

# Okpebholo charges Edo public service leaders on performance, accountability

## UDOMI (ESAN CENTRAL)

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State has charged civil and public service leaders in the State to embrace discipline, teamwork and measurable results, declaring that his administration is firmly driven by performance and accountability.

The governor gave the charge

at the opening ceremony of a 3-day Orientation and Strategic Leadership Retreat for top government officials at the Udomi Townhall, Esan Central Local Government Area.

The retreat, themed "High Performing Public Service for Sustainable Development of Edo State," is the first of its kind under the Okpebholo administration.

Okpebholo said the retreat

was not a social gathering but a serious engagement aimed at strengthening governance and improving service delivery across the state.

"We are gathered here today not for a jamboree, but for a purpose. This retreat is designed to serve dual purposes — orientation and capacity building for top government officials," he said.

He explained that the pro-

gramme was structured to reposition the administration for effective service delivery, enhance collaboration among ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), and deepen understanding of governance processes.

"Our administration is driven by a clear vision of the SHINE Agenda. This vision is practical governance that deliv-

ers results," the governor stated.

Emphasising collective responsibility, Okpebholo noted that no ministry or appointee could succeed in isolation, stressing the need for teamwork across government.

"Good governance is teamwork, and no single appointee or agency can succeed in isolation. We must work as a team and strengthen collaboration

across MDAs," he said.

The governor warned appointees against using public office for personal enrichment, stressing that leadership is first and foremost a call to service.

"I want to repeat my warning to you: public office is a call to service, not for profit-making or personal gain. Every naira

CONTINUES ON PG 2 >>

# The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

f t i g NigerianObserver @Nigerian\_Observer @NigerianObserver www.nigerianobservernews.com

PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968

VOL. 47, NO. 1,185

WEDNESDAY 4TH FEBRUARY 2026.

**NECO releases 2025 SSCE external results, records 71.63% pass rate**

—Pg 4

# Edo govt attracts \$109m investments, secures NEPC certification for 10 MSMEs

## BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has attracted investments valued at over \$109 million and facilitated Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) certification for 10 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in a move aimed at boosting export readiness and promoting Made-in-Edo products.

The Managing Director

of the Edo State Investment Promotion Office (ESIPO) and Ease of Doing Business Secretariat, Mr Amen Odigie, disclosed this during a media interaction with journalists in Benin City while reviewing the office's performance in 2025 and outlining plans to scale up investment facilitation in 2026.

Odigie said the NEPC certifications, processed directly through the council's headquarters in Abuja, helped to

eliminate bureaucratic hurdles and opened international market opportunities for Edo-based agro-processing businesses.

The certified firms include Tamah Limited, Fonwose Global Services Limited, Amineru Nigeria Enterprises Ltd, Osimhe Ventures Ltd, Neo-Ritzzy Ltd, JVV Food Limited, Usediam Limited, P.P. International Foods Ltd, Gem Organic Foods, and Varli Foods Limited.

He described the \$109 mil-

lion investment inflow recorded during the year under review as a strong indication of growing investor confidence in Edo State's business environment, adding that several of the investments are already at advanced stages and expected to commence operations soon.

Among the projects cited is Zeta Autos, valued at about \$3 million, for which a site has been identified and a Memorandum of Understanding

signed. Odigie also disclosed that Presco Plc is set to inject about \$100 million in foreign direct investment into the state's agriculture sector.

He noted that investment attraction is a collective effort involving close collaboration with relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies, adding that companies such as Mandate, recently attracted to the state, are already working with the Edo State Signage Agency to facilitate smooth operations.

The ESIPO managing director further revealed that the office delivered over 170 aftercare services to existing

businesses despite logistical challenges inherited from the previous administration.

He said the engagements helped resolve key operational issues facing investors, stressing that aftercare remains central to sustaining investor confidence and ensuring business continuity.

Odigie commended Governor Okpebholo for his commitment to addressing challenges confronting businesses in the state, assuring that the administration remains focused on strengthening MSMEs, supporting investors and positioning Edo State as a preferred destination for investment.



## OPENING CEREMONY:

Edo State Governor, Sen Monday Okpebholo (middle), flanked by his Deputy, Hon Dennis Idahosa (left) and State Chairman, All Progressives Congress (APC), Emperor Jarrett Tenebe, at the opening ceremony of a 3-Day Retreat for Edo State Government and public service leaders held in Udomi-Uwessan, Irrua, Esan Central Local Government Area, Edo State.

## WHO seeks \$1bn to bolster global health emergency response

### ABUJA

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has launched a 2026 global appeal seeking nearly one billion dollars to strengthen responses to health emergencies worldwide.

The organisation disclosed this in a statement on Tuesday, saying the appeal is aimed at ensuring that millions of people affected by humanitarian crises and conflicts can access essential health care.

WHO said that in 2025, it and its partners supported about 30 million people through its annual emergency appeal.

The funding enabled the delivery of life-saving vaccinations to

5.3 million children, facilitated 53 million health consultations, supported more than 8,000 health facilities and led to the deployment of 1,370 mobile clinics.

According to the statement, the 2026 appeal targets 36 emergencies globally, including 14 Grade Three crises that require the highest level of organisational response.

These emergencies include both sudden-onset and protracted humanitarian situations where health needs remain critical.

WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus, said the appeal was a call for global solidarity with people affected by con-

CONTINUES ON PG 2 >>

**Sokoto probe uncovers alleged N17bn financial infractions**

—Pg 2

**TETFund breaks ground for Abuja Leadership Centre, to commission 467 projects nationwide**

—Pg 6

**South Sudan's leader sacks aides after dead man appointed**

—Pg 9

**Glasgow 2026: Nigeria to make historic Men's 3x3 basketball debut**

—Pg 12

# "Proper documentation key to prompt pension payments"

## ABUJA

The Chairman of the Contributory Pension and Happy Retirement Advocacy (COPEHRA), Mr Sani Mustapha, has said that retirees in Nigeria are increasingly receiving their pension benefits promptly upon retirement, provided their documentation is properly completed.

Mustapha stated this in an interview with journalists on Tuesday, noting that sustained reforms in pension administration have significantly improved the timeliness of benefit payments.

According to him, enhanced regulatory oversight, improved employer compliance and the

deployment of digital platforms for pension processing have reduced the delays that previously characterised pension disbursement.

He explained that under the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS), retirees now access their Retirement Savings Account (RSA) balances through either programmed withdrawals or annuities shortly after completing documentation and verification processes.

Mustapha advised employees to work closely with their Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) to ensure all records are in order well ahead of retirement.

He stressed that timely payment of retirement benefits is

critical to the welfare and dignity of senior citizens, adding that predictable post-retirement income reduces poverty, improves access to healthcare and promotes economic stability.

The COPEHRA chairman also urged employers, particularly in the public sector and

among small and medium-scale enterprises, to sustain prompt remittance of pension contributions to consolidate the gains recorded so far.

He commended the Director-General of the National Pension Commission (Pen-Com), Mrs Omolola Olowor-

aran, for driving reforms in the pension industry.

Meanwhile, a retiree, Hajjiya Amina Aliyu, said she retired in November 2025 and had since received all her entitlements.

"I worked closely with my PFA and ensured that all my documents were intact. I was

also given the option to choose between programmed withdrawals and annuities," she said.

Aliyu noted that some of her colleagues were yet to receive their benefits due to documentation issues and praised Pen-Com for reforms that prioritise the interests of senior citizens.

## Okpebholo charges Edo public...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

we spend must deliver value, and every policy must produce measurable results," he warned.

According to him, the retreat signals a fresh approach to governance in Edo State, with renewed emphasis on discipline, accountability and performance monitoring.

"Your performance will be measured. Tangible results and excellence will now determine your status in this administration," Okpebholo declared.

He urged participants to take the retreat seriously, participate actively and remain committed to delivering quality governance to the people of the state.

"I charge you to participate actively, think boldly, and commit fully to the collective success of this administration. Edo people are watching, and

they deserve nothing less than excellence," he added.

Earlier, Secretary to the State Government, Umar Musa Ikhilor, Esq., said the guiding philosophy of the retreat is that "Edo is building Edo," stressing that the state's transformation must be driven by its own people.

He also delivered a presentation on Project S.H.I.N.E, the administration's official framework and strategic blueprint for Edo State's development.

In his welcome address, the Head of Service, Dr Anthony Okhungbowa, Esq., expressed optimism that the retreat would strengthen leadership capacity and enhance service delivery across the state.

Participants at the retreat include commissioners, special advisers, permanent secretaries and heads of ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs).

## WHO seeks \$1bn to bolster global...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

flict, displacement and disasters. "This is not charity. It is a strategic investment in health and security," he said.

"Access to health care restores dignity, stabilises communities and offers a pathway towards recovery."

Ghebreyesus noted that the appeal comes amid mounting global pressures, including protracted conflicts, the escalating effects of climate change and recurring infectious disease outbreaks, all of which are increasing demand for emergency health support. He added that this was happening at a time when global humanitarian financing continues to decline.

He revealed that in 2025, humanitarian funding dropped below 2016 levels, leaving WHO and its partners able to reach only one-third of the 81 million people initially targeted for humanitarian health assistance.

"Renewed commitments and solidarity are urgently needed to protect and support people living in the most fragile and vulnerable settings," he said.

The Director-General said WHO's priority emergency response areas in 2026 would include Afghanistan, the Dem-

ocratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Myanmar, the occupied Palestinian territory, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen, as well as ongoing outbreaks of cholera and mpox.

He added that as the lead agency for health response in humanitarian settings, WHO coordinates more than 1,500 partners across 24 crisis settings worldwide, while ensuring national authorities and local partners remain central to emergency response efforts.

Speaking as co-chair at the launch event, Ireland's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office in Geneva, Ambassador Noel White, said every humanitarian crisis was also a health crisis.

He said this informed Ireland's support for WHO's emergency response through flexible and predictable funding of the Contingency Fund for Emergencies.

Also speaking, Norway's Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ms Marita Sørheim-Rensvik, said WHO remained indispensable in today's most complex emergencies, protecting health and upholding international humanitarian law.



### INAUGURATION OF COMMITTEE:

L-R: Representative of the Speaker, Rep. Kwamoti Laori; Chairman, House of Representative Ad-hoc Committee to investigate and appraise the performance and benefits that accrued to FG from concessionaires 2006-2025, Rep. Kolawole Davidson and the Deputy Chairman of the Committee, Rep. Harrison Anozie, during the inauguration of the committee at the National Assembly Complex in Abuja on Tuesday.

## Sokoto probe uncovers alleged N117bn financial infractions

### SOKOTO

The Sokoto State Judicial Commission of Inquiry has uncovered alleged financial infractions amounting to about N117 billion, reportedly linked to the immediate past administration in the state.

The Chairman of the commission, Justice Ma'azu Pindiga, disclosed this on Tuesday while presenting the commission's report to Governor Ah-

mad Aliyu in Sokoto.

Pindiga said the commission received 31 memoranda from public and private institutions, as well as individuals, detailing alleged infractions committed between 2015 and 2023.

He explained that the allegations ranged from disregard for due process and non-compliance with financial regulations to abuse of office by public officials.

According to him, 241 witnesses testified before the

commission and tendered several exhibits, all of which were carefully examined in line with the commission's terms of reference.

He emphasised that the sittings were conducted diligently, in accordance with constitutional and legal provisions, and denied claims of witch-hunt or intimidation.

Pindiga said the commission began sittings on August 7, 2023, and operated under several extensions beyond the initial two-month timeline, adding that its findings were

categorised into five segments with corresponding recommendations.

In his remarks, Governor Aliyu commended the commission for its thorough work, noting that it was established in response to inherited administrative decay, governance lapses and suspected financial mismanagement.

He dismissed claims that the probe was politically motivated, stressing that the exercise was aimed at safeguarding public funds and ensuring transparency in governance.

## Lagos Assembly halts Makoko waterfront demolitions

### LAGOS

The Lagos State House of Assembly has ordered the immediate suspension of demolition activities at the Makoko waterfront and surrounding communities.

The chairman of the House ad-hoc committee, Mr Noheem Adams, announced this on Tuesday during a stakeholders' engagement with

leaders of affected waterfront communities.

The committee was set up by Speaker Mudashiru Obasa following public outcry over the demolition exercise, which triggered protests by displaced Makoko residents at the Assembly complex last week.

Adams said the Assembly resolved that all ministries, departments and agencies involved in the exercise must

halt demolitions in Makoko, Oko-Agbon and Shogunro with immediate effect.

He added that the House had demanded full disclosure of the composition and mandate of the task force coordinating the exercise and called for transparency and the inclusion of affected residents in decision-making.

"The Assembly assures residents that demolitions remain

suspended and that compensation will be paid to those already affected," Adams said.

The announcement was met with cheers from community representatives, who expressed appreciation for the Assembly's intervention.

An affected resident, Mr Tomi Ipaye, described the decision as a positive step towards resolving the crisis through dialogue and engagement.

## FG approves 28 new oil field projects worth \$18.2bn

### ABUJA

The Federal Government has approved 28 new Field Development Plans (FDPs) valued at about \$18.2 billion, with an estimated reserve potential of 1.4 billion barrels, in 2025.

The government also disclosed that between 2024 and 2025, four of the seven major Final Investment Decisions

(FIDs) announced across Africa were in Nigeria, attributing the development to policy clarity and improved governance.

The Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, made this known on Tuesday at the opening of the 2026 Nigeria International Energy Summit (NIES) in Abuja.

President Bola Tinubu, who declared the summit open, was

represented by Vice-President Kashim Shettima.

Lokpobiri said reforms under the Tinubu administration had reversed years of declining production and capital flight, repositioning Nigeria's petroleum sector as an attractive investment destination.

He noted that recent investments by international oil companies to indigenous firms

had boosted production by an additional 200,000 barrels per day, while stalled transactions were concluded in record time.

On the downstream sector, the minister said fuel subsidy removal had stabilised the market and improved product availability, while indigenous investors such as Dangote and BUA were expanding refining and midstream infrastructure.

# Senate orders FG to enforce anti-venom stocking in hospitals

CAROLINE AMEH

## ABUJA

The Senate has urged the Federal Government to compel all public and private hospitals across the country to maintain adequate stocks of snake anti-venoms and other essential antidotes, following the death of Abu-

ja-based singer Ifeanyi Nwan-gene, popularly known as Nanyah, from a snake bite.

The upper chamber, on Tuesday, called on the Federal Ministry of Health to immediately develop and enforce national guidelines prescribing minimum stock levels of snake anti-venoms, emergency medicines and critical antidotes in

designated hospitals nationwide.

Lawmakers further directed health regulatory authorities to deny registration or licensing to private hospitals that lack these life-saving antidotes, while stressing the need for adequate budgetary provision to ensure their availability in public health facilities.

The resolutions followed a

motion by Senator Idiati Oluranti Adebule (APC, Lagos West), who highlighted what she described as the urgent need for federal and state governments to guarantee access to emergency antidotes, given the rising cases of snake bites, scorpion stings, poisoning and drug overdoses across the country.

Senators noted that Nwan-

gene's death exposed serious gaps in emergency preparedness, adding that the tragedy was avoidable with timely access to anti-venom.

The Senate also urged the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), to ensure proper procurement, quality control, storage and nationwide dis-

tribution of safe, effective and affordable anti-venoms, with priority for high-risk regions.

State governments were asked to conduct immediate audits of public and private hospitals to ensure compliance with antidote-stocking and emergency preparedness standards.

The Senate observed a minute of silence in honour of Nwan-gene, who died at the age of 26.



## ALUMNI MEET AND GREET:

L-R: Public Relations Officer, Alumni Coordinator, U.S. Embassy Abuja (USGEAAN), Daniel Iwuchukwu; Secretary, Ikechukwu Chukwu; Alumni Coordinator, Hannatu Sadiq; Program Coordinator, Ebenezer Ajah-Chris; FCT Deputy Coordinator, Rabi Umma Adamu; Education USA Advising Specialist, U.S. Embassy Abuja, Folashade Adebayo; Public Diplomacy Officer, U.S. Embassy Abuja, Raisa Dukas; FCT Coordinator/Spokesman, House of Representatives, Rep. Akin Rotimi; Youth Engagement Specialist, U.S. Embassy Abuja, Adediran Adegoke; Financial Secretary, John Okoroafor and Vice President, North Central USGEAAN, during the Alumni Meet and Greet, bringing together about 300 U.S. Government sponsored exchange alumni resident in the Federal Capital Territory, in Abuja.

# Army deploys multi-domain strategy against asymmetric threats —COAS

## ABUJA

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt-Gen. Wai-di Shaibu, has said the Nigerian Army has adopted a flexible, intelligence-driven and technology-enabled strategy to counter Nigeria's evolving asymmetric security threats.

Shaibu disclosed this on Tuesday in Abuja while delivering a lecture titled, "Combating Asymmetric Threats to National Security in Nigeria: The Nigerian Army in Perspective" to participants of Course 34 at the National Defence College.

He noted that global security dynamics have shifted from conventional inter-state warfare to complex intra-state conflicts driven by terrorism, cybercrime, trafficking and transnational organised crime.

According to him, the army's response integrates kinetic operations, intelligence fusion, joint operations with sister services, and collaboration with domestic and international partners.

"Asymmetric threats exploit vulnerabilities and deliberately target civilians, institutions and critical infrastructure. Our response must therefore

be adaptive, multi-domain and collaborative," he said.

Shaibu said Nigeria's security environment reflects global volatility and uncertainty, adding that the army has retooled its doctrine and operations to address emerging threats.

He listed enhanced training, unmanned aerial platforms and improved joint operations as key capabilities strengthening detection and response.

Reviewing operations nationwide, the COAS said sustained campaigns in the North-East had weakened insurgent networks, while operations in

the North-West were dismantling bandit enclaves and restoring freedom of movement. He added that efforts in the North-Central focus on civilian protection and stabilising communal flashpoints.

Shaibu stressed that national security now extends beyond the battlefield to include economic resilience, cyber protection, environmental safety and human security.

He urged participants, described as Nigeria's future strategic leaders, to embrace whole-of-government solutions that address the root causes of insecurity alongside military action.

# UN women links poverty, education gaps to gender-based violence

## LAGOS

The United Nations Women Country Representative to Nigeria, Beatrice Eyong, has identified poverty, limited access to education and structural inequalities as major drivers of gender-based violence.

Eyong spoke on Tuesday in Lagos at the Conference of African Traditional and Cultural Leaders on Gender-Based Violence Prevention, jointly organised by the Ford Foundation and UN Women.

The two-day conference, themed "Driving Norms Change and Gender-Based Violence Prevention through Cultural Custodianship," focused on the role of traditional institutions in addressing harmful practices.

Eyong said UN Women adopts an integrated and holistic approach by tackling poverty, education, legal frameworks and structural barriers confronting women.

She described traditional rulers as critical agents of change, noting that their proximity to communities positions them to transform harmful norms at the grassroots.

According to her, ongoing engagements with traditional leaders have led to the emergence

of progressive gender norms, the creation of safe spaces for women and increased advocacy against gender-based violence.

She added that the initiative extends beyond Nigeria, with the African Union adopting a new continental convention on ending violence against women and girls.

Eyong also noted that many traditional rulers serve as religious leaders and are highly educated, enabling them to understand the health and social implications of harmful practices such as female genital mutilation.

She, however, identified insecurity, difficult terrain and restrictive cultural norms as challenges to reaching vulnerable women, including those living with disabilities, HIV/AIDS, widows, young mothers and survivors of violence.

Earlier, UN Women Deputy Executive Director, Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda, said Africa bears the highest global burden of child marriage, with nine of the 10 countries with the highest rates located on the continent.

She called on traditional and religious leaders to confront the practice, describing child marriage as sexual exploitation and abuse of girls.

# Four in 10 cancer cases preventable —WHO

## ABUJA

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and its International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) have said up to four in every 10 cancer cases worldwide can be prevented.

In a statement issued ahead of World Cancer Day on February 4, the agencies said a new global analysis showed that 37 per cent of new cancer cases recorded in 2022 — about 7.1 million cases — were linked to preventable causes.

The study examined 30 risk factors, including tobacco use, alcohol consumption, obesity, physical inactivity, air pollution, ultraviolet radiation and, for the first time, nine cancer-causing infections.

According to the report, tobacco remains the leading preventable cause, accounting for 15 per cent of new cancer cases, followed by infections at 10 per cent and alcohol at three per cent.

Lung, stomach and cervical cancers accounted for nearly half

of all preventable cases globally. WHO Team Lead for Cancer Control, Dr André Ilbawi, said the analysis provides governments and individuals with clearer evidence on how many cancer cases could be avoided through effective prevention strategies.

The report noted that preventable cancer rates were higher in men than women, with smoking responsible for 23 per cent of new cancer cases among men.

IARC Deputy Head of Cancer Surveillance, Dr Isabelle Soerjomataram, said addressing preventable causes offers one of the most powerful opportunities to reduce the global cancer burden.

She stressed the need for region-specific strategies, including strong tobacco control, alcohol regulation, vaccination against HPV and hepatitis B, improved air quality and safer workplaces.

According to her, coordinated action across sectors could prevent millions of cancer cases and significantly reduce long-term healthcare costs.

# Onicha-Olona: Royal family affirms due process in selection of new crown Prince

## ONICHA-OLONA (DELTA)

The Ugbe Royal family of Onicha-Olona has affirmed that due process and long-established tradition were strictly followed in the selection of Prince Ephraim Odiakaosa Nwabuokei as the new Crown Prince of the community.

Prince Nwabuokei emerged in 2021 after consultations by the kingmakers, who considered four eligible princes presented for the traditional position of Crown Prince to the ancestral throne of Onicha-Olona in Aniocha North East Local Government Area of Delta State.

In line with custom, the

Crown Prince on December 5, 2023, performed the traditional rite of acceptance, a crucial step that formally signalled his acceptance by the royal institution and the wider community.

At the ceremony, he also commenced the process to rebuild the Onicha-Olona Palace, which was destroyed during the British colonial period.

Speaking with journalists, Nwabuokei said the responsibility of selecting a successor rests squarely with the royal family.

"In the kingdom, it is the duty of the royal family to choose a prince to take over the seat of the ancestors. To the best of my knowledge, the fam-

ily has done its duty," he said.

His remarks were supported by senior members of the Ugbe Royal family, including Diokpa Prince Banyem Andrew Akalue, the Odioegbe and oldest member of the family; Prince Okafor John Enodiolu, the second oldest member; and Prince Efefe Obinna Uk-

wadia, the youth representative.

They jointly maintained that the selection of the Crown Prince followed all laid-down traditional procedures, dismissing any suggestion of irregularities and reaffirming the family's commitment to preserving the customs and heritage of Onicha-Olona.



PRINCE EPHRAIM ODIKAOSA NWABUOKEI

## NEWS

## NGO returns 500 Out-of-school girls to classrooms in C'River

## CALABAR

A Cross River-based non-governmental organisation, Her Voice Foundation, has supported no fewer than 500 out-of-school adolescent girls in the state to return to classrooms.

The Founder, Ms Favour Abatang, disclosed this on Tuesday in Calabar at the launch of the foundation's Girls to Women: Stronger, Bolder project.

Abatang said many adolescent girls in Cross River dropped out of school due to the stigma associated with early pregnancy, adding that the project was designed to eliminate the discrimination that forced young mothers out of school and limited their future opportunities.

"Pregnancy should not end a girl's education, but stigma, rejection and lack of support keep many willing learners away from school," she said.

She explained that the foundation provides re-enrolment support, counselling, mentorship and life-skills training to adolescent girls.

"So far, we have reached no fewer than 500 girls, including 350 enrolled in second-chance education and 150 trained in entrepreneurship skills," she added.

One of the beneficiaries, Miss Margaret Eneji, 17, said the programme helped her return to school after an early pregnancy at the age of 15.

"I was abandoned by family and friends, but this programme has given me literacy and numeracy education and

renewed my dream of becoming a nurse," she said.

A community leader in Ablesang, Obanliku Local Government Area, Chief Shik-

ishong Jeremiah, said the initiative had changed his perception of girl-child education.

"I am now mobilising parents and encouraging fami-

lies to keep their daughters in school, no matter the mistakes they may have made," he said.

Community leaders noted that the project's implementa-

tion in Obudu, Bekwarra and Obanliku Local Government Areas had positively changed family attitudes towards girl-child education.



## INEC REC INTERACTION:

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), Rivers State, Prof Gabriel Yomere (M) receiving a report from the Convener, Rivers Peace Initiative, Mr Obinna Ebogidi, during the INEC REC interaction with Civil Society Organisations in Port Harcourt on Tuesday.

## Police detain 25 suspected robbers, terrorists in Imo

## OWERRI

The Imo State Police Command has recorded a major breakthrough in its fight against crime, with the detention of 25 suspects linked to various criminal activities in January.

The command's spokesperson, DSP Henry Okoye, disclosed this in a statement issued on Tuesday in Owerri.

Okoye said the arrests followed enhanced security strategies implemented by the Commissioner of Police, AIG Aboki Danjuma, through sustained operations by the Anti-Kidnapping Unit and other tactical teams.

He said the suspects were arrested for offences ranging from kidnapping, armed robbery, cultism and drug peddling to terrorism, murder and child trafficking.

Recovered items included four assault rifles, 25 cartridges, two vehicles, three motorcycles, about 1,200kg of suspected marijuana, stolen aluminium roofing sheets and

other incriminating exhibits.

"Prominent among those arrested are suspected members of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra and its armed wing, the Eastern Security Network," Okoye said.

He listed some of the suspects and said they were allegedly responsible for the 2021 murder of two traditional rulers in Njaba Local Government Area, as well as several kidnapping and armed robbery cases.

In a related operation, police intercepted an ash-coloured Ford J5 bus in Oguta LGA and arrested two drug peddlers conveying large quantities of illicit substances to criminal networks.

Okoye also confirmed the arrest of a wanted ESN member whose confession led to the dismantling of an ESN camp and the recovery of arms and ammunition.

He said all suspects would be arraigned after investigations and urged residents to remain vigilant and support security agencies with timely information.

## Experts urge rice farmers to remain resilient amid import surge

## LAGOS

Agriculture experts have urged local rice farmers not to abandon cultivation despite rising rice imports into the country.

The experts spoke in separate interviews with newsmen on Tuesday in Lagos.

A recent survey showed that over 3,500 rice farmers may quit production due to losses estimated at N93 billion during the 2025 wet season.

An agricultural communication expert, Dr Ismail Olawale, said factors discouraging farmers went beyond rice importation and urged government to address structural challenges in the sector.

"No matter how much rice is imported, if local rice can com-

pete effectively, it will benefit consumers and the country by offering real choices," he said.

Olawale listed hoarding and porous borders as major challenges affecting local producers, stressing the need to support farmers to sustain local production.

Similarly, agriculture analyst and farmer, Mr Omotunde Banjoko, cautioned that over-reliance on importation was not sustainable.

"If local rice farmers quit, we may face shortages in the future. The government should focus on reducing the cost of farm inputs rather than relying on imports to control prices," he said.

He added that addressing production costs was critical to preventing losses and ensuring food security.

## Protect human dignity in deporting, A'lbom CJ tells Journalists

## UYO

The Chief Judge of Akwa Ibom State, Justice Ekaete Fabian-Obot, has urged journalists in the state to uphold the right to human dignity in their reportage.

Fabian-Obot made the call on Tuesday in Uyo during a courtesy visit by the leadership of the Nigeria Union of Journal-

ists (NUJ), Akwa Ibom Council.

She described the media as a powerful tool for societal change, stressing that journalists must use their platforms responsibly.

"The pen is powerful; it can make and mar. In using the power of the media, the dignity of people must never be compromised," she said.

The chief judge said the media, as the conscience and image

of society, must maintain the highest standards of professionalism through fact-checking, balanced reporting and patience in gathering information.

She warned that defamatory reports could erode public confidence, damage reputations and undermine trust.

"I encourage you to remain true to the ethics of your profession. Professionalism is the hallmark of an excellent practitioner," she said.

Earlier, the NUJ Chairman,

Mr Nsibiet John, commended the chief judge for implementing "highly impactful and reform-driven" decisions since assuming office.

He said her administration had performed creditably in infrastructure development, speedy dispensation of justice, rights protection and improved workers' welfare.

John also appealed to the chief judge to facilitate capacity-building programmes for journalists covering judiciary and crime beats.

## NECO releases 2025 SSCE external results, records 71.63% pass rate

## MINNA

The National Examinations Council (NECO) has released the 2025 Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) External results, recording a pass rate of 71.63 percent.

The Registrar and Chief Executive of NECO, Prof. Dantani Ibrahim-Wushishi, announced this on Tuesday at a news conference in Minna.

He said the examination was conducted between November 26 and December 13, 2025, while the

marking exercise took place from January 5 to 21, 2026, noting that the results were released 52 days after the last written paper.

According to him, 96,979 candidates registered for the examination, comprising 51,823 males and 45,156 females, while 95,160 candidates sat for the exams.

He disclosed that 93,425 candidates sat for English Language, out of which 78.32 percent obtained credit and above, while 91.35 percent of the 93,330 candidates who sat for Mathematics scored credit and above.

Ibrahim-Wushishi said 68,166 candidates, representing 71.63 percent, obtained five credits and above, including English Language and Mathematics, while 82,082 candidates achieved five credits and above irrespective of the two core subjects.

He explained that the SSCE External provided a second chance for candidates seeking admission into tertiary institutions within and outside Nigeria.

The registrar also revealed that 9,016 candidates were booked for various forms of examination

malpractice, representing a 31.7 per cent increase over the 6,160 cases recorded in 2024.

He added that five supervisors were recommended for blacklisting, while four examination centres were recommended for de-recognition over whole-centre malpractice.

Ibrahim-Wushishi advised candidates to check their results on NECO's website using their registration numbers and announced the release of the 2026 Automated Staff Posting Calendar to enhance transparency.

## Edo moves to boost non-oil exports with NEPC-led packaging, branding session

## EDENIYERE OBOSE

## BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has intensified efforts to strengthen its non-oil export sector with a one-day technical session on quality packaging and branding for export, organised in collaboration with the Nigerian Export

Promotion Council (NEPC).

The programme, hosted by the Edo State Investment Promotion Office (ESIPO) in Benin City on Tuesday, brought together exporters, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), industry stakeholders and development partners to enhance export readiness and competitiveness.

Speaking at the event, the Ex-

ecutive Director of NEPC, Mrs Noye Ayeni, represented by the Edo State Coordinator, Mr Andrew Okhiulu, said the training aligned with the Council's Operation Double Your Export initiative aimed at boosting Nigeria's non-oil export earnings.

He noted that in an increasingly competitive global marketplace, quality packaging and branding

had become critical determinants of market access, value addition and global acceptance.

According to him, the session equipped participants with practical knowledge of international packaging and labelling standards, product presentation and regulatory

CONTINUES ON PG 6

# Alleged political thugs vandalise NRC rail assets in Ibadan

IBADAN

The Nigeria Railway Corporation (NRC) has raised the alarm over the alleged vandalism of its rail infrastructure by hoodlums suspected to be political thugs

along the Mile One–Odo Ona railway corridor in Ibadan.

The Public Relations Officer of the NRC, Western District, Mr Olawale Ayeni, told reporters on Tuesday that rail tracks, sleepers, signal poles and count boards were damaged during

the incident, which occurred on Monday.

Ayeni said the development had been reported to the corporation's headquarters, assuring that appropriate action would be taken.

He added that the Railway

Police had also been notified.

According to eyewitness accounts, the hoodlums were allegedly led by an official of one of the local governments in the Ibadan metropolis, who reportedly claimed authority to clear structures and facili-

ties within the railway land for commercial development.

The source said the operation was carried out despite the official's attention being drawn to the visible rail tracks and installations clearly indicating NRC ownership of the property.

Efforts by officers of the Nigerian Railway Police Command to stop the exercise were reportedly resisted by the

group at the site.

When contacted, the Information Officer of Ibadan South-West Local Government, Mrs Kehinde Adediran, said the council chairman was unavailable for comment.

"He is busy with activities marking Oyo State at 50. I am not aware of the incident and cannot comment on behalf of the chairman," she said.



OYO STATE PDP SECRETARIAT INAUGURATION:

L-R: Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State; PDP National Secretary, Taofeek Arapaja; PDP National Chairman, Kabiru Turaki; National Deputy Chairman (South), Daniel Ambrose Woye and National Vice Chairman (South West), Kamoru Ajisafe, during the inauguration of the Oyo State PDP Secretariat, donated by Governor Makinde in Ibadan on Tuesday.

## Army adopts multi-domain strategy against asymmetric threats —COAS

ABUJA

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt-Gen. Waidi Shaibu, has said the Nigerian Army has adopted a flexible, intelligence-driven and technology-enabled strategy to confront Nigeria's evolving asymmetric security threats.

Shaibu stated this on Tuesday in Abuja while delivering a lecture titled "Combating Asymmetric Threats to National Security in Nigeria: The Nigerian Army in Perspective" to participants of Course 34 at the National Defence College, Nigeria.

He noted that global security challenges had shifted from conventional inter-state wars to complex intra-state conflicts driven by terrorism, cyber-crime, trafficking and transnational organised crime.

According to him, the army's response combines kinetic operations, intelligence fusion, joint operations with sister services and collaboration with domestic and inter-

national partners.

Shaibu said advanced capabilities, including unmanned aerial platforms, improved training and enhanced joint operations, had strengthened the army's capacity to detect, interdict and respond to threats.

Reviewing operations across the country, he said sustained campaigns in the North-East had degraded insurgent networks, while operations in the North-West were dismantling bandit enclaves and restoring freedom of movement.

He added that in the North-Central zone, the army was focusing on civilian protection, area domination and stabilisation through long-term joint task force frameworks.

The COAS urged participants to embrace whole-of-government approaches that address the root causes of insecurity, stressing that sustainable security requires governance, justice, development and community trust alongside military action.

## Senate confirms Oyewole as Supreme Court Justice

ABUJA

The Senate on Tuesday confirmed Justice Joseph Oyewole as a Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria.

The confirmation followed the presentation of a report by

the Senate Committee on Judiciary, Human Rights and Legal Matters, chaired by Sen. Adegbonmire Ayodele (APC, Ondo Central).

President Bola Tinubu had, in January, forwarded Oyewole's nomination to the Senate for confirmation, in line

with Section 231(2) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended).

Following the presentation of the committee's report, Ayodele moved that the Senate receive and consider the nomination.

The confirmation was subsequently carried out through a voice vote.

Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, congratulated Justice Oyewole on his elevation and commended the committee for what he described as a thorough and diligent assignment.

## TETFund breaks ground for Abuja Leadership Centre, to commission 467 projects nationwide

ABUJA

The Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) on Tuesday performed the foundation-laying ceremony for the Abuja Leadership Centre of Excellence in Public Governance at the University of Abuja.

The Executive Secretary of TETFund, Mr Sonny Echono, carried out the ceremony alongside the Vice-Chancellor of the university, Prof. Hakeem Fawehinmi.

Echono disclosed that the Fund would, between now and October, commission no fewer than 467 projects across tertiary institutions nationwide.

Describing leadership as a critical driver of national development, Echono said nations rise or fall based on the quality of leadership they produce, stressing the need to harness intellectual, human and material resources to achieve national goals.

"It is my prayer and hope

that this centre will become a stopping point for every leader visiting our country," he said.

He charged contractors handling the project to deliver a facility of international standard, assuring that funds would be made available for construction, furniture and equipment.

According to him, the centre is envisioned as a global leadership facility capable of hosting visiting heads of state and international delegations.

Echono also announced that TETFund would select at least

50 iconic projects for commissioning across the states, with a minimum of two to three projects in each state, to showcase the impact of the Federal Government's Renewed Hope Agenda on tertiary education.

Earlier, Fawehinmi described the project as a major milestone in the partnership between the University of Abuja and TETFund, noting that the centre would serve as a national hub for training future leaders in public governance and policy formulation.

## PDP founding fathers, BoT must intervene now, says Ex-National Ex-Officio

LAGOS

Former two-term National Ex-Officio of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Mr David Vaughan, has called on the party's founding fathers and Board of Trustees (BoT) to urgently intervene in the lingering leadership crisis threatening the party's survival ahead of the 2027 elections.

Vaughan, a former PDP governorship aspirant in Lagos State, made the call in an interview with newsmen on Tuesday.

He warned that unresolved internal disputes and factional struggles could further weaken the party and undermine its electoral prospects.

According to him, the party's inability to resolve its crisis politically contributed significantly to its loss in the 2023

presidential election, noting that divisions between camps loyal to Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State and the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, had continued to polarise members.

Vaughan said reconciliation at the national level would encourage defected members to return and restore confidence at the grassroots.

He urged the BoT to rise

above inducements and intervene honestly, warning that continued division would further drive loyal members away from the party.

He also stressed the need for unity, inclusion and strategic alliances ahead of 2027, insisting that the PDP could still reposition itself to challenge the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) if leaders prioritised party interest over personal ambition.

## U.S. deploys special forces team to Nigeria to tackle terrorism —AFRICOM

ABUJA

The United States has deployed a special forces team to Nigeria as part of efforts to deepen military cooperation and combat terrorism, the Commander of the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), Gen. Dagvin Anderson, has said.

Anderson disclosed this during a virtual news conference on Tuesday from AFRICOM's headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany.

He said the deployment followed earlier discussions with President Bola Tinubu in Rome, after which the Nigerian President approved U.S. airstrikes carried out against Islamic State (ISIS) targets in Nigeria on Christmas Day.

According to Anderson, both countries agreed on the need for closer coordination to confront terrorism in Nigeria and across the ECOWAS sub-region.

"Our partnership with Nigeria is a great example of a willing and capable partner that requested unique capabilities

only the United States can provide," he said.

He explained that U.S. support includes intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, as well as intelligence fusion to enhance operational effectiveness.

Anderson confirmed that a small U.S. team with specialised capabilities was already in Nigeria to complement ongoing counter-terrorism efforts but declined to disclose details of the team's composition.

He said terrorism threats were expanding across West Africa and the Sahel, with groups such as Daesh, al-Qaida and JNIM exerting increasing pressure, particularly in the Sahel and coastal states.

The AFRICOM chief also announced that the U.S. would host African Lion 2026, the largest joint military exercise involving Africa, Europe and the Middle East, in Morocco in May.

The exercise will involve forces from 19 African countries, six European nations and others from the Middle East and Latin America, bringing participation to over 30 countries.

## NEWS

# Illicit drugs: Marwa seeks nat'l backing for alternative devt programme

## ABUJA

Chairman of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), retired Brig.-Gen. Buba Marwa, has called for a strong national response and sustained support for the Alternative Development Programme aimed at curbing illicit cannabis cultivation and strengthening national security.

Marwa made the call on Tuesday in Abuja at a press briefing to rally support for the initiative, the first of its kind in Africa, following the launch of a pilot scheme in three cannabis-growing communities in Ondo State.

He explained that the alternative development strategy goes beyond crop substitution, noting that it strengthens rural economies through val-

ue-chain development, reduces pressure on law enforcement and the justice system, and promotes peace and social cohesion in crime-prone areas.

According to him, the programme also supports national food production, agricultural diversification and improves Nigeria's standing in global drug control and development cooperation.

"The successful take-off of the pilot scheme in Ilu Abo, Ifon and Eleyewo in Ondo State demonstrates that alternative development works when communities are engaged and empowered," Marwa said.

He urged all tiers of government, traditional rulers, community leaders, development partners, donor agencies, the private sector, civil society or-

ganisations and the media to support the initiative.

Marwa stressed that the programme was a people-centred development intervention designed to uplift communities, enhance security and secure Nigeria's future, assuring that NDLEA was committed to expanding it nationwide.

He said the pilot project

recorded overwhelming acceptance, with communities recognising it as a dignified and lawful source of income capable of reducing poverty, improving food security and curbing insecurity.

Marwa noted that cannabis cultivation fuels organised crime networks, adding that replacing it with sustainable

livelihoods tackles the root causes of drug production.

He cited the 2018 National Drug Use Survey, which showed that about 14.3 million Nigerians used psychoactive substances, more than twice the global average, with cannabis accounting for the highest usage.

He disclosed that over 75 percent of the 15 million kilo-

grams of illicit drugs seized by NDLEA in the past five years were cannabis.

Marwa expressed confidence that the initiative would reverse the trend, noting that it aligns with President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda and is supported by international partners, including the UNODC and IITA.

## Kaduna Assembly clears COE to run degree programmes

## KADUNA

The Kaduna State House of Assembly has amended the law establishing the Kaduna State College of Education, Gidan Waya, to enable it operate a dual mandate system.

Chairman of the House Committee on Education, Mahmud Lawal, said the amendment allows the institution to run both NCE and Degree programmes independently, without university affiliation.

He said the law grants the col-

lege autonomy to award degrees and post-degree qualifications, in line with national policy.

The amendment also revises the tenure of the Provost, Registrar and Librarian to a single non-renewable five-year term and provides for the establishment of additional campuses across the state.

Lawal said the changes would reposition the institution to meet growing demand for teacher education, expressing confidence that Governor Uba Sani would assent to the bill.

## Edo moves to boost non-oil exports...

## «CONTINUED FROM PG 4

compliance required to penetrate foreign markets.

Okhiulu added that the Edo Exporters' Cluster initiative remained a strategic platform for collaboration, improved product quality and expanded market access for exporters in the state.

He commended ESIPO and the Edo State Ministry of Business, Trade and Investment for their sustained support to exporters, assuring participants of NEPC's commitment to technical assistance, market intelligence, training and access

to trade facilitation platforms.

Also speaking, Mrs Anthony Azeke, who represented the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Business, Trade and Investment, said product quality alone was no longer sufficient for success in international trade, stressing that poor packaging, labelling and branding continued to limit many viable export businesses.

She described the programme as timely, noting that it would enable MSMEs to meet international standards, enhance product appeal and build globally competitive brands.

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as MISS OGHENEORUESE OHWOKA, now wish to be known and called MRS. OGHENEORUESE DJORHOGBA. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as OSHIOBUGIE GIFT ESOSA, now wish to be known and addressed as OMORUYI GIFT ESOSA OSAMEDE. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and General public please take note.

## CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that EBIOWEI GAJAH BALOGUN and EBIOWEI OGBOS GAJAH are one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as EBIOWEI GAJAH BALOGUN. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please note.

Classified  
Advert Space  
for Sale



LAGOS' FLOODED ROAD:

Flooded road at Suru Bus Stop on Lagos-Badagry Express in Lagos on Tuesday.

## Agric fund, stakeholders validate fertiliser manual to boost food production

## ABUJA

The National Agricultural Development Fund (NADF), in collaboration with the Farm Inputs Support Services (FISS) and other stakeholders, has validated a harmonised fertiliser application manual to improve soil health, food production and security.

Executive Secretary of NADF, Mr Mohammed Ibra-

him, disclosed this on Tuesday in Abuja at the National Stakeholder Validation Workshop on the Harmonised Fertiliser Application Manual.

Ibrahim said fertiliser remained a key driver of agricultural productivity but warned that improper application reduced efficiency and endangered soil health.

"A harmonised national manual promotes better yields, smarter input use and more sustainable

farming practices," he said.

He said the exercise aligned with NADF's mandate to support evidence-based agricultural development, adding that the workshop aimed to ensure the manual's practicality across Nigeria's agro-ecological zones.

Also speaking, Director of FISS, Mr Abana Abba, said harmonised fertiliser application was critical to improving productivity, farmers' income and national food security.

He noted that blanket fer-

tiliser recommendations often result in nutrient imbalance, over-application or under-application, stressing the need for precision agriculture.

"This validation ensures farmers apply the right nutrients, at the right rate, at the right time and in the right place," Abba said.

Participants included representatives of FEPSAN, OFPSAN, All Farmers Association of Nigeria, Oxfam and other stakeholders.

## 2027: PDP won't be sacrificed for another party, Makinde declares

## IBADAN

Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State has declared that the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) will not be held down to allow another party win power at the centre in 2027.

Makinde spoke on Tuesday

at the inauguration of a newly built PDP Secretariat at Oke-Ado, Ibadan.

The governor said his past alliance in 2023 that contributed to the emergence of another party at the federal level would not be repeated.

"I have repented. I will not go again. For holding PDP

down for another party, it is no, no, no," he said.

Makinde attributed the crisis in the party to a few individuals who were expelled in November 2025, expressing confidence that the judiciary would resolve the party's legal challenges.

Highlights of the event included the handover of documents of

the new secretariat, named after former state chairman, Alhaji Omokunmi Mustapha, to Alhaji Kabiru Turaki, whose emergence as national chairman followed a convention later nullified by a Federal High Court in Ibadan.

Turaki thanked Makinde for his support and commitment to the growth of the party.

## Middlemen, weak policies driving food prices —AFAN

## IBADAN

The All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN) has blamed rising food prices on the dominance of middlemen and weak agricultural market structures.

National First Deputy President of AFAN, Mr John Olateru, said this in an interview with

newsmen on Tuesday in Ibadan.

Olateru said farmers lacked control over pricing due to poor storage, processing facilities and limited access to structured markets.

According to him, middlemen exploit farmers' financial pressure after harvest, buying produce cheaply and selling later at higher prices.

"The farmer is crying, the government is crying, but the middlemen never trade at a loss," he said.

He added that poor infrastructure, climate risks and weak insurance systems further worsened farmers' challenges, while banks preferred to lend to middlemen rather than farmers.

Olateru also criticised government interventions, saying many funds meant for farmers failed to reach them.

He called for policies that would empower farmers with processing facilities, modern tools and flexible financing, stressing that agriculture must be subsidised to ensure food security.

## JUDICIARY

## NEWS

## C'River magistrates set to resume indefinite strike Feb 9

## CALABAR

The Cross River State chapter of the Magistrates' Association of Nigeria (MAN) has announced plans to resume its indefinite strike from February 9, following the state government's fail-

ure to fully meet its demands.

The decision was conveyed in a letter dated February 2 and signed by the association's Chairman, Godwin Onah, and Secretary, Solomon Abuo.

According to the letter, the resolution was reached at a general meeting held on January 30.

The magistrates recalled that the strike was earlier suspended after Governor's intervention during a meeting in November 2024, where assurances were given to address their demands.

While acknowledging the government's implementation of promotions and regulariza-

tion of magistrates with attendant financial benefits, MAN lamented the lack of progress on other critical welfare issues.

The association said neglect of the remaining demands has caused hardship and dissatisfaction among its members, affecting their welfare, security

and the effective administration of justice in the state.

Key demands include a 50 percent increase in remuneration, provision of official vehicles and accommodation, renovation of court facilities, and payment of outstanding 2019 salary arrears.

The magistrates also criticised

the N15,000 monthly imprest paid to magistrates in the state, noting that their counterparts in neighbouring states receive between N200,000 and N250,000.

MAN warned that the suspended strike would resume without further notice on February 9 if the issues are not addressed.



## SOUTH EAST VISION 2050:

L-R: Special Adviser to the President on Development Review, Dr Miriam Marshall; former Deputy Governor of Anambra State, Mr Emeka Sibeudu; Chairman, South East Development Commission (SEDC) Board, Dr Emeka Wogu; Special Guest, Prof. Paul Nnamchi; Secretary to Enugu State Government, Prof. Chidiebere Onyia and Managing Director SEDC, Mr Mark Okoye-II, during the South East Vision 2050 Stakeholders Forum in Enugu on Tuesday.

## Emefiele acted on Buhari's order for local Naira production —Witness

## ABUJA

A prosecution witness on Tuesday told an Abuja court that former Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Governor, Godwin Emefiele, complied with late President Muhammadu Buhari's directive that redesigned Naira notes be produced locally.

The witness, Chinedu

Emere, an Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) investigator and the seventh prosecution witness, testified during Emefiele's trial over alleged disobedience of lawful directives and acts injurious to the public.

Emere said Emefiele submitted a memorandum dated October 6, 2022, seeking approval to redesign and reissue N1,000,

N500, N200 and N100 notes.

According to him, Buhari approved the redesign but expressly directed that the notes be produced locally by the Nigerian Security Printing and Minting Company (NSPMC).

He told the court that the CBN raised settlement bills to NSPMC, which produced the notes in compliance with the presidential directive.

However, Emere disclosed that while production was done locally, the redesign was carried out by foreign firm, De La Rue, which was paid in British pounds, while NSPMC was paid in naira.

Justice MaryAnn Anenih ordered the prosecution to make available its investigative report to the defence after objection by the prosecution.

The matter was adjourned until February 10 for further hearing.

## Alleged terrorism financing: Court arraigns Malami, son, orders bail application

## ABUJA

A former Attorney-General of the Federation, Abubakar Malami, and his son, Abdulaziz, were on Tuesday arraigned before the Federal High Court in Abuja over alleged terrorism financing and unlawful possession of

firearms.

The defendants pleaded not guilty to a five-count charge filed by the Federal Government through the Department of State Services (DSS).

The prosecution alleged that Malami knowingly abetted terrorism financing while in office by refusing to prosecute

suspected terrorism financiers in November 2022.

Both defendants were also jointly charged with unlawful possession of a firearm and ammunition allegedly found at their residence in Birnin Kebbi, Kebbi State, in December 2025.

Following their plea, the defence applied orally for bail,

citing health concerns and time already spent in custody.

Justice Joyce Abdulmalik, however, directed the defence to file a formal bail application and adjourned the case until February 20. The defendants were ordered to remain in DSS custody pending the determination of the bail request.

## Alleged Naira misappropriation: Court adjourns Ganduje's trial to April 15

## KANO

A Kano State High Court has adjourned the trial of former Governor Abdullahi Ganduje and others over alleged mis-

appropriation of public funds until April 15.

Ganduje and his wife, Hafsat Umar, are facing an 11-count charge bordering on bribery, conspiracy and diversion of billions of naira alongside sev-

eral individuals and corporate entities.

During proceedings, parties informed the court of various pending motions, including applications for stay of proceedings, preliminary objec-

tions and requests to file additional proof of evidence.

Justice Amina Adamu-Aliyu adjourned the case to allow for hearing of all preliminary objections and pending applications.

## Court remands 4 over alleged production, sale of fake insecticides

## IBADAN

A Grade A Customary Court sitting at Mapo, Ibadan, has remanded

four men in a correctional facility over alleged production and sale of fake insecticides.

The defendants pleaded not guilty to charges of conspiracy,

unlawful production of insecticides and forgery of trademarks.

Although the court granted them bail in the sum of N200,000 each with two sure-

ties, they were unable to meet the bail conditions as at the time of filing this report.

The case was adjourned until March 17 for trial

## Court grants bail to 3 accused of stealing N154m truck

## IKEJA

An Ikeja Magistrates' Court has granted bail to three men accused of stealing a truck conveying goods valued at N154 million.

The defendants pleaded not guilty to charges of conspiracy and stealing.

The court granted them bail in the sum of N5 million each with two sureties and adjourned the case until February 11 for mention.

## Man arraigned in Ekiti over alleged assault on Police officer

## ADO-EKITI

A 45-year-old man, Olarinde Gboyega, has been arraigned before an Ado-Ekiti Chief Magistrates' Court for allegedly assaulting a police officer while

on duty.

The defendant pleaded not guilty to charges of assault and breach of peace.

The court granted him bail in the sum of N10,000 with one surety and adjourned the case until March 3 for hearing.

## Tinubu congratulates NNPC board chair, Musa Kida, at 65a

## ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu has congratulated the Chairman of the Board of NNPC Limited, Mr Ahmadu Musa Kida, on his 65th birthday, celebrated on February 3.

In a statement issued by his Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Mr Bayo Onanuga, the President lauded Kida's distinguished career in both the public and private sectors, as well as his involvement in professional basketball.

President Tinubu recalled that since joining Elf Petroleum

Nigeria Limited, now Total Exploration and Production Nigeria (TEPNG), in 1985, Kida had built a reputation as an outstanding professional who contributed significantly to the growth of Nigeria's oil sector.

He acknowledged Kida's current role as NNPC Limited board chairman, noting his contributions to repositioning the company and driving revenue growth in line with the Federal Government's vision for the oil industry.

The President urged him to continue in service to the nation and wished him many more fulfilling years.

## Police arrest 24yr-old over alleged ₦48m romance scam in Lagos

## LAGOS

The Lagos Airport Police Command has arrested a 24-year-old man over an alleged romance fraud scheme involving ₦48.5 million.

The command's spokesperson, ASP Mohammed Adeola, confirmed the arrest in a statement on Tuesday, saying the suspect was apprehended while attempting to board a flight to Asaba.

Adeola said the arrest followed actionable intelligence and was carried out by operatives of the Anti-Fraud Unit.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the suspect allegedly joined a romance scam syndicate in 2023, targeting victims through social media platforms such as Facebook and

Instagram using fake identities.

He said the suspect allegedly posed as "Travis Kevin," a white American medical doctor, and created a fake banking website showing fictitious account balances.

Funds were allegedly solicited under false pretences, including claims of medical emergencies and injuries, with payments requested via cryptocurrency.

The Commissioner of Police, Airport Command, Mrs Olufunke Ogunbode, has ordered a comprehensive investigation and directed that other members of the syndicate be identified and arrested.

The suspect will be transferred to the Interpol unit for further investigation and prosecution.

## NEWS

## Foreign

## Thousands of Epstein documents taken down after victims identified

The US Department of Justice (DOJ) has removed thousands of documents related to Jeffrey Epstein from its website after victims said their identities had been compromised.

Lawyers for Epstein's victims said flawed redactions in the files released on Friday had "turned upside down" the lives of nearly 100 survivors.

Email addresses and nude photos in which the names and faces of potential victims could be identified were included in the release.

Survivors issued a statement calling the disclosure "outrageous" and said they should not be "named, scrutinized and retraumatized".

The DOJ said it had taken down all the flagged files

and that mistakes were due to "technical or human error".

In a letter submitted to a federal judge on Monday, the DOJ said: "All documents requested by victims or counsel to be removed by yesterday evening have been removed for further redaction."

The department said it was continuing to examine new requests, as well as checking whether there are any other documents that may need further redaction. A "substantial number" of documents independently identified have also been removed, it added.

Under the terms of the release, which was mandated after both chambers of Congress approved a measure compelling the DOJ to publish the documents, the federal government

was required to redact details which could identify victims.

On Friday, two lawyers representing victims asked a federal judge in New York to order the DOJ to take down the website hosting the files, calling the release "the single most egregious violation of victim privacy in one day in United States history".

Brittany Henderson and Brad Edwards said there was "an unfolding emergency that requires immediate judicial intervention" due to the DOJ "failing to redact victims names and other personally identifying information in thousands of instances".

Several of Epstein's victims added comments to the letter, including one who described the release as "life-threatening" and another who said she had received death threats after her

private banking details were published.

Speaking to the BBC on Tuesday, Epstein survivor Annie Farmer said: "It's hard to focus on the new information that has been brought to light because of how much damage the DOJ has done by exposing survivors in this way."

Another of Epstein's victims, Lisa Phillips, said that many of the survivors were "very unhappy with the outcome" of the release.

"The DOJ has violated all three of our requirements," she told BBC's Newsday on Tuesday. "Number one, many documents still haven't been disclosed. Number two, the date set for release has long passed. And number three, DOJ released the names of many of the survivors."

## 'I don't think I am a hero': Boy, 13, describes 'superhuman' swim to save family

The 13-year-old Australian boy who swam for hours after they were swept out to sea has told the BBC "I didn't think I was a hero - I just did what I did".

Austin Appelbee didn't know if his mother Joanne, brother Beau and sister Grace were still alive when he finally reached the shore, four hours after he left them in the water clinging to two paddleboards.

Miles out to sea off Australia's west coast - the waves getting bigger, the light beginning to fade - his mother feared he too may not have made it.

Only hours later, after Joanne finally spotted the rescue boat, did she know he was safe. By that time she and the children had drifted 14km (8.5 miles) offshore.

What had started as a family day at the beach had ended in a 10 hour ordeal for Joanne and her family. Austin's swim to raise the alarm was later described as "superhuman" by rescuers.

"I had assumed Austin hadn't made it," Joanne, 47, told the BBC News channel.

In the end though, "it was an absolute perfect ending to have them all well and happy and sore but no injuries".

'A tough battle'  
The family had been due to

head home to Perth last Friday and were having "a bit of fun" with two paddleboards and a kayak in the shallow water off the beach, Joanne explained, when the children "went out a bit too far".

"The wind picked up and it went from there," she recalled. "We lost oars, and we drifted out further.... It kind of all went wrong very, very quickly."

Finding themselves drifting further and further out from Quindalup beach, in Western Australia, Joanne realised she needed to do something - but she couldn't leave Beau, 12, and Grace, eight, alone.

"Early on, we sent this young man back in to try and get help because it didn't look like we were that far from the shoreline," she said.

Austin took the kayak, but no one realised it had been badly damaged and was already taking on water.

"It started flipping, and then I lost an oar and I knew I was in trouble," he recalled. "I started paddling with my arm."

At one point, he managed to get the kayak to work - before it threw him for the last time.

Clinging to the capsized kayak, Austin - who swears he "saw something in the water" - realised he needed to do something.



**THE CLINTONS:**

Former US President Bill Clinton and his wife Hillary Clinton.

## Clintons agree to testify on Epstein as vote looms to hold them in contempt of Congress

Former US President Bill Clinton and his wife Hillary Clinton, the former Secretary of State, have agreed to testify in the congressional investigation into late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

It comes days before a vote on whether to hold the couple in criminal contempt for refusing to appear before the House Oversight Committee after a months-long standoff.

Bill Clinton was acquainted with Epstein, who died in prison in 2019, but has denied knowledge of his sex offending and says he cut off contact two decades ago.

It's unclear when the depositions will take place, but it will be the first time a former US president has testified to a congressional panel since Gerald Ford did so in 1983.

The House Oversight Committee has asked for the depositions to be filmed and tran-

scribed in February, with no time limit. The committee gave the Clintons a deadline of Tuesday at 12:00 EST (17:00 GMT) to agree with the proposed deposition terms, according to the BBC's US partner, CBS News.

The Clintons had long resisted a demand to appear before the committee, saying they had already given sworn statements representing the "limited information" they had on Epstein.

They had dismissed the legal summonses issued by the committee as "nothing more than a ploy to attempt to embarrass political rivals, as President Trump has directed".

The oversight committee, led by Republicans, then approved the measure to hold the Clintons in contempt late last month, with the support of several Democrats.

On Saturday, lawyers for the Clintons made an offer for them

to provide limited testimony that would have centred on a four-hour interview by Bill Clinton. But Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer expressed concerns that the former president would stonewall questions and run down the clock.

On Monday evening, Bill Clinton's Deputy Chief of Staff Angel Ureña posted on X confirming the couple would appear before the panel.

"They negotiated in good faith," Ureña wrote in a tweet directed at the House Oversight Committee. "You did not."

"They told you under oath what they know, but you don't care. But the former President and former Secretary of State will be there. They look forward to setting a precedent that applies to everyone."

Afterwards, it was announced that lawmakers' consideration of the contempt resolutions against the Clintons would be post-

poned. House Rules Committee Chairwoman Virginia Foxx said the Oversight Committee needed more time "to clarify with the Clintons what they are actually agreeing to".

Neither Clinton has been accused of wrongdoing by survivors of Epstein's abuse, and they have denied knowledge of his sex offending.

Hillary Clinton, former US senator and secretary of state, and the Democratic presidential nominee in 2016, has said she never met or spoke to Epstein.

Epstein's private jet logs show that Clinton took four international flights in 2002 and 2003.

Shortly after Epstein was arrested on sex trafficking charges in July 2019, Clinton's spokesperson said the former president took trips on the plane including "stops in connection with the work of the Clinton Foundation".

## 'Record number of missiles' hit Ukraine leaving thousands with no heating in -20C

Russia has used a record number of ballistic missiles to target Ukraine's energy sector, President Volodymyr Zelensky has said.

The combined missile and drone strikes hit power plants and infrastructure in Kyiv and multiple locations causing "the most powerful blow" so far this year, according to private energy company DTEK.

The strikes were launched as temperatures dropped to -20C (-4F) and left more than 1,000 tower blocks in the capital without heating once again and damaged a power plant in the eastern city of Kharkiv beyond repair.

Zelensky said Russia was "choosing terror and escalation" rather than diplomacy to end this war and called for "maximum pressure" on Moscow from Ukraine's allies.

The attack comes after a so-called "energy truce" agreed by Donald Trump with Vladimir Putin expired at the weekend.

Ukraine's president suggested that Russia had simply used the time to stock up on missiles and prepare for the next attack.

It also came on the day Nato Secretary-General Mark Rutte was in Kyiv to meet President Zelensky and to address the national parliament.

Donald Trump's initiative was meant to give diplomacy

a chance. Negotiators from Russia and Ukraine are due to meet in Abu Dhabi for another round of talks co-ordinated by the US later this week.

It is clear that Russia has other ideas.

And in fact, there is always a gap between Russia's massive strikes which makes Ukrainians doubt there was ever any real pause at all.

We heard the first explosions in Kyiv soon after midnight and the air raid lasted more than seven hours. There were several subsequent blasts.

President Zelensky has said more than 70 ballistic and cruise missiles were fired - significantly more than usual - together with 450 drones which are used to overwhelm Ukraine's air defences.

Ukraine's Air Force said it had intercepted only 38 of the missiles, which means many reached their target.

Officials here have complained repeatedly of a shortage of missiles to protect the skies. Ukraine relies on US-made Patriot missiles, in particular.

"Timely delivery of missiles for air defense systems and the protection of normal life are our priority," Zelensky wrote on X this morning. "Without pressure on Russia, there will be no end to this war."

## Foreign

## NEWS

## France teacher fighting for life after knife attack by pupil

A secondary school teacher in south-eastern France was left in a critical condition on Tuesday after being stabbed by a 14-year-old pupil.

The 60-year-old female art teacher was stabbed three to four times in her chest in front of around 20 other students, according to a local official.

The pupil fled the classroom before being caught in the schoolyard, and was later arrested on suspicion of attempted murder.

Toulon's public prosecutor Raphaël Balland said the suspect did not appear to have had a religious or political motive, adding: "All we know is that there had been tensions with this teacher recently, and he was angry with her."

La Guicharde school was evacuated after the attack in the early afternoon and Wednesday's lessons were cancelled, a regional education official said.

Earlier on Tuesday, France's

Education Minister Edouard Geffray said he was heading "immediately" to the school in Sanary-sur-Mer, a coastal area of the Var region.

"My thoughts immediately go to the victim, her family, and the entire educational community, whose deep shock I share," he wrote on X.

It is the latest in a series of attacks by students in French schools in recent years.

In 2025, a 14-year-old was charged with the murder of a teaching assistant after allegedly stabbing her to death in June.

In a separate case in April, a student killed a girl and wounded several others in a knife attack in the western city of Nantes.

In 2020, teacher Samuel Paty was murdered by a Chechen refugee outside the school where he taught in a suburb of Paris, an attack which was motivated by religious extremism.



**DR CONGO SOLDIERS:**

AFC/M23 soldiers stand by during the funeral service for civilians killed in a drone strike in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, Thursday, Jan. 8, 2026.

## DR Congo: Authorities call for calm after drone attacks on airport

Drones targeted a strategic airport in the city of Kisangani in the north-eastern Democratic Republic of Congo over the weekend, the provincial government said Monday.

No claim of responsibility has been made for the drone attack but local authorities accuse the armed M23 anti-governmental group and its ally Rwanda of being behind it.

The explosive drones carrying munitions targeted the airport between Saturday and Sunday, the Tshopo provincial government said in a statement seen by AFP.

"Eight enemy drones were neutralised before reaching their target," it said.

No casualties have been reported.

On Monday, security around the airport was reinforced, according to witnesses who spoke to AFP by phone. The local airline, CAA, which operates domestic flights to Kisangani several times a week, had not announced any cancellations.

The resource-rich east of the DRC, which borders Rwanda as well as Burundi, has been plagued by 30 years of violence that has drawn in several foreign powers.

In recent years, the resurgence of the M23 group has left thousands dead and triggered a spiralling humanitarian crisis. Since taking up arms again at the end of 2021, the M23 has seized swathes of the Congolese east with Rwanda's help, taking the key cities of Goma and Bukavu in a lightning offensive a year ago.

In early December, M23 fighters carried out a new offensive on the town of Uvira on the Burundi border, as the DRC and Rwanda were formalising a US-brokered peace deal. Kisangani, a city of more than 1.5 million inhabitants on the banks of the Congo River, is largely dependent on its airport due to the poor state of the roads. The civilian airport is also used by the Congolese army and its aircraft.

The runway is used for the take-off of army attack drones and fighter jets, which regularly carry out strikes on positions of the M23 militia and the Rwandan army, more than 400 kilometres (around 250 miles) from Kisangani. Explosions echoed around the airport until 2:00 am on Sunday, prompting some residents to flee, according to witnesses.

## Iran's president says it is ready to negotiate with the US

President Masoud Pezeshkian has said Iran is ready to negotiate with the US after requests from "friendly governments in the region" to respond to a proposal for talks.

In a statement on X, Pezeshkian said he had told Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi to pursue talks "provided that a suitable environment exists - one free from threats and unreasonable expectations".

His words come after the country's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, warned any attack on Iran would spark a "regional war".

US President Donald Trump has built up forces in the region and threatened to take military action if Iran does not agree a deal on its nuclear programme

and stop killing protesters.

Pezeshkian said Iran would pursue "fair and equitable negotiations" with the US, adding that they should be "conducted within the framework of our national interests".

The talks may be held in Istanbul on Friday, with Araghchi due to meet US special envoy Steve Witkoff, according to US media reports.

The foreign ministers of Egypt, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have also been invited to participate.

Pezeshkian's announcement came a day after Araghchi told CNN in an interview that he was "confident that we can achieve a deal" to "ensure that there is no nuclear weapons".

Iran insists its nuclear programme is entirely peaceful and denies that it is seeking to develop nuclear weapons.

When asked about the prospect of a deal by reporters, Trump said: "If we can work something out, that would be great, and if we can't, probably bad things would happen."

He said a "tremendous force" was headed to Iran, including the "biggest and the best" ships.

The US military build-up in the region includes the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, which has an air wing of around 70 aircraft, and three destroyers equipped with Tomahawk cruise missiles.

In an address on Sunday, Khamenei told Iranians: "We are not the initiators and do not

want to attack any country, but the Iranian nation will strike a strong blow against anyone who attacks and harasses them."

Last June, the US carried out air and missile strikes on three key Iranian nuclear facilities during a 12-day war between Israel and Iran.

Trump said the strikes "obliterated" Iran's capacity to produce enriched uranium, which is used to make reactor fuel but also nuclear weapons.

The Israeli military also targeted Iran's nuclear facilities and nuclear scientists during the war, as well as its military commanders and missile arsenal.

Iran responded to the strikes by launching hundreds of missiles and drones at Israel. It also carried out a missile attack on a major US air base in Qatar.

## South Sudan's leader sacks aides after dead man appointed

South Sudan's President Salva Kiir has sacked two senior aides following an embarrassing situation where he appointed a dead man to serve on a panel to lead discussions on elections scheduled for

December.

Steward Soroba Budia's appointment was announced in a presidential order dated 30 December, but local media pointed out that the member of the opposition United Democratic Party (UDP), had died five years ago.

It led to people mocking the appointment on social media.

Without giving reasons, an official statement said the president had sacked his press secretary David Amour Major and the chief administrator in the Ministry of Presidential Affairs, Valentino Dhel Maluet.

Kiir was "pleased" to announce that the two had been relieved of their duties, and wished to express his "profound gratitude" to them for their service, said the statement posted on the president's official Facebook account, and signed by Minister of Presidential Affairs Africano Mande Gedima.

On Monday, Amour said in a press release that the president's office had relied entirely on the "accuracy and currency" of the names submitted by "stakeholders" for inclusion on the panel.

"It is now evident that a thorough verification was not done by one of the stakeholders which resulted in this unfortunate administrative oversight," Amour said.

He did not name the stakeholder, while the UDP has not commented.

It is unclear whether the statement led to Amour's dismissal. There had been speculation before the statement that he would be sacked.

Budia had been a signatory to a peace agreement signed in 2018 to end conflict that had hit South Sudan after its independence in 2011.

Kiir has set up the panel, made up of representatives of different parties, to pave the

way for elections.

But there are doubts as to whether the election will take place, as the country is still experiencing conflict.

Previous elections have been postponed, with Kiir in office since independence.

The UN says more than 180,000 people are believed to have been forced to flee their homes by recent fighting.

Jonglei state is seeing the worst of it with the army battling forces aligned to South Sudan's suspended Vice-President Riek Machar.

He is currently under house arrest and on trial for murder, treason and crime against humanity. He denies the charges.

Kiir and Machar are supposed to be part of a unity government agreed in the 2018 settlement after a five-year war that followed a power struggle between the two men.

## Tens of thousands evacuated in northern Morocco amid heavy rainfall

More than 50,000 people have been evacuated from their homes in Ksar el-Kebir about a 190 kilometres north of the Moroccan capital, Rabat.

Severe weather and heavy rainfall affecting several provinces has resulted in significant flooding in the town.

The interior ministry said they have been taken in by relatives or housed in temporary shelters set up by the authorities.

Authorities said the Moroccan army had been deployed to support relief efforts on the instructions of King Mohammed VI.

As rising water levels in the Loukkos River spread across several neighbourhoods, officials banned entry into the town.

Electricity has been cut in parts of it and schools were ordered to remain closed until Saturday.

Officials say the floods were

partly triggered by water released from a nearby dam which had reached full capacity.

The heavy rainfall has brought an end to a seven-year drought that pushed Morocco to invest heavily in desalination plants.

The national weather service has forecast heavy rains, strong winds, and snowfall at altitudes above 1,500 metres to continue in the area until Wednesday.

## FEATURES



THE PROTESTERS

# Africa's democracy at a crossroads as gerontocracy tightens its grip

FORTUNE ABANG (NAN)

The persistence of sit-tight governance, often described as gerontocracy, among some African leaders continues to raise serious concerns about democratic consolidation across the continent.

Foreign affairs analysts, members of the African diaspora, academics and diplomats say the trend poses deep structural challenges to democratic transitions, institutional credibility and political renewal in several African states.

They argue that the inclination of some Heads of State and Government to prolong their stay in office through constitutional amendments, manipulated elections or weakened institutions undermines the core democratic principles of accountability and periodic leadership change.

According to them, sit-tight governance is typically characterised by tenure elongation, institutional capture and political intimidation, creating fertile ground for authoritarianism and eroding public confidence in democratic systems.

Observers also note that prolonged rule by ageing political elites restricts generational inclusion and limits opportunities for younger citizens to contribute meaningfully to govern-

ance and policy innovation.

This growing concern, they say, has renewed calls for stronger safeguards against constitutional manipulation and for collective continental action to uphold presidential term limits.

Some respondents cited long-serving African leaders such as Cameroon's President Paul Biya, Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni and Equatorial Guinea's President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo as notable examples of extended rule that continues to generate debate over democratic norms.

Others pointed to recent constitutional changes and electoral outcomes in parts of West and Southern Africa as further evidence of how legal frameworks are reshaped to entrench incumbency.

They warned that these trends risk normalising tenure extension and weakening the credibility of elections as genuine mechanisms for leadership renewal.

The respondents also expressed concern over the limited effectiveness of regional institutions in addressing the problem.

They criticised the African Union (AU) and regional blocs such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for what they described as inconsistent enforcement of

constitutional order in countries grappling with prolonged incumbency.

Mr Chibuzo Ubochi, Coordinating Chairman of the Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation (NiDO) Worldwide, urged African leaders to recommit to non-extendable presidential term limits.

Ubochi described sit-tight governance as a disturbing pattern driven by constitutional manipulation and weak enforcement mechanisms.

"Sit-tight syndrome corrodes public trust, fuels instability, constrains civic space and often goes hand-in-hand with corruption and human rights abuses," he said.

He stressed that respect for term

limits remains one of the strongest indicators of democratic maturity and peaceful political transitions.

Ubochi called on the AU and regional bodies to impose political and economic sanctions on unconstitutional tenure extensions, similar to measures taken after military coups.

"Democracy cannot condemn tanks on the streets while tolerating power grabs carried out through legal manipulation," he said.

A foreign affairs commentator, Mr Collins Nweke, highlighted the importance of sustained investment in political education and citizen empowerment.

Nweke warned that sit-tight politics should not be mistaken for stability, describing it instead as gradual state capture.

"Across Africa, leaders win elections and then convert public office into a lifetime entitlement through repression, constitutional changes or managed successions," he said.

He noted that such practices weaken institutions, marginalise citizens and slow development.

An academic, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said stronger civic awareness could help societies resist unconstitutional tenure elongation.

"When citizens are politically informed and organised, sit-tight ambi-

tions lose legitimacy and public support," he said.

A diplomat also called for reforms to strengthen electoral credibility, including transparent voter registration, open results management systems and credible domestic and international observation.

She advocated structured diaspora participation, fair access for independent candidates and legal frameworks that promote competitive politics.

According to her, leadership legitimacy should be rooted in merit and popular consent rather than entrenched political advantage.

She added that African states and their international partners should protect pro-democracy activists through robust human rights monitoring, asylum pathways and emergency visa arrangements.

She stressed that Africa's sit-tight challenge is not inevitable but the result of deliberate constitutional manipulation and weak enforcement of democratic norms.

"The solution lies in firm term limits, transparent elections and open political competition," she said.

She emphasised that the African diaspora remains a critical partner in advocacy, expertise and principled pressure on African and international democratic institutions. (NAN Feature)

*Democracy cannot condemn tanks on the streets while tolerating power grabs carried out through legal manipulation.*

## FEATURE

# The night editors became 'media ancestors'



ACROSS SECTION AT THE BANQUET HALL OF THE BENUE GOVERNMENT HOUSE IN MAKURDI.

IJEOMA POPOOLA

Soft laughter rippled across the Banquet Hall of the Benue Government House in Makurdi that evening.

It was not the loud, rehearsed laughter common at official functions, but the spontaneous kind — triggered by a phrase no one quite expected: “media ancestors.”

The words had just been used by Chief Solomon Terver Lorpev, Technical Adviser to the Benue Governor on Media, Publicity and Strategic Communication, while acknowledging the presence of editors at a dinner hosted by Governor Hyacinth Alia for media professionals on a project tour of the state.

At first, the editors chuckled and waved it off. The phrase sounded curious, even amusing. After all, ancestors are meant to be revered — but also long gone.

Minutes later, Governor Alia, the sixth democratically elected governor of Benue State, walked into the hall. Rather than proceed straight to the podium, he chose a slower, more personal route, moving from table to table and greeting every journalist with a handshake.

He then asked each editor to introduce himself or herself. The exercise took nearly 20 minutes, yet no one appeared impatient.

“I have read many articles written by those of you here,” Alia later explained. “I knew your names, but I had not been able to attach faces to them. Now I have.”

The gathering brought together some of the most recognisable names in Nigerian journalism: Mr Bayo Onanuga, Special Adviser to President Bola Tinubu on Media and Strategy; Mr Eze Anaba, President of the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE); Mr Onuoha Ukeh, Managing Director of The Sun Newspaper; Mr Azu Ishiekwe, Editor-in-Chief of Leadership Newspaper; Mr Martins Oloja, former Managing Director of The Guardian Newspaper; and Mr Danlami Nmodu, President of the Guild of Corporate Online Publishers (GOCOP).

As the evening progressed, the phrase “media ancestors” resurfaced this time from the governor himself.

Alia praised the editors for decades of sacrifice, resilience and service to national development through information dissemination and constructive criticism. According to him, words such as experienced, dedicated and determined barely captured the depth of their contributions. That was how “media ancestors” stuck.

Among themselves, the editors teased one another.

“Media ancestors? Are we dead already?” some whispered, laughing quietly.

Yet beneath the humour lay a deeper meaning.

Media analysts said the phrase, though unusual, carried weight — speaking to longevity, institutional memory and responsibility.

Mr Adeleye Ajayi, Chairman of the Lagos State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), said the

term underscored the editor’s role as the final gatekeeper of information.

“An editor has seen it all,” Ajayi said. “That experience demands that his final judgement must be factual, balanced and accurate, always guided by national interest.”

For Chief Lorpev, the phrase was simply a recognition of years spent shaping public discourse.

“Think of how long names like the late Dan Agbese or Bayo Onanuga

have been part of Nigeria’s media history,” he said. “Those years count.”

A sociologist, Mr Ihechukwu Elemuo, also noted that such experience positioned editors as co-builders of society.

“With that experience comes the courage to criticise when necessary and the fairness to commend when deserved,” he said.

“We often criticise governments, but encouragement also matters.”

Governor Alia said the editors’ experience was critical to nation-building, particularly in helping citizens better understand government programmes and policies.

He outlined his administration’s interventions in agriculture, education, healthcare, human capital development and infrastructure, adding that security challenges in the state had significantly reduced.

Benue, he said, should not be known only for insecurity, but also for development.

It was therefore heart-warming, he added, to see widespread media reports on the ongoing reconstruction and dualisation of a 55.09-kilometre road network in Gboko and its environs, valued at N62.1 billion, with progress attributed to the support of President Bola Tinubu.

“I cannot do this effectively without the support I enjoy from President Tinubu,” the governor said.

The economic conversation extended beyond roads.

Dr Raymond Asemakaha, Group Managing Director of the Benue Investment and Property Company

(BIPC), said the newly established Food Basket Brewery and the Benue Fruit and Juice Concentrate Company had created 1,000 direct jobs and 2,000 indirect jobs, with employment slots reserved for host communities.

He said the brewery, currently undergoing test runs, produces Zeva Lager Beer, non-alcoholic beverages and bitters, and was established to reduce post-harvest losses and boost employment.

Onanuga described the Alia administration’s programmes as people-oriented, highlighting improvements at the Benue State University Teaching Hospital, including molecular laboratories, in-vitro fertilisation facilities and a 64-slice CT scanner.

He also commended the establishment of a Special Needs and Therapeutic Centre to cater for children with Down syndrome, autism and speech disorders.

While expressing admiration for the projects, NGE President, Anaba, offered a note of caution: sustainability.

“Projects must outlive administrations,” he said, urging sustained attention to job creation, road infrastructure and workers’ welfare.

As the evening wound down, one thing was clear — the phrase “media ancestors” had evolved from a casual remark into a reflection on experience, responsibility and legacy.

And if ancestors are those whose wisdom guides the living, then perhaps the editors wear the title — humbly and all — with quiet pride.


(NAN Feature)

*He outlined his administration’s interventions in agriculture, education, healthcare, human capital development and infrastructure, adding that security challenges in the state had significantly reduced*

# PHOTO SPEAK

## Edo State Government 3-Day Retreat For Civil and Public Service Leaders with the theme: "High Performance Public Service for the Sustainable Development of Edo State."



 <p><b>The Nigerian Observer</b> ...That the people may know</p>	<h2 style="margin:0;">ADVERTISEMENT RATES (PRINT)</h2>
---	--

SIZES	COLOUR		BLACK AND WHITE		BLACK AND WHITE		MULTI NATIONALS			
			PUBLIC NOTICE		PRODUCT		COLOUR		BLACK & WHITE	
	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)
FULL PAGE	517,344	556,145	369,500	397,213	325,150	349,536	665,156	715,043	443,440	476,698
13 X 4	369,500	397,213	295,600	317,770	206,938	222,458	443,500	476,763	369,550	397,266
10 X 4	340,000	365,500	273,500	294,013	177,400	190,705	370,000	397,750	295,600	317,770
HALF PAGE	295,600	317,770	236,500	254,238	147,800	158,885	340,000	365,500	273,450	293,959
10 X 3	221,700	238,328	147,800	158,885	118,300	127,173	266,000	285,950	251,300	270,148
13 X2	206,900	222,418	133,000	142,925	103,500	111,263	221,800	238,435	147,810	158,896
QUARTER PAGE	192,150	206,561	118,250	127,119	88,690	95,342	236,500	254,238	133,000	142,975
CENTER SPREAD	1,356,968	1,466,992						B/W	1,148,181	1,241,276
HALF CENTER	991,590	1,071,989						B/W	887,272	959,212

FRONT PAGE POSITIONS					OTHER SIZES				
SIZES	PRODUCTS		PUBLIC NOTICE		SIZES	PUBLIC NOTICE		PRODUCTS	
	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)		RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)
FP 6X2	89,800	96,535	105,450	113,359	6 X 2	60,640	65,188	49,140	52,826
FP 5X2	81,100	87,183	97,300	104,598	5 X 2	51,950	55,846	42,120	45,279
FP 4X2	73,000	78,475	80,700	86,753	4 X 2	45,260	48,655	34,400	36,980
FP 3X2	64,870	69,735	73,000	78,475	3 X 2	30,900	33,218	26,600	28,595
FP 2X2	59,000	63,425	64,900	69,768	2 X 2	18,680	20,081	15,600	16,770
					2 X 1	12,400	13,330	7,415	7,971
					CAC	38,000	40,850		

SPECIAL POSITIONS					LOOSE INSERTS				
SIZES	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	LOOSE INSERTS: N40 PER SHEET MINIMUM ORDER: 5000 COPIES HANDLING CHARGES: N40,000 PER 1000 COPIES NEWSPAPER DIMENSION: 14.5" X 10.5"				
STRIP	118,250	127,119	147,800	158,885					
STRIP INSIDE	88,600	95,245	118,250	127,119					

SPECIAL PAGES					CHANGE OF NAME		
SIZES	SURCHARGE				Type	Fridays	Other Days
FRONT PAGE	ADD 70% SURCHARGE						
PAGES 2 & 3	ADD 55% SURCHARGE						
PAGES 4 & 5	ADD 40% SURCHARGE						
BACK PAGE	ADD 60% SURCHARGE						
PAGES 4 & 5	ADD 40% SURCHARGE				Miss to Mrs.	5000	7000
BACK PAGE	ADD 60% SURCHARGE				Reconciliation/Corrections of name	6000	8000

**NOTE: Booking for Colour Advert should be done 48 hours (i.e 2 days) before Publication.**

 <p><b>The Nigerian Observer</b> ...That the people may know</p> <p><b>24 Airport Road, Benin City, Edo State</b></p>	<p><b>For advert placement contact:</b>                  08023457635 or 08137709000                  Email: nigerianobservernews1@gmail.com</p>
--	---

**EFFECTIVE FROM FEBRUARY 1, 2023**

# Sports

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

## Enabulele hails Goal-Filled start as 3rd Kada Unity Cup Kicks Off in Benin City

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The third edition of the Kada Unity Cup kicked off on Monday with thrilling harvest of goals and dazzling football action at the Chief Lucky Igbinedion Sports Centre, Oti Resorts, Benin City.

Three high-energy matches lit up the opening day, with attacking football taking centre stage, in the presence of the Executive Chairman of the Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele who praised the participating teams and organizers for high standard of organization.

The Kada Unity Cup, a football fiesta for military and paramilitary organisations, is sponsored by former Edo State Governor, Chief Lucky Igbinedion, and organised by the Edo State Football Association (ESFA) in collabora-



3rd Kada Unity Cup Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele in a handshake with former Governor of Edo State Chief Lucky Igbinedion during the opening ceremony on Monday.

tion with Kada Plaza.

In his remarks, Enabulele praised the organisers and sponsor for sustaining the competition, describing the

tournament as a strong platform for promoting unity, discipline, fitness and camaraderie among security agencies. "The Kada Unity Cup has

once again proven that sports remain a powerful tool for unity, cooperation and mutual respect among our military and paramilitary institutions.

Beyond the goals and excitement, this competition is about building bonds, promoting fitness and strengthening teamwork among the men and women who safeguard our nation," Enabulele said.

"We are delighted with the quality of football on display on the opening day. It reflects the growing commitment to sports development within our security agencies."

He added, "The Edo State Sports Commission will continue to support initiatives like this that align with our vision of grassroots sports growth and inclusive participation. I commend Chief Lucky Igbinedion for his consistency and passion in sustaining the Kada Unity Cup."

"Competitions like the Kada Unity Cup complement government efforts in using sports to engage institutions positively and

foster unity across Edo State. As the tournament progresses, we expect even higher levels of discipline, fair play and competitiveness, which are values central to both sports and national service," he stated.

The opening ceremony was also graced by the Deputy Governor of Edo State, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa and other top government officials, as well as the leadership of the Edo State Football Association.

The ceremonial kickoff was jointly performed by Chief Lucky Igbinedion and the Deputy Governor, after which matches commenced simultaneously.

In the first match of the day, Nigeria Correctional Service (NCS) FC outclassed Nigerian Air Force (NAF) FC with a convincing 3-1 victory, boosting their chances of qualification for the quarterfinals.

## NIS, EFA management sign MoU to reposition sports economy

The National Institute for Sports (NIS) has reiterated its commitment to aligning with President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda to diversify the nation's sports economy.

The Director-General of NIS, Philip Shaibu, said this on Tuesday in Abuja during the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the institute and EFA Management Ltd., a private firm.

Shaibu said collaboration with the private sector was imperative, given the Tinubu administration's interest in repositioning sports under the Renewed Hope Agenda.

He said diversification of the sports economy would be difficult to achieve if the institute relied solely on government funding, which he described as inadequate.

"The President gave us a mandate to introduce the Renewed Hope Agenda to NIS and ensure that the institute returns to its core mandate.

"In line with that mandate, we decided to engage the private sector because government funding, as far as NIS is concerned, is at its lowest point.

"We are also in discussions with other agencies and private partners across various fields to explore areas of support.

"The support could be in terms of facility upgrades, maintenance, curriculum development and other areas.

"We require partnerships

that will ensure sustainability," Shaibu said.

Also speaking, the Director of EFA Management Ltd., Olumide Fakeyeye, expressed optimism that the partnership would yield positive results in the coming years.

Fakeyeye commended the Federal Government's renewed focus on sports, noting that it inspired the company's decision

to partner with the institute.

He said Nigeria possessed enormous sports talent but lacked adequate environments for proper development.

"Initiatives like this, supported by a visionary leadership, are helping to bring the right people together to unlock the potential in Nigerian sports," Fakeyeye said.

A Principal Consultant

to NIS, Remu Majiroh, said the partnership would have far-reaching implications beyond athletic performance.

According to Majiroh, the initiative is expected to address youth unemployment, noting that sports could potentially provide employment opportunities for between 15 million and 20 million Nigerians across its value chain.

## Morocco to appeal CAF rulings on disorderly Africa Cup of Nations final



MOROCCO TEAM AT THE AFCON 2025

Morocco's football federation (FRMF) announced on Tuesday it would appeal the Confederation of African Football's (CAF) disciplinary rulings over last month's chaotic Africa Cup of Nations final against Senegal, which the hosts lost 1-0 after extra time.

FRMF criticised the sanctions as disproportionate to the "seriousness and gravity" of the incidents during the 18 January match, which was overshadowed by a 14-minute interruption after Senegalese players staged a walk-off, a pitch invasion by their fans and confrontations involving players and staff.

CAF's Disciplinary Committee handed Senegal's coach Pape Thiaw a five-match ban and fined him \$100,000 (£82,000) after he instructed his team to leave the pitch following a VAR decision to disallow a goal late in regular time.

Senegal's football federation was fined \$615,000 (£508,000) for the behaviour of their players and supporters, with Iliman Ndiaye and Ismaila Sarr receiving two-match bans for unsporting actions directed at the referee.

Morocco, whose appeal to have the match result overturned was rejected by CAF, were also hit with sanctions totalling \$315,000 (£260,000).

Their penalties relate to what CAF described as misconduct by Moroccan players, staff, and supporters, including the use of laser pointers and improper intervention in the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) area.

Captain Achraf Hakimi was handed a two-match suspension, one of which is suspended for a year, while Ismael Saibari was banned for three games, with both players penalised for attempting to remove Senegal goalkeeper Edouard Mendy's towel in heavy rain conditions.

## Glasgow 2026: Nigeria to make historic Men's 3x3 basketball debut

Nigeria has been named among three countries set to make their debut in the men's 3x3 basketball competition at the Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games. Guyana and Malaysia complete the list of debutants.

The confirmation was announced by the Glasgow 2026 Organising Committee on February 3, highlighting Nigeria's growing footprint in international basketball.

Scheduled for July 24 to July 29, 2026, the 3x3 basketball event will be staged at the SEC Centre in Glasgow. The format features three players per team on a single hoop, a 12-second shot clock and matches that last 10 minutes or end once a team reaches 21 points.

Nigeria, Africa's top-ranked

men's basketball nation, will use the platform to test its depth and competitiveness in the fast-rising 3x3 format. Kenya will be the only other African nation in the men's competition, having made its debut at Birmingham 2022.

Following its successful introduction at the Birmingham Games, where eight teams competed per gender, the sport has been expanded to 12 teams per category at Glasgow 2026 — a move that reflects its strong reception and increasing global appeal.

Among the confirmed nations for both gender in the 3x3 basketball competitions are Scotland (hosts), Australia, Cayman Islands, Fiji, Jamaica, New Zealand, Singapore and Kenya



## 2nd NDGs: Edo begins Athletes trials as preparation for games enters advance stage

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

As preparation for the second edition of the Niger Delta Games enters advance stage across the region Team Edo has scheduled its athletes trials exercise to hold between Wednesday, February 4 and Friday 6, 2026.

The trials exercise is for the selection of athletes that will be

participating in the second Niger Delta Games, holding in Benin from February 20 to 27, 2026

The Edo athletes trials exercise, according to the secretary of Edo Liaison Committee for the Niger Delta Games Mr Idahosa Bright, is holding across the 18 Local Government Areas of the state.

"Edo is set for the final preparation for the Niger Del-

ta Games and to host the rest states of the region. All 17 Sports associations participating in the games must complete the exercise on Friday as directed by the Executive Chairman of the Edo State Sports Commission, Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele who is incidentally the chairman of the state liaison committee.

"Our chairman has also

directed that all Edo Liaison Committee members and technical officials to do proper monitoring and supervision of the exercise to ensure that the best athletes are selected to represent the state at the games proper." Idahosa explained.

He revealed that the Edo State Sports Commission boss has approved two weeks close camping for athletes and coaches to ensure intensified training ahead of the games. "The close camping begins on Sunday and only the best athletes within the specified age bracket (U-20) will be selected to represent Edo", Idahosa said.

The trials exercise which is expected to end on Friday, February 6, 2026 will have athletics association who already started about two weeks ago, returned to the field and track of the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium to complete their assignment. Other sports featuring include Tennis, Basketball, Volleyball, wrestling, boxing, weightlifting, gymnastics and more.



TEAM EDO ATHLETES READY FOR NDGS

## SWAN tasks Soludo on Olympic stadium, sports development in Anambra

The Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN), Anambra Chapter, has urged Gov. Chukwuma Soludo to construct an Olympic-standard stadium to boost sports development in the state.

The association made the call in a communiqué signed by its Chairman, Mr Chimezie Anaso, and Secretary, Mr Uche Ndeke, and issued on Tuesday in Awka.

SWAN also urged the governor to reposition the sports sector and review reward systems for athletes, saying the measures would encourage increased youth participation in sports as a means of empowerment.

The association commended Soludo for his investments in sports development and the establishment of Solution Football Club.

It, however, stressed the need for the state government to improve the club's visibility, acceptability and marketability.

While congratulating the governor on his re-election, SWAN urged him to consolidate on the achievements that contributed to his electoral victory.

"We urge His Excellency to deliver more people-oriented projects, particularly in youth development through sports.

"We also reiterate our call for the construction of an Olympic stadium in Awka.

"The previously proposed site for the Awka stadium was reduced to a football pitch following the development of the Fun City project," the communiqué said.

SWAN further lauded Tony Neziyanya, Public Relations Officer of the Nigeria Olympic Committee, and other sports icons from

Anambra for their recognition during the association's 60th anniversary celebration held in Abuja in October 2025.

The association called on the state government to organise a reception in honour of the awardees and other sports icons as worthy ambassadors of the state.

It reaffirmed its commitment to neutrality, objectivity and the protection of minority voices in advancing sustainable sports development in Anambra.



## Team Rivers tennis, handball fired up for Niger Delta Games

### ● As team set sights on Glory after Successful Trials

The Rivers State Tennis and Handball contingents for the 2nd edition of the Niger Delta Games, 'Edo 2026', have concluded their final phase of trials held at the Port Harcourt Club and the Diete-Spiff Civic Centre, Moscow Road.

Athletes turned out in large numbers to showcase their skills and competitive spir-

it during the final selection of Rivers-born players who will represent the state at the games.

In the male tennis category, Joshua Mark and Prince Emeka emerged to fly the Rivers State flag at Edo 2026, while Roseline Nubari and Favour Emeka will represent the state in the female tennis category.

The table tennis trials also

delivered exciting moments, as spectators were treated to powerful serves, precise ball control, and dynamic forehand and backhand rallies. Saviour Hycenth, Godswill Johnson, and Donald Daniel emerged as the male representatives, while Japheth Joyful, Ineme Mary, and Perebo Boma will compete in the female category.

Meanwhile, the Rivers State handball team also impressed with a strong and spirited performance throughout the trials, demonstrating resilience and discipline. The team expressed confidence in its ability to compete strongly and reclaim the trophy at the Niger Delta Games.

Trials for wrestling, volleyball, and taekwondo are scheduled to continue on Wednesday as the state's selection process gradually winds down.



RIVERS STATE ATHLETES DURING TRIALS FOR NDGS



BOXING ACTION

## NBF unveils Team Nigeria for maiden African Boxing League

The Nigeria Boxing Federation has unveiled the list of boxers to fly the country's flag at the African Boxing League.

The inaugural event will kick-off in April and will feature pugilists from over twenty African nations.

In readiness for the championship, the NBF technical and tournament committee have listed forty-one boxers to represent the country across the various weight categories.

In the male category, the listed boxers are: Sodiq Oduniyi 55kg, Samuel Dahusi 55kg, Raymond Abodunrin 55kg, Musefiu Quam 60kg, Abdulahi Robiu 60kg, Ajisola 60kg, Abdulrahman Abdulwahab 65kg, Ridwan Raheem 65kg, and Michael Babalola 70kg.

Others are Ibrahim Yakubu 70kg, Alata 70kg, Daniel Joshua 80kg, Prince Gardy 80kg, Chu-

wka Emmanuel 80kg, Jamiu Saheed 90kg, Olomitutu Michael 90kg, Ifeoluwa Ogunniyi 90kg, Agbadike Emmanuel 90+kg, Ebuka Henry Obierika 90+kg, and Adeniyi Adesoji 90+kg.

The women consist Ayomide Mayowa 51kg, Amirah Oluwatoyin 51kg, Adesina Zainab 51kg, Aliyat Olalekan 54kg, Aliyat Ganiyu 54kg, Kadijat Ajisola 57kg, Akinremi Asisat 57kg, Shoyombo Anuoluwapo 57kg, Asisat Gbadamosi 60kg, and Adeniji Aliyat 60kg.

Others are Sakirat Kareem 60kg, Damilola Sodipe 65kg, Omolayo Adaramola 65kg, Jinadu Akimot 65kg, Blessing Orakwe 70kg, Adaobi Onara 70kg, Onyechi Anya 70kg, Queen James 70+kg, Mary Bassey 70+kg and Chidimma Nmugeu 70+kg.

The list of coaches are Lasisi Mayowa, Sabo Mohammed, Tolani Balogun, Waheed Sobalajo

## CAFCL/CC: CAF to conduct Quarter-Final draw on Feb 20

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) is set to conduct the quarter-final draw for the 2025/26 CAF Champions League and Confederation Cup on February 20.

According to information gathered, the draw which will also outline the full route to the finals for both competitions is likely to take place on either February 19 or 20, as CAF works to align its congested calendar.

The African football governing body is currently racing against time to conclude all club competitions before June,

a move aimed at creating sufficient room for national teams to shift focus to preparations for the upcoming FIFA World Cup qualifiers and international engagements.

The quarter-final draw will determine the matchups, potential semi-final pairings, and the path to the finals in both continental tournaments, setting the stage for the decisive phase of Africa's elite club competitions.

Further details on the venue and format of the draw are expected to be communicated by CAF in the coming days



# FEATURE

## Society in dire need of a mother's Carefulness or Thoughtfulness

LOVETH ACHOONU NNENNA

**M**otherhood is a choice you make everyday to put someone else's happiness and well-being ahead of your own. -Donna Ball.

Motherhood is a complex and multifaceted concept that can be understood in various ways. Generally, it refers to the state of being a mother, encompassing the roles, responsibilities and emotions associated with caring for and nurturing a child. This brings us to the question of who is a mother? A mother is a woman who has given birth to a child, adopted a child or takes on a maternal role in a child's life. She is a caregiver, a nurturer and often, a child's first teacher.

Mothering is no small task or feat and it is obviously not for the weak or unprepared though many mothers today were not prepared for the role but became one according to them by mistake.

Motherhood is time consuming, right from the first weeks and the first trimester; is not always easy most especially for the first time mom.

Motherhood can be "Tricky" at times, no matter how prepared or calculative you are as a woman, there are times you cry quietly and there are times you lose yourself, your space and even your peace of mind, there are also times you shout "leave there" like hundred times in a day (not exaggerated). Other times, when one keeps the house clean and neat and just goes out expecting to come home to a neat house then comes and meets the opposite, it could be quite inundating.

Some cases you just want to scream and flog but you just can't react, remember how you use to flog your younger ones for doing even less than what they did but now you can't react or flog mercilessly. What changed? Your position changed. You wondered why your younger ones kept misbehaving and your mom does nothing and you took it upon yourself to be the disciplinarian of the house, mom already knew that parenting is not everyday flogging in the name of discipline. There are times you sit them (kids) down and talk to them in a calm manner, one of the mistakes we often make is thinking they don't or won't understand, they actually do no matter their age bracket. They understand the message you are passing across and if they go back to do the thing you warned them against, that doesn't mean they didn't get the message, keep emphasizing on it and let them know the consequences of their actions.

Infact, we have moved from "Strict Parenting" to "Gentle parenting". Strict parenting is a style where rules



are set and kids are expected to follow it without questioning, often with punishment for disobedience while gentle parenting on the other hand is raising kids with empathy, respect and understanding rather than punishment or strict rules. But I feel that as a mom, the cultural context you find yourself have a lot to do with the method of parenting you can adopt. I would rather embrace the two methods of parenting for the sake of balance.

Motherhood doesn't come with a manual, neither does raising kids and doing alot of things as a mother comes with manuals. Most times, you are left to figure it out on your own, if you are lucky to still have a mother, all good and fine. Given that you have a supportive spouse, that is amazing, what if you don't have a mother, a supportive spouse or an elderly woman close by? You can't do trial and errors because it could cost a life. The best manual you can ever have as a mother is the "Bible" read the Bible, a girl doesn't need to be a wife or a mother before preparation starts. Read as much book as possible on parenting and motherhood because as the saying goes, proper preparation prevents poor performance. Like ladies that took their time to prepare



*It is easy to call a striving mother Irresponsible because you are not one, you are not there yet. Spectators should mind the way they judge mothers, though they may be right in some of the things they say, they don't say it or put it out in the right manner.*

are not finding that phase of being a mother easy, what will now become the fate of a lady that became a mother by mistake or didn't prepare? Read as much as possible 2 Timothy 2vs15 says study to show thyself approved unto God. How are you studying, and have you put yourself on a target on the number of books you want to read on motherhood and parenting by the end of the year?

It is easy to call a striving mother Irresponsible because you are not one, you are not there yet. Spectators should mind the way they judge mothers, though they may be right in some of the things they say, they don't say it or put it out in the right manner.

Sometime ago, I entered a mini bus because I live in the outskirts, on our way, a mother with three kids stopped the bus, put just her two kids in the bus, the kids were going to school, she told the driver where to stop the kids and they were just too young, the kids should be between the ages of five years and three years respectively, she paid and left, then everyone in the bus became angry like so angry, how would you leave your kids in the hands of a total stranger, you don't even know and there have been increase in the kidnapping of kids in

recent times and a lot of sensitization have been going on telling parents to enrol their kids in schools close to the house so as to avoid alot of these kidnapping but it seemed we are not listening. A lot is going on out there, please as a mother, be careful and protect your kids so your case won't be added to statistics. One can't be too careful but there are things we should not trigger and cause with our hands. What if the bus breaks down and the kids become stranded, how do they navigate and find their way to school? Adults are being kidnapped on a daily basis, talk more of kids. You can't compare your time and now, in our days, we go to schools that are very far, there was not too much kidnapping then compared to now. It is a whole lot different now.

The role of a mother in the family, society, etc can never be overemphasized.

The influence of a mother in the life of a child is beyond measure - Deborah Poff

A mother's love is the fuel that enables a child to grow, explore and become the best version of themselves.

Motherhood is the greatest thing and the hardest thing- Toni Morrison.

May God help all mothers, imbue them with the spirit of discernment.