

# Edo govt intensifies crackdown on kidnappers

## ● Demolishes home of suspected informer

The Edo State Government has intensified its crackdown on kidnappers and their accomplices, demolishing another property linked to criminal activities in Eshioriri-Erah, Owan East Local Government Area.

The latest crackdown, carried out by the state's security task force, targeted the home of a 70-year-old man accused of

working as an informant for kidnappers operating in the dense forests of Owan and Esan.

The suspect, identified as Mr. Karimu Audu, was alleged to be providing logistical support to criminal gangs by offering them shelter, food, and intelligence.

According to local sources, villagers who challenged his alleged activities either disappeared under mysterious cir-

cumstances or faced violent attacks on their farms.

Speaking at the demolition site, Mr. Akhere Paul, the Special Adviser Security Affairs to Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpeholo reaffirmed the state government's commitment to eradicating kidnapping in the state.

"This is about a conspiracy. He has been working with kidnappers in the forest. We are

sending a clear message — if you aid criminals, you will face the consequences," he stated.

The Commander of the Edo State Task Force, SP Michael Anetor, emphasized that the demolitions are part of a broader security strategy to disrupt criminal networks.

He said that "We are enforcing the law to restore peace. It is not my wish to see people's

homes destroyed, but security must come first. Kidnapping must stop, and those who support it will face justice."

However, Mr. Audu denied the allegations, claiming that his interactions with herders were lawful and part of his duties as a community committee leader.

"They say I give information to Fulani kidnappers, but I don't. I am the chairman of a six-man committee that collects payments from herders for the community.

That is my only role," he insisted.

Eshioriri-Erah, a border community between Owan East and Esan West, has long been a hot-spot for criminal activities due to its vast forest terrain, which serves as a hideout for kidnappers.

The Edo State Government has vowed to continue its crackdown, with more demolitions expected in the coming weeks as part of ongoing efforts to secure the state

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# The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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# Edo PDP in shambles

## ● As internal crisis deepens ● NEC meeting postponed 5th time

The crisis in the Edo State Chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) is getting messier as the party is presently contending with deepening internal crisis, with growing factionalism, mounting desperation and struggles to maintain political relevance following its defeat in the September 21, 2024 governorship election.

The party, once a dominant

force in the state and at the national level, it was gathered has become increasingly divided, with infighting and leadership disputes overshadowing its ability to form a formidable force to provide effective opposition to Governor Monday Okpeholo's administration.

It was gathered that the crisis in the party escalated following the departure of key party members, including

lawmakers and former government officials, who have defected to the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

Among the defectors, it was gathered is Hon. Sunday Ojizele Ikpenomen, a former PDP lawmaker, citing Governor Okpeholo's leadership as a driving factor behind his decision.

This is coming in the wake of PDP not being able to co-

ordinate its members at the national level for the party's National Executive Council (NEC) with the fifth postponement of the schedule meeting so far

In a statement on Sunday, the PDP's National Secretary, Sunday Ude-Okoye, said the meeting, originally slated for March 13, was delayed due to pending zonal, state, local government, and ward congresses,

as well as the need for further consultations.

The crisis within the PDP has intensified since Umar Damagum assumed office as acting National Chairman following the court's removal

of Senator Iyorchia Ayu, with growing calls for his resignation.

During the 98th NEC meeting on April 18, 2024, party

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## Fubara bows to pressure, invites 27 pro-Wike lawmakers to meeting

The political crisis in Rivers State took a new turn on Sunday as Governor Siminalayi Fubara invited the Amaewhule-led members of the House of Assembly to a meeting.

This was contained in a letter issued in Port Harcourt on Sunday by the Secretary to the State Government, Dr Tammy Danagogo, and sent to newsmen.

The letter, addressed to the Speaker of the House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Martin Amaewhule was titled "Meeting Between the Governor of Rivers State and the Honourable Members of the Rivers State House of Assembly"

Danagogo stated that the meeting, scheduled for Monday, March 10, 2025, became necessary following the Governor's receipt of the Certified True Copy of the Supreme Court judgement.

The letter stated that discussions would focus on providing a space for the lawmakers loyal to the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, to hold their sittings, as well as the presentation of the 2025

budget, among other matters.

The statement read: "I hereby write, in furtherance of His Excellency's promise stated in my letter dated 5 March 2025, to notify you that His Excellency has received the Supreme Court judgement and has therefore directed me to invite you and your colleagues — the Honourable members of the Rivers State House of Assembly — to a meeting to discuss:

"Provision of a befitting space for the Assembly's sittings, payment of all outstanding remuneration or allowances of the Honourable members;

"Presentation of Budget and sundry matters. Any other matter(s), as may be necessary, to chart the way forward in the best interest of the State.

"Sequel to the above, I hereby humbly invite the Rt. Hon. Speaker and all members of the Rivers State House of Assembly to a meeting with the Governor as follows:"

According to the statement, the meeting will take place at 10 am on Monday at the Government House, Port Harcourt.



COURTESY VISIT:

L-R: Hon. Aliyu Sani Danlami, Chairman Nigeria-Morocco Parliamentary Friendship Group; H.E. Amb. Tagma Moha Ali, Morocco Ambassador to Nigeria; Prof. Julius Ihonvbere, the Majority Leader of the House of Representatives (representing Speaker Abbas Tajudeen); Dr. Jumoke Oduwole, Minister for Industry, Trade and Investment; Barr. Chimdi Neliaku, Special Assistant to the Speaker on Inter-Parliamentary and Public Relations, and Hon. Ahmed Munir, Chairman House of Representatives Committee on Commerce, during the Nigeria-Morocco Trade Meeting in the Office of the Speaker in Abuja recently.

PHOTO: OMOYE AMINU

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## Edo PDP in shambles

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leaders failed to resolve several critical issues.

As a result, the crisis has deepened, affecting state and zonal chapters and causing significant divisions within the National Working Committee.

The 98th NEC meeting had initially set August 15 for the 99th NEC meeting to address unresolved matters.

However, the meeting was first postponed to October 24, 2024, then rescheduled for November 28, 2024, before being indefinitely delayed.

In response, the PDP Governors' Forum, led by Bauchi State Governor Bala Mohammed, directed the NWC in December 2024 to ensure the NEC meeting was held by February 2025 at the latest date.

On December 5, 2024, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Adolphus Wabara, raised concerns that continued delays were eroding the trust and confidence of PDP members.

To ensure the meeting was held promptly, the PDP Governors' Forum, during their meeting in Asaba, Delta State, on January 31, proposed March 13 for the NEC meeting.

However, in a new development, the party leadership announced that after consulting with all party organs, the 99th NEC meeting has, for the fifth time, been postponed to May 15.

The statement read, "Distinguished members of the National Executive Committee may recall that after due deliberation by party leaders, stakeholders, and relevant organs of the party, the NEC meeting was scheduled to be held on Wednesday, March 13, 2025.

"However, following emerging issues, including the need to conclude our pending zonal, state, local government, and ward congresses, as well as to allow for further consultations to ensure the smooth conduct of the meeting — especially concerning other proposed activities of our party — the NWC, after due consultation with leaders, stakeholders, and relevant organs of the party, including the Board of Trustees (BoT), the PDP Governors' Forum, and the PDP National Assembly Caucus, hereby notifies distinguished NEC members that the 99th NEC meeting, earlier scheduled for Wednesday, March 13, 2025, has been unavoidably shifted to Thursday, May 15, 2025.

"All NEC members should please note the change of date and be guided accordingly.

"The NWC sincerely regrets any inconvenience this change of date may cause distinguished NEC members," the statement said.

In Edo State, despite its declining influence, the PDP has launched a series of attacks on the current administration.

# APC woman leader urges support for Okpebholo

● **Advocates greater inclusion for women**

Former Edo North Senatorial Woman Leader of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Hon. Mrs. Angelina Aigbokhai, has called on the people of Edo State to support Governor Monday Okpebholo and his deputy, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, as they work to elevate the state.

Speaking to journalists on the administration's developmental efforts, Aigbokhai praised the governor's leadership, stating that his election was timely and that he is determined to deliver the dividends of democracy.

She highlighted his achieve-

ments within his first hundred days in office, including extensive road rehabilitation, agricultural development, improvements in healthcare, and enhanced security measures through the provision of modern facilities and operational vehicles for security agencies.

While commending the governor's appointments, describing them as "a square peg in a square hole," she urged him to ensure greater inclusion of women in governance by upholding the stipulated 35% representation.

According to her, women

play a crucial role as foot soldiers in electoral processes and should be adequately recognized in political appointments.

Addressing the ongoing Edo Governorship Election Petition Tribunal, Aigbokhai dismissed concerns about the case, describing it as baseless.

She expressed confidence in the legitimacy of the election, stating that the people overwhelmingly voted for Okpebholo and that the process was free, fair, and devoid of any major disputes.

She called on the people, especially those in Owan West, to

set aside political divisions now that the election is over and unite in supporting the administration both spiritually and physically to ensure its success.

Additionally, she commended APC leaders across Edo State for their unity and commitment to securing victory for the party.

In closing, Aigbokhai extended her felicitations to Muslims and Christians as they observe Ramadan and Lent season urging them to continue praying for the peace, progress, and development of Edo State and Nigeria at large.

## Edo SDG Office launches 'Plant, Nurture, Eat' initiative to empower young girls in agric

In commemoration of International Women's Day, the Edo State Office of the Special Adviser on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), headed by Miss Sally Suleiman, has introduced the Plant, Nurture, Eat - Edo Girls' Farm Project,

an initiative designed to empower young girls through hands-on agricultural training.

The project aims to provide practical farming skills while fostering patience, responsibility,

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COURTESY VISIT:

Minister of Art, Culture, Tourism and the Creative Economy, Hanatu Musawa (left), and the President, Federation of Tourism Associations of Nigeria (FTAN), Nkereuwem Onung, during a courtesy visit to the Minister in Abuja.

PHOTO: OMOYE AMINU

## Oba of Benin suspends 67 Enigie for rebellion

The Oba of Benin, His Royal Majesty Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Ewuare II, has suspended 67 Enigie in the Benin Kingdom for alleged rebellious and anti-palace activities.

The suspension was announced through a letter addressed to the Chairman of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council, Festus Alenkhe, and signed by the Secretary of the Benin Traditional Council, Frank Irabor.

The letter stated that the Enigie were suspended due to actions that undermined the authority of the Oba and the traditional institution. The affected Enigie include Chief D. E. Igihon, Enigie of Ehor (Uhunmwode); Prince Osaretin Akenzua, Enigie of Okodighi (Ovia North-East); Chief Ibie Okhionkpaimwonyi, Enigie of Iguogbe (Ovia N/E); Chief Ogieriakhi Iguodeyala Friday, Enigie of Uroho (Ikpoba-Okha); Chief Airomwanbo Ogieayebona, Enigie of Uto-

ka (Ovia N/E); Chief Ewemade Uhimwen, Enigie of Ekae (Oredo); Chief Orobosa R. Agbongiazowe, Enigie of Isievbee (Uhunmwode); Chief Obarogie Lucky, Enigie of Umelu (Ikpoba-Okha); Chief Sunday E. Omoregie, Enigie of Ulegun (Ikpoba-Okha); Chief Odolagbon Erese, Enigie of Amagba-Adolor (Oredo); Chief Evans Omobogie, Enigie of Obogbe N'Ugu (Orhionmwon); Chief Erhauyi Eguagie, Enigie of Ewbowe (Uhunmwode); Chief Ewaensefe Iyi-Eweka, Enigie of Oghada (Uhunmwode); Chief Nosakhare Ohenzuwa, Enigie of Orior-Osemwende (Uhunmwode); Chief Ereyi Aduwa Ogiegbaen, Enigie of Egbaen/Ogbeson (Ikpoba-Okha); Chief P. A. Omoregie, Enigie of Egba (Uhunmwode); Chief Joseph A. Airehenbuwa, Enigie of Obadan (Uhunmwode); Chief Tony Aigbehomwan, Enigie of Egor (Egor); Chief Samson Osemwengie, Enigie of Igbekhue (Orhionmwon); Chief Kelly N. Udobor, Enigie of Ugolo (Ovia

South-West); Chief Agidigbi Idahosa, Enigie of Utese (Ovia N/E); Chief Enabulele Osaze Obanosa, Enigie of Ewbolekenpen (Ovia N/E); Chief Godwin Igbinosun, Enigie of Uzalla (Uhunmwode); Chief Evbayiro Festus Osayemwenre, Enigie of Avbama (Ikpoba-Okha); Chief Emwinmadomwan Igbinenikao, Enigie of Amagba-Akengbuda (Oredo); Chief Johnson Edosomwan, Enigie of Okha-Azagba (Ovia S/W); Chief Stephen Ohangbon, Enigie of Ewbomoma (Ikpoba-Okha); Chief Aiwansoba Eghosa Kelly, Enigie of Ewbovbiuke (Oredo); Chief Dr. Julius Chukwuyen Isitor, Enigie of Ottah-igbanke (Orhionmwon); Chief Ogiesoba Igbiniowa, Enigie of Uwusan (Ikpoba-Okha); Chief Kingsley Ogiesoba, Enigie of Umoguohen (Ikpoba-Okha); Chief Omokaro Nogieru, Enigie of Iguoghor (Ovia N/E); Chief Clifford Edomwonyi, Enigie of Erua (Uhunmwode); Prince Owen Jackson Akenzua, Enigie of Ologbo (Ikpoba-Okha);

Chief Eholor Henry, Enigie of Igieduma (Uhunmwode); Chief Festus Uwaifiokun Ugbo, Enigie of Ugha (Uhunmwode); Chief Lucky Osunde III, Enigie of Oligie Igbanke (Orhionmwon); Chief Osagumwenro Eki-Eresoyen, Enigie of Uhogua (Ovia N/E); Chief Imuentiyan Omoragbon, Enigie of Idumwunugbo (Orhionmwon); Chief Kingsley Igbinosa Iyayomwangbe, Enigie of Umoghun Zuagbor (Orhionmwon); Chief Edward Obamojie, Enigie of Ugiamwen (Uhunmwode); Chief Owenaze Idemudia, Enigie of Ewan (Uhunmwode); Chief Matthew A. Ogieriakhi, Enigie of Uvbe-Nisi (Uhunmwode); Chief Richard Osaigbovo Ogunbor, Enigie of Ukhiri-Eresoyen (Ikpoba-Okha); Chief Aimuanmwonsa Enadiakhe, Enigie of Ilobi (Uhunmwode); Chief Okunbor Jesurobo Osawaru, Enigie of Uvbe-Egbede (Uhunmwode); Chief Victor Etinosa Ogiugo, Enigie of Ugo N'lyekikpoba (Uhunmwode); Chief Imagbenikao Ekhosuehi,

Enigie of Oka-Izevbihen (Ikpoba-Okha); Chief Osayande Aigbe, Enigie of Ukhiri-Osemwende (Ikpoba-Okha); Chief Edugie Ogieriakhi Ogiugo, Enigie of Ugo N'lyekorhionmwon (Orhionmwon); Chief Kingsley O. Omorose, Enigie of Ohoghobi (Ikpoba-Okha); Chief Irobun Ikponmwosa, Enigie of Iguemokhua (Orhionmwon); Chief M. U. Ogbonmwan, Enigie of Oghoghe Osemwende (Ikpoba-Okha); Chief Edobor Uwai-fo, Enigie of Omolua-Igbanke (Orhionmwon); Chief James I. Ewansiha, Enigie of Oheze (Orhionmwon); Chief Osawaru Henry Abifade, Enigie of Ewbiakagba (Ikpoba-Okha); Chief S. Ogiomade, Enigie of Ugboko (Orhionmwon); Chief Uhumwunmwenpenma, Enigie of Ewbo-modu (Ikpoba-Okha); Chief Eki Iyawe, Enigie of Obazagbon (Ikpoba-Okha); Chief Iyegumwena Usuanle, Enigie of Uma (Uhunmwode); Chief Daniel Omoregie Ewbuomwan, Enigie of Umokpe Irhue (Uhunmwode);

Chief Ogiesoba S. Aghoghwen, Enigie of Oguwa (Ikpoba-Okha); Chief Osazuwa Napoleon, Enigie of Uteshi (Ikpoba-Okha); Chief Ekhomagbomwan Oyevbemina, Enigie of Owe (Orhionmwon); Chief J. U. llawe, Enigie of Ewboeghae (Orhionmwon); Prince Aiguobasimwin Akenzua, Enigie of Siluko (Ovia S/W); and Chief B. O. Igiebor, Enigie of Idumuodin Igbanke (Orhionmwon).

The suspension, which is one of the most significant disciplinary actions taken by the Oba in recent history, underscores the importance of loyalty and respect for the Benin traditional institution. The Benin Traditional Council reaffirmed that the decision was made in accordance with long-standing customs, and any form of rebellion against the Oba will not be tolerated. While the affected Enigie have not yet publicly responded, the decision is expected to have a lasting impact on the leadership structure of the kingdom.

# Aladja/Ogbe-Ijoh crisis: Gov Oborevwoiri strikes lasting peace, as parties agree terms

Ajuwa Victor

Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevwoiri, on Saturday, met with stakeholders of Aladja and Ogbe-Ijoh communities

in Udi and Warri South-West Local Government Areas of the state over the age-long land dispute.

The meeting, which held at the Osubi residence of the Governor, had in attendance

members of the peace committee of the Aladja and Ogbe-Ijoh crisis.

At the meeting, both parties agreed to live in peace and adhere to the terms of settlement agreeable to both communities.

Governor Oborevwoiri commended youths and elders of both communities for agreeing to maintain and walk on the path of peace.

He assured that government would soon make a

pronouncement based on the terms of settlement.

Representatives of both communities thanked the Governor for his intervention and subsequent resolution of the age-long crisis.

Recall that Governor Oborevwoiri had through the State Executive Council, approved the construction of the Aladja/Ogbe-Ijoh Road to ensure free movement of people across both communities.



**DOCTOR OF HUMANE LETTERS:**

Enugu State Governor, Barr. Peter Mbah (middle), receiving the prestigious Doctor of Humane Letters (DHL) degree from the Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology (BOUESTI), Ikeru from the school's Chancellor, Chief Wole Olanipekun, in Ekiti State.

## Village headship dispute: Elder appeals to Benin Monarch for intervention

The ongoing leadership dispute in Ogiza Village, Iyekogba Quarters, Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State, has led to the third-ranking elder (Ozukpogieha), Lawrence Alohan, to seek the intervention of the Oba of Benin, His Royal Majesty, Oba Ewuare II CFR.

Alohan is challenging the eligibility of Pa Isaiyah Otengh-abun Eghonmwanre to assume the position of Odionwere (village head), alleging that Eghonmwanre is not an indigene of Ogiza by birth, which, according to Benin tradition, disqualifies him from the role.

He asserted that Eghonmwanre declared himself Odionwere in 2017 before seeking recognition from the Oba as a prelude to official installation.

Despite submitting multiple petitions to the palace contesting Eghonmwanre's claims, Alohan reported that his efforts to secure an audience with the Oba have been unsuccessful.

He insisted that allowing Eghonmwanre to continue in the role violates the kingdom's traditions and endangers the village's future.

Alohan further accused Eghonmwanre of mismanaging communal land and ceding portions designated for a market, health centre, and primary school to neighbouring villages.

This he said prompted I'm (Alohan) to initiate legal action against Eghonmwanre, with

the case currently before High Court 7 in Benin City.

Additionally, Alohan claimed that several individuals presented by Eghonmwanre as indigenes are not truly from Ogiza.

To resolve the matter, he appealed to the Oba to summon all parties involved and administer a palace oath to ascertain the truth.

Alohan recalled that on November 7, 2024, Eghonmwanre visited the palace, allegedly with the backing of influential figures, including an Enogie, to claim that no court case was pending against him, aiming to secure the Oba's endorsement of his leadership.

Alohan also refuted a claim made on February 18, 2025 in the Vanguard Newspaper publication, where Eghonmwanre allegedly stated that Alohan had been dismissed from the village two years prior.

Alohan described the claim as baseless and laughable, emphasizing that his late father, Pa Ogbomo Alohan, was a respected elder, and he himself remained a key figure in Ogiza's development.

He reiterated his appeal to the Oba of Benin to summon all concerned parties to the palace for a resolution in line with the kingdom's customs.

Responding to the allegations, Pa Isaiyah Otengh-abun Eghonmwanre dismissed Alohan's claims as unfounded and politically motivated.

He asserted that he is the rightful Odionwere of Ogiza

Village, emphasizing that his leadership is a recognition of his status as the oldest man in the community, in accordance with Benin tradition.

He refuted claims of not being an indigene, asserting deep ancestral ties to Ogiza Village and lifelong residency there-in.

Eghonmwanre described Alohan's accusations regarding land ceding as false, arguing that all land transactions have been conducted transparently with stakeholder involvement.

He maintained that no communal land designated for public amenities was wrongfully ceded to neighbouring villages, suggesting that such claims aim to discredit his leadership.

He further accused Alohan of using legal action to undermine the village's traditional leadership, stating that the court case lacks merit and will not alter his position as Odionwere.

Regarding Alohan's call for a palace oath to verify true indigenes of Ogiza, Eghonmwanre deemed it unnecessary, arguing that the village's lineage and heritage are well known to the Oba's palace.

He accused Alohan of sowing discord by questioning the identities of long-recognized indigenes.

He also denied allegations of misleading the palace about pending court cases, asserting that his November 2024 visit to the Oba was solely to seek blessings for peace and devel-

opment in the village.

Eghonmwanre insisted that Alohan's removal from the village was necessary due to activities threatening communal peace and unity, prompting elders to act decisively.

He emphasized that Alohan's dismissal was a collective decision aimed at preserving harmony, not personal rivalry.

Expressing confidence in the Oba's wisdom and fairness, Eghonmwanre restated his loyalty to the Benin throne and willingness to abide by the monarch's decision regarding the dispute.

He urged Ogiza Village residents to remain united and focus on development, avoiding internal conflicts that could cause division.

## Edo SDG Office launches 'Plant...'

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ity, and self-sufficiency among participants.

It also aligns with broader goals of enhancing food security and promoting environmental sustainability in the state.

Launched under the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo, the initiative is in line with his SHINE Agenda, which prioritizes agriculture as a key driver of economic growth and transformation.

By involving young girls in farming, the project contributes to youth empowerment

## Curb age falsification in Delta civil service, Uzum enjoins DTSG

Ajuwa Victor

A prominent lawyer, politician and social commentator Eugene Azuka Uzum has advised Delta State Government to intensify efforts at curbing the menace of age falsification in the state civil service to promote efficient service delivery in the state.

Uzum, who is also a policy analyst, stated this against the lingering occurrences of age falsification by some civil servants in the state civil/public service.

Responding to newsmen at the Prof. Chike Edozien Secretariat Complex in Asaba, the state capital, Uzum reiterated the need to maintain standard in the career progression of civil servants by ensuring that those at the topmost rung of the service did not retard the rise of their subordinates through age falsification.

He maintained that biomet-

ric exercises should be regularly carried out in the service to fish out civil servants who had falsified their ages to elongate their stay in the service, wondering why the malaise persisted even after several past rigorous biometric exercises in the service.

Uzum said that the malaise had made employment of fresh intakes into the service almost impossible because of a possible over bloating of the workforce, adding that the civil service was currently the most viable avenue to absorb the teeming unemployed youths in the state.

Responding to the question on why some civil servants falsified their ages to stay longer in the service, Uzum blamed it on poor pensions management in the service, saying that it was harrowing for one to retire from service without immediate payment of retirement benefits and subsequent monthly pensions to retirees.

## Mentorship: Hon. Paddy Iyamu counsels students on steadfastness to career paths

Bernadette Idalu

The Edo State Commissioner of Education, Hon. Dr. Paddy Emmanuel Iyamu on Saturday, March 8, at the "Purposeful teen conference" hosted by Mrs. Uzezi Uduefe-Ideho at Imaguero Girls College Hall, mentored one thousand two hundred (1200) participants drawn mostly from public secondary schools in Benin City.

He counseled them to avoid the fast lane to life with its attendant focus on beauty and immediate gains as glamorised by modern social media buzz, not-

ing that if such acts remained unchecked, there is this potential danger of crash landing.

Dealing with the theme of the conference, "Recalibrate," Dr. Iyamu challenged students to refocus and recalibrate their reading and learning assets in order to break barriers. He said the quest for beauty is "ephemeral," it fades in a blink.

Based on societal experience, he encouraged students not to lose focus in a manner that could alter their destinies based on wrong associations and peer pressure. He mentored them on keeping true to their career paths as they had to "Learn in order to earn" good incomes in future.

Giving insight on activities of government to build Edo youths of our dream, the commissioner stated that the State Government has ran some mentorship programmes for public secondary schools and are billed to do more.

This, he said, would be a continuous process, as it takes a whole village to raise a child. He pointed out, "We will be doing more of mind re-engineering. That is what we are working on. We encourage our culture and make our people think in a particular direction. It is time for us to renew our minds. We need to speak differently. We need to renew the norm."

while supporting key United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Zero Hunger (SDG 2), Quality Education (SDG 4), and Gender Equality (SDG 5).

The Plant, Nurture, Eat initiative highlights Edo State's commitment to sustainable agricultural practices and the development of future female leaders in agribusiness.

Through this effort, the state seeks to secure a more food-sufficient future while equipping young girls with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in the agricultural sector.

## NEWS

## Senator Orji Kalu owes N179m property tax in US —Report

Despite his wealth, Kalu has repeatedly failed to meet his tax obligations on these properties, raising new questions about Nigerian politicians' hidden assets abroad.

A fresh investigation has revealed that Orji Uzor Kalu, a former governor of Abia State and now a senator in Nigeria's National Assembly, owes \$118,282 (N179 million) in unpaid property taxes in the United States.

Documents obtained by The Post and Courier's Uncovered Project and the Platform to Protect Whistleblowers in Africa show that Kalu's real estate empire in the U.S. includes multiple properties in South Carolina, North Carolina, Maryland, and Texas, valued in the millions of dollars.

Despite his wealth, Kalu has repeatedly failed to meet his tax obligations on these properties, raising new questions about Nigerian politicians' hidden assets abroad.

According to U.S. tax records, Kalu is linked to at least five properties in South Carolina, valued at over \$2 million.

His real estate holdings in the Charlotte metro area alone exceed \$4.7 million. He also owns two high-end properties near Washington, D.C., including an opulent home with eight bathrooms and a tennis court, which is currently listed for \$2.5 million.

But despite these assets, Kalu

has been unable or unwilling to pay his property taxes. Records from Spartanburg County, South Carolina, show that after missing multiple deadlines this year, his outstanding balance has ballooned to \$118,282.52, including fees for the county's demolition of an abandoned warehouse on one of his properties.

Kalu's U.S. real estate ventures date back to the early 1990s, even before he became a state governor in Nigeria. In 1993, while serving as a member of Nigeria's House of Representatives, Kalu acquired a four-acre tract of land in Spartanburg County, South Carolina.

Today, that land is an eyesore. What was once a commercial property with multiple warehouses and homes has now been reduced to red clay dirt, overgrown trees, and a single trash can. Neighbors recall that at one time, several warehouses stood on the site, but one was burned down while another remains abandoned.

A man who identified himself as Nnanna Utah, a former schoolmate of Kalu's from Nigeria, told The Post and Courier that he had been using the warehouse for years.

"He can buy anything anywhere in the world he wants to," Utah said. "He likes South Carolina because he was doing business here even before he made a dime."

## IPOB warns against misuse of N250bn S'East devt fund

The Indigenous People of Biafra has cautioned politicians and individuals in the South-East region against sharing the ₦250 billion appropriated for the newly created South East Development Commission, insisting that the funds should be used solely for the region's development.

In a statement issued on Sunday by the spokesman for the pro-Biafran group, Emma Powerful, IPOB emphasised the urgent need for developmental projects and intervention programmes in the South-East, stating that the funds should be channelled towards the region's progress.

Powerful outlined examples of such projects, including the construction and expansion of roads, the rehabilitation of federal hospitals, the establishment of new healthcare facilities, and the building of power plants to provide reliable and affordable electricity.

The statement read in part: "The attention of the noble IPOB family worldwide has been drawn to the purported sum of ₦250 billion appropriated for

the newly created South East Development Commission, under the chairmanship of Dr Emeka Nworgu and supervised by the former Governor of Abia State, Senator Orji Uzor Kalu, who is the Senate Committee Chairman of the Commission.

"If this information is true, we wish to warn Senator Orji Uzor Kalu and those handling this money to ensure that it is not shared among individuals but is utilised for the development of Alaigbo.

"The money is meant to initiate and complete developmental projects in the region. The South-East requires social intervention initiatives and industrialisation that will generate employment for the Igbo youth at this critical time.

"Examples of such projects include the rehabilitation of existing infrastructure, the construction and expansion of roads, the refurbishment of federal hospitals, and the establishment of new healthcare facilities. Additionally, power plants should be built to ensure a stable and affordable electricity supply."

## EIRS refutes revenue decline claims

### ● Reports N9.5bn IGR for Feb

The Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS) has dismissed claims by Ifaluyi Isibor regarding an alleged drop in the state's Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) for February 2025, describing the assertions as misleading and politically motivated.

In a statement issued today, the agency reaffirmed that Edo's revenue performance remains strong, with February's IGR

standing at over N9.5 billion—an amount unprecedented in previous administrations.

The EIRS emphasized that the state has consistently maintained an average monthly revenue of N10 billion, countering Isibor's claims of a sharp decline.

According to the statement signed by Courage Eboigbe, Head of Corporate Communications, the figures circulated

suggesting a drop from ₦4.7 billion in January to ₦3.4 billion in February are entirely false.

The agency condemned the spread of unverified data, reiterating that Edo's revenue trajectory remains upward and stable.

It further clarified that all government revenue is consolidated into a single account, dismissing any notion of sepa-

rate IGR sources.

The EIRS also reaffirmed its commitment to tackling illegal revenue collection by unauthorized individuals and urged the public to report any suspicious activities.

He called on residents to disregard misinformation and continue supporting the government's efforts to enhance financial stability and economic growth in the state.



ITFAR:

Former Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar (right), during Itfar (breaking of fast), with former Governor of Kaduna State, Malam Nasir El-Rufai, in Adamawa.

## Edo govt lauds USSOSA contributions to devt of education

The Edo State Government has commended the Ujemen Secondary School Old Students Association (USSOSA) for their dedication to educational development following the commissioning of a N122 million ultramodern classroom block at Ujemen Secondary School in Ujemen-Ekpoma, Edo State.

The project, spearheaded by USSOSA Inc., was officially inaugurated during the school's 44th anniversary celebration.

The event also marked the launch of the maiden edition of the USSOSA Magazine and served as an occasion to honour the school's founding parents and distinguished past teachers.

Representing the state governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, at the commissioning, the Secretary to the Edo State Government, Barr. Musa Ikhilor, praised the old students for their commitment to improving the

quality of education.

He noted that the initiative aligns with the governor's five-point agenda, which emphasizes functional and value-driven education.

"When we saw that the old students association of this school came together to tackle educational challenges by constructing this wonderful edifice, we knew it was something worthy of commendation," Ikhilor said.

"This project is a clear demonstration of the partnership that should exist between alumni associations and the government in providing functional and quality education.

"The state government is proud of this achievement and will continue to support such laudable initiatives."

Ikhilor further highlighted that USSOSA's effort mirrors global best practices, where alumni play significant roles in the development of their alma

maters and society at large.

He encouraged the association to go beyond infrastructure by investing in quality teaching, whether through the recruitment of qualified teachers or mentorship initiatives for students.

Ujemen Secondary School, established in 1980, was founded to address the challenges faced by the local community in securing secondary education for their children.

Unlike many schools at the time, which were founded by Christian missionaries, Ujemen Secondary School was conceived and built through the efforts of the Ujemen Elders-in-Council and the Grammar School Working Committee.

The school admitted its first set of students on October 10, 1980, under the leadership of its pioneer principal, Mr. Jacob Azubuiké Ofune, author of 'Modern and Regional Geography'.

Reflecting on the school's his-

tory, USSOSA BOT Chairman, Mr. Johnson Dion, recounted the struggles that led to its establishment. The community, determined to create educational opportunities for its children, levied every adult male and female N20 and N6, respectively, to raise funds for the school's registration and construction under the then Bendel State Ministry of Education.

"The seeds sown by our forebears in 1979 have shaped our destinies today," Dion remarked. "They saw our future and selflessly paved the way. Their legacy will continue to inspire generations to come, and we owe them a great debt of gratitude."

The commissioning event, chaired by Elder Pius Omofuma, Founder and CEO of GT Foods, represented by his son, Mr. Osemudiamen Omofuma, was attended by past and present students, government officials, traditional rulers, and community leaders.

## Tinubu converts TASUED to Federal University

President Bola Tinubu has approved the adoption of Tai Solarin University of Education in Ijagun, Ogun State, as a federal university.

This makes it the first federally owned tertiary institution in the

Ogun East senatorial district.

The announcement was made in a press release on Sunday, signed by Bayo Onanuga, Special Adviser to the President on Information and Strategy.

Established by the Ogun

State Government in 2005, TASUED holds the distinction of being Nigeria's first specialised university of education.

Tinubu expressed gratitude to the Ogun State Government for inviting the Federal Gov-

ernment to take over one of the state's best educational assets, adding that the move honours the legacies of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Dr Tai Solarin.

"It is an opportunity for the Federal Government to honour

Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who began the revolutionary free education programme in Western Nigeria, and Dr Tai Solarin, who spent most of his life educating our children and instilling patriotic and leadership lessons

in them at Mayflower School in Ikenne," Tinubu stated.

The President also acknowledged the role of the Awujale of Ijebuland in preventing the university's closure in 2012, just seven years after its establishment.

## NEWS

## Foreign

# Syria leader calls for peace after hundreds of civilians killed

Syria's leader Ahmed Sharaa has called for peace after days of clashes where Syrian security forces allegedly killed hundreds of civilians from the Alawite religious minority.

The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) - which monitors fighting in Syria - said about 745 civilians were killed in 30 "massacres"

targeting Alawites on the west coast on Friday and Saturday.

The BBC has not been able to independently verify the death toll of the escalating violence, believed to be the worst since the fall of the Assad regime.

President Sharaa said: "We must preserve national unity and civil peace as much as possible and... we will be able

to live together in this country."

The number of fighters killed in the past four days brings the total death toll to more than 1,000 people, says the Syrian Observatory. This included about 125 fighters linked to the new Islamist-led government and 148 pro-Assad fighters.

Reuters news agency reported sources in the new Syrian

government saying at least 200 of the fighters had been killed.

Speaking from a mosque in Damascus on Sunday, the interim president said "what is currently happening in Syria is within the expected challenges".

He did not comment directly on accusations that atrocities were being committed by his supporters in the coastal prov-

inces of Latakia and Tartus.

On Sunday, Syrian media reported that fighting between government forces and Assad loyalists had also broken at a gas power plant in Baniyas, a city about halfway between Latakia and Tartus.

The violence of recent days has been sparked after ambushes on government forces on Thursday. A Syrian defence ministry spokesman described it to the Sana state news agency as "treacherous attacks" against security personnel.

It has since escalated into a wave of clashes between Assad loyalists and government forces.

Amid the fighting, hundreds of civilians living along the Mediterranean coast have fled their homes. The provinces of Latakia and Tartus were former heartlands of deposed president Bashar al-Assad, who also belongs to the Alawite minority.

Alawites, whose sect is an

offshoot of Shia Islam, make up around 10% of Syria's population, which is majority Sunni Muslim.

The violence has left the Alawite community in "a state of horror", an activist in Latakia told the BBC on Friday.

Large crowds sought refuge at a Russian military base at Hmeimim in Latakia, according to the Reuters news agency.

Video footage shared by Reuters showed dozens of people chanting "people want Russian protection" outside the base.

Meanwhile, local media reported dozens of families had also fled to neighbouring Lebanon.

The UN's special envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, said he was "deeply alarmed" by "very troubling reports of civilian casualties" in Syria's coastal areas.

He called on all sides to refrain from actions which could "destabilise" the country and jeopardise a "credible and inclusive political transition".



## LARGE RALLIES:

Corneille Nangaa has addressed large rallies in cities captured by the M23

## Iran criticises 'bullying countries' after Trump letter for nuclear talks

Iran's Supreme leader has criticised "bullying" countries in an apparent response to Donald Trump's letter demanding negotiations over its nuclear programme.

Trump said on Friday he had warned Tehran in a letter it could face military action unless it agreed to talks for a nuclear deal.

In a furious response on Saturday, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Iran would not negotiate with "bullying governments" insisting on talks.

His regime has rapidly advanced its nuclear programme in recent years, the UN's monitor says.

Trump has said he wants to strike a new deal with Iran to prevent it from developing its nuclear programme further.

On Friday he said he had offered Iran a chance to negotiate or risk its nuclear programme being targeted.

"I've written them a letter, saying I hope you're going to negotiate because if we have to go in militarily it's going to be a terrible thing for them," Trump told Fox Business on Friday.

"There are two ways Iran can be handled - militarily, or you make a deal," Trump said. "I would prefer to make a deal, because I am not looking to hurt Iran."

Iran's Ayatollah appeared to respond to Trump's statements in a Ramadan meeting with officials on Saturday, reported by local media.

Khamenei did not name the US but said "some bully governments insist on negotiations."

"Their negotiations are not

aimed at solving problems, they aim at domination," he said according to Iranian media.

"The issue is not just the nuclear issue. They are setting new expectations that these new expectations will definitely not be met on the part of Iran."

In December, the head of the UN nuclear watchdog said Iran's decision to begin producing significantly more highly enriched uranium was "very worrisome".

Rafael Grossi, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said Iran was increasing its stockpile of uranium enriched to 60%, just below the level of purity needed for a nuclear weapon.

Tehran has denied accusation it is building nuclear weapons,

emphasising instead that its programme has peaceful aims.

Iran had previously agreed to limits on its nuclear programme under the 2015 Iran nuclear accord, an agreement signed with the US, UK, France, China, Russia and Germany in return for sanctions relief.

But during his first term in office, Trump withdrew the US from the deal and reinstated US sanctions on Iran.

In the years since the collapse of the deal, Iran has accelerated its nuclear programme, accelerating its enrichment of uranium. It now has stocks that are near weapons grade, analysts say. The conflicts in the Middle East this past year have also heightened nuclear tensions.

## Israeli tourist and homestay host gang-raped in India, police say

Two women were gang-raped and a man was killed in an attack near a popular Unesco World Heritage site in southern India, according to police.

The two women - an Israeli tourist and an Indian homestay operator - were stargazing with three male tourists near a lake in the city of Hampi, Karnataka, when they were attacked by a group of men on Thursday night, police superintendent Ram Arasiddi told Reuters.

Arasiddi said the assailants pushed the men into the Tungbhadra River canal before rap-

ping the women.

Two of the men, one of them American, survived, and the third man's body was recovered on Saturday morning, he said.

"Five people - two women and three men - were attacked near Sanapur," Arasiddi said.

"Two of them are foreigners, an American [man], and another a woman from Israel."

Police have arrested two of the men accused of the attack and an investigation is ongoing, Arasiddi said. Police believe the men followed the group.

The US State Department

said it was "aware of reports that a US citizen was among a group of victims of violent crime" near Hampi.

According to witness testimony from one of the women, the group was stargazing near a temple in Sanapur when three men arrived on a motorcycle and asked them where they could get petrol.

As one member of the group gave them directions, one of the three men demanded 100 rupees (\$1.29) from the tourists.

"Since the homestay operator did not know them, she told them they had no money,"

police said.

"When the men repeatedly insisted, one of the male tourists gave them 20 rupees.

"After that, the three men allegedly started arguing."

The body of one of the male tourists was later found in the Tungbhadra canal in Karnataka's Koppal district.

A case has been registered at Gangavathi Rural Police Station under sections related to extortion, robbery, gang rape and attempted murder.

The victims are receiving medical treatment at a government hospital, the police said.

## DR Congo offers \$5 million bounties for rebel leaders

The Democratic Republic of Congo government has offered a reward of \$5m (£4m) for help arresting three leaders of a rebel group which has seized much of the east of the country this year.

Corneille Nangaa, a former head of DR Congo's electoral commission, now leads the Congo River Alliance, which includes the M23 rebel group. He has addressed large rallies in the cities under the group's control.

The bounty is also on offer for M23 leaders Sultani Makenga and Bertrand Bisimwa.

Last year the three men were

prosecuted in absentia by a military court and given death sentences for treason.

A reward of \$4m (£3) was also offered for the arrest of two journalists living in exile, and others the government describes as accomplices.

But the chances of anyone being arrested appear slim.

In recent weeks the army has been no match for the Rwandan-backed rebels who have captured large parts of the mineral-rich eastern DR Congo, including the region's two largest cities - Goma and Bukavu.

## European leaders back 'realistic' Arab plan for Gaza

Leading European nations have said they support an Arab-backed plan for the reconstruction of Gaza that would cost \$53 billion (£41 billion) and avoid displacing Palestinians from the territory.

The plan, drawn up by Egypt and endorsed by Arab leaders, has been rejected by Israel and by US President Donald Trump, who presented his own vision to turn the Gaza Strip into a "Middle East Riviera".

On Saturday the foreign ministers of France, Germany, Italy and Britain welcomed the plan, which calls for Gaza to be rebuilt over five years, as "realistic".

In a statement, they said the proposal promised "swift and sustainable improvement of the catastrophic living conditions" for the people of Gaza.

The plan calls for Gaza to be governed temporarily by a committee of independent experts and for international peacekeepers to be deployed to the territory.

The committee would be responsible for overseeing humanitarian aid and tempo-

rarily managing Gaza's affairs under the supervision of the Palestinian Authority.

The proposal was drawn up amid growing concern that Gaza's fragile ceasefire deal could collapse after the six-week first phase expired on 1 March.

Israel has blocked aid from entering the territory to pressure Hamas to accept a new US proposal for a temporary extension of the truce, during which more hostages held in Gaza would be released in exchange for Palestinian prisoners.

But Hamas has insisted that the second phase of the ceasefire, which would see the full withdrawal of Israeli troops, should begin as agreed.

Israel will send a negotiating team to Qatar on Monday to take part in talks on extending the ceasefire, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said.

It remains unclear if or when the second phase of the ceasefire agreement will be implemented. But a Hamas spokesman, Abdel Latif al-Qanoua, spoke of "positive indicators" for next week's talks.

## NEWS

## Foreign

## Storm Alfred: Cyclone 'like jet airliners over roof'

A singer in Australia when a cyclone hit said it sounded like "three of four jet airliners roaring over the roof".

David Harrop from Warwickshire, who was in Brisbane, Queensland, for work when the storm landed on Saturday night, said it had been frightening to experience and caused "severe damage" and brought serious flooding.

He said a "beautiful" nearby beach had been completely eroded by the winds and the rain had been so heavy it had stripped the branches off trees.

The cyclone was downgraded to a tropical storm when it reached land, but still brought winds of up to 85km/h and forced tens of thousands to evacuate their homes.

Alfred was thought to be the region's first tropical cyclone in 50 years and Mr Harrop said it

caused most of Brisbane to lose its power.

"Driving through Brisbane city was like a ghost town, hardly a single person to be seen in the city's streets," he said.

When the storm was at its most fierce he said the noise came in surges and was eerily quiet at times and the damage had been unpredictable.

The house he was staying in was largely unharmed, but others in the area were badly damaged he said.

Mr Harrop had hoped to have a holiday in Australia while he was out there, but his plans are now uncertain.

But it was not the first cyclone he has experienced.

He was in New Zealand two years ago when Cyclone Gabrielle hit and said friends have told him: "Either I'm following them, or they're following me."



**STORM-HIT:** Wild weather leaves mass blackouts in storm-hit eastern Australia

## Who is in the running to replace Trudeau as Liberal Party leader?

Canadians are voting to decide who will take over from Justin Trudeau as the leader of the country's governing Liberal Party, in a crucial vote that will change the face of Canadian politics.

About 140,000 of the party's members have been voting for their preferred candidate, with results expected to be announced by Sunday evening (the BBC will have live coverage).

The new leader will become the country's prime minister. But because the Liberals are a minority government, holding onto the top job will require winning a general election, which could be called in the coming weeks.

Whoever replaces Trudeau will have to grapple with US President Donald Trump's

threats against Canada, which include an escalating trade war and repeated calls to make the country the US's "51st state".

The issue has dominated the campaigns of all four candidates vying for the top job. Here's what to know about them.

Former central banker Mark Carney

Former Bank of Canada and Bank of England governor Mark Carney has pitched himself as a strong fiscal manager who can help countries navigate challenging times, including his own.

"I've helped manage multiple crises, and I've helped save two economies," he said in his campaign launch speech.

Widely seen as the front-runner for the job, he's sought to position himself as the man who can steer the country

through the fallout caused by Trump's tariffs.

"In a situation like this, you need experience in terms of crisis management, you need negotiating skills," he said during a leadership debate last month.

The 59-year-old was born in Canada's Northwest Territories and grew up in Edmonton, Alberta.

He has sought to highlight his Canadian roots and paint himself as a political outsider.

He has served in recent months as a special economics adviser to Trudeau, and has long been considered a contender for the top job, though the Harvard graduate has never held public office.

Trudeau himself admitted that he had long been trying to recruit Carney to his team.

Carney tried to distance

himself from the unpopular PM, saying he is "not the only Liberal in Canada who believes that the prime minister and his team let their attention wander from the economy too often". Trudeau's approval ratings have however improved since Trump's return to office.

Carney brings with him expertise on environmental matters through his role as the United Nations special envoy on climate action, recently calling the goal of net zero "the greatest commercial opportunity of our time".

He is a champion of some Liberal policies that have been unpopular, like the federal carbon tax, the party's signature climate policy that critics argue is a financial burden for Canadians.

He has recently back away

from the policy, saying in May that it had "served a purpose up until now".

He has received a number of cabinet endorsements, including Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault and Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly.

Former Deputy PM Chrystia Freeland

The Toronto member of parliament became one of the

most well-known members of Trudeau's team.

While she had long been seen as a trusted senior official in his inner circle, a rift with the prime minister's office led to her recent abrupt resignation in December.

That was a blow to Trudeau's already-shaky hold on power, helping to usher in his own resignation.

## 'My best friend went to work - and was crushed to death by rubbish'

Fighting back the tears, 22-year-old rubbish collector Okuku Prince recalls the moment his best friend's lifeless body was found at a massive rubbish dump in Uganda's capital, Kampala.

The landslide at the Kiteezi dump last August killed 30 people, including his friend Sanya Kezia.

"I think some people are still underneath the garbage," he tells the BBC.

Many of them eked out a living by washing and selling whatever discarded items they found that still had value - anything from fishing nets to plastic bottles, glass jars and the components of old electronic devices.

A blame-game erupted after the fatal collapse, with Kampala's city council and central government accusing each other of negligence, while some of the dead still languished under tonnes of rubbish without the dignity of a burial.

When government tractors did eventually dig up Kezia's

body, there were injuries to the 21-year-old's face.

It was horrifying for his friend to see him enveloped by stinking, rotting waste.

"We're not safe here. Unless they [repair] it, maybe level it. Otherwise, people are not safe," says Mr Prince, who before becoming a rubbish-picker had been studying law at the Islamic University of Uganda.

Unable to afford tuition fees after his family became financially unstable, his daily routine is now a far cry from libraries and lecture halls.

Youth unemployment is at crisis levels in Uganda, and there are many like Mr Prince who often risk their health and abandon their dreams just to make a living.

"I come here to the dump in the morning, collect polythene bags, take them for washing and sell them," says Mr Prince. "I make 10,000 shillings [equivalent to \$2.70 or £2.10] a day."

The collapse has left him in further financial distress as he

used to live by the side of the dump - but has had to move because of safety concerns.

The houses of others were also destroyed during rescue operations.

Compensation money has been paid to the families of those who died, but not to around 200 people who lost their homes, local authorities have admitted to the BBC.

Officials are "waiting for the valuation and budget allocation", says Dr Sarah Karen Zalwango, the new head of public health and the environment at the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA).

Some argue that the Kiteezi collapse was inevitable because basic common sense was ignored.

"You can't take four million people, get all that waste, mingled - degradable and non-degradable - and take it to one dumping site. No, that's not how we [ought to] do it. But we've been doing it for over 20 years," Frank Muramuzi, a Kampala-based urban planner, tells the BBC.

The Kiteezi landfill was built in 1996, with financing from the World Bank, to provide a single, major depository for solid waste generated by Kampala.

## Mass blackouts in storm-hit eastern Australia

Hundreds of thousands of people remain without power in Australia after a cyclone brought wild weather to the east coast.

Communities in southeast Queensland and northern New South Wales (NSW) were beginning the clean-up on Sunday after the storm caused widespread flooding and knocked down power lines and trees.

A 61-year-old man's body was recovered from floodwaters on Saturday, while in a separate incident, 12 soldiers were taken to hospital after their convoy crashed en route to rescue operations.

The storm had weakened by the time it made landfall near Brisbane on Saturday night, but

## Secret Service shoots armed man outside White House

The US Secret Service shot a man outside the White House early on Sunday after an "armed confrontation", the service said in a statement.

It had earlier received a tip-off from local police about a "suicidal individual who may be travelling to Washington DC from Indiana", it said.

Its officers approached a man matching that description, "who brandished a firearm", adding that shots were fired. The man is now in hospital in an "unknown" condition, it said.

President Donald Trump was not in the White House at the time, as he is spending the weekend at his Florida residence, Mar-a-Lago.

"As officers approached, the individual brandished a firearm and an armed confrontation ensued, during which shots were fired by our personnel," the statement said.

The incident is now under investigation by Washington's Metropolitan Police, which investigates all law-enforcement shootings in the District of Columbia.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Sunday warned locals of the continued wild weather and risks from flooding.

"The situation in Queensland and northern New South Wales remains very serious due to flash flooding and heavy winds," Albanese said.

"Heavy rainfall, damaging wind gusts and coastal surf impacts are expected to continue over coming days."

Cyclone Alfred had hovered for days off the country's east coast as a category two cyclone before weakening into a tropical depression on Saturday.

By Sunday evening, emergency services had conducted over a dozen rescues in Queensland and NSW - most involving people

trapped by rising waters in their cars or homes. The NSW State Emergency Service reported receiving more than 6,000 calls for help.

Almost 290,000 properties in the affected regions remain without power, and energy companies have warned residents the blackouts could persist for days.

Police said on Saturday they had discovered a body in the search for a 61-year-old man who went missing on Friday after his car was caught in floodwaters in Dorrigo, northern NSW.

Emergency responders witnessed the man escaping his car and climbing onto a tree near the riverbank, but rescuers were not able to reach him before he was swept away.

# Sports

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

## ESSC chairman Hon. Enabulele celebrates Edo women in sports



KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

As the International Women's Day is celebrated globally, the Executive Chairman of the Edo State Sports Commission (ESSC), Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele, has congratulated all Edo and Nigerian women in sports as they joined the rest of the world in marking the International Women's Day.

Hon. Enabulele, in his message said he acknowledged the vital role women play in Sports and the society and described them as virtuous role models for future generations of athletes.

He commended them for being active in sports and show of commitment towards building

and shaping the society through physical health encouragement.

"Together, we will raise the bar and make the sports commission a breeding ground for talent development and sports excellence," he encouraged Edo sports women.

Hon. Enabulele expressed deep appreciation for the strength, talent, and impactful contributions of women toward the growth of the Edo State Sports Commission. "Your beautiful and powerful impact in making positive changes is highly appreciated," he stated.

"I celebrate every woman who has ever made a difference in sports, no matter how big or small. You are valued and important"



## Ankalaev stuns Pereira to win UFC Light Heavyweight title

Russian Magomed Ankalaev shocked the MMA world with the biggest victory of his UFC career, dethroning Brazilian Alex Pereira to win the UFC light heavyweight title at UFC 313 in Las Vegas on Saturday.

Ankalaev (21-1-1), unbeaten since March 2018, outclassed former kickboxing champion Pereira with relentless forward pressure, well-timed knees to the body, and superior grappling, leaving the Brazilian exhausted and unable to mount his signature offence.

The 32-year-old Russian dominated large portions of the fight, pinning Pereira against the cage and forcing him into grappling exchanges. His efforts were rewarded with

a unanimous decision victory, earning scores of 48-47, 48-47, and 49-46 from the judges.

"I can't even put it into words. It has been such a long wait. Here's my dream, and it's on my waist," Ankalaev said, finally securing UFC gold after fighting Jan Blachowicz to a split draw in his first title bout in December 2022.

Pereira (12-2), who had won his last four fights by knockout, started aggressively, attacking Ankalaev's lead leg with powerful kicks. However, the Russian responded in the second round with a hard left hand that wobbled Pereira just before the bell.

Ankalaev continued to dictate the fight in the third round, landing knees from close range while Pereira struggled to defend against takedown attempts. By the fourth round, Ankalaev's grappling superiority drained Pereira's energy as he controlled the action against the fence.

With his corner urging him to fight back, Pereira came out aggressively in the final round, landing a head kick. But his late surge was not enough to sway the judges, as the former middleweight champion suffered only the third loss of his professional MMA career.

"The plan was to pressure, pressure, pressure. Everyone who fights him tries to counter, but I wanted to make sure I fought as the number one," Ankalaev said.

## NPFL25: Hon. Enabulele hails Bendel Insurance on superlative performance against Remo Stars

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

### ● reaffirms Edo Govt Commitment to club

The Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele has congratulated Bendel Insurance FC on their outstanding performance in a thrilling 2-1 victory over league leaders Remo Stars in Benin city.

The Benin Arsenal defeated the high flying Sky blue boys 2-1 in the Match Day.28 of the Nigeria Premier Football League game on Saturday, Courtesy of skipper Meyiwa. Oritseweyinmi's two beautiful goals at the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium.

Hon Enabulele was speaking in a chat with journalists shortly after the game at the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium, Benin.

While describing the Benin Arsenal's performance as superlative, Hon. Enabulele lauded the team for their resilience and the great skill they displayed to secure the crucial 2-1 victory over the table toppers Remo Stars.

The match kicked off with an explosive start as Meyiwa Oritseweyinmi found the net just two minutes into the game, setting the tone for an intense contest. In the 54th minute, Meyiwa doubled Bendel In-

urance's lead, securing a brace and putting the home team in firm control. Despite a late surge from Remo Stars when Samuel Anakwe managed to pull one goal back in the 82nd minute to reduce the deficit, Bendel Insurance held on to claim the well-deserved win.

Hon. Enabulele also praised the team for their remarkable turnaround, after battling out of relegation zone and now comfortable on the 7th position. He assured Insurance FC of the State Government com-

mitment to the welfare of the players and officials.

"This victory is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our players and coaching staff. When we came in, Bendel Insurance was battling relegation, but today, the transformation is evident. I must commend the team captain, Meyiwa Oritseweyinmi, for proving his worth. The team is heading in the right direction. Currently, we are seventh on the league table, and we are confident of breaking into the top four."

He further encouraged the players to maintain their momentum as they continue their Nigerian Premier Football League (NPFL) campaign, emphasizing the importance of teamwork and determination in achieving greater success.

At the end of the match, team captain Meyiwa Oritseweyinmi was named Man of the Match and received a N150,000 award, presented by Edo State Commissioner for Information, Barr. Paul Ohonbamu, alongside Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele.

## Nigeria's Eniola Bolaji clinches gold at Spanish Para Badminton International

Nigeria's Paris 2024 Paralympic bronze medalist Eniola Bolaji is already on the path to an Olympic medal. She added a gold medal to her growing collection at the 2025 Spanish Para-Badminton International II in Vitoria, making it 11 out of 11 internationals she has played so far.

Her feat at the Paris 2024 ignited the Badminton Confederation Africa (BCA) to begin the sensitization of Africans for possible medals at the next Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

She has again proven her mettle! The multiple African

champion beat Ukraine's Okšana Kozyba 2-0 (21-15, 21-15) dominating the women's singles SL3 final category.

Her path to gold was nothing short of impressive. Her path is littered with the carcasses of defeated highly rated players.

Bolaji first defeated Brazil's Kauana Michelson Beckenka of Brazil 2-0 (21-15, 21-2) and then France's Caroline Bergeron 2-0 (21-7, 21-8) at the group stage before cruising through the quarter-finals, where she beat Australia's Celine Vinot 2-0 (21-8, 21-12).

In the semifinals, Bolaji showcased her exceptional

form with a dominant 2-0 (21-12, 21-6) win over India's Neeraj, booking her spot in the final.

The performance has highlighted the progress badmin-

ton has made in Nigeria in the current dispensation.

It is like singing the old famous song: "Let's do it again" that was made popular in the 1970s.



## NSC DG congratulates NRFF boss Ademola Are on election as 1st VP, West African Rugby Federations



The Director General of the National Sports Commission, NSC, Hon. Bukola Olopade, has congratulated the President of the Nigeria Rugby Football Federation, NRFF, Dr. Ademola Are, for his election as the 1st Vice President of the Union of West African Rugby Federations.

Dr. Are, who has been at the forefront of revamping the Country's Rugby got elected alongside other executives in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire.

The DG said this is a testa-

ment to the hard-work currently going on in the Nigeria Rugby family since Dr. Are became the President and only shows that the West Africa Sub region also recognises that.

"This is very massive for the continuous growth of Rugby in the Country because the NRFF President can now use his current position to seek different intentional collaborations that will strengthen the growth of the Sports both locally and in the West African sub region."

"And for us at the National

Sports Commission, these are the kind of feat we want our Sports administrators to strive for and get actively involved in international Sports politics."

The Director General added that this is also a big boost for the RHINSE campaign because having Nigerians holding key positions in continental and region sports bodies will help the chances of bringing international competitions to the Country.

"Our Renewed Hope Initiative for Nigeria Sports Economy is definitely on the right track I

must say, because with having a Nigerian as 1st Vice President of the West African Rugby Body, Nigeria will have more say in terms of staging international competitions and as we know tournaments help to boost infrastructural development of a Country."

"I want to congratulate Dr. Ademola Are once again because he is a visionary and innovative Sport administrator who will use this new position to elevate and maximise the potential of Rugby in the Country and beyond."

# SPORTS

## Meyiwa delivers as Bendel Insurance beat table toppers Remo Stars to climb up

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

**B**endel Insurance Football Club of Benin have continued to maintain their impressive run of form since Coach Greg Ikhenoba's promotion as the head coach as they defeated the Nigeria Premier Football League 2024/25 leaders Remo Stars of Ikenne 2-1 in the Match Day 28 fixture in Benin.

The captain of the resurgent Benin Arsenal Meyiwa Oritseyinmi scored in each half to hand Insurance FC the three maximum point against the high

flying sky blue boys from Ikenne.

Meyiwa whose form and leadership have been consistently superb, gave Insurance an early lead just a minute and 45 seconds into the game as Ini Eden's well propelled cross from the left flank was flicked by Uche Collins towards well positioned Meyiwa Oritseyinmi who didn't miss his target with his shot that opened scoring for his side.

The visitors however showed some resistance to prevent more goals before the half time whistle as Uche Collins, Kayode Oke and Osahon Osobo came close to in-

creasing the tally before half time.

In the second half, Insurance continued to mount pressure in search of another goal for safety and their hard work paid off in the 54th when Meyiwa again, fired a sublime strike.

The visitors made multiple substitution in search of their rhythm which worked for them in the 82 minutes as Samuel Anakwe neatly headed home a good reply to force Insurance out of the comfort zone.

Insurance remain consistent in their fight for stability and push for silverware in the league this season.

Meanwhile, Meyiwa's impressive form earned him the Man of the Match award. The N150,000 worth Award sponsored by the Nigeria Breweries (NB) was presented by the Hon. Commissioner for Information and Communication, Edo State Rt Hon Paul Ohonbamu.

The 2-1 victory over high flying Remo Stars has helped Insurance climbed up one step from 8th position with 41 points on the table.

The Benin Arsenal will be guests to Abia Warriors in the Match Day 29 next week.



## Nigeria missing out of 2026 World Cup would be a disaster —Ahmed Musa

**I**conic Super Eagles captain and legend, Ahmed Musa, said on Sunday in Ilorin, that it would amount to total disaster for Nigerian football if Nigeria fails to make to the 2026 World Cup.

According to him, a whole generation of talented players would be lost and with it confidence for upcoming players for the country.

Musa made this explanation at the Taiwo Awoniyi Sports Media Center/SWAN Secretariat, Ilorin, where he also heaped plaudits of the Nottingham Forest ace, Awoniyi for helping the sports writers complete a functional work Secretariat.

"The Super Eagles are in a very



difficult situation right but we believe in our selves that we can still scale through," Musa said.

"Super Eagles cannot be absent from the 2026 World Cup.

"It is going to be a big disaster for Nigerian players not to be at the World Cup." Musa added.

Super Eagles is currently in the Fifth position in group C with South Africa, Rwanda, Zimbabwe and Benin.

But the Super Eagles striker believes that the Rwanda game for which he has been called up to join others is key to turning around Eagles fortune.

"The important game is Rwanda. If we can get the three points from that match it's going to be a turning point for us. But it is not just a job for the Super Eagles alone.

"Every Nigerian must be involved because we need their support," he said.

Musa also commended teammate, Awoniyi for his gestures to the state sports writers guild, Sports Writers Association of Nigeria, SWAN.

"I am going to say a very big thank you to my younger brother, Taiwo Awoniyi for this magnificent building he has built for SWAN.

"Every footballer needs to learn from what Awoniyi has done.

## Nigeria resumes dominance over South Africa with Flamingos away win

**N**igeria's U17 girls, Flamingos, on Saturday defeated their hosts, South Africa's Bantwana 3-1 to put a firm leg in the final round of the qualification series for this year's FIFA U17 Women's World Cup finals.

It is one of the overwhelming victories that a Nigerian team has scored against South Africa since Nigeria's commanding control waned in the 2000s.

Four-goal scorer at the FIFA U17 Women's World Cup in the Dominican Republic last year, Shakirat Moshood finished with aplomb in the 20th

minute to put the 2022 FIFA World Cup bronze medallists ahead at the Lucas 'Masterpieces' Moripe in Pretoria, before Harmony Chidi, who scored 13 goals in the qualifying series for last year's finals, made no mistake from six yards as Nigeria was awarded a penalty.

Bantwana kept the Flamingos in their sights when they also converted a penalty two minutes after the break, courtesy Malebana, but the prolific Harmony Chidi took Nigeria out of South Africa's sights with a third goal in the 68th minute.



## Kanu's son, Sean Kanu, signs for Polish club Górnik Polkowice

**S**ean Kanu, the son of Nigerian football icon Nwankwo Kanu, has signed with Polish third-tier side Górnik Polkowice, marking the start of his professional football career.

The 19-year-old's move to Górnik Polkowice was announced by KS Dozamet Con-

necter Nowa Sól, who stated that he joined from another Polish team, Górnik Polkowice, without disclosing the length or financial details of the contract.

Amara Kanu, Sean's mother, attended the signing ceremony and expressed her pride and excitement on social media, writing, "Congratulations, son,

Sean Kanu. You have put in so much work and dedication to your craft, and I am so proud of you. More goals up in front."

A product of Watford Academy in England, Sean Kanu departed the club without making a senior appearance. He was previously featured in the popular "Kanu Nkwankwo and Sons" video, a follow-up to his father's iconic "Papilo" Peak Milk advertisement.

His father, Nwankwo Kanu, is a celebrated figure in Nigerian football, having won numerous major titles, including the UEFA Champions League (1995) with Ajax Amsterdam, the English Premier League (2002, 2004) and the FA Cup (2002, 2003, 2008) with Arsenal, Olympic gold medal (1996) with Nigeria and FIFA U17 World Cup (1993).

Kanu was also crowned African Footballer of the Year

twice (1996 and 1999).

Sean Kanu was not included in the matchday squad for KS Dozamet Connector Nowa Sól's match against Debem on Sunday afternoon.



## CHAN 2025: Gambia survives as Gabon crashes out after penalty heartbreak

**G**abon's hopes of progressing in the 2025 African Nations Championship (CHAN) qualifiers were dashed as they suffered a penalty shootout defeat to Gambia after a goalless draw in Libreville on Saturday.

Despite dominating the second-leg match of the second qualification stage and creating numerous scoring chances, the Panthers failed to find the net, ultimately paying the price in

the shootout.

The decisive moment came in the 78th minute when Gabon was awarded a penalty, but Samson Mbingui failed to convert, leaving the Scorpions with a lifeline.

With the match still deadlocked at 0-0 after regulation time, the contest went to a penalty shootout, where Gambia kept their composure to secure victory and advance to the next round.

The Scorpions converted all their attempts, while Gabon's Nasta Oyono missed his shot, sending his effort wide and sealing his team's elimination.

Elsewhere, Malawi advanced thanks to their 2-0 home win over Comoros to seal a 4-0 aggregate victory.

Wongani Lungu opened in the scoring for the home side in the 50th minute before Binwell Katinji's strike on the hour mark secured the win.