

# Ovia killings: Gov Okpebholo vows to bring perpetrators to justice

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has pledged to bring to justice those responsible for the February 21 attacks on seven communities in Ovia South West Local Government Area, which resulted in the tragic loss of 22 lives and significant property damage.

During a visit to the affected areas, Governor Okpebholo

reaffirmed his administration's commitment to restoring lasting peace and security.

He announced plans to establish a police outpost to prevent future attacks and enhance security, emphasizing that under his leadership, no crime will go unpunished.

The Governor urged residents to remain calm and avoid taking the law into their own

hands, assuring them of the government's intervention.

He highlighted the deployment of additional security personnel, including soldiers and Operation Rescue patrol vehicles, to the area. Governor Okpebholo also met with leaders of Gbelebe, a neighboring Ijaw community, advocating for harmony and promising government support.

The crisis reportedly began when hoodlums attempted to steal farm produce from farmers in Madoti's farm settlements but were confronted by a newly formed local vigilante group.

Community leaders lamented the longstanding issue of farm theft and appealed to the Governor to intensify efforts in protecting lives and property, ensuring that farmers can work

without fear of attacks.

Governor Okpebholo emphasized that his core mission is to restore peace and bring development, noting that without peace, there can be no progress.

He assured the communities that his administration would gradually bring meaningful development to the area, addressing issues such as lack of

roads and electricity.

The Governor's decisive actions and assurances aim to foster peace and security in Edo State, ensuring that perpetrators of violence are held accountable and that affected communities receive the support needed to rebuild and thrive.

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# The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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**Edo gov dismisses claims of being overwhelmed by insecurity, reaffirms commitment to safety** —Pg 2

# Federal allocation seizure: Militants threaten oil attacks in Rivers

## ● Order mass evacuation non-indigenes

Tensions are at a breaking point in Rivers State as the Niger Delta Rescue Movement, a militant group, has issued a grave warning, threatening to attack oil installations over the ongoing political crisis and the federal gov-

ernment's seizure of the state's allocation.

In a chilling video that surfaced on social media Thursday, armed militants—dressed in combat gear and wielding AK-47 rifles—declared their intent to cripple oil produc-

tion unless their demands were met. They also ordered all non-indigenes to evacuate the state immediately, warning of imminent violence.

The militants accused the factional 27-member House of Assembly, led by Martin Amaewhule, of deliberately plunging Rivers into chaos in an attempt to force a state of

emergency or remove Governor Siminalayi Fubara.

"If the federal allocation due to Rivers State is not released promptly, we will have no choice but to take decisive action, including hitting oil production," one of the masked men threatened.

The group directly called on President Bola Tinubu to in-

tervene, alleging that Minister Nyesom Wike and his allies were behind the crisis.

This development follows last week's Supreme Court ruling upholding a lower court's decision to halt Rivers' federal allocation while recognizing the Amaewhule-led lawmakers as the legitimate state assembly.

In response, the assembly is-

sued a 48-hour ultimatum for Governor Fubara to present the 2025 state budget, a deadline that expired at midnight on Wednesday.

With threats of attacks on critical oil infrastructure, fears are mounting over possible disruptions to Nigeria's crude production, raising economic and security concerns nationwide.

## Chief Imam of Benin chides Northern governors over school closures for Ramadan

### ● Urges Muslims to show kindness to less privileged during Ramadan

IDAHOZA MOSES

The Chief Imam of Benin, Sheikh Abdulfattah Enabulele, has condemned the recent decision by some northern state governments to close schools for five weeks in observance of Ramadan fasting.

Speaking in Benin on Thursday, he criticized the move by the governors of Bauchi, Katsina, Kano, and Kebbi states, which affects all levels of education, from nursery to tertiary institutions.

The decision has sparked widespread criticism from various organizations, including the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA), Civil Rights Groups, and ActionAid Nigeria

(AAN). These groups argue that the abrupt closure disrupts students' education and financially impacts teachers and school staff who rely on their salaries.

They described the action as unconstitutional, discriminatory, and insensitive, saying it hampers educational development.

Reacting to the controversy, Sheikh Enabulele stated that Islam does not support shutting down schools for Ramadan, as knowledge-seeking is fundamental to the faith. Instead of a total closure, he suggested that schools could adjust their schedules by closing earlier in the day.

"It is completely un-Islamic. There is no Quranic verse or prophetic teaching that supports this behavior. Muslims

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ADDRESSING RESIDENTS:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, addressing residents of one of the communities in the state where killings occurred recently.

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# Edo govt dismisses claims of being overwhelmed by insecurity, reaffirms commitment to safety

The Edo State Government has refuted claims that it is struggling to handle the rising insecurity in the state, following remarks made by Hon. Marcus Onobun, a member of the House of Representatives.

Onobun, representing Esan West, Esan Central, and Igben Federal Constituency, had raised concerns over frequent killings and violent attacks in the state, alleging that the government was overwhelmed by the security situation.

In response, the Edo State Commissioner for Information and Communications, Hon. Paul Ohonbamu, described Onobun's statement as an exaggerated portrayal of the situation, insisting that Governor Okpeholo's administration is actively addressing security concerns.

While acknowledging the need for increased intelligence gathering and deployment of additional security personnel, Ohonbamu stressed that it was misleading to suggest that the state government had lost control.

He stated that ensuring the safety of lives and property is a top priority for Governor Okpeholo, who has swiftly taken measures to strengthen security agencies by providing necessary tools to combat crime.

According to the commis-

sioner, the current administration inherited security lapses from the previous government but has moved swiftly to address them.

The Edo State Government has issued a strong warning to criminals within and outside the state, declaring that their days are numbered.

Security forces have already made several arrests, and ongoing investigations are yielding positive results. Ohonbamu emphasized that while completely eradicating criminal activities will take time, progress is being made, and residents should exercise patience as security agencies intensify their operations.

Governor Okpeholo has also taken bold steps to crack down on crime, recently signing into law an amendment to the state's 2025 anti-kidnapping laws.

As part of this initiative, the government has begun demolishing buildings used by kidnappers and their accomplices in Uromi and Ekpoma.

The move is intended to send a clear message to criminals and deter future criminal activities.

In addition, landlords have been urged to properly vet their tenants, as any property found to be used for criminal activities will be demolished.

The state government, in collaboration with security agencies, is conducting aggressive raids on criminal hideouts and making arrests to dismantle criminal networks.

Contrary to Onobun's claim

that Edo is becoming unsafe for residents, Ohonbamu reiterated that the government remains resolute in its fight against crime.

He assured citizens that the ongoing security operations

will make Edo State uninhabitable for kidnappers and other criminals.

With coordinated efforts between the state government and security agencies, Edo State is making significant

strides in restoring safety and ensuring that criminal elements are flushed out. The government remains unwavering in its commitment to creating a secure environment for all residents.



## MEETING:

Vietnamese ambassador to Nigeria, Bui Quoc Hung (left), and Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, during a meeting at the Abia State Government House, Umuahia, yesterday.

## Chief Imam of Benin chides Northern...

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should understand that fasting does not mean stopping daily activities, including learning," he said.

He stressed that education is empowerment, and depriving students of learning opportunities is counterproductive.

"If we truly value education, we should not halt academic activities for fasting. The best alternative would be reducing school hours rather than shutting them down entirely," he added.

Sheikh Enabulele urged state governments to reconsider their decision to ensure that students continue their education while observing their faith.

Meanwhile, the Chief Imam of Benin, Sheikh Abdulfatah Enabulele, has called on Muslims to embrace kindness, charity, and community support during Ramadan.

Speaking in Benin City while receiving members of the Edo State Chapter of the Muslim Media Practitioners of Nigeria (MMPN), he emphasized the importance of sharing food with the less privileged and offering prayers during the holy month.

He urged wealthy Muslims to support those in need so that everyone could partake in the fast, reinforcing Islam's teachings on peace, unity, and good neighborliness. "Muslims, especially the rich, should extend kindness and share food with the less privileged so they can also fast," he said.

Sheikh Enabulele also advised members of the MMPN to uphold Islamic values in their media work, discouraging misinformation and negative narratives about Islam.

He urged journalists to use their platform to promote peace, security, and economic development.

"Islam values human life and abhors violence, fraud, and all forms of corruption. As media practitioners, you have a responsibility to correct misconceptions and promote the true teachings of Islam through your reporting, conduct, and attitudes," he stated.

The Chief Imam pledged his support for the association's efforts to provide accurate and balanced coverage of Islamic matters.

In his remarks, MMPN interim chairman, Abdullah Abdul-Kadir, said the visit aimed to strengthen collaboration with the Chief Imam's office, foster positive narratives about Islam, and address misinformation.

He emphasized the need for a working relationship to highlight the contributions of Muslim leaders and organizations in building a better society.

The MMPN, founded decades ago and registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) in 1997, reaffirmed its commitment to working with religious leaders to enhance understanding and promote positive community engagement during Ramadan and beyond.

## Stakeholders unanimously support amendment to RMRDC Act

CAROLINE AMEH

Stakeholders have unanimously endorsed the proposed amendment to the Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC) Act 2022 during a public hearing organized by the Senate Committee on Science and Technology in Abuja.

The Bill, initiated by the RMRDC and sponsored by Senator Peter Onyekachi Nwe-

bonyi, seeks to mandate the processing of raw materials in Nigeria before they are exported, a move aimed at strengthening the country's economy.

At the hearing, representatives from the Ministry of Solid Minerals, the Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON), and the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) voiced strong support for the amendment, urging its swift passage.

They emphasized that by

prioritizing local value addition, the legislation would prevent the outsourcing of jobs and wealth to foreign nations while creating economic opportunities within Nigeria.

Professor Nnanyelugo Ike Muonso, the Director-General of RMRDC, expressed joy over the unanimous support, describing it as a landmark moment for the country's economic transformation. "Today is my happiest day with the

100% support the amendment bill got from various stakeholders," he stated.

Senator Iya Abbas, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Science and Technology, concluded the hearing by acknowledging the absence of opposition to the Bill.

He assured that the committee would expedite the submission of its report to the Senate for final consideration and passage.

## FG congratulates Ghana on 68th independence anniversary

The Federal Government has extended its warm congratulations to the Republic of Ghana on the occasion of its 68th Independence Anniversary.

This was contained in a statement signed by the ministry's spokesperson, Kimiebi Ebienna, on Thursday.

According to the statement, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Yusuf Tuggar, conveyed the country's best wishes to Ghana's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, Samuel Ablakwa.

As Ghana celebrates 68 years

of independence, Nigeria joined a host of nations in recognising the remarkable progress and achievements of its neighbor in strengthening its democracy, fostering economic growth, and promoting peace and stability within the West African region.

Ghana's journey since gaining independence in 1957 has been described as a source of inspiration not only for Nigeria but for the entire African continent.

The statement also highlighted the long-standing friendship and bilateral ties between Nigeria and Ghana, which are based on shared history, cultural af-

finity, and a mutual vision for a prosperous and united Africa.

Nigeria reaffirmed its commitment to further enhancing cooperation with Ghana in key areas such as trade, education, security, and regional integration.

Both nations are expected to continue their collaboration on critical issues within the Economic Community of West African States platform and in pursuit of the goals of the African Union's Agenda 2063.

FG also expressed its hope for continued peace, prosperity, and success for the government and people of Ghana in their fu-

ture endeavours.

"The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Yusuf Tuggar, extends its warmest congratulations to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Republic of Ghana Hon. Samuel Ablakwa on the joyous occasion of their Country's Independence Anniversary.

"As Ghana marks 68 years of freedom and self-determination, Nigeria joins the host of friendly nations in celebrating the remarkable achievements and progress made by Ghana in strengthening its democracy, fostering economic growth."

## Senate chambers a place of honour, not controversy —Remi Tinubu

First Lady, Oluremi Tinubu, has stated that the Senate chamber is a place of honour and not for controversy.

According to a report cited on TheCable on Thursday, the First Lady was reacting to the ongoing sexual harassment allegations by Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, lawmaker representing Kogi central, against Senate President, Godswill Akpabio.

Speaking to journalists ahead of the International Women's Day, the first lady urged Nigerian women to assert themselves in leadership and not be sidelined.

"I know with what is going on in the Senate, you may say, why am I not taking a position? I believe that the Senate is doing what is needful, because that's what it is," she said.

"We shouldn't be hearing

things like that. It's a matured chamber, and it should be treated with respect. It's an honour for you to be in that place alone.

"I was there for 12 years, even in my younger days, and I'm still trying to look young, but people compliment you all the time. Women, raise yourself, don't be in a position that men will be talking to you anyhow. You can always shut them down before they start," she added.

She acknowledged the significant progress women have made over the decades, from the matriarchs of old to contemporary figures like Zuriel Oduwole, who champions peace.

The first lady added that Nigerian youths are equipped with what it takes to excel, urging women to continue lifting their heads high and doing their best.

# Senate c'ttee recommends Sen Natasha for six-month suspension

CAROLINE AMEH

The Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges, and Code of Conduct has recommended a six-month suspension for Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, citing violations of Senate rules.

The committee, chaired by Senator Neda Imasuen, sub-

mitted its report on Thursday, urging the suspension to take effect immediately from March 6, 2025.

According to the committee's recommendations, Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan will be barred from entering the National Assembly premises during the suspension.

Her office will be shut down,

and both her salary and those of her legislative aides will be withheld. Additionally, she will be prohibited from representing Nigeria in any official capacity as a senator.

The committee also stated that the senator could be given the opportunity to submit a written apology, which may be considered if the Senate de-

cidates to review the suspension at a later date.

It stated that the final decision will be made after a vote by the entire Senate, which could strip her of all legislative privileges for the duration of the suspension.

Meanwhile, Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan has filed a new petition accusing Senate President

Godswill Akpabio of sexual harassment. The petition, reportedly signed by her constituents, was presented during plenary on Thursday. When asked whether the case was before any court, she confirmed that it was not.

In accordance with parliamentary procedure, the Senate referred the petition to the Committee on Ethics, Privileg-

es, and Code of Conduct for investigation. The committee has been given four weeks to examine the allegations and report its findings.

This is the second time Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan has raised similar allegations against the Senate President. A previous petition was dismissed on procedural grounds on Wednesday.



ARCHBISHOP OF ABUJA:

President Bola Tinubu (right) received in audience, Most Rev. Dr. Ignatius Ayau Kaigama, Archbishop of Abuja, in the State House. 6th March 2025.

## DHQ questions credibility of global terrorism index

The Defence Headquarters has stated that reports from the Nigerian military provide a more accurate account of counter-terrorism efforts in the country than those from external sources.

The Director of Defence Media Operations, Major General Markus Kangye, stated this on Thursday while fielding questions on the 2025 Global Terrorism Index, which was released on March 5.

The index ranked Nigeria sixth globally, with a score of 7.658, moving up from eighth

place in 2023 and 2024. It also recorded 565 terrorism-related deaths in Nigeria in 2024.

Using a family analogy, Kangye argued that information from the family head should be deemed more credible than reports from outsiders.

"Something is happening in my house. I am the head of the house. I have children, I have a wife, and then Kuma Shi (someone else) is reporting what is happening in my house to me. Which one would be more correct? The one I tell you as the head of the house or the one Kuma Shi is re-

porting from outside?" he asked.

He urged the media to verify and correct any misleading narratives about Nigeria's security situation, adding, "I'm not countering what they put out there, but as observers, you should be the ones to give the correct version of what is happening in Nigeria."

On the sit-at-home order in the South East, Kangye noted that fear still keeps many residents indoors on Mondays.

He, however, reassured that the military is actively working to restore normalcy and rid the

region of IPOB/ESN fighters.

"Who gave the order? IPOB/ESN criminals. Because of what was happening in the South East, Operation Udo Ka was set up—just like Operation Hadin Kai in the North East.

"The past three commanders in the region have been doing very well. They continue to encourage people to go about their normal business, but in some areas, locals stay home out of fear of being attacked. The commanders are working hard to free the South East from IPOB/ESN influence," he said.

## NDDC official clarifies Abraka-Oben road commissioning, says project is ongoing

Amid controversy surrounding the recently commissioned Abraka-Oben road project, Patrick Aisowieren, the Edo State representative on the Board of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), has clarified that the project remains incomplete, with only the first phase delivered.

He explained that the first phase, covering 9.8km, was commissioned by the Minister of Regional Development Commission, Abubakar Momoh, while the second phase, which includes the 12.18km Oben-Umughun Nokhua section linking the Benin-Abraka highway in Orhionmwon Local Government Area, has not yet commenced.

Aisowieren dismissed claims that the federal government had completed and fully commissioned the entire Abraka-Oben road project.

He emphasized that "nobody has claimed that the federal government has done or completed the Oben road axis of the project."

He assured the people of Orhionmwon that the project is still in progress and remains a priority for the NDDC.

His statement comes in response to protests from youths in Oben, Orhionmwon Local

Government Area, who insisted that the road is a phantom project

Hundreds of youths under the Ugu Youths umbrella on Thursday called on President Bola Tinubu to investigate the commissioning of the road by the Minister of Regional Development Commission, Abubakar Momoh.

The youths, led by their coordinator, Monday Osemwenkhae, argued that the so-called "Abraka-Oben road" begins and ends in the Delta State section of the Benin-Abraka road, with no visible reconstruction in their community.

Osemwenkhae maintained that no such road called Abraka-Oben exists in the Niger Delta and that the only known federal road in the area is the Benin-Abraka road.

Appealing to President Tinubu, Osemwenkhae urged the federal government to conduct an on-the-spot assessment of the project, stressing that Oben, a host to several oil and gas companies, has been neglected despite its contributions to Nigeria's economy.

He lamented that the community had to construct its own link roads with local efforts and support from an oil company operating in the area.

## Uzum raises concern over deplorable state of Uromi junction in Agbor

AJUWA VICTOR

Eugene Azuka Uzum has ascribed the continued neglect of Uromi Junction, Agbor in Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State to unfortunate political leadership failure in Ika Nation.

Uzum, a lawyer, politician, social commentator and policy analyst, stated this while speaking to newsmen in Agbor.

He said that Uromi Junction is a major connecting spur to all parts of the country, wondering why succeeding administrations in the state had neglected the development of the area at the detriment of the people, the state and national integration.

He said that several individuals have been politically positioned to shift the paradigm from frustration, but that it appeared either the political actors were self-centered or lacking the proficiency to actualise the dream of a better Uromi Junction in the state.

He maintained that the Oko-wa Administration might not have been able to effect the needed transformation at the Uromi Junction owing to the unfortunate financial misfortune that befell it at inception but carried out palliatives works that ought to have been a complete flyover.

He stated emphatically that with the present Administration of Oborevwo and its favourable earnings and key political actors from Ika as helmsmen in the administration, the junction deserves a major prioritising in the policy drive of the state government, decrying the roll out of 275 billion Naira state projects by Delta State Government without the inclusion of Uromi Junction.

Uzum posited that the office of the Secretary to the State Government (SSG) occupied by an Ika man and other strategic offices to mention but a few are either ineffectual or intentionally compromising the development of Uromi Junction.

## We won't allow idle politicians mislead Deltans with lies —Commissioner

AJUWA VICTOR

Delta State Government, says the Oborevwo administration will not allow idle politicians to continue to paint pictures at variance with the reality on ground.

The State Commissioner for Works (Rural Roads) and Public Information, Mr. Charles Aniagwu, disclosed this during a press conference in Asaba.

Aniagwu who was reacting to comments made by former Deputy President of the Senate, Senator Ovie Omo-Agege during a visit to Bomadi and Burutu Local Government Areas of the state, said the opposition should be able to show some element of patriotism in identifying what government is doing and not to tell lies that make them look uninformed.

"At the weekend we saw the former Deputy President of the

Senate, a man Governor Oborevwo defeated roundly in the last election accusing our government of neglecting the people of Southern and Northern senatorial districts.

He said Governor Oborevwo has continued to reply critics with verifiable projects in the Health, education, road, agriculture sectors and many other areas including human capital development which cuts across the three senatorial districts.

He said, "Starting from the Southern Senatorial District, in Isoko South, we have a good number of roads that we are constructing and in Isoko North we have the Southern Delta University located in Ozoro and you can see the amount of structures we are building there.

"The Ughelli-Asaba road which cuts across the three senatorial districts is also receiving serious attention and in Patani, we

are working on Uduophori road, Schools, Water projects are ongoing and if you move from there towards Bomadi, you will see that the Ohoror - Bomadi road which is about 47km is ongoing.

Aniagwu further said Governor Oborevwo has taken actions to improve the landscape and the skyline of the capital territory, recalling efforts to rehabilitate the Ogbeogonogo Nnebis Road starting from Interbau Roundabout all the way to Abraka.

In the nine local government areas of Delta North, Aniagwu said Governor Oborevwo has been able to deal and complete the storm drainage in Owa-Alero to Owa-Ofie River, Idumu-Etiti Street is completed, Aliosimi- Owanta Road, among others are ongoing.

"In Ndokwa West, the Eweshi-Utagba - Uno Road, the Ndemili - Utagba-Uno Road,

Construction of Inam-Abbi Access Road still in Ndokwa West LGA. In Ukwuani we have the Amai-Aragba Road already approved for construction in addition to what we are doing in the health and education sectors.

"So, please help us tell him so that he has more information. When next he goes out, he can look for areas to proceed to rather progressing in a whole lot of error.

"We just needed to give this information to help them so that they don't continue to tell stories that make them look uninformed and we feel bad that they are people who are supposed to be highly exposed displaying that level of ignorance.

"We don't want them to continue like that before they go out to the public and put us to shame as Deltans." You know Delta no suppose carry last so tell them to 'wise up' a little"

# PHOTO SPEAK

***A Sensitization Workshop themed: "Exposing the Policy thrust of Governor Monday Okpebholo's Administration" organized by the state Ministry of Information and Communication in collaboration with the Edo State government***



Panel of discussants: R-L: Edo State Commissioner for Information and Communication and moderator of the discussion segment of the workshop, Hon Paul Ohonbamu; Commissioner for Health, Dr Cyril Oshiomhole; Professor Felix Oriakhi of the Federal University, Otuoke, Bayelsa State; Edo State Commissioner for Education, Dr Paddy Iyamu and Dr Onoho Omhen Ebhohimhen of the Mewar International University, Abuja



A cross section of participants



Edo State Head of Service, Dr. Anthony Okungbowa who represented the state Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo at the event



The state Commissioner for Information and Communication and moderator of the panel discussion segment, Hon Paul Ohonbamu (right) and one of the panelists, the state Commissioner for Health, Dr Cyril Oshiomhole



Ushers at the event



A cross section of participants

# Fashion & Style

## Cross-cultural reflections on the matters of dressing

OSUMAH AUGUSTINE

As used in this discourse, the term “dressing” entails the practice of wearing clothes on human body. This act is among the basic norms of the social institutions in most countries across the globe.

As it stands, dressing is a cross-cultural phenomenon. It is a practice that different societies are involved in on a universal scale.

### TWO BROAD METHODS OF CLOTH PRODUCTION EXIST

First is the manual or handmade type while the other is machine-made. Findings from previous studies on the subject of dressing showed that most of the earliest clothes worn by people were handwoven. Subsequent to industrial revolution, machine-made garments surfaced.

Attires worn by people vary from place to place. People from nations all over the world have diverse kinds of regalia they put on. Tribes, clans and families have dressing styles that are peculiar to them. Same is applicable to institutions such as schools, event centres, hospitals and places of worship. Professionals like doctors, lawyers, nurses, astronauts and athletes wear unique attires in their workplace.

### IN THE DAYS OF YORE, CLOTHES WERE SCARCE

The commonest ones available were made with cotton, silk and animal skin. Skilled guilds of weavers and tanners made dresses which were not enough for the clothing needs of households. It was gathered in a research that the then prevalent scarcity made parents to exchange clothes.

An informant revealed that in the ancient clan of Ozalla which is ward one in the present-day Owan West Local Government Area of Edo State, clothes were so much scarce to the point that a wife had to stay nude at home at what time her husband was out for any engagement. Same was applicable to a husband whenever his wife was out to carry out whatever tasks. The same shortage of clothes made nudism a form of dressing pattern for the children until they attained the age of puberty.

Development in trade and industry later boosted the production and distribution of clothes. In contemporary times, most people from various cultures have enough attires for dressing in the different geographical locations across the globe.

Nevertheless, people dress for multifarious reasons which are often the same from one country to another. This is known as cross-cultural reasons for dressing. Some of them are somewhat effortless to fathom.

### THE FOLLOWING ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS

The foremost reason for dressing is covering. The need to cover nakedness is the most vital purpose of wearing clothes. Thus, any garments that reveal the pubic areas in the human body do not serve the primary purpose of putting on attires.

Another reason for dressing is beautification. Human beings all over the world do wear clothes in other to appear beautiful. The beautifully dressed people receive complementary accolades most times wherever they are present.

Again, dressing is for the purpose of identification. A cliché says “dress the way you want to be addressed”. Chief among the apparent ways to

distinguish royalties from commoners is mode of dressing. Dress pattern reveals the wearer’s identity.

Dressing is furthermore a means of differentiation. In many tertiary institutions of learning, students are differentiated on the basis of dressing. Students undergoing academic training in law, medical sciences and engineering do not put on the same regalia. Such is also the case with the graduation gowns worn by the first degree, masters and doctorates holders at different universities during convocations.

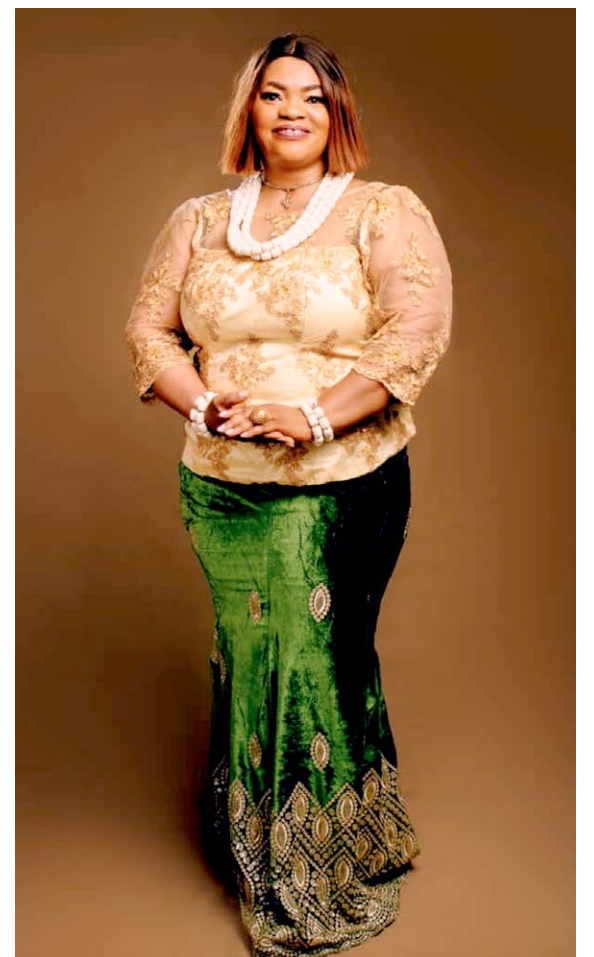
It is imperative to note that dressing also signifies the health and moral conditions of people in the society. Wearers of revealing clothes are most times judged as whoremongers while the reverse are tagged as decent people. In addition, tattered and dirty attires are often associated with mad people in most communities.

In the modern day, the purpose of dressing seems defeated. Boundaries have been blurred in regard to what to wear, when, where, how, and why? It is now difficult, if not impossible to decipher the sane from the insane, and the decent from the indecent people in the society.

This is as a result of the mix-ups in the patterns of dressing. Even the indigenous dress culture is endangered by foreign types.

There is the urgent need for reorientation in the bid to reinstate the functions which dressing is meant to serve.

Since charity begins at home, germane cross-cultural reawakening regarding dress culture should commence from families. Afterwards, the said renaissance about the issues bordering on dressing should be disseminated to schools, hospitals, markets, worship centres, and other social institutions.



# Europe's leaders to hold Ukraine talks at 'turning point in history'

EU leaders gather in Brussels on Thursday for a special council on defence, as France's President Emmanuel Macron warned that the continent was at a "turning point of history".

As well as rearmament, leaders are expected to discuss how the body can further support Kyiv in the face of US President Donald Trump's announcement on Monday that he would suspend aid to Ukraine. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is invited to the summit.

Nerves have grown increasingly frayed across Europe since Trump and Zelensky's showdown at the White House last week, and the rhetoric around Thursday's summit leaves no doubt about the importance EU officials are ascribing to it.

Three years on since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Trump administration's overtures to Russian President Vladimir Putin have left many in Europe concerned the continent would not be able to rely on US support for its security.

Washington's decision on Wednesday to pause intelligence sharing with Ukraine did nothing to allay those worries.

In a sign of the depth of concern, President Macron said France was open to discussing extending the protection offered by its nuclear arsenal to its European partners, during an address to the nation on Wednesday.

That followed a call from Friedrich Merz, likely to be Germany's next chancellor, to discuss increased nuclear sharing.

Europe was facing a "clear

and present danger on a scale that none of us have seen in our adult lifetime", European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said, while European Council President António Costa said this was a "defining moment for Ukraine and European security".

In a letter to European leaders, von der Leyen also said the continent had to "meet the moment" and "unleash our industrial and productive power and direct it to the goal of security".

On Monday, von der Leyen

announced an unprecedented defence package - dubbed ReArm Europe - and said that Europe was ready to "massively" boost its defence spending "with the speed and the ambition that is needed".

Von der Leyen said the three proposals outlined in the ReArm Europe plan would both support Ukraine and "address the long-term need to take much more responsibility" for European security - probably referring to the fact many Europeans feel the continent can no longer automatically rely on the US to come to its aid.

The proposals include:

Allowing countries to increase national deficit levels to give room for more defence spending

€150bn (£125bn) in loans for defence investment in domains that could benefit the defence of the EU as a whole - for example, air and missile defence, anti-drone systems, and military mobility - helping pool demand, and reduce costs through joint procurement.

Allowing countries to redirect funds earmarked for cohesion policy programmes (policies aimed at levelling the differences between more and less advantaged regions) to defence spending

The European Investment Bank would also be allowed to finance military projects.

According to von der Leyen, the plan could free up a total of €800bn (\$860bn; £670bn) in defence expenditure.



**KF-16 FIGHTER JET:**

South Korea's air force said that its KF-16 fighter jet accidentally dropped eight bombs outside of its firing range during a military drill

## Fifteen hurt after SK fighter jets drop bombs by accident

Fifteen people in South Korea were injured, two of them seriously, after a pair of fighter jets accidentally dropped eight bombs in a civilian district on Thursday during a live-fire military exercise, local media reported.

The incident involving the Air Force KF-16 aircraft, in the city of Pocheon near North Korea, was part of routine drills held by the South to maintain combat readiness against potential attacks from the North.

South Korea's Air Force said that it was investigating the incident and apologised for the damage, adding it would provide compensation to those affected.

While shells from live firing exercises sometimes land near civilian residences, they rarely cause injuries.

According to local media reports, two people suffered fractures to their necks and shoulders.

A 60-year-old who was driving when the explosion happened had shrapnel lodged in their neck, Yonhap reported.

"I was driving when I heard a 'bang,' they said. 'When I woke up, I was in an ambulance.'"

"Our KF-16 (fighter jet) abnormally dropped eight shells of MK-82 bombs. It landed outside of firing range," said Korea's Air Force in a statement to the BBC.

The military said the pilot of one of the jets inputted the wrong coordinates by mistake, causing the bombs to drop in the civilian community.

Investigators have yet to determine why the second jet dropped its bombs, the military said, adding all live-fire exercises will be suspended.

One church building and houses were also damaged as a result of the incident.

Images published on local media show a broken window of a building and damaged roof of the church.

A local resident told Yonhap that he had been watching television at home when the explosion, which sounded "like a thunderclap", shook the house.

The director of a nearby senior citizen care centre said that the building's windows shattered and one of their teachers was taken to hospital with injuries. While no seniors were hurt, they said, "they were so frightened that we sent them all home".

Pocheon authorities told the BBC earlier on Thursday that residents had been evacuated while a bomb disposal team worked on safely disposing any unexploded bombs.

But authorities later said they did not find any unexploded bombs at the scene, Yonhap reported.

The defence ministry said the training on Thursday was related to a joint drill with US forces.

South Korea and the US are set to run combined drills from March 10 to March 20 - the first since US president Donald Trump's return to the White House. This comes at a time when the two countries are increasingly wary of the growing alliance between North Korea and Russia.

During another joint drill by South Korea and the US in 2022, troops fired a short-range ballistic missile which malfunctioned and crashed on a golf course in the military base. While the warhead did not explode, it still burst into flames and sent panic rippling across residents in the area.

## Trump issues 'last warning' to Hamas as US confirms direct hostage talks

US President Donald Trump has issued what he called a "last warning" to Hamas to release the hostages being held in Gaza.

"I am sending Israel everything it needs to finish the job, not a single Hamas member will be safe if you don't do as I say," Trump said in a lengthy post on his Truth Social platform.

Hamas accused the US president of encouraging Israel to break the ceasefire deal currently in effect between the two sides.

Trump's statement came just hours after the White House confirmed it was holding direct talks with Hamas over the remaining hostages.

Washington has until now avoided direct engagement with the group, and there is a longstanding US policy against having direct contact with entities it lists as terrorist organisations.

In his social media post, Trump said there would be "hell to pay" if the hostages were not released, while not specifying the nature of the support he was sending Israel.

"Release all of the hostages now, not later, and immediately return all of the dead bodies of the people you murdered, or it is OVER for you," he added.

"For the leadership, now is the time to leave Gaza, while you still have a chance."

He also appeared to issue a wider threat: "Also, to the People of Gaza: A beautiful Future awaits, but not if you hold Hostages. If you do, you are DEAD!"

Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said in a statement that such threats "complicate matters regarding the ceasefire agreement and encourage the occupation [Israel] to avoid implementing its terms".

It's not the first time Trump has threatened Hamas. In December, he said there would

be "all hell to pay" if hostages were not released by the time he took office.

The post came after Trump met with a group of hostages in the White House who had been recently released under the ceasefire.

Meanwhile, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt confirmed the US has been negotiating directly with Hamas to try to secure the release of the hostages.

Israel had been consulted prior to the talks, she added.

President Trump believed in doing what was in the best in-

terest of the American people, Leavitt told reporters.

The work of the special envoy for hostages, Adam Boehler, work was a "good faith effort to do what's right for the American people", she added.

"Two direct meetings" have taken place between Hamas and a US official, "preceded by several communications", a Palestinian source told the BBC.

News of the talks was first reported by Axios, which said the two sides were meeting in Qatar to discuss the release of US hostages as well as a wider deal to end the war.

## Denmark postal service to stop delivering letters

Denmark's state-run postal service, PostNord, is to end all letter deliveries at the end of 2025, citing a 90% decline in letter volumes since the start of the century.

The decision brings to an end 400 years of the company's letter service. Denmark's 1,500 post boxes will start to disappear from the start of June.

Transport Minister Thomas Danielsen sought to reassure Danes, saying letters would still be sent and received as "there is a free market for both letters and parcels".

Postal services across Europe are grappling with the

decline in letter volumes. Germany's Deutsche Post said on Thursday it was axing 8,000 jobs, in what it called a "socially responsible manner".

Deutsche Post has 187,000 employees and staff representatives said they feared more cuts were to come.

Denmark had a universal postal service for 400 years until the end of 2023, but as digital mail services have taken hold, the use of letters has fallen dramatically.

Fifteen hundred workers facing losing their jobs, out of a workforce of 4,600.

"It's a super sad day. Not just

for our department, but for the 1,500 who face an uncertain future," employee Anders Raun Mikkelsen told Danish broadcaster DR.

Denmark ranks as one of the world's most digitalised countries. There's an app for almost everything: few people use cash, and Danes even carry drivers' licences and health cards on their smartphones.

Bank statements, bills, and correspondence from local authorities are all sent electronically.

Public services send communications via a Digital Post app or other platforms and PostNord Denmark says the letter market is

no longer profitable.

Letter numbers have fallen since the start of the century from 1.4 billion to 110 million last year.

The decision will affect elderly people most. Although 95% of Danes use the Digital Post service, a reported 271,000 people still rely on physical mail.

"There are many who are very dependent on letters being delivered regularly. These include hospital appointments, vaccinations or decisions regarding home care," Marlene Rishoj Cordes, from Aeldre Sagen (DaneAge) told Denmark's TV2.

## News

## Foreign

## Injuries as Mozambique police fire on opposition protest

At least a dozen people were injured after Mozambican police violently dispersed a protest led by opposition leader Venâncio Mondlane, the runner-up in last year's disputed presidential election, Mondlane's team and a civil society group say.

Eyewitnesses and Mondlane's aides said the police fired live rounds at the opposition leader's convoy and the anti-government protesters who had joined him on the streets of the capital, Maputo, on Wednesday.

Neither the police nor the authorities have commented.

The protests came as President Daniel Chapo, who took office in January, was due to sign a deal after talks with other political parties to end months of protests over the disputed election.

Mondlane, who has been calling for the protests, was excluded from the talks leading to the ceremony.

A communique from Mondlane's office said the opposition leader had been leading a procession on Wednesday afternoon when his convoy came under fire.

"A contingent of the UIR [a rapid intervention police unit] rammed into Venâncio Mondlane's convoy and began a barrage of gunfire, using live ammunition and tear gas," it added.

In response to the incident, Interior Minister Paulo Chachine told reporters that the police had a mission to prevent any attempt to disrupt the deal-signing ceremony.

He denied that there had been

an attempt to kill Mondlane.

Sixteen people were injured, according to local civil society group Plataforma Decide. The BBC has not been able to confirm the casualty figures.

Mondlane's team said two children from a nearby school had died from the shooting. It said 16 people had been injured, including their camera person, with others seriously affected by tear gas.

In a statement, it said Mondlane's condition was "unknown, and his whereabouts are causing concern among his entire team".

A video shared on social media shows the moment when gunshots started ringing out as the procession approached what looks like an armoured vehicle on the streets. People run for safety and the crowds disappear, while the gunfire continues.

More images of people bloodied from the incident have also been shared online.

A witness, who was among the protesters, told the AFP news agency that police had started shooting, as if it was an "ambush scenario. It was just a march".

"I saw some people bleeding from their wounds. My friend was wounded in the leg. I also saw a child who was shot and lost his life in hospital," AFP quoted 27-year old protester Silvestre Alexandre as saying.

Mozambique's former colonial power, Portugal, has condemned "the unacceptable attack on Venâncio Mondlane's convoy" while calling for "restraint from violence and respect for fundamental rights".



**THE MILITARY WING:**

Gen Gabriel Duop Lam is in charge of the military wing of the opposition party

## General's arrest violates South Sudan peace deal, opposition says

The arrest of an army general from South Sudan's main opposition is a "grave violation" of the peace deal that ended a five-year civil war, an opposition spokesperson said.

Gen Gabriel Duop Lam was arrested earlier this week, along with other senior officials of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM-IO).

The detainees are all allies of Vice-President Riek Machar, whose rift with President Salva Kiir sparked a devastating war in 2013.

On Thursday morning, Machar's spokesperson said

that the SPLM-IO did not know how their officials were or where they were being held.

"We are doing our best to avoid any escalation to the situation, however we need our partners in peace to demonstrate the political will to assure that this country will not go back to war again," Puok Both Baluang told the BBC's Newsday programme.

President Kiir has insisted that South Sudan will not return to war, government spokesperson Michael Makuei told reporters in the capital Juba on Wednesday.

Makuei added that the opposition figures were arrested

because they were "in conflict with the law".

South Sudan is the world's newest nation, after seceding from Sudan in 2011. But just two years later, a civil war erupted when Kiir sacked his entire cabinet and accused Machar of instigating a failed coup.

After five years, with 400,000 lives lost, and 2.5 million people forced from their homes, a peace deal was agreed in 2018.

But it has been fraught ever since.

Gen Lam is in charge of the military wing of the opposition party, which is yet to be integrated into the army. He was taken into custody on Tuesday. Another Machar ally, Oil Minister Puot Kang Chol, was taken by security forces in the middle of the night.

Machar's house in the capital, Juba, was surrounded by troops from the South Sudanese army overnight before they were later withdrawn.

All other senior military officials allied with Machar have been placed under house arrest, the BBC understands.

The arrests follow reports

that the White Army militia had seized a strategic town in Upper Nile state close to the Ethiopian border, after clashes with government troops.

The White Army fought alongside Machar during the civil war.

Some in the army, loyal to Kiir, have accused Machar's allies of supporting the rebels.

Machar's spokesperson told the BBC that the current fighting between the White Army and security forces "would have been avoided" if the leadership of the national army had abided by the peace agreement.

The UN and African Union have warned that the violence in this area could potentially spread.

Ter Manyang, head of the Juba-based Center for Peace and Advocacy, told Reuters that the fighting in this area could threaten the peace deal.

"The country is likely to slide to war unless the situation is managed by the top leadership of the country," he said.

The country has never held an election - these are now due to take place in 2026 after years of delay.

## Serbia's opposition under fire for smoke and flare protest in parliament

The cleaners had scrubbed the debating chamber clean before MPs arrived for Wednesday's session in Serbia's National Assembly.

Spent smoke bombs, smears of egg yolk and a dusting of white fire extinguisher powder had all been removed from the benches and tables after the mayhem of the previous day.

The police had also been on the scene.

They were gathering evidence for potential criminal charges against the MPs who had plunged the parliament into a fug of pink and black smoke as they unfurled banners accusing the government of corruption.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic labelled the scenes "hooliganism". He said he was "looking for responsibility,

criminal law" to be applied.

Three female MPs were hurt. One of them was hit on the back of the head by an object, although it was unclear who threw it, and another apparently suffered a stroke.

The EU said a parliament should be a place for democratic debate and that it was very concerned.

Opposition party MPs were unabashed.

The co-leader of the Green-Left Front, Radomir Lazovic, had let off a fire extinguisher from his seat in the chamber.

He described the intervention as "a response to the violence that has been perpetrated against the citizens of Serbia for 13 years".

That covers the period that the Serbian Progressive Party

(SNS) has been in power.

Under the leadership of Vucic - who previously served as deputy prime minister and prime minister - the party has been an election-winning machine.

The SNS has emerged victorious from no fewer than five parliamentary elections since it first formed a governing coalition in 2012.

## Jack Daniel's hits out at Canada pulling US alcohol

Canadian provinces pulling US alcohol off store shelves in response to Trump trade policy is "worse than tariffs", the boss of Jack Daniel's maker Brown-Forman has said.

Several Canadian provinces, including Ontario, which is by far the most populated, took action this week in retaliation

for US tariffs on Canadian goods.

Its opponents claim that has more to do with the party's domination of Serbia's media outlets and state institutions than its policies.

But Vucic has successfully projected an image of strong, effective leadership that appeals to a large proportion of Serbia's electorate - particularly outside the main urban areas.

The Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO), one of the largest buyers of alcohol in the world, removed US-made alcoholic drinks from its shelves on Tuesday.

Brown-Forman boss Lawson Whiting said the Canadian response was "disproportionate" to the 25% levies on Canadian goods imposed by the Trump administration.

"I mean, that's worse than a tariff, because it's literally taking your sales away, completely removing our products from the shelves," Mr Whiting said.

In response to the tariffs, Canada has retaliated with 25% levies on goods imported from the US, including beer, spirits, and wine.

Some provinces also took action themselves, including Ontario and Nova Scotia.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford said the LCBO sells nearly \$1bn of US alcohol per year. "As of today, every single one of these products is off the shelves," Mr Ford said on Tuesday.

The LCBO is the exclusive wholesaler in Ontario, which

means other retailers, bars and restaurants in the province will no longer be able to restock US products, Mr Ford said.

Nevertheless, Mr Whiting said Canada makes up only 1% of Brown-Forman's total sales, so the firm can withstand the hit.

Canadians are being advised by the LCBO to buy products made in Canada. Some Canadians have been turning to local goods anyway in response to the Trump tariffs.

Canada's prime minister, Justin Trudeau, criticised the US tariffs on Tuesday, saying imposing them was "a very dumb thing to do".

He also accused the US president of planning "a total collapse of the Canadian economy because that will make it easier to annex us".

## North Korea halts tourism just weeks after reopening

North Korea has stopped tourists from visiting, just weeks after the first Western tourists entered the country for the first time in five years.

North Korea sealed itself off at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, and started to scale back restrictions in the middle of 2023.

It opened up to Russian visi-

tors in 2024, but it was only last month that Western tourists were allowed into the remote, eastern city Rason.

However several tour companies now say that trips to the reclusive country have been cancelled until further notice. Pyongyang has not given a reason for the sudden halt.

"Just received news from our

Korean partners that Rason is closed to everyone. We will keep you posted," China-based KTG Tours, which specialises in North Korean tours, said Wednesday on Facebook.

Young Pioneer Tours and Koryo Tours were among the other agencies that have announced the suspension.

Those planning tours in

April and May should refrain from booking flights "until we have more information", Young Pioneer Tours said in a Facebook post.

On 20 February, the first Western tourists started arriving in Rason, a city earmarked by the North as a special economic zone, to trial new financial policies.

# Sports

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

## 2025 Scrabble Festival to hold in April as Nigeria Scrabble Federation picks Benin as host city



The biggest and most prestigious domestic scrabble competition in Nigeria - the NSF Scrabble Festival 2025 has been scheduled to hold from 11th to 17th of April as the Nigeria Scrabble Federation (NSF) has chosen

Benin city, Edo State as choiced destination for the big event.

The Nigeria Scrabble Federation (NSF), made this known in a statement on Thursday in Abuja.

The four-in-one, Scrabble Festival will be staged in the

ancient and iconic city of Benin, Edo State, South-South, Nigeria and over 25 States of the Federation are expected to attend the event which was last staged at the Rolak Hotel & Suites, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, South-West, Nigeria in 2024.

We gathered that participants are expected to touch down in Benin City, the Culture and Art capital of Nigeria, on the 10th of April.

The Aspha Zadok National Championship, one of the four events that make up the Scrabble Festival bouquet begins on the 11th and ends on the 13th when the NSF Green Jacket winner will emerge.

Lagos State's Enoch Nwali is the current holder of the revered NSF Green Jacket.

On Monday the 13th of April, the Annual General

Meeting (AGM), of the Nigeria Scrabble Federation will take the centre stage.

The AGM provides a platform for stakeholders in the scrabble fraternity to formulate policies, projects and programme that will accelerate the growth of the sport.

After the AGM on the 14th, the NSF Inter Club Challenge which is open to all the Scrabble Clubs in Nigeria will run from the 15th to the 17th of April. Pyramid SC of Lagos under the stewardship of Engineer Dipo Akanbi, are the defending champions of the competition.

The thrilling and exciting week long Scrabble Festival will be brought to a befitting close with the NSF Awards and Gala Night, on Thursday the 17th of April 2025.



## Onyedika confident Club Brugge can overturn defeat against Aston Villa

Super Eagles midfielder Raphael Onyedika remains optimistic about Club Brugge's chances of staging a comeback in their UEFA Champions League Round of 16 tie against Aston Villa

Onyedika, returning from injury, was named in the starting lineup but couldn't prevent his side from suffering a 3-1 home defeat on Tuesday.

This marks only the second time Aston Villa has defeated a Belgian club in UEFA competition, with their previous victory being a 1-0 win over Anderlecht in the 1982 European Cup semi-finals, a tournament

they went on to win.

"The result makes things difficult for us, but nothing is impossible. We have to believe in ourselves because anything can happen.

"In this competition, you must always be at your best, ready for every moment and every match. We have worked hard for this, and we gave our best.

"It was a tough way to end the game. The result was going in our favor at some point, so it was hard to take."

Club Brugge will look to overturn the deficit when they face Aston Villa in the return leg at Villa Park next Wednesday.

## Presidency hosts Eagles coach Chelle ahead of World Cup qualifiers

The Senior Special Assistant to President Bola Tinubu on Grassroots Sports, Hon. Anthony Adeyinka Adeboye played host to Super Eagles head coach Eric Chelle ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers this month.

Hon. Adeboye welcomed the Malian tactician to his Abuja office on Wednesday, a day after Chelle announced his provisional squad for the games against Rwanda and Zimbabwe.

The Presidential aide assured Chelle of the federal government's support as he gears up for his first competitive match as Nigeria coach since his appointment in January.

He stressed that the Nigerian government are keen on qualification for the historic 2026 World Cup that will feature 48 teams and will take place in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The meeting with Chelle follows Hon. Adeboye's engagement with former Super Eagles and Inter Milan striker, Obafemi Martins earlier in the week and the conversation was centered around grassroots

football development across the country.

Nigeria are currently in fifth position in Group C without a win and they have three points after four matches.

Chelle's side are scheduled group leaders Rwanda who have seven points at the Amahoro Stadium in Kigali on March 21 before hosting bottom-placed Zimbabwe who have two points at the Godswill Akpabio Stadium in Uyo, four days later.



## Green slams Chelle's 39-player roster, claims new coach is just 'screening' Super Eagles

Former chairman of the technical committee of Nigeria Football Federation (NFF), Barrister Chris Green has mocked the decision of new Super Eagles' coach, Eric Chelle to invite 39 players for upcoming World Cup qualifiers.

Although he admitted that the Franco-Malian tactician has a right to make his own choices and selections as the new man on charge, Barrister Green reckoned that having too many players in camp would cause distractions.

He reasoned further that Chelle may want to start on a fresh note and from scratch by observing as many players as possible during his first assignment with the three time African champions, but Green insisted that the list is overcrowded.

Green, who is currently the commissioner for sports in Rivers State, retorted, "We have a new coach, and he has pencilled down 39 names. I am sure he wants to see these guys, and he's not seen them before. He's just mounting the saddle, and he needs to get ac-

quainted with our players. At the end of the day, he'll pick those of them he thinks would be able to win these games for him.

However, the only part which is not really going down well with me is that, for you to get a new coach, he should be able to know your team in and out before employing him.

He shouldn't appear to be a stranger, somebody coming for the first time, knowing just a few of our players. That's not really good, and it doesn't augur really well for us."

## Topher bags major NFF deal as official designer for AFCON 'Let's Do It Again' campaign

Topher, has secured what many are calling the biggest deal since 2019. He has partnered with the Nigeria Football Federation as the official creative merchandise designer for the AFCON "Let's Do It Again" campaign.

Topher is a former Big Brother housemate who captured public attention with his creative flair and unique style during last year's

season. Known simply as Topher, he has successfully parlayed his reality TV exposure into a flourishing career in design.

Speaking on his X page, Topher said, "I'm excited to announce my partnership with the Nigeria Football Federation (@thenff) as the official creative merchandise designer for the AFCON 'Let's Do It Again' campaign. This is a defining moment, a chance to blend

my passion with the electrifying spirit of African football"

He added that he has designed a collection that captures the core values of the campaign—unwavering belief, national pride, and the spirit of champions. To show his gratitude and share the excitement with his supporters, Topher announced the release of a limited edition of 20 pieces before his main collection drops.

The exclusive store will go live on March 9, 2025, at 4 PM WAT.

This partnership is expected to bring huge visibility to Topher's brand, as the Super Eagles AFCON jersey will be watched by millions across Africa. Fans and supporters can look forward to a fresh, creative take on football merchandise that celebrates Nigerian pride and the beautiful game.



## Two swimmers get N14m as Delta rewards athletes

Delta State governor Sheriff Oborewori.

The boost the morale of Delta State athletes and officials ahead of this year's National Sports Festival, which will be held in Ogun State, Governor Sheriff Oborewori has approved a cash award regime for Team Delta stars, who topped the medals table at the 21st edition of the Games, tagged Asaba 2022.

One of the state's swimmers, Clinton Opute, who won eight individual gold medals, pocketed N8 million, while Timi Akiyefa, also a swimmer, smiled to the bank with N6 million for winning six individual gold medals during the sports festival.

Team Delta made history at the 21st National Sports Festival by winning an unprece-

dent 576 medals, made up of 280 gold, 167 silver, and 129 bronze.

Last year, Governor Oborewori boosted the morale of the state's junior athletes preparing for the eighth National Youth Games, which Delta also hosted. It paid off as Team Delta topped the medals table.

On Tuesday evening, Oborewori approved the sum of N1 million as a cash reward for each gold medal won at the 2022 Games. Silver medalists got N500,000 each, while N250,000 was approved for each bronze medal.

Speaking with The Guardian, yesterday, the Chairman of Delta Sports Commission, Onoriode Oborewori, described the Governor's gesture as a clear indication of his passion for sports development.

## Mobi Oparaku backs NFF's plan to open S'Eagles' camp directly in Kigali ahead of clash with Rwanda

Former Super Eagles' full back, Mobi Oparaku has thrown his weight behind a decision by Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) to open the next camp of the national team in Rwanda's capital, Kigali.

It was gathered that egg heads of the football governing body are touting the idea of directing all players invited to the Eagles' camp to travel directly to Kigali, instead of first reporting to Lagos or Abuja ahead of the March 21st clash with Rwanda's Amavubi.

While projecting on the Eagles' chances of defeating the Wasps of Rwanda at their backyard, and put their qualification back on track for the 2026 World Cup, Oparaku

took into consideration the issue of high altitude in Kigali and reckoned that opening camp there directly instead of first coming to Nigeria would rule out issues of acclimatisation.

The member of Nigeria's Atlanta '96 Olympic Games' gold medal winning team declared, "The new players and the old players all need to go there. That's why I am supporting the NFF's idea of taking them directly to Rwanda to start the preparations for that game. I am in support of them going to Rwanda and prepare."

The product of Iwuanyanwu Nationale of Owerri, now Heartland, who played for Nigeria at the 1998 World Cup



in France, concluded with information about the likely advantages of the Eagles' opening camp in Kigali, especially as their new coach, Eric Chelle will be aiming for victory away to the qualification group lead-

ers in his first match after taking over the saddle.

"I am happy that they are being directed to do such. It's a beautiful idea and a welcome development, especially for the new coach.

## Morocco eyes 2031 Women's World Cup hosting

FIFA has given the United States and CONCACAF the green light to bid but they will still have to beat off competition from South Africa and Morocco, while Japan sees its hopes fading until at least 2039 but says it will continue to push for the growth of the female category in football.

The road to the 2031 Women's World Cup has taken a decisive turn as the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) confirmed on Wednesday its intention to complete the bidding process to host the tournament along with the Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football and its affiliated federations.

The decision comes after the International Federation

of Association Football (FIFA) reduced the number of eligible regions to just two: North America and Africa.

"We are excited about the opportunity to welcome teams and fans, inspire the next generation and grow the game regionally and globally," the USSF explained in a release on social media.

The wish represents a new venture to bring the tournament to North American soil after the United States and Mexico dropped their bid for 2027, allowing Brazil to keep the 2027 tournament.

FIFA delivered the reduction of bidders in a statement from Zurich, specifying that the 2031 Women's World Cup will be decided between North America and Africa.

## Falcons maintain 36th spot in FIFA women's rankings, remain Africa's best

Nigeria's Super Falcons have retained their 36th position

in the latest FIFA Women's World Rankings released on March 6, 2025. With 1622.49

points, they remain the highest-ranked African team for the fifth consecutive time.

The Falcons achieved their best-ever ranking in 2003 when they were placed 23rd globally. Their recent friendly against France, which ended in a narrow 1-2 defeat, could have influenced their position but was not enough to push them higher.

Next on Nigeria's schedule is the Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) 2026 qualifier against Benin Republic in April.

Defending WAFCON

champions South Africa are the second-best African side at 54th globally, while Morocco follows in 90th place.

Significant movements were recorded across Africa, with Tanzania and Kenya climbing seven places each after their WAFCON qualifying victories over Equatorial Guinea and Tunisia, respectively.

Tanzania now ranks 145th, while Kenya sits at 149th. Meanwhile, Tunisia suffered the biggest drop, falling 11 places to 89th after their loss to Kenya.



## UK countries to make joint bid to host 2035 women's World Cup

FIFA Women's World Cup Australia and New Zealand 2023 - Final - Spain v England - Stadium Australia, Sydney, Australia - August 20, 2023 General view of World Cup trophy on display before the match.

The Football Associations of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales intend to submit an Expression of Interest to FIFA with a view to the United Kingdom hosting the 2035 women's World Cup, they said on Wednesday.

It would be the first time the tournament has been held on British soil, following two women's European Championships in England in 2005 and 2022.

FIFA's Council recently decided to recommend Europe or Africa as potential hosts for the 2035 tournament.

"The women's World Cup on home turf would be another monumental moment in our sporting history, driving growth and leaving a lasting legacy. The FAs' intention to bid has my government's full support," British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said in a statement.

FIFA announced that bids for the 2031 and 2035 Women's World Cups will be submitted in late 2025, with decisions expected by mid-2026.

"We strongly believe that we could organise a fantastic tournament, building on the success of the UEFA women's EURO in 2022 and the subsequent rapid growth of the women's game in England," said Mark Bullingham, CEO of the English Football Association.

## Enrique unhappy with PSG's UCL home loss to Liverpool

Paris Saint-Germain manager Luis Enrique is unhappy with his team's 1-0 loss to Liverpool in the first leg of the UEFA Champions League round of 16 at the Parc des Princes on Wednesday night, asserting the game can be unfair, Afrosport reports.

The French capital outfit

were the better side for much of the 90 minutes but were undone by substitute Harvey Elliott's 87th-minute strike.

While Enrique believes his team deserved a better result from how they played, he humbly accepted the defeat.

"This match is not hard to analyse: I think we were superior to

Liverpool both in how we played and in the number of chances we had," the Spaniard said.

"We played a great match against the number one team both in England and in Europe, we defended very well and we took risks. Clearly, we deserved

another result, but this is football, it is a sport which is often unfair, and we have to accept it."

Meanwhile, Liverpool boss Arne Slot says his side were lucky to come off with the win and had goalkeeper Alisson to thank after he made some top saves.



## FIFA considering expanding World Cup to 64 teams

Next year's FIFA World Cup already has its marks. It is the first to be hosted across three countries, and the first to have the 48-team format.

According to the New York Times, FIFA is considering expanding the 2030 Morocco-Spain-Portugal World Cup to 64 teams.

Like that of 2026, the edition will be hosted by three countries.

"Gianni Infantino would certainly be 'seduced' by the possible financial benefits of such an enlargement", the newspaper reports in its Thursday edition.

It is gathered that the football governing body will review a proposal to expand the 2030 World Cup to 64 teams to mark the 100th anniversary of the World Cup.

The 2030 World Cup will be held in Morocco, Spain and Portugal, with Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay, where the inaugural edition was staged, set to host three games.

The World Cup has already been expanded from 32 to 48 teams for next year's edition in the U.S., Mexico and Canada.



## Dikko declares 13th ECOWAS wrestling tournament open, restates Nigeria's commitment to regional unity through sports

National Sports Commission Chairman Malam Shehu Dikko on Thursday reiterated the nation's commitment towards unity and economic advancement of West Africa deploying sports as a tool.

The NSC Chairman made this commitment in his opening speech at the 13th ECOWAS African Wrestling Tournament at the Velodrome MKO Abiola National Stadium Abuja.

His words, "We are particularly honoured that this prestigious event is taking place at a time when the leadership of ECOWAS is being steered by

drive through sports. His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the Chairman of the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government.

Under his visionary guidance, ECOWAS continues to champion unity, economic development and the advancement of sports as a tool for peace and regional cohesion.

"This tournament is a testament to our collective commitment to promoting cultural ties and strengthening the bonds that unite us as West Africans, and indeed proud Africans."

He highlighted the Commission's youth empowerment

drive through sports.

"Nigeria is proud to host this prestigious event, reaffirming our commitment to the promotion and development of traditional

sports. The National Sports Commission remains dedicated to harnessing sports as a vehicle for youth empowerment, regional integration and economic growth.





# Restoring discipline and dignity: A new dawn for Edo State teachers under Governor Monday Okpebholo

KELLY ODARO

For years, teachers in Edo State have endured a period of relegation and undue interference that significantly weakened their morale and authority in the classroom.

Under the administration of Governor Godwin Obaseki, the treatment of teachers, particularly in secondary schools, deteriorated to a distressing level. Policies and administrative actions stripped them of their professional dignity, making it difficult to maintain discipline among students. The situation worsened to the point where teachers were not only undermined but actively discouraged from enforcing order in schools.

One of the most controversial developments during this period was the directive by the then Commissioner for Education, Dr. Joan Oviawe, who allegedly encouraged students to call her directly whenever they were disciplined by their teachers.

This move sent shockwaves through the education sector, as it effectively empowered students to challenge the authority of their educators without due process. The implication was clear: teachers were no longer the custodians of discipline, and their efforts to instil order could be questioned or overturned by direct intervention from the commissioner's office.

This policy, coupled with other administrative lapses, led to an unprecedented breakdown of discipline in Edo State's secondary schools. Truancy became rampant, as students realised there were little to no consequences for their actions. Instances of open defiance against teachers surged, and many teachers found themselves unable to enforce basic rules without fear of being reported and possibly sanctioned.

During the tenure of Dr. Joan Oviawe as Commissioner for Education, one of the most notable activities that defined her administration, was the relentless documentation of school events through photography. Whether for significant educational milestones or the most trivial occurrences, cameras were always clicking and rolling, capturing every moment for record-keeping purposes. This practice became so pronounced that it almost seemed as if the essence of educational progress was measured by the number of pictures taken rather than the quality of learning imparted.

Teachers who already bore the burden of academic responsibilities were not spared from this routine. Attendance at various school-related functions, both critical and ceremonial, was mandatory, with strict records kept. Those who failed to show up risked facing sanctions, as the administration viewed participation as a measure of commitment to the government's edu-

cational agenda. Many teachers, rather than focusing on classroom engagements, found themselves preoccupied with ensuring their presence was noted at these numerous events.

While the intention behind this rigorous documentation might have been to enhance accountability and transparency, it soon became an overwhelming distraction. The excessive emphasis on photographs and attendance tracking overshadowed the core objective of qualitative education. Teachers were constantly shuttling between events, sometimes abandoning actual teaching duties to satisfy administrative directives. The entire school system appeared to have been caught in a frenzy of optics rather than substance.

Critics of this approach argued that education should be measured by impact, not by images. A well-documented event means little if it does not translate into meaningful learning outcomes. Many teachers lamented that instead of being given incentives to enhance classroom performance, they were being evaluated based on their presence at functions that often had no direct bearing on student development. The result was a disillusioned teaching workforce grappling with misplaced priorities.

More so, the pressure to comply with these directives created an atmosphere of coercion rather than enthusiasm. Teachers were compelled to attend events, sometimes at short notice, disrupting their lesson plans. Some were forced to travel long distances to be physically present at functions that had little relevance to their professional growth. The culture of compulsion overshadowed what should have been a voluntary commitment to educational advancement.

Beyond the teaching staff, students also bore the brunt of this approach. With teachers frequently pulled away for events, classroom engagements suffered. The emphasis on documentation led to a situation where education became more about appearances than about learning. Schools that should have been centres of intellectual growth were gradually transformed into venues for staged activities aimed at painting a favourable public image.

In a well-structured educational system, policies should be tailored towards enhancing learning outcomes rather than fulfilling bureaucratic obligations. While record-keeping is essential, it should not be pursued at the expense of classroom instruction. A truly progressive education system thrives on innovation, teacher motivation, and student-centred learning rather than on forced attendance at events with cameras clicking away.

As the educational sector in the state moves forward, it is imperative to shift the focus from optics to impact. The legacy of any admin-

istration should be assessed by the quality of education provided, not by the number of pictures taken. If real progress is to be made, the emphasis must return to the classroom, where the actual transformation of students occurs, rather than in front of the lens of a camera.

This policy, coupled with other administrative lapses, led to an unprecedented breakdown of discipline in Edo State's secondary schools. Truancy became rampant, as students realised there were little to no consequences for their actions. Instances of open defiance against teachers surged, and many teachers found themselves unable to enforce basic rules without fear of being reported and possibly sanctioned.

The situation further deteriorated when the state government outsourced key administrative roles to external consultants, one of whom Miss Chinelu (Secretary to the Edo State Secondary Education Board) was given sweeping powers over the affairs of secondary school principals.

The Igbo consultant, as she was commonly referred to, wielded so much influence that her name alone struck fear into the hearts of executive principals across the state, particularly in the Benin metropolis. Reports from various schools indicated that she often overstepped her boundaries, treating seasoned teachers with disdain and making unilateral decisions that disrupted the smooth functioning of the school system.

Many school heads, some of whom had dedicated decades to the teaching profession, found themselves at the receiving end of humiliating treatment. Their experience and expertise were disregarded, and they were forced to take orders from an overzealous consultant whose understanding of the unique challenges facing Edo State schools was questionable. The situation was really exasperating!

Teachers and executive principals, who were once respected figures in their communities, now operated under an atmosphere of intimidation and uncertainty.

With the emergence of Governor Monday Okpebholo, the tides have begun to turn. Recognising the urgent need to restore order and dignity to the teaching profession, his administration has wasted no time in reversing some of the damaging policies of the past. One of the most significant steps taken so far has been the appointment of Mrs. Sonia Omozane as the new Chairperson of the Edo State Secondary Education Board (SSEB). A move widely applauded by stakeholders in the education sector.

Mrs. Omozane wasted no time in addressing the pressing issues that had plagued Edo State schools. In a bold and decisive move, she issued a memo

recently to all school principals, mandating them to take full responsibility for maintaining discipline in their schools. This directive is a sharp departure from the previous administration's approach, which had weakened the authority of school heads. By placing the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of principals, the new policy reinforces their leadership role and empowers them to enforce school rules without fear of external interference.

The memo explicitly condemned truancy and all forms of indiscipline, signalling a renewed commitment to restoring order in Edo schools. It also serves as a reassurance to teachers that their role as disciplinarians is not only recognised but essential to the effective functioning of the education system. For too long, educators had been reduced to mere spectators in their own classrooms, unable to take decisive action against errant students without repercussions.

With this new policy, teachers can now operate with a sense of confidence, knowing that they have the backing of the government in maintaining discipline. This shift is expected to curb the rising cases of absenteeism, lateness, and general misconduct that had become prevalent in many schools. Students who had grown accustomed to defying authority without consequences will now have to rethink their approach, as principals and teachers regain their rightful place as enforcers of school regulations.

Another key aspect of the reforms under Governor Okpebholo's administration is the elimination of undue interference from external consultants in the management of schools. The era of school principals living in fear of hired consultants appears to be over, as the government has reasserted the authority of experienced education professionals in school administration.

Many principals and teachers who had suffered humiliation under the previous administration now have a renewed sense of purpose and heave a sigh of relief. The restoration of administrative autonomy to school heads means that decisions affecting their schools will be made by those who understand the challenges firsthand, rather than by bureaucrats or consultants with little connection to the realities on the ground.

For any education system to thrive, the morale of teachers must be high. When educators feel valued and supported, they are more likely to be committed to their work and go the extra mile in ensuring that students receive quality education. Unfortunately, during the previous administration, teachers in Edo State felt abandoned. Their concerns were ignored, their authority was eroded, and their working conditions deteriorated.

With the new reforms, however,

there is a renewed sense of hope and motivation among educators. They can now perform their duties without fear of being undermined by students who previously had a direct phone line to the Commissioner of Education. The new administration's approach acknowledges the fundamental truth that discipline is a prerequisite for effective learning and that teachers must be empowered to enforce it.

While the recent reforms represent a significant step in the right direction, there is still much work to be done. Ensuring that these policies are effectively implemented across all schools will require continuous monitoring, periodic assessments, and a commitment to making necessary adjustments where needed.

Governor Okpebholo's administration must also prioritise teachers' welfare, ensuring that educators are not only respected but also adequately compensated for their work. Salaries should be paid promptly as usual, promotions should be based on merit, and training programmes should be implemented to keep teachers abreast of modern teaching techniques.

Additionally, parents and guardians have a crucial role to play in reinforcing discipline. The government should engage with parent-teacher associations (PTAs) to ensure that discipline is not just enforced in schools but also supported at home. A collective effort between teachers, school administrators, parents, and the government will be necessary to maintain the momentum of these positive changes.

The dark days of teacher relegation and student lawlessness in Edo State appear to be coming to an end. With Governor Monday Okpebholo's decisive leadership and the bold policies introduced by the indefatigable Chairman of the SSEB Mrs. Omozane, the state is on a path toward restoring discipline and dignity in its schools. Teachers, who had once been silenced and disrespected, are regaining their authority, while students are being reminded of the importance of respect and responsibility.

Education remains the foundation of any progressive society, and Edo State is making the necessary corrections to ensure that its students receive not just knowledge but also the discipline required to succeed in life.

If these reforms continue, the state's education system will not only recover from past missteps but will also emerge stronger, more structured, and more effective in producing well-rounded individuals who can contribute meaningfully to society.

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