

Fear grips FCT communities as suspected bandits issue attack threat

ABUJA

Many residents of Kungaboku and Paze communities in the Federal Capital Territory have fled their homes following a letter by suspected bandits threatening a coordinated attack.

In the letter allegedly found in a pupil's school bag in a private school, the bandits vowed to attack Kungaboku and neighbouring Paze to avenge

their commander's killing.

It would be recalled that on March 7, troops of the 7 Guards Battalion, Guards Brigade of the Nigerian Army, with police and vigilantes, rescued 19 kidnapped victims.

The victims, mostly residents of Paze and Kungaboku, regained their freedom during a coordinated search and rescue operation conducted around Gidan Dogo in Bwari Area Council.

During the operation, troops

reportedly killed a bandit, while others fled the scene with suspected gunshot wounds.

Further exploitation of the area led to the recovery of one AK-47 rifle and one locally fabricated firearm.

The threat letter was reportedly discovered in a pupil's notebook at a private school in Paze by a teacher while marking the child's homework.

After raising the alarm, the pupil, parents, teacher and

school authorities were picked up, interrogated, profiled and later released by the police.

Meanwhile, news of the threat spread rapidly, with residents sharing the information across various community groups and social media platforms.

To worsen matters, a day before the letter surfaced, suspected bandits attacked a Fulani settlement in Kungaboku, kidnapped three women and demanded a N70 million ransom.

Kungaboku and Paze, near Byazhin, an extension of Kubwa in Bwari Area Council, have witnessed several violent attacks recently.

In October 2025, Dr Ifeanyi Ogbu, a veterinary doctor, was killed in Kungaboku, a farming community hosting hundreds of livestock, poultry and fish farmers.

Ogbu, former chairman of the Nigerian Veterinary Medical Association, FCT Chapter, was abducted with his three

children and later shot in an open field while the children were taken away.

On March 5, suspected bandits also attacked Kungaboku and abducted a retired military officer, Bankole Ganiyu, and three children.

Ganiyu's wife, a police officer, and two other children in the house during the attack managed to escape unharmed.

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The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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Nigeria hosts 3.7m internally displaced persons —IOM

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Nigerians groan as petrol hits N1,350 per litre, diesel N1,650

● NLC demands FG's intervention

LAGOS/BENIN CITY

Motorists and commuters across Lagos and Benin City are groaning following rising transportation costs occasioned by another increase in the pump price of petrol, which now sells for between

N1,250 and N1,350 per litre at filling stations.

A survey by our newsmen on Sunday showed growing concern among road users as the increase, driven largely by global supply pressures and domestic price adjustments, continues to influence transportation expenses.

The latest increase follows another upward review of petrol prices by the Dangote Petroleum Refinery, which raised the gantry price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), commonly known as petrol, to N1,175 per litre from N995 early last week.

The adjustment represents an increase of N180, about 18.1 percent within three days,

marking the refinery's third price review within the week and prompting swift adjustments across the downstream market.

Industry sources attribute the rise partly to heightened geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, particularly the escalating standoff between Israel and Iran, as well as attacks linked to Yemen's Houthis

movement on the Red Sea corridor.

The instability has forced many oil tankers to reroute from traditional shipping lanes, pushing global freight costs up by roughly 40 percent, according to market data from the Baltic Exchange.

At the same time, international oil prices have risen, with Brent crude approaching 99 dollars per barrel, while the Nigerian currency trades

at about N1,650 to the dollar, factors analysts say are contributing to higher domestic fuel prices.

However, with the emergence of the Dangote refinery, Nigeria continues to rely significantly on imported refined petroleum products.

A spokesperson for the refinery said the price adjustment reflects rising feedstock

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INAUGURATION OF THE FCT HEALTH INSURANCE:

L-R: Acting Director, FCT Health Insurance Scheme (FHIS), Dr Salamatu Belgore; Chairman, Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), FCT Council, Comrade Grace Ike; National President of NUJ, Comrade Alhassan Yahya; Mandate Secretary, Health Services and Environment Secretariat (HSES), FCT, Dr Adedolapo Fasawe and wife of the former Permanent Secretary, Health Services and Environment Secretariat, Hajiya Maryam Adams, during the inauguration of the FCT Health Insurance for journalists, at the NUJ FCT Council Secretariat in Utako, Abuja.

Delta, NDDC, Chevron strengthen alliance on 70km Omadino-Okerenkoko-Escravos road project

ASABA

The Delta State Government, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and Chevron Nigeria Limited have intensified efforts to deepen collaboration for the construction of the proposed Omadino-Okerenkoko-Escravos Road and Bridges project in Delta State.

The ambitious infrastructure project, which spans about 70 kilometres and includes 29 bridges, is expected to significantly improve connectivity across riverine communities and stimulate economic development throughout the Niger Delta region.

Delta State Governor, Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori, gave the assurance of the state government's readiness to partner with the NDDC and Chevron during a meeting with the leadership of the commission and a dele-

gation from the oil company at Government House, Asaba.

Oborevwori commended the Managing Director of the NDDC, Dr. Sam Ogbuku, for the progress recorded under his leadership and pledged the state government's commitment to ensuring that the long-awaited project becomes a reality.

The governor stressed that the Omadino-Okerenkoko-Escravos Road was critical to the development of riverine communities, noting that the project would open up the area for increased economic activities and improved access.

"We are ready to partner with NDDC on this project because it is very key to those living in the riverine areas. Delta State believes in executing projects that people will see and appreciate," he said.

Oborevwori, however, empha-

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Edo govt sets up probe panel over viral school bullying video

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Bird strike forces Air Peace Abuja-London flight to return

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Ugandan opposition leader goes abroad after two months in hiding

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House Committee on Sports mourns as Football Legend Henry Nwosu dies at 62

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Edo govt sets up probe panel over viral school bullying video

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Ministry of Education has set up a five-man committee to investigate a bullying incident involving students of a private school in Benin City after a video of the assault surfaced on

social media.

In a statement issued by the Permanent Secretary of the ministry, Edith Ebomoyi, the government said it strongly condemned the incident, describing the act captured in the viral video as disturbing and unacceptable.

The statement said the video showed a student physically assaulting another student, an action the ministry noted runs contrary to the standards of discipline, safety and respect expected in schools across Edo State.

According to the ministry,

the investigative committee has been mandated to examine the circumstances surrounding the incident and determine the factors that led to the assault.

It added that the students directly involved in the incident had already been expelled and would face legal consequences

as part of efforts to deter similar behaviour among other students.

The ministry further disclosed that it would conduct a comprehensive audit of the school to assess student activities and ensure that adequate safety measures are in place to

protect every child.

Reaffirming the government's commitment to the welfare of students, the ministry said it would continue to uphold educational standards and ensure that schools across the state remain safe environments for learning.

Nigerians groan as petrol hits N1,350...

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and logistics costs associated with developments in the global energy market.

Checks revealed that retail prices have increased across several outlets in Benin City and Lagos, with petrol selling between N1,200 and N1,350 per litre depending on location.

Major marketers in Lagos have also adjusted their pump prices.

MRS Oil Nigeria Plc and Matrix Energy Group sell petrol at about N1,250 per litre, while outlets of Arдова Plc (formerly AP) retail the product at around N1,300 per litre.

Some independent stations charge slightly higher prices.

A NorthWest outlet in the Gbagada area dispensed petrol at about N1,250 per litre, while several other stations across the metropolis sold the product close to the N1,200 mark.

At a Mobil Station along the LASU-Isheri Road corridor, petrol was sold at N1,250 per litre, while Petrocam Station nearby dispensed fuel at the same price.

Similarly, MRS stations in parts of Alimosho sold petrol at about N1,250 per litre, while Mobil outlets in Alaguntan and Iyana Ipaja recorded prices of N1,250 and N1,350 per litre respectively.

Other stations, including Heyden outlets in Iyana Ipaja and along the Oshodi-Abeokuta Expressway, also sold petrol at about N1,250 per litre, reflecting a broad market trend.

At Ugbowo, Sapele Road and Upper Sakponba Road axis in Benin City, petrol sells for between

N1,250 and N1,300 per litre, even though all the petrol stations visited were selling the product.

As at 6.20pm, NNPC Mega Station on Sapele Road was selling petrol at N1,265 per litre; MRS, N1,247; Rain Oil and Raptor petrol stations, N1,250, while diesel at Raptor petrol station sells for N1,650 per litre.

Meanwhile, market insiders have said pricing differences were increasingly influenced by variations in product sourcing, particularly between coastal marine lifting arrangements and gantry loading operations.

The increase in fuel prices has already led to higher transportation fares across Lagos and Benin City for inter and intra city movement with commuters reporting increases of more than 30 percent on several routes.

In Lagos, a commercial driver, Mr Sodiq Olarenwaju, said the rising cost of petrol had made daily operations more demanding.

"We are the ones passengers blame for increasing fares, but they don't realise how much we now spend on petrol.

"If we buy fuel at over N1,000 per litre, we have no option but to adjust fares," he said.

Another motorist, Mrs Funke Oladipo, described the experience of searching for fuel as stressful.

"I have been driving around since morning with my Jerry can looking for petrol. Some stations that opened earlier have already shut their gates," she said.

A private car owner, Dr Adewale Suleiman, said fuel price increases often had wider economic implications.



PRESS CONFERENCE:

L-R: Special Adviser to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on Information and Strategy, Mr Bayo Onanuga: Executive Vice Chairman/CEO of Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC), Mr Tunji Bello and Executives Commissioner, Operations, FCCPC, Mr Louis Odion during a Press Conference by the Chairman FCCPC on the challenges and successes of the organisation at the Presidential Villa Abuja.

Edo High Court to begin Easter vacation April 6

BENIN CITY

The Edo State High Court will commence its Easter vacation on Monday, April 6, 2026, following a directive issued by the Chief Judge of the state, Daniel Iyobosa Okungbowa.

The directive was conveyed

in an official notice released through the Chief Registrar of the High Court of Justice, Benin City, Benson O. Osawaru Esq.

According to the statement, the vacation was declared in compliance with the provisions of Rules 4(b) and 5 of the High Court (Civil Procedure) Rules,

2018.

The notice stated that all High Courts across Edo State would remain closed during the vacation period, which will run until Friday, April 10, 2026.

Judicial activities and normal court proceedings are expected to resume on Monday,

April 13, 2026.

The Chief Judge advised members of the Nigerian Bar Association in the Benin, Ekpoma, Auchi, Igarra and Uromi branches, as well as the general public, to take note of the court's Easter break schedule and plan their legal activities accordingly.

10,000 widows receive Feb stipend as beneficiaries pray for Oborewori

ASABA

About 10,000 widows under the Delta State Widows Welfare Scheme have received their February 2026 monthly stipends from the Delta State Government, as beneficiaries across the three senatorial districts organised prayer and thanksgiving sessions for Governor Sheriff Oborewori.

Coordinator of the Delta State Widows Welfare Scheme and Executive Assistant to the Governor on Social Investment

Programmes, Elder Isioma Okonta, led members of the scheme's management team on a tour of the senatorial districts for special prayer sessions in appreciation of the governor's continued support for vulnerable widows in the state.

Speaking during the visit to Delta Central Senatorial District in Okpe Local Government Area, Okonta highlighted the importance of the Widows Welfare Scheme, noting that the initiative had continued to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable widows across the state.

He explained that the programme aligns with Governor Oborewori's MORE Agenda, which prioritises social welfare and inclusive development.

Okonta said the prompt payment of monthly stipends to beneficiaries had helped many widows meet their basic needs and regain a sense of dignity, adding that the scheme had become a strong support system for thousands of families.

At the end of the visit, beneficiaries offered prayers and thanksgiving for the governor, expressing appreciation

for what they described as his compassion and commitment to improving their welfare.

Many of the widows prayed for God's continued blessings upon the governor for what they described as "wiping the tears of vulnerable widows" in the state.

The beneficiaries also commended Okonta for his leadership of the scheme, particularly for ensuring prompt payment of stipends and approving routine meetings between beneficiaries and their various area coordinators.

Fear grips FCT communities as...

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During operations that same day, the bandits attacked a farm settlement, killed a vigilante on duty, abducted three workers, while six others escaped.

At Paze, residents said the attacks were recurring, with armed groups raiding nearby settlements and moving from house to house abducting residents.

No fewer than 12 people have been kidnapped by gunmen in the past two weeks, including women and children.

Among those kidnapped were four children of a pastor and a vigilante leader's wife and her sister, while in another incident a baby was left behind.

To address the latest threat and stop residents from fleeing in droves, the Byazhin Divisional Police Officer convened a meeting on Saturday.

At the meeting held at the palace of Kungaboku's community head, Chief Ishaya Jagaba, police confirmed the letter but assured residents of

proactive security measures.

Residents were advised to remain vigilant, regulate activities of commercial motorcyclists and scavengers, who sometimes act as informants for attackers.

They were also advised to profile new residents moving into the community to ensure they are not criminals or informants.

On the proposed construction of a police post in Kungaboku, the DPO urged residents to take proactive steps toward achieving the project.

He assured that regular day-and-night security patrols would be conducted within the community to prevent any attack.

For now, fear hangs over Kungaboku and Paze, with deserted homes and anxious residents awaiting whether promised security measures will prevent another attack.

Community leaders, however, urged residents not to panic but remain vigilant, assuring them that cooperation with security agencies could deter further violence.

Delta, NDDC, Chevron strengthen alliance on 70km Omadino-Okerenkoko...

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sisted that the state government would only support the project if it was awarded to a reputable construction company capable of delivering it successfully without abandoning the work midway.

He disclosed that the state government would establish a technical team to work with the NDDC and Chevron to review the project design, determine the current cost and outline the contributions expected from each stakeholder.

According to him, the team would also address critical issues such as right-of-way, possible realignment of sections of the road and other technical considerations required for the successful execution of the project.

The governor further noted that Delta State had consistently demonstrated its readiness to support major infrastructure initiatives, including those initiated by the Federal Government, adding that the state was currently undertaking several strategic road and flyover projects

on federal roads across the state.

Earlier, the Managing Director of the NDDC, Dr. Sam Ogbuku, said the commission and Chevron visited Delta State to brief the governor on the progress recorded in discussions regarding the project.

Ogbuku explained that the road project was originally awarded by the commission many years ago but remained incomplete, prompting the NDDC to explore partnership arrangements as part of efforts to fulfil the directive of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu

that all abandoned projects in the region must be completed.

He noted that the Omadino-Okerenkoko-Escravos Road would deliver enormous benefits to Delta State and the wider Niger Delta region by improving access to remote communities and economic activities.

"The benefit of this project to the region and to Delta State cannot be overemphasised. It is about 70 kilometres long with 29 bridges, and it will open up the area for socio-economic development," he said.

NEWS

Nigeria hosts 3.7m internally displaced persons —IOM

BENIN CITY

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has said that Nigeria currently hosts about 3.7 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who have lost their homes, livelihoods and,

in some cases, family members due to conflicts and disasters.

The IOM Nigeria Chief of Mission, Dimanche Sharon, disclosed this during a media engagement in Benin City, where she highlighted the organisation's ongoing interventions in migration management

and humanitarian support.

Sharon said the IOM has, since 2017, supported the safe return of about 9,000 migrants from Edo State back to Nigeria.

According to her, about 8,000 of the returnees have received reintegration support aimed at helping them rebuild

their lives and livelihoods.

She added that the organisation has assisted more than 1,100 victims of trafficking and provided psycho-social support to over 5,000 people to help them recover from trauma.

Sharon further disclosed that across Nigeria, the IOM has

supported the return of about 60,000 migrants since 2017, many of whom were survivors of exploitation and abuse along dangerous migration routes.

She noted that more than 1,200 migrants continue to return each year, while many unemployed young people remain vulnerable to trafficking and irregular migration.

Sharon stressed that sustained support from partners and donors remains essential to addressing the challenges

associated with migration and displacement.

She also noted that Edo State has taken important steps in addressing migration issues and commended the state government for its leadership in supporting returnees, protecting vulnerable persons and creating opportunities for young people.

According to her, with continued partnership and investment, migration can become safer, more orderly and a force for development rather than a risk.



SECURITY MEETING:

L-R: Director-General, National Intelligence Agency, (NIA), Amb. Mohammed Mohammed; Director-General, Department of State Services, (DSS), Mr Adeola Ajayi; Chief of Army Staff, Lt-Gen. Waidi Shaibu; Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Olufemi Oluyede; President Bola Tinubu; Minister of Defence, Gen. Christopher Musa; National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu; Inspector-General of Police, Mr Tunji Disu; Chief of Air Staff, Air Vice Marshal Sunday Aneke; Chief of Naval Staff, Rear Admiral Idi Abbas, and Chief of Defence Intelligence, Maj-Gen. Emmanuel Undiandeye, during security meeting at the Presidential Villa, Abuja.

Edo empowers 166 women with ₦100,000 grants at IWD grand finale

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has empowered 166 vulnerable women across the state with cash grants of ₦100,000 each to support their businesses and improve their livelihoods, as part of activities marking the 2026 International Women's Day (IWD) celebration.

The empowerment programme took place at the New Festival Hall, Government House, Benin City, during a one-day stakeholders' engagement and grand finale of the International Women's Day celebration organised by the Edo State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in collaboration with the Office of the First Lady and development partners.

Speaking at the event, Gov-

ernor Monday Okpebholo, who was represented by the Commissioner for Special Duties, Hon. Kenneth Ihensekhien, said the theme of the 2026 celebration, "Rights, Justice, Action for All Women and Girls," serves as a timely reminder that the progress of any society is closely tied to how well it protects the rights, dignity and opportunities of its women and girls.

He highlighted key initiatives of his administration aimed at improving the economic well-being of women, including a ₦1 billion loan facility provided for market women to strengthen their businesses, boost household incomes and enhance economic resilience in communities.

The governor reaffirmed his administration's commitment to policies and programmes that promote women's economic em-

powerment and wellbeing, stressing that empowering women remains fundamental to achieving sustainable development and inclusive growth in Edo State.

In her remarks, the Coordinator of the Office of the Edo State First Lady, Mrs Edesili Okpebholo Anani, who was represented by the Wife of the Secretary to the State Government, Barr. Nimata Umar Ikhilior, described International Women's Day as a significant global occasion for celebrating the achievements, resilience and contributions of women and girls.

She noted that the celebration also provides an opportunity to reflect on the progress made so far and the work that still needs to be done to ensure greater opportunities for women.

Mrs Anani explained that the theme of this year's celebration emphasises the need to move beyond discussions and commitments to concrete

actions that will protect the rights of women and girls, promote justice and expand opportunities for them to thrive.

Also speaking, the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice in Edo State, Prof. Roland Otaru, SAN, said the celebration offers a moment to recognise and celebrate the remarkable achievements, strength and compassion of women and girls.

He stressed that empowering women and safeguarding their rights remain essential for building a just, inclusive and progressive society.

Earlier in her welcome address, the Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Mrs Eugenia Abdallah, said the event was organised not only to celebrate women but also to recognise the strength, courage, resilience and limitless potential they bring to families, communities and society.

IWD: Edo NAWOJ visits Home of the Elderly, donates relief items

BENIN CITY

Nigeria Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), Edo State Chapter, on Thursday marked the 2026 International Women's Day with a charity visit and donation of relief materials to residents of the Catholic Home of the Elderly at St. Paul's Catholic Church, Airport Road, Benin City.

The outreach formed part of the association's activities to commemorate the global celebration themed "Give to Gain."

Leading the delegation of executive members and other journalists, the Chairperson of NAWOJ in Edo State, Comrade Habiba Sam, presented food items and toiletries to the elderly residents of the home.

Speaking during the visit, Comrade Sam said the association decided to celebrate the day with the elderly to demonstrate love, compassion and appreciation for their lives and contributions to society.

"We are pleased to be in your presence to mark this year's celebration with you, knowing that you are in your twilight years where you can hardly be seen. We hope our visit brings hope and good memories,

gladdening your hearts and making this day remarkable for us all," she said.

Responding on behalf of the Directress of the home, Rev. Sister Gloria Ochei, the caregiver, Mrs Rose John, expressed profound gratitude to the women journalists for the visit and their generous donation.

She commended the association for identifying with the elderly residents and prayed for God's blessings upon the group.

In an emotional moment, the oldest resident of the home, Mrs Comfort Solomon, aged 111, offered prayers for the visiting journalists, thanking them for their kindness and generosity.

Earlier, Mrs John had appealed to the journalists to use their various media platforms to raise public awareness about the existence and needs of the home.

"I plead with you all to assist us in taking care of our aged mothers by letting the public know there is a home like this. The Archbishop of Benin is sponsoring their total welfare, including medical care. We appeal to well-meaning Nigerians to assist with their care," she said.

The items donated included foodstuffs and toiletries meant to improve the welfare and comfort of the elderly residents.

Over 1,000 benefit as UBTH holds subsidised cataract surgery programme

BENIN CITY

More than 1,000 patients have benefited from a cataract screening and subsidised surgery programme organised by the Department of Ophthalmology at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH).

The programme, which ran from March 4 to March 6, 2026, attracted a large number of patients from across the South-South region of Nigeria seeking treatment for cataracts and other eye-related conditions.

Participants underwent free eye consultations and screenings during the programme.

Patients diagnosed with cataracts were also offered subsidised cataract surgery aimed at addressing their visual impairment and improving their quality of life.

The initiative has been widely commended by beneficiaries and stakeholders, who praised the leadership of the Chief Medical Director of UBTH, Prof. Idia Ize-Iyamu, for supporting programmes that improve access to specialised healthcare services.

The programme highlights the growing demand for accessible eye care in the region and the role of UBTH in providing specialised medical services.

Medical experts involved in the exercise said the initiative is giving renewed hope and better vision to many patients who had previously struggled with impaired sight.

They noted that the intervention aligns with ongoing efforts under the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to improve healthcare delivery and expand access to essential medical services across the country.

IWD: Edo govt honours UBTH CMD Ize-Iyamu with medical administrator award

BENIN CITY

The Chief Medical Director of the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH), Prof. Idia Nibokun Ize-Iyamu, has been honoured with the "Exceptional Medical Administrator of the Year" award in recognition of her contributions to healthcare administration.

The award was presented during the 2026 International

Women's Day celebration organised by the Edo State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development at the Government House, Benin City.

Presenting the award, the Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Mrs Eugenia Abdallah, described Prof. Ize-Iyamu as an accomplished professional and a role model whose achievements continue to inspire young girls and women across Edo State.

She praised the UBTH chief for her outstanding leadership, dedication and remarkable contributions to effective healthcare administration.

According to the commissioner, Prof. Ize-Iyamu's commitment to excellence, innovation and quality service has significantly strengthened healthcare delivery and improved the lives of many people.

"In recognition of your outstanding leadership, dedication

and exceptional contributions to effective healthcare administration, your commitment to excellence, innovation and quality service has significantly strengthened healthcare delivery and improved the lives of many. Your professionalism and vision continue to set a remarkable standard in medical administration," Abdallah stated.

The 2026 International Women's Day celebration was held under the theme "Rights, Justice, Action for All Women and Girls."

LAPO honours 743 staff for long service, excellence at 2026 awards

BENIN CITY

Founder of the Lift Above Poverty Organisation (LAPO), Godwin Ehigiamusoe, has reaffirmed the institution's enduring

commitment to lifting people from the lower rungs of the socio-economic ladder, restoring dignity and fostering hope.

Ehigiamusoe made the declaration in his welcome address at the 2026 LAPO Staff Long

Service and Meritorious Award Ceremony held in Benin City, where the organisation honoured 680 staff members for long service and 63 others for exceptional performance.

Speaking at the event, he stressed that LAPO's mission places people at the centre of its operations, noting that the organisation's growth and sustained impact over the years have been driven by the dedication, commitment and steadfast service of individuals who have consistently advanced its vision.

"To serve the underserved effectively, we need more than just

employees; we need torchbearers who possess uncommon commitment, unwavering diligence and unassailable integrity," he said.

"Today is set aside to shine a special light on those whose dedication has not just lasted, but flourished over the years."

According to him, for more than three decades these qualities have defined the LAPO workforce and helped transform the organisation from a mere vision into a leading development institution in Nigeria.

He noted that many of the awardees being celebrated were among the pioneers who helped lay the

foundation of the institution.

"You did not just show up for work; you showed up for a cause. Your sweat and sacrifice have contributed immensely to the credibility and impact of LAPO," Ehigiamusoe said.

He further challenged the honourees to serve as mentors to younger staff members, describing their experience as a "library of knowledge" that must be passed on to the next generation.

Earlier in her remarks, President of the LAPO Staff Multipurpose Cooperative Society, Mrs. Lilian Ehigiamusoe, described the ceremony as a moment of re-

flection, celebration and gratitude for staff whose dedication and resilience have shaped the organisation's journey.

"Institutions do not grow merely because of strategies or structures. They grow because of people who believe in a mission and work tirelessly to advance it," she said.

She disclosed that 680 members of the LAPO family were honoured for completing 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 years of uninterrupted service, describing the milestones as symbols of loyalty, perseverance and unwavering belief in the LAPO vision.

Delta CP seeks stronger collaboration with traditional rulers to tackle rising crime

EFFURUN (DELTA):

The Commissioner of Police, Delta Command, Mr. Aina Adesola, has called for greater collaboration between traditional rulers, political actors, and security agencies to address crime, particularly kidnapping, cultism, and armed robbery in Delta State.

Adesola made the appeal at the weekend during a courtesy visit to the palace of the Ovie of Uvwie Kingdom, Emmanuel Sideso, Abe 1, following an earlier inspection of the newly created Effurun Area Command office. He stressed that criminal investigations and prosecutions must proceed without interference from families of suspects

or political actors.

"It is only in Nigeria that families of suspected criminals attempt to influence investigations, sometimes resorting to blackmail or social media campaigns. In Uvwie Kingdom, the absence of such interference has contributed to declining crime," the CP said.

Adesola commended the Ovie for constituting a palace security committee tasked with monitoring criminal activity, urging residents to report incidents discreetly to Area Commanders or Divisional Police Officers for prompt action.

He also emphasised the importance of proper upbringing of children and careful screening of okada riders, some of whom are used by criminal elements.

C'River police confirm disruption of ADC political gathering by suspected thugs

CALABAR

The Cross River State Police Command has confirmed the disruption of an African Democratic Congress (ADC) political gathering in Bakassi Local Government Area by suspected opposing political thugs.

Police spokesman ASP Sunday Eitokpah said the incident occurred on Saturday, just as the event was about to begin.

"Hoodlums came from nowhere and scattered chairs, canopies, and sound equip-

ment, causing chaos," he said.

Tactical police officers were promptly deployed to prevent escalation, though the event could not continue. No arrests have been made.

Eitokpah added that similar disruptions occurred earlier in the week, prompting the ADC to raise alarms over attempts to hijack the party structure in the state.

The viral video of the incident has drawn national attention, highlighting concerns over political violence and intimidation during party activities.

Togo seeks increased electricity imports from Nigeria to meet surging demand

LAGOS

Togo has expressed strong interest in importing more electricity from Nigeria through the Niger Delta Power Holding Company (NDPHC) to meet rising domestic demand, particularly in industrial and commercial sectors.

The Managing Director of NDPHC, Jennifer Adighije, disclosed this after hosting a delegation from Togo's National Electricity Utility, Compagnie Energie Electrique du Togo (C.E.E.T), led by Director-General Débo-K'mba Barandao.

Currently, Togo imports about 75 megawatt-hours of electricity under a bilateral arrangement, which has bolstered power stability and economic activities.

Barandao said Nigeria's electricity imports have been crucial in providing reliable and affordable energy for house-

holds, businesses, and public institutions across Togo.

"With rising electricity demand and government initiatives to expand access nationwide, C.E.E.T is keen to increase the volume of electricity off-taken from NDPHC," he said.

Adighije assured that NDPHC operates multiple plants under the National Integrated Power Project, with sufficient capacity to support increased regional supply.

She noted that expansion would require structured financial arrangements and credible payment guarantees to reduce cross-border trade risks.

Both parties agreed to continue engagements to develop workable frameworks for increased electricity exports, aligning with broader Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) efforts to strengthen regional electricity trade.



2026, CONFIDENCE SELF-AWARENESS:

L-R: Founder, Africa Writer Poem and Articles, Titi Kush; Chison Mabia; General Manager, Dominion Television Broadcast, Roke Giwar-Onafuwa; Daniel Adaaja; Nancy Damlindi; Executive Director, Network for Justice and Inclusion Foundation/Guest Speaker, Toju Ikime, during the 2026, confidence self-awareness and thriving in love and marriage seminar Organised by Dominion Television, in Ibadan Oyo State.

Edo to host Project Leadership summit on sustainable devt

BENIN CITY

Benin City will on March 21, 2026 host the Project Leadership Summit 2026, an initiative designed to strengthen leadership development and improve project management practices aimed at achieving sustainable development outcomes.

The summit, themed "Beyond Delivery: Creating Sustainable Impact Through Projects," seeks to reposition the Edo State capital as a regional hub for project leadership excellence while equip-

ping professionals with the skills required to measure and create lasting value through well-managed initiatives.

Convener of the summit, Philip Neil Gideon, disclosed this while speaking with journalists in Benin City, noting that the event will attract participants from across the South-South geopolitical zone.

According to him, the summit is structured to provide practical training and knowledge sharing that will help both experienced professionals and new entrants in the field improve their com-

petence in project management and leadership.

Gideon explained that the South-South region currently witnesses significant project activities across sectors such as construction, energy, information and communication technology, and development initiatives, but lacks a coordinated platform where professionals can exchange ideas, strengthen standards and enhance project outcomes.

"The South-South has tremendous project activity across construction, energy, ICT and development, but we lack a

structured forum for professionals to learn, collaborate, elevate standards and transform development outcomes," he said.



GIDEON

Navy destroys illegal refinery, seizes nearly 4,000ltrs of stolen fuel in Rivere, C'River

PORT HARCOURT

The Nigerian Navy has intensified its nationwide crackdown on crude oil theft and illegal bunkering, scoring another major success by destroying a reactivated illegal refinery in Rivers State and intercepting nearly 4,000 litres of suspected stolen petroleum products in Calabar, Cross River State.

The Director of Naval Information, Capt. Abiodun Folorunsho, disclosed in a Sunday statement that personnel of the Nigerian Navy Ship SOROH, operating under Operation DELTA SENTINEL, discovered and destroyed a previously dismantled

illegal refinery at Okolomade Community in Abua-Odual Local Government Area (LGA).

The operation followed credible intelligence that the site had resumed illegal refining activities.

"Further exploitation of the area led to the discovery of additional refining equipment and storage facilities containing about 3,000 litres of product suspected to be illegally refined Automotive Gas Oil (AGO)," Folorunsho said.

He added that ovens, storage tanks, hoses, pipelines, and newly acquired metal components used for illegal refining were destroyed in line with standard operational procedures.

In a parallel operation, the Nigerian Navy Ship Victory intercepted about 3,950 litres of suspected stolen petroleum products at the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) area in Calabar. Intelligence had pointed to siphoning of petroleum products from vessels berthed at the port. Naval patrol teams traced the stolen products to a trailer park within the port facility. Upon sighting the naval officers, the suspects fled, leaving the illegally siphoned petroleum behind.

The recovered AGO, stored in drums and jerrycans, was evacuated to the naval base for further action.

Folorunsho said these op-

erations reflect the directive of the Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Adm. Idi Abbas, to intensify measures against crude oil theft, illegal bunkering, and other maritime crimes across Nigeria's maritime domain.

"The Navy remains committed to sustained operational tempo through intelligence-driven patrols and surveillance, ensuring that perpetrators of economic sabotage are neutralised," he said.

Industry observers note that the operations are part of a broader strategy to protect Nigeria's oil revenues, which are estimated to lose billions of naira annually to crude oil theft and illegal refining.

NEWS

Tinubu pledges review of media tariffs, urges press to deepen democratic oversight

ABUJA

The President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has pledged to review tariffs on newspaper and broadcasting materials as part of efforts to strengthen Nigeria's media industry and support its constitutional role in sustaining democracy.

The president made the commitment at the Presidential Villa in Abuja during an

inter-faith breaking of fast with media executives, where he commended media owners, editors and journalists for their contributions to informing citizens, shaping national discourse, creating employment opportunities and promoting democratic accountability.

Tinubu said responsible leadership requires making difficult decisions at the appropriate time, warning that failure by leaders to

act decisively during critical moments often amounts to an abdication of responsibility.

He explained that several reforms undertaken by his administration were painful but necessary measures aimed at stabilising the Nigerian economy and preventing the country from sliding deeper into financial distress.

"Leadership must, as a matter of responsibility, make decisions at the best time. Yes, I

accepted my predecessor's assets and liabilities because I applied for the job and was given it," the president said.

"But if anybody tells you it is easy, it is a lie. I thank you for your criticism at the beginning of this administration. You challenged and inspired me."

Tinubu noted that constructive criticism from the media had stimulated reflection within government and strengthened his resolve to deliver on the mandate given to him by Nigerians.

"We had to save the nation and bring it back from the brink.

Today, I can stand proudly before you and say that Nigeria has recovered from that difficult moment," he added.

Responding to requests for government intervention on tariffs affecting newsprint and broadcasting materials, the president assured media stakeholders that the issues raised would receive careful attention.

"We discussed the issue of tariffs earlier today. What I cannot confirm now is whether action has already been taken in the areas affecting you. But if I missed that, I will certainly go back to rectify whatever is necessary to ensure fairness and support for the media industry," he said.

Tinubu also urged journalists to extend their watchdog role beyond the Federal Government to other tiers of government, stressing that reforms implemented by the Federal Government had increased financial resources available to states and local governments.

Earlier, the Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, expressed confidence in the president's resilience and leadership, urging journalists to continue discharging their constitutional responsibilities with professionalism while holding governments at all levels accountable.



FORMALLY INDUCTED:

A group photograph of graduands of the Igbinedion College of Health Technology who were formally inducted as Community Health Extension Workers (CHEWs) over the weekend.

Police, agencies beef up security ahead of Soludo's second-term inauguration

AWKA

The Nigeria Police Force in Anambra State has intensified security arrangements in collaboration with other security agencies ahead of the March 17 inauguration of Governor Chukwuma Charles Soludo for a second term in office.

The Police Public Relations Officer in the state, Tochukwu Ikenga, disclosed this in a statement issued in Awka over the weekend.

According to the statement,

the command has stepped up security operations and public sensitization across the state to ensure a peaceful and hitch-free inauguration ceremony.

"The Anambra Police Command has intensified security measures across the state as preparations heighten for the second-term inauguration of the state governor," Ikenga said.

"The command, in collaboration with other security agencies, has also stepped up security advocacy, public sensitization and operational deployments across the state to ensure a peaceful and

hitch-free event."

He explained that 100 police personnel recently trained in arms handling and combat readiness at the Police College Orji River would complement officers already deployed across the state.

The personnel, he said, would reinforce strategic security deployments at critical locations, strengthen patrol operations and enhance intelligence gathering to maintain law and order before, during and after the inauguration ceremony.

The command urged resi-

dents, stakeholders and visitors expected in the state for the event to remain law-abiding and cooperate with security personnel.

Ikenga assured that adequate arrangements had been made to guarantee the safety of dignitaries and members of the public attending the event.

Soludo, who was re-elected on the platform of the All Progressives Grand Alliance, secured a second term in the November 8, 2025 off-cycle governorship election in Anambra State.

Police chief seeks stronger media partnership for nat'l security

ABUJA

The Inspector-General of Police, Olatunji Disu, has called for stronger collaboration between the police and the media to enhance public trust, improve security communication and strengthen national development.

Disu made the call while addressing the congress of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), FCT Council in Abuja, where he commended journalists in the Federal Capital Territory for keeping the public informed and supporting democratic governance.

The police chief described his relationship with journalists as one built on mutual respect and professionalism, stressing that media practitioners should be treated as respected professionals rather than as beggars.

"I have always had a respectful and mutually beneficial relationship with journalists. They are professionals who deserve respect and should never be treated as beggars," he said.

He emphasised that the media plays a vital role in shaping public discourse, promoting transparency and ensuring accountability in governance.

According to him, stronger collaboration between the Nigeria Police Force and journalists would help improve the dissemination of accurate information on security matters and strengthen public confidence in law enforcement.

Disu also urged both police officers and journalists to conduct themselves responsibly in the discharge of their duties, noting that good conduct leaves lasting impressions on society.

Responding, Chairman of the Nigeria Union of Journalists FCT Council, Grace Ike, congratulated the police chief on his appointment and described him as a longstanding friend of the press.

"We are confident in your leadership and assure you of our readiness to collaborate with the police in reporting security matters objectively," she said.

3 ex-Governors launch APC strategy c'ttee for 2027 Abia elections

UMUAHIA

Three former governors of Abia State have inaugurated a technical committee tasked with developing a strategy to secure victory for the All Progressives Congress in the 2027 general elections.

The committee, made up of former legislators and political appointees who served under past administrations in the state, was inaugurated in Umuahia at the weekend.

Speaking on behalf of the former governors, Senator Orji Uzor Kalu said the committee had been constituted in January and mandated to develop a blueprint that would guide the party's preparations ahead of the polls.

According to him, arrangements are being finalised for a strategic meeting between the committee and the former

governors to harmonise plans for the elections.

"It is a technical committee to work on modalities on how we are going to set up larger committees that will work for the victory of our party," Kalu said.

"We are showing people our commitment for our party to win from the President to the House of Assembly."

The committee is chaired by A. C. B. Agbazuer, who served as Chief of Staff during the administration of former governor Okezie Ikpeazu.

Members of the committee include former government officials who served in Abia State between 1999 and 2023.

Meanwhile, Mascot Uzor Kalu, younger brother of Orji Uzor Kalu, used the occasion to reaffirm his intention to contest the 2027 governorship election on the platform of the APC.

Igbinedion College of Tech inducts 73 Community Health Extension Workers

BENIN CITY

Seventy-three graduands of the Igbinedion College of Health Technology were formally inducted as Community Health Extension Workers (CHEWs) over the weekend in a ceremony that celebrated their academic achievements, with a call on them to uphold professionalism, discipline, and integrity as ambassadors of the institution.

The second oath-taking and induction ceremony, had the Chief Medical Director of Igbinedion University Teaching Hospital, Dr. Ya'U Abubakar

Gagarawa, as Guest of Honour. Dr. Gagarawa commended the graduands for successfully completing their studies and obtaining the certification that qualifies them to practise in Nigeria's healthcare system.

Speaking on the role of CHEWs in the health sector, the keynote speaker, Dr. Francis Osemhoahu Erah, emphasised their critical contribution to primary healthcare delivery, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

"The stage you are now in is a transition. You have completed this journey and are certified to practise, but the next

phase—expertise and professional growth is just beginning. Your duty is to keep learning, uphold ethical standards, and serve humanity," he urged the graduands.

The Provost and Chairman of the College, Dr. Osaretin Enadeghe, alongside Dr. Edwin Ojiego, congratulated the students, encouraging them to remain disciplined and dedicated as they enter the medical profession.

Dr. Enadeghe reminded them that as frontline health workers, they are essential in responding to emergencies, promoting community health, and delivering quality care.

Troops kill 10 terrorists, foil ISWAP infiltration in Borno

ABUJA

Troops of the Nigerian Army have eliminated 10 terrorists, apprehended suspects and rescued kidnapped victims during coordinated operations conducted across several theatres of operation in the country.

A credible source at the Army Headquarters disclosed that the successes were recorded in ongoing military campaigns under Operation Hadin Kai, Operation Fansan Yamma, Operation UDO KA and Operation OPEP.

In the North-East, troops of Operation Hadin Kai thwarted an infiltration attempt by fight-

ers of the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) at Bitta in Borno State.

According to the source, the insurgents were forced to retreat after encountering coordinated spoiling attacks and superior firepower from the troops.

The failed infiltration came shortly after terrorists launched attacks on troops' positions at Banki and Azir Bridge, both of which were successfully repelled.

The repeated failed assaults, the source said, represented another significant setback for the insurgents within a 24-hour period and underscored the sustained pressure being mounted by troops across the theatre of operation.

He further disclosed that

troops conducting an ambush along the Kirawa-Gakara axis in Gwoza Local Government Area engaged suspected terrorist logistics suppliers, forcing them to abandon supplies and flee with possible gunshot wounds.

Items recovered at the scene included four bicycles and seven bags of groundnuts believed to be meant for insurgents.

"In Yunusari Local Government Area of Yobe State, troops working with members of the Civilian Joint Task Force arrested a suspected ISWAP/

JAS spy during patrol operations," the source added.

In the North-West, troops operating under Operation Fansan Yamma launched an offensive against terrorist camps in Shinkafi Local Government Area of Zamfara State, where one terrorist was neutralised.

During the operation, troops recovered an AK-47 rifle, ammunition and a motorcycle.

Similarly, troops under Operation UDO KA in Obubra Local Government Area of Cross River State engaged

armed criminals and neutralised nine terrorists.

During the operation, troops uncovered a local gun-making factory, recovering three AK-47 magazines, 10 locally made double-barrel guns and weapon fabrication tools.

The illegal facility was subsequently destroyed on site.

The source also confirmed that troops apprehended two suspected ammunition couriers transporting 192 rounds of ammunition, while further searches led to the recovery of locally fabricated

weapons and mortar tubes.

Troops also rescued five civilians from terrorist captivity during separate operations, while four victims who escaped from a terrorist enclave were intercepted and assisted by troops in Faskari Local Government Area of Katsina State.

In another development, troops rescued a kidnapped victim during pursuit operations in Wase Local Government Area of Plateau State after terrorists fled under sustained pressure from advancing soldiers.

Defence Ministry pushes for prompt payment of Military retirees' pensions

ABUJA

The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, Mr Richard Pheelangwah, has called on the Military Pensions Board (MPB) to prioritise the prompt payment of pensions to retired military personnel.

Pheelangwah made the appeal during a visit to the headquarters of the Board in Abuja, according to a statement issued at the weekend by Queenet Iheoma-Hart on behalf of the Director of Press and Public Relations.

He emphasised the crucial role played by the Board in safeguarding the welfare of retired members of the armed forces and urged that pension payments should be prioritised even before those of serving officers.

According to him, military veterans represent a "valuable national asset," stressing that

timely and accurate pension administration is both a moral obligation and a national responsibility.

He noted that many retired personnel rely heavily on their entitlements for their livelihood and wellbeing, warning that delays or administrative challenges could have serious consequences for them and their families.

The permanent secretary further encouraged the Board to strengthen its systems in order to improve efficiency and ensure seamless disbursement of pensions and gratuities.

Pheelangwah reiterated the ministry's full support for the Board's initiatives, stressing that efficient pension administration remains a critical component of the welfare structure sustaining both serving and retired military personnel.

Responding, the Chairman of the Board, Air Vice Marshal Mikail Abdullaheem, assured



ODUNAIYA VISITS TO MPB:

Chairman, Military Pensions Board (MPB), Air Vice Marshal Mikail Abdullaheem (R), presenting a souvenir to the Executive Secretary, Pension Transitional Arrangement Directorate (PTAD), Ms Tolulope Odunaiya, during the latter's visit to MPB in Abuja.

Bird strike forces Air Peace Abuja-London flight to return

LAGOS

The Air Peace has explained that its Abuja-London flight returned shortly after take-off due to a windshield crack suspected to have been caused by a bird strike.

The airline disclosed this in a statement issued by its management at the weekend in Lagos, stressing that no passenger was abandoned or stranded during the incident.

According to the airline, the aircraft made an air return strictly in compliance with aviation safety procedures.

"The air return occurred due

to a windshield crack suspected to be caused by a bird strike on our Abuja-London Heathrow flight. The decision to return to base was strictly in line with established aviation safety protocols," the statement said.

The airline added that the aircraft landed safely at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja, where passengers disembarked without incident while engineers immediately commenced technical checks.

Air Peace stated that all affected passengers were properly catered for in line with global aviation best practices.

Passengers were offered op-

tions of travelling the same day through the airline's Lagos-Gatwick route or departing the next day from Abuja.

Most passengers were flown free of charge to Lagos to connect the Gatwick service, while others opted to depart from Abuja the following day.

The airline also provided hotel accommodation for passengers who required it.

Air Peace therefore dismissed reports suggesting that passengers were abandoned.

"We clarify that claims that passengers were abandoned or stranded are inaccurate and we wonder where such narratives

originated," the airline said.

The carrier added that it maintains a strong working relationship with the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority and remains fully committed to regulatory compliance and passenger protection.

Air Peace thanked passengers for their patience and understanding during the disruption.

"We decry the deliberate bashing and persistent hounding of Air Peace for unfounded reasons," the statement added, reiterating that safety remains the cornerstone of its operations across its domestic and international network.

NSCDC arrests suspected child traffickers, rescues 5 babies in Imo

OWERRI

The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) in Imo State has arrested a 52-year-old man, Tochukwu Ogaranya, along with five pregnant women, aged between 25 and 33 years over alleged child trafficking.

The command also rescued five newborn babies from the suspects.

The NSCDC Commandant in Imo State, Mr Basil Igwebueze, disclosed this while briefing journalists in Owerri on recent operations carried out by the command.

Igwebueze said the suspects, including an alleged accomplice identified as Godwin Nnamdi, 47, were arrested at an orphanage where they were allegedly carrying out the illicit activities.

He explained that the discovery followed an incident on March 14 when one of the corps' officers noticed a preg-

nant teenager running away from the orphanage located at the World Bank area of Owerri.

"This prompted my officers to move into action at the orphanage, arrest the owner of the orphanage and rescue the pregnant women and newborn babies," he said.

The commandant described child trafficking as a "heinous crime" and urged residents of the state to remain vigilant and report suspicious activities to security agencies.

"If the residents of the state had not assisted us with the necessary information, the command would not have uncovered such a criminal act," he said.

CONFIRMATION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **IMO OA OLOHITARE MERCY** and **IMO OA OHIO TARE MERCY** are one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known and address as **IMO OA OLOHITARE MERCY**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

Foundation distributes N39m Zakat to 140 needy Muslims in Ibadan

IBADAN

An Islamic organisation, The Rightly Guided Foundation (TRGF), has distributed N39 million in Zakat to 140 less privileged Muslims in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Zakat, the third pillar of Islam, requires Muslims whose wealth exceeds a certain threshold to donate 2.5 percent of their wealth annually to assist the needy.

The Ameer of the foundation, Malam Ibrahim Bello,

said the organisation, established in 2019 to address challenges faced by Muslims, particularly during the Ramadan period had continued to impact lives positively.

Bello explained that the foundation, in collaboration with The Merciful Foundation in Houston, Texas, United States, had been paying for WAEC and JAMB registration forms annually for Muslim students, distributing food items and cash to the less privileged and providing meals for prison inmates.

He said the foundation commenced its Zakat distribution programme in 2025 with N10 million, while the amount had increased to N39 million in 2026.

"The foundation's donations keep increasing yearly," Bello said, adding that the organisation places high priority on trust and transparency in distributing the funds entrusted to it.

According to him, the initiative is aimed at reducing poverty in society through re-

sponsible distribution of Zakat to Muslims in need.

The Secretary of the foundation, Prof. Moruf Oke, said the N39 million would be shared among 140 beneficiaries.

He explained that each beneficiary would receive between N150,000 and N3 million depending on their specific needs.

"These amounts were determined based on our interactions with the selected beneficiaries and what they require to help their businesses grow and thrive," he said.

NEWS

Kano law officers' strike: Ex-NBA Chairman calls for urgent dialogue

ABUJA

Former Chairman of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Abuja branch, Mr Afam Okeke, has called on the Kano State Government and the leadership of the Law Officers Association of Nigeria (LOAN) to return to the negotiation table in a bid to resolve the ongoing strike by law officers in the state.

Okeke made the appeal in an interview with journalists at the weekend in Abuja, warning that the industrial action had generated a growing concern within the legal community and among members of the public

who rely on the smooth functioning of the justice system.

He noted that law officers occupy strategic positions in the administration of justice and in safeguarding the rule of law, stressing that their roles are too critical to be disrupted for prolonged periods.

According to him, any extended interruption in their services inevitably undermines access to justice for citizens.

"Law officers play critical roles in the administration of justice and the protection of the rule of law. Therefore, any prolonged disruption of their services inevitably impacts access to justice for citizens," he said.

While acknowledging that workers have the legitimate right to organise and embark on lawful industrial action, Okeke stressed that labour disputes should ideally be resolved through constructive engagement.

"It is important to state that the right of workers to organise and engage in lawful industrial action is a fundamental labour right recognised under Nigerian labour laws and international labour standards.

"However, the significance of pursuing amicable resolution of labour disputes cannot be overstated, as it de-escalates tension and mitigates potential strain on existing labour relations," he said.

He therefore urged both parties to explore dialogue, mediation and conciliation as effective pathways to achieving a sustainable resolution to the impasse.

Okeke further appealed to the Kano State Government and the leadership of the association to engage each other in good faith and work towards addressing the contentious issues.

According to him, a solution that addresses the legitimate welfare concerns of the law officers while ensuring the uninterrupted administration of justice would serve the best interests of the state and the public.

"The justice sector is a vital pillar of democratic govern-

ance, and every effort should be made to ensure that it continues to function efficiently and effectively.

"It is my hope that through

mutual understanding, compromise and commitment to the rule of law, this dispute will be resolved promptly and amicably," he added.

UN women, SSDO push justice reforms as GBV survivors face barriers in Nigeria

ABUJA

The United Nations Women (UN Women) and the South Saharan Social Development Organisation (SSDO) have called for urgent reforms to reduce the barriers preventing Nigerian women and girls from accessing justice, particularly survivors of gender-based violence (GBV).

The call was made during the launch of an anthology titled "The Cost of Justice: Women's Voices of Resilience in Nigeria," organised as part of activities marking the 2026 International Women's Day in Abuja.

The publication documents the experiences, voices and resilience of Nigerian women who have navigated the country's justice system while seeking redress for various forms of abuse.

Speaking at the event, the UN Women Country Representative to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Ms Beatrice Eyong, said the anthology highlights the struggles faced by survivors of GBV in their pursuit of justice.

She noted that the theme of International Women's Day 2026, "Rights, Justice, Actions for All Women and Girls," underscores the urgent need to protect women's rights and ensure that justice is accessible to

all.

"For many women and girls, especially survivors of GBV, justice remains difficult to access," Eyong said.

She explained that many survivors face multiple barriers, including financial constraints, prolonged legal procedures, stigma and limited access to legal support.

"These challenges can discourage women from reporting abuse or pursuing justice, leaving violations unaddressed and perpetrators unaccountable," she said.

Eyong noted that although Nigeria had made progress in strengthening legal frameworks and raising awareness about GBV, ensuring that women can access justice safely and affordably remains a major priority.

She cited statistics showing that 27,698 cases of sexual and gender-based violence were reported in Nigeria between 2020 and 2023, underscoring the magnitude of the problem.

She also disclosed that between 2017 and 2020, at least 17,664 survivors accessed Sexual Assault Referral Centres across the country, indicating increasing reporting and a growing demand for medical and psychosocial support services.



NEWS CONFERENCE:

L-R: Human Resources Manager, Emiral Global (EG), Mr Obioma Enyinnaya; Franchise Officer, EG, Ms Juliet Ebere; Member Advisory Board, EG, Chief Hyacinth Aniagolu; Administration Officer, EG, Ms Chidinma Agomoh and Director of Marketing Enugu, EG, Mr Kelechukwu Oti during a news conference on Sunday on the forthcoming launch of EG Health Products in Enugu.

Appeal Court reinstates Zamfara Rep Gummi, voids judgment over party defection

ABUJA

The Court of Appeal sitting in Abuja has set aside the judgment of the Federal High Court which earlier sacked Abubakar Gummi as the member representing Gummi/Bukkuyum Federal Constituency of Zamfara State in the House of Representatives.

In a unanimous judgment delivered on Friday, a three-member panel of the appellate court held that the trial court erred when it declared Gummi's seat vacant on the grounds that he defected from the Peoples Dem-

ocratic Party (PDP) to the All Progressives Congress (APC).

Justice Oyebiola Oyewumi, who delivered the lead judgment, held that the lawmaker had an inherent right to abandon the PDP in view of the prevailing crisis within the party.

Gummi was elected into the House of Representatives on the platform of the PDP, but later defected to the APC, citing the leadership crisis that had engulfed the party, particularly at the national level.

The appellate court held that the circumstances surrounding the crisis within the PDP justi-

fied the lawmaker's decision to switch political parties.

Justice Oyewumi upheld the reasons advanced by Gummi in support of his defection, noting that a political office holder could legitimately seek a more stable platform where his current party was threatened by internal disarray.

The court further ruled that a party member has the right to seek a better political platform to contest elections if his or her existing platform is weakened or threatened.

Consequently, the court allowed the appeal marked CA/ABJ/CV/1606/2025 and set aside the October 30, 2025 judgment

of Justice Obiora Egwuatu of the Federal High Court in Abuja.

The earlier ruling, delivered in suit FHC/ABJ/CS/1803/2024, had been instituted by the PDP and the party's Zamfara State Chairman, Jamilu Jibomagayaki.

The Court of Appeal also awarded a cost of N1 million against the PDP and Jibomagayaki in favour of Gummi.

Reacting to the development, Gummi reiterated that the internal crisis within the PDP had created a situation where he could no longer effectively represent his constituents or ensure they benefited from democratic governance without undue interference.

Ibadan court dissolves troubled union over alleged screwdriver attacks

IBADAN

A Grade A Customary Court sitting at Mapo in Ibadan has dissolved a six-year-old relationship between Sherifat Olasunkanmi and her estranged partner, Ahmed, following allegations of repeated violent attacks involving a screwdriver.

Delivering judgment, the President of the court, Mrs O. E. Owoseni, held that persistent threats to life within the relationship could lead to more serious consequences if left unresolved.

The court ruled that the relationship between the parties amounted to mere cohabitation and did not constitute a valid marriage under customary law.

Owoseni explained that both parties had admitted in their testimonies that no bride price was paid and that there was no formal handing over of the bride to the groom's family.

Consequently, the court ordered the dissolution of the union.

The court also awarded custody of the four-year-old child

from the relationship to the mother, Olasunkanmi, noting that the child was still in his formative years and would be better cared for by her.

However, the court directed that Ahmed should be granted reasonable access to the child and ordered him to take full responsibility for the child's welfare, including education and medical care.

The court also granted a restraining order preventing Ahmed from harassing, threatening or interfering with the private life of the petitioner.

Earlier in his testimony, Ahmed, a commercial tri-cyclist residing in the Muslim-Boluwaduro area of Ibadan, told the court that he could no longer continue living with Olasunkanmi because of what he described as her violent behaviour.

According to him, after she moved into his residence in 2020, she frequently displayed uncontrollable anger and often picked fights with him.

"At the slightest provocation, she would bring out a screwdriver with the intention of stabbing me," he alleged.

Advocacy groups seek probe of alleged cyberbullying in Mohbad Justice campaign

LAGOS

A coalition of civil society organisations campaigning for justice in the death of Nigerian singer Ilerioluwa Aloba, popularly known as Mohbad, has called on the police to investigate alleged cyberbullying and online harassment targeting members of the group.

The Coalition of Justice Advocates (CJA), in collaboration with Olori Ebi Platform

Worldwide, made the demand during a press briefing in Lagos at the weekend.

The groups accused a Germany-based TikTok user, Mrs Comfort Ilesanmi, popularly known online as Comfy, of orchestrating acts of cyberbullying, defamation and unlawful processing of personal data against members of the coalition and their families.

According to the coalition, its members had been actively involved in sustained advocacy and

public campaigns seeking justice over the circumstances surrounding Mohbad's death when the alleged harassment began.

A member of the coalition, Mr Kayode Adebisi, who spoke on behalf of the group, stressed that the pursuit of justice must remain lawful and respectful of the rights and dignity of all individuals.

"We, as a group fighting for justice for Mohbad, recognise the responsibility we all share — institutions, professionals and

citizens alike — to ensure that justice is not only done, but seen to be done," Adebisi said.

He alleged that the TikTok user had used several monetised social media accounts to bully members of the coalition by manipulating their photographs and circulating them online.

"There are several social media handles allegedly used by this woman to bully our members by cropping their images into coffins and writing 'RIP' on their pictures," he said.

Foreign

NEWS

Severe flooding kills 66 in Kenya, as heavy rains continue

A further four people have died in Kenya after heavy rain caused widespread flooding, police said, taking the number to have died in the past week to at least 66.

The capital, Nairobi, was hit by more heavy rain overnight although no new deaths were reported.

Eleven people were rescued after a minibus taxi, known locally as a matatu, got stuck as water rose in Nairobi, according to the Kenya Red Cross, while two children were saved from a flooded house.

Heavy rainfall over the past week has triggered flash floods as rivers have burst their banks, flooding homes and damaging roads, power- and water- lines.

Some roads have been closed after bridges were dam-

aged in Nairobi, while some schools were also flooded after Saturday's downpour.

The interior ministry warned on Sunday that different parts of the country were continuing to experience heavy rains, increasing the risk of flooding.

Authorities have urged residents in low-lying areas to move to safer ground and more than 2,000 people have had to leave their homes to seek shelter.

Police say search-and-rescue operations are continuing following the "torrential rain and subsequent devastating flooding affecting various parts of the country".

Half of those killed - 33 - have been in Nairobi, where poor drainage has been a major factor, along with the obstruction of rivers and waterways caused

by unregulated development.

Businessman Kareem Hassan Ali, who lives in the Parklands area of Nairobi, told the BBC there was about two metres (6.5ft) of water outside his block of flats on Saturday night, although this had now subsided.

His flat was not flooded but cars in the underground parking area were submerged, he said.

Another Parklands resident, auditor Deenesh Patel, said he had spent the night at a friend's house. "I saw the warning and didn't want to take any risks."

Both men called on officials to do more to improve drainage and stop construction that blocked rivers.

"The rain was heavy but this happens each year," said Patel. "Other low-lying areas were not affected because they have

the proper infrastructure."

President William Ruto on Sunday said authorities were working to clear blocked drainage systems but Ali said they had seen no-one and the Parklands Residents Association had cleared up the debris themselves.

Ruto also said emergency food supplies and medical assistance were being delivered to those affected.

The flooding has not just affected Kenya.

More than 100 people have been killed in neighbouring Ethiopia following floods and landslides in the south of the country.

Many factors contribute to flooding, but a warming atmosphere caused by climate change makes extreme rainfall more likely.

Zelensky accuses EU allies of 'blackmail' in oil pipeline row

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has accused European allies of seeking to "blackmail" Kyiv into reopening a pipeline transporting Russian oil to Hungary and Slovakia.

He said restoring the flow of Russian crude oil through Ukraine into the European Union (EU) would be like lifting economic sanctions on Moscow.

Ukraine says the Soviet-era Druzhba oil pipeline was damaged by Russian air strikes in January and has yet to be repaired.

Hungary depends on Russian energy and is blocking both fresh EU sanctions on Moscow and a vital €90bn (\$103bn; £78bn) loan for Kyiv until the pipeline is reopened.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has made hostility towards Ukraine a key issue ahead of April elections. His party is entering the race trailing behind in opinion polls.

The EU has urged Zelensky to repair the pipeline quickly and is asking him to allow inspectors to visit the damage.

Some EU officials fear Zelensky's resistance may help Orban win re-election.

But talking to reporters in Kyiv, including the BBC, Zelensky said he was simply opposed in principle to al-

lowing Russian oil to transit through Ukraine while the EU sanctioned its sale elsewhere.

He said: "We either sell Russian oil or we don't. Because [the EU] are forcing me to restore Druzhba.

"How is this different from lifting sanctions on the Russians? Why can we in one case tell the United States that we oppose lifting sanctions, while on the other hand forcing Ukraine to resume oil transit through Druzhba - and at a political price that effectively pays for anti-European policies?"

Zelensky's comments come after the US loosened sanctions preventing other countries buying Russian oil in order to ease the energy supply crunch sparked by the US-Israel war with Iran. The move has drawn criticism from a number of European leaders.

"If we have decided to restore Russian oil supplies, then I want them to know that I am against it. And there is no need to accuse me of blocking anything. I am not blocking it," Zelensky said.

"I am saying openly: I am against it. But if I am given conditions that Ukraine will not receive weapons, then, excuse me, I am powerless on this issue. I told our friends in Europe that this is called blackmail."



KENYA FLOOD:

Nairobi has been worst hit by the flooding over the past week

Israeli forces kill Palestinian couple and two of their children in occupied West Bank

Palestinians gathered to mourn the deaths of the family in Tammoun

A Palestinian husband and wife, and two of their young children, have been shot and killed by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank.

The Bani Odeh family were travelling in their car in the town of Tammoun, in the northern West Bank, when Israeli forces opened fire.

Two of their other children were injured but survived.

Israeli authorities said a joint operation by the army and Israel's paramilitary border police had been taking place in the town at time. They claim the car accelerated towards Israeli forces, who felt endangered and responded by shooting.

"As a result, four Palestinians in the vehicle were killed," a statement from the Israeli military and police said, adding that the circumstances of the incident were being investigated.

The Palestinian health min-

istry said that four of the family members - parents Ali and Waad, and two of their children, five-year-old Mohammed and seven-year-old Othman - were killed.

They all arrived at the hospital with gunshot wounds to the face and head, the ministry said.

Two older children, aged eight and 11, who had also been travelling in the car and witnessed the deaths of their family, survived with minor in-

juries from shrapnel.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said in a statement that Israeli forces had initially prevented their crews from reaching the injured inside the car and ordered them to leave the area.

The UN says much of the occupied West Bank has remained under heightened movement restrictions since the outbreak of the war between the US, Israel and Iran on 28 February.

Violent attacks have also continued, according to Palestinian authorities and the UN.

More broadly, violence there has risen sharply since the 7 October 2023 Hamas attacks, which triggered the war in Gaza.

Between 7 October 2023 and 8 March 2026, the UN's humanitarian affairs office, OCHA, said 1,064 Palestinians were killed in the occupied West Bank, including at least 231 children.

Ugandan opposition leader goes abroad after two months in hiding

Ugandan opposition leader Bobi Wine says he has left the country after spending two months in hiding following January's disputed election.

Bobi Wine says he has gone abroad for "critical engagements" and to help mobilise the international community against President Yoweri Museveni.

The pop star turned politician, whose real name is Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, repeated his

claim to have won the presidential election, saying it had been rigged in favour of Museveni, who has been in power since 1986.

Museveni, 81, won the election with 72% of the vote and has accused the opposition of seeking to overturn the results through violence.

Wine's statement, posted on a five-minute video on X, called for targeted sanctions against Museveni. It was his first public

appearance in weeks.

While some members of the government have denied that the security forces are looking for Bobi Wine, Museveni's son, Gen Muhoozi Kainerugaba, who is head of the country's military, said he was "wanted dead or alive" and also threatened to castrate him. Those messages have since been deleted from his X account.

He did not accuse Wine of committing any specific offences.

US names six crew killed in refuelling plane crash in Iraq

The US military has named all six crew members who were killed when their refuelling aircraft crashed in Iraq.

The Pentagon said those on board the KC-135 plane were: John Klinner, 33, from Alabama, 31-year-old Ariana Savino from Washington, Ashley Pruitt, 34, from Kentucky, 38-year-old Seth Koval from Indiana, and Ohio natives Curtis Angst, 30, and Tyler Simmons, 28.

The first three were US Air Force personnel, and the latter three served in the National Guard.

The US military previously said neither hostile nor friendly fire were involved in the loss of the plane, which had been involved in US operations against Iran.

The aircraft had been on a combat mission when it went down over western Iraq and was one of two planes involved in the incident. The second landed safely.

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth hailed the aircraft's crew members as "American heroes".

Iran war: Follow live updates

US officials told CBS News, the BBC's US partner, that the incident may have involved a midair collision, but said they were still investigating the cause of the crash.

US Central Command, which is responsible for operations in the Middle East region, earlier described the crash as happening over friendly airspace.

An Iraqi intelligence source told CBS the first plane went down near Turabil, located on the Iraqi-Jordanian border.

Pro-Iranian militias operate in western Iraq. Iran's military claimed on state TV that an allied group had targeted the plane with a missile.

Thursday's crash brings the official US military death toll in the US-Israel war with Iran, which began a fortnight ago, to 13. Six more soldiers have been killed in Kuwait and another in Saudi Arabia.

To date, the US military has lost at least four aircraft during the war, which began with US and Israeli launching air strikes on Iran, including one that killed its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

In early March, three F-15 fighter jets were shot down in "an apparent friendly fire incident" over Kuwait, officials said. All six crew members were able to safely eject.

NEWS

Foreign

French police detain brothers over 'lethal and antisemitic' plot

French anti-terror prosecutors have opened an investigation into two brothers suspected of plotting a "lethal and antisemitic" attack.

They say the men – described as Moroccan-Italian nationals aged 20 and 22 – were picked up last week in a car in northern France.

Officers found a loaded semi-automatic weapon, a bottle of hydrochloric acid and a flag of the Islamic State group in the vehicle, the prosecutors say.

As the current war in the Middle East enters its third week, many countries are on heightened alert for possible terror attacks motivated by the conflict. Jewish sites have been targeted with attacks in the US, the Netherlands and Belgium this week.

The pair are said to have arrived in France with their parents in 2017, after the family spent several years in Italy.

Anti-terrorist prosecutors said in a statement that, after concluding they could not wage jihad in Syria or the Palestinian territories, the brothers had in recent weeks developed a "terrorist plan in France, for which they aspired

to martyrdom".

Analysis of seized digital devices, together with statements from relatives, revealed a "radicalisation of the two brothers over the past two years, as well as a marked intensification of their jihadist commitment in the days preceding their arrest", officials said.

The two brothers had taken steps in planning a "lethal and antisemitic" attack, the statement added, without giving specifics on the nature of the alleged plot.

There have been concerns that the threat of violence to Jewish communities around the world could be exacerbated due to the US-Israeli strikes on Iran.

An explosion at a Jewish school in Amsterdam on Saturday came a day after a suspected arson attack on a synagogue in Rotterdam the day prior.

A synagogue in the Belgian city of Liège was damaged in an explosion

In the US state of Michigan, a Lebanon-born gunman rammed a pickup truck laden with fireworks and petrol into a synagogue on Thursday. The suspect killed himself, police said.

We will intervene on energy bills if necessary, says Miliband

Energy Secretary Ed Miliband has said "if it's necessary to intervene, we will" if people's energy costs surge due to the US-Israel war in Iran.

Speaking on the BBC's Sunday programme, Miliband left the door open to interventions on fuel duty and energy bills if the impact of the Gulf crisis demands it.

"We're going to stand by people in this crisis," he said, adding the government was "preparing for all eventualities".

Oil and gas prices have surged due to the US-Israel war in Iran and, with no clear indication of how long conflict will continue, economists have warned about the possible impact on the global economy and cost of living.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves is expected to offer a support package to households struggling with higher heating oil costs this week.

Petrol prices have jumped to an 18-month high, according to motoring organisation the RAC, leading to Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer warning his government "will step in" if fuel companies "try to rip off customers" last week.

Shown that the largest chunk of petrol cost at the pump was fuel duty at 38%, Miliband was asked whether the government would maintain the current freeze on fuel duty from September.

"With five months to go until September, we'll have to see where we are," he said, adding: "We will stand by the British people in this crisis and we will do what it takes to do that."

Last week, Miliband got into a row with petrol retailers after warning them the independent watchdog the Competition and Markets

Authority (CMA) was keeping a close eye on potential "price gouging" around the current conflict.

Petrol retailers labelled the warnings "inflammatory language" and responded by briefly threatening to withdraw from a Downing Street meeting, although they did eventually attend.

Asked what evidence he had for suggesting retailers were unfairly pricing fuel, Miliband said CMA findings showed profits remained "persistently high" and price competition between petrol stations was "weak" in December.

He said: "There is evidence this market isn't working well... Some of them [fuel retailers] didn't like it but that's tough because we're going to fight for the British people in this conflict."

The energy secretary also said there were recent "bad examples" in the heating oil sector, commonly used in rural areas not connected to the main gas grid - with Reeves' support package expected to be announced early next week.

"I don't think these are markets that have been working well, frankly; I think there's a longer term look that needs to be done about how these markets are working," Miliband said.

"The thing I learned from previous crisis was the British people expect us to be by their side and no vested interest, no powerful interest, will stand in the way of that."

Most people with gas and electric powered heating will still see their energy prices fall for the next three months, following a shake-up of government charges, so any impact of the war will be delayed until the autumn - but bills could rise at that point.



OIL VESSEL SHIP:

A tanker anchored in Muscat, Oman near the strait on 7 March.

UK looking at all options to secure Strait of Hormuz, says Miliband

The UK is looking at "any options" - including working with the US and allies - to secure key oil shipping routes through the Strait of Hormuz, Ed Miliband has said.

It comes after US President Donald Trump on Saturday threatened to open the channel "one way or another" and urged countries including the UK, China, and France to send warships to the waterway.

The energy secretary told the BBC it was "very important" that the strait be made safe for shipping, but refused to give details of options being considered by the government.

Iran's effective blockage of the strait, one of the world's most important shipping channels, has had a catastrophic impact on global supply chains and energy prices.

According to a statement attributed to Iran's new Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, Iran will continue blocking the strait, as a means of political and economic pressure against the US.

As the US and Israel's war with Iran enters its third week, a number of ships are said to have been attacked as they attempted to navigate the narrow strait - through which about 20% of the world's oil usually passes.

There are also concerns that Iran has placed mines in the passage as part of its attempts to hinder shipping.

Speaking on BBC One's Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg programme, Miliband said it was a "priority" for the strait to be reopened and that there were "different ways we can contribute, including with mine-hunting drones".

Pressed on whether the UK

was considering sending drones or ships to the region, Miliband responded: "You can rest assured that any options that can help to get the strait reopened are being looked at in concert with our allies."

Refusing to be drawn into operational details, Miliband reiterated that "ending the conflict is the best and surest way to get the strait reopened".

Speaking later on the same programme, shadow energy secretary Claire Coutinho said the UK should explore sending ships or drones to the Middle East if it were in the national interest.

She said it was in the UK's interests to reopen international shipping lanes and protect military assets abroad, and added that the Conservative party would have allowed its US allies to use UK military bases more

quickly than Labour did.

Meanwhile, Liberal Democrat leader Sir Ed Davey argued the UK should not send ships to help secure the strait, and instead focus on "de-escalating" the war.

Hitting out at Trump as "very reckless" in this "illegal and damaging war", Sir Ed said Britain should not be at the beck and call of an American president "who does not seem to know what he is doing".

In 2025, about 20 million barrels of oil passed through the Strait of Hormuz per day, according to estimates from the US Energy Information Administration - nearly \$600bn (£447bn) worth of energy trade per year.

It is also a key trading route for other commodities such as helium, the chemical sulphate, and urea, which is used to produce fertiliser.

French vote tests polarised electorate with right hoping to win control of Paris

People in France are voting in town council elections, whose results will be closely analysed for trends ahead of next year's presidential votes.

A strong showing for Marine Le Pen's National Rally (RN) would be a boost for the nationalist right - even as she awaits a judicial decision on whether she can stand for head of state in 2027.

More broadly the six-yearly municipal elections - which take place in two rounds on 15 and 22 March - will be a test of how far mainstream parties are prepared to go in forming alliances with the far left and far right.

Politics in France has become increasingly polarised, as in much of Europe, and traditional parties have found it harder to win elections without

at least tacit support from formations on their outer flank.

But this leads to accusations of pandering to extremism which in turn can cost votes in the centre.

Inevitably the highest-profile contest is for the mayorship of Paris, which has been under left-wing control for 25 years, but could now shift back to the right.

Here as elsewhere alliances will play a vital role in between the two rounds of voting.

Under the complex voting system, it is quite possible that as many as five candidates in the capital will make it through to the run-off on 22 March.

Defending the status quo is Socialist Emmanuel Grégoire, 48, former deputy to outgoing mayor Anne Hidalgo.

Leading the challenge from

the right is former culture minister Rachida Dati, 60, one-time protégée of ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy.

All the main candidates could get through to the second round on 22 March

But other candidates in the race are Pierre-Yves Bournazel from the pro-President Macron centre, Sophia Chikirou from the radical left France Unbowed (LFI), Sarah Knafo from the radical right Reconquest party and Thierry Mariani from the RN.

Polls consistently put all the candidates, except for Mariani, above the 10% level of votes needed to get through to the second round. And if Mariani were to get more than 5%, he, too, would be allowed to form a pact to merge his list with another's.

So between the two rounds there will be pressure on Bournazel and Knafo to stand down in favour of Dati - and on Chikirou to leave the field to Grégoire. It will be urged on them that by staying in the race, they split the vote and open the way for their opponent.

The difficulty is that if Dati cuts a deal with Knafo, she will be accused of flirting with "fascists", and if Grégoire cuts a deal with Chikirou, he will be doing the same with "violent antisemites".

Tensions in France have become all the sharper after the February killing of nationalist student Quentin Deranque apparently by far-left militants in Lyon. This has led to calls for mainstream parties to boycott the LFI, just as they have the RN.

Feature

US-IRAN conflict: The crux of the matter

MARTHA SOLOMON-DIKE

The US-Iran conflict is a complex and multifaceted issue, but the main crux of it revolves around Iran's nuclear program and the US's concerns about it. The US has been worried that Iran's nuclear program is aimed at developing nuclear weapons, which it believes would destabilize the region and threaten global security.

In 2015, Iran and the P5+1 (US, UK, France, Germany, China, and Russia) signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), limiting Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

In 2018, the US unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA and re-imposed sanctions on Iran, leading to increased tensions.

Iran has responded by increasing its uranium enrichment and imposing retaliatory sanctions.

The US and Iran have been engaged in a series of escalating actions, including military strikes, cyberattacks, and diplomatic tensions.

The conflict is also influenced by regional and historical factors, including:

Iran's support for militant groups in the Middle East.

The US's military presence in the region

Historical tensions between the US and Iran dating back to the 1979 Iranian Revolution

The US-Iran conflict has escalated with recent military strikes and diplomatic tensions. Here's a breakdown of the latest developments:

US and Israeli Strikes: On February 28, 2026, the US and Israel launched strikes against Iran, targeting key officials, military commanders, and facilities. Iran responded with strikes against Israel and US military bases in the region.

Nuclear Talks: The US and Iran held indirect talks in Muscat, Oman, mediated by Oman's foreign minister. The talks focused on Iran's nuclear program, with the US demanding a permanent end to uranium enrichment and Iran seeking sanctions relief.

Military Buildup: The US has deployed aircraft carriers and warships to the region, while Iran has strengthened its air defense systems and increased military investments.

Economic Sanctions: The US has imposed new sanctions on Iran, targeting ships selling Iranian oil and funding Iran's ballistic missile program.

The conflict's impact on global oil prices and regional stability is significant. Experts warn that the situation could spiral into a prolonged regional conflict.

The US-Iran conflict is likely to have significant consequences on global oil prices. Here are some potential effects:

Price Surge: Oil prices have already surged above \$100 a barrel due to the conflict, with Brent crude trading around \$100.

Supply Disruption: The conflict has disrupted global oil supply, with the International Energy Agency (IEA) expecting a drop of 8 million barrels per day in March

Increased Volatility: Oil markets are pricing in extreme swings in crude prices, with the CBOE Crude Oil Volatility Index soaring to its highest levels since 2020.



Inflation Impact: Higher oil prices could lead to increased inflation, affecting global economic stability.

Regional Impact: The conflict may affect oil production and exports in the Middle East, particularly in the Strait of Hormuz, a critical energy chokepoint.

Nigeria's economy, being oil-dependent, may face challenges due to the conflict. The Nigerian government is monitoring the situation and reviewing its oil market exposure.

The US-Iran conflict could significantly impact regional stability in the Middle East. Here are some potential effects:

Escalation and Proxy Wars: The conflict might escalate into proxy wars involving regional actors like Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Hezbollah, further destabilizing the region.

Increased Militancy: Iran's support for militant groups could rise, leading to more attacks on regional targets and increased tensions.

Regional Arms Buildup: Countries might increase military spending and arms purchases, fueling an arms race and instability.

Humanitarian Crises: Conflict could lead to refugee crises, humanitarian emergencies, and increased human suffering.

Global Economic Impact: Disruptions to oil supplies and regional instability could affect global trade and economies.

The Middle East is already volatile, and this conflict could exacerbate existing tensions. Diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the situation are crucial.

The possible diplomatic solutions to de-escalate the US-Iran conflict include:

Ceasefire Agreement: Iran has proposed a ceasefire, but the US is hesitant to accept the terms.

Nuclear Negotiations: Talks between the US and Iran have focused on Iran's nuclear program, with Iran proposing a three-step plan to limit enrichment in exchange for sanctions relief.

Mediation Efforts: Countries like Oman, Egypt, and the UAE are attempt-

ing to mediate between the US and Iran.

Regional Consortium: Iran has proposed a joint nuclear-enrichment project with regional Arab states and US investment.

Sanctions Relief: The US could lift some sanctions in exchange for Iran's commitment to limit its nuclear program. However, significant challenges remain, including:

Trust Issues: The US and Iran have deep-seated mistrust, making negotiations difficult.

Maximalist Demands: The US demands zero enrichment and full dismantlement, which Iran rejects.

Regional Tensions: The conflict involves regional actors, making a comprehensive solution complex.

The key sticking points in the US-Iran negotiations are:

Enrichment levels: The US demands zero enrichment, while Iran insists on its right to enrich uranium for civilian purposes, citing its sovereignty and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Uranium stockpiles: The US wants Iran to eliminate or export its highly enriched uranium stockpile, while Iran is willing to limit enrichment levels and allow inspections in exchange for sanctions relief

Sanctions relief: Iran seeks effective and verifiable lifting of economic and financial sanctions, while the US is hesitant to provide relief without guarantees on Iran's nuclear program.

Regional proxies and ballistic missiles: The US demands that Iran cease support for regional proxies and limit its ballistic missile program, which Iran views as a threat to its national security.

These issues are intertwined with broader concerns, including trust, verification, and the sequencing of concessions. The US and Iran have different expectations for the talks, with the US seeking a comprehensive agreement and Iran preferring a phased approach with confidence-building measures.

Regional actors like Saudi Arabia and Israel can significantly influence diplo-

matic efforts between the US and Iran.

Saudi Arabia has expressed support for ongoing negotiations, hoping to ease tensions and promote regional stability. The kingdom's defense minister, Prince Khalid bin Salman, has urged Iran to take President Trump's offer to negotiate a nuclear agreement seriously, citing the risk of war with Israel if talks break down.

Israel, on the other hand, is seen as a potential spoiler in the negotiations. Iranian officials have accused Israel of attempting to sabotage the process, and Israel has expressed concerns about Iran's nuclear program and regional ambitions.

Saudi Arabia's influence is driven by its strategic relationships with the US and its regional rivalry with Iran. The kingdom has been seeking to reduce tensions with Iran and has restored diplomatic relations after a China-brokered rapprochement in 2023.

Israel's influence is largely driven by its concerns about Iran's nuclear program and regional ambitions. The country has been vocal about its opposition to a nuclear deal with Iran and has taken military action against Iranian targets in the past.

Overall, Saudi Arabia's support for diplomacy and Israel's opposition to a nuclear deal with Iran are likely to shape the negotiations and influence the outcome.

A failed US-Iran diplomatic effort could have significant consequences, including:

Escalated Tensions: Increased military tensions, potential for conflict, and regional instability.

Nuclear Escalation: Iran might accelerate its nuclear program, potentially leading to a nuclear-armed Iran.

Regional Fallout: Increased support for militant groups, proxy wars, and humanitarian crises in countries like Yemen, Syria, and Lebanon.

Economic Consequences: Further economic sanctions on Iran, impacting global oil prices, trade, and regional economies.

Global Security Implications: Potential for nuclear proliferation, increased

terrorism, and destabilization of the Middle East.

The consequences would depend on how the US, Iran, and regional actors respond to the breakdown in talks.

A failed US-Iran nuclear deal could lead to severe consequences, including: **Escalated Conflict:** Increased military tensions, potential for conflict, and regional instability, with possible attacks on US and Israeli targets.

Nuclear Escalation: Iran might accelerate its nuclear program, potentially leading to a nuclear-armed Iran, triggering a regional arms race.

Economic Consequences: Further economic sanctions on Iran, impacting global oil prices, trade, and regional economies.

Humanitarian Crisis: Increased civilian casualties, displacement, and humanitarian emergencies in the region.

Regional Instability: Increased support for militant groups, proxy wars, and destabilization of the Middle East.

The consequences would depend on how the US, Iran, and regional actors respond to the breakdown in talks.

A breakdown in US-Iran nuclear negotiations could lead to varied international responses:

UNSC Involvement: The UN Security Council might impose additional sanctions or consider new resolutions, but faces challenges due to veto powers.

EU Sanctions: The EU could impose its own sanctions on Iran, targeting key sectors like oil and finance.

Regional Diplomacy: Countries like Oman, Qatar, or the UAE might mediate or facilitate backchannel talks.

Global Coalitions: Allies like the UK, France, and Germany could coordinate responses, while China and Russia might support Iran or counter Western moves.

Military Considerations: The US and allies might increase military presence in the region, risking escalation.

The international response would depend on the reasons for the breakdown and the positions of key players.

NIGERIA AND THE OIL IMBROGLIO

How the US-Iran war affects oil pricing

GRACE IJEOMA UMEH

The ongoing conflict between the US and Iran is sending shockwaves through the global oil market, and Nigeria's economy is feeling the pinch. As a major oil producer, Nigeria stands to gain from higher oil prices, but its dependence on imported refined petroleum products means that rising global oil prices are driving up fuel costs at home.

The conflict has pushed crude oil prices above \$70 per barrel, surpassing Nigeria's federal budget benchmark price. This might seem like good news, but the reality is more complex. Higher oil prices increase the cost of refined petroleum products, which Nigeria imports in large quantities, leading to higher fuel prices, transportation costs, and inflation.

In fact, petrol prices in Nigeria have already risen to between 1,200 and N1,400 per litre in some parts, causing supply uncertainty and queues in several cities. The Central Bank of Nigeria has reassured that the country's macroeconomic reforms will help mitigate the impact of the conflict, but experts warn that Nigeria's vulnerability to global oil shocks highlights the need for structural reforms, such as strengthening local refining capacity and diversifying the economy.

For many Nigerians, the ques-

tions linger on: how is the Nigerian government responding to the impact of the conflict on oil prices?

And...what are the potential long-term effects of the conflict on Nigeria's economy?

How can Nigeria reduce its dependence on imported refined petroleum products?

Findings show that the Nigerian government is taking steps to mitigate the impact of the conflict on oil prices. Finance Minister Wale Edun has convened the Economic Management Team to review the potential effects on oil prices, capital flows, and logistics costs. The government is also monitoring crude price movements, exchange rate pressures, and fiscal risks to shield households and businesses.

To address the issue, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has approved the establishment of a Presidential Petroleum Reform and Value Optimisation Taskforce to accelerate structural reforms in the petroleum sector and unlock new investments. The government is also promoting local refining capacity, with the Dangote Refinery supplying petrol and diesel to the local market.

The potential long-term effects of the conflict on Nigeria's economy include:

Higher inflation due to increased fuel prices

Pressure on the naira

Increased cost of living

To reduce dependence on imported refined petroleum products, Nigeria can:

Strengthen local refining capacity, like the Dangote Refinery

Invest in alternative energy sources, such as biofuels (e.g., cassava-based ethanol)

Improve energy infrastructure and distribution networks.

Diversify the economy to reduce reliance on oil exports..

Some experts suggest Nigeria can benefit from the conflict by leveraging higher oil revenues to stabilise the naira, reduce borrowing, and strengthen macroeconomic positions.

More questions that have also been asked continuously by Nigerians is: What specific policies is the Nigerian government implementing to support local refining capacity? How will the Presidential Petroleum Reform and Value Optimisation Taskforce Impact Nigeria's energy sector?

What are the potential challenges to Nigeria's biofuel development plans and so forth!?

The Nigerian government is implementing several policies to support local refining capacity, including:

Domestic Crude Oil Supply Obligation (DCSO): The government is enforcing DCSO on all producers in Nigeria to ensure local refineries receive crude oil supply before exports.

Petroleum Industry Act (PIA):

The PIA encourages investment in local refining and limits import licenses to companies with local refining capacity or proven track records in crude oil and petroleum trading.

Refinery Protection and Promotion Bill: The House of Representatives is introducing a bill to classify local refineries as strategic national assets, guaranteeing them first right of refusal on crude oil allocations.

The Presidential Petroleum Reform and Value Optimisation Taskforce is expected to:

Accelerate petroleum sector reforms: Strengthen governance architecture, optimize national energy assets, and position Nigeria's petroleum resources as a foundation for sustainable economic transformation.

Unlock \$5bn-\$10bn in sectoral liquidity: Develop a Capital and Liquidity Acceleration Blueprint to support local refining and energy infrastructure development.

Potential challenges to Nigeria's biofuel development plans include:

Competition with food production: Biofuel expansion should not compromise food security or drive deforestation.


Inadequate infrastructure: Feedstock collection, storage, and transportation systems need investment.

Regulatory frameworks: Clear policies and incentives are necessary to attract private-sector participation.

”

The House of Representatives is introducing a bill to classify local refineries as strategic national assets, guaranteeing them first right of refusal on crude oil allocations.



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13 X 4	369,500	397,213	295,600	317,770	206,938	222,458	443,500	476,763	369,550	397,266
10 X 4	340,000	365,500	273,500	294,013	177,400	190,705	370,000	397,750	295,600	317,770
HALF PAGE	295,600	317,770	236,500	254,238	147,800	158,885	340,000	365,500	273,450	293,959
10 X 3	221,700	238,328	147,800	158,885	118,300	127,173	266,000	285,950	251,300	270,148
13 X 2	206,900	222,418	133,000	142,925	103,500	111,263	221,800	238,435	147,810	158,896
QUARTER PAGE	192,150	206,561	118,250	127,119	88,690	95,342	236,500	254,238	133,000	142,975
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FP 6X2	89,800	96,535	105,450	113,359	6 X 2	60,640	65,188	49,140	52,826
FP 5X2	81,100	87,183	97,300	104,598	5 X 2	51,950	55,846	42,120	45,279
FP 4X2	73,000	78,475	80,700	86,753	4 X 2	45,260	48,655	34,400	36,980
FP 3X2	64,870	69,735	73,000	78,475	3 X 2	30,900	33,218	26,600	28,595
FP 2X2	59,000	63,425	64,900	69,768	2 X 2	18,680	20,081	15,600	16,770
					2 X 1	12,400	13,330	7,415	7,971
					CAC	38,000	40,850		

SIZES	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)
STRIP	118,250	127,119	147,800	158,885
STRIP INSIDE	88,600	95,245	118,250	127,119

SPECIAL PAGES	
FRONT PAGE	ADD 70% SURCHARGE
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EFFECTIVE FROM FEBRUARY 1, 2023

Sports

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

NPFL26: Bendel Insurance FC beat Kun Khalifat FC 2-1

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Bendel Insurance Football Club, Saturday, defeated Kun Khalifat F.C of Owerri 2-1 in one of the Match Day 30 fixtures of the Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) played at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium.

Akpan Emmanuel gave the Benin Arsenal a flying start to the thrilling encounter, scoring in



BENDEL INSURANCE CELEBRATING

the 4th minute after his long range strike caught KunKhalifat goalkeeper EJIOGU CHIJIJOKE napping.

Akpan's early breakthrough, no doubt was the Benin Arsenal's needed confidence booster as they continued to dictate the pace despite the visitors tough tackles.

Insurance players' composure and discipline paid off in the 41st minute when Kayode Oke tapped on Emmanuel Dung's line breaking pass to make it 2-0

for the host before half time.

Emmanuel Dung's dazzling run unsettled the highly physical and combative Khalifat defenders in a one-on-one situation before releasing the fine pass, making it easy for Kayode Oke to strike the superb finish that sent the home crowd into jubilation.

The second half resumed with the visiting Kun Khalifat showing aggression as they came out smokey and their efforts paid off almost immediately as Gabriel Lekan struck to reduced the deficit in the 51st minute to make it 2-1.

Insurance maintained their composure as the match progressed fiercely as the visitors continued to search for an equaliser while the coach Kennedy Boboye side were also hungry for more goals after the hosts had made triple substitution, withdrawing Akpan Emmanuel, Dung Emmanuel and Udom Wisdom for Efe Ubiomo, Chinedu Nwosu and Musa Sudes in the 67th

minute, in a tactical switch that added value to their midfield.

The hard-fought 2-1 victory over Kun Khalifat F.C put Insurance back to 6th position on the league table with 44 points.

Recall that Insurance fc and KunKhalifat in their first round meeting settled for a 1-1 draw in Owerri.

The Benin Arsenal are guests to their Niger Delta neighbours Warri Wolves in the match day 31 Fixtures scheduled for next weekend.

NPFL MATCH DAY 30 RESULTS

Elkanemi Warriors FC 1-1 Katsina United FC
Kwara united FC 0-0 Rangers INTL FC
Bayelsa United FC 2-1 Warri Wolves FC
Niger Tornados FC 0-0 Kano Pillars FC
Enyimba FC 2-0 Plateau United FC



YAW YEBOAH AND DERRICK JONES

Betting scandal rocks MLS as two African players banned for life

Two Ghana-born footballers have received lifetime bans from Major League Soccer following a betting scandal that prompted the league to reinforce its stance on gambling-related misconduct.

In a statement, MLS confirmed that Yaw Yeboah and Derrick Jones had been handed lifetime suspensions after an investigation found they violated the league's strict gambling regulations during the 2024 and 2025 seasons.

According to the findings, both players placed multiple bets on football matches, including wagers involving games featuring their own teams — a serious

breach of MLS integrity rules.

One of the incidents examined during the investigation involved a match between Columbus Crew and New York Red Bulls on October 19, 2024. Investigators discovered that a wager had been placed predicting that Jones would receive a yellow card during the game, which ultimately occurred.

The suspicious betting activity was flagged by the league's integrity monitoring partners, leading MLS to place the players on administrative leave while a full inquiry was conducted. League officials stressed that protecting the credibility and fairness of the competition remains a top priority.

"Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium cannot host International matches without Major Remediation Works" — A claim that deserves careful scrutiny

IDAHOUSA MUSA

The recent assertion by former Edo State Deputy Governor, Philip Shaibu, that the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium can no longer host international matches unless major remediation works are carried out has generated considerable debate among sports enthusiasts and stakeholders in Edo State.

In my view, such a claim deserves careful scrutiny, particularly given the importance of the stadium to the sporting heritage and identity of the state.

Statements of this nature, especially when made by individuals who have held high public offices, are bound to attract widespread attention. Public commentary on the condition of major infrastructure does not exist in a vacuum.

It shapes public perception, influences opinion and can even affect the reputation of institutions responsible for managing such facilities.

It is therefore necessary that claims regarding the condition or functionality of public assets be examined with caution and supported by verifiable facts.

For decades, the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium has remained one of the most prominent sporting arenas in southern Nigeria.

The facility has hosted a wide range of football matches, athletics competitions and other sporting activities, serving as a hub for sports development in the region.

Generations of athletes have trained and competed within its grounds, while countless

fans have gathered there to celebrate moments of sporting achievements.

The stadium gained renewed prominence following the extensive renovation carried out during the administration of former governor, Godwin Obaseki, in preparation for the 2020 National Sports Festival.

That renovation project transformed the stadium into a modern sporting complex with significantly improved facilities.

From upgraded seating arrangements and improved lighting system, to enhanced training facilities and a careful-

ly maintained playing surfaces, the transformation was widely regarded as a major boost for sports development in the state.

In particular, the football pitch at the stadium received considerable attention during the renovation.

The playing surface was redesigned to meet modern standards, with improved turf quality, effective drainage and enhanced maintenance systems intended to sustain optimal playing conditions.

For many football followers and sports administrators who regularly interact with the fa-

cility, the quality of the pitch remains one of the stadium's strongest assets.

Indeed, several athletes, coaches and sports enthusiasts continue to describe the pitch as one of the best in Nigeria. The grass cover is often cited as healthy and well maintained, while the surface remains even and suitable for competitive football.

These features are crucial for any stadium aspiring to host high-level matches, as the quality of the playing surface directly affects player performance and safety.

12 Days to Go: Host Venues Announced for 3rd National Para Games, Abuja 2026

With just 12 days to the start of the 3rd National Para Games Abuja 2026, the Local Organizing Committee have confirmed that all competition venues across Abuja are fully prepared to host athletes from across the country for Nigeria's biggest multi-sport event for athletes with disabilities.

According to the official Games venue plan, the majority of competitions will take place at the iconic Moshod Abiola National Stadium, which will serve as the central hub for the Games.

Events scheduled at the complex include Para Athletics at the Main Bowl, Para Powerlifting, Sitting Volleyball, Wheelchair Basketball, Para Taekwondo, Para Table Tennis, Para Badminton, and Wheelchair Tennis across various indoor facilities within Packages A and B of the stadium complex.

Other events will take place at specialized facilities around the stadium area, including Para Swimming at the Swimming Pool Complex, Para Cycling and Para Karate at the Velodrome, and Para Shooting at the stadium shooting range.

Beyond the stadium complex, additional venues have also been designated. Para Canoeing will take place at Jabi Lake, while Amputee Football will be hosted

at the FIFA Goal Project Pitch.

The 3rd National Para Games Abuja 2026 will bring together thousands of athletes from the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, celebrating resilience, excellence, and the spirit of inclusivity through sport.

The Games continue to serve as a platform for discovering new talents and strengthening Nigeria's position in global para-sports.



NIGERIA'S PARA ATHLETICS



D'TIGRESS AND FRANCE

D'Tigress play France at FIBA World Cup Qualifying Tournament

Nigeria's D'Tigress continue to show the resilience and fighting spirit that has made them one of Africa's most dominant teams on the global stage.

At the ongoing FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup Qualifying Tournament in France, the seven-time AfroBasket champions have delivered strong performances against top international opposition, recording key victories and demonstrating the character that defines Nigerian sport.

A commanding opening win over Colombia set the tone, while the team showed impressive composure and attacking firepower in a 101-84 come-

back victory against the Philippines after trailing at halftime.

Despite a setback against South Korea, the team continues to compete with determination as they push through the qualifying tournament. D'Tigress will next face France on March 15 before rounding off their schedule against Germany on March 17, as they continue preparations toward the FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup 2026 in Germany.

The National Sports Commission commends the players, coaching crew and the Nigeria Basketball Federation for their dedication, discipline and commitment to representing the nation with pride on the international

Enabulele lauds Sportsville nomination, reaffirms commitment to transforming Edo Sports

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele has applauded the organizers of the prestigious Sportsville Special Recognition Awards for their roles in shaping the sports sub-sector of the Nigerian economy.



DESMOND ENABULELE

The Edo State Sports Commission boss gave the commendation, weekend, while reacting to his nomination by Sportsville Communication Annual Award Committee for special recognition of his Visionary Leadership qualities.

Enabulele expressed his appreciation to the organizers for considering him worthy of the special recognition.

The Edo State Sports Commission boss said the nomination serves as a strong motivation to continue working tirelessly for the advancement of sports development in Edo State and Nigeria at large.

According to him, "I feel honoured and grateful to the organizers of the Sportsville Special Recognition Awards for this nomination in the Visionary Leadership Category. It is truly humbling to be considered among respected sports administrators who have contributed immensely to the growth of sports in our country." He said.

Enabulele noted that the recognition is not just a personal achievement but also a reflection of the collective efforts of the Edo State Government, sports administrators, coaches, athletes and other stakeholders working to reposition the state as a powerhouse in Nigerian sports.

"This nomination belongs to the entire Edo sports family. It reflects the unwavering commitment of our athletes,

coaches and administrators, as well as the strong support of His Excellency, Governor Monday Okpebholo, whose passion for sports development has continued to inspire us in the sector," Enabulele said.

He reassured that the Edo State Sports Commission will remain focused on building sustainable sports structures; nurturing young talents and sustaining the winning culture that has recently brought pride to the state.

"We will continue to invest in grassroots sports development, athlete welfare and modern sports facilities to ensure Edo State remains a leading force in Nigerian sports," he added.

In the official letter informing the Executive Chairman of his nomination, the Sportsville Award Committee stated that the award is being bestowed on him in recognition of his visionary leadership that propelled Edo State to first position at the just-concluded 2nd Niger Delta Games.



HON AMADIN DESMOND ENABULELE

Sportsville Award: 'A Big Motivation to do more', says Enabulele

The Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission, Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele, has described his nomination for the prestigious Sportsville Award as a big motivation to do more for Edo State in the years to come.

Enabulele spoke after his nomination for the Visionary Leadership Category of Sportsville Annual Award for his leadership qualities that saw Edo State winning a major tournament after 24 years.

Only last Month, Edo State hosted and won the 2nd edition of Niger Delta Games dethroning defending champions Bayelsa State and big rivals Delta State.

And the man behind this historic win has thanked the Governor of Edo State, His

Excellency Senator Monday Okpebholo, for being the brain behind the victory.

"First, I want to give God the glory and also express my deep appreciation to my Governor, distinguished Senator Monday Okpebholo for his wonderful support. His support from day one has been unique and the result is what is beginning to show. Like I always say, this victory is a turning point in our quest to return Edo State to winning ways.

"I also want to thank my team at the Sports Commission for their support, otherwise the victory we are celebrating today won't have been possible."

For the award nomination, Enabulele describes it as a huge surprise but added that it will serve as a big motivation for him to do more.

House Committee on Sports mourns as Football Legend Henry Nwosu dies at 62

Nigeria's football community has been thrown into mourning following the death of former international Henry Nwosu, a member of the historic Nigeria national football team squad that won the 1980 Africa Cup of Nations. He was 62.

Nwosu died in a hospital in Lagos in the early hours of Saturday, prompting an outpouring of tributes from across the country's football community.

The Chairman of the House of Representatives Committee on Sports, Kabiru Amadu, expressed deep sorrow over the loss, describing the former midfielder as one of the most gifted footballers Nigeria has produced.

According to Amadu, the news of Nwosu's death comes as another painful blow to Nigerian football, coming just days after the passing of former Nigeria Football Federation Technical Director Adegboye Onigbinde.

"Henry Nwosu was one of the most remarkable footballers Nigeria has produced, and his contributions to the development of the game will never be forgotten," Amadu said. "His vision, leadership and commitment on the pitch inspired generations of players across the country."

He also extended condolences to the late footballer's family, the football community and all those who were touched by his career.

"This is another very sad moment for Nigerian football, especially as we are still mourning Chief Onigbinde. Nigeria will always remember the enormous contributions of Henry Nwosu both as a player and as a coach.

We pray that God grants him eternal rest and gives his family the strength to bear the loss," he added.

Nwosu was widely regarded as one of the finest left-sided midfielders of his generation. At just 17 years old, he became the youngest member of the Nigerian team that captured the country's first continental title at the 1980 Africa Cup of Nations on home soil.

He later played crucial roles as Nigeria reached the finals of the 1984 Africa Cup of Nations in Abidjan and the 1988 Africa Cup of Nations in Casablanca, both against Cameroon national football team.

One of the most memorable moments of his international career came on April 25, 1981, when the young midfielder



HENRY NWOSU

scored a spectacular long-range goal against Guinea national football team during a FIFA World Cup qualification match, helping Nigeria progress to the next round against Algeria national football team.

At club level, Nwosu enjoyed successful spells with New Nigerian Bank FC of Benin City and ACB FC of Lagos, where he became known for his creativity, dribbling ability and vision in midfield.

NPFL orders one-minute silence for Henry Nwosu as Kwara United, Rangers Light Up Lagos

The Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) has directed that a one-minute silence be observed before kick-off in all Matchday 30 fixtures this weekend in honour of late Nigerian football legend Henry Nwosu.

The directive was issued by NPFL Chairman Gbenga Elegbeleye following the death of the former Nigeria national football team midfielder at the age of 62.

In a statement released on Saturday, the league body said the tribute is aimed at recognising Nwosu's immense contribution to Nigerian football both as a player and later as a coach within the domestic league.

Nwosu, who was the youngest member of Nigeria's squad that won the 1980 African Cup

of Nations, died in the early hours of Saturday at the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital in Ikeja after a brief illness.

Elegbeleye described the late midfielder as a respected figure in Nigerian football whose legacy extended beyond his playing days.

He noted that Nwosu was not only a key player for several Nigerian league clubs but also contributed to the development of the domestic game as a coach after retiring from active football.

Meanwhile, attention on the pitch shifts to one of the stand-out fixtures of Matchday 30 as Kwara United host in-form Enugu Rangers at the Mobolaji Johnson Arena in Lagos.

Rangers arrive in strong form, having won four of their

last six matches, including an emphatic victory over defending champions Remo Stars.

The Flying Antelopes currently sit on 52 points and are pushing hard in the title race behind league leaders Rivers United.

Kwara United, however, head into the encounter with renewed confidence after securing consecutive victories.

The Harmony Boys are aiming for a third straight win as they seek to improve their position on the league table.

With Rangers chasing the title and Kwara United eager to build momentum, Sunday's clash in Lagos is expected to deliver an intense contest while the Nigerian football community pays tribute to one of its enduring icons

Four-Nation Tournament: Super Eagles, Jordan, other matches move to Turkey

The Super Eagles of Nigeria will take part in a four-nation international friendly tournament scheduled to hold in the Turkish city of Antalya.

The Jordan Football Association confirmed that the competition, initially planned to be staged in Jordan, has been moved to Turkey due to the current political situation in the Middle East.

In a statement released by the federation, the decision was taken to ensure smooth organisation of the matches and ease of movement for participating teams and supporters.

"The Jordanian Football As-

sociation has decided to move the matches of the four-team international friendly tournament, scheduled for March 2026, to be held in the Turkish city of Antalya, due to the current situation in the region and the limited movement of people," the statement read.

The mini-tournament will feature Jordan's national team alongside Nigeria, Iran national football team and Costa Rica national football team.

The matches are expected to serve as part of preparations for the participating countries ahead of their upcoming international assignments later in the year



SUPER EAGLES

FEATURE

Gov Okpebholo's 3-pronged approach to road construction in Edo

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

Infrastructure development remains one of the most critical responsibilities of government, particularly in a developing economy where road networks serve as the life-line of commerce, mobility and social interaction.

In Edo State, Governor Monday Okpebholo has adopted a deliberate and multi-layered strategy to address road infrastructure challenges across the state. From Edo South to Edo Central and Edo North, the administration's commitment to road construction and rehabilitation is becoming increasingly visible.

Rather than relying on a single approach, the governor has implemented what observers describe as a three-pronged model. The model focuses on empowering local government councils to address grassroots roads, establishing a rapid response mechanism for road maintenance and emergency repairs, and engaging reputable construction firms for major road and infrastructure projects.

Together, these pillars are designed to ensure that road construction, maintenance and rehabilitation take place simultaneously across different levels of Edo State's transportation network.

Road infrastructure is widely recognised as the backbone of economic growth and development. Functional roads connect rural communities to urban centres, enable farmers to transport agricultural produce to markets and facilitate commercial and industrial activities.

In Edo State, years of neglect had left many roads in poor condition, limiting economic productivity and hindering mobility for residents.

Governor Okpebholo's administration has therefore placed infrastructure development at the centre of its governance SHINE agenda. Within a relatively short period, the state government has initiated numerous road projects across the state, covering strategic urban roads, inter-community corridors and major transportation routes.

These projects are designed not only to improve mobility but also to stimulate economic activity, open up communities and attract investment into the state.

However, addressing the scale of road infrastructure challenges required a comprehensive strategy that goes beyond traditional government contracting.

One important component of the governor's strategy is the empowerment of local government councils to play an active role in grassroots road development.

Many rural and community roads fall within the jurisdiction of local authorities. Historically, however, local



GOVERNOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO LAUNCHES NEW TRACTOR FOR ROAD CONSTRUCTION

governments have often lacked the equipment and resources required to maintain these roads effectively.

To address this challenge, the state government recently handed over 54 pieces of construction equipment to the 18 local government councils in Edo State. This initiative enables councils to undertake grading, rehabilitation and maintenance of roads within their communities.

With the availability of these machines, council administrations are now better positioned to respond to local infrastructure needs, open up rural areas and maintain community roads without waiting for state-level intervention.

The initiative also strengthens decentralisation in infrastructure development, as residents can engage directly with their local councils on road issues affecting their communities.

By bringing road maintenance closer to the grassroots, the state government is ensuring that smaller community roads receive timely attention.

Another critical pillar of the administration's infrastructure strategy is the establishment of a Rapid Response Road Maintenance mechanism within the Ministry of Works.

Among the early administrative steps taken by Governor Okpebholo was the restructuring of ministries, departments and agencies in the state.

As part of that restructuring, the Ministry of Works was restored, reversing the previous administration's decision to merge it into the Ministry of Roads and Bridges.

The restoration of the Ministry of Works strengthened the government's capacity to focus on road construction and maintenance across the state.

To further enhance this capacity,

the state government recently procured light and heavy-duty equipment for the ministry to support road maintenance and emergency repairs.

This equipment enables government maintenance teams to intervene quickly when roads develop potholes, erosion problems or drainage failures, particularly during the rainy season.

The approach reflects a proactive philosophy: roads should be maintained continuously rather than waiting until they deteriorate completely before intervention.

Through early response to road failures, the government is able to extend the lifespan of road infrastructure while minimising disruptions to commuters and businesses.

The third pillar of the governor's strategy involves engaging reputable construction companies to execute large-scale and technically complex road projects across the state.

Several strategic road projects are currently being handled by established engineering firms.

China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) is handling the Ikpoba Hill Flyover project, as well as erosion control works around the Ramat Park axis in Benin City—one of the most significant infrastructure initiatives aimed at easing traffic congestion and addressing environmental challenges.

BRASS Engineering and Construction Nigeria Limited is responsible for the construction of Ogheghe Road off Sapele Road and the Sapele Road bypass in Benin City, projects expected to significantly improve connectivity within the metropolis.

Place of Peace Investment Limited is executing the 1.4-kilometre Charismatic Church Road off Ekenhuan Road in

Benin City, improving accessibility for residents and businesses in the area.

Rawtech Nigeria Limited is handling the Old Sapele Road project linking the Agip, Ohogbohi and Ogheghe communities, a critical corridor within the expanding Benin urban area.

Meanwhile, Heartland Nigeria Limited is executing two major projects: the 12.6-kilometre Temboga-Ekiuwa-University of Benin Road (Temboga Road Extension) and Oba Irediauwa Road off Upper Mission Road in Benin City.

The Benin Technical Road Project is being carried out by NAFRO Nigeria Limited, contributing to improved infrastructure around educational and residential districts.

Beyond Benin City, the administration has also initiated major road projects including the Ekpoma-Irrua-Udomi-Ubiaja dualisation, as well as the construction of UNEWA Road in Uromi and the Illeh-Uko Road.

In addition, the state government has maintained a cooperative relationship with the Federal Government, enabling Edo State to take over and reconstruct some federal roads within the state. One notable example is Sapele Road in Benin City, where reconstruction works are currently progressing and some sections are already nearing completion.

This collaborative approach ensures that critical roads serving Edo residents are not left unattended due to jurisdictional limitations.

A defining feature of Governor Okpebholo's infrastructure policy is strict oversight and accountability.

The governor has repeatedly emphasised that contractors must deliver projects according to agreed timelines and quality standards.

Regular inspection visits to project sites help ensure that contractors remain committed to their responsibilities.

The administration has made it clear that substandard work or unnecessary delays will not be tolerated.

This hands-on supervision helps ensure that infrastructure investments translate into durable and reliable roads for the people of Edo State.

The benefits of improved road infrastructure extend far beyond transportation.

Better roads improve access to markets for farmers, reduce travel time for commuters and support the growth of businesses across the state.

Students, healthcare providers and emergency services also benefit from improved mobility and connectivity.

Communities that were previously difficult to access are gradually being opened up, creating new economic opportunities and improving the quality of life for residents.

Governor Okpebholo's three-pronged strategy represents a comprehensive approach to infrastructure development.

Through the empowerment of local government councils, the strengthening of rapid response maintenance mechanisms and the engagement of reputable construction firms for major projects, the administration is addressing road infrastructure challenges at multiple levels.

Together, these initiatives are gradually transforming Edo State's road network, improving connectivity and laying the foundation for sustainable economic growth.

If sustained and effectively implemented, the model could provide a useful framework for infrastructure development across other states in Nigeria.