

# Eid-el-Fitr: Gov Okpebholo calls for unity, religious tolerance

## ● Sends birthday greetings to President Tinubu

RICHARD EWEKA

As Muslims across Edo State and beyond celebrate Eid-el-Fitr, the Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo has ex-

tended his warm greetings to the Muslim community, commending their steadfastness, devotion, and sacrifices during the holy month of Ramadan.

The governor praised the spiritual discipline, charity,

and prayers observed by the Muslim faithful, highlighting their role in strengthening the moral fabric of society.

He encouraged Muslims to uphold the virtues of compassion, tolerance, and unity, stress-

ing the importance of peaceful coexistence among all faiths.

Governor Okpebholo reaffirmed his administration's commitment to fostering an inclusive and progressive Edo State where religious harmony

and mutual respect thrive.

"On behalf of the Government and the good people of Edo State, I heartily congratulate our Muslim brothers and sisters on the joyous occasion of Eid-el-Fitr. Your dedication and devo-

tion during Ramadan have been truly inspiring. As you celebrate this significant festival, may the spirit of peace, unity, and love continue to guide our state and

CONTINUES ON PG 2»

# The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

Facebook Twitter Instagram YouTube NigerianObserver @Nigerian\_Observer @NigerianObserver www.nigerianobservernews.com

PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968

VOL. 46, NO. 971

MONDAY 31ST MARCH, 2025.

**Okpebholo condemns vigilante killings in Uromi, orders investigation**

—Pg 3

# Infrastructural devt: Edo indigenes in Abuja celebrate Okpebholo's landmark achievements

The Edo State Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo has received widespread acclaim from Edo indigenes in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) for his groundbreaking achievements in digital transformation and infrastructural development within his first 100 days in office.

The commendations poured in during the unveiling of Good Governance magazine in Abuja, an event designed to highlight and document the governor's strides in governance.

Barrister Peter Odion Abulu, the Director General of

the Edo State Liaison Office in Abuja, praised the governor's vision and urged for continuity in his developmental agenda.

"If you start a journey well, our prayer is that you continue well so that you end well. Governor Okpebholo has demonstrated that he is prepared, not just for this term, but for the future.

"His achievements so far are commendable, and we encourage him to do more. This is his time to succeed," Abulu stated.

He emphasized the importance of ensuring that the government's achievements are amplified and well-document-

ed, allowing Edo indigenes, both at home and abroad to remain informed about the progress being made.

"When you do something and do not tell people, it is easy for it to be forgotten. Even when people hear, it is still necessary to amplify it through means that can be documented. That is why we decided to re-echo what the governor presented in Benin City during his 100 days in office here in Abuja," he explained.

The newly unveiled magazine, he noted, would serve as a historical record of the administration's efforts and would

showcase Edo's progress to a global audience.

"We produced this magazine so that it can be taken anywhere, even outside Nigeria, for people to see what the government is doing. It will encourage Edo indigenes to work hard and find ways to contribute to the state's development," he added.

Dr. Osazuwa Imasuen, the Chairman of the occasion, encouraged Governor Okpebholo to sustain his developmental vision.

"If you start well, you must continue well and end well. He has set a strong foundation,

and we encourage him to do more," he affirmed.

The event attracted a diverse gathering of Edo indigenes who praised the governor's initiatives in infrastructure and governance.

Dorothy Okoduwa, an attendee, expressed her confidence in the governor's leadership. "Even from Abuja, we have seen what he is doing back home. We are

happy, and we pray that he continues on this path," she said.

Barrister Lucky, President of the Benin Community in Abuja, hailed the governor's efforts, particularly the construction of the flyover at Ramat Park in Benin City, calling it "unprecedented" in Edo's history.

"This is a major milestone,

CONTINUES ON PG 2»



EID-EL-FITR PRAYER:

L-R: Vice President Kashim Shettima; President Bola Tinubu, and Deputy Senate President, Jibril Barau, during the Eid-el-Fitr Prayer at the National Eid Ground in Abuja on Sunday

## Eid-el-Fitr: Tinubu hosts Wike, FCT delegation at Aso Villa

### ● As Akpabio hails Muslims

President Ahmed Bola Tinubu on Sunday hosted guests for the Eid-el-Fitr homage at the Presidential Banquet Hall, State House, Abuja.

Sunday's meeting began at 12:16 pm when the president arrived at the venue.

The guests included some lawmakers representing the Federal Capital Territory at the National Assembly, area councils chairpersons of the FCT, traditional rulers, leaders of the Christian and Muslim community, senior judicial officers, among others.

The opening prayers were said by the Chairman of the FCT Chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria, Dr Timothy Amazon and the Murshid of the National Mosque, Prof. SAS Galadanci.

According to our source, the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike led the delegation.

Meanwhile, the President of the Senate, Senator Godswill Akpabio has hailed the Muslim faithful on the occasion of Eid-

el-Fitri, urging them to pray for the unity of the nation.

This was contained in a congratulatory message issued by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Esemey Eyiboh in Abuja.

The former governor appealed that as the faithful celebrate Sallah, they should continue to pray and work for the unity of the country.

He said "As you celebrate the end of Ramadan and mark the occasion of Eid-el-Fitri, I send you my warmest felicitations on behalf of my family, constituents, the 10th Senate and the entire National Assembly.

"May this joyous occasion bring you peace, happiness, and spiritual renewal. May the blessings of Allah be upon you and your loved ones. As we celebrate, let us remember the values of compassion, kindness, and generosity that define the spirit of Ramadan.

"May we continue to uphold these values in our daily lives and continuously work for our unity. Once again, I wish you all a happy and blessed Eid-el-Fitri."

**Okowa advocates Oborewori's re-election in 2027** —Pg 4

**Heritage Bank liquidation: NDIC to commence dividend payments April** —Pg 5

**Israel-Hamas ceasefire back on table in new negotiations** —Pg 7

**Usain Bolt stripped off medal amid claims of losing world record due to rule change** —Pg 10

# Neda Imasuen dismisses recall effort, alleges sponsorship of campaign against him

Senator Neda Imasuen, representing Edo South senatorial district, has dismissed the ongoing efforts to recall him from the Senate, describing them as a waste of time and a ploy sponsored by external forces.

Addressing journalists in Benin City, he asserted that those pushing for his removal were being financially motivated and that some of them had even been taken to Kogi State for briefing on how to execute the agenda.

Imasuen linked the recall attempt to his role as Chairman

of the Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges, and Public Petitions, which recently handled the controversy involving Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan and Senate President Godswill Akpabio.

He maintained that his duty was strictly to address the conduct on the Senate floor and not matters of sexual harassment, as some have alleged.

He expressed disbelief at the involvement of individuals from Kogi State in a political matter concerning Edo, stating that such interference was unnatural and driven by mon-

etary incentives.

According to him, those spearheading the recall effort had been paid to do so, showing the extent to which some people would go for financial gain.

"Some individuals have been taken to Kogi, where they were briefed and given money to push for my recall. They are simply working for their pay, but it is absurd for someone from Kogi to come to Edo and dictate our political affairs.

This is purely a case of financial desperation," Imasuen stated.

He further defended his tenure as chairman of the Senate Ethics Committee, noting that he had always acted fairly and within the Senate's standing rules.

"The petition brought before his committee initially focused solely on parliamentary conduct, and the sexual harassment allegations emerged only later. He emphasized that Senate procedures had to be

followed and that the committee, which consists of nearly 30 members, functioned collectively, rather than at his sole discretion.

Imasuen also dismissed claims of bias against Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, stating that her petition was invalid because it violated Senate protocol. "A petition cannot be signed by the petitioner herself if she is a senator. That is against the standing rule," he clarified,

reaffirming his commitment to fairness and due process.

Reiterating his stance, Imasuen insisted that the recall efforts were baseless and politically motivated, urging those behind them to desist from their fruitless pursuit.

He maintained that his work in the Senate had always been guided by principle and fairness, regardless of the individuals involved in any case before his committee.

## Eid-el-Fitr: Gov Okpebholo calls for...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

nation."

Hosting Muslim leaders at Government House, Benin City, during their Sallah homage on the occasion of Eid-el-fitr, Senator Okpebholo reaffirmed his administration's commitment to fostering peace and unity among people of all faiths.

Represented by his Deputy, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, Governor Okpebholo assured the Muslim community of his dedication to ensuring a safe and harmonious environment for all residents. He disclosed that security agencies have been directed to identify and apprehend those responsible for the recent attack on travellers in Uromi.

He urged Muslim faithful in Edo to continue praying for peace and development, emphasising that the state remains a fertile ground for investment and economic growth.

"The lessons of Ramadan—peace, kindness, and patience—must guide our daily interactions. Our nation can only progress when citizens remain law-abiding, respect authorities, and uphold ethical values," the Governor stated.

He further assured that Edo would continue to implement policies promoting peaceful coexistence and security for all, adding, "The security agencies have already made arrests, and they have been instructed to ensure that all those responsible for the barbaric act in Uromi face justice."

In his Sallah message, the Chief Imam of Benin Central Mosque, Alhaji Abdulfatih Enabulele, praised Governor Okpebholo's proactive governance, particularly his prompt response to the Uromi incident.

"This is not the Edo we know. Our northern brothers residing here have always lived in peace with their host communities. The incident in Uromi is deeply regrettable, and we strongly condemn it.

However, we commend the Governor's swift intervention, which prevented further escalation. It reflects his dedication to the welfare of the people," the Chief Imam stated.

He also acknowledged the Governor's positive relationship with the Muslim community,

highlighting the presence of high-ranking government officials at the Eid ground for the first time since the advent of democracy.

"The presence of the Secretary to the State Government and the Chief of Staff at our prayers today is a great honour. It shows that the Governor values and recognises us.

Additionally, we have witnessed improvements in Ramadan palliatives and commend the administration for its efforts within the first 140 days in office. We can see the impact of infrastructural projects across the state," he added.

The Sallah homage was attended by senior government officials, including the Secretary to the State Government, Musa Ikhilior, and the Chief of Staff to the Governor, Mallam Gani Audu, among others.

Also, Governor Okpebholo, weekend, extended warm birthday wishes to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on behalf of the government and people of Edo State.

In a message honouring the President, Governor Okpebholo joined millions of Nigerians in celebrating a leader whose dedication to national progress remains commendable.

He praised President Tinubu's visionary leadership and tireless efforts in steering the country towards greater heights, describing him as the "father of Modern Nigeria" whose impact will be remembered by future generations.

The Governor highlighted Tinubu's wealth of experience, political acumen, and steadfast resolve in addressing national challenges, acknowledging his role in promoting unity, economic growth, and democratic stability.

"As President Tinubu marks another year, we pray for his continued good health, wisdom, and strength to guide our nation towards a brighter future," Governor Okpebholo stated, expressing confidence in the administration's commitment to national development.

The Edo State Government reaffirmed its dedication to working closely with the Federal Government to achieve shared goals and improve the lives of Nigerians.



COURTESY VISIT:

Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon Dennis Idahosa (right), exchanging pleasantries with the Chief Imam of Benin Central Mosque, Aljaji Abdul-Fatah Ikponmwoşa Enabulele, who led Muslim leaders on a courtesy visit to Government House, Benin City on the occasion of Eid-el-Ffitr celebration.

## Eid-el-fitr: Edo Attorney-General salutes Muslims

Edo State Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Dr Samson Osagie, has felicitated with the Muslims in Edo State and across Nigeria on the occasion of Eid-el-Fitr, marking the successful conclusion of the holy month of Ramadan.

In a statement issued by Clementina Agweda, the

Public Relations Officer of the Ministry, Dr Osagie commended the Muslim community for their devotion and sacrifices during Ramadan.

He emphasized that the period is a time for spiritual renewal, prayer, and self-discipline, encouraging Muslims to continue their acts of worship and charity beyond the holy month.

The Attorney General urged Muslims to uphold the values of love, compassion, and forgiveness fostered during Ramadan.

He called on them to continue praying for peace and progress in Edo State, Nigeria, and the world, fostering unity and harmonious coexistence.

Reaffirming the commitment of Governor Monday Okpebho-

lo's administration to maintain peace and development in the state, Dr Osagie assured citizens of a government dedicated to unity, justice, and progress.

He therefore wished all Muslims a joyous and blessed Eid-el-Fitr celebration, praying for God's continued protection and blessings upon Edo State and Nigeria.

## Edo communities express worries over abandoned road project

RAYMOND OSOGBE

### OKE-IRHUE

The people of Oke, Irhue and Uhiere villages in Uhumwode Local Government Area of Edo State have expressed concern over the abandoned, Ehor - Irhue - Oke - Uhiere road project.

The stakeholders of the road

project, including farmers and transporters, lamented the non completion of the road project which they said has in many ways affected them as inhabitants of the area.

Speaking with The Nigerian Observer at Irhue village, a community leader who craved anonymity, conveyed the fears and worries of stakeholders regarding what he called the

poor handling and later withdrawal of the contractor from the road project which covers Ehor - Benin - Auchu Express Way and terminates at Uhiere.

The road, it was observed serves a bypass in the event of a gridlock on the ever busy Benin Auchu Road.

One Mr. Osagle in Oke village called on the Governor Monday Okpebholo's led ad-

ministration to fix the road because of its economic viability.

"It's absolutely alright to emphasize that the said road passes through Okomu Oil farms," he said

Another stakeholder however called on Okomu Oil Palm plc, to synergize with the state government, to ensure that, the road project is completed.

## Infrastructural devt: Edo indigenes in Abuja celebrate...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

and we commend the governor. Edo people, regardless of where they are, must support him and work for the progress of our state," he said.

Evelyn Ubehi, a leader of the Edo State Legacy Association, also praised the governor's infrastructure projects, highlighting road improve-

ments from Benin City to Ekpoma as a significant achievement.

"Within a short period, we have seen remarkable improvements in roads, from Benin City to Ekpoma. As an Esan indigene, I am grateful for his work," she remarked.

The organizers assured that similar events and publications would continue to highlight

the administration's achievements while fostering the welfare of Edo indigenes beyond the state.

"This is the first of its kind since I assumed office, and I assure you that it will be sustained. We will not only showcase the governor's achievements, but also highlight Edo indigenes' businesses and explore how the government can support them.

We must create a system where people do not just wait for government support, but actively contribute to the state's development," Abulu concluded.

The event ended with a resounding call for unity among Edo indigenes and a renewed commitment to supporting Governor Okpebholo's administration in its continued drive for transformation.

## NEWS

# Okpebholo condemns vigilante killings in Uromi, orders investigation

## ● **Suspends State Security Corps Commander** ● **As Islamic Council urges calm**

The Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has condemned the tragic incident that occurred in Uromi, Esan North East Local Government Area, on Thursday, March 27, 2025.

The incident was an attack, allegedly carried out by members of a local vigilante group which resulted in multiple deaths and arson.

Initial reports suggest that the victims were travelling through the town from Port Harcourt, Rivers State, when they were stopped by the vigilante members on suspicion of being criminals.

Rather than involving law enforcement, the group reportedly took the law into their own hands, leading to the brutal killings.

Visiting the town on Friday to assess the situation, Governor

Okpebholo expressed deep dismay over the incident and vowed that justice would be served.

He denounced the vigilante group's actions and stressed that no one has the right to bypass the statutory law enforcement agencies.

The Governor directed the Edo State Police Command and other security agencies to carry out a swift and thorough investi-

gation, ensuring that all those responsible are held accountable.

He also urged the local community to cooperate with security personnel in identifying the perpetrators.

Acknowledging the efforts of community leaders, particularly the leadership of the Arewa community, Governor Okpebholo praised their role in preventing further unrest and

handling the crisis with restraint.

Meanwhile, the Edo State government has ordered the immediate suspension of CP. Friday Ibadin (Rtd.), the Commander of the Edo State Security Corps.

The government also ordered the suspension of all illegal vigilante groups operating within the state.

A statement by Umar Musa Ikhilior, Esq., Secretary to the State Government indicated that the action was arrived at by the State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo in response to the tragic killings of travellers in Uromi, Esan North East Local Government Area, on Thursday March 27, 2025 after reviewing the preliminary report on the incident.

The statement emphasised that the vigilante group involved in the killings was never profiled nor registered with the Edo State Security Corps and, therefore, operated illegally.

The statement quoted Governor Okpebholo reaffirmation that such actions do not align with the core values of his administration or the objectives of the state security corps, as outlined in the Edo State Security Corps Governance Law.

"Investigations are currently ongoing, with fourteen suspects already arrested. A special team established by the Inspector General of Police is conducting an intensive manhunt for others

involved in the brutal attack."

The statement reassured the public of government commitment to upholding the constitutionally guaranteed rights of citizens to move freely and conduct lawful business.

"In the light of this, the government is actively engaging with the victims' families, community leaders, and the Kano State Government, as many of the deceased hailed from Kano," and therefore urged all concerned parties to remain calm as it works towards ensuring that justice is served swiftly and transparently.

Also, the State chapter of the Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) has expressed deep concern over the recent loss of lives in Uromi, Edo State.

The victims, reported to be Hausa hunters traveling to Kano for the upcoming Id el-Fitr celebrations, were intercepted by local security personnel, leading to a tragic outcome.

In a statement issued by its Chairman, Alhaji Abdulazeez Igbini, the council described the incident as a regrettable failure of justice, emphasizing the importance of due process in any legal matter.

It highlighted that such occurrences often stem from misinformation and a lack of awareness about the fundamental right to a fair hearing.



**EKEHUAN ROAD:**  
Asphalt Laying on Ekehuan Road, Benin City

## Man kills elder brother during argument in Edo

There was tragedy in Uzala Community, Uhumwode Local Government Area of Edo State, when a heated argument between two brothers ended in bloodshed.

The 34-year-old Iyayi Omokaro allegedly killed his elder brother, 38-year-old Friday

Omokaro, in a violent dispute that escalated around 3:30 PM.

According to police reports, the altercation quickly turned deadly when Iyayi, in a fit of rage, grabbed a machete and hacked his brother to death.

The Ahor Police Division received a report of the inci-

dent and, in collaboration with local vigilantes, rushed to the scene. The victim was taken to the hospital, where he was confirmed dead.

CSP Moses Joel Yamu, the spokesman for the Edo State Police Command, confirmed that the weapon of murder was

recovered, and preliminary investigations revealed that the brothers' misunderstanding led to the fatal attack.

Iyayi Omokaro has since confessed to the crime and is currently in police custody as arrangements for his arraignment are underway.

## Ex-Nigerian Observer GM dies at 65

Former General Manager of Bendel Newspapers Company Limited (BNCL), publishers of the Observer titles, Mr Monday Aigbe is dead.

He passed on after a brief

illness at the age of 65 years.

Mr Aigbe, a former lecturer with the Delta State University, Abraka, as a staff Bendel BNCL, rose through the ranks from a Reporter to the position of Editor-in-Chief of The

Nigerian Observer newspapers where he retired after a successful journalism career with the state owned newspaper.

He is survived by a wife, children, relations, friends and well wishers.



## Benin residents laud Edo govt on road projects

HENRIETTA OLOTU

Benin City residents said that the Edo State Government is making significant strides in enhancing road connectivity and driving socio-economic development through ongoing road construction projects across various communities.

Residents of Ogbewise Link Roads in Ogbe Quarters, Benin City, expressed joy as long-awaited road rehabilitation efforts progressed.

The newly asphalted roads, now complete with clear road markings, are expected to improve mobility and accessibility.

Construction is also underway at Catholic Charismatic Renewal Road in Ugbiyokho and Palace Road, off Upper Mission

Extension, with concrete drain casting in progress at both sites.

These projects aim to enhance access and address persistent flooding issues that have long plagued residents.

A key milestone in the state's infrastructural development, these road projects will facilitate smoother transportation and promote trade by linking more communities with motorable roads.

At the Ekiuwa-University of Benin Road, construction has advanced significantly.

A severe gully that forced many landlords to abandon their homes is nearing full reclamation.

The road's reconstruction is part of a broader initiative to combat erosion, a longstanding challenge in the region.

Meanwhile, the dualization and construction of Ekehuan Road, along with spurs at Agbonkina, Uwadiae, Asoro, and Old Barrack Road, are progressing steadily.

Ekehuan and Barrack roads have been asphalted, and a retention pond has been created near the Army Barracks to manage floodwaters effectively.

At Ramat Park, work on Edo State's first-ever flyover bridge is in full swing, with sub-structure (foundation) work advancing and base pillars being installed.

The project is generating optimism among residents and road users, who anticipate relief from the notorious traffic congestion in the area.

Commuter bus drivers, in particular, have welcomed the

rapid progress of the construction, expressing confidence in Governor Okpebholo's administration's commitment to prioritizing funding and meeting project timelines.

Governor Okpebholo, who inaugurated the flyover project just a week after assuming office on November 12, 2024, has mandated its completion within 18 months. He emphasized that the Ramat Park flyover will play a transformative role in Benin City's economic and social landscape.

Describing Ramat Park as a key gateway to Benin City and other parts of the country, the governor highlighted the bridge's potential to ease commuting for motorists and travelers along the Benin-Auchi and Benin-Asaba Expressways.

## New Edo-CSDA GM meets with staff

GLORIA AGBONGIASEDE

The newly appointed General Manager of the Edo State Community and Social Development Agency (Edo-CSDA), Hon. Ivie Idahosa, held her maiden meeting with staff members to familiarize herself with the team and the Agency's operations.

Speaking at the Agency's Conference Room, she expressed her commitment to fostering teamwork, dedication, and continuous learning as guiding principles in her leadership.

"I am honored to take on this role and join the Edo-CSDA family. I recognize the great work done so far, and I am here to build on it.

"I am ready to learn, collaborate, and ensure that together, we deliver impactful projects that uplift communities across Edo State," she stated.

The outgoing General Manager, Engr. Osarume Osazuwa, who made significant contributions to community development during his tenure, emphasized the importance of continuity, collaboration, and dedication in sustaining the Agency's mission.

He urged staff to fully support Hon. Idahosa to ensure smooth operations and effective service delivery.

"Getting the work done should remain the priority of

the Agency," he asserted, encouraging employees to remain committed and focused under the new leadership.

The staff welcomed Hon. Idahosa and pledged their support to achieving the Agency's objectives. Her appointment marks a new chapter for Edo-CSDA as she brings a wealth of experience in leadership, project management, and community development.

Hon. Idahosa holds a Bachelor's Degree in Agricultural Economics and Rural Development, a Master's Degree in International Marketing Management from Robert Gordon University in Scotland, and another Master's Degree in Data Analytics and Healthcare Services Management from Rutgers University, USA.

She is also a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) and a Certified Project Management Professional (PMP), reflecting her expertise in healthcare administration and project management.

Her career spans various sectors, particularly in healthcare management and public service. Prior to her appointment, she served as a Principal Manager at Cooper University Hospital, a renowned research hospital in New Jersey, USA.

She was also an aspirant for the Orhionmwon/Uhumwonde Federal Constituency in the 2023 general elections.

## SOUTH-SOUTH

## NEWS

# Ikpe community refutes claims of selling Okhuahe shrine

The people of Ikpe in Ikpo-ba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State have dismissed allegations that they sold the land housing the Okhuahe shrine, which is said to be under the custodianship of the Benin Monarch, His Royal Majesty, Oba Ewuare II.

In a recently circulated viral video, leaders from neighbouring villages, Azagba and Obagie Nekekporo, accused the Okaighele (Youth Leader) of Ikpe, Alex Alele, of spearheading the alleged sale, asserting their collective custodianship of the shrine on behalf of the Benin Monarch.

However, the Ikpe commu-

nity has strongly denied these claims, labelling them as baseless fabrications aimed at tarnishing their reputation before the Monarch.

Speaking at an enlarged meeting held at the village's Ogedion (ancestral sanctuary), the community leaders reaffirmed their position.

Okaighele Alex Alele clarified that Ikpe village shares boundaries with Obaretin, Utesi, Avbiakagba, Ukhiri, and Ikhuen, with Uyimwendi historically being part of their community.

He asserted that Ikpe alone holds the custodianship of the Okhuahe shrine on behalf of the Oba of Benin, dismissing

any claim by other villages.

"The allegation that we have sold the land where the Okhuahe shrine is located is entirely false. The shrine remains intact as it has always

been," Alele stated.

He further described the accusations as a deliberate attempt to discredit Ikpe before the revered Monarch.

Supporting Alele's stance,

Ikpe elders, including Victor Eghenayariore, Ekhosuehi Aghedo, Alex Ighiriao (the second in command), and Noble Aghedo, reiterated that the claims were baseless.

They emphasised that there is no such entity as "Okhuahe Obagie" or "Okhuahe Uyimwendi," urging the public to disregard the allegations as mere falsehoods.

## Okowa advocates Oborevwo's re-election in 2027

Former Governor of Delta State, Senator Ifeanyi Okowa, has urged Deltans to support Governor Sheriff Oborevwo's re-election in 2027.

Speaking to party members in Ika North East Wards 3 and 4, Boji-Boji Owa, Okowa commended Oborevwo's leadership and his commitment to improving the lives of Deltans.

Okowa criticised those who left the PDP despite benefiting from the party's empowerment initiatives. He cautioned against political deception and urged party members to remain steadfast in their support.

He applauded the local party leaders for launching a monthly contributory scheme, which provides ₦100,000 grants to

100 beneficiaries from two wards each month. He noted that while the amount might seem small, it would significantly impact micro-businesses and local farmers.

Ika North East PDP Chairman, Hon. Chuks Agbormah, reaffirmed the party's commitment to mobilizing support for Oborevwo. During the event, APC members from the wards defected to the PDP, and Agbormah assured them of a warm reception within the party.

Several notable leaders, including Hon. Victor Nwokolo, Hon. Marilyn Okowa-Daramola, Dr. Kingsley Emu, Mr. Charles Aniagwu, and local government party leaders, attended the rally, further demonstrating the party's strong support base.

## Diri unveils educational projects across 6 new schools in Bayelsa

PHILLIP JEREMIAH EKE

The Bayelsa State Governor Douye Diri has inaugurated several projects across six newly established secondary schools in Yenagoa, the state capital, marking a significant investment in the state's education sector.

The schools, located in Biogbolo, Yenezue-Epie, Ovom, Ekeki, Akenfa, and Igbogene communities, now cater to a combined student population of 4,628.

Speaking at the joint commissioning ceremony at Community Secondary School, Biogbolo, Governor Diri reaffirmed his administration's commitment to educational development, stating that his legacy would be defined by impactful infrastructural projects and policies that empower future generations.

"For us, it is an opportunity to serve, and we believe at the end of the day, these will speak for us. The schools we have built, the children we have trained, the empowerment of the youths and women are the things that will speak for us," he said.

Diri explained that upon assuming office, he identified a critical deficit in school in-

frastructure, which prompted the government to embark on an aggressive construction initiative.

"When I got the statistics from Bishop Dimeari Grammar School, Ovom, and St. Jude's Girls Secondary School, Amara-ta, I knew we had a problem because the student-teacher ratio was under threat.

"It was not anything close to the prescription of the United Nations. I then promptly approved that new schools be established across the length and breadth of the state capital," he explained.

The governor noted that his administration has so far built eight new schools in Yenagoa, including those previously commissioned at Ogbogoro and Swali.

Providing a breakdown of student enrollment, he stated that Biogbolo accommodates 1,000 students; Community Secondary School, Igbogene 361; College of Education Demonstration Secondary School, Ekeki 450; Government Secondary School, Ovom 883; Community Secondary School, Akenfa 1,237, while Government Secondary School, Yenezue-Epie caters to 679 students.



**THANKSGIVING SERVICE:**

L-R: Edo State Commissioner for Information and Communication, Barr. Paul Ohonbamu; Head of Service, Barr. Anthony Okungbowa, and State Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Dr. Samson Osagie, during the thanksgiving service to climax the burial rites of Iyoba Omo N' Ikuoyemwen, Iyoba Ewuare 11, at the Holy Aruosa Cathedral in Benin City. PHOTO: CHARITY OZIGBO-ESERE.

## Critics of my educational qualification silenced —Oborevwo

● **Receives AAU Alumni award** ● **Urges public servants to uphold integrity, diligence**

VICTOR AJUWA

The Delta State Governor, Sheriff Oborevwo has declared that those who questioned his academic qualifications during the 2023 general election campaign have been proven wrong.

Speaking when he hosted the Executive Committee of the Ambrose Alli University (AAU) Alumni Association at Government House, Asaba, he reaffirmed his academic credentials and dismissed past allegations as baseless political blackmail.

Oborevwo expressed gratitude for the Hero and Excellence awards bestowed upon him by the AAU Alumni Association.

He recalled his time as a full-time student at AAU, graduating with a 2:1, and later obtaining a Master's degree from

Delta State University, Abraka.

The Governor reiterated his commitment to the university and pledged financial support for an ongoing Computerized Examination and Records Building project, estimated at ₦500 million.

The Alumni Association President, Dr. Clifford Omoze-gian, acknowledged the Governor as AAU's first alumnus to hold the state's highest office.

He noted that the new building, once completed, would be named in Oborevwo's honour.

Dr. Omoze-gian emphasized that AAU alumni were excelling across various fields, adding that the Governor's leadership further validated the association's legacy.

The event ended with the presentation of awards and a renewed pledge of collaboration between

the state government and the university's alumni network.

Meanwhile, the Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevwo, has called on public servants to serve with integrity, diligence, and a strong commitment to the welfare of the state and nation. He made this appeal at the retirement thanksgiving of the former Delta State Head of Service, Mr. Reginald Bayoko, held at Grace and Progress Family Church, Asaba.

Commending Bayoko for his steadfast service, Oborevwo acknowledged his perseverance through challenges and expressed gratitude for his contributions over a 35-year career. He praised Bayoko's decade-long tenure as a permanent secretary and Head of Service, highlighting his exemplary leadership and mentorship.

Oborevwo encouraged patience and adherence to due process within the civil service, urging officers to allow space for younger generations to grow. He emphasized that leadership transitions should be based on merit and due process rather than manipulation.

Delivering a sermon titled "Don't Forget," Bishop Chuka Agwuegbo reminded the congregation that all achievements come through divine mercy. He warned against ingratitude, citing biblical examples of individuals who faltered after failing to acknowledge God's blessings.

In his response, Bayoko expressed appreciation to Governor Oborevwo and past governors for the opportunity to serve, attributing his successful career to divine grace and dedicated leadership.

## Delta's devt: Oborevwo strengthens ties with FG

● **Addresses viral video on First Lady's visit**

AJUWA VICTOR

Delta State Governor, Sheriff Oborevwo, is deepening collaboration with the Federal Government to drive the state's development, according to Delta State Commissioner for Works (Rural Roads) and Public Information.

Speaking at a press briefing in Asaba, Aniagwu reaffirmed the government's commitment to strengthening relationships with federal agencies to advance the MORE agenda and maximize developmental benefits for the state.

He emphasized that the state is already reaping the rewards

of this partnership, highlighting the recent concession of the Benin-Onitsha Expressway with dual carriage, which will improve transportation along the corridor.

The initiative, he stated, enjoys the full support of the Delta State Government as it aligns with its commitment to infrastructure enhancement.

Aniagwu also referenced the visit of the Minister of Works, Engr David Umahi, and Governor Oborevwo's representation of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu at key federal engagements.

He underscored the state's recognition of the President as

the nation's leader and reiterated its commitment to cooperating with the Federal Government to ensure national stability and development.

As part of this collaboration, the Federal Government has committed to completing the 17.5km alignment linking the Second Niger Bridge from Issele-Azagba. The Commissioner noted that Governor Oborevwo pledged the state's full support for the project's completion, reinforcing Delta's readiness to work in tandem with federal authorities for infrastructural progress.

Aniagwu also highlighted the Federal Government's ac-

knowledge of Governor Oborevwo's contributions to infrastructure and human capital development.

He noted that the Minister of Works recognized the governor's dedication to delivering democratic dividends in line with Section 14 (2)(b) of the 1999 Constitution, which prioritizes the security and welfare of the people.

Addressing the viral video concerning nursing students during the visit of the First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, Aniagwu clarified that the video did not accurately represent the events that transpired.

## NEWS

# Heritage Bank liquidation: NDIC to commence dividend payments April

The Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation has announced that the first tranche of liquidation dividends for uninsured depositors of the defunct Heritage

Bank will be declared in April 2025.

The disclosure was made in a press statement released by the Acting Head of Communication & Public Affairs, NDIC,

Hawwau Gambo, on Sunday.

According to the statement, the declaration of the first tranche of liquidation dividends in April will be followed by the payment to uninsured

depositors.

The NDIC stated that the payment will be made on a pro-rata basis, in line with Section 72 of the NDIC Act 2023, which prioritises the

settlement of deposit liabilities over other liabilities when an insured institution fails.

The statement read, "With the considerable progress recorded in the asset realisation, the Corporation will declare the first tranche of liquidation dividends in April 2025, which will be paid to uninsured depositors on a pro-rata basis, in line with Section 72 of the NDIC Act 2023 on the priority of claims."

The NDIC said significant progress has been made in realising Heritage Bank's assets and recovering its debts, allowing the planned declaration and subsequent payout to move forward.

Heritage Bank's banking licence was revoked by the Central Bank of Nigeria on June 3, 2024. Following this, the NDIC was appointed as the liquidator in accordance with Section 12(2) of the Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act 2020 and Section 55(1 & 2) of the NDIC Act 2023.

Since the revocation, the NDIC has taken charge of the liquidation process, which includes verifying and paying insured deposits to affected depositors.

The NDIC noted that it has made significant progress in reimbursing insured deposits, which are capped at a maximum of N5 m per depositor. However, it said some depositors have not received their insured amounts due to various reasons.

The Corporation identified some of the challenges as the absence of Bank Verification Numbers or alternate accounts in other banks, which are essential for retrieving account details from the Nigeria In-

ter-Bank Settlement System database.

Other challenges include post-no-debit restrictions on some accounts, Know Your Customer limitations, particularly on Tier 1 accounts that restrict the maximum lodgement of funds, and mismatches in account names, according to the statement.

The NDIC said some depositors who have received their payments may not be aware because of the absence of mobile phone transaction alerts linked to their alternate bank accounts. It advised such depositors to check their other bank accounts for payments that may have been processed.

While depositors with balances exceeding N5 million have already received the insured portion, the NDIC noted that the remaining balance, which exceeds the insurance limit, will be paid as liquidation dividends. It said it had been actively realising Heritage Bank's physical assets and recovering its risk assets to generate funds for these payments.

The NDIC said its approach involves simultaneously reimbursing insured depositors while pursuing the sale of assets and debt recovery aggressively.

It explained that this strategy is aimed at speeding up the liquidation process and ensuring that all depositors are reimbursed without unnecessary delays.

The Corporation said it had advertised the asset disposal process on its official website, social media platforms, major national newspapers, and through radio and television announcements to ensure transparency.



**COMMISSIONING:**

Akwa Ibom State Governor, Pastor Umo Eno (middle), during the commissioning of the new 23.25km Ikot Ekaide-Ikot Okoro-Ikot Ibritam road.

## Tinubu joins Muslims for Eid prayers in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu on Sunday joined Muslim faithful at the National Eid Prayer Ground along Airport Road in Abuja to observe the Eid-el-Fitr prayers that marks the end of the holy

month of Ramadan.

Tinubu, who arrived at minutes before 9am was received by top government officials, religious leaders, and other dignitaries.

Vice President Kashim

Shettima, the Deputy Senate President, Barau Jibrin, and the National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu, were among those who were at the prayer ground.

On Sunday afternoon, the

President will, for the first time since assuming office, receive guests at the State House for lunch to mark Eid-el-Fitr.

He has observed previous celebrations at his Ikoyi home in Lagos.

## NCDC activates level two emergency as Lassa fever kills 118

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention has recorded 645 confirmed Lassa fever cases out of 3,465 suspected cases from January to March, 2025, in 33 states, across 91 local government areas.

This was as the Director General of the NCDC, Dr Jide Idris activated the Lassa Fever National Emergency Operations Centre at Response Level Two in an effort to respond and strengthen outbreak control.

The Head of Corporate Communication at the NCDC, Sani Datti, disclosed this in a press statement on Sunday.

Lassa fever is an acute viral haemorrhagic fever caused by the Lassa virus.

The natural reservoir for the virus is the multimammate rat (also known as the African rat), although other rodents can also act as carriers.

"During the period, January to March 2025, Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention has recorded 3,465 suspected cases of Lassa fever across 91 Local Government Areas in 33 states.

"Out of the above figure, 645 cases were confirmed, and sadly, 118 lives lost resulting in a Case Fatality Rate of 18.3 per cent.

"Unfortunately, 20 health-care workers have been infected: 8 in Ondo, 4 in Bauchi, 1 in Edo, 2 in Taraba, 1 in Ebonyi, 2 in Gombe, 1 in Benue, and 1 in Ogun states," the public health

institute stated.

It added that in line with its commitment to an effective response, the agency, deployed Rapid Response Teams to Kogi, Plateau, Ondo, Edo, Bauchi, Ebonyi, Taraba, Benue, Gombe, and Nasarawa states for a period of two weeks between January and March 2025.

"As a result of the evolving nature of the outbreak in some areas, deployments in Edo and Taraba were extended by an additional 10 and seven days respectively."

It highlighted that the agency activated the Lassa fever emergency operations centre at response level two to strengthen the outbreak control.

"The Director General of

the NCDC, Dr. Jide Idris, said in an effort to respond and strengthen outbreak control, the agency has activated the Lassa Fever National Emergency Operations Centre at Response Level Two.

"This activation allows for improved coordination across all the stakeholders (Federal, States, Local Government, Developmental partners and others).

"Moreover, the agency has distributed essential medical supplies, including personal protective equipment, and treatment medications, to affected states. Also, targeted, state-specific advisories have been issued to guide the prevention and control of Lassa fever," it said.

## Nigerian leaders prioritise power over progress —AfDB president's adviser

The Senior Special Adviser to the President of the African Development Bank on Industrialization, Prof. Banji Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, has criticised Nigerian leaders for prioritising power over national development.

Speaking at the Aquinas College Old Students Association 2025 Convention in Akure, Ondo State, on Saturday, where he served as the guest lecturer, Oyelaran-Oyeyinka lamented decades of leadership failure in Nigeria.

In his lecture titled 'Leadership and Nigeria's Development,' he reflected on how leadership choices had shaped

the country's progress, often to its detriment.

Quoting the former Premier of the Western Region, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, he stated, "Despite Nigeria's vast resources, economic potential, and human capital, it remains one of the poorest and most underdeveloped countries in the world.

"It is generally agreed, and the fact stares us in the face that despite her enormous economic potentialities, Nigeria is one of the poorest and most underdeveloped countries of the world."

According to Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, leadership in Nigeria has been all too often defined by the desire for power rather than

responsibility, vision, and a genuine commitment to the people's welfare.

He further explained that effective leadership should be founded on integrity, accountability, and the ability to inspire a nation to achieve collective goals.

"Yet, Nigeria has suffered from 'Power Politics' instead of the 'Welfare Politics' advocated by Chief Awolowo. This misdirected approach has perpetuated poverty, insecurity, and corruption, contributing to Nigeria's downward spiral.

"Leadership is about doing the right thing," the professor stated.

The professor cited Nigeria's failed steel industry as an example of leadership failure.

He said, "Despite substantial investments, Nigeria's steel plants became a cautionary tale of squandered resources.

"What should have been the bedrock of our industrialization turned into a tragic failure of leadership.

"Billions of dollars invested in steel production were wasted, and Nigeria still spends over \$4 billion annually importing steel products. Had Nigeria developed a robust steel sector, it would have created vital economic linkages, spurring growth in other industries."

## Eid-el-Fitr: Nigerians can overcome corruption with stronger resolve —EFCC Chairman

The Executive Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Ola Olukoyede, has expressed confidence that Nigerians have the capacity to defeat corruption through collective determination and commitment.

Olukoyede made this statement in Abuja on Sunday in his goodwill message to Muslims celebrating Eid-el-Fitr across the country.

"Tackling economic and financial crimes and other acts of corruption is achievable through courageous readiness and corporate commitments of Nigerians," he stated.

Reaffirming the nation's ability to overcome corruption, he stated that, "Nigerians are stronger than corruption. No corrupt act can break our common resolve and determination. We have all it takes to confront and conquer economic and financial crimes."

He urged Muslims to internalise the lessons of Ramadan—

self-denial, discipline, sacrifice, love, and purity—and channel them into a renewed commitment to shun corrupt practices.

"I congratulate Muslims and charged them to allow lessons of self-denial, discipline, sacrifice, love and purity of the Ramadan season imbued in them greater readiness and commitment to shun corrupt practices.

"At Eid-el-Fitr, Allah's benevolence and sacrifice are greatly magnified. May the lessons of love, peace, joy, and celebration of the festival abide in us and imbue in us a greater desire to reject corruption," he added.

Olukoyede also assured Nigerians that the anti-corruption war remains on course, stating that the EFCC is gaining momentum in its efforts to curb economic and financial crimes.

"The anti-corruption war is on course, maintaining that the EFCC is gaining more strength and speed in bringing economic and financial crimes to a halt," he said.

# Feature

## AS THE BLESSED MONTH DRAWS IT'S CURTAINS: A call for self introspection and evaluation

IMAM TAJUDEEN IBN IBRAHIM

All praise is due to none but Allah, The Lord of the heavens and earth. He created Prophet Adam and taught him the names of everything. He commanded the Angels to prostrate before Him, and made him live in Jannah, paradise the home of eternity. He equally warned him against the evil plots of Satan, the most vicious enemy.

It is He, Allah Who has made this world a place of work and struggles, not a place of reward or retribution, as our recompense will only come in the Hereafter. He says in the Holy Quran, in Surah Al-Imran, verse 185: "Everyone shall taste death. And only on the Day of Resurrection shall you be paid your wages in full. And whoever is removed away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise, he indeed is successful. The life of this world is only the enjoyment of deception (a deceiving thing).

So, you can see what true success is! We are eternally grateful to Allah for His avalanche of bounties on us, and particularly for making us witness the Blessed Month Of Ramadan. I testify wholeheartedly that none is worthy of worship but Allah Alone

and I testify that Prophet Muhammad is His servant and Messenger. May an outpouring of Allah's peace and benediction be upon him, his household and companions and all believers in his doctrine till the last day.

O servants of Allah, be conscious of Allah in every move you make and every step you take, for verily, Taqwa, God consciousness is the most profitable asset of a believer.

O servants of Allah, true success is not determined by inordinate acquisition of mundane possessions; be it wealth, wives, children or position, true success however, is getting admitted into paradise and being shielded from the Hellfire. May Allah grant us Jannah and protect us from the fire.

O servants of Allah, as the blessed month of Ramadan draws the curtains, there abides with us it's last days, which are it's noblest. These days are a last chance for those who have misused the earlier days of this month, and also a graceful end for those who have been consistent in worship right from the first day.

As the blessed month announces its departure, it is important to carry out self introspection and evaluation. The

*The Messenger of Allah, prayers and peace of Allah be upon him, ordained the fast-breaking zakat as a sâ' (One Sâ' = 3 Kilograms approx.) of dates or of barley upon Muslims, free men as well as on slaves, males and females and young and old people*

importance of this is to make amends if we have fallen short, or increase our virtues if we have done well, as no one is guaranteed of witnessing another Ramadan.

Allah says in Surah Al-Hashr, verse 18 "O you who have believed, fear Allah. And let every soul look to what it has put forth for tomorrow - and fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is acquainted with what you do".

Shaykh Abdur Rahman As-Sa'di says with respect to this verse: "This verse speaks about the importance of self evaluation by a servant of Allah. If he finds himself sinful, he should hasten to sincere repentance, and if he finds himself falling short in carrying

out Allah's commands, he should strive hard and seek Allah's assistance in fulfilling His obligation s."

Umar Ibn al-Khattab is authentically reported to have said: "Hold yourself accountable before you are held accountable and weigh your deeds before they are weighed for you. It will be easy for you tomorrow (the day of judgement) should you evaluate yourself today, and be prepared for the great assembly on a Day when all things will be revealed and nothing will be hidden."

O servants of Allah as the blessed draws the curtains, do not forget Zakatul Fitr; fast-breaking zakaat. Abdullah Ibn Abbas narrated a

traceable Hadith that, "The Messenger of Allah, prayers and peace of Allah be upon him, has ordained the fast-breaking zakat as a sâ' (One Sâ' = 3 Kilograms approx.) of dates or of barley upon Muslims, free men as well as on slaves, males and females and young and old people. He ordained it to be paid before people went out to offer the fast prayer." [Reported by Al-Bukhari].

Among the evidence that it is obligatory is the Hadith of Abdullah Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with him and his father, who said, "The Messenger of Allah, prayers and peace of Allah be upon him, ordained the fast-breaking zakat as a sâ' (One Sâ' = 3 Kilograms approx.) of dates or of barley upon Muslims, free men as well as on slaves, males and females and young and old people. He ordained it to be paid before people went out to offer the fast prayer." [Reported by Al-Bukhari].

May Allah accept our fasts and other acts of worship. May He grant us Jannah, paradise, and protect us from the Hellfire.

*IMAM TAJUDEEN IBN IBRAHIM is the Grand Chief Imam of Akoko-Edo. He writes from Akoko Edo Local Government Area, Edo State.*

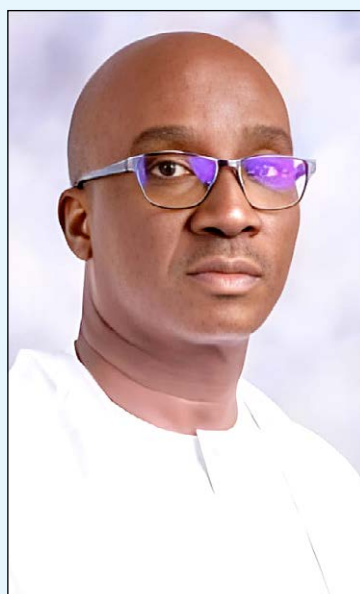
## Edo State Security: PDP's desperation and distortion of facts

Our attention has been drawn to a press statement issued by the Edo State Chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), making baseless allegations regarding the security situation in the State. While we acknowledge the unfortunate incident in Uromi, it is disappointing that the PDP has chosen to exploit a tragic event for political mileage rather than contribute constructively to ongoing efforts to enhance security. It is important to set the records straight:

The administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo has demonstrated an unyielding commitment to addressing security challenges head-on. The swift classification of the perpetrators as an illegal vigilante group and the subsequent suspension of the Edo State Security Corps Commander, CP Friday Ibadin (Rtd.), is a clear indication that this government does not condone lawlessness or impunity. Unlike previous administrations that overlooked security failings, this government takes decisive actions.

Contrary to the PDP's misleading assertions, the Okpebholo administration has consistently prioritized security through robust collaboration with security agencies, reinforcement of community policing structures, and the establishment of a multi-layered security approach to safeguard lives and property across the state.

The unfortunate February 5 protest by members of the Edo Security Corps was not ignored, as the PDP falsely



OKPEBHOLO

claims. On the contrary, the government has taken proactive measures to review the operational framework of the Corps, ensuring that such lapses do not re-occur. Unlike the PDP's tenure, where security concerns were often swept under the carpet, the present administration has acted transparently and responsibly.

The Edo State Government has already commenced a full-scale investigation into the Uromi incident, with the arrest and prosecution of those responsible. This government believes in the rule of law and will ensure that every individual or group

found culpable faces justice.

Security is a collective responsibility, and it is unfortunate that the PDP continues to play politics with the lives of Edo people rather than supporting genuine efforts to enhance security.

The Okpebholo administration remains open to constructive dialogue and collaboration with stakeholders, including opposition parties, to develop sustainable security strategies. However, fear-mongering and baseless accusations will not deter the government from its commitment to keeping Edo safe.

The call for federal intervention by the PDP is not only unnecessary but also an admission of their lack of faith in the State's capabilities. Under Governor Okpebholo's leadership, Edo State remains secure and capable of handling its internal security matters without undue political interference.

Governor Monday Okpebholo urges all Edo citizens to remain vigilant and support ongoing security efforts. The government will not relent in its determination to provide a safe and secure environment for all.

Edo's security is a priority, and no amount of political manipulation will derail this administration's commitment to that goal.

Signed,  
**Fred Itua**  
The Chief Press Secretary to the Edo State Governor.  
Sunday, 30 March, 2025.

## A fresh call to ban motorbikes

OSEHOBO VICTOR OFURE

Benin City needs a new motorbike ban. Now. The streets demand safety. Our citizens deserve protection. Criminals exploit two-wheeled mobility daily. The evidence is overwhelming.

In 2013, Governor Adams Oshiomhole took decisive action. He banned commercial motorcycles ("Okada") in key areas. Oredo, Egor, and Ikpoba Okha local government areas saw immediate changes. The governor cited urgent security concerns. His broadcast called it "painful but necessary."

The ban extended further. It covered Aduwawa in Uhumwode. It included Ekosodin in Ovia North East. Major streets became motorcycle-free zones. Citizens welcomed the respite from crime.

Oshiomhole's reasoning was sound. Investigations identified many kidnappers as Okada riders. The state had become a criminal haven. Displaced riders from neighboring states flooded in. They brought their illegal activities with them.

Motorbikes enable crime in multiple ways. They offer unmatched mobility. They provide quick escape routes. Law enforcement struggles to pursue them through narrow alleys and crowded markets.

"Criminals use motorcycles to access difficult terrain quickly," security experts confirm. They conduct surveillance operations undetected. A motorbike appears innocent until it isn't.

Stolen goods move efficiently on two wheels. Drug trafficking thrives with motorbike couriers. Armed robbers strike and disappear in seconds.

Kidnappers scout neighborhoods without raising suspicion.

The anonymity factor cannot be overstated. Many motorbikes operate without registration. Others use fake license plates. This makes tracing nearly impossible. Crimes go unsolved. Citizens remain vulnerable.

Oshiomhole's government showed determination. They threatened to destroy non-compliant vehicles. Security agencies received clear directives. The message was unambiguous: the ban would be enforced.

The administration didn't stop at prohibition. They explored alternatives for displaced riders. Civil service opportunities were discussed. Agricultural initiatives received consideration. Vehicle procurement plans took shape.

The government understood the economic impact. They sought to balance security with livelihood concerns. This holistic approach deserved support. It recognized the complexity of the situation.

Legal challenges emerged predictably. The Federal High Court initially supported the ban. They dismissed opposition suits. The government appeared victorious.

Then came the reversal. The Court of Appeal overturned the decision. They declared the ban "unconstitutional, illegal, null, void." The ruling emphasized personal freedoms. It prioritized individual rights over collective security.

This judicial intervention created confusion. It emboldened criminal elements. It tied the hands of security agencies. Residents could now ride "without fear of molestation." Law enforcement risked contempt charges for interventions.

## NEWS

## Foreign

# Myanmar junta continues air strikes after devastating earthquake

Myanmar's military junta has continued to bomb parts of the war-torn country following the major earthquake there, which has killed more than 1,600 people.

The UN has described the attacks as "completely outrageous and unacceptable".

Special Rapporteur Tom Andrews told the BBC that it was "nothing short of incredible" that the military was continuing to "drop bombs when you are trying to rescue people" after the earthquake.

He called on the military regime, which seized power in a coup nearly four years ago to stop all military operations.

"Anyone who has influence on the military needs to step

up the pressure and make it very clear that this is not acceptable," he said.

"I'm calling upon the junta to just stop, stop any of its military operations," he added.

BBC Burmese confirmed that seven people were killed in an air strike in Naungcho in northern Shan state. This strike took place around 15:30 local time, less than three hours after the quake struck.

Pro-democracy rebel groups that are fighting to remove the military from power have reported aerial bombings in Chang-U township in the north-western Sagaing region, the epicentre of the quake. There are also reports of airstrikes in regions near the Thai border.

The National Unity Govern-

ment (NUG), which represents the ousted civilian administration, said in a statement that its armed forces would begin a two-week pause in "offensive military operations, except for defensive actions" in areas affected by the earthquake, from Sunday.

The 7.7 magnitude earthquake that struck Sagaing was also felt in neighbouring countries. It was followed by reports of destruction coming from nearby Mandalay - Myanmar's second largest city - as well as the capital, Nay Pyi Taw, which is more than 150 miles (241km) away.

The junta says 1,644 people are known to have died and many more are believed to be trapped under rubble.

The quake comes after four years of civil war in Myanmar

that followed a military coup in 2021. The coup triggered huge protests, with thousands taking to the streets daily, demanding the restoration of civilian rule.

What initially began as a civil disobedience campaign soon evolved into a widespread insurgency involving pro-democracy and ethnic rebel groups - which eventually sparked an all-out civil war.

Four years on, violent fighting has continued between the military on the one hand, and ethnic armies and armed resistance groups on the other.

The junta, which has suffered continual and humiliating defeats and lost vast swathes of territory, is increasingly relying on air attacks to crush resistance to its rule.

Large parts of the Sagaing region, the epicentre of the earthquake, are now under the control of pro-democracy resistance groups.

A BBC investigation revealed that nearly four years after seizing power in a coup, the military now controls less than a quarter of the country.

The investigation revealed that ethnic armies and a patchwork of resistance groups now control 42% of the country's land mass, while much of the remaining area remains contested.

It's in aerial combat that the military regime has the upper hand. Resistance groups lack the capacity to fight back in the air.

The military has a history of carrying out indiscriminate

aerial bombardments that have destroyed schools, monasteries, churches, and hospitals. In one of the deadliest airstrikes, more than 170 people were killed, including many women and children.

The UN body investigating human rights violations in the country has warned that the military junta is committing war crimes and crimes against humanity against its own people.

The military's aerial warfare is being sustained by continued support from Russia and China. Despite UN calls for an arms embargo in response to the coup, both China and Russia have sold the junta sophisticated attack jets and provided training on how to use it.



**VISITED A HOSPITAL:**

Myanmar's military chief Min Aung Hlaing visited a hospital where survivors are being treated in Nay Pyi Taw on Friday

## Israel-Hamas ceasefire back on table in new negotiations

The Palestinian militant group Hamas says it supports resuming a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip through a proposal put forward by mediators which would see five more hostages released to Israel in exchange for a 50-day truce.

Khalil al-Hayya, the most senior Hamas leader outside Gaza, said the group had approved a draft deal sent by Egyptian and Qatari mediators.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said it had also received the plan, and submitted a "counter-proposal to the mediators in full co-ordination with the United States".

If agreed to, the new limited ceasefire agreement could coincide with the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr which begins on Sunday.

On Saturday, Netanyahu's office said he had held consultations on the ceasefire proposal from the mediators.

It said the Israeli counter-offer had been agreed with the US, but did not provide further details. The US has not publicly commented on the issue.

It comes as Israeli forces launched a ground operation in Rafah and continued air strikes across Gaza Strip after a ceasefire which had come into force on 19 January ended earlier this month. Both sides had been unable to agree to a second phase of the deal after the first ended.

During the first phase, Hamas had released 33 hostages. The Iran-backed group is

thought to still be holding 59 hostages, although not all are believed to be alive. Hamas had previously insisted on sticking to the original deal - with negotiations to start on a second phase that envisaged the release of all the remaining hostages in return for a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces in Gaza and an end to the war. But those negotiations never started.

Israel and the US instead proposed that the first phase of the ceasefire - which expired a month ago - should be extended, with no clear guarantee that the war would end.

Israel accused Hamas of rejecting the extension and on 18 March resumed its military strikes on Gaza.

More than 900 people across the territory have been killed by Israeli air strikes since then, the Hamas-run health ministry has said.

Meanwhile, the relatives of the remaining hostages have accused Netanyahu of putting hostage lives in danger by breaking the ceasefire.

One of those hostages, El-kana Bohbot, was shown in a new video posted by Hamas in which he begs for his release.

The war was triggered when Hamas attacked southern Israel on 7 October 2023, killing about 1,200 people and taking 251 back to Gaza as captives.

Israel responded with a massive military offensive, which killed more than 50,000 Palestinians, Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry says.

## Trump says he 'couldn't care less' about higher car prices

Donald Trump has said he "couldn't care less" if carmakers raise prices after his 25% tariffs on foreign-made vehicles comes into effect.

Some analysts have warned that Trump's charges on businesses importing vehicles could lead to the temporary shutdown of significant car production in the US, increase prices, and strain relations with allies.

But speaking to NBC News on Saturday, the US president said he hoped foreign carmakers raise prices as it means "people are gonna buy American-made cars. We have plenty".

On Wednesday, Trump announced new import taxes of 25% on cars and car parts entering the US from overseas, which go into effect on 2 April. Charges on businesses importing vehicles are expected on 3 April, and taxes on parts are set to start in May or later.

When asked about what his message was to car bosses, he said: "The message is congratulations, if you make your car in the United States, you're going

to make a lot of money".

He went on to say: "If you don't, you're going to have to probably come to the United States, because if you make your car in the United States, there is no tariff."

The 25% import tax on carmakers was briefly implemented but then paused at the beginning of March following pleas from major carmakers in North America like Ford, General Motors and Stellantis.

But Trump told NBC he did not plan to delay imposition of the car tariffs any further,

saying he would consider negotiating "only if people are willing to give us something of great value. Because countries have things of great value, otherwise, there's no room for negotiation".

Trump's comments come as Downing Street sources said the UK would not hesitate to retaliate against US tariffs if needed.

The UK is in last-minute negotiations with the White House and is trying to get an exemption, arguing that - unlike other countries - the UK

has a relatively equal trading relationship with the US. The prime minister Sir Keir Starmer has said he does not want to jump into a trade war.

Several major economies have also vowed to retaliate in response to Trump's tariffs.

Germany has said it "will not give in" and that Europe must "respond firmly", France's president branded the move "a waste of time" and "incoherent", Canada calling it a "direct attack", and China accused Washington of violating international trade rules.

## Man tending grave probed for starting South Korea fires

A 56-year-old man is being investigated in South Korea on suspicion of starting a deadly wildfire that killed 30 people.

The man, who has not been named, was performing an ancestral rite by a family grave on a hill in Uiseong county, North Gyeongsang province, at the time.

He has been booked - but not arrested - and will be called in for questioning once the investi-

gation of the site has been completed. He denies the charges.

On Sunday, officials said the main fires had finally been brought under complete control - 10 days after they started, causing widespread damage to buildings, including historic temples.

Investigators reportedly spoke to the suspect's daughter who is said to have told them the fire began as her father tried to burn tree branches

hanging over the graves with a cigarette lighter.

According to the Korea Forest Service, the fires burned more than 48,000 hectares - equivalent to about 80% of the size of the capital Seoul.

They also destroyed an estimated 4,000 structures, including homes, factories and a number of national treasures.

Goun Temple - a Unesco World Heritage Site - was

among the temples destroyed in the blaze. It was built in 618 AD and was one of the largest in the province.

Most of the casualties were people in their 60s and 70s.

Even though the main fire has been brought under control, smaller ones continue to reignite, authorities say.

Fuelled by strong and dry winds, the fires spread to several cities and counties.

Unseasonably warm weather, dry conditions and pine forests in the region also helped fuel the flames.

An investigation involving the police, fire authorities, and forest management will be carried out next week.

Acting President Han Duck-soo said the government would provide financial support for those who have been displaced by the fires.

## NEWS

## Foreign

## Protesters return to Istanbul's streets for huge rally

Hundreds of thousands of pro-democracy demonstrators have returned to the streets of Istanbul, Turkey, to show support for the city's jailed mayor.

Ekrem Imamoglu, who is seen as the main rival of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, was arrested on corruption charges last week, sparking mass protests.

He denies the charges and says his arrest was politically motivated.

Saturday's crowds were so large they spilled from the site of the protest into a neighbouring park. The chairman of Imamoglu's Republican People's Party (CHP) addressed demonstrators, reading out a letter from the jailed politician who is being held in solitary confinement.

"I have no fear, you are behind me and by my side. I have no fear because the nation is united. The nation is united against the oppressor," Imamoglu said in the letter.

His wife, Dilek, was also at the protest and told the crowd: "We will keep fighting and fighting."

Protesters waved Turkey's red-and-white flags and chanted: "Rights, law, justice!"

Imamoglu has served as Istanbul's mayor since 2019 and won a resounding victory in mayoral elections last year.

He has been named as the CHP's candidate for the presidential election due in 2028 and

is widely viewed as the only politician capable of challenging Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party at the ballot box.

Erdogan has been in power for more than two decades, first as prime minister then as president from 2014. He cannot run again for the presidency after 2028 - unless he changes Turkey's constitution.

A series of mass pro-democracy protests have wracked the country since Imamoglu's arrest more than week ago.

While Saturday's demonstration was peaceful, some earlier protests faced heavy-handed police tactics who fired teargas and rubber bullets.

Nearly 2,000 people have been arrested including some journalists who had been covering the protests.

That includes BBC correspondent Mark Lowen who was deported after the state claimed he lacked the correct press accreditation.

Erdogan has claimed the protests amount to "street terrorism", and accused demonstrators of attacking the police and damaging public property.

There are concerns that Imamoglu will not face a free and fair trial when his case is heard in court.

The government has denied Imamoglu's arrest was politically motivated and insists the Turkish courts are fully independent.



## Japan chain shuts shops after pests found in food

One of Japan's biggest restaurant chains is closing its outlets for deep cleaning, after two incidents of customers finding pests, including a rat, in their food.

Sukiya, known for its beef-on-rice dishes, announced the temporary closure after an insect was found by a customer. Last weekend, it admitted that a rat had been discovered in a bowl of miso soup in January.

The chain, which has nearly 2,000 restaurants, said most of its sites would be shut between 31 March and 4 April "to prevent external intrusion and internal infestation of pests and vermin".

In a statement, it apologised for the "great inconvenience and concern caused".

Rumours about the rat-in-miso incident had been circulating on social media for weeks before Sukiya was forced to confirm that the rodent had been found "before it was eaten".

The restaurant, in the city of Tottori, was temporarily closed, and Sukiya said measures had been taken to address cracks in the building that could lead to contamination.

It then announced that all of its outlets would be regularly checked for gaps and rubbish would be refrigerated.

The company has now taken the more drastic measure of closure after the insect - widely reported to have been part or all of a cockroach - was found on Friday by a customer in Tokyo.

The manager apologised to the customer and gave them a refund, it said.

Sukiya is part of Zensho Holdings, which owns a number of restaurant chains in Japan.

Last Monday, following the disclosure about the rat, its share price tumbled before recovering later in the week. Its shares will face scrutiny after Saturday's announcement.



### CLOSING ITS OUTLETS:

Japan's biggest restaurant chains is closing its outlets for deep cleaning.

## Academy apologises for statement on Palestinian Oscar winner attack

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences apologised on Friday after hundreds of its members criticised it for not supporting Oscar-winner Hamdan Ballal, a Palestinian who was recently detained by Israeli settlers.

The Academy apologised for not "directly [acknowledging] Mr Ballal and the film by name", after nearly 700 voting members, including multiple A-list actors, signed a letter rebuking it.

Mr Ballal is one of the co-directors of the documentary *No Other Land*, which won an Academy Award this month.

He said earlier this week that he was attacked by Israeli settlers before being detained by the Israeli military. He was

later released.

The academy initially responded to the incident on Wednesday, but it did not refer to Mr Ballal directly, which led to scrutiny from Hollywood.

Those who signed the rebuke included: Mark Ruffalo, Javier Bardem, Olivia Colman, Joaquin Phoenix, Emma Thompson, Penélope Cruz and Richard Gere.

Directors Jonathan Glazer and Ava DuVernay also signed it.

"It is indefensible for an organisation to recognise a film with an award in the first week of March, and then fail to defend its filmmakers just a few weeks later," the letter said.

It also noted how difficult it was to win an Oscar and the steep competition one faced to

be acknowledged as a winner of the most prestigious honour in film globally. It said the film won without the typical pricey campaigns most films pay to win such an award.

"The targeting of Ballal is not just an attack on one filmmaker - it is an attack on all those who dare to bear witness and tell inconvenient truths," the letter said.

The Academy released a statement on Friday that named the director and apologised.

"We regret that we failed to directly acknowledge Mr Ballal and the film by name," the statement reads.

"We sincerely apologize to Mr Ballal and all artists who felt unsupported by our previous statement and want to

make it clear that the Academy condemns violence of this kind anywhere in the world.

"We abhor the suppression of free speech under any circumstances."

Mr Ballal was freed one day after he was beaten by settlers and then taken by soldiers while in an ambulance, his co-director Yuval Abraham said earlier this week.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has denied that claim. They said three Palestinians and an Israeli had been detained on suspicion of "rock hurling" at security forces.

*No Other Land* follows the fight over Masafer Yatta, a community of about 20 villages, and the friendship between Adra and Abraham.

## Kink and LGBT dating apps exposed 1.5m private user images online

Researchers have discovered nearly 1.5 million pictures from specialist dating apps - many of which are explicit - being stored online without password protection, leaving them vulnerable to hackers and extortionists.

Anyone with the link was able to view the private photos from five platforms developed by M.A.D Mobile: kink sites BDSM People and Chica, and LGBT apps Pink, Brish and Translove.

These services are used by an estimated 800,000 to 900,000 people.

M.A.D Mobile was first warned about the security flaw on 20 January but didn't take action until the BBC emailed on Friday.

They have since fixed it but not said how it happened or why they failed to protect the sensitive images.

Ethical hacker Aras Nazarovas from Cybernews first alerted the firm about the security

hole after finding the location of the online storage used by the apps by analysing the code that powers the services.

He was shocked that he could access the unencrypted and unprotected photos without any password.

"The first app I investigated was BDSM People, and the first image in the folder was a naked man in his thirties," he said.

"As soon as I saw it I realised that this folder should not have been public."

The images were not limited to those from profiles, he said - they included pictures which had been sent privately in messages, and even some which had been removed by moderators.

### HACKING RISK

Mr Nazarovas said the discovery of unprotected sensitive material comes with a significant risk for the platforms' users.

Malicious hackers could have found the images and tortured individuals.

There is also a risk to those who live in countries hostile to LGBT people.

None of the text content of private messages was found to be stored in this way and the images are not labelled with user names or real names, which would make crafting targeted attacks at users more complex.

In an email M.A.D Mobile said it was grateful to the researcher for uncovering the vulnerability in the apps to prevent a data breach from occurring.

But there's no guarantee that Mr Nazarovas was the only hacker to have found the image stash.

"We appreciate their work and have already taken the necessary steps to address the issue," a M.A.D Mobile spokesperson said. "An additional update for the apps will be re-

leased on the App Store in the coming days."

The company did not respond to further questions about where the company is based and why it took months to address the issue after multiple warnings from researchers.

Usually security researchers wait until a vulnerability is fixed before publishing an online report, in case it puts users at further risk of attack.

But Mr Nazarovas and his team decided to raise the alarm on Thursday while the issue was still live as they were concerned the company was not doing anything to fix it.

"It's always a difficult decision but we think the public need to know to protect themselves," he said.

In 2015 malicious hackers stole a large amount of customer data about users of Ashley Madison, a dating website for married people who wish to cheat on their spouse.

# Sports

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

## Champion Executive Schools organises 3rd Easter Egg Olympics

EDWARD OSEGHE

The Champion Executive Schools celebrated its 2025 Easter Eggs Olympics competition on Thursday, March 27, in Benin City, the Edo State capital.

The inter-house sports aim to celebrate the School's Core Values of Team Spirit, Sharing, Caring, Openness, Self Respectability, and Honesty.

The event encapsulated competition in fun games like Fill in the Basket, Word Search, Eating Competition, Egg Race, Catching the Train, Relay Race, 100meter Race, Skipping, Thug of War, Aerobic Flying Ring, Egg Spin, Egg Short-Put, Continental Parade Award, Egg Roll Race, Easter Quiz, Egg Treasure Hunt, Table Tennis, Taste and Tell, and Basket Ball.

Three teams participated in the contests. The teams abbreviated as Asia, America and Africa respectively are Oceania - Asia (Blue

House), North and South America (Light Purple House) and Europe - Africa (Green House).

The history of the Easter Egg Olympics championship was remarkably traced to the Olympic history of 776 BC in Greece.

In her opening address, the Proprietress and Chairman Board of Schools, The Champion Executive Schools, as well as Children and Youth Development Expert and a seasoned Educationist, Mrs. Irene Kenneth-Okoeguale shared her vision of creating an environment that will foster quality education and improved learning in Edo State.

She stressed that The Champion Executive Schools' vision is to executively raise global champions in 21st-century learners.

"My driving force is to pull parents from far and near to bring their children to a place where they can get quality education.

"I wanted a school with a different vision. A system that could match the standards of other

schools outside Nigeria," she stated.

The Proprietress further emphasized the rising 'Japa' syndrome which she traced to a fundamental issue in the educational sector that demands a swift call to review Nigeria's educational curriculum.

The competitions kicked off with contestants taking part in various fun activities. Parents, pupils, and tutors actively participated in the events, bringing to life the spirit of sportsmanship.

North and South America (Light Purple House) secured first place with 6 Golds, 6 Silvers and 4 Bronzes, beating Europe and Africa (Green House) in a close tie. The latter came second with 6 Golds, 4 Silvers and 6 Bronzes.

Team Oceania & Asia (Blue House) finished third position with 4 Golds, 6 Silvers and 6 Bronzes.

Outstanding learners during the Easter Egg Olympics competition including Mercy Osadolor (Year 9 Learner)-



**2025 EASTER EGG OLYMPICS:**

L-R: Proprietress, The Champion Executive Schools, Mrs. Irene Kenneth-Okoeguale (4th) with medalists, tutors, parents and learners during the School's 3rd edition Easter Egg Olympics Day celebration on Thursday, March 27 in Benin City.

Africa House with 3 Golds and 2 Silvers; Osabouhien Osawonamen (Year 6 Learner) - Africa House, with 3 Golds, Osaze Akpata (Year

7 Learner)- America House, with 2 Golds, and Gwendolyn Aideyan (year 6 Learner)- America House, winner of the skipping competition.

Outstanding parents at the event are the Inter-Continental House Patrons namely Engr. Sunday Egbiki Ph.D, FNSE, North and South America House, Mr. Abu Abuduganiyu Oceania- Asia House, and Mr. Nafiu Adam, Europe- Africa House.

In his remarks, the Principal Coordinator of The Champion Executive Schools, Edwin Odigie, underscores the school's resilience and commitment to ensuring the event was successful.

He opined that the Easter Egg Olympics would help change the educational environment for learners in Edo State and influence positive

interests in learning. He added that the School's Goal is to provide all-round top-quality education for all learners at affordable rates, second to none in the nation.

"The Mission of The Champion Executive Schools is to provide a learning center where all-round top quality education can be provided through strategically tailored and robust Syllabi and other relevant educational activities that would meet the specific communities/global technology needs of this contemporary age.

"This inter-house sports competition will help publicize the school's impressive activities. This is a big achievement for The Champion Executive Schools in just 2 years and 6 months of its establishment," he said.

## Kenyan Federation opens investigation into suspected match-fixing in AFCON 2025 qualifiers

Eyebrows are being raised after Cameroon ran riot with goals against Kenya on home soil.

The Kenya Football Federation (KFF) has decided to investigate suspicions of match-fixing by the national team against Cameroon in the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations qualifiers

The KFF has confirmed that it is aware of videos circulating online involving Kenyan goalkeeper Patrick Matasi, raising suspicions of possible match manipulation.

This amateur video, filmed in secret and viewed by AFP, shows a man discussing with Matasi a plan to fix a match in exchange for money.

"The KFF defends the integrity of football and has launched an official investi-

gation, in collaboration with FIFA, CAF and other relevant authorities," the federation said in a statement.

"We reaffirm our policy of tolerance regarding match manipulation and we are committed to preserving the credibility

of our competition," she insisted.

The match in question was lost 4-1 by Kenya to Cameroon in Yaoundé last October, destroying the Harambee Stars' chances of qualifying for the finals in Morocco next December-January and leading to the

resignation of the then coach, Engin Firat.

Matasi has since been omitted from the squad by new coach Benni McCarthy for the 2026 World Cup qualifiers against Gambia and Gabon in Group F on March 20 and 23.



## Iheanacho ends 525-day goal drought as Middlesbrough fight back to beat Oxford

Kelechi Iheanacho finally got off the mark for Middlesbrough, scoring his first goal for the club in their crucial 2-1 victory over Oxford United at the Riverside Stadium.



The Nigerian striker, who joined Boro on loan from Sevilla, had endured a frustrating seven-game goal drought but played a decisive role in helping Michael Carrick's side

strengthen their playoff push.

Middlesbrough dominated possession but struggled to create clear-cut chances in the first half, with Oxford's resilient defense making life difficult.

The visitors took the lead in the 38th minute when Boro failed to clear Will Vaulks' long throw, allowing Michal Helik to lash a precise shot into the bottom-left corner.

Iheanacho almost responded instantly, latching onto Finn Azaz's clever through ball and unleashing a powerful effort that rattled the crossbar—agonizingly close to his long-awaited breakthrough.

Just three minutes into the sec-

ond half, Iheanacho finally got his moment. Samuel Iling-Junior sent a low ball across the six-yard box, and the Nigerian forward was perfectly placed to sweep it home, ending his goal drought and bringing Middlesbrough level.

It was his first goal in English football since 21 October 2023 (525 days)—one that not only lifted the crowd but reignited Boro's fight for a playoff spot.

With the equalizer fueling their momentum, Boro pushed for a winner. The breakthrough came in the 80th minute when Iling-Junior turned provider again, this time setting up Neto Borges, who produced a stunning backheel finish to complete the turnaround.

## SPL: Dessers celebrates 100th appearance for Rangers

Nigerian striker Cyril Dessers was overjoyed after making his 100th appearance for Rangers.

The Super Eagles forward marked the milestone in style, scoring a dramatic injury-time winner as the Gers edged Dundee United 4-3 on Saturday.

Reflecting on the special

moment, Dessers expressed his delight.

"It was very nice to score so late, but the 90 minutes before that were not that nice. In the end, if you can score like that in your 100th game, it is a very nice feeling," he told Rangers TV.

The goal was his 45th for the Scottish Premiership giants



# SPORTS

## Prestina Ochonogo earns more track, field prestige

### ● Marks Tarleton debut with records

EDWARD OSEGHE

Nigeria's long jumper, Prestina Ochonogor announced her arrival in the American Collegiate Games with an impressive jump of 6.64m on her debut performance for Tarleton State University.

Tasting her first competition Friday at the 2025 WAC Indoor Track and Field Championships Ochonogor who arrived in Texas USA, barely two weeks ago set two different records to make her presence felt.

Her fourth jump of 6.64m,

became Tarleton State University all-time records and also the sixth-best jump in the NCAA this season.

Each of her first five leaps were the top five in school history, breaking a 10-year-old school record set by Euphemia Eden in 2015. Ochonogor broke The Podium facility record set by 2020 Olympian Quanesha Burks in 2022 of 6.55 meters.

Ochonogor who will be 19 in July was discovered at the first edition of the Princess Mabel Madojiemu Schools Athletics Championships in 2023 and from there has gone

to represent Nigeria at the Africa Games in Accra where she won bronze with 6.79m. She, Ese Brume and Ruth Usoro became the first three Nigerians to be in the final of the Olympics long jump. She was placed 12th overall with 6.24m in her Olympic debut at the 2024 Games in Paris.

Three weeks ago, she competed at the SWAC Pre-NSF Athletics Meet held at the Obafemi Awolowo University Sports Complex, Ile-Ife and warmed her way to the top position with a personal best-setting 6.85m.



## Cradle Montessori Nursery, Primary School hosts 4th bi-annual inter-house sports

EDWARD OSEGHE AND CHIDINMA KALU

The Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium beamed alive with excitement on Friday, March 28, as Cradle Montessori Nursery and Primary School held its 4th bi-annual inter-house sports competition.

The celebration of athletic talents held at the main bowl of Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin City, brought together pupils, teachers, parents, and supporters under beautiful weather, which the school's proprietress, Pastor Mrs. Josephine Atibi-Brown described as a divine blessing.

In her remarks, the proprietress expressed her joy at the success of the inter-house sports competition.

"It's been a great day, a beautiful day. It's pretty much so. It's just not great, it's a happy day for us. Education is not just about academics, it's also about sports. From here, talents have been developed," she said.

While congratulating the

young athletes for their impressive performances, Atibi-Brown thanked the pupils, teachers, and parents for their unwavering support.

The competition featured five houses; Crystal House (White), Ruby House (Red), Emerald House (Green), Topaz House (Yellow), and Sapphire House (Blue) battling it out in a series of events.

The match pass results showcased tight competition, with Crystal House leading at 136 points, followed closely by Ruby House with 132, Emerald House with 126, Topaz House with 116, and Sapphire House with 108. The parents also joined in the fun, with match pass results seeing Crystal House parents securing the top spot at 48 points, followed by Ruby House (46), Emerald House (44), Topaz House (42), and Sapphire House (36).

Notably, the inter-house sports featured swimming, chess, and football among other games for weeks. The grand finale revealed the overall winners, with Emerald House emerging victorious

and securing first place with 211 points. Ruby House grabbed second position with 208 points, Crystal House claimed third place with 205 points, Topaz House finished fourth with 184 points, and Sapphire House rounded out the rankings in fifth with 178 points.

The event which was not just about competition, placed a premium on recognition, gifting the student with the highest number of medals with a cash prize of N100,000. The best-performing teams were also awarded generously, courtesy of the Chairman of the occasion, Honourable Augustine Osawaru. The first place team received N150,000, second place - N100,000, third place - N80,000, and both fourth and fifth places received N40,000 each. Medals were awarded to standout students, and cups were presented to the winning houses.

The event underscored Cradle Montessori Nursery and Primary School's commitment to holistic education, blending academics with sports to nurture well-rounded individuals.



## Usain Bolt stripped off medal amid claims of losing world record due to rule change

EDWARD OSEGHE

Sprinting legend Usain Bolt has already had one of his Olympic gold medals stripped amid claims he could lose his world record due to a potential rule change.

Jamaican great Bolt is one of the most successful athletes of all time, having won eight Olympic gold medals during his illustrious career.

The 38-year-old is also the current holder of the 100m and 200m world records.

Bolt first broke the world record when he set a time of 9.72 seconds at a Grand Prix meet in New York before running a time of 9.69 in the 100m final at the Beijing 2008 Olympics.

A year later, Bolt broke his own world record again when he clocked 9.58 at the 2009 World Athletics Championships in Berlin.

However, Bolt technically won nine gold medals but had one stripped from his records nearly a decade after the event.

One of the first golds he achieved at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing was taken off him because it came in the 4x100-metre relay and his teammate Nesta Carter was hit with a doping

sanction nine years later.

The team set a new world record of 37.10 seconds for the relay but all four participants were stripped of their medals.

Recently, it was claimed that Bolt's 100m world record could be beaten in the future if a new 'super track' is to be introduced.

Hong Kong-born sprinter turned entrepreneur, Alvina Chen, who has worked with a British-based team of experts, is the brains behind the world's first digital 'smart' track, which is expected to be "20 per cent faster than the Paris Olympic track".

Chen, who founded Feldspar, explained: "There is the poten-

tial for early nine seconds if not sub nine seconds for a human. We see how running shoes have evolved a lot, training methods and nutrition... but one thing that hasn't changed pretty much is the track surface - that hasn't changed for like 60 years, from the 1968 Olympics.

It has been suggested that 'positive talks' have been held with World Athletics with regard to ratifying Feldspar's "super track".

As the fastest man over both 100 and 200 metres, the controversial change could have a direct impact on Bolt if it increases the likelihood of somebody like Noah Lyles overtaking him.

