

Dep Governor Idahosa lauds PASAN for supporting legislators

Edo State Deputy Governor, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, has commended the Edo State Chapter of the Parliamentary Staff Association of Nigeria (PASAN) for their role in supporting legislators who drive policy-making and development programs in the state. Idahosa made this

statement on March 13 at the Edo State Government House while receiving PASAN members in his office.

Speaking as a former legislator, Idahosa emphasized the importance of legislative bills in maintaining peace and stability. He recalled that upon assuming office, the adminis-

tration of Governor Monday Okpebholo faced challenges of insecurity and cultism, but the passage of key laws helped restore order. He expressed gratitude to PASAN members for their contributions in this regard.

Idahosa assured PASAN that the state government val-

ues their role and will continue to seek their collaboration to maintain a strong relationship between the executive and legislative arms of government. He further assured them that their concerns and requests would be conveyed to the governor.

The chairman of PASAN,

Edo State Chapter, Comrade Umar Haruna, praised the state government's effectiveness and lauded Idahosa's advocacy efforts. However, the group also highlighted their need for a bus to ease transportation challenges and solicited government support.

In a separate visit, a soci-

ocultural group, "Umagbae Ne Edo," also known as the Daughters of Benin Kingdom, met with the deputy governor. The group, dedicated to preserving the culture, language, and heritage of the Benin people, discussed their initiatives aimed at cultural revival.

The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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Lagos-Calabar coastal highway wasteful, corrupt —OBJ

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Edo govt accuses PDP of arming thugs, stockpiling weapons

A storm is brewing in Edo State as the government has accused the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) of fueling insecurity by arming thugs before the 2024 governorship election and failing to disarm them, leading to a surge in violent crimes across the state.

In a statement released on behalf of Governor Monday Okpebholo, his Chief Press

Secretary, Fred Itua, warned that these armed groups, many of whom were integrated into the Edo State Security Network under the previous administration, still possess over 5,000 illegal firearms. According to him, these weapons are now being used to terrorize innocent citizens through armed robbery, kidnappings, and violent attacks.

Itua further claimed that in-

telligence reports indicate PDP leaders are not only protecting these criminal elements but actively stockpiling additional weapons in anticipation of post-election violence, should their candidate, Asue Ighodalo, lose his case at the election tribunal.

"The former administration deliberately armed these thugs for political purposes, and now they have become a menace to

society. Instead of assisting security agencies in recovering these weapons, PDP leaders are providing cover for them. This is a ticking time bomb, and we will not allow Edo to descend into anarchy," Itua stated.

The government has called on security agencies to act swiftly, recover all illegal arms, and bring those responsible to justice. Governor Okpebholo reaffirmed

his administration's commitment to restoring peace and ensuring that no individual or political group holds the state hostage.

As security forces ramp up

operations, residents remain on edge, hoping that the government's strong warning will translate into concrete action before the situation spirals out of control.

Edo NUJ disowns "Independent Journalists Forum"

● **Urges investors to support Okpebholo's devt strides**

BENIN CITY

The leadership of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council, has disassociated itself from a group known as the NUJ Independent Journalists Forum, stating that it operates without the union's knowledge, recognition, or authorization.

In an official statement signed by the union's Secretary, Andy Egbon on Sunday, the Edo NUJ made it clear that the so-called forum is not affiliated with the union at any level and does not form part of the 15 recognized chapels under its structure.

The council emphasized that any communication, request, or engagement from the group does not reflect the position of the NUJ and should be disregarded by government officials, organizations, and the public.

To prevent misinformation and misrepresentation, the Edo MY NUJ urged all stake-

holders to verify any correspondence claiming to be from the NUJ through its official channels.

The union also advised the public to report any activity of the NUJ Independent Journalists Forum to its leadership.

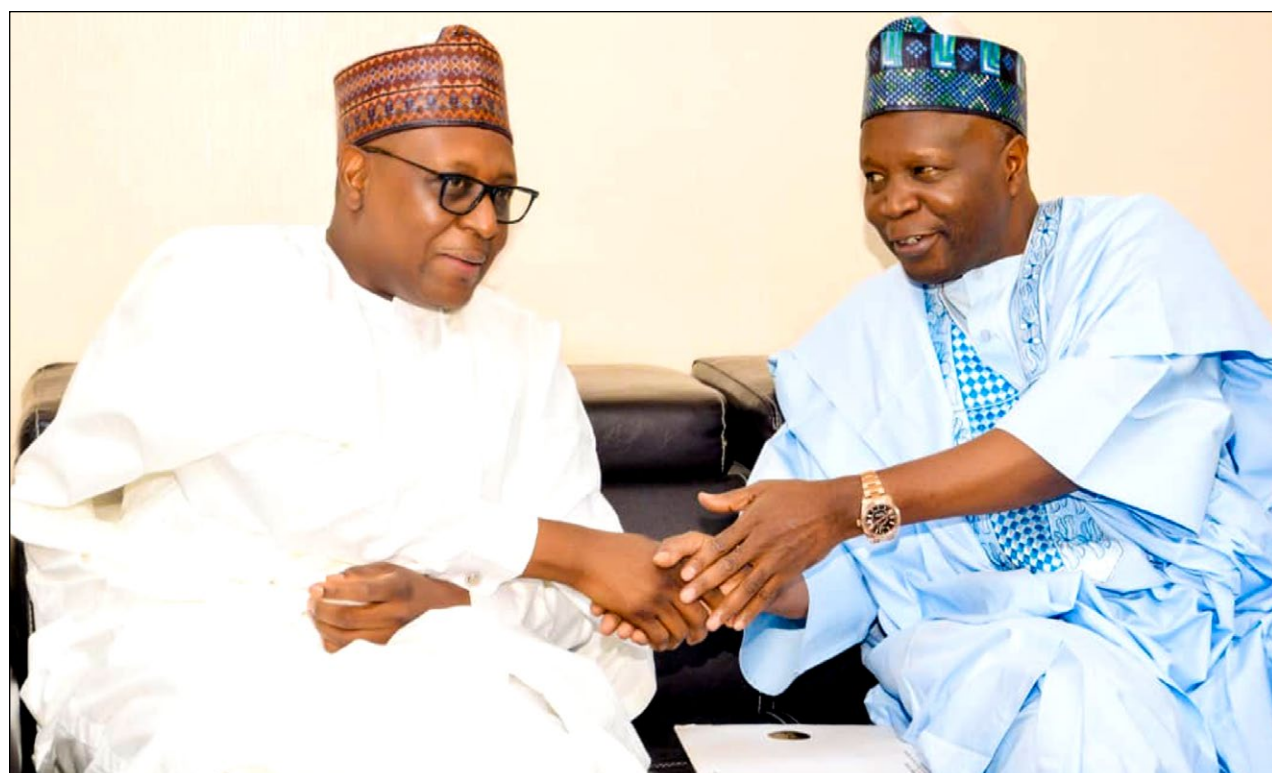
In response to the emergence of the group, security agencies have been placed on high alert to investigate what the NUJ described as a "fake and illicit" organization.

The NUJ, Edo State Council reaffirmed its position as the only legitimate body representing journalists under the NUJ structure in the state.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council, Dr Festus Alenkhe has called on investors to continue to support the developmental strides of the state Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo.

He stated this when he led the executive officers and oth-

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YAHAYA VISITS PATE:

Gombe State Governor, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya (left), and the Coordinating Minister for Health and Social Welfare, Prof. Mohammed Ali Pate, during the governor's visit to the Minister in Abuja.

PHOTO: OMOYE AMINU

Edo govt, IDH, stakeholders collaborate for sustainable agric in Sokponba —Pg 2

Customs intercept over \$1.1m at Kano airport —Pg 3

Fifty-one dead after North Macedonia nightclub fire —Pg 5

MTN CHAMPS Benin: Efetobore makes sprint double, Oyibu claims 200m crown —Pg 8

NEWS

Edo govt reaffirms commitment to modernise agric

The Edo State Government has reaffirmed its commitment to modernizing agriculture through a regenerative and agroecological approach, aligning with global environmental best practices.

Speaking at the opening of a two-day workshop on the Regenerative and Agro-ecological Landscape Acceleration Facility (RALAF) in Benin City, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Dr. Peter Osagie, emphasized the state's dedication to sustainable agricultural investment across forestry, fisheries, and engineering sectors.

Edo State has been selected as the pilot location for RALAF in Nigeria, a recognition the government views as a significant opportunity.

The initiative aims to mobilize private sector finance to accelerate Nigeria's agroecology transition, ensuring re-

silient and regenerative local food economies.

Dr. Osagie highlighted the critical role of regenerative agriculture in preserving ecosystems, reducing carbon emissions, and combating climate change.

Managing Director of Pollination, Mr. Steven Lang, accompanied by Associate Director Ms. Isabella Franklin, explained that RALAF is backed by the Green Climate Fund and developed in partnership with Pollination and Assets Management.

The initiative is designed to align Edo State's agricultural policies with sustainable conservation efforts.

Government officials, agriculture experts, and representatives from key ministries participated in the workshop, marking the beginning of Edo State's drive toward a more sustainable and environmentally conscious agricultural sector.

Gov Okpebholo launches NElfund scheme in Edo

BERNADETTE IDALU

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, officially launched the Nigeria Education Loan Fund (Nelfund) scheme in Edo State.

Represented by the Deputy Governor, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, he reaffirmed his administration's commitment to making education accessible to all Edo State indigenes, regardless of gender or location, through collaboration with the scheme.

Idahosa highlighted the significance of Nelfund in alleviating the financial burden on indigent students, ensuring they can pursue higher education without undue stress.

He praised Governor Okpebholo for staying true to his campaign promise of prioritizing education, a goal now being realized through this partnership.

During a prior courtesy visit from the Nelfund team, Idahosa commended Edo State Commissioner of Education, Dr. Paddy Emmanuel Iyamu, for his extensive media en-

gagement to raise awareness about the scheme and encourage optimal utilization of the interest-free loan.

He also expressed gratitude to Nelfund's Managing Director and CEO, Mr. Akin-tunde Oluwale Sawyer, and acknowledged Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila for sponsoring the bill, which was signed into law by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, making interest-free loans available to students in government-owned federal and state tertiary institutions.

At the New Festival Hall in the Edo State Government House, stakeholders engaged directly with the Nelfund team to address their concerns.

The official website (<https://nelf.gov.ng>) was provided for students to check eligibility criteria and access relevant information.

Mr. Sawyer explained that loan repayment begins two years after the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) program, with employers required to deduct 10% from beneficiaries' salaries at the source to ensure sustainability of the revolving loan scheme.

Edo NUJ disowns "Independent..."

CONTINUES FROM PG 1

er members of the union on a courtesy visit to a patron of the union, Elder Pius Omofomwan in Benin City.

He expressed satisfaction that the state government was putting machinery in place to improve the welfare of the people of the state.

Alenkhe disclosed that the visit was to brief the patron on activities of the union so far, including the election which brought the present executive

for another term of office and thanked Elder Omofomwan for his support to the union.

Elder Omofomwan, the Chairman/Chief Executive Officer of GT Plaza thanked the leadership of the union for the visit.

He appreciated the union for striving for excellence and therefore sued for its sustainability.

Elder Omofomwan promised to sustain his support for the union and praised the leadership of the union for being above board.

Edo govt, IDH, stakeholders collaborate for sustainable agric in Sokponba

The Edo State Government, in partnership with the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) Netherlands and key stakeholders, has taken a major step toward transforming agriculture in the Sokponba community landscape through the validation of critical studies aimed at enhancing farming practices, protecting the environment, and fostering inclusive community investments.

Sokponba community is in Orhionmwon Local Government Area of Edo State.

At a Stakeholders Engagement Meeting held in Benin City, government officials, investors, community leaders, and development partners gathered to review findings and lay the groundwork for a structured intervention programme to drive economic growth and sustainability in the region.

Speaking at the event, the

Country Director of IDH, Prof. Eniola Fabusoro, described the engagement as both "historic and strategic," emphasizing that the validation process was key to ensuring that the proposed interventions addressed the realities on the ground.

He noted that this step was crucial in designing impactful projects that would benefit both the local people and the environment.

Prof. Fabusoro also highlighted the positive reception from local communities, dispelling initial concerns of resistance.

He attributed this trust to the commitment of the Edo State Government and ESOPP-IIO in prioritizing agricultural development.

This growing confidence among locals, he said, provided a solid foundation for sustainable agricultural initiatives in the region.

The General Manager of ES-

OPP-IIO, Mr. Churchill Oboh, commended the state government's dedication to agriculture, pointing to the increased budgetary allocation as evidence of its commitment.

He stated that this financial backing would help tackle key challenges, such as access to agrochemicals, improved planting materials, and mechanized land development, ultimately improving farmers' yields and ensuring food security.

Explaining the significance of the socio-economic survey conducted in the Sokponba forest by IDH, Mr. Oboh said that the research aimed to evaluate the impact of various investments on local farmers' livelihoods.

He noted that most people in the Sokponba landscape were subsistence farmers, underscoring the need for a structured approach that would enhance productivity, raise living stand-

ards, and curb deforestation, while fostering collaboration between investors, farmers, and host communities.

He further emphasized that as a non-profit organization, IDH was committed to supporting farmers but needed a thorough understanding of existing challenges before launching targeted interventions.

The Chairman of Sokponba Dunkudon, Mr. Ogbonmwan Godfrey, expressed optimism that ongoing discussions and collaborations would lead to meaningful development for host communities.

He however, urged the government to introduce policies granting permanent land ownership rights to local families, arguing that such measures would resolve longstanding land disputes between investors and residents, ensuring long-term peace, stability, and economic prosperity.



LAUNCH OF NElfund:

Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa (right), and Akin-tunde Sawyer, Managing Director/CEO, Nigerian Education Loan Fund (Nelfund), before the launch of Nelfund in Benin City.

Amori inducted into Hall of Fame

AJUWA VICTOR

The Chief Adviser to the Governor of Delta State, Chief Ighoyota Amori, has been inducted into the prestigious Hall of Fame of the Nigeria Radar Magazine as the 2025 Role Model in Leadership.

The honour was conferred on him in Asaba, Delta State during a courtesy visit by the Editorial Team of Nigeria Radar Magazine where he was also recognized as a Member of Africa 100 Peace Ambassadors, a Nigeria's Change Maker, and the PDP Chieftain of the Year.

Speaking at the presentation, the Publisher of Nigeria Radar Magazine, Mr. Tony Okwunebe, stated that the recognition was a result of Chief Amori's outstanding leadership record and unwavering commitment to unity and political stability in Delta State.

"We have been following your excellent leadership track record and activities, and we have observed with great fulfilment your ability and commitment towards ensuring unity across the state," Okwunebe said.

He described Chief Amori as a highly detribalized Deltan who, despite being a core Urhobo son, has worked tirelessly to foster inclusivity across ethnic and political lines.

"You have been a force behind all administrations and have ensured that the PDP remains the ruling party in the state. You are like the father of all administrations in Delta State. Since you came into the office, you have changed the narrative of politics in the state," Okwunebe added.

He congratulated Chief Amori on his appointment by Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori, the Governor of Delta State, as Chief Ad-

viser, stating that the position was in safe hands given his wealth of experience, strategic insight, and wisdom to assist the governor in fulfilling his mandate.

"In line with your consistency in leadership and your relevance over the years, Nigeria Radar Magazine is pleased to identify with you and commend you for a job well done. Through this honour, we recognize your significant contributions and induct you into our Hall of Fame as the 2025 Role Model in Leadership," he affirmed.

In his response, Chief Ighoyota Amori expressed gratitude to the editorial team for the honour and recognition, describing it as an encouragement to remain steadfast in his service to Delta State and Nigeria at large.

"I sincerely appreciate this great honour bestowed upon me by Nigeria Radar Magazine. Leadership is about service, and I will contin-

ue to play my part in ensuring that Delta State moves forward in line with the vision of His Excellency, the Governor, through the MORE Agenda," he stated.

Chief Amori further underscored the critical role of accurate information in governance, assuring that his office is open to working with Nigeria Radar Magazine and other credible media platforms to promote factual reporting and counter misinformation.

"The role of the media in shaping public perception and governance cannot be overemphasized. I encourage you to continue your commitment to spreading the right information instead of the propaganda that sometimes floods the public space. My office remains available to collaborate in ensuring that the people of Delta State stay informed with credible and accurate news," he emphasized.

Customs intercept over \$1.1m at Kano airport

Operatives of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) have intercepted \$1,154,900 and SR135,900 undeclared foreign currency at the Mallam Aminu Kano International Airport (MAKIA).

NCS spokesman, Abdullahi Maiwada, disclosed this in a statement on Thursday.

He said the seizure was made recently during a routine baggage check on an inbound passenger, Hauwa Ibrahim Abdullahi, who arrived on Saudi Airline Flight No. SV401 from

Saudi Arabia.

According to Maiwada, during the physical examination of the passenger's luggage conducted by NCS Officers, the undeclared currency was discovered concealed within palm-date fruit packs locally referred to as Dabino.

He stated that the interception aligns with the NCS's commitment to enforcing financial regulations and preventing illicit financial flows across Nigeria's borders.

"In line with established pro-

cedures, the suspect and the seized foreign currency have been handed over to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for further investigation and necessary legal action," the statement read.

"Subsequently, the court convicted the defendant as charged and ordered the forfeiture of the undeclared money to the Federal Government in line with the provisions of the Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Act of 2022.

"The Service reiterates that

all travellers must comply with Nigeria's financial regulations, particularly the legal requirement to declare any cash or negotiable instruments exceeding the approved threshold when travelling in or out of the country. The Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Act of 2022 and the Foreign Exchange (Monitoring and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1995, provide clear guidelines on currency declaration. Non-compliance with these regulations constitutes a violation of Nigerian law and attracts se-

vere penalties. The Service, therefore, urges the public to adhere strictly to these requirements to avoid legal consequences.

"Under the leadership of the Comptroller-General of Customs, Bashir Adewale Adeniyi, the NCS remains resolute in its enforcement efforts to combat smuggling, illicit financial transactions, and other trans-border crimes.

"This latest seizure highlights the Service's unwavering dedication to protecting the

nation's economic interests and ensuring compliance with financial regulations.

"The NCS will continue to collaborate with relevant government agencies and stakeholders to strengthen border security, enhance compliance with financial laws, and safeguard Nigeria's economy.

"Travellers and stakeholders in the financial sector are advised to remain vigilant and always adhere to lawful financial practices," he added.



COURTESY VISIT:

Delta State Governor, Sheriff Oborevwori (left), and Delta State Police Commissioner, Abaniwonda Olufemi, when he led his management team on a courtesy visit to Government House, Asaba.

FG to unveil Fly Nigeria Act for local airline growth —Aviation Minister

The Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, has stated that the Federal Government is set to introduce the Fly Nigeria Act to the National Assembly, a policy aimed at boosting the country's aviation industry by mandating government officials to prioritise local airlines for official trips.

Keyamo disclosed this during the 2025 Ministerial Press Briefing on Thursday in Abuja.

"We are in the process of pushing the Fly Nigeria Act to the National Assembly. There is a Fly America Act, and I be-

lieve there is also a Fly India Act. Most major countries have their own 'Fly Act' to promote their national airlines," Keyamo stated.

The proposed legislation will require that all government-funded official trips be taken using Nigerian airlines.

"Only when a local airline does not operate on a particular route can an international airline be used," he explained.

According to Keyamo, the Fly Nigeria Act is not just an aviation policy but also a strategic move to strengthen Nigeria's economy.

"This will be enacted as a law. We are unsure how nationalism will influence its reception, but it is a key policy push from us," he added.

He emphasised that the initiative aligns with President Bola Tinubu's vision of a \$1 trillion economy, with aviation playing a critical role in achieving that goal.

"The Fly Nigeria Act is almost ready in draft form. It aims to further boost business within the country, contributing to the \$1 trillion economy that the President envisions," Keyamo said.

The minister revealed that the process for formal adoption is already in motion.

"Once the Fly Nigeria Act is finalised, we will present it to the Federal Executive Council for approval. After that, we will take it to the National Assembly to ensure that local airlines are given priority on international routes before international airlines."

The Fly Nigeria Act is expected to drive increased patronage for local airlines, stimulate growth in the aviation sector, and ultimately retain more revenue within Nigeria.

"SMOF offers free AI smart glasses, eye tests to car buyers in Edo"

KEHINDE OSAGIEDÉ

BENIN CITY

Relief has come the way of residents in Edo State as AutoVision Initiative in conjunction with Sen. Monday Okpebholo Foundation (SMOF) has concluded plans to roll out free Smart AI Driving Glasses with eye screenings for car buyers in Edo State.

Aside providing smart AI driving glasses to car buyers, AutoVision in collaboration with SMOF is also sponsoring free eye screenings for 100,000 road users in Edo within the period of five years.

The initiative, according to AutoVision, is to improve road safety by providing smart AI driving glasses with advanced blue lens technology to car users in Nigeria for free.

Desmond Bassey, the Lead Consultant in a chat with journalists in Benin City on Friday, disclosed that this will be achieved in collaboration with car vendors, eye clinics and NGOs with beneficiaries, ensuring that more people get the best vision care they need for safe driving.

Bassey noted that many road accidents occurred due to poor vision, and this initiative aims to reduce those risks by ensuring drivers have access to advanced smart eyewear technology and free access to eye screening that enhances visibility and overall driving comfort.

Speaking on the eligibility and accessibility, he said: "The smart AI driving glasses are subsidised by SMOF, making the glasses more accessible to car buyers in Edo State.

"The initiative also supports the glaucoma community for

individuals with glaucoma. Access to the AutoVision initiative and benefits is completely free after purchasing a car. This ensures that those living with glaucoma can drive safely without extra financial burden.

"Also, for individuals without glaucoma, they are also eligible to participate; however, they must provide proof of donation, which requires a minimum contribution towards supporting individuals living with glaucoma. This must be completed before proceeding with the application after purchasing a car.

"AutoVision connects donors which includes; auto dealers, eye clinics, and NGOs with beneficiaries, ensuring that all car buyers have access to eye screening and high-quality, AI-powered smart glasses for driving.

"These glasses are designed with the most advanced blue lens technology to reduce glare and improved vision. They also come with smart features such as direct access to chat with eye doctors; hands-free phone calling; language translation, and music playback."

Bassey explained further that the application process will begin at the point of purchase with designated car vendors participating in the AutoVision initiative, noting that a representative will be available on-site to assist buyers with the application process.

"AutoVision initiative will collaborate with partners nationwide to enhance accessibility and road safety, while remaining independent of car pricing decisions. We also work with trusted donors and partner vendors to ensure that cars are sold at fair market prices and in optimal working conditions.

Court enforces judgment on land grabbing case

LUCKY EFESÉ

An Edo State High Court, sitting in Benin has begun the process of execution of its judgement on a parcel of land measuring 500ft by 600ft which was alleged to have been unlawfully sold by elders and youths of Obah Village in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area of Edo State to unsuspecting buyers.

The land which belongs to a Lagos based businessman, Sir Francis Aghedo, but was encroached upon by the elders of the community, selling same to unsuspecting members of the public who had started erecting structures thereon.

Sir Aghedo had approached the High Court to seek redress and a judgement was delivered in his favour.

In exercise of its powers

to execute judgements of the court in Suit No. B/822/2022, the Chief bailiff of the court, in the company of security agents, including the judgement beneficiary, Sir Francis Aghedo went to the land, sealed it up and pasted the judgement documents on both the empty parcels of land, as well as the completed and uncompleted buildings as warning to the encroachers.

Speaking on the development, Sir Aghedo said that he legitimately bought the said land from the Enogie of Obazagbon village in the locality who doubles as both the administrative and traditional head that oversees the three villages to wit; Obah, Obazagbon and Obadolovbiyi which are under his watch.

He further said that no soon-er he bought the said land, than

he took possession unencumbered by surveying the entire land, saying he was shocked to see completed and uncompleted buildings on the land, a development which influenced his decision to approach the court to seek redress.

Having gotten the judgement, he said he embarked on friendly moves to give notice by pasting the judgement documents on the buildings to

enable the owners who are disposed to negotiation to come forward and open talks as their failure, would enable him confiscate the buildings.

Aghedo who expressed concerns over growing acts of land grabbing by some unscrupulous elements in the society for financial gratification, however exudes confidence in the ability of the judiciary to administer justice on such matters.

Lagos-Calabar coastal highway wasteful, corrupt —OBJ

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo has described the N15.6tn Lagos-Calabar Coastal highway project as wasteful and corrupt.

He equally slammed the President Bola Tinubu administration for spending N21bn on a new official residence for Vice President Kashim Shettima, calling it a misplaced priority and conduit designed to embezzle public funds.

The ex-leader disclosed this

in chapter six of his new book, 'Nigeria: Past and Future' where he painted the portrait and characters of chief executives at both the federal and state levels.

The book was one of the two new books unveiled to mark Obasanjo's 88th birthday last week.

The Minister of Works, David Umahi, had revealed that the 700km Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway will cost N4.93bn per kilometre, stating that the contract was awarded on a coun-

terpart-funding basis and not a Public-Private Partnership.

About N1.06tn has been released for the pilot phase, or six per cent of the project, which begins at Eko Atlantic and is expected to terminate at the Lekki Deep Sea Port.

Many prominent Nigerians, including the presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party in the 2023 general elections, Atiku Abubakar, have questioned the Federal Government's decision to award the contract to Gilbert Chagoury's Hitech Construction Company without competitive bidding.

Chagoury is believed to be Tinubu's long-time business

partner and friend.

Assessing the two years of Tinubu in office, Obasanjo said it appears that the game of short-changing over 230 million Nigerians would continue because "Everything is said to be transactional and the slogan is 'It is my turn to chop'."

Presidential spokesman, Bayo Onanuga, declined to react to Obasanjo's criticism of his principal when contacted.

The former President said the majority of those who have been opportune to hold leadership positions in the country as governors, presidents, ministers, commissioners even as local government chairmen are

ill-prepared, satanic, self-centred and are all out to corruptly enrich themselves while the nation continues to wallow in abject poverty and condemnable underdevelopment.

Obasanjo said that many clamouring to be governors or lead the country in one form or the other are only interested in using their offices to enrich themselves and their cronies and then leave the country worse than they met it.

The former President pointed out that most office-seekers in the country would go as far as obtaining loans of billions of naira believing that paying back from the public funds after be-

ing elected won't be a problem.

He stated, "How do you explain the situation of a chief executive, a governor, whose business was owing the banks billions of naira and millions of dollars before becoming a governor and within two years of becoming governor, without his company doing any business, he paid all that his businesses owed the banks."

"You are left to guess where the money came from. Having got away with that in the first term, he consigned to himself almost half of the state resources in the second term. He was a typical example of the goings-on at that level almost universally in the country with only a few exceptions."

Police arrest couple for gun running in Delta

Operatives of the CP-Special Assignment Team of the Delta State Police Command have arrested a couple, Joshua Bogbon Godwell and his wife, Uche Joshua, in Okpe Local Government Area of the state over alleged involvement in gun running.

The police, acting on credible intelligence, stormed their residence on March 9, 2025, at about 2:30 pm and recovered a fabricated Beretta pistol with a single live round meant for delivery to a client in Sapele.

Confirming the arrest on Thursday, the state Police Public Relations Officer, SP Bright Edeafe, said, "Following a well-coordinated sting operation, our officers arrested the couple in Okpe LGA and recovered a locally fabricated Beretta pistol in their possession."

"The wife, Uche Joshua, admitted to being the dispatcher of illegal arms for her husband."

According to the police statement, Uche confessed that she had "delivered several arms as di-

rected by her husband to various clients within Warri and Sapele."

Further investigations led to the arrest of one Junior Moses Ogedegbe, 30, of Useifurun community, Ughelli South Local Government Area, suspected to be a member of the syndicate.

"Our operatives are intensifying efforts to recover more arms and apprehend other members of the gang," Edeafe added.

In a separate operation, CP-SAT operatives arrested suspected cultists and armed robbers in different parts of the state, recovering two pump-action guns, one Beretta pistol, one cut-to-size gun, and 24 live cartridges.

Edeafe disclosed, "On February 3, 2025, at about 1:45 pm, operatives, acting on intelligence, arrested a wanted cultist and gun runner, Stephen Oma Odu, 25, of Obagho community, Warri North LGA, in Sapele town. His confession led to the arrest of Abel Festus, aka Tompolo, 42, of Oghareki community, Ethiope West LGA."

Delta Steel town not community, says LG boss

AJUWA VICTOR

Olorogun Vincent Ogheneruemu Oyibode, the Chairman of Udu Local Government Council, has refuted claims by former employees of Delta Steel Company (DSC), now Premium Steel, that the steel town constitutes a community within Udu.

Speaking during a meeting in his office in Otor-Udu, Oyibode clarified that DSC does not meet the criteria of a traditional community and should not be regarded as one.

He explained that a community is typically defined by shared cultural values, norms, and ancestral heritage.

Many DSC workers, he noted, hail from various states, including Kogi and other parts of Nigeria, with no common cultural ties to Udu.

When asked about their ancestral deities, some ex-workers could not provide answers, further proving their lack of historical roots in the area.

Oyibode also pointed out that the land on which DSC

was built was donated by multiple host communities, including Orhuwhorun, Aladja, Ujewu, Eket, and Igbogidi.

He emphasized that these settlements are the true indigenous communities of Udu and should be recognized as such.

Rather than seeking recognition as a separate entity, Oyibode urged former DSC workers to focus on improving infrastructure, particularly in road development, electricity, and healthcare.

He noted that residents of the steel town have long struggled with basic amenities, and addressing these issues should be the priority.

The meeting ended on a positive note, with ex-workers expressing gratitude for Oyibode's commitment to development. They acknowledged his perspective and pledged their support for efforts to enhance living conditions in the area.

Oyibode assured them that all residents, including those in DSC, would benefit from ongoing improvements and better services.



PROTEST:

Pro-Senator Natasha protest at the National Assembly, Abuja.

PHOTO: OMOYE AMINU

Ozekhome demands equal penalties for political, financial crimes

Senior Advocate of Nigeria, Mike Ozekhome, has called for political corruption to be treated with the same level of seriousness and penalties as financial crimes, arguing that it undermines democracy and good governance.

Ozekhome made the call while delivering a lecture titled, "Has Democracy Led to Good Governance in Nigeria?" at the Midwest Achievers Awards in Benin City, Edo State.

The legal luminary, who was honoured with the Defender of Democracy award at the event, decried what he described as the unchecked impunity of the political elite, whom he accused of manipulating the system to their advantage.

He stated, "Political corruption should be aggressively tackled with the same seriousness and penalties as financial crimes."

"Too often, it is overlooked because those involved wield

significant power."

Citing Nigeria's history of electoral malpractice, Ozekhome noted that elections in the country have been riddled with manipulation and voter exploitation.

He advocated for post-election adjudication processes that not only determine winners, but also impose penalties, including imprisonment and fines on politicians and their agents who violate electoral rules.

He added, "Free and fair

elections are the foundation of legitimacy, transparency, and accountability.

"They must be safeguarded to ensure leaders remain accountable to the people."

Earlier, the Director of Organisation, Midwest Achievers Awards, Owen Omo-Ojo, said that the event was designed to recognise individuals who have demonstrated excellence, resilience, and ethical leadership while inspiring positive change in their communities

Nigerian energy innovator wins 2025 Commonwealth youth award

A Nigerian innovator, Stanley Anigbogu, has clinched the overall title of 2025 Commonwealth Young Person of the Year at the annual Commonwealth Youth Awards for Excellence in Development Work, in London.

Anigbogu, who is the founder and Chief Executive Officer of LightEd, was recognised for transforming waste into solar innovations that provide clean energy to over 10,000 refugees in Africa.

His work draws from his childhood experiences with energy poverty, according to a

statement from the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Determined to create change and promote sustainability as well as climate resilience, he founded LightEd in Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic. With a small team of like-minded young people, he has trained 6,000 students and recycled over 20,000 kilograms of waste.

"Originally from Anambra State in south-east Nigeria, Stanley received the award from the Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Rt Hon Patricia Scotland KC, during a vibrant cere-

mony at Marlborough House," the statement partly read.

Government ministers, senior government officials, youth leaders, and other stakeholders attended the event to celebrate the achievements of young people across the Commonwealth.

Scotland, being a committed advocate for a sustainable energy transition, thanked Stanley for his creative and impactful solution to multiple challenges.

She congratulated him, saying, "Not only are you bringing hope and light to vulnerable communities and refugees who face many

hardships and disadvantages, but you are also ridding communities of harmful waste and pollution, leaving environments safer and cleaner for other young people. This is a testament to the creativity of the Commonwealth's youth."

"Stanley is training other young people and providing skills for employment in a field that will contribute to the energy transition we need to mitigate against climate change. You are a true revolutionary, a visionary, and I am pleased to award you the title of Commonwealth Young Person of the Year."

Fifty-one dead after North Macedonia nightclub fire

At least 51 people have been killed and more than 100 injured in a nightclub fire in North Macedonia, officials say.

The blaze is said to have started around 02:30 (01:30 GMT) at the Pulse club in Kocani, a town around 100 km

(60 miles) east of the capital, Skopje. Footage posted on social media shows the building engulfed in flames.

As many as 1,500 were said to have been attending a concert by the band DNK, a hip-hop duo popular in the country.

Interior Minister Pance Toskovski said that according to initial reports, the fire started from sparks caused by pyrotechnic devices.

He told reporters in front of the Kocani police station that sparks then hit the ceiling made of highly flammable

material, before the fire spread through the club. He said some arrests had been made.

Footage shows the band playing on stage when two flares go off, sparks then catch on the ceiling before rapidly spreading.

Prime Minister Hristijan

Mickoski wrote in a statement on Facebook that the government was "fully mobilised and will do everything necessary to deal with the consequences and determine the causes of this tragedy."

He called it a "difficult and very sad day" for the country

which had now lost so many young lives.

The hospital in Kocani initially reported 90 admissions, with many suffering severe burns. Some of the injured have since been transferred to hospitals in Skopje for further treatment.

Trump blocked from using wartime law for deportations

A federal judge has blocked President Donald Trump from using a 227-year-old law meant to protect the US during wartime to carry out mass deportations of Venezuelans.

Trump on Saturday proclaimed immigrants belonging to the Venezuelan crime gang Tren de Aragua were "conducting irregular warfare" against the US and that he would deport them under the Alien Enemies Act of 1798.

But US District Judge James Boasberg on Saturday evening ordered a halt to deportations covered by the proclamation that will last for 14 days, according to media reports.

Judge Boasberg told a hearing he had heard planes with deportees were taking off and ordered them turned back, the Washington Post reported.

The law allows the US during wartime to detain and remove people threatening the country's safety without having to follow due process. It was last invoked to intern people of Japanese descent during World War Two.

There was little surprise to the proclamation on Saturday, where Trump declared Tren de Aragua was "perpetrating, attempting, and threatening an invasion or predatory incursion against the territory of the United States".

He had promised to use the controversial law for mass deportations during last year's campaign.

The American Civil Liberties Union and other rights group had already sued to block him from using it on Saturday before he issued the proclamation, as well.

At a hearing, the judge said the terms "invasion" and "predatory incursion" in the law "really relate to hostile acts perpetrated by enemy nations," and the law proba-

bly did not offer a good basis for Trump's proclamation, according to the New York Times.

An ACLU lawyer had told the New York Times he believed there were two planes of Venezuelan immigrants in the air on Sunday. The BBC has not verified that report.

The case will now move through the legal system and could go all the way to the Supreme Court.

The proclamation, and the fight around it, should rally Trump's supporters, who largely returned him to the White House on his pledges to crack down on illegal immigration and bring down prices of everyday goods. Since he was inaugurated in January, he has swiftly worked to overhaul the US immigration system.

Rights groups, along with some legal experts, are calling the invocation unprecedented, noting the Alien Enemies Act has been used in the past after the US officially declared war against other countries. Under the constitution, only Congress can declare war.

All Venezuelan citizens in the US who are at least 14 years old, members of Tren de Aragua and "are not actually naturalized or lawful permanent residents" were to be "apprehended, restrained, secured, and removed as Alien Enemies", under Trump's order.

Trump did not lay out in the proclamation how US officials would determine that a person is a member of the violent, transnational gang.

By using this law, instead of immigration laws that already give him "ample authority" to deport the gang's members, Trump would not have to prove that detainees are part of Tren de Aragua, said Katherine Yon Ebright, counsel at the Brennan Center for Justice in a statement.



TORNADO:
Damage from a tornado that hit Missouri.

US launches wave of air strikes on Yemen's Houthis

The US has launched a "decisive and powerful" wave of air strikes on Houthi rebels in Yemen, President Donald Trump has said, citing the armed group's attacks on shipping in the Red Sea as the reason.

"Funded by Iran, the Houthi thugs have fired missiles at US aircraft, and targeted our Troops and Allies," Trump wrote on his Truth social platform, adding that their "piracy, violence, and terrorism" had cost "billions of dollars" and put lives at risk.

The Houthi-run health ministry said at least 31 people were killed and 101 others were injured in the strikes.

The group - which began targeting shipping in response to the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza - said its forces would respond to US strikes.

The Houthis reported a series of explosions on Saturday

evening in Sanaa and in the northern province of Saada - the rebels' stronghold on the border with Saudi Arabia.

The Iranian-backed rebel group, which considers Israel its enemy, controls Sanaa and the north-west of Yemen, but it is not the country's internationally-recognised government.

Unverified images show plumes of black smoke over the area of Sanaa's airport - which includes a military facility.

In a statement, the Houthis blamed the US and the UK for "wicked" aggression targeting residential areas in the Yemeni capital, Sanaa.

The UK did not participate in Saturday's US strikes against the Houthi targets but it did provide routine refuelling support for the US.

These attacks, Trump said, "will not be tolerated".

He added: "We will use over-

whelming lethal force until we have achieved our objective."

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the US government had "no authority, or business, dictating Iranian foreign policy".

"End support for Israeli genocide and terrorism," he posted on X on Sunday. "Stop killing of Yemeni people."

The Houthis have said they are acting in support of the Palestinians in the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, and have claimed - often falsely - that they are targeting ships only linked to Israel, the US or the UK.

Since November 2023, the Houthis have targeted dozens of merchant vessels with missiles, drones and small boat attacks in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. They have sunk two vessels, seized a third, and killed four crew members.

The group has not been deterred by the deployment of

Western warships to protect merchant vessels, or by multiple rounds of US and British air strikes on its military targets.

Israel has also carried out air strikes against the Houthis since July in retaliation for the 400 missiles and drones that the Israeli military said had been launched at the country from Yemen, most of which were shot down.

Major shipping companies have been forced to stop using the Red Sea - through which almost 15% of global seaborne trade usually passes - and use a much longer route around southern Africa instead.

Trump said that it had been more than a year since a US-flagged ship had sailed safely through the Suez Canal - which the Red Sea leads to - and four months since a US warship had been through the body of water between east Africa and the Arabian peninsula.

At least 34 dead as tornadoes tear through southern US

At least 34 people have died in the US - including 12 in Missouri alone - after deadly tornadoes tore through several south-eastern states, flipping cars and flattening homes.

In Kansas, at least eight people died after more than 55 vehicles were involved in a crash due to a dust storm.

More than 250,000 properties were without power across seven states - including Michigan, Missouri and Illinois - overnight into Sunday, according to tracker PowerOutage.

Further severe weather is expected for the region, with tornado watches issued across eastern Louisiana, western Georgia, central Tennessee and the western Florida Panhandle.

Six deaths were reported in Mississippi by the Governor Tate Reeves, as several tornadoes spread across the state.

Flash flooding and flood warnings have also been issued in central Mississippi, eastern Louisiana and western Tennessee; as well as parts of Alabama and Arkansas, as severe weather continues to track across the

south-east.

The National Weather Service (NWS) has said these flash floods could prove deadly.

Multiple tornado warnings were also issued across Alabama on Saturday night.

The NWS warned of "multiple intense to violent long-track tornadoes" in those areas, describing the situation as "particularly dangerous".

The meteorological agency said: "If you live in these areas, get to the sturdiest structure you have access to and remain in place until the storms pass."

Gusts of up to 60mph (97km/h) have been recorded in Shelby, Tennessee, according to NWS data.

Mike Kehoe, governor of Missouri, said the state had been "devastated by severe storms and tornadoes, leaving homes destroyed and lives lost".

Missouri's emergency management agency said initial reports indicated 19 tornadoes had struck 25 counties so far.

A home belonging to one of the 12 people killed in Missouri was torn apart by a tornado.

"It was unrecognisable as a

home. Just a debris field," Coroner Jim Akers of Butler County told CBS News, as rescuers attended the scene.

"The floor was upside down. We were walking on walls."

Alicia Wilson, who was evacuated from her home in Missouri, told TV station KSDK: "It was the scariest thing I've ever been through; it was so fast, our ears were all about to burst."

Arkansas has seen three deaths and 29 injuries - prompting Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders to declare a state of emergency.

Georgia's governor, Brian Kemp, also declared a state of emergency, while Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt confirmed one person had been killed in the state.

A dust storm that caused three deaths in Texas on Friday night caused a pile-up of an estimated 38 cars.

"It's the worst I've ever seen," Sgt Cindy Barkley, of the state's department of public safety, told reporters.

"We couldn't tell that they were all together until the dust kind of settled."

Creativity or cultural invasion? A fashion show sparks a row in Kashmir

A fashion show held last week in a picturesque, snow-clad town in Indian-administered Kashmir has sparked a major controversy that is still simmering.

The show, by the well-known fashion brand Shivan & Narresh, was held last Friday at a ski resort in Gulmarg to display their skiwear collection. The label is the first big, non-local brand to hold a fashion show in Kashmir, a scenic Himalayan region which has seen decades of violence.

But it soon sparked outrage among locals, politicians and religious leaders in Muslim-majority Kashmir after fashion publisher Elle India posted a video

on social media which showed some models wearing underwear or bikinis. Locals were also angry over another video - shared by online magazine Lifestyle Asia - of a party held after the show, which showed people drinking alcohol outdoors.

Many took offence with the show being held in the holy month of Ramadan - a time of fasting and prayer for Muslims - and accused the designers of "mocking their faith" and "disregarding local culture and sentiments". Some clerics called the show "obscene" and said it was like "soft porn".

Some others explained that the outrage had arisen not only from religious conservatism, but

also from a fear of cultural imposition from "outsiders". Kashmir has witnessed decades of armed separatist insurgency against Indian rule since the late 1980s.

The backlash prompted Elle India and Lifestyle Asia to delete their videos. Shivan Bhatiya and Narresh Kukreja, the designers behind the label, also apologised, saying that their "sole intention was to celebrate creativity" and that they didn't intend to offend religious sentiments.

Kashmir - known as the land of saints and Sufism (Islamic mysticism) - has a rich tradition of spirituality which influences many aspects of peoples' lives. The traditional attire is

modest, with locals - both men and women - often wearing the pheran, a long, loose cloak.

The row also moved off social media and a discussion about the show and the after-party caused a ruckus in the Jammu and Kashmir assembly.

The opposition criticised the government, accusing it of giving permission for the event despite being aware of local sensitivities. Meanwhile, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah distanced his government from the event, saying it had been organised by private entities, and asking local authorities to investigate the matter and submit a report.

"If law has been violated, strict action will be taken," he said in the assembly on Monday. The police have not yet given details about who organised the event and what laws, if any, have been violated.

The fashion brand did not respond to the BBC's questions about the show, including about permissions it obtained.

It's not surprising that scenic Gulmarg - one of India's few skiing destinations and a favourite with tourists - was the choice of venue for a show highlighting a skiwear collection.

Fashion journalist Shefalee Vasudev says it's not uncommon

for designers to want to hold fashion shows in exquisite locations.

In fact, international designers like Alexander McQueen and Karl Lagerfeld are remembered as much for their creative, theatrical fashion shows as they are for their iconic designs.

But experimentation brings with it the risk of controversy and so, it's important to be mindful of the political and cultural sensitivities of a place, Ms Vasudev told the BBC.

And this holds especially true in a place like Kashmir, which has witnessed wars and decades of armed conflict.



SPACE STATION:

Astronauts Suni Williams (left), and Butch Wilmore, were supposed to have stayed on the space station for eight days.

SpaceX capsule docks as astronauts prepare return after nine months

A SpaceX capsule carrying a new crew has docked at the International Space Station (ISS), paving the way for astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams to come home.

The pair were due to be on the ISS for only eight days, but because of technical issues with the experimental spacecraft they arrived on, they have been there for more than nine months.

The astronauts are due to begin their journey back to Earth later this week. Steve Stich, manager of Nasa's commercial crew programme said he was delighted at the prospect.

"Butch and Suni have done a great job and we are excited to bring them back," he said.

Live footage showed the SpaceX Crew Dragon docking with the ISS and opening a hatch. Shortly after 0545 GMT, the astronauts embraced and hugged their counterparts in zero gravity.

The astronauts, along with

their ISS workmates, Nasa's Nick Hague and Roscosmos cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov, will be relieved by four astronauts, from Russia, Japan and two from the US.

There will be a two-day handover after which the old crew are due to begin their journey back to Earth. But there could be a small further delay, as they wait for conditions on Earth to be right for a safe re-entry of the returning capsule, according to Dana Weigel, manager, of the ISS programme.

"Weather always has to cooperate, so we'll take our time over that if it is not favourable," she told reporters.

Ms Weigel explained that the astronauts had begun getting ready for the handover last week.

"Butch rang a ceremonial bell as Suni handed over command to cosmonaut Alexei Ovchinin," she said.

The astronauts have consistently said that they have been

happy to be on board the space station, with Suni Williams describing it as her "happy place". But Dr Simeon Barber, of the Open University, told BBC News that there would likely have been a personal cost.

"When you are sent on a work trip that is supposed to last a week, you are not expecting it to take the best part of a year," he said.

"This extended stay in space will have disrupted family life, things will have happened back home that they will have missed out on, so there will have been a period of upheaval."

Butch and Suni arrived at the ISS at the beginning of June 2024 to test an experimental spacecraft called Starliner, which was built by the aerospace firm Boeing, a rival to SpaceX.

The mission had been delayed by several years because of technical issues in the spacecraft's development, and there were problems during its launch and docking on to the ISS. This in-

cluded issues with some of Starliner's thrusters, which would be needed to slow the spacecraft for re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere, and leaks of helium gas in the propulsion system.

Nasa decided that it would not take even a small risk in bringing back Butch and Suni on Starliner, when they had the option of returning them on SpaceX's Dragon capsule. Nasa decided the best option was to do this during a scheduled crew rotation, even though it would mean keeping the astronauts on the space station for several months.

Boeing has consistently argued that it would have been safe to bring Butch and Suni back on Starliner, and were unhappy about the decision to use a rival's capsule instead, which will be "embarrassing" for Boeing, according to Dr Barber.

"It's not a good look for Boeing to see astronauts they took into space come back in a competitor's craft."

Hackman's children not named in actor's \$80m will

The will of legendary actor Gene Hackman has been released, but uncertainty lingers over his \$80m (£62m) fortune.

The two-time Academy Award winner left his entire estate to his wife of 30 years, Betsy Arakawa. But Arakawa, 65, was found dead alongside her husband in their New Mexico home last month.

Legal experts have now said that, because authorities say Arakawa died seven days before her husband, Hackman's children could now potentially inherit his fortune, despite not being named in the will.

His three children with his late ex-wife, Faye Maltese - Christopher, 65, Elizabeth, 62, and Leslie, 58 - have not commented publicly on the matter.

Legal documents obtained by the BBC show Hackman, 95, named Arakawa as his sole beneficiary in 1995, with the

last update to the will in 2005.

However, California attorney Tre Lovell told the BBC that the estate could default to them under succession laws, as long as there was no other beneficiary named.

"The estate will actually be probated in accordance with intestate succession laws and the children would be lawfully next in line to inherit," he said.

They would also need to prove that the will is invalid because Arakawa died before Hackman, he added.

Authorities say Arakawa passed away on 11 February after contracting a rare virus, days before Hackman died of natural causes.

The couple was found dead in separate rooms of their \$4m Santa Fe home on 26 February after neighbourhood security conducted a welfare check and saw their bodies on the ground through a window.

Serbia's largest-ever rally sees 325,000 protest against govt

Hundreds of thousands of people descended on Serbia's capital on Saturday to protest over the deaths of 15 people in a railway station collapse.

While the government put attendance at 107,000 across Belgrade, an independent monitor said 325,000 - if not more - had gathered, making it Serbia's largest protest ever.

The Novi Sad collapse last November has galvanised anger towards the government and President Aleksandar Vucic. Demonstrators blame corruption and corner-cutting for the loss of life.

They believe the disaster reflects more than a decade of governing by the Progressive Party of Vucic - who closely associated himself with the station's recent renovation.

President Vucic addressed the nation on Saturday and praised the police, adding that he was proud that "we managed to pre-

serve the peace".

He added that he "understood" the protesters' message, and said "we will have to change ourselves".

Despite multiple resignations - and Vucic's insistence that he is going nowhere - the protests have only continued to grow.

"We just want a country that works," law student Jana Vasic told the BBC in the growing crowd in Belgrade.

"We want institutions that do their jobs properly. We don't care what party is in power. But we need a country that works, not one where you don't get justice for more than four months."

Republic Square - just one of the four meeting points around Serbia's capital for the "15th for 15" protest - was full to overflowing on Saturday.

Some took refuge on the plinth of Prince Mihajlo's statue - the traditional spot for Belgraders to meet, the equivalent of Eros in London's Piccadilly.

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HALF PAGE	295,600	317,770	236,500	254,238	147,800	158,885	340,000	365,500	273,450	293,959
10 X 3	221,700	238,328	147,800	158,885	118,300	127,173	266,000	285,950	251,300	270,148
13 X2	206,900	222,418	133,000	142,925	103,500	111,263	221,800	238,435	147,810	158,896
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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	
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SPORTS

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MTN CHAMPS Benin: Efetobore makes sprint double, Oyibu claims 200m crown

The curtains fell after an eventful three-day MTN CHAMPS Athletics Classics at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, with the finals of several events such as the 200m, 800m, 4X100m and

mixed 4x400m relays bringing the first leg of Season 3 to a climax.

Success Oyibu was one of the standout performers of the final day, roaring to an astounding lifetime best of 23.71s, im-

proving her times from both the heats and semifinals to win the Junior Girls' 200m title, adding it to her 100m Silver. Perezide Sigah clocked a Personal Best of 24.24s to place 2nd while Vivian Iyamu ran a

24.30s for 3rd place.

It was another PB galore on the men's side. David Akhalu bettered his lifetime best to a 21.29s to claim the title, finishing ahead of Wilfred Awonusi (21.34s) and Eniola Shiro (21.35s).

The senior ranks weren't left out of the action as Sophia Efetobore completed the sprint double, winning the 200m crown in the Senior women's category with a time of 23.72s. Jane Onyeneho took the Silver in 24.58s while Janet Adesiyana had the Bronze in 24.90s.

In the men's race, Lucky Daje fired through to 21.09s to win the Senior men's 200m ahead of Emmanuel Ojeli who produced

a 21.28s. Augustine Ezuruike grabbed Bronze in 21.53s.

Hamid Sambo executed a strong finish to stop the clock at a Season's Best (SB) of 1:51.64 in the Senior men's 800m final, the fourth fastest time he has ever run in the event. Adedokun Ayobami got through in 1:52.12 for 2nd position while Temitope Karunwi finished 3rd in 1:52.73.

Rhoda Adisa distanced herself from the pack at the sound of the bell, crossing the finish line in 2:06.21 to win the Senior women's 800m final. Fatimah Adebayo came in 2nd place in 2:12.05 while Adeyinka Mulero was 3rd in 2:16.55.

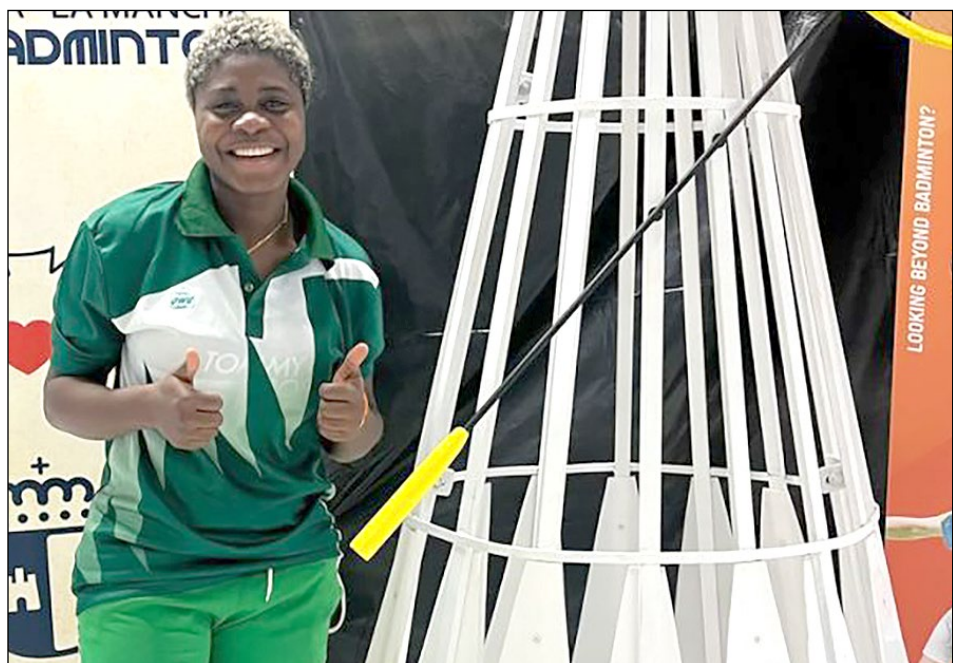
In the men's Junior category,

Olaitan Ayomide broke the 2min barrier to win the title in 1:57.89 over Samson Tebowei (1:59.97) and Solomon Okundaye (2:00.16).

Kehinde Olude triumphed in the women's division, dominating the lineup with a time of 2:17.31. Precious Orogun was a distant 2nd in 2:49.14, ahead of Favour Dio, who placed 3rd in 2:51.17.

Chukwuweniwe Olisa Emmanuel edged out Nwabueze to claim the Youth Boys GOLD in 2:03.37 to 2:03.41. Emmanuel Umeadi came 3rd in 2:05.59.

Elisha Agape struck GOLD in a PB of 2:14.90 ahead of Mary Edeh (2:16.48) and Esohe Ugbo (2:29.88) to win the Girls' section.



BADMINTON

Enugu State set to host first-ever international marathon

Enugu State is set to make history as it prepares to host its first-ever international marathon on May 3, 2025.

The Enugu City Marathon, a World Athletics-certified event, will bring together elite athletes and running enthusiasts from

across the globe to compete in a race that promises to be both thrilling and unforgettable.

The marathon, which aims to showcase the rich culture and resilience of the Coal City, will take runners through a carefully mapped-out course, highlighting the beauty and landscape of Enugu. The event is expected to attract top-tier athletes, amateur runners, and fitness enthusiasts eager to test their endurance on an international stage.

Registration for the marathon is now open. Interested participants can register online at www.enugucitymarathon.com or pick up registration forms at Nnamdi Azikiwe Stadium and the Enugu State Secretariat.

With Enugu State positioning itself as a hub for sports and tourism, the Enugu City Marathon is expected to put the city on the global athletics map while promoting fitness and community spirit.



Enugu State Governor, Barr. Peter Mbah, during the 2024 Coal City Half Marathon, in Enugu.

ICC U19 men's cricket world cup Africa qualifier to begin March 28

The ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup Africa Qualifier is set to begin, marking the start of an intense battle for a place on the global stage.

From March 28 to April 8, 2025, Africa's brightest young cricket talents will compete for the coveted ticket to the World Cup.

The first match is scheduled to bowl off on March 28, setting the stage for thrilling encounters and standout performances.

The countdown has begun, and fans can stay updated with exclusive match highlights, and key updates throughout the tournament.



Nigeria U19 cricket team that secures promotion to Division 1 at ICC U19 Cricket World Cup Qualifier.

Lobi Stars appoint Tope Bulos Head Coach

Lobi Stars have appointed Tope Bolus, a seasoned coach with previous stints at Rangers International, Katsina United, and MFM FC, as their new head coach.

This decision comes with just 10 games left in the season, following the team's recent struggles.

Coach Bolus faces the formidable task of steering the team to safety and improving their standing in the Nigeria Premier Football League.

ANFASSC extends its best wishes to Coach Bolus in this challenging endeavor.



TOPE BULOS

Morocco 2025: Flamingos defeat S'Africa, soar into final qualifying round

Nigeria's Flamingos wrapped up their qualification battle against South Africa's Bantwana with another dominant victory in Ikenne, BSNSports.com.ng reports.

After securing a 3-1 first-leg win in Pretoria last weekend, the Nigerian team entered the match full of confidence. However, they had to wait until

the 37th minute to break the deadlock, with Chidi Harmony opening the scoring.

Aishat Animashaun sealed the victory in the second half, securing a 2-0 win for the

hosts.

With a 5-1 aggregate triumph, Nigeria advances to the final round of qualifiers, where they will face the winner of the Algeria vs. Botswana tie

NSC Hails Nigerian Badminton team as Eniola Bolaji Strikes Gold

The National Sports Commission (NSC) has applauded the Nigerian contingent at the 2025 Spanish Parabadminton International, after another impressive outing that saw the team secure a gold and a bronze medal in Toledo,

Spain, on Sunday.

Paralympic medallist Eniola Bolaji continued her dominance, winning her second gold medal in two weeks with a commanding 2-0 (21-7, 21-10) victory over Turkey's Halime Yildiz in the women's SL3 final.

Bolaji had won gold a week earlier at the Spanish International in Victoria, Spain.

In the men's SL4 doubles event, Nnana Jeremiah and Eze Chukwuebuka delivered a strong performance, battling their way to a well-deserved bronze medal.

NSC Chairman, Mallam Shehu Dikko, commended the athletes for making Nigeria proud and praised the Badminton Federation of Nigeria, led by Francis Orbih, for ensuring the team's optimal performance on the international stage.