

# Fuel hike bites harder as residents groan over soaring food, service costs

**ABUJA**  
Residents of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) are groaning under the weight of rising food prices and service costs following a fresh hike in the pump price of petroleum products, with many calling for urgent Federal Government intervention. A market survey across Abuja and its environs on Sunday revealed sharp increases in

the prices of staple foods and basic services, largely attributed to the ripple effects of the Middle East crisis on fuel supply and pricing.

At Orange Market along the Abuja-Keffi Road, widely regarded as a major hub for bulk food trading, a large basket of tomatoes now sells for between N30,000 and N35,000, a steep rise from N9,000-N10,000 recorded in February.

A large bag of onions

has also surged to between N40,000 and N45,000 from its previous range of N15,000-N25,000, while smaller baskets now go for as much as N5,000.

At Lugbe Market, the cost of a basket of sweet potatoes has doubled to between N2,000 and N2,500, while five tubers of yam now sell for between N8,000 and N10,000. Beans have not been spared, as a mudu of white beans now costs up to N1,600.

Similar trends were ob-

served at Orozo Market, where five medium-sized tubers of yam now sell for between N8,500 and N9,000, while a mudu of brown beans has risen sharply to N1,300.

In Karu Market, tomato prices have climbed to between N38,000 and N40,000 per large basket, while pepper and tatashe have recorded significant increases. Yam prices have also risen, with five large tubers now costing as much as N15,000.

At Wuse Market, a small basket of tomatoes now sells for between N6,000 and N8,000, while pepper and tatashe prices have also increased. A large tuber of yam now costs between N10,000 and N15,000.

Utako Market has witnessed similar increases, particularly in onions and sweet potatoes, while Garki Modern Market recorded mixed trends, with slight drops in tomato prices but increases in onions and pepper.

In Nyanya Market, the price of yam has surged significantly, with medium-sized tubers now selling for between N8,500 and N9,000.

The rising cost of fuel has also impacted other sectors, particularly water production and cold storage, as operators grapple with erratic electricity supply and increased reliance on diesel-powered generators.

CONTINUES ON PG 2

# The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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

PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968

VOL. 47, NO. 1,223

MONDAY 23RD MARCH, 2026.

**Blackout crisis deepens as APC chieftain urges Tinubu's action**  
—Pg 5

# NLC kicks against N6trn power bailout

## Demands sweeping energy sector overhaul

**ABUJA**  
The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) on Sunday firmly rejected the proposed N6 trillion bailout for power generation companies, declaring that years of financial interventions have failed to deliver meaningful improvements in electricity supply across the country.

In a strongly worded state-

ment issued in Abuja, NLC President, Joe Ajaero, described the planned bailout as a superficial response to deeper, systemic failures plaguing Nigeria's power sector, insisting that further public spending on the current framework would only perpetuate inefficiency.

He argued that repeated injections of funds into the sector have not translated into better service delivery, noting that Ni-

gerians continue to grapple with erratic power supply, rising tariffs and widespread outages.

"The proposed N6 trillion bailout is a mere symptom of deeper structural failures in the power sector," Ajaero said. "We cannot continue to deploy public funds to sustain a fundamentally flawed system, while ordinary citizens bear the burden of inefficiency through high tariffs and persistent outages."

The labour leader called on the Federal Government to abandon the bailout plan and instead embark on comprehensive structural reforms aimed at addressing the root causes of the sector's underperformance.

Central to the NLC's proposal is the merger of the Ministries of Petroleum and Power into a single, unified Ministry of Energy, a move Ajaero said would improve coordination and resolve longstanding inefficiencies, particularly those linked to gas supply for ther-

mal power generation.

He maintained that the current separation of the two critical sectors has contributed significantly to operational bottlenecks, undermining efforts to achieve stable electricity generation and distribution.

According to him, establishing an integrated energy framework would enable the country to prioritise domestic electricity needs, strengthen

energy security and drive sustainable national development.

The NLC also took a swipe at what it described as the continued use of public funds to prop up failing private investments in the power sector, warning that such an approach is neither sustainable nor in the public interest.

CONTINUES ON PG 2



**SANDOSHAM VISITS KYARI:**

L-R: Minister of State for Agriculture and Food Security, Sen. Aliyu Sabi-Abdullahi; President, Heifer International, Ms. Surita Sandosham, and Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Sen. Abubakar Kyari, during the visit of the president of Heifer International to the minister's office in Abuja.

## Embrace AI or risk irrelevance, Expert tells Edo Journalists

### BENIN CITY

The Safer Media Initiative (SMI) has trained 35 journalists in Edo State, with a charge on them to embrace artificial intelligence (AI) as a critical tool for survival and relevance in the rapidly evolving media landscape.

The training was organised under the Artificial Intelligence and Media Project themed, "AI Tools for Journalists: Effective, Responsible and Safe Use," drawing participants from the print, electronic and online media, and advising them that resistance to technological change could cost journalists their careers.

Executive Director of SMI, Peter Iorter, stressed during the session that technological innovation is driving a profound transformation in journalism, making adaptation no longer optional but imperative.

He explained that emerging technologies, particularly AI, have significantly altered how

journalists gather, process and disseminate news, and warned that practitioners who fail to align with these changes risk becoming obsolete in an increasingly competitive industry.

"There is something that has changed about journalism. While some aspects remain the same, many changes are driven by technology. Even the traditional media has no option but to adapt, otherwise it risks being left out of the media business," he said.

Iorter emphasised that AI sits at the centre of this disruption and dismissed widespread fears that the technology will replace journalists outright. He argued instead that journalists who refuse to embrace innovation will lose out to colleagues who adopt and master these tools.

"AI will not take your job, but it will take the job of journalists who refuse to embrace it and give it to those who have adopted it," he stated, under-

CONTINUES ON PG 2

**ADC crisis deepens as Imo, Rivers chapters back Mark, reject lawsuit**  
—Pg 4

**APC fixes Tue for crucial screening ahead of Nat'l Convention**  
—Pg 6

**Presidents of Kenya and Uganda launch next phase of cross-border railway**  
—Pg 8

**Stranded in the US: Nigerian athletes risk missing Commonwealth Games**  
—Pg 13

# Expert advocates creation of electricity consumers' protection unit

**ABUJA**

An expert on power, Mr Princewill Okorie, has called on the Feder-

al Government to establish a separate electricity consumer protection unit or agency to generate data.

Okorie, the Executive Direc-

tor, Electricity Consumers Protection Advocacy Centre made the call while speaking with newsmen in Abuja on Sunday.

He said that the unit would relate with consumers across the country.

"As we speak today, there is no accurate data on the investments of consumers because there is no consumer-centric approach in managing the sector.

"If they want to make the

sector work there has to be a separate electricity consumer protection unit or agency standing on its own to generate data and relate with consumers across the country.

"The unit should be able to look at the quantity of supply to consumers as well as the revenue and investment they have put into the sector," he said.

Okorie also said that there was an urgent need to organise

a national electricity consumers conference on the repositioning of the power sector.

"What we are clamouring for in order to reposition the sector is a national electricity consumer conference.

"Let there be an all stakeholders' conference especially for the consumers on repositioning the sector.

Okorie said that the idea of just hearing from only the Electricity

Distribution Companies (Dis-Cos) or the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) without hearing from consumers had continued to destroy the sector.

According to him, decisions are not properly taken and this is not good for the sector.

He said that there was no effective monitoring of the sector adding that it was important for consumers to be involved in the activities going on in the sector.

## NLC kicks against N6trn power...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1»

Ajaero stressed that electricity must be recognised as a social service and a fundamental right of citizens, rather than being treated solely as a profit-driven commodity.

He noted that the prevailing structure places an undue financial burden on Nigerians, particularly workers, and called for reforms that prioritise service delivery, affordability and the overall welfare of the populace.

To chart a new course for the sector, the NLC urged the government to convene a broad-

based stakeholders' summit that would produce a people-centred roadmap for the power industry.

Such a forum, he said, should focus on policies that promote public interest, guarantee energy security and ensure that the benefits of electricity access are equitably distributed across the country.

The union insisted that without bold and far-reaching reforms, further financial interventions would amount to little more than temporary fixes, leaving the fundamental challenges of Nigeria's power sector unresolved.

## Fuel hike bites harder as residents...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1»

Mr Simon Adolo, a sachet water distributor, said the price of a bag of water has risen to between N450 and N500 due to increased diesel costs.

"Demand is high because of the hot season, but production is low due to electricity challenges. We spend heavily on diesel, and our profit margins are shrinking," he said, urging the government to address power supply issues.

An ice-block dealer in Nyanaya, Mrs Esther Gabriel, said her prices have increased from N500 to N800 due to the high cost of fuel and poor electricity supply.

Residents say the impact is becoming unbearable. At Apo Resettlement Area, a bag of sachet water now sells for as much as N500, with fears that

prices may rise further.

Mrs Rosemary Akor lamented the rising cost of services, citing a recent haircut that cost her N3,000, up from N1,400 just weeks earlier.

"This is outrageous. We cannot continue like this. Something must be done urgently," she said.

A baker in Nyanya, Mrs Rebecca Terve, said the cost of baking materials had risen across board, while yam traders blamed increased transportation costs from Benue State for the spike in prices.

Consumers like Ms Ifeoma Atuegwu say their standard of living is declining daily, urging the government to tackle rising transportation and energy costs to stabilise prices and ease the burden on citizens.

## Embrace AI or risk irrelevance,...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1»

scoring the urgency for media practitioners to upskill.

He revealed that a recent survey conducted under the project shows that 95 percent of journalists already use at least one AI tool weekly. However, 81 percent rely on just a single tool, commonly identified as ChatGPT, while only 10 percent have received formal training from their organisations.

Iorter described the figures as evidence of a glaring knowledge and skills gap in the industry and warned that superficial engagement with AI tools will not sustain long-term relevance in modern journalism.

While acknowledging concerns about job displacement, he maintained that journalists can overcome such fears by properly understanding and strategically deploying AI to enhance productivity, improve newsroom efficiency and deepen storytelling.

He cautioned, however, that journalists must pair adoption with responsibility, noting that AI introduces complex ethical

and safety considerations that require careful navigation.

"It is not just about using AI effectively; it is also about using it responsibly and safely. While it offers efficiency, it also challenges our ethics as journalists. We must learn how to strike that balance," he added.

Iorter disclosed that the Artificial Intelligence and Media Project receives support from the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication and remains the only initiative of its kind in Nigeria with such backing this year.

In his remarks, Chairman of the Nigeria Union of Journalists, Edo State Council, Festus Alenkhe, commended SMI for selecting Edo journalists for the capacity-building programme and described the training as timely and critical.

He added that AI continues to shape modern journalism practice and urged journalists to acquire the necessary knowledge and tools to remain competitive, relevant and capable of meeting the demands of a digital-first media environment.



**£746M PORTS REFURBISHMENT DEAL:**

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (left) and United Kingdom Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer at a meeting in Downing Street, where the two countries agreed on a deal to refurbish two major ports in Lagos, worth £746m.

## COAS hosts Sallah luncheon for troops in Edo

**BENIN CITY**

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lieutenant General Waidi Shaibu, on Saturday hosted a special Sallah luncheon with troops of the Forward Operations Base (FOB) Sobe in Owan West Local Government Area of Edo State as part of activities marking Eid-el-Fitr.

Addressing the troops, the COAS reaffirmed the Nigerian Army's commitment to enhancing morale and strengthening inter-agency collaboration through welfare-driven initiatives.

He urged the personnel to remain steadfast in the defence of peace, unity and national sovereignty.

Represented by the Commander, 4 Brigade Nigeri-

an Army, Brigadier General Ahmed Balogun, the army chief emphasised the need for resilience and unwavering dedication among troops in safeguarding the nation's territorial integrity and protecting lives.

"They serve in difficult and often demanding environments, far from the comfort of their homes, yet remain steadfast in loyalty and professionalism.

Their endurance, sacrifice and courage represent the true spirit of the Nigerian soldier. We pray for their safety, strength and success in all ongoing operations, and we look forward to their safe return," he said.

He also commended sister services as well as other security and intelligence agencies for their collaboration and professionalism, noting that sus-

tained synergy remains critical to operational success and national stability.

The COAS further conveyed appreciation to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his continued support, leadership and commitment to the welfare and operational effectiveness of the Armed Forces.

He noted that the President's strategic guidance continues to serve as a source of motivation for troops across various theatres of operation.

In his address, the Commander, FOB Sobe, Lieutenant Colonel Stanley Agboro, described the luncheon as a symbolic annual event held during festive periods such as Eid-el-Fitr, Eid-el-Kabir, Easter and Christmas.

He said the initiative is designed to boost morale, recog-

nise the sacrifices of frontline soldiers, honour fallen heroes and strengthen camaraderie within the military.

Agboro expressed appreciation to the Brigade Commander and his entourage for visiting the operational base to celebrate with the troops.

He also acknowledged the presence of the Chairperson of Owan West Local Government Area, Madam Joy Ohonyon, represented by the Vice Chairman, Mr Dele Aleburu, as well as the Odibiado of Sobe, HRH Anthony Ero Aleburu I, and heads of other security agencies in the area.

Highlights of the event included a luncheon, cultural dance performances, comedy presentations and morale-boosting songs by the troops.

## NDLEA busts drug rings, intercepts opioids, meth at Lagos airport

**ABUJA**

Operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) have intercepted consignments of methamphetamine and opioids at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Ikeja, Lagos, in a series of coordinated operations targeting drug trafficking networks.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the agency's Director of Media and Advocacy, Mr Femi Babafemi, said the illicit consignments, concealed in cartons, winter jackets and body cream containers, were destined for

European countries, with two shipments bound for Italy.

He disclosed that attempts by members of drug trafficking organisations to export the drugs were foiled on Friday, March 20, leading to the arrest of two suspects.

Babafemi said one of the suspects, a 37-year-old resident of Milan, was intercepted while attempting to board an Ethiopian Airlines flight to Rome with 2,698 pills of tramadol 225mg hidden inside skin-lightening body cream containers packed in his luggage. The suspect reportedly confessed he was to be paid in euros upon successful

delivery of the consignment.

In a separate operation at the airport's departure hall on March 18, NDLEA operatives intercepted another passenger bound for Milan on a Lufthansa flight.

A search of his luggage uncovered 23,150 pills of tramadol 225mg, 4,000 tablets of tapentadol 250mg, and 1,320 pills of tramadol 100mg concealed in two large winter jackets, bringing the total to 28,470 opioid pills.

The 38-year-old suspect is also said to reside in Milan.

Beyond the airport, the agency recorded multiple seizures across the country. At a Lagos courier firm, officials

intercepted two parcels of "Loud", a potent strain of cannabis weighing 1kg, shipped from the United States.

Another attempt to export 158 grammes of methamphetamine hidden in a carton bound for New Zealand was also thwarted.

In Ijora, Lagos, operatives raided a store in the Otto area, recovering 21,737 bottles of codeine-based syrup. On the same day, two suspects were arrested on the Third Mainland Bridge while transporting 8,380 bottles of the substance.

Operations in other states

CONTINUES ON PG 4»

## NEWS

# Okpebholo pledges sustainable growth, urges vigilance on security

## BENIN CITY

Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to driving sustainable development across critical sectors, assuring that the government's SHINE Agenda will continue to deliver infrastructure and improve the overall well-being of citizens.

The governor gave the assurance at Government House in Benin City while receiving Muslim faithful who paid him

Sallah homage to mark the end of Ramadan. Represented by his deputy, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, Okpebholo emphasised that his administration remains resolute in tackling insecurity and called on residents to support ongoing efforts by remaining vigilant and reporting suspicious activities.

He described Eid-el-Fitr as a significant spiritual milestone marking the end of Ramadan, a period devoted to fasting, reflection, discipline, and renewal.

According to him, the celebration embodies enduring values of peace, compassion, unity, and love, which must be sustained beyond the festive period.

"The Edo State Government deeply recognises the importance

of this occasion and the ideals it represents. As we celebrate, let us embrace unity, forgiveness, and gratitude, and continue to foster peaceful coexistence across our communities," he said.

Reiterating the government's stance on security, the deputy governor stressed that safeguarding lives and property remains a top priority, urging citizens to actively support the campaign against crime.

"If you see something, say something," he added, noting that collective vigilance is critical to overcoming security challenges.

He further assured that the administration would continue to pursue policies and programmes aimed at strength-

ening infrastructure and stimulating economic growth.

"Through our SHINE Agenda, this government is dedicated to driving sustainable development, particularly in critical sectors, for the overall growth and prosperity of Edo State," he stated.

In his remarks, the Secretary to the State Government, Musa Ikhilor Esq., commended the prevailing religious harmony in Edo, describing the state as a model of peaceful inter-faith coexistence.

He noted that both Ramadan and the Christian fasting season commenced on February 18, 2026, describing it as a symbolic call for unity among adherents of different faiths.

Ikhilor urged residents to up-

hold the virtues of charity, love, and hard work imbibed during the fasting period, stressing the need for continued compassion towards the less privileged.

Earlier, the Chief Imam of Benin Central Mosque, Alhaji Abdul-Fatai Enabulele, lauded the Okpebholo administration for its developmental strides, particularly in road infrastructure, noting that improved road networks are being felt across the state.

He, however, called on the government to intensify efforts in key areas, including electricity supply, security, environmental sanitation, and the regulation of commercial transport operators.

The cleric also appealed to perpetrators of crimes such as kidnapping, robbery, and sexual violence to desist, stressing that national development can only thrive in a peaceful environment.

## Viral Edo school bullying: Arrested suspects to face family court —Police

## BENIN CITY

The Edo State Police Command has confirmed the arrest of all individuals linked to a viral bullying incident involving secondary school students, stating that the suspects will be charged before the Family Court in line with juvenile justice laws.

In an update issued by the Command's Public Relations Officer, ASP Eno Ikoedem, police said investigations revealed that the incident stemmed from a disagreement on March 5, 2026, involving two 14-year-old female students and a fellow student.

According to preliminary findings, the altercation escalated after the victim allegedly made offensive remarks about the girls' late father, provoking a violent reaction.

The girls reportedly attacked the student after school hours and subsequently assaulted a parent who attempted to intervene, an act that led to their expulsion by the school authorities.

The situation further degenerated the following day when the son of the assaulted parent carried out a retaliatory attack on another student, identified as the brother of the girls in an incident that was recorded and cir-

culated widely on social media.

Police authorities said all those directly connected to the incidents have been identified and apprehended, with arrangements underway to prosecute them in accordance with child protection laws.

In response, the Commissioner of Police has ordered the immediate intensification of the Operation Safe Schools Initiative across the state, aimed at strengthening supervision and preventing similar occurrences.

The Police Campaign Against Cultism and Other Vices (POCACOV) has also been deployed to schools to engage students and administrators through sensitisation and reorientation programmes.

The Command urged parents, guardians, and school authorities to take greater responsibility in supervising children, while advising students to shun violence and seek proper channels for resolving disputes.

While appealing for calm, the police assured residents that necessary steps are being taken not only to ensure justice but also to prevent a recurrence, reaffirming its commitment to safeguarding lives and maintaining law and order across Edo State.



## LEADERSHIP SUMMIT:

A cross section of participants at a Project Leadership Summit held in Benin City recently.

## Irrua traders hail Okpebholo's 700-shop market

## IRRUA

Excitement has gripped residents and traders in Irrua, headquarters of Esan Central Local Government Area of Edo State, as Governor Monday Okpebholo's administration pushes ahead with the construction of a 700-shop ultra-modern market designed to transform commercial activities in the area.

The large-scale project, described by stakeholders as a landmark development, is expected to significantly boost

trade, create employment opportunities, and improve livelihoods upon completion.

During an inspection visit by the governor, jubilant crowds of residents and traders thronged the project site, expressing appreciation for what many described as the first development of its kind in Irrua and surrounding communities.

The visit took on a festive atmosphere as locals sang and danced in the Esan dialect, celebrating what they see as a major step towards economic revitalisation at the grassroots.

A petty trader, Isidahome Ose, said the project would be life-changing for small business owners.

"We came out in large numbers to welcome the governor and appreciate him for his good works. This market will change our lives and businesses for the better," she said.

Another resident, Evelyn Osemu, described the development as unprecedented.

"What we are seeing today can best be described as a miracle. We never imagined such a modern market in Irrua. We

are grateful to our governor," she added.

Community stakeholders echoed similar sentiments, describing the 700-shop capacity as a "game changer" that would expand trading space, reduce congestion, and stimulate local economic growth.

The market project forms part of the Okpebholo administration's broader strategy to strengthen infrastructure, empower small-scale entrepreneurs, and drive inclusive economic development across Edo State.

## Police nab 10 suspects over Delta community sexual assault scandal

## BENIN CITY

The Delta State Police Command has arrested no fewer than 10 suspects in connection with the alleged sexual assault and harassment of young women in Oramudu Quarters, Ozooro, Isoko North Local Government Area, following the circulation of disturbing viral videos.

The Command, in a statement issued by its Public Relations Officer, SP Bright Edefe,

disclosed that the arrests include the chief organiser of the event, Chief Omoredede Sunday, four accomplices, the community head, and five other individuals linked to the incident.

Commissioner of Police, CP Aina Adesola, has ordered a comprehensive investigation into the matter, directing that the case be transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) for detailed handling.

Tactical and investigative teams have since been de-

ployed to track down other suspects and ensure that all those involved are apprehended and prosecuted.

The Command described the incident as criminal, inhumane, and a grave violation of the victims' fundamental rights and dignity, stressing zero tolerance for sexual violence.

"Sexual violence is criminal, inhumane, and a grave violation of the fundamental rights and dignity of victims. The Command unequivocally condemns such acts," the state-

ment read.

Police authorities have called on victims and witnesses to come forward with useful information, assuring confidentiality and professionalism in handling all reports.

The Commissioner further urged residents to remain calm, vigilant, and law-abiding, reaffirming the Command's commitment to protecting lives and maintaining public order, while assuring that all perpetrators would be brought to justice.

## Gas explosion injures 38 in Calabar as Otu promises free treatment, compensation

## CALABAR

No fewer than 38 persons sustained varying degrees of burns on Saturday following a devastating gas explosion that rocked Edibe Edibe Street, a densely populated area of Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State, as Governor Bassey Otu pledged immediate government support for victims, including free medical treatment and compensation.

The explosion, which occurred at about 10:00 a.m., razed a gas station, destroyed parts of nearby residential buildings, and left several others injured, though authorities confirmed that no life was lost in the incident.

receiving treatment.

He attributed the explosion to a gas leakage that occurred while a station attendant was transferring gas from a storage tank to a service tank.

According to him, the situation escalated rapidly when the hose used in the transfer process became detached, leading to the release of highly flammable gas fumes into the surrounding environment.

Eitokpah explained that attempts to control the leakage proved unsuccessful, forcing the attendant to abandon the process as the fumes spread quickly, leaving little or no time to alert residents before the area was engulfed in flames.

"The leak happened rapidly, and there was no sufficient time to warn nearby residents. The entire area was soon overtaken by fire, resulting in extensive damage to property, the value of which is yet to be determined," he said.

# ADC crisis deepens as Imo, Rivers chapters back Mark, reject lawsuit

**ABUJA**

The crisis within the African Democratic Congress (ADC) deepened

on Sunday as the Imo and Rivers State chapters publicly distanced themselves from a lawsuit filed against the party's national leadership at the Fed-

eral High Court, Abuja.

In separate statements, the State Chairmen, Prof. James Okoroma (Imo) and Chief Leader Sampson (Rivers) said that they neither authorised nor were consulted on the legal action, describing it as the personal decision of those involved.

Okoroma stressed that the Imo State structure was not a party to the suit and warned against actions capable of creating confusion within the party.

He reaffirmed loyalty to the national leadership under David Mark, expressing confidence in the party's internal

conflict resolution mechanisms.

Similarly, the Rivers State chairman emphasised the need for unity, internal democracy and adherence to the rule of law, cautioning members against presenting personal actions as collective decisions.

Both chapters urged the party faithful to prioritise dialogue and internal dispute resolution, warning that divisive actions could weaken the party's cohesion.

They maintained that the ADC remains focused on strengthening its structures and advancing the interests of its members nationwide.

## COAS hosts Sallah luncheon for troops in Edo

**BENIN CITY**

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lieutenant General Waidi Shaibu, on Saturday hosted a special Sallah luncheon with troops of the Forward Operations Base (FOB) Sobe in Owan West Local Government Area of Edo State as part of activities marking Eid-el-Fitr.

Addressing the troops, the COAS reaffirmed the Nigerian Army's commitment to enhancing morale and strengthening inter-agency collaboration through welfare-driven initiatives.

He urged the personnel to remain steadfast in the defence of peace, unity and national sovereignty.

Represented by the Commander, 4 Brigade Nigerian Army, Brigadier General Ahmed Balogun, the army chief emphasised the need for resilience and unwavering dedication among troops in safeguarding the nation's territorial integrity and protecting lives.

"They serve in difficult and often demanding environments, far from the comfort of their homes, yet remain steadfast in loyalty and professionalism.

Their endurance, sacrifice and courage represent the true spirit of the Nigerian soldier. We pray for their safety, strength and success in all ongoing operations, and we look forward to their safe return," he said.

He also commended sister services as well as other security and intelligence agencies for their collaboration and professionalism, noting that sus-

tained synergy remains critical to operational success and national stability.

The COAS further conveyed appreciation to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his continued support, leadership and commitment to the welfare and operational effectiveness of the Armed Forces.

He noted that the President's strategic guidance continues to serve as a source of motivation for troops across various theatres of operation.

In his address, the Commander, FOB Sobe, Lieutenant Colonel Stanley Agboro, described the luncheon as a symbolic annual event held during festive periods such as Eid-el-Fitr, Eid-el-Kabir, Easter and Christmas.

He said the initiative is designed to boost morale, recognise the sacrifices of frontline soldiers, honour fallen heroes and strengthen camaraderie within the military.

Agboro expressed appreciation to the Brigade Commander and his entourage for visiting the operational base to celebrate with the troops.

He also acknowledged the presence of the Chairperson of Owan West Local Government Area, Madam Joy Ohonyon, represented by the Vice Chairman, Mr Dele Aleburu, as well as the Odibiado of Sobe, HRH Anthony Ero Aleburu I, and heads of other security agencies in the area.

Highlights of the event included a luncheon, cultural dance performances, comedy presentations and morale-boosting songs by the troops.



### PRESENTING DOCUMENTS:

Sokoto State Governor, Ahmed Aliyu (right) presenting documents for a vehicle he donated to the State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) during a special Ifta organized by the State government in Sokoto recently.

## Police smash kidnap ring, rescue 3 victims in Ondo

**ONDO**

The Ondo State Police Command has arrested three suspected kidnapers and rescued three victims following a coordinated operation in Oda community, Akure South Local Government Area.

Police spokesman, DSP Abayomi Jimoh, said that the breakthrough followed the circulation of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) footage cap-

turing the abduction, which prompted immediate action by the command.

According to him, intelligence teams deployed digital surveillance tools and field operations to identify and track down the suspects.

"Acting on credible intelligence derived from the footage, operatives of the Anti-Kidnaping Squad carried out targeted operations leading to the arrest of one suspect, whose

confession led to the arrest of two accomplices," he said.

The suspects, Mohammed Koro (27), Muhammad Usman (30) and Musa Alhaji (23), were all captured in the CCTV footage and have since made confessional statements.

Jimoh said the victims had been rescued, debriefed and taken to hospital for treatment, while efforts were ongoing to apprehend other members of the syndicate.

He added that the suspects would be charged to court upon conclusion of investigations.

The Commissioner of Police, Adebowale Lawal, reiterated the command's resolve to rid the state of criminal elements, warning that Ondo would not serve as a safe haven for criminals.

He urged residents to remain vigilant and support security agencies with credible information.

## 2027: APC chieftain warns of mass exit over Bayelsa divisions

**YENAGOA**

Chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Bayelsa State, Chief Joshua MacIver, has warned that unresolved internal divisions could trigger a mass exodus of members ahead of the

2027 general elections.

MacIver, a former deputy governorship candidate, made the call in a statement, urging party leaders to urgently address grievances among stakeholders.

"Unresolved internal imbalances can threaten the party's cohesion in Bayelsa ahead of

the 2027 elections. Leaders must look inwards and address these concerns," he said.

While commending the party for conducting a successful state congress, he congratulated the newly elected executive led by Warman Ogoriba.

He reaffirmed support for

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's re-election bid but stressed that unity within the party was critical to achieving that goal.

"We must adopt a more inclusive approach in managing our internal affairs. A divided house cannot effectively support the president," he added.

## NDLEA busts drug rings, intercepts...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 2

yielded significant seizures. In Kano, two suspects were arrested with a combined 198kg of skunk at Dan-Tsalle and Naibawa Gabas.

In Kaduna, NDLEA operatives recovered 586,000 pills of tramadol and exol-5 from a suspect along the Kaduna-Zaria highway, while an additional 7,290 tramadol tablets were seized at the same location days later.

In Taraba, a suspect was intercepted along the Takum-Jalingo highway with 77,660 tramadol capsules en route to Gombe. Similarly, in Adamawa, six suspects were arrested in connection with the seizure of 82.8kg of tramadol concealed in a truck in Yola.

In the Federal Capital Territory, operatives intercepted a commercial bus along the Gwagwalada expressway, recovering 91,840 tramadol pills hidden in its body compartments, leading

to the arrest of the driver.

Further operations in Edo and Oyo states led to the recovery of 97.5kg of skunk from a residence in Ojah, Akoko-Edo Local Government Area, and the arrest of a suspect in Oke-Oyan, Ibarapa LGA, with 71.2kg of the substance smuggled into Nigeria through the Oyan River.

Babafemi added that NDLEA commands nationwide sustained their War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) sensitisation campaigns in schools, worship centres, workplaces and communities over the past week.

He quoted the NDLEA Chairman, retired Brigadier-General Buba Marwa, as commending officers across various commands, including Lagos, Kano, Kaduna, Edo, Oyo, the FCT, Taraba and Adamawa, for the arrests and seizures, urging them to maintain the agency's balanced approach to drug control efforts.

## Experts push sustainable impact at Project Leadership Summit in Benin

**BENIN CITY**

Stakeholders in project management and development practice have called for a shift from mere project delivery to sustainable impact, as the maiden edition of the Project Leadership Summit (PLS) held in Benin City.

The summit attracted professionals, aspiring project managers and industry leaders from across the South-South region, including participants from Edo, Delta and Rivers states.

With the theme, "Beyond Delivery: Creating Sustainable

Impact Through Projects," the event focused on strengthening leadership capacity and improving project execution for long-term development outcomes.

Convener of the summit, Philip Neil Gideon, said the initiative was designed to bridge critical gaps in the region's project ecosystem by ensuring that projects deliver enduring value.

A major highlight of the discussions was the emphasis on defining the purpose of projects beyond completion timelines.

"Of what use is your project after the delivery date?" Gideon asked, challenging partici-

pants to prioritise sustainability and long-term relevance.

Speakers at the event, including Engr. Osayamen Airhumwunde, Mrs Isimeme Whyte and Mrs Tinah Balewa, delivered insights on community engagement, structured project frameworks and data-driven decision-making.

Airhumwunde stressed the need for collaboration with host communities to ensure ownership and sustainability, while Balewa introduced participants to project management models such as Waterfall, Agile and hybrid systems.

Whyte highlighted the importance of integrating environmental and social considerations, integrity and continuous evaluation into project planning and execution.

The summit also featured the launch of the Global Project Managers Network (GPMN) and interactive sessions aimed at fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange among participants.

Overall, the event marked a significant step towards redefining success in project management, placing sustainability, responsibility and long-term impact at the centre of development initiatives.

## NEWS

# Blackout crisis deepens as APC chieftain urges Tinubu's action

## OSOGBO

**A**chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Osun State, Olatunbosun Oyintiloye, has raised the alarm over worsening electricity supply across the country, describing the situation as a national emergency undermining economic stability and citizens' welfare.

Oyintiloye, a former lawmaker, told journalists on Sunday in Osogbo that the persistent power outages had become a major source of distress for

Nigerians and a significant setback to ongoing reforms in the power sector under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

He warned that despite repeated assurances and policy interventions by authorities, the electricity situation had deteriorated into what he termed a "nightmare," with homes and businesses grappling with erratic supply.

The APC stalwart appealed directly to the President to urgently intervene, urging the constitution of a high-powered investigative panel to unravel

the root causes of recurring national grid collapses and chronic inefficiencies in the sector.

According to him, the impact of poor electricity supply cuts across all strata of society, crippling small-scale enterprises, stalling industrial productivity and leaving households in prolonged darkness.

He noted that the crisis had become more severe amid an ongoing heatwave, with many Nigerians unable to access basic cooling, thereby compounding discomfort and

health risks.

"It is a terrible situation across Nigeria, with persistent and worsening epileptic power supply," he said, lamenting that most households could hardly boast of three hours of electricity daily.

Oyintiloye identified gas supply shortages, weak transmission infrastructure and long-standing underinvestment across the power value chain as key contributors to the crisis, adding that citizens were "groaning" under the weight of the situation.

He also called on the Minister of Power, Adebayo Adela, to take immediate corrective steps, warning that rising public frustration had already triggered peaceful protests in parts of the country.

"This epileptic power supply has led to a series of peaceful protests nationwide. I appeal for urgent presidential intervention before these protests escalate," he said.

The APC chieftain stressed the need for transparency,

urging authorities to clarify whether the persistent failures stem from structural deficiencies or sabotage within the system.

While acknowledging ongoing reforms by the Tinubu administration, Oyintiloye maintained that a comprehensive probe and decisive action were critical to restoring public confidence and stabilising the sector, especially as high fuel costs continue to limit the use of generators as alternatives.



## 2026 EID-AL-FITR PRAYERS:

L-R: National Security Adviser to President of Nigeria, Malam Nuhu Ribadu; Chief of Staff to the President, Mr Femi Gbajabiamila; President's son, Mr Yinka Tinubu; President Bola Tinubu; Deputy Governor of Lagos State, Dr Obafemi Hamzat; former Minister of Works and Housing, Mr Babatunde Fashola and Principal Secretary to the President, Mr Hakeem Muri-Okunola, during the 2026 Eid-al-Fitr Prayers at Dodan Barrack, Lagos

## Army Chief rallies troops at Eid luncheon, reaffirms welfare commitment

## KACHIA (KADUNA)

**T**he Chief of Army Staff, Lt.-Gen. Waidi Shaibu, has reaffirmed his commitment to the welfare and operational effectiveness of troops, hosting an Eid-el-Fitr luncheon for frontline personnel under Operation Fansan Yamma.

The event, held at Sub-Sector 5 Forward Operating Base, DI-CON Agundu in Kachia Local Government Area, brought together troops of Sector 1 under the 1 Division Area of Responsibility in a morale-boosting gathering over the weekend.

Represented by the Com-

mander, Corps of Signals, Maj.-Gen. M.T. Abdullahi, the Army chief congratulated Muslim personnel and their families on the successful completion of Ramadan, highlighting the values of sacrifice, discipline and devotion as core to military service.

Shaibu described the overlap of the Ramadan fast and the Christian Lenten season as symbolic, noting that the shared experience of sacrifice among Muslim and Christian personnel had strengthened unity within the Nigerian Army.

He reiterated that troop welfare remained central to his command philosophy, assur-

ing soldiers of sustained efforts to improve living conditions, enhance professional development and provide robust support systems for personnel and their families.

The Army chief also underscored the importance of collaboration in tackling insecurity, commending the synergy between the military, other security agencies and law-abiding citizens.

He expressed appreciation to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for continued strategic support to the Armed Forces.

Earlier, Sub-Sector 5 Commander, Navy Captain Patrick Ali, said the luncheon was part

of a longstanding tradition aimed at fostering esprit de corps and strengthening bonds among troops.

The event attracted key dignitaries, including the Deputy Speaker of the Kaduna State House of Assembly, Magaji Danjuma, the General Officer Commanding 1 Division, Maj.-Gen. Abubakar Wase, alongside other military commanders, government officials and stakeholders.

It featured entertainment, presentation of souvenirs and group photographs, underscoring unity and camaraderie among personnel in the theatre of operations.

## Police arrest 'Fake NSCDC officer,' 2 others over robbery in Anambra

## ABUJA

**T**he Anambra State Police Command has arrested three suspected criminals, including a man posing as an officer of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), in a crackdown on armed robbery and cult-related activities.

Police Public Relations Officer, SP Tochukwu Ikenga, disclosed this in a statement on Sunday, highlighting ongoing efforts by the command to enhance public safety.

According to him, operatives of the Rapid Response Squad, Awkuzu, acting on credible intelligence, raided a suspected criminal hideout in Ogidi, Idemili North Local Government Area, on March 21 at about 1:46 p.m., leading to the arrest of the suspects.

Those apprehended were identified as Francis Anene (46), Emmanuel Obi (29) and Okoye Chinonso (35), one of whom allegedly impersonated a serving security operative.

Items recovered during the operation included two locally made Beretta pistols, four rounds of live 9mm ammunition and a suspected fake security identity card.

Preliminary investigations, Ikenga said, linked the suspects to a criminal syndicate involved in armed robbery, kidnapping and terrorising residents of Ogidi and neighbouring communities.

He added that the suspects were also being investigated in connection with the murder of the late President-General of Ogidi.

In a separate operation, police operatives from the Ozubulu Division recovered a suspected stolen white petrol tanker abandoned along the Onitsha-Owerri Expressway in the early hours of March 17.

The vehicle, found without a registration number and with its key still in the ignition, is believed to have been abandoned by an unidentified individual.

Ikenga said investigations were ongoing to determine the ownership of the tanker and the circumstances surrounding its abandonment.

The Commissioner of Police, Ikioye Orutugu, reassured residents of sustained efforts to combat crime and urged the public to provide timely and credible information to security agencies.

## Lekki-Epe inferno: 2 killed as truck slams into gas tanker

## LAGOS

**A** fatal collision between a tipper truck and a gas tanker on the Lekki-Epe Expressway has claimed two lives and triggered a massive fire that destroyed properties in the Sangotedo area of Lagos.

The Lagos State Fire and Rescue Service confirmed that the incident occurred at about 2:36 a.m. on Saturday near Tera Ahmed Bus Stop.

The agency's Controller-General, Margaret Adeseye, said a speeding 20-tonne tipper truck rammed into a stationary 30-tonne gas tanker that had failed to properly pull off the highway.

The impact sparked a fire that spread rapidly, engulfing three warehouses and at least

10 roadside shops, including a gym and a generator house.

Firefighters from Lekki Phase II, Oniru and Epe II stations were swiftly deployed and successfully contained the blaze, preventing it from spreading to a nearby filling station and a fully loaded 33,000-litre Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) tanker.

Emergency responders later recovered three Sienna buses, a Toyota Corolla and a forklift from the affected premises.

Adeseye confirmed that the driver of the tipper truck and his assistant died in the inferno, while the gas tanker driver escaped unhurt.

She added that clearance operations were ongoing to evacuate the wreckage, with normalcy gradually returning to the area after the incident.

## Power surge tragedy: Toddler, 2 others electrocuted in Kaduna community

## MANCHOK (KADUNA)

**T**here tragedy in Manchok, Kaura Local Government Area of Kaduna State as three persons, including a toddler and a 10-year-old girl, were electrocuted following a power surge caused by a fallen high-tension cable.

The incident, which occurred on Saturday, also left three other residents with varying degrees of injuries,

throwing the community into mourning.

Reports indicated that a high-tension line snapped and fell onto lower-voltage distribution lines supplying residential homes, triggering a sudden surge of electricity into buildings and surrounding areas.

A two-year-old boy was electrocuted after touching a phone charger plugged into a socket when electricity was restored, while a 10-year-old girl reportedly died after coming into con-

tact with an electrified iron pole used for drying clothes.

The third victim, identified as Rilwanu Musa, a driver, was electrocuted while ironing his clothes during the surge.

The Secretary of Kaura Local Government Council, Haruja Pius, confirmed the incident and condoled with the bereaved families during a visit to the Primary Healthcare Centre in Manchok.

He conveyed the sympathies of the Council Chairman,

Sankyai Obadiah, describing the loss as devastating.

"This kind of loss is hard to bear. One moment a child is healthy and sound, and the next moment he is gone. May God grant you the strength to bear this immeasurable loss," he said.

Authorities have yet to announce measures to prevent a recurrence, even as residents called for urgent intervention to address faulty power infrastructure in the area.

# APC fixes Tue for crucial screening ahead of Nat'l Convention

## ABUJA

The All Progressives Congress (APC) has scheduled Tuesday, March 24, for the screening

of aspirants seeking to occupy various national offices, as the party intensifies preparations for its March 27 National Convention.

In a notice issued on Sunday

in Abuja, the Secretary of the party's Aspirants' Screening Committee, Isa Yuguda, confirmed that the exercise will take place at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja.

Yuguda stated that all aspirants who have purchased and

submitted their Expression of Interest and Nomination Forms are expected to appear in person for the screening, underscoring the importance of physical verification in the process.

He advised candidates to arrive early at the venue with

all relevant supporting documents to facilitate a seamless verification exercise, adding that the screening is a critical step in ensuring only duly qualified aspirants contest for the party's top positions.

The exercise comes amid

heightened political activity within the ruling party, as stakeholders position themselves ahead of the convention, where new national officers are expected to emerge to steer the affairs of the APC in the coming years.

## NMGS Conference targets skills, sustainability in mining sector

### ABUJA

The Nigerian Mining and Geosciences Society (NMGS) has intensified efforts to build capacity in Nigeria's extractive sector, with a focus on equipping young professionals and students through its 61st Annual International Conference and Exhibition (AICE).

President of the society, Rose Ndong, disclosed this ahead of the conference scheduled to begin in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

According to her, the event will centre on the theme of optimising efficiency, sustainability and resilience in natural resource management and infrastructure development.

Ndong said that the conference would feature a wide range of capacity-building initiatives, including short courses, mentoring sessions, webinars and career development programmes designed to strengthen the next generation of geoscientists and mining professionals.

She explained that beyond technical sessions, the gathering would serve as a policy dialogue platform where stakeholders will deliberate on regu-

latory reforms, environmental sustainability, responsible resource utilisation and the role of geosciences in economic diversification.

According to her, discussions will span mineral exploration, sustainable mining practices, mineral processing, energy resources, geohazards and emerging technologies shaping the sector.

Ndong noted that the theme reflects Nigeria's urgent need to align economic growth with environmental sustainability, particularly in the face of climate variability, resource inefficiency and infrastructure challenges.

She emphasised that responsible mining practices, including environmental monitoring, land reclamation and proper waste management are critical to safeguarding ecosystems and host communities.

The NMGS president further stressed the need for resilient infrastructure capable of withstanding environmental pressures such as flooding, erosion and land degradation, adding that sound geoscientific knowledge must underpin national planning.



**2026 ELD-EL-FITR PRAYER:**

L-R: Founder/Chairman, Eleganza Group of Companies, Chief Razaq Okoya; Jubril Okoya; Tajudeen Okoya and others, during the 2026 Eld-el-Fitr Prayer at his Residence Oluwanishola, Ajah. Lagos.

## Cocoa price crash pushes farmers to brink across S'West

### AKURE

Cocoa farmers across Ondo, Osun and Ekiti states are facing deepening financial distress following a dramatic collapse in cocoa prices, with many warning of looming farm abandonment, rising debt and a growing humanitarian crisis in rural communities.

Investigations and interviews with farmers revealed that cocoa prices, which surged to historic highs in 2024, have since plunged by more than 70 percent, wiping out incomes and destabilising livelihoods across the cocoa belt.

A farmer in Owo, Ondo State, Mr Abiodun Joseph, said the sharp reversal has discouraged many young farmers, with some abandoning plantations or leasing them out due to mounting costs and declining returns.

He explained that while

cocoa once sold for about N14,500 per kilogram in January 2025, prices have now crashed to between N2,000 and N2,500, even as the cost of labour, chemicals and other inputs continues to rise.

"The reality is that many of us can no longer meet basic needs. Farmers are frustrated, and some are slipping into depression," he said.

Stakeholders across the value chain are equally affected. A cocoa buying agent in Akure, Mr Olanrewaju Abiodun, noted that many dealers have gone bankrupt, with some forced to shut down operations or evade creditors due to heavy losses.

He called for the establishment of a National Cocoa Management Board to regulate the sector and stabilise prices, citing examples from Ghana, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire where government-backed pricing mechanisms protect farmers.

## 2027: Obasa, Ambode rally support for Tinubu's 2nd term bid

### LAGOS

Political momentum gathered in Lagos at the weekend as key stakeholders threw their weight behind President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's potential re-election bid, arguing that continuity is vital to sustaining ongoing reforms under the Renewed Hope Agenda.

Speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly, Mudashiru Obasa, said extending Tinubu's administration beyond 2027 would consolidate gains already recorded in economic and social reforms.

Obasa spoke during an interfaith prayer session held in Ikeja to mark the President's 74th birthday, organised by the

Mandate Movement (TMM), a political group within the APC.

He described Tinubu as a pragmatic and visionary leader whose policies, including the removal of fuel subsidy, have boosted state revenues and repositioned the economy for long-term growth.

He also highlighted the Nigeria Education Loan Fund (NELFund) as a transformative initiative expanding access to higher education, and cited the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway as a landmark infrastructure project capable of driving economic expansion and tourism.

The Speaker further commended First Lady Oluremi Tinubu for her Renewed Hope Initiative, noting its impact in

food distribution, women-focused agricultural support, economic empowerment schemes and digital learning centres.

He urged Nigerians to support Tinubu and all APC candidates in the 2027 general elections, stressing that sustained leadership is key to national stability.

Former Lagos State Governor, Akinwunmi Ambode, also endorsed the President's leadership, describing his commitment to national development as commendable.

"President Tinubu's commitment to Nigeria's progress is commendable, and it is our collective duty to support him so the nation can fully reap the benefits of his reforms," Ambode said, expressing con-

fidence that the country would continue to prosper under the current administration.

Also speaking, the Chief of Staff to Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, Mr Tayo Ayinde, lauded Tinubu's economic reforms and called for sustained public support, while offering prayers for wisdom and good health for the President.

Similarly, Chairman of the Lagos State House Committee on Information and Strategy, Mr Stephen Ogunidipe, urged Nigerians to celebrate the administration's achievements and back its reform agenda.

The event drew a large turnout of political leaders, party faithful, clerics, community leaders and other stakeholders from across Lagos State.

## APC lawmaker launches food bank to tackle hunger, poverty

### IBADAN

A member of the House of Representatives, Remi Oseni, has unveiled a food bank initiative alongside the Remi Oseni Foundation, in a bid to address rising hunger and poverty among vulnerable groups in his constituency.

The initiative, launched at the weekend in Oyo State, is targeted at supporting the elderly, widows, orphans and other disadvantaged persons, while aligning with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Re-

newed Hope Agenda.

Speaking at the event, Oseni emphasised the urgency of collective action in tackling food insecurity, noting that while financial grants may not reach everyone, access to food remains a universal need.

He disclosed that the foundation would distribute staple items such as rice, beans and garri, adding that the programme would be expanded to rural communities where poverty levels are highest.

The lawmaker recalled that about four weeks earlier, he dis-

bursed grants worth approximately N100 million to constituents, mainly political beneficiaries, but acknowledged that many vulnerable residents lacked access to such financial support.

"Everybody will not have access to money, but everybody needs food. Once hunger is addressed, every other challenge becomes easier to manage," he said.

Coordinator of the foundation, Mrs Tolulope Ojelabi, said beneficiaries were selected through a thorough verification process to ensure trans-

parency and fairness, stressing that the initiative is non-partisan and focused strictly on grassroots impact.

She added that the outreach involved community-by-community identification of genuinely needy individuals to ensure the benefits reach the intended recipients.

The event attracted APC members, traditional rulers, community leaders and other stakeholders, while beneficiaries expressed optimism that the intervention would ease hardship and improve living conditions.

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **SUNDAY EDALY IGBINEDION**, now wish to be known as **SUNIN EDAMWEN IGBINEDION**. Former documents remain valid. General public should please take note.

### RECONCILIATION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **BENJAMIN-ODION AMENZE EDITH, IRABOR AMENZE EDITH, BENJAMIN-ISAAC EDITH AMENZE and BENJAMIN-ISAAC EDITH**, are one and the same person as appeared on some of my documents. Henceforth, I wish to be known and address as **BENJAMIN-ODION AMENZE EDITH**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

## NEWS

## Foreign

## Iranian missiles injure 160 in towns near Israeli nuclear site

More than 160 people have been injured - some seriously - in Iranian missile strikes on two southern Israeli towns close to a nuclear facility, Israeli emergency officials say.

They say 84 people were wounded in Arad and another 78 in Dimona, after ballistic missiles hit the towns on Saturday evening.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) says it is not aware of any damage to the nuclear research facility located about 13km (eight miles) outside Dimona.

Iranian state TV earlier said the strikes were in response to an attack on Iran's Natanz nuclear facility on Saturday.

On Sunday, at least seven people were injured in an Iranian missile attack on Tel Aviv,

emergency services say.

A large Iranian missile shattered apartment blocks in Arad, southern Israel.

The Israeli Air Force says Tehran has fired 400 missiles at Israel since the US-Israeli attack on Iran on 28 February. Of these 92% were intercepted, it adds.

In Arad, local residents said the blasts they heard on Saturday were terrifying. The missile badly damaged several buildings, leaving a deep crater.

Naram Zaid, a paramedic in the town, told BBC News she had seen a "lot of children with head and chest injuries" after being crushed by objects inside a damaged building.

"I was trying to reassure a 10-year-old girl with head injuries, with blood on her face from broken glass," she added.

"She was refusing to get into

the ambulance as her parents were still inside the building, and we waited for her parents to be evacuated from the destroyed apartment block and then we sent them all to hospital."

The outside walls of two residential apartment buildings were gouged out by the impact.

Crowds of dark-suited men stood staring at the damage in this Ultra-Orthodox town in the Negev desert.

The nearby town of Dimona experienced a similar missile strike.

Among the many injured there was a 10-year-old boy. Medics described his condition as serious.

"In both Dimona and Arad, interceptors were launched that failed to hit the threats, resulting in two direct hits by

ballistic missiles with warheads weighing hundreds of kilograms," Israeli firefighters said.

The ability of Iran to keep inflicting this kind of damage inside Israel is a reminder of the human cost of the war.

Urgent investigations are taking place to ascertain how the missiles breached Israel's air defence system.

But as in the 12-day war last summer, Israelis know that the system is not infallible.

As then, such attacks are more likely to harden the public's resolve rather than weaken it.

The Shimon Peres Negev Nuclear Research Center - located in the Negev desert - is often referred to colloquially as the "Dimona reactor". It is long accepted as holding Israel's undeclared arsenal of nuclear weapons.

## Qatari and Turkish citizens die in military helicopter crash

A military helicopter has crashed in Qatar, killing all seven people on board, authorities in the Gulf state say.

They say all the bodies were found after the helicopter went down due to a "technical malfunction" in Qatar's territorial waters on Sunday.

Four Qatari military personnel, one Turkish serviceman and two technicians from a Turkish defence company were on board, Qatar and Turkey say.

The cause of the crash that happened during a training exercise is now being investigated.

Turkey has a military base in Qatar under a defence agreement signed between the two countries in 2014.

In a statement, Qatar's inte-

rior ministry said that all seven people on board had been found dead.

It expressed its "deepest condolences" to the victims' families.

Turkey's defence ministry said the Qatari military helicopter had been "carrying out a training exercise as part of the Qatar-Turkey Joint Forces Command".

The two technicians were from the Aselsan defence corporation, the ministry said, adding that the exact cause of the crash would be determined by Qatari authorities.

The crash comes as the US and Israel continue their wide-ranging strikes against Iran, while Tehran retaliates with its own attacks against Israel and US-allied states in the Gulf.



**ISRAELI NUCLEAR SITE:**

A large Iranian missile shattered apartment blocks in Arad, southern Israel.

## Sudan drone attack on key hospital killed 64 people during Eid, WHO says

Sudan's army has denied it carried out a deadly attack on a major hospital on Friday night in a city in the west of the country held by its rivals, the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

The head of the World Health Organization (WHO) said 64 people - including 13 children, two nurses and a doctor - had died in the strike on el-Daein Teaching Hospital and 89 others had been wounded.

"Enough blood has been spilled," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus posted on X, urging the warring parties to end the conflict, which started nearly three years ago.

The RSF said an army drone had hit the hospital in el-Daein, the capital of East Darfur state, on the day Muslims were marking the festival of Eid.

Sudan was plunged into a civil war in April 2023 when a vicious struggle for power broke out between the military and the RSF, who had once been allies after coming to power in a coup in 2021.

More than 150,000 people have since died in the conflict and about 12 million have fled their homes - nearly a third of the country's population - in what the United Nations has called the world's largest humanitarian crisis.

The devastating conflict where both sides have reasons to keep fighting

Dr Tedros, who said el-Daein Teaching Hospital was no longer able to function following Friday night's attack, condemned the frequent targeting of medical facilities.

"Over the nearly three-year conflict, WHO has confirmed

that 2,036 people have been killed in 213 attacks on health care, including Friday night's strike," the WHO chief said in his tweet.

"The time has come to de-escalate the conflict in Sudan and ensure the protection of civilians, health workers, and humanitarians," he said.

"Health care should never be a target. Peace is the best medicine."

In a statement, the RSF said the strike had completely destroyed the hospital's top floor, caused extensive damage to the accident and emergency department and destroyed vital medical equipment.

In response, the military said it was surprised by the accusation it was behind the attack, adding that it abided by "international norms and laws".

The Emergency Lawyers

group has called for an independent and transparent investigation and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

The local rights organisation, which has documented atrocities by both the army and the RSF throughout the war, said the hospital in el-Daein was a vital health facility relied upon by thousands of civilians in the city and surrounding villages.

There have been muted gatherings across Sudan this year to mark Eid and the end of the Muslim fasting month

East Darfur borders the Kordofan region, a new front line in the war where there are near-daily drone strikes.

The area is a major corridor linking the western Darfur region, which is controlled by the RSF, to the capital, Khartoum, which was retaken by the army last year.

## Russian attacks kill six in Ukraine, officials say

Six people have been killed in Russian attacks on four Ukrainian regions in the past 24 hours, local authorities say.

They say that in the southern city of Zaporizhzhia two people died when a drone hit a residential house on Saturday. Eight people, including two children, were injured.

In the nearby Dnipropetrovsk region, two people were killed and five injured. Authorities in the eastern Donetsk and southern Kherson regions each reported one death.

This comes as Ukrainian and US teams are continuing their talks on how to end Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine - the first such negotiations since Israel and America launched wide-ranging strikes on Iran last month.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky wants his negotiators to discuss the US decision to ease sanctions on Russian oil - implemented by Washington to help keep down global energy prices.

On Saturday, the first day of the talks in Florida, Ukrainian negotiators met Donald Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff and the US president's son-in-law, Jared Kushner.

"It is important for all of us across the world that diplomacy continues and we're trying to stop this war," Zelensky said in his late-night video address.

"The most important thing is to understand how prepared Russia is for moving towards really ending the war and how prepared they are to do this honestly and decently. This is particularly important given that because of the Iran situation geopolitical problems have only got worse."

The talks were due to resume later on Sunday.

Several rounds of talks mediated by the US have so far failed to stop the fighting in Ukraine or change Russia's maximal-

ist demands, and there is little hope of a breakthrough.

A friend of one of the victims of the drone attack in Zaporizhzhia told the Reuters news agency: "I stopped believing long ago. When will this all just end? When will they finally reach an agreement?"

"How long can they keep negotiating? Just give it to the Russian side so hard that it hurts them as much as it hurts us."

The mother of one of the victims told Reuters that she had been staying at a friend's apartment at the time of the strike.

"When the strike happened I checked a Telegram channel and I saw their fence and my son's car," she added.

On the agenda for the US talks is setting up another trilateral meeting involving Russia, as well as efforts to smooth over the rocky relationship between Zelensky and Trump, who has accused the Ukrainian leader of being the main obstacle to peace.

Ukraine is also offering the US its drone expertise and technology - which could be useful in fighting and defending against Iran.

Russian forces have frequently targeted Zaporizhzhia since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Speaking to the BBC's Laura Kuenssberg last week, Zelensky said Ukraine faced a deficit of missiles due to the war in the Middle East.

He said Russian President Vladimir Putin wanted a "long war" between the US, Israel and Iran because it would weaken Kyiv, with US resources being directed elsewhere.

The Trump administration's decision to ease its sanctions on countries buying Russian oil earlier this month was welcomed by the Kremlin - but sparked deep concerns among Ukrainians.

## Foreign

## NEWS

## Socialists battle to hold Paris as France holds mayoral elections

Polls have opened in France for mayoral elections across its cities and major towns, in the last vote before next year's presidential election.

Excitement is especially high in the capital Paris and the city of Nice on the Riviera.

The capital could shift to the right after 25 years under a Socialist-led coalition, if Rachida Dati comes from behind in the opinion polls to defeat Emmanuel Grégoire.

And in Nice, a hard-right ally of Marine Le Pen's National Rally (RN), Eric Ciotti, seems on course for victory.

But in this second round of municipal elections, the biggest focus across the country is on the hard-left party France Unbowed (LFI).

In many of these places, it has now formed alliances with other left-wing lists – mainly from the Socialist Party (PS) or Greens – in order to concentrate the anti-right vote.

But the key test in these elections – of big importance ahead of 2027 – is whether voters favour or shun these alliances, given the growing criticisms aimed at LFI and its leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon for alleged antisemitism and pursuing a "sectional", i.e. Muslim, vote.

Emblematic of this is Toulouse in the south-west, home of France's aeronautics industry as well as a big student population and a classic French

banlieue of high-rise estates.

The city's centre-right mayor Jean-Luc Moudenc came first in round one, with 37% of the vote. But he was followed by two left-wingers, François Piquemal (27.5%) of LFI, and the Socialist François Brianchon (25%).

These two have now merged their lists, giving them a clear lead over Moudenc on paper. If they win it will be the hard-left Piquemal who becomes Toulouse mayor.

The test is to see whether the left/hard-left alliance acts as a clarion call to Toulouse voters or a turn-off.

Similar left-wing pacts have been made in 26 big towns and cities, including Nantes, Grenoble, Lyons, Limoges, Clermont-Ferrand, Brest and Tours – earning the fury of right-wing politicians who call them "alliances of shame".

The fact of the matter is that these alliances have been forged just weeks after the Socialists led the rest of the mainstream left in a chorus of condemnation of LFI, vowing to forego any future nationwide all-left coalition unless it changed its ways.

This followed the murder of a far-right student in Lyon by suspected far-left militants, including the parliamentary assistant of an LFI MP; and then a speech by Mélenchon in which he performed a nod-and-a-wink to his audience about the Jewish identity of late sex criminal Jeffrey Epstein.

## US troops in Nigeria using drones to detect and disrupt terrorist activity

US military trainers deployed to Nigeria are using high-powered drones for surveillance and intelligence gathering, the Nigerian military said on Saturday.

The drones are being deployed from an air base in Bauchi state. Although capable of strikes, they are only being used to detect, track and disrupt terrorist activity, according to a military official.

About 100 US troops arrived in Nigeria last month to help train soldiers in their fight against Islamic militants and other armed groups. The Americans are not serving in combat roles, both countries have confirmed.

Nigeria is facing a long-run-

ning battle with dozens of militant groups including Boko Haram and affiliates of the so-called Islamic State. Other armed groups specialise in kidnapping for ransom and illegal mining.

Last year, America launched strikes on jihadist groups in Nigeria's northwest. US President Donald Trump has criticised Abuja for failing to stop violence in the country. He's claimed that Christians are being persecuted but analysts say the attacks target people from all faiths.

Washington previously operated a major drone base in neighbouring Niger, which has since shuttered after the ruling junta ordered US forces to depart the country.

## Presidents of Kenya and Uganda launch next phase of cross-border railway

Kenya and Uganda took a major step towards regional integration on Saturday, with the launch of a new phase of the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR).

The project is aimed at linking East Africa to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

"Today, here at Kibos in Kisumu, we take yet another decisive

and consequential step," Kenyan President William Ruto said. "We break ground on the 107-kilometre Kisumu-Malaba section of the SGR, completing nearly one thousand kilometres of seamless rail link from Mombasa to Malaba and forming a vital connection to the Malaba-Kampala line."

The Chinese-funded extension is due to reach the border



**CUBA NATIONAL BLACKOUT:** Power cuts leave millions of homes and businesses without power across Cuba.

## National blackout hits Cuba for second time in a week

More than 10 million people have had power cut to their homes and businesses across Cuba after the country's national electrical grid collapsed for the second time in a week.

Cuba's energy ministry said "a total disconnection of the National Electrical System has occurred", in a statement posted on social media. "Protocols for restoration are already beginning to be implemented."

Cuba's grid operator UNE said it was gradually recovering electricity, prioritising "vital" centres including hospitals and water systems.

The Caribbean country has suffered three major blackouts this month as a US fuel blockade cuts off foreign oil imports, required to keep power stations running.

Power cuts leave millions of homes and businesses without power across Cuba

The Communist-run country has an ageing electricity infrastructure and chronic fuel shortages.

A coalition of international socialist groups arrived in Havana over the weekend to show their support for the Cuban government, bringing with them aid donations of solar panels, basic food kits and medicines.

The "Nuestra America" convoy, a flotilla of aid leaving Mexico, was delayed because

of rough sea conditions but is expected to arrive in Havana's port on Monday.

Rare public dissent sparked by the recent crisis and national power cuts saw locals banging pots and pans in central Havana on Monday. Protesters in central Cuba's town of Morón also attacked and set fire to the Communist Party headquarters on the same day.

Unauthorised demonstrations are illegal in Cuba and those who defy the ban risk

being jailed.

Since US soldiers seized former Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on 3 January, Donald Trump has been repeatedly asked about similar mooted plans for Cuba.

President Trump is reported to want the removal of Cuba's President Miguel Díaz-Canel, a regional ally of Venezuela, as a condition of lifting the fuel embargo.

Last week, Trump suggested there could be a "friendly takeover" of Cuba, later remarking

it would be an "honour".

Speaking to campaigners delivering humanitarian supplies this weekend, the Cuban president said the island has a "preparation plan to raise our people's readiness for defence" against any US military aggression.

The American and Cuban governments have held initial phases of bilateral talks aimed at ending the crisis, Díaz-Canel has confirmed, although it is unclear how they are progressing.

## No assessment Iran could strike London, UK minister says

There is "no assessment to substantiate" Israel's claim that Iran has long-range missiles capable of reaching London, a UK cabinet minister has said.

Housing Secretary Steve Reed told the BBC there was "no specific assessment that the Iranians are targeting the UK – or even could if they wanted to", after the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said on Saturday that Tehran had weapons that could reach up to 4,000km (2,485 miles).

It comes after it emerged Iran targeted the joint US-UK military base on the Chagos

Islands in the Indian Ocean, around 3,800km from Iran.

Reed refused to say how close the missiles came to the British overseas territory, saying he could not share "operational details".

Iran fired two ballistic missiles at Diego Garcia – one of which failed and fell short, while the other was intercepted, Reed said.

The intercepted missile disappeared after a US destroyer fired missiles at it, according to the Wall Street Journal, which first reported the strikes, citing US officials.

After news of the attempted attack emerged, the IDF said on Saturday that it had revealed last year that Tehran had intended to develop missiles capable of reaching Europe, Asia and Africa.

It added: "We have been saying it: The Iranian terrorist regime poses a global threat. Now, with missiles that can reach London, Paris or Berlin."

Asked whether this was true, Reed insisted that there was "no specific assessment that the Iranians are targeting the UK or even could, if they wanted to".

"We are perfectly capable

of protecting this country and keeping this country safe, whether it's here at home, or whether it's our assets and nationals across the region," he told Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg.

Pressed again about the IDF's comments, he said: "There is no assessment to substantiate what's being said."

Even if Iran were able to launch strikes at such a range, the British armed forces would be able to defend the UK, he said.

The longest-range weapon in Iran's arsenal is thought to have a maximum range of 2,000km, far short of both Diego Garcia and London.

US President Donald Trump claimed days before the US and Israel began their strikes on Iran that it had developed missiles that could "threaten Europe" and was working towards building missiles capable of striking the US.

Iran's foreign minister said earlier this month that his country had deliberately capped its missiles' range at 2,000km, as "we don't want to be felt as a threat by anybody else in the world".

# Feature

## The intricacies of the City Boys vs Village Boys movement and its implications for Nigerian youth

CHUKWUFUMNAYAN ADIGWE

What began as a loosely defined social media expression has gradually evolved into a cultural marker of identity among young Nigerians. The “City Boys vs Village Boys” movement, though often presented in humorous tones across digital platforms, reflects a deeper divide; one that speaks to class perception, exposure, lifestyle, and, ultimately, belonging. Beneath the banter lies a conversation that deserves closer examination, particularly in a country where youth identity is constantly shaped by both economic realities and political narratives.

The emergence of the movement can be traced to Nigeria’s evolving social media culture, where identity is shaped and amplified through humour, trends, and viral language. What started as casual expressions in online banter gained traction among young users on platforms like X and TikTok. The phrase “City Boys” had earlier associations with confidence, urban sophistication, and influence, and over time became a label young men adopted, sometimes ironically, sometimes aspirationally. In contrast, “Village Boys” emerged as a counter-label, often used to describe those perceived as less exposed or less aligned with urban culture. As both terms gained popularity, they moved beyond humour into a more defined social commentary, reflecting underlying attitudes about class, exposure, and identity in contemporary Nigeria. At its core, the distinction appears simple. “City Boys” are often portrayed as urbane, polished, socially aware, and attuned to modern trends. They are seen as individuals who understand the language of soft life, networking, and strategic positioning. On the other hand, “Village Boys” are framed, often unfairly as less refined, more traditional, and lacking exposure. However, this binary, while catchy, is deeply reductive. It compresses the Nigerian experience into two opposing extremes, ignoring the fluidity between them and the reality that many young people exist somewhere along a broad spectrum of identities.

What makes the movement particularly significant is how quickly it has been adopted and internalised by the youth. It has moved beyond jokes and hashtags into a subtle framework through which young people assess themselves and others. In social interactions, professional environments, and even romantic relationships, these labels now carry weight. They influence perception, who is seen as desirable, who is considered informed, and who is deemed worthy of opportunity. In many ways, it has quietly become a social filter.

This is where the implications become more serious. In a society already grappling with inequality, unemployment, and limited access to opportunity, reinforcing such labels can deepen existing divides. The “City Boy” becomes aspirational, while the



“Village Boy” risks being reduced to a stereotype to outgrow or escape. This creates pressure, particularly among young people to perform a version of sophistication that may not align with their reality. It also risks eroding the value of authenticity, replacing it with curated identities shaped by trends, rather than lived experience.

A closer look reveals that the movement is also tied to the growing influence of digital culture in Nigeria. Social media has become a powerful tool for shaping perception, often rewarding visibility over substance. In this environment, the “City Boy” identity thrives because it aligns with easily consumable aesthetics — fashion, confidence, urban lifestyle, and social awareness. The “Village Boy,” by contrast, is often positioned outside this visual economy, making it easier for stereotypes to persist and spread without challenge.

However, reality on the ground tells a more nuanced story. Many individuals who may be labelled as “village boys” are, in fact, highly adaptive, resourceful, and deeply connected to their environment. They navigate challenges with a level of resilience often overlooked in surface-level conversations. Conversely, the “City Boy” identity, while aspirational, does not automatically translate into competence or depth. This contrast exposes the danger of reducing identity to appearance alone.

Beyond the social dimension, there is a political undertone that cannot be ignored. Nigerian political culture has long relied on identity, perception, and influence. Movements like this, even when they originate informally can be absorbed into broader narratives about power, class, and access. The language of “City Boys,” for in-

stance, can subtly align with ideas of elitism and influence, while “Village Boys” may be framed within populist or grassroots identities. What appears to be a harmless social trend can, over time, evolve into a framework for political messaging.

This becomes particularly relevant when considering the role of young people in Nigeria’s democratic process. The youth constitute a significant portion of the electorate, yet their political engagement is often shaped by simplified narratives. When identity-based labels like “City Boys” and “Village Boys” gain traction, they risk influencing how young people perceive leadership, competence, and representation. It raises concerns about whether political choices are being guided by substance or by perception.

Furthermore, the movement highlights an ongoing tension between as-

piration and origin. For many young Nigerians, there is a desire to evolve beyond their immediate environment, gain exposure, and access better opportunities. This is natural in a developing society. However, when aspiration is framed in a way that devalues one’s background, it creates a disconnect, suggesting that growth must come at the expense of identity, rather than alongside it.

There is also a cultural dimension to consider. Nigeria is rich in tradition, diversity, and community values. The term “village” carries meanings beyond geography; it represents heritage, connection, and shared history. Reducing it to a symbol of inferiority risks eroding an important aspect of cultural identity. At the same time, the “City” as a space of sophistication and advancement is not without its own complexities, as urban life brings its own challenges and contradictions.

For the next generation, the signals are layered. On one hand, there is encouragement to be informed, evolve, and engage with the wider world. On the other, there is implicit pressure to conform to a narrow image of success; one shaped by visibility, aesthetics, and perception. This duality can shape self-worth in ways that are both motivating and limiting.

It is also worth considering how language reinforces these ideas. The repeated use of “City Boys” and “Village Boys” in everyday conversation, even in jest normalises the distinction. Over time, what begins as humour can solidify into belief. This is how social constructs take root: not through formal definitions, but through repetition and shared understanding.

Ultimately, the movement is not just about labels. It reflects how a generation is negotiating identity in a rapidly changing society. It captures the influence of social media, the realities of economic disparity, and the enduring importance of perception in Nigerian life. It also raises important questions about what it means to belong, to succeed, and to be seen.

If there is a key takeaway, it is the need for a more balanced narrative; one that acknowledges growth and exposure without dismissing origin, encourages development without enforcing conformity, and allows young Nigerians to define themselves on their own terms.

In the end, the conversation should not be about choosing between “City” and “Village,” but about recognising that identity is far more complex than such distinctions allow. The strength of a generation lies, not in how neatly it fits into a label, but in how confidently it can exist beyond one.

*Ultimately, the movement is not just about labels. It reflects how a generation is negotiating identity in a rapidly changing society. It captures the influence of social media, the realities of economic disparity, and the enduring importance of perception in Nigerian life. It also raises important questions about what it means to belong, to succeed, and to be seen*

# Nigeria's dissociative identity disorder

Crusoe Osagie writes that the conflicting conditions in Nigeria depicted by the haves and the have-nots perfectly fits a mental health condition known as Dissociative Identity Disorder

Nigeria today presents one of the most perplexing paradoxes in the modern world. It is a nation that appears to exist in two incompatible realities at the same time. In one reality, parts of the country resemble ungoverned territories where armed groups dictate the rhythms of daily life. In the other, a confident political and economic elite projects an image of stability, prosperity, and progress through lavish ceremonies, outlandish declarations of robust economic growth, global travel, and glittering displays of wealth.

The coexistence of these two extremes has produced what can best be described as a national psychological split — a kind of collective dissociative identity disorder.

## TERRITORIES WITHOUT THE STATE

Across several northern and central Nigerian states — particularly in parts of Borno State, Benue State, Niger State, and Kwara State — there are local government areas where the authority of the Nigerian state has been severely diminished.

In these communities, residents have reported paying levies to bandits and insurgents in order to farm their land, move along local roads, or simply remain alive. Entire villages have negotiated informal “tax arrangements” with armed groups that dominate nearby forests and rural corridors. These arrangements function as a crude survival mechanism in regions where government security presence is intermittent or absent.

The rise of these parallel systems of authority is tied largely to the insurgency driven by groups such as Boko Haram and its splinter faction Islamic State West Africa Province. The conflict has killed tens of thousands and displaced millions since it began in 2009, transforming large portions of northeastern Nigeria into prolonged conflict zones.

Banditry in northwestern and north-central Nigeria has compounded the crisis. What began as sporadic cattle rustling evolved into a complex criminal economy built on mass kidnappings, village raids, extortion, and protection rackets.

The most disturbing development is how normalised this condition has become. Communities now routinely negotiate with criminals for survival — an arrangement that reflects not merely insecurity, but the erosion of the state's monopoly on force.

## WHEN GENERALS FALL

Perhaps the most symbolic evidence of Nigeria's fractured security reality is the unprecedented targeting of senior military officers.

In previous decades, the deaths of high-ranking officers in active combat were extremely rare in Nigeria's internal security operations. Over the past 10 years, however, insurgents and bandits have repeatedly ambushed military convoys, attacked bases, and even captured senior commanders.

## Among the notable cases include:

**Killing of Lt. Col. Aliyu Saidu Paiko**  
On 17 October 2025, Lt. Col. Aliyu Saidu Paiko, the Commanding Officer of the 202 Tank Battalion, was killed



during a military operation in the Kashmiri area of Bama Local Government Area, Borno State. The incident occurred while Nigerian troops were conducting a clearance operation as part of Operation Hadin Kai, the military campaign aimed at combating insurgency in northeastern Nigeria. During the mission, militants from Boko Haram/ISWAP launched a surprise ambush against the troops, triggering a heavy gun battle. In the course of the confrontation, Lt. Col. Paiko and several soldiers lost their lives.

This incident highlights the continuing capability of insurgent groups to target and kill high-ranking military officers even during organized military operations. It also underscores the persistent insecurity in Borno State, which remains a major stronghold of insurgent activity in northeastern Nigeria.

## KILLING OF BRIGADIER-GENERAL MUSA UBA

Brigadier-General Musa Uba, who served as the Commander of the 25 Task Force Brigade, was killed during operations against insurgents linked to the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) along the Damboa-Biu axis in Borno State. During the course of military operations, ISWAP militants ambushed the convoy in which the general was traveling.

Reports indicate that General Uba was captured alive by the militants after the ambush. The insurgents reportedly interrogated him before ultimately executing him. The incident demonstrated a disturbing level of operational coordination and intelligence capability among insurgent groups, suggesting that they were able to track or anticipate the movements of senior military personnel.

## MULTIPLE OFFICERS KILLED IN BASE ATTACKS (2025–2026)

Between 2025 and 2026, several coordinated attacks were carried out on Nigerian military bases located in Borno and Yobe states. These assaults were attributed to Boko Haram and ISWAP militants, who launched well-organized raids on the installations.

During these attacks, at least four military officers and numerous sol-

diers were killed as militants overwhelmed certain positions. In addition to the casualties, the attackers seized military equipment including weapons, vehicles, and ammunition from the bases they temporarily overran.

## AMBUSH KILLING OF SOLDIERS IN ZAMFARA (2026)

In 2026, Nigerian troops conducting security operations in Zamfara State were ambushed by armed gunmen. The attackers launched a sudden strike on the soldiers, killing five troops before reinforcements arrived.

The attack reflects the volatile security environment in northwestern Nigeria, where armed bandit groups frequently carry out ambushes on both civilians and security personnel.

The incident also demonstrates the geographic spread of violent attacks in Nigeria, indicating that security threats once concentrated in the northeast are increasingly affecting other regions, particularly the northwest.

## PLATEAU STATE AMBUSH KILLING SECURITY PERSONNEL (2026)

In 2026, security personnel operating near Wanka and surrounding communities in Plateau State were targeted in a deadly ambush by an armed group. The attack resulted in the deaths of approximately 20 security personnel, including officers and other security operatives.

The assault took place during security operations aimed at stabilizing communities affected by violent clashes and criminal activities in the region. The scale of casualties underscored the seriousness of the attack and the level of coordination displayed by the armed group responsible.

This event reflects Nigeria's increasingly complex security challenges, where different threats—including banditry, insurgency, and communal violence—often overlap and stretch the capacity of security forces across multiple regions.

## LARGE-SCALE MILITARY CASUALTIES IN BORNO BASE RAIDS (2026)

In 2026, a series of coordinated assaults on military positions in northeastern Nigeria, particularly in Borno

State, resulted in the deaths of approximately 40 Nigerian soldiers. The attacks were attributed primarily to militants associated with ISWAP. During these operations, the insurgents launched simultaneous attacks on several military bases, employing advanced weaponry and well-coordinated tactics. In addition to killing soldiers, the militants abducted civilians and looted military equipment from the targeted bases.

## OREKE-OKEIGBO ATTACK (2025)

On 4 June 2025, armed gunmen attacked a mining site located in Oreke-Okeigbo, Kwara State, which was under the protection of Nigerian security forces. During the assault, the attackers killed Assistant Superintendent of Police Haruna Watsai and Inspector Tukur Ogah. Following the killings, the gunmen abducted two workers from the mining site before fleeing the area. The attack illustrates the vulnerability of security personnel assigned to protect economic sites such as mining operations, particularly in regions where criminal networks target resource extraction activities.

The incident also highlights the broader security risks facing Nigeria's mining sector, where armed groups sometimes attack sites in order to kidnap workers, steal resources, or disrupt operations. Meanwhile, attacks on military bases have intensified in recent years, with insurgent groups sometimes overrunning forward operating positions and seizing equipment.

In any country claiming peacetime stability, such occurrences would constitute a national emergency.

## THE KIDNAPPING ECONOMY

Parallel to insurgency is the meteoric rise of kidnapping for ransom.

What was once a sporadic crime on remote highways has grown into a highly organized criminal industry. Armed gangs now conduct coordinated raids on schools, villages, highways, and residential neighborhoods.

Victims range from farmers and traders to schoolchildren and clergy. Entire communities have been forced to pool resources to pay ransom for abducted members.

Kidnapping has effectively become

a shadow economic sector — complete with logistics networks, informants, negotiators, and ransom brokers.

## THE OTHER NIGERIA

Yet while these grim realities unfold in rural and conflict-affected regions, another Nigeria operates in dazzling contrast.

In the capital and major cities, political elites host elaborate state banquets and international summits. Presidential delegations travel frequently to stable global capitals such as Washington, D.C., London, and Ankara.

State visits are accompanied by declarations that Nigeria has overcome many of its challenges and is entering a period of renewed economic growth. Within the political class, party defections have become a daily spectacle. Politicians migrate between parties not on ideological grounds but in pursuit of electoral advantage and personal security.

The message projected outward is one of stability and continuity.

## BILLIONAIRES AND THE MIRAGE OF WEALTH

Beyond politics, Nigeria's elite economic class also contributes to the paradox. Prominent business figures regularly announce their inclusion in the Forbes list of global billionaires. Their combined wealth often appears to exceed the productive capacity of the national economy from which it emerged. Luxury real estate, private jets, and global investment portfolios project the image of a thriving capitalist powerhouse.

Yet the macroeconomic fundamentals tell a different story: high inflation, volatile currency values, widespread unemployment, and one of the world's largest populations living in poverty. The glitter often obscures the fragility beneath it.

## THE YOUTH AND THE SPECTACLE

Nigeria's young population — arguably the greatest victims of this contradiction — has learned to participate in the spectacle. Social media platforms are filled with displays of luxury lifestyles: Lamborghinis, Ferraris, Rolls-Royces, designer fashion, and exclusive travel experiences.

To be fair, some of this wealth is genuinely earned. Nigerian creatives have successfully exported talent to the global market.

The rise of Afrobeats has propelled artists onto international stages. Nigerian comedians and skit creators dominate digital entertainment platforms. Social media influencers and fintech entrepreneurs are building new industries that were unimaginable two decades ago.


These achievements deserve recognition.

But alongside legitimate success stories is a culture of exaggerated prosperity — one that celebrates visible wealth while ignoring the structural weaknesses of the national economy.

## DANCING ON A FRAGILE EDGE

The result is a society that appears to celebrate itself while standing on unstable ground.

Political elites proclaim victory over crises that millions of citizens still experience daily. Economic elites accumulate immense fortunes while public infrastructure decays. Young people project luxury lifestyles even as unemployment and underemployment remain widespread.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**EFFECTIVE FROM FEBRUARY 1, 2023**

# Sports

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

## FIFA, CAF delegates arrive as NFF holds extraordinary assembly in Yenogoa

Yenogoa, the capital of Bayelsa State, is set to host the 2026 Extraordinary General Assembly of the Nigeria Football Federation on Monday, March 23, .

Governor Douye Diri will formally declare the assembly open at the DSP Alamieyeseigha Banquet Hall, located within Government House in Yenogoa.

A number of high-profile stakeholders in Nigerian sports administration are expected to attend the gathering, including Chairman of the National Sports Commission, Shehu Dikko; the Commission's Director-General, Bukola Olopade; Chairman of the Senate Committee on Sports, Abdul Ningi; and Chairman of the House of Representatives Committee on Sports, Kabiru Amadu.

The Extraordinary General Assembly will bring together chairmen and secretaries of football associations from all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, alongside members of the NFF Executive Committee and management.

Representatives of the domestic leagues, the Coaches Association, Referees Association, and the Players' Union are also expected to participate.

President of the NFF, Ibrahim Musa Gusau, will deliver the opening address before proceedings move into the business session.

Key items on the agenda include deliberations on proposed amendments to the NFF Statutes, the Electoral Code, and the Standing Orders of the General Assembly. The Congress will also oversee the appointment of members to the NFF Electoral Committee and the Electoral Appeals Committee, as well as the selection of an independent auditor.



## CAF Champions League champions: League holders Pyramids, record winners Al Ahly stunned in quarterfinals

Record champions Al Ahly both crashed out of the African Champions League quarter-finals on Saturday, losing to Morocco's Royal Armed Forces and Tunisian Esperance respectively on a bleak night for Egyptian soccer.

Pyramids' 3-2 aggregate loss ended their title defence despite a 1-1 draw in the first leg in Rabat. The Egyptians won their first African Champions League crown last June, beating South Africa's Mamelodi Sundowns.

Rida Slim put the visitors ahead in the ninth minute at Cairo's 30 June Stadium before Mohamed Rabie Hrimat doubled the lead with a 54th-minute header. Fiston Mayele halved the deficit in the 62nd minute

but the Egyptians could not find the equaliser that would have sent the tie straight to penalties.

"This is a historic win and a historic qualification for the club," forward Youssef El Fahli told beIN Sports. "We have the determination to fight for the title this season and, God willing, we'll bring home the club's second continental crown."

Royal Armed Forces will face fellow Moroccan Renaissance Berkane or Sudan's Al-Hilal in the semi-finals, hoping to move a step closer to a second continental crown after winning the African Cup of Champions Clubs in 1985 when they beat AS Bili-

ma (now AS Dragons) of then Zaire, now Democratic Republic of Congo.

## AFCON Final Saga: I'm not at odds with Morocco, I was misinterpreted —Le Roy

Veteran French coach Claude Le Roy has clarified his earlier remarks regarding the Appeal Committee decision on the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) final, insisting that his comments were misinterpreted and not directed at Morocco.

Le Roy, who has managed several national teams across Africa, was previously reported to have criticised Morocco following the controversy surrounding the annulment of the AFCON 2025 final result.

Addressing the issue, the experienced tactician distanced himself from any perceived attack on the North African nation, instead pointing fingers at football's global and continental leadership.

"The way people perceived what I said about the Africa Cup of Nations final... I blame two figures I consider shady: the CAF president and the FIFA president, but certainly not Morocco, which had absolutely nothing to do with the whole affair," Le Roy stated.

The former Confederation of African Football (CAF) technical expert stressed that his disagreement was solely with the decision-making process that followed the tournament, particularly the timing of the ruling.

"People thought that because I contested this decision, which came two months later, I was somehow at odds with Morocco not at all. Morocco had an exceptional Africa Cup of Nations, the best in its history," he added.

Le Roy further acknowledged the quality displayed by Morocco during the tournament,

while also recognising Senegal's performance in the final.

"Overall, they deserved to win, especially in the final, Senegal deserved it, but that had nothing to do with the players from the Kingdom of Morocco," he concluded.

The controversy surrounding the 2025 AFCON final continues to generate debate across the continent, with tensions still evident following the Appeal Committee's decision to overturn the initial outcome



LE ROY

## Wuraola Hussain selected for World Rugby Women in Rugby Careers Programme

Board member of the Nigeria Rugby Football Federation, Wuraola Hussain, has been selected as a participant in the prestigious World Rugby Women in Rugby Careers Programme.

In an official communication, World Rugby expressed its delight at her selection, stating that her commitment to developing rugby in Nigeria and her clear career aspirations stood out during the selection process. The

governing body noted that she is now part of a global network of over 250 emerging female leaders and that the programme is designed to strengthen leadership capacity, boost confidence, and expand professional networks within the sport.

As part of the programme, Hussain is expected to participate in a series of seven webinars, beginning on Wednesday, April 8, with sessions focused on

programme introduction, personal journey, and goal setting. Subsequent sessions will cover key areas such as self-awareness and transferable skills on May 6, effective communication and confidence building on June 3, and networking development on July 8, among others.

Her selection is widely regarded as a significant milestone for women's rugby development in Nigeria. Hussain has played a pivotal role in promoting the sport, particularly among young girls, and has been instrumental in driving grassroots initiatives aimed at increasing participation.

One of her recent achievements includes overseeing the Rugby Rising programme, which has successfully introduced the sport to close 7,000 girls across the country. This effort has not only expanded the reach of rugby in Nigeria but also contributed to empowering young female athletes and creating new pathways in the sport.



WURAOLA HUSSAIN



AL AHLY CELEBRATING

## Awoniyi on target in Nottingham Forest victory over Tottenham Hotspur

Nigeria's Super Eagles forward Taiwo Awoniyi returned to the scoresheet on Sunday as Nottingham Forest secured an impressive 3-0 victory over Tottenham Hotspur.

Awoniyi started the encounter from the bench but made a significant impact after coming on in the second half.

Forest had already taken control of the game, with Igor Jesus opening the scoring just before halftime, while Morgan

Gibbs-White doubled the advantage midway through the second half.

The Nigerian forward then put the result beyond doubt in the 87th minute, calmly finishing to seal an emphatic away win for Forest.

The victory further underlines Nottingham Forest's strong performance, while Awoniyi's goal will come as a boost for both his club and Nigeria's national team ahead of upcoming fixtures



TAIWO AWONIYI

# Preparation ahead of Commonwealth Games exposes neglect and systemic failure in Nigerian sports



NIGERIA COMMONWEALTH ATHLETICS

UNI DAN KAKWI

A viral video making rounds has exposed a deeply troubling reality within Nigeria's sports system, raising serious concerns about the country's readiness for the Commonwealth Games.

Rather than showcasing a nation building elite athletes through structured preparation, the revelations point to a system riddled with neglect, poor planning, and a shocking disregard for athlete welfare.

Home-based Nigerian athletes, who have been in camp for six weeks preparing to represent the nation, have come forward with disturbing allegations.

According to them, the reward for their sacrifice and ded-

ication was a paltry N75,000 while a few received N100,000 as transport fare upon being abruptly decamped.

Even more alarming is the claim that coaches, the backbone of technical and tactical development, received nothing.

This situation goes beyond financial inadequacy; it reflects a systemic failure.

The athletes allege they were not paid allowances throughout the camping period and were subjected to poor feeding conditions.

These are not just complaints\*they are indicators of a structure that is failing those it is meant to support.

The accommodation arrangements further deepen the crisis. Athletes reportedly stayed in a facility linked to

Tonobok Okowa, President of the Athletics Federation of Nigeria, under conditions they described as deplorable.

Electricity supply was inconsistent, with the generator allegedly operated only when guests were present.

Such treatment paints a grim picture of neglect, leading athletes to describe their experience as "modern-day slavery."

Perhaps most damning is the reported response from the hotel management allegedly run by the president's son that the athletes should not expect better conditions because the federation had not settled payments.

Athlete morale is already eroded, and performance at the Commonwealth Games could be significantly compromised.

## World Cup: FIFA cancels thousands of hotel rooms in World Cup host cities amid U.S. immigration concerns

Concerns are mounting over the United States' readiness to host the 2026 FIFA World Cup, with immigration policies, funding delays, and FIFA's logistical adjustments emerging as key issues ahead of the tournament.

The expanded 48-team competition will feature 104 matches, with the United States hosting 78, Canada 13, and Mexico 13.

Immigration Crackdown Sparks Alarm

Growing anxiety among fans and stakeholders centres on the potential impact of ongoing immigration enforcement measures in the United States, which critics fear could hinder the entry of international supporters and even participants.

The issue has reached Capitol Hill, where Congresswoman Nellie Pou has introduced a bill seeking to prohibit the use of federal funds for immigration enforcement within a one-mile radius of World Cup venues and designated Fan Festival sites during the tournament.

The proposed legislation underscores fears that strict immigration policies could deter attendance and affect the overall atmosphere of the global showpiece.

### FIFA SCALES BACK HOTEL RESERVATIONS

At the same time, FIFA has begun reducing its hotel bookings in several host cities, raising further questions about planning assumptions.

According to the Philadelphia

Inquirer, the governing body recently cancelled 2,000 of its 10,000 reserved hotel rooms in Philadelphia. Similar reductions have reportedly occurred in at least two other U.S. host cities.

The move follows earlier reports that FIFA also cut approximately 40% of its hotel reservations in Mexico City.

A source familiar with FIFA's arrangements said the organisation was exercising standard contractual provisions typical of major global events, noting that such adjustments are not unusual as planning evolves.



## NPFL26: Bendel Insurance FC, Warri Wolves settle for draw again

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Bendel Insurance Football Club, Sunday evening, proved to be a hard nut to crack in the Nige-

ria Premier Football League as they shared the spoils with their stubborn neighbours Warri Wolves in the Niger Delta derby which ended in a goalless draw.



BENDEL INSURANCE FC

The Benin Arsenal's started the match day 31 game of the Nigeria Premier Football League with promising attacking intent, only for the host to resist them from hitting target.

Insurance came out even stronger in the second half with substitutes Efe Ubiomo and Chinedu Nwosu connecting well with Dazzling Dung Emmanuel and another substitute Alex Oweifaleya. Dung Emmanuel and Efe Ubiomo came close to breaking the deadlock for Insurance in the 80 and 82nd minutes but the Deltans did everything to prevent the heartbeat.

## Iran hit by player absences ahead of Nigeria friendly amid political tensions

Iran will be without two influential players when they take on Nigeria's Super Eagles in a rescheduled international friendly on Friday in Turkey, dealing a blow to their preparations ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Forward Sardar Azmoun has been expelled from the national team after sharing a photograph of himself shaking

hands with Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, at a time of heightened political tensions between Iran and several Gulf nations.

Reports suggest that authorities have moved to seize assets belonging to Azmoun, as well as UAE-based forward Mehdi Ghayedi and former international Soroush Rafiei, further underscoring the gravity of the

situation.

Azmoun, 31, is one of Iran's most prolific forwards, with 57 goals in 91 international appearances. He currently plays for Shabab Al-Ahli and has previously featured for European clubs including Zenit Saint Petersburg, Bayer Leverkusen, and AS Roma.

Despite the off-field developments, Iran are set to proceed with their scheduled

friendlies against Nigeria on Friday and Costa Rica four days later in Antalya, Turkey, as part of their build-up to the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

However, the absence of key personnel is expected to significantly weaken the squad, raising concerns about the team's competitiveness and readiness ahead of the upcoming fixtures.

## Stranded in the US: Nigerian athletes risk missing Commonwealth Games

Nigeria's preparations for the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow face significant uncertainty as several of the country's top athletes risk being unavailable due to restrictive United States immigration policies.

A large number of Nigeria's elite track and field athletes are currently based in the United States, where they train and compete. However, recent immigration measures have created fears among visa holders that leaving the country—even temporarily—could jeopardize their ability to return.

As a result, athletes without U.S. passports are reportedly reluctant to travel for international competitions, including the Commonwealth Games scheduled to take place in Glasgow, Scotland, from July 23 to August 3, 2026.

The impact of this situation is already evident. At the World Indoor Championships in Poland, Nigeria is represented by only one athlete, shot putter Chukwuebuka Enekwechi, who holds a U.S. passport. Other Nigerian athletes requiring U.S. visas have opted out of international travel to avoid the risk of being denied re-entry.

An official familiar with the situation explained that the limited participation is not due to administrative lapses by the Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN) or the National Sports Commission (NSC), but rather the unintended consequences of U.S. immigration rules.

According to the official, current policies mean that visa holders from certain countries may be required to reapply for entry visas if they leave the United States, regardless of whether their existing visas are still valid. This has created widespread uncertainty among Nigerian athletes.

Among those potentially affected are some of Nigeria's leading track stars, including Tobi Amusan, Kanyinsola Ajayi, Samuel Ogazi, and others who rely on U.S.-issued visas to remain in the country.

Sports administrators in Nigeria are now exploring possible solutions to ensure that athletes can travel for international competitions and return to the United States without complications. However, with the Commonwealth Games fast approaching, time is becoming a critical factor.



TOBI AMUSAN

# FEATURE

## Edo in darkness: The urgent power crisis stalling economic growth and demanding immediate government action

GENERAL IWU COSMOS JP

Electricity is the engine that drives modern economies, yet in Edo State, this vital resource remains unreliable, inconsistent, and inadequate. What should be a fast-growing economic hub in southern Nigeria is gradually being held back by persistent poor electricity supply.

This ongoing power crisis is no longer just a technical issue—it is a major economic setback that demands urgent attention from both the government and the public.

Across Benin City and other parts of Edo State, residents and business owners continue to endure frequent blackouts, erratic voltage, and prolonged periods without power.

These disruptions have become a daily reality, forcing individuals and businesses to seek costly alternatives. The heavy dependence on generators has significantly increased the cost of living and doing business, placing a severe burden on the people.

For small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs), which form the backbone of Edo's economy, the impact is devastating. Traders, artisans, and service providers—such as barbers, tailors, welders, and food vendors—are forced to spend a large portion of their income on fuel and generator maintenance. This reduces profitability, discourages expansion, and in many cases, leads to business closure. The result is rising unemployment and increased economic hardship among the population.

The manufacturing and industrial sectors are equally affected. Industries that rely heavily on constant power supply are unable to operate at full capacity. Production costs soar, output declines, and competitiveness weakens. Investors who would otherwise bring development and job opportunities to the state are discouraged by the unreliable power situation. Consequently, Edo State risks losing its attractiveness as a destination for investment.

Beyond business and industry, the effects of poor electricity supply extend to critical sectors such as healthcare and education. Hospitals struggle to provide efficient services as essential medical equipment depends on stable power. In emergency situations, power failure can lead to tragic consequences. Similarly, schools are unable to fully embrace modern teaching methods that rely on digital technology, thereby limiting the quality of education available to students.



The agricultural sector, which holds great potential for economic diversification, is also suffering. Farmers face challenges in processing, preserving, and storing their produce due to lack of electricity. This leads

to significant post-harvest losses, reduced income, and increased food insecurity. In a time when agriculture should be a major driver of growth, poor power supply continues to undermine progress.

Despite the growing demand for electricity driven by population increase and urban expansion, infrastructure development has not kept pace.

Aging equipment, poor maintenance, and inefficiencies in power distribution continue to worsen the situation. While efforts have been made in recent years, they remain insufficient to meet the needs of the people.

However, this challenge also presents an opportunity for transformation. The Edo State Government, in collaboration with private stakeholders, must take decisive steps to address the power crisis. Investment in modern electricity infrastructure is essential.

Expanding and upgrading the power grid, improving distribution systems, and ensuring regular maintenance will significantly enhance supply.

EDO STATE GOVERNOR MONDAY OKRIBHOLA  
In addition, alternative energy solutions such as solar power should be aggressively promoted. Edo State is blessed with abundant sunlight,

making renewable energy a practical and sustainable option. Encouraging households and businesses to adopt solar systems through subsidies and incentives can help reduce reliance on the unstable national grid.

Transparency, accountability, and effective regulation in the power sector are also critical. Eliminating corruption, ensuring proper management of resources, and holding service providers accountable will improve efficiency and service delivery. Public awareness and community participation must also be encouraged to promote responsible energy use.

In conclusion, the issue of poor electricity supply in Edo State is not just an inconvenience—it is a serious economic threat. It affects every sector, limits growth, and reduces the quality of life for citizens. If left unaddressed, it will continue to hinder development and push the state further behind its potential.

The time for action is now. Government, private sector players, and the public must come together to confront this challenge with urgency and commitment. Edo State has the resources, the people, and the potential to thrive—but without reliable electricity, that future remains uncertain. Let there be light, so that Edo's economy can shine and prosper.