centre), flanked by Director, Special Procurement, Engr. Nasir Bello (left) and Director of Compliance, Certificate and Monitoring (BPP), Engr. Isaiah Yusuf, during the Bureau's budget proposal and defense before the Senate Committee at National Assembly complex, Abuja.

PHOTO BY OMOYE AMINU

BPP, FRC sign MoU to deepen transparency, curb corruption in procurement processes

ABUJA

The Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) and the Fiscal Responsibility Commission (FRC) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen collaboration and promote good governance in Nigeria.

The Director-General, BPP, Dr Adebowale Adedokun, disclosed this in a statement by Zira Nagma, Head of Press and Public Relations, BPP in Abuja on Monday.

According to Adedokun, the partnership is aimed at boosting transparency, curbing corruption and reducing wastage in government procurement processes across the country.

He reiterated that the bureau was part of the anti-corruption group assigned by Bola Tinubu to curb corrupt practices in the country.

"The MoU will strengthen shared responsibility in supporting the President's Renewed Hope Agenda and ensure the judicious utilisation of government funds at the three

tiers of government," he said.

He said the collaboration would also ensure that government spending remained within constitutional limits and extant regulations provided by the bureau.

The director general highlighted key initiatives introduced by the bureau to promote transparency and accountability to include digitisation of procurement processes effective March 1, as well community-based procurement.

Others he said were the Nigeria First policy; debarment policy;

and affirmative procurement for women, youths, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and persons living with disabilities.

Adedokun added that through its reform programmes and price bench-marking mechanisms, the bureau had saved almost one trillion Naira for the nation in less than one year.

Similarly, the FRC Chairman, Mr Victor Muruako, commended Adedokun's leadership and described the MoU as a strategic step toward strengthening fiscal discipline in the country.

Tomato farmers in Plateau decry poor storage, processing facilities

JOS

Tomato farmers in Plateau State have decried the dearth of the produce's storage and processing facilities in the state.

Some of the farmers, who spoke with newsmen on Monday in Jos, described the situation as the biggest challenge to tomato cultivation in the state.

Mr Musa Abdullahi, who cultivates between three to five hectares yearly, said that due to its perishable nature, farmers were

usually forced to sell their produce immediately after harvest.

Abdullahi, who harvests between 200 to 300 baskets of tomatoes per season, expressed frustration that the government was not consistent in its support towards this end.

"I have been cultivating tomatoes in the last 10 years; I know exactly the plight of farmers, particularly the small-scale farmers.

"Occasionally, we receive subsidised fertilisers or improved seeds from government, but the support is not regular.

ABUJA

The Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, Most Rev. Ignatius Kaigama, has urged Nigerian leaders to place the common good above personal and partisan interests.

Kaigama made the call during his homily at the opening Mass of the first 2026 Plenary Assembly of the (CBCN) in Abuja.

Speaking on the theme, "The Common Good and Leadership in Nigeria," he decried what he described as the quest for power without responsibility, transparency and accountability.

"In our country, we have seen leaders who desire pow-

er but not responsibility; titles and positions but not service.

"Over the years, many have complained that elections have been manipulated, justice hijacked, and truth buried," he said.

Archbishop Kaigama expressed deep concern over the desperation of the Nigerian youth, noting that he frequently receives messages from highly qualified graduates seeking employment.

He advised youths to channel their demands to elected political leaders, noting that religious authorities lacked the constitutional power to provide jobs.

He expressed hope that the 2027 general elections would

be free from past irregularities.

The cleric advocated full deployment of modern electronic systems to ensure that votes reflected the genuine will of the people.

Kaigama said the Church monitored the recent local government elections in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and was prepared to share its observations with relevant authorities to improve governance.

He called for Christian-Muslim unity, noting that the overlap of Lent and Ramadan underscored shared values and collective responsibility.

The archbishop urged Nigerians to avoid unhealthy rivalry and

focus on issues that promote development and poverty reduction.

Quoting from the 2026 Lenten message of Pope Leo XIV's, he called for restraint in public discourse, particularly on social media and in political debates.

The Secretary General of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN), Rev. Fr. Michael Banjo, described the plenary as a significant moment for the Church to discern pathways for national advancement.

Sen. Osita Izunaso, who spoke with newsmen, said that good governance required responsibility from both leaders and citizens, and urged the Church to continue engaging on electoral matters.

JUDICIARY

NEWS

El-Rufai files N1bn suit against ICPC, others over alleged unlawful invasion of residence

ABUJA

Former Governor Nasir El-Rufai of Kaduna State has filed a N1 billion fundamental rights enforcement suit against the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Enforcement Commission (ICPC) over alleged unlawful invasion of his Abuja residence.

El-Rufai, through his team of lawyers led by Oluwale Iyamu,

SAN, prayed the court to declare that the search warrant issued on February 4 by the Chief Magistrate, Magistrate's Court of the FCT (2nd respondent), authorising the search and seizure at his residence was invalid, null and void.

He urged the court to declare that the search warrant was "null and void for lack of particularity, material drafting errors, ambiguity in execution parameters,

over breadth, and absence of probable cause thereby constituting an unlawful and unreasonable search in violation of Section 37 of the Constitution."

The former governor had, in the originating motion on notice marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/345/2026, sued ICPC as 1st respondent.

El-Rufai named the Chief Magistrate, Magistrate's Court of the FCT, Abuja Magisterial District; I-G and Attorney-General

of the Federation (AGF) as 2nd to 4th respondents respectively.

In the suit dated and filed Feb. 20 by Iyamu, the detained ex-governor sought seven reliefs.

He prayed the court to declare that the invasion and search of his residence at House 12, Mambilla Street, Aso Drive, Abuja, on February 19 at about 2pm and executed by agents of ICPC and I-G, "under the aforesaid invalid warrant, amounts to a gross vi-

olation of the applicant's fundamental rights to dignity of the human person, personal liberty, fair hearing, and privacy under Sections 34, 35, 36, and 37 of the Constitution."

He urged the court to declare that "any evidence obtained pursuant to the aforesaid invalid warrant and unlawful search is inadmissible in any proceedings against the applicant, as it was procured in breach of constitutional safeguards."

El-Rufai, therefore, sought an order of injunction restraining the respondents and their agents from further relying on, using, or tendering any evidence or items seized during the unlawful search

in any investigation, prosecution, or proceedings involving him.

"An order directing the 1st and 3rd respondents (ICPC and I-G) to forthwith return all items seized from the applicant's premises during the unlawful search, together with a detailed inventory thereof.

"An order awarding the sum of One Billion Naira as general, exemplary, and aggravated damages against the respondents jointly and severally for the violations of the applicant's fundamental rights, including trespass, unlawful seizure, and the resultant psychological trauma, humiliation, distress, infringement of privacy, and reputational harm."



ROAD-CENTRE DUMP:

Garbage dropped at Ojoo, Ibadan Oyo State on Monday.

CJ reassigns EFCC's cases against Malami as judge fixes dates for hearing

ABUJA

The Chief Judge (CJ) of the Federal High Court (FHC), Justice John Tsoho, has reassigned the two cases filed by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) against Abubakar Malami, former Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF), to another judge.

The case files, which were remitted back to the CJ by Justice Obiora Ekwuatu, following his recusal, have now been fixed for February 27 by the new trial judge, Justice Joyce Abdulmalik.

Justice Ekwuatu had, on February 12, withdrew from the civil and the criminal suits filed by the EFCC against Malami, his wife, Hajia Asabe Bashir, and his son, Abdulaziz. Ekwuatu, who was reassigned the cases after a sister court presided over by Justice Emeka Nwite earlier heard the matters, said he decided to withdraw from them for personal reasons and for better interest of justice.

The two cases include the

multi billion naira asset forfeiture suit concerning 57 property and the N8.7 billion money laundering charge filed by the EFCC against Malami, Asabe and Abdulaziz.

The cases were formerly before Justice Nwite, who sat as vacation judge during the Christmas/New Year break.

After the vacation period, the CJ reassigned the cases to Justice Ekwuatu who had now recused himself.

Meanwhile, Justice Abdulmalik has fixed the civil and the criminal cases for Feb. 27.

Malami, his wife and son are, therefore, expected to be re-arraigned on 16 counts money laundering offences on February 27 while the ex-AGF and other interested parties are also expected to show cause why the interim forfeiture order on the 57 assets should be set aside.

Justice Nwite, during the vacation period, had, on January 6, ordered the interim forfeiture of the 57 property suspected to be proceeds of unlawful activities linked to Malami, to the Federal Government.

3 docked for alleged stealing, receiving stolen property

LAGOS

The Police has dragged three men before an Ojo Magistrates' Court in Lagos over charges bordering on stealing and receiving of stolen property.

The defendants, Kenneth Raphael, 27; Samuel Gift, 22; and Emmanuel Sopurechi, 32, are standing trial before Magistrate Mr Lateef Layeni, on a three-

count charge of conspiracy, stealing, and receiving stolen property.

They each, however, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The prosecutor, ASP Simon Uche, told the court that the defendants committed the offence on January 28, at the Alaba International Market in Ojo, alongside others now at large.

Uche alleged that the first and second defendants conspired with others at large,

to steal two Samsung laptops i5 valued at N200, 000, two HP laptops i7 valued at N250, 000, one HP laptop i5 valued at N100, 000, and another HP laptop i5 valued at N110, 000.

According to him, the total value of stolen goods is N660, 000.

The items are said to belong to one Mr Ifeanyi Umerah, the complainant.

The third defendant was however alleged to have received the

stolen items from the first and second defendants, knowing same to be stolen goods.

He said the offences contravene the provisions of sections 287, 328 and 411 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State 2015.

The court granted the defendants bail in the sum of N300, 000 each, with two sureties each in like sum.

He adjourned the case until March 2, for mention.

Nigeria wins \$6.2m arbitration case against European tech giant

ABUJA

Nigeria has won a 6.2 million dollars arbitration case against the European Dynamics UK Ltd, an international technology contractor.

The firm had entered into a dispute through the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP).

This was contained in a statement by Mr Kamarudeen Ogundele, Senior Assistant on Communication and Publicity to the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Lateef Fagbemi, SAN.

The ministry said that the European Dynamics UK Ltd,

an international technology contractor had entered into a dispute with the BPP over a national e-Procurement project.

It noted that the ruling which is final and not subject to appeal was dismissed by Mrs Funmi Roberts, the Sole Arbitrator when the tribunal sat at the International Centre for Arbitration and Mediation, Abuja.

"The tribunal dismissed the contractor's claims in their entirety, relieving Nigeria of potential financial exposure estimated at over 6.2 million dollars (approximately ₦9.3 billion) in claimed payments and damages.

"The European Dynamics UK Ltd had claimed approximately

2.4 million dollars for alleged milestone completions, 3 million dollars in general damages and an additional 800,000 thousand dollars settlement claims."

It added that the Director-General of the BPP, Dr Adebawale Adedokun, inherited a stalled technology project together with ongoing arbitration proceedings upon resumption in office.

Prior to Adedokun's appointment, there had been discussions around an out-of-court settlement but the bureau, however, elected to continue with the arbitral process, maintaining that payments must be tied strictly to demonstrable value delivered.

The underlying contract concerned the design, development, customisation, supply, installation and maintenance of a national electronic Government Procurement (eGP) system financed with support from the World Bank.

The project aimed to strengthen transparency, accountability and efficiency across federal public procurement processes.

Central to the dispute was the User Acceptance Test (UAT).

The UAT carried out by the BPP identified significant functional deficiencies, including critical omissions and errors affecting system performance.

Guarantor arraigned for allegedly obtaining N500,000 under pretence

SANGO-OTA

A 43-year-old woman, Fausat Adekanbi, who allegedly stood as guarantor for a friend to obtain a N500,000 loan, was on Monday dragged before an Ota Magistrates' Court in Ogun.

Adekanbi whose address was not mentioned, is standing trial on a three-count charge of conspiracy, collecting money under false pretence and stealing.

The defendant, however, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The prosecutor, ASP Adaraloye, told the court that the defendant and others now at large, committed the offences on January 15, at about 2:00 p.m. at plot 5 Femi Omolade Crescent, Onifade, Ota.

Adaraloye alleged that the defendant stood as a guarantor to help her friend to obtain

the sum of N500,000, from a complainant, one Omolade Olufemi with a promise to pay back the loan with interest.

He alleged that the guarantor's friend converted the said money to her personal use instead of paying it back with the agreed interest, but instead, absconded.

He said that the guarantor was consequently arrested by the police

The offences contravene the provisions of sections 390(9), 419 and 516 of the Criminal Law of Ogun, 2006.

The Magistrate, Mrs O.O. Fadairo, granted the defendant bail in the sum of N100,000 with one surety in like sum.

The court held that the surety must reside within the court's jurisdiction and must be gainfully employed with evidence of tax payment to Ogun Government.

NEWS

Foreign

Four years into its full-scale war in Ukraine, Russia is feeling the effects

At first glance, Yelets in winter looks like something from a Russian fairy tale.

From the embankment I spy the golden domes of Orthodox churches and, down below, ice fishermen dotted along the frozen river.

But in this town, 350km (217 miles) south of Moscow, the fairy tale feeling is transient.

On the riverbank I spot an army recruitment billboard. It promises a one-off sum equivalent to £15,000 to anyone who'll sign up to fight in Ukraine.

Close by there's a poster of a Russian soldier taking aim with a Kalashnikov.

"We're there where we need to be," the accompanying slogan declares.

The Kremlin launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Outside Russia it was widely seen as an

attempt to force Kyiv back into Moscow's orbit and to overturn the entire post-Cold War security architecture in Europe.

The Russian leadership envisaged a short and successful military operation.

It didn't go to plan.

Four years later, Russia's war on Ukraine grinds on. It has lasted longer than Nazi Germany's brutal war on the Soviet Union, known here as the Great Patriotic War.

And, in this town, you can see some of the consequences.

A giant mural fills one side of a nine-storey Yelets apartment block. Depicted here are the faces of five Russian soldiers, local men killed fighting in Ukraine.

"Glory to the heroes of Russia!" has been painted at the top.

The Russian authorities do not release casualty figures for the so-called "special military

operation". But Russia is known to have suffered huge battlefield losses. So many of the towns and villages I've visited in the last two years have had museums and monuments dedicated to soldiers killed in Ukraine, as well as separate sections for recent war dead at local cemeteries.

"My friend's husband was killed fighting there. The son of my cousin, too. And grandson," says Irina, who has stopped to chat to me opposite the mural.

"Lots of people have been killed. I feel sorry for these lads."

Irina is a ticket collector at the bus station. She struggles to make ends meet.

"Utility bills are suffocating us. Prices are crushing us. It's very hard to get by."

Although money is tight, Irina helps put together aid packages for Russian soldiers on the front line. She doesn't

criticise the war on Ukraine. She is, though, confused by it.

"In the Great Patriotic war, we knew what we were fighting for," Irina says. "I'm not sure what we're fighting for now."

The border with Ukraine is 250km away. But sometimes the front line feels much closer. This part of Russia, Lipetsk region, like many others, has been targeted by Ukrainian drones. Around Yelets the authorities have installed emergency shelters. I spot one at a bus stop, another in a park.

These concrete constructions stand like monuments to President Vladimir Putin's "special military operation". Before the Kremlin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine there had been no need for shelters, since there had been no drone attacks on Russia.

Blocks of flats in Yelets have designated shelters, too, in basements.



US EMBASSY:

Non-essential staff have been told to leave the US embassy in Beirut.

Zelensky tells BBC Putin has started WW3 and must be stopped

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky continues to send out a firm message of defiance.

When we met this weekend in the government headquarters in Kyiv, he said that far from losing, Ukraine would end the war victorious. He was firmly against paying the price for a ceasefire deal demanded by President Vladimir Putin, which is withdrawing from strategic ground that Russia has failed to capture despite sacrificing tens of thousands of soldiers.

Putin, Zelensky told me, has already started World War Three, and the only answer was intense military and economic pressure to force him to step back.

"I believe that Putin has already started it. The question is how much territory he will be

able to seize and how to stop him... Russia wants to impose on the world a different way of life and change the lives people have chosen for themselves."

What about Russia's demand for Ukraine to hand over the 20% of the eastern region of Donetsk that it still holds - a line of towns Ukraine calls "fortress cities" - as well as more land in the southern regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia? Isn't that, I asked, a reasonable request if it produces a ceasefire?

"I see this differently. I don't look at it simply as land. I see it as abandonment - weakening our positions, abandoning hundreds of thousands of our people who live there. That is how I see it. And I am sure that this 'withdrawal' would divide our society."

But isn't it a good price to pay if that satisfies Putin? Do you think it would satisfy him?

"It would probably satisfy him for a while... he needs a pause... but once he recovers, our European partners say it could take three to five years. In my opinion, he could recover in no more than a couple of years. Where would he go next? We do not know, but that he would want to continue [the war] is a fact."

I met Zelensky in a conference room inside the heavily guarded government enclave in a well-to-do corner of central Kyiv. In the interview he spoke mostly in Ukrainian.

You get a sense of the weight of leadership carried by Zelensky from the diligence of his security guards.

Visiting any head of state re-

quires rigorous checks. But entering the presidential buildings in Kyiv takes the process to a level I have rarely experienced before.

It is not surprising in a country at war, with a president who has already been targeted by Russia.

Despite all that, the man who started as an entertainer, who won the Ukrainian version of Strictly Come Dancing in 2006, and played the role of an unexpected president of Ukraine in a TV comedy, before becoming the real-life president of Ukraine, seems to be remarkably resilient.

US President Donald Trump said on the eve of the most recent ceasefire talks in Geneva that "Ukraine better come to the table fast".

Cartel henchmen unleash violence after top drug lord killed in Mexico

Members of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), one of the most powerful and feared criminal organisations in Mexico, have unleashed a wave of violence across 20 Mexican states.

They torched businesses and erected burning blockades in retaliation to the killing of their leader, Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, better known as "El Mencho", who died in custody on Sunday shortly after being captured by Mexican special forces.

El Mencho, Mexico's most wanted man, was seriously injured in a firefight between his bodyguards and the military commandos deployed to capture him.

He died while the military was transporting him from the town of Tapalpa, in Jalisco state, to the capital, Mexico City.

Reuters Smoke rises from burning busses in Mexico. We can see a scene of the city from a distance with sea and blue skies in the background.

At least six of El Mencho's security guards were also killed in the operation, while three members of the Mexican military were injured, the defence ministry said.

As news of El Mencho's death spread, members of his cartel launched attacks in many towns and cities where the CJNG is active.

In some towns, they blocked roads by throwing spikes and

nails on to the tarmac - in others, they commandeered buses and other vehicles they then torched in the middle of the road.

Cartel members also set alight dozens of banks and local businesses such as pharmacies.

Footage recorded by locals showed plumes of smoke rising above several towns and cities, including the beach resort of Puerto Vallarta, which is popular with tourists.

In Guadalajara - one of the host cities of the forthcoming Fifa World Cup - travellers at the airport could be seen running and crouching on the floor in panic.

News site Milenio reported that the panic spread when a group came running into the airport to seek shelter after they had heard gunshots ring out from the nearby highway.

Their reporter said that he had seen a burnt-out car on the highway but that rumours that shots had been fired inside the terminal had been dismissed by the authorities.

In many towns, streets were deserted as local authorities told residents to seek shelter in their homes.

The scenes that unfolded on Sunday reminded many of the violence that erupted in the state of Sinaloa after the capture of another notorious drug lord - Ovidio Guzmán López - in 2019.

US partially evacuates Beirut embassy amid rising Iran tensions

The US government has ordered all non-essential staff to leave its embassy in the Lebanese capital of Beirut after a security review, a senior State Department official has revealed.

The decision comes as there are heightened tensions in the region, with US President Donald Trump threatening military action against Iran if it does not reach a deal over its nuclear programme.

Iran has previously vowed to retaliate if attacked by the US, with American bases and facilities in the Middle East thought to be possible targets.

Meanwhile, Secretary of State Marco Rubio has delayed a planned trip to Israel without announcing a reason.

A senior State Department official said: "We continuously assess the security environment, and based on our latest review, we determined it prudent to reduce our footprint to essential personnel."

"The embassy remains operational with core staff in place. This is a temporary measure intended to ensure the safety of our personnel while maintaining our ability to operate and assist US citizens."

About 50 members of US embassy staff have been ordered to leave, with 32 staff members and their families flying out of Beirut airport on

Monday, an airport official told Reuters news agency.

A precise reason has not been given for the partial evacuation, but it comes after Trump said "bad things" would happen if Iran did not reach an agreement over its nuclear programme.

The rhetoric has sparked fears of possible retaliation from Tehran, with Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, posting messages to social media threatening US forces.

Washington holds the Lebanon-based group Hezbollah, which is backed by Iran, responsible for the deadly bombings of a US Marine barracks and the embassy in Beirut in 1983.

On Thursday, Trump said the world would find out "over the next, probably, 10 days" whether a deal would be reached or whether the US would attack Iran.

The US and its European allies suspect that Iran is moving towards the development of a nuclear weapon, something Iran has always denied.

US and Iranian officials said progress had been made after talks between the two sides in Switzerland last week.

Despite this, the US has continued to bolster its huge military deployment near Iran, which includes an array of destroyers, combat ships and fighter jets.

Foreign

NEWS

Rob Jetten becomes Netherlands' youngest ever PM

Rob Jetten has become the youngest and first openly gay prime minister of the Netherlands after his minority government was sworn in.

The 38-year-old claimed victory in October's election with his Democrats 66 party (D66) narrowly beating anti-Islam populist Geert Wilders in a nail-biting election.

Jetten formed a centre-right minority government with the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) and the Christian Democratic Alliance (CDA).

It is a minority cabinet, meaning every major reform in the coalition deal - from an extra €19bn (£16.6bn) for defence to painful cuts in healthcare and benefits - will have to be negotiated vote by vote in the Netherlands' two parliamentary houses.

The coalition also wants fewer asylum seekers, with refugees having to apply for asylum outside Europe, not after they arrive.

Asylum migration has been a particularly sensitive issue in Dutch politics, contributing to the downfall of the country's last two coalition governments.

Jetten succeeds Dick Schoof as prime minister who over-

saw one of the shortest-lived governments in Dutch history.

D66 will provide seven ministers, VVD will provide six, and CDA five, with three state secretaries each - junior members of cabinet.

Jetten was formally sworn in by King Willem-Alexander at the Huis ten Bosch Palace in The Hague on Monday.

Posting a selfie ahead of his swearing-in ceremony, Jetten wrote on X: "Proud to be doing this together. In a new phase, with great responsibility and, above all, a shared promise to work for everyone in the Netherlands."

"By not dwelling on what's wrong, but by building on what can be improved. That requires courage and collaboration."

'Let's get to work'

Slick, smiling and patient, Jetten has spent years shaking off the nickname "Robot Jetten", earned for his stiff, over-rehearsed TV appearances.

The transformation was stark on election night. In a packed, sweaty music venue in Leiden (between Amsterdam and The Hague), he seemed effortlessly at ease, confident and groomed, as young supporters roared around him.

Kim Jong Un re-appointed leader of North Korea's ruling party

North Korea's ruling Workers' Party has again chosen Kim Jong Un to be its general secretary, state media report.

The announcement, which was made at a rubber-stamp party congress in Pyongyang on Sunday, comes as little surprise given the Kim family has ruled by dictatorship since the late 1940s.

State-run KCNA said that under Kim's leadership North Korea "radically improved" its "war deterrence", "with the nuclear forces as its pivot".

Despite long-standing international sanctions, North Korea has continued to build its nuclear capabilities, regularly testing banned intercontinental missiles. But the secrecy of the regime makes it harder to evaluate how much progress the military has made.

Kim, who took control of the regime after his father's death in 2011, has invested heavily in the nuclear weapons programme, turning Pyongyang into a far bigger challenge for the West, and especially the US.

He is expected to announce the next phase of the country's weapons programme during the Ninth Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea, which began on 19 February and is now in its fourth day. Before it started, North Korea unveiled what it said was a range of nuclear-capable rocket launchers.

The congress has been held once every five years in the last decade.

With some 5,000 party members in attendance, according to KCNA, it offers a rare glimpse into the structure of political power in North Korea, which remains quite opaque to even the keenest watchers.

The meetings are considered to be the most important political event and provide insight into where the country's priorities lie, from foreign policy to its nuclear ambitions.

While Kim has remained at the top of North Korean leadership, the party congress' presidium, or executive committee, has been reshuffled since the last meeting in 2021.



UPCOMING VISIT:

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's upcoming visit to India marks a significant reset in ties between the two countries.

Mexico sends thousands of soldiers to stop violence after death of drug lord

A member of Mexico's National Guard stands near the charred wreckage of bus that appears to have been set on fire by organised crime groups in Jalisco state on Sunday.

Mexico has deployed thousands of soldiers to bolster security after a wave of violence erupted following the death of a powerful drug lord, the country's security minister has said.

Defence Secretary Ricardo Trevilla said an extra 2,500 soldiers had been sent to western Mexico on Monday, with the government saying about 9,500 troops have been deployed overall since Sunday.

At least 20 states have seen unrest since Nemesio Oseg-

uera Cervantes - better known as "El Mencho" - died in custody on Sunday shortly after being captured by Mexican special forces in Jalisco state.

The Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) is one of Mexico's most feared criminal organisations and its leader was the country's most wanted man.

At least 25 members of Mexico's National Guard have died in Jalisco state since the violence erupted, the country's security minister said.

El Mencho was captured after forces tracked down a romantic partner he was meeting, according to defence secretary Trevilla.

The drug lord was seriously injured in a firefight between his bodyguards and the mil-

itary commandos deployed to capture him, and he died while the military was transporting him from the town of Tapalpa to the capital, Mexico City.

At least six of El Mencho's security guards were also killed in the operation, while three members of the Mexican military were injured, the defence ministry said.

Security secretary Omar Garcia Harfuch said a prison guard, a member of the state prosecutor's office and 30 members of El Mencho's criminal organisation were killed in the unrest since his death, according to the AFP news agency.

Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum has praised the army's operation that led to

El Mencho's death and said her priority is to guarantee peace and security across the country.

"There is calm, there is government, there are armed forces and there is a lot of co-ordination," Sheinbaum said.

As news of El Mencho's death spread, members of his cartel launched attacks in many towns and cities where the CJNG is active.

In some towns, they blocked roads by throwing spikes and nails on to the tarmac - in others, they commandeered buses and other vehicles then torched them in the middle of the road.

Sheinbaum said that the road blocks had been cleared by Monday morning.

Carney heading on trade trip as Canada seeks to reduce reliance on US

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's upcoming visit to India marks a significant reset in ties between the two countries.

Prime Minister Mark Carney is travelling to India, Australia and Japan this week in his latest effort to cultivate trade ties as he seeks to wean Canada off its economic dependency on the US.

Carney will begin the trip in India on Thursday, his office said, meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He will then travel to Australia to meet Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and address Australia's parliament - the first such speech by a Canadian PM in nearly 20 years. The trip will end in Tokyo, where Carney

will meet Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi.

It is the latest in a string of global trips by Carney in recent months amid trade tensions between Canada and the US.

It also marks a significant shift in Canada-India ties, which deteriorated after former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau accused New Delhi of killing a Sikh separatist on Canadian soil in 2023.

Carney has since sought to mend the relationship by inviting Modi to last year's G7 summit in Kananaskis, Alberta, where the two met on the sidelines.

Canada's foreign minister, Anita Anand, also took a trip to India late last year, where she met Modi and her counterpart S Jaishankar. After that meeting, the two countries agreed to kickstart talks on trade.

Anand told reporters on Monday that she "repeatedly raised issues related to do-

mestic rule of law concerns" as well as transnational repression during that visit.

Carney's office said the forthcoming trip would also focus on energy, AI, defence, critical minerals, maritime security and food security.

Carney has repeatedly stated his objective of doubling Canada's non-US exports by the next decade, in response to ongoing US tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump on key Canadian sectors like metals and cars.

The US is by far Canada's largest customer, making up about 75% of Canadian exports.

"In a more uncertain world, Canada is focused on what we can control," Carney said in a statement on Monday. "We are diversifying our trade and attracting massive new investment to create new opportunities for our workers and businesses."

Trade and hope return to Uvira after DRC-Burundi border reopens

Closed for more than two months, the border between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi reopened this Monday, February 23, ending a period of isolation and uncertainty for thousands of residents.

In Uvira, a strategic city on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, life is gradually returning to normal.

Bujumbura's decision to close the border post followed the takeover of Uvira by the AFC/M23, amid particularly tense security conditions. From the early hours of the morning, a dense crowd gathered at the Kavimvira crossing on the Congolese side and at Gatumba on the Burundian side.

Traders, transporters, students, and families separated

by the crisis crossed the barrier, visibly relieved.

Motorcycle taxis resumed their rotations, bicycles loaded with goods reappeared, and cross-border trade — the economic lifeline of Uvira — restarted.

"I am very happy, because for a long time we were looking for a way to return home, but it was not possible," said Dalili Mussa, a Congolese cit-

izen who had been stranded in Burundi during the closure.

Like him, many families had sought refuge across the border, fleeing insecurity. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the advance of M23 rebels in South Kivu province caused a significant influx of Congolese refugees into Burundi.

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FEATURES

THE WAY FORWARD

The Impact of Insecurity on Nigeria's Economy

GRACE IJEOMA UMEH

Insecurity in Nigeria is a pressing issue, with various factors contributing to the problem. The country is experiencing a surge in violent attacks, kidnappings, and banditry, particularly in the northern regions.

Some of the key drivers of insecurity in Nigeria include: Poverty and Unemployment: Many Nigerians are living below the poverty line, and unemployment is rampant, leading to increased crime rates.

Corruption is widespread, and it's affecting the government's ability to address security challenges.

Weak Security Apparatus: The security forces are often underfunded, and their equipment is outdated, making it difficult for them to effectively tackle security threats.

Porous Borders: Nigeria's borders are not well-secured, allowing criminals and terrorists to easily enter and exit the country.

Ethnic and Religious Tensions: The country is experiencing increased tensions between different ethnic and religious groups, leading to violent conflicts.

The Nigerian government has taken steps to address the issue, including increasing military presence in affected areas and launching initiatives to improve security. However, more needs to be done to tackle the root causes of insecurity and ensure the safety of citizens.

Insecurity is significantly impacting Nigeria's economy, with far-reaching consequences. The country's extreme poverty rate has increased from 40% in 2019 to over 60% in 2025, with 133 million people living in multidimensional poverty.

The impact of insecurity on Nigeria's economy includes:

Reduced Economic Growth: Insecurity has led to a decline in GDP, with a 0.9056 unit reduction in economic growth for every unit increase in insecurity.

Increased Poverty: Poverty rates are higher in rural areas (72%) compared to urban areas (42%), with insecurity exacerbating the situation.

Unemployment: Insecurity has contributed to rising unemployment, with a 1.16-unit increase in unemployment for every unit decline in security.

Disrupted Agricultural Activities: Insecurity has affected farming, leading to food inflation and reduced economic output.

Decreased Foreign Investment: Insecurity has deterred foreign investors, with companies like Mobil and Unilever relocating to other countries.

To address these challenges, experts recommend improving security infrastructure; Promoting peacebuilding efforts; fostering regional economic diversification, addressing poverty and unemployment and enhancing governance and accountability.

The main drivers of insecurity in Nigeria are multifaceted and interconnected. Some of the key factors include poverty and unemployment: High levels of poverty and unemployment, especially among youths, contribute to insecurity. Many individuals are forced to engage in criminal activities due to lack of economic opportunities.



Widespread corruption undermines the effectiveness of security agencies and fuels insecurity. Corrupt officials often collude with criminals, exacerbating the problem.

Weak Security Apparatus: Nigeria's security forces are often underfunded, poorly equipped, and lack modern technology, making it difficult for them to effectively tackle security threats.

Porous Borders: Nigeria's borders are not well-secured, allowing criminals and terrorists to easily enter and exit the country.

Ethnic and Religious Tensions: Exploitation of ethnic and religious differences by politicians and other leaders contributes to insecurity.

Bad Governance and Poor Leadership: Ineffective governance and poor leadership have created an environment conducive to insecurity.

Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons: The easy availability of small arms and light weapons fuels insecurity and violent conflicts.

These factors are interconnected and often exacerbate each other, creating a complex security challenge for Nigeria.

Attracting foreign investment amidst insecurity is challenging, but Nigeria can take steps to improve its investment climate:

Improve Security Infrastructure: Enhance security measures, invest in modern technology, and train security personnel to tackle threats effectively.

Increase Transparency and Accountability: Implement robust anti-corruption measures, ensure transparency in governance, and hold officials accountable for their actions.

Promote Economic Diversification: Reduce dependence on oil, develop other sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, and services, and create a more resilient economy.

Enhance Regulatory Framework: Streamline regulations, reduce bureaucracy, and create a business-friendly environment.

Invest in Human Capital: Develop skills and education, improve health-

care, and create a skilled workforce.

Infrastructure Development: Invest in infrastructure like roads, ports, and power to support business operations.

Regional Integration: Leverage regional partnerships like ECOWAS and AfCFTA to attract investment and promote economic cooperation.

Some initiatives can include:

Special Economic Zones (SEZs): Create SEZs with enhanced security and infrastructure to attract investors.

Investment Promotion Agencies: Strengthen agencies like the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) to promote investment opportunities.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): Encourage PPPs to leverage private sector expertise and investment.

Community engagement is crucial in addressing insecurity in Nigeria. Here's how:

Building Trust: Community engagement helps build trust between citizens and security agencies, encouraging collaboration and information sharing.

Intelligence Gathering: Local communities can provide valuable insights and intelligence to security agencies, helping prevent attacks and crimes.

Conflict Prevention: Community engagement can help resolve conflicts and prevent escalation into violence.

Promoting Social Cohesion: Community programs can foster social cohesion, reducing ethnic and religious tensions.

Youth Empowerment: Engaging youths in community activities can redirect their energy towards positive pursuits, reducing recruitment into criminal groups.

Supporting Vulnerable Groups: Community engagement can identify and support vulnerable individuals, reducing their susceptibility to radicalization.

Some effective community engagement strategies include:

Community Policing: Collabora-

tive policing efforts between communities and security agencies.

Town Hall Meetings: Regular meetings between community leaders, security agencies, and citizens to discuss security concerns.

Youth Programs: Sports, education, and skills development programs for youths.

Women's Initiatives: Empowering women to promote peace and security in their communities.

Nigeria offers various sectors with potential for foreign investment, driven by its large market, young population, and natural resources. Some of the key sectors include:

Fintech: Nigeria's digital economy is projected to generate \$18.3 billion in revenue, with fintech companies like OPay, PalmPay, and Flutterwave dominating mobile payments and digital lending.

Renewable Energy: The government has launched a \$2 billion climate resilience and energy transition fund, with opportunities in solar photovoltaic systems, mini-grids, and energy storage solutions.

Agriculture and Agribusiness: Agriculture employs 35% of the workforce, with opportunities in processing facilities for soybeans, cassava, and fruit juices, as well as export-oriented cash crops like cocoa and cashew.

Manufacturing: Sectors like textiles, food and beverage processing, and construction materials are poised for growth, driven by government policies and regional trade agreements like AfCFTA.

Oil and Gas: Nigeria's oil and gas sector offers opportunities in upstream exploration, midstream processing, and downstream distribution, with international oil companies investing in new projects.

Mining and Solid Minerals: Nigeria has significant deposits of lithium, nickel, cobalt, and other critical minerals, with opportunities for investment in exploration, mining, and processing.

Real Estate and Construction: Ur-

banization and infrastructure development drive demand for residential and commercial properties, with opportunities in affordable housing and smart estates.

E-commerce and Logistics: Nigeria's e-commerce market is growing, with opportunities in logistics, delivery services, and digital payment solutions.

These sectors offer attractive opportunities for foreign investors, but it's essential to conduct thorough research and understand the regulatory environment and risks involved.

Nigeria can improve its regulatory environment by:

Streamlining Regulations: Simplify and consolidate regulations, reducing bureaucracy and complexity.

Increasing Transparency: Make regulations clear, predictable, and easily accessible.

Enhancing Regulatory Institutions: Strengthen institutions like the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) and Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Reducing Corruption: Implement robust anti-corruption measures and ensure accountability.

Improving Infrastructure: Invest in infrastructure like power, roads, and digital connectivity to support business operations.

Promoting Public-Private Dialogue: Engage with businesses and stakeholders to understand challenges and improve regulations.

Adopting Technology: Leverage technology to automate processes, reduce human interaction, and increase efficiency.

Some initiatives include:

Online Business Registration: Implementing online registration systems to simplify business setup.

Single Window System: Introducing a single window for customs clearance and regulatory approvals.

Regulatory Impact Assessment: Conducting impact assessments to evaluate regulatory effectiveness.

Public-Private Partnerships: Encouraging PPPs to leverage private sector expertise and investment.

International organizations can play a significant role in supporting Nigeria's investment climate by:

Providing Technical Assistance: Offering expertise and guidance on regulatory reforms, investment policy, and institutional capacity building.

Promoting Investment: Facilitating investment promotion and matchmaking between Nigerian businesses and international investors.

Supporting Infrastructure Development: Assisting in infrastructure development, such as energy, transportation, and digital connectivity.

Enhancing Transparency and Accountability: Promoting transparency and accountability in governance, anti-corruption efforts, and regulatory frameworks.

Fostering Regional Integration: Supporting regional economic integration, such as ECOWAS and AfCFTA, to increase trade and investment opportunities.

Sports

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

Nigerian-Born teen sensation breaks U18 60m hurdles World Record



JARED EJIASIAN

Nigerian-born sprint hurdler Jared Ejiasian has set a new Under-18 world record in the men's 60 meters hurdles, delivering a standout perfor-

mance at the French U18 and U20 Indoor Championships in Val-de-Reuil.

The 16-year-old clocked 7.43 seconds in Saturday's final at the Stade Couvert

Jesse Owens, lowering the previous U18 world mark by five hundredths of a second. The former record of 7.48 seconds had stood since 2019 and was set by Sasha Zhoya.

Ejiasian seized control of the race after the second hurdle, accelerating away from the field before powering through the finish line in record time. The victory marks his second major triumph of the indoor season and further cements his growing reputation in youth athletics.

He had already signaled his potential earlier this year. In January, Ejiasian claimed victory in the same event at the Tempo Run League indoor meet, posting a time of 7.57 seconds to establish a new African U18 record.

Born in Nigeria, Ejiasian relocated to France at just

three months old. He currently represents Nigeria in international competitions. However, reports indicate he has initiated the process of naturalisation and could represent France in future events.

His rapid ascent has been years in the making. In 2024, Ejiasian broke four French school records in the U14 category, including three in the 200 meters hurdles and one in the 4x60 meters mixed relay.

Competing for AC Nord Val d'Oise in domestic league meetings, Ejiasian is widely regarded as one of the most promising young talents in global sprint hurdling. His latest achievement not only underscores his remarkable progression but also positions him as a rising force in international athletics



HANDBALL EVENT

Niger Delta Games: Imo, Edo, Ondo record wins in handball

Handball event at the ongoing Niger Delta Games, is becoming more interesting with some impressive results recorded at Day 2 of the tournament.

In the men category, Imo State with good defensive work and striking form, defeated Akwa Ibom State by 23 -14 in a match which was full of action and good handball artistry

Speaking shortly after the game, Coach of Imo State, Cletus Ogueri Emeanna expressed happiness with the performance of his team with a declaration that they will take other states to the cleaners as they aim for top podium finish at the Games.

"My boys played to instruction. Although they missed

many scoring chances, but we shall get it right as the tournament progresses.

In his own remarks, Coach of Akwa Ibom State acknowledged that his team played against a better side but was quick to add that they'll make amends in their next game.

Also, the game between Edo State and Rivers ended with the host recording a 25-17 victory over their opponents

The first half of the keenly contested game ended 11-10 in favour of Edo State. However on the resumption of the second half, the host state came back strongly, tightening their defence and improving their strike force which helped them win the match 25-17.

2nd Niger Delta Games: Etoro Bassey thrilled after beating Lorelay Holzendorff to reach Women's Tennis final

Team Akwa Ibom tennis player Etoro Bassey has described her victory over Lorelay Holzendorff as "thrilling" after reaching the women's singles final at the 2nd Niger Delta Games in Benin City, Edo State.

"The feeling is thrilling. Last year (1st Edition) of the Niger Delta Games) was basically the same thing as we met in the semifinals and I won and to defeat her again is a good thing for me," Etoro Bassey said after her 2-0 (6-1, 6-1) win in the semifinal held on Monday at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium.

The 18-year-old said she had no fear going into the match despite Lorelay's improvement. "I didn't feel fear at all. I was confident in my game," she stated.

Etoro Bassey also said she is hoping for a repeat of last year's final against fellow Team Akwa Ibom player, Favour James. "I am really looking forward to a repeat of last years final. I want to face Favour James in the final but if it happens otherwise fine."

She praised the organisers of the Games for their support and welfare of athletes. "The competition is okay. They are treating us well, giving us good food and everything is okay.

"It has been fun in Edo State. I am getting to meet new people and our team we are supporting each other and so I am enjoying myself here."

Etoro Bassey, who has achieved significant success in youth events, also revealed her ambition to reach the top circuit and become a professional tennis player.

The Niger Delta Games is organised by Dunamis-Icon Limited and sponsored by the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). Events will run until the closing ceremony on February 26.



ETORO BASSEY AND LORELAY HOLZENDORFF

NDDC pledges to sustain Niger Delta Games, seeks States' support



THE MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE NIGER DELTA DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (NDDC), DR SAMUEL OGBUKU

The Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Dr Samuel Ogbuku, has assured that the Niger Delta Games will be sustained, urging state governments in the region to support the initiative.

Ogbuku gave the assurance at the opening ceremony of the second edition of the Niger Delta Games held at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin, Edo State.

He affirmed the commis-

sion's commitment to continued sponsorship of the sports festival, explaining that the competition was designed to nurture amateur athletes.

"We discovered that some state governments recruit athletes from outside their states in a bid to win medals. This competition is for home-grown amateur athletes. From here, they can rise to professional levels. Let us groom our own talents," he said.

He described the games as

a platform for discovering and harnessing raw talents and bringing them to national and international limelight.

Ogbuku noted that the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Tinubu's administration had created opportunities for youths to thrive through initiatives such as the games.

President Bola Tinubu, represented by the Minister of State for Industry, Senator John Enoh, urged the NDDC to expand its youth-focused programmes and invest more in initiatives that empower young people and women.

The President described sports as a powerful instrument of unity and empowerment and commended the NDDC for sustaining the initiative. He reiterated his administration's commitment to human capital development alongside infrastructure.

NDF Tennis: Ondo, Akwa Ibom boys to face off in final

Ondo State tennis player, Rahman Ahmed, on Monday defeated Wisdom Chibueze of Abia State 6-1, 6-1 to qualify for the finals of the tennis competition at the ongoing second Niger Delta Games (NDG).

The U-20 tournament, sponsored by the Niger Delta Development Commission, was held at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin.

The victory ensured that Ahmed would face Wisdom Effiong of Akwa Ibom State in the finals after Effiong overcame Chinedu Obinna of Abia State

6-2, 7-5 in the second semi-final.

Ahmed, who spoke with newsmen after the match, expressed confidence ahead of the finals, saying he was determined to clinch the gold medal.

The Ondo player described the tournament as a major breakthrough, noting that it was his first appearance in a finals since he began playing tennis.

"This tournament is a good platform for me because I have been able to reach my first final since I started playing tennis.

"I trained very hard for this competition and I am happy the efforts are yielding positive results.



WISDOM CHIBUEZE

Sports

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Grassroots Coaching Development Key to Football Growth — DG Ono Akpe

The Director General of the Bayelsa Governor's Football Tournament (Prosperity Cup) Mr. Ono Akpe has explained that grassroots coaching development is the key to football growth.

Mr Akpe who was speaking at the opening ceremony of the Prosperity Cup/ FC Barcelona international Coaching Clinic ahead of the 2026 Prosperity Cup explained that the main purpose of the programme is to enhance the competence of

grassroots coaches across the state. He emphasized that football development must start from the foundation, where young talents are discovered and nurtured. According to him, equipping community coaches with modern training methods, tactical knowledge, and effective player management skills is crucial for sustainable growth. He described the initiative as a strategic step toward raising the overall standard of football in the state.

Mr. Akpe noted that the continuous training of grassroots coaches is already producing visible improvements in local competitions. He observed better tactical discipline, improved teamwork, and stronger technical ability among young players. He attributed this progress to the deliberate investment in coaching education, stressing that one well-trained coach can positively influence many players.

In his view, strengthening coaches ultimately strengthens the entire football structure of the state.

The DG used the opportunity to express gratitude to the Governor of Bayelsa State, Senator Douye Diri, for his strong commitment to sports development, as well as to the sponsors for their consistent support. Mr. Akpe commended their contributions, noting that their partnership has played a vital role in sustaining the tournament's vision. He affirmed that with continued government backing and corporate collaboration, foot-

ball in the state will continue to thrive and reach greater heights.

Mr. Bernat Villa Gorris, the Team Lead of the FC Barcelona delegation, asserted that he was pleased with the organization of the programme particularly the enthusiasm of the coaches, stressing that his dream was to see these coaches rise to the peak of their career.

Also speaking, Mr. Sylvester Okonkwo of Whiz-Kid Ventures, Netherlands, who brokered the FC Barcelona/ Prosperity Cup partnership, stated that the programme was designed to equip grassroots coaches with the FC Barcelona philosophy, methodology, and distinctive style of play, with the aim of enhancing their technical and tactical approach to the game.

The Prosperity Cup/FC Barcelona International Coaching Clinic will run until Thursday 26th of February as build up to the commencement of the 2026 Bayelsa Governor's Football Tournament (Prosperity Cup).



DG ONO AKPE WITH EGUAVOEN



DR SAMUEL OGBUKU

Niger Delta Games will be sustained, NDDC boss assures

The Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission, NDDC, Dr Samuel Ogbuku, has assured that the Niger Delta Games will be sustained, urging state governments to join in sponsoring the sports fiesta.

Ogbuku gave the assurance during the opening ceremony of the 2nd edition of the Niger Delta Games at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin, Edo State.

The NDDC Chief Executive Officer affirmed that the Commission was committed to the continued sponsorship of the games, noting that the sports festival was carefully crafted to target amateur athletes.

He added, "We found out that the state governments hire people from other states in the name of winning gold medals. This competition is aimed at the amateur athletes. From here, they will be professional. All athletes come from their respective states. Let us use what we have to groom our athletes."

"This opportunity could only be given by renewed hope. This competition has come to stay. This is part of our sports intervention. We welcome the governors' support. The NDDC is the sole sponsor at the moment. We believe the state governments will support us to sustain the games."

Ogbuku stated that the games were where raw talents are discovered, harnessed and brought to the limelight.

He noted that the Renewed Hope Agenda of President

Bola Tinubu's Administration gave the youths the opportunity to participate in the games.

Speaking at the event, President Bola Tinubu, who was represented by the Minister of State for Industry, Senator John Enoh, tasked the NDDC to expand its opportunities and invest in initiatives that empower the youths and women.

President Tinubu said sports remained an instrument of unity and empowerment known to mankind.

He also commended the NDDC for sustaining the initiative and said his administration prioritised human capital development alongside infrastructural development.

Tinubu stated: "Niger Delta youths are creative and ready to compete. Beyond medals and trophies, this game is about talent discovery. Nigeria must lead. Young talents must see sport as a pathway to career and global recognition."

In his address, the Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo announced a N20m reward for the state that emerged as the winner and a N10m reward for the runner-up.

He said the sporting event represented more than competition but symbolised possibilities.

According to him, "The games are a powerful statement that the Niger Delta is not only defined by its resources, but also by its resilience, talent, and boundless human potential."

Navy seeks Govt. partnership to sustain command's Golf Tournament

The Nigerian Navy has called for the inclusion of the annual Eastern Naval Command (ENC) Golf Tournament in the tourism calendar of Cross River.

The call was made by a former Chief of Naval Staff, Dele Ezeoba, at the 2026 edition of the tournament held at the Calabar Golf Course on Sunday.

Ezeoba commended the organisers for hosting a tournament that attracted golfers from across the country, noting that such an event had the potential to boost tourism and revenue generation in the state.

He said the Cross River Government only needed to partner with the organisers to sustain and expand the event in subsequent editions.

"I have had a wonderful experience of golf and I must say that it is something that should be encouraged," he said.

He noted that participants aged 81 and above completed nine holes during the tournament, demonstrating that golf remained a viable form of exercise even in old age.

According to him, the tournament forms part of the annual activities of flag officers and their regimental engagements.

"There is need for a more sustainable funding structure beyond the resources of the Navy and the flag officers."

"My take is that the state government should come in and add value to the development of this course as a source of tourism potential for the state," he said.

Also speaking, the Flag Of-

ficer Commanding, ENC, Chiedoie Okehie, said the 2026 edition attracted 152 golfers from across Nigeria to Calabar.

Okehie said that beyond its fitness value, the annual tournament also provided opportunities for networking.

He added that the golf course spans about 10 kilometres, underscoring its capacity to host

major competitions.

In his remarks, the Deputy Governor of Cross River, Peter Odey, urged participants to promote the state as an investment destination, particularly in tourism and agriculture.

"To be honest, I didn't know it was going to be this well-organised."

"I am impressed with what I have seen here; I'm impressed with

the way they are taking it seriously."

"It's an encouragement for some of us who've just started playing golf to ensure that we step up our game."

Similarly, the traditional ruler of Orlu in Imo, Patrick Acholonu, urged the state government to leverage the tournament to promote and boost its tourism sector.



EASTERN NAVAL COMMAND (ENC) GOLF TOURNAMENT

Cross River Chess sensation, Ekwe confident of podium finish

Cross River State Chess sensation, John Praise Ekwe has predicted a podium finish for the Canaan City State in the ongoing 2nd Niger Delta Games in Benin City, the Edo State capital.

Cross River finished bottom at the inaugural edition last year with five gold, seven silver and 19 bronze medals, totalling 31 medals.

Ekwe in an interview with journalists, said the competition has been eventful in the chess after day one of the spectacle, stating that their priority at the Games

was to finish on the podium.

Although, Cross Rivers State has recorded one silver and one bronze medal, according to the official medals table released but Ekwe believes that they are in Benin City to rewrite their story, having performed poorly in 2025.

He noted that this year's edition of the Niger Delta Games in Benin City has witnessed unprecedented improvement compared to the maiden edition in Uyo, maintaining that the organization has been perfect so far.

According to him, one of the most improved aspects of this year's Niger Delta Games is the quality of the hostels and the facilities at the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium, commending Dunamis Icon Limited for the improvement.

"The Games have been perfect, we have witnessed a lot of improvement from the previous edition in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. I am enjoying my stay in Benin, the Niger Delta Games have made me see different parts of the country," he stated.



JOHN PRAISE EKWE

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2nd NDGs: Governor Okpebholo Commends Dunamis —NDDC

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

● Tells Edo athletes to compete with passion integrity

Edo State Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo has commended the organizers and sponsors of the Niger Delta Games Dunamis Icon Ltd and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) for their initiative, ideas and investment geared toward youth and sports development in the Niger Delta region.

The host state Governor gave the commendation in his address during the opening ceremony of the second Niger Delta Games at the Samuel Ogburn stadium on Friday evening.

Governor Okpebholo described the Niger Delta Games as a laudable project that should be embraced and sustained.

"To the organisers, the NDDC, we commend your vision in using sports as a vehicle for youth



EDO STATE GOVERNOR SENATOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLU

empowerment, regional integration, and sustainable peace. When we invest in our youth, we secure their future.

He said that the Games represent more than competition, but that they symbolise possibilities. "The games are a powerful statement that the Niger Delta is not only defined by its

resources, but also by its resilience, talent, and boundless human potential.

"Through sports, discipline is taught. Through sports, character is built. Through sports, people across language, culture, and boundaries disappear. In this tournament, there is no division, only teamwork, ex-

cellence, and greatness. This is the spirit we must carry beyond this arena into our various communities." He stressed.

While welcoming all the participants and contingent from the rest part of the region to Edo State, Governor Okpebholo urged the athletes to imbibe the culture of sportsmanship and compete fairly as the games begin.

"On behalf of the Government and good people of Edo State, I warmly welcome all athletes, officials, and distinguished guests to the 2026 Niger Delta Games. We are deeply honoured to host this landmark event in partnership with the Niger Delta Development Commission.

"To our athletes: you are the pride of the Niger Delta. You

carry the dreams of millions of young people who look to you for inspiration. I urge you to compete with passion and integrity. Let your performance reflect the strength, courage, and determination of our people.

"To the organisers and sponsors Dunamis Icon Ltd and the NDDC, we commend your vision in using sports as a vehicle for youth empowerment, regional integration, and sustainable peace. When we invest in our youth, we secure their future.

"When I was approached by Dunamis Icon Ltd and the NDDC to host the 2nd edition of this wonderful tournament, I hurriedly embraced the offer, but I also promised that ours will be the best outing and will remain the best experience for the youths of the Niger Delta.

The idea of this sports fiesta is to galvanise the energies of our youth population and re-channel it to positive endeavours. This tournament is in line with our SHINE AGENDA whose cardinal objective is sustainable youth development. It is our administration's policy to deliberately balance our developmental drive with meaningful engagement of our youth population. We believe that no meaningful development can be achieved if the youths, who constitute the majority of the population, are ignored.

"Edo State is proud to provide a safe, hospitable, and conducive environment for these Games. May this games forge new friendships, inspire new dreams, and showcase to the nation and the world the true spirit of the Niger Delta.

2nd NDGs: Team Edo delivers in Athletics, advance to quarter finals in Basketball

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Team Edo continued with its impressive run in the ongoing second Niger Delta Games in Benin as they make good harvest of gold in athletics, parapoe ER lifting and as well edging close to podium finish in the female Basketball event.

On the second day of the competition, Edo female Basketball team beat Delta 20-18 to advance to the quarter finals stage. They had earlier dismantled Team Abia 47- 6 in their opening match.

In the track and field events, Osawe Salami put up a strong showing in the men's 400m Hurdles, finishing in a time of 51.73 seconds.

Solomon Okundaye stormed to gold in the Men's 800m Final, finishing in a time of 1:56.34. Solomon Okundaye stormed to gold in the Men's 800m Final,

In the field events, Rebecca Njoku clinched gold in the women's Hammer with an impressive 30.20m throw. Emmanuel Chakamumudu also secured gold in the men's Hammer, recording a massive 41.57m throw to edge out David Bosa of Team Delta, who settled for silver, while Goodnews Musa of Rivers claimed bronze.

Chakamumudu had secured his first gold medal in the Shot-put event.

In Para Powerlifting, Nicholas Ojomah won gold in the

72kg category, ahead of Abia (Silver) and Imo (Bronze).

Favour Imasuen increased the medal tally with a silver medal in the women's Hammer, after a distant throw of 24.60m.

In Taekwondo, Emmanuel Ogbevoen clinched gold in men's 68kg category after a brilliant performance in the combat sport.

In the Chess Male Rapid category, Nwachukwu John of Rivers State emerged champion to claim gold. Team Edo's Osayande Kingsley delivered a strong performance to secure silver, while Evbuomwam Hen-

ry Oghogho earned bronze.

In the Female Rapid category, Omoruyi Sandra Osarugue of Edo State clinched gold.



TEAM EDO WITH THE COMMISSIONER FOR SPORTS

Nwankwo Michelle Chiamaka of Abia State took silver, while Effiom Esther Erin of Cross River State settled for bronze.

Niger Delta Games: Imo, Edo, Ondo record wins in handball



Handball event at the ongoing Niger Delta Games, is becoming more interesting with some impressive results recorded at Day 2 of the tournament.

In the men category, Imo State with good defensive work and striking form, defeated Akwa Ibom State by 23 -14 in a match which was full of action

and good handball artistry. Speaking shortly after the game, Coach of Imo State, Cletus Ogueri Emeanna expressed happiness with the performance of his team with a declaration that they will take other states to the cleaners as they aim for top podium finish at the Games.

"My boys played to instruc-

tion. Although they missed many scoring chances, but we shall get it right as the tournament progresses.

In his own remarks, Coach of Akwa Ibom State acknowledged that his team played against a better side but was quick to add that they'll make amends in their next game.

Also, the game between Edo State and Rivers ended with the host recording a 25-17 victory over their opponents.

The first half of the keenly contested game ended 11-10 in favour of Edo State. However on the resumption of the second half, the host state came back strongly, tightening their defence and improving their strike force which helped them win the match 25-17.

Nigerian-born teen sensation breaks U18 60m Hurdles World Record

Nigerian-born sprint hurdler Jared Ejiasian has set a new Under-18 world record in the men's 60 meters hurdles, delivering a stand-out performance at the French U18 and U20 Indoor Championships in Val-de-Reuil.

The 16-year-old clocked 7.43 seconds in Saturday's final at the Stade Couvert Jesse Owens, lowering the previous U18 world mark by five hundredths of a second. The former record of 7.48 seconds had stood since 2019 and was set by Sasha Zhoya.

Ejiasian seized control of the race after the second hurdle, accelerating away from the field before powering through the finish line in record time. The victory marks his second major triumph of the indoor season and further cements his grow-

ing reputation in youth athletics.

He had already signaled his potential earlier this year. In January, Ejiasian claimed victory in the same event at the Tempo Run League indoor meet, posting a time of 7.57 seconds to establish a new African U18 record.

Born in Nigeria, Ejiasian relocated to France at just three months old. He currently represents Nigeria in international competitions. However, reports indicate he has initiated the process of naturalisation and could represent France in future events.

His rapid ascent has been years in the making. In 2024, Ejiasian broke four French school records in the U14 category, including three in the 200 meters hurdles and one in the 4x60 meters mixed relay.



JARED EJIASIAN