

Natasha's recall petition fails to meet requirements —INEC

The petition seeking the recall of Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, representing the Kogi Central Senatorial District, has failed to meet the constitutional requirements outlined in Section 69(a) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999.

The Independent National Electoral Commission made this announcement on Thursday

via its official X handle.

The statement was signed by the National Commissioner and Chairman, Information and Voter Education Committee, Sam Olumekun.

The commission said, "The petition for the recall of the Senator representing the Kogi Central Senatorial District has not met the requirement of Section 69(a) of the Constitution of the

Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended)."

In a detailed breakdown, INEC revealed that the petitioners failed to gather the requisite number of signatures/thumbprints, which must represent more than one-half of the registered voters in the Kogi Central Senatorial District.

"For emphasis, a petition for the recall of a Senator must com-

ply with the provision of Section 69(a) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) which requires the signatures of more than one-half of the registered voters in the constituency.

"The total number of registered voters in the Kogi Central Senatorial District is 474,554. More than one-half of this figure (i.e. 50%+1) is 237,277+1 which

is at least 237,278 voters," INEC said.

The total number of registered voters in the district is 474,554, meaning that at least 237,278 signatures were needed.

However, only 208,132 signatures were collected, falling short by 29,146.

"Across the 902 Polling

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AKPOTI-UDUAGHAN

The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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Global AI market to reach \$4.8trn by 2033, impact 40% of jobs —UN

—Pg 5

Triumphant return: Edo Gov, Deputy celebrate tribunal victory with royal blessing

RICHARD EWEKA

In a moment of historic affirmation, Governor Monday Okpehlo and Deputy Governor Dennis Idahosa returned triumphantly to Benin City on Thursday, greeted by an outpouring of support following the election petition tribunal's ruling in their favour.

The tribunal's unanimous decision cemented their victory in the September 21, 2024, Edo State governorship election, bringing clarity to the political landscape.

A motorcade led by top government officials, including Secretary to the State Government Musa Ikhilor, escorted the Governor and his deputy from the airport to the Palace of His Royal Majesty, Omo N'

Oba N' Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Ewuare II, the Oba of Benin.

Crowds lined the streets, celebrating the ruling that solidified Okpehlo's position as the duly elected leader of Edo State.

Upon arrival at the palace, Governor Okpehlo expressed gratitude to the Benin Monarch, acknowledging the Oba's prayers and unwavering support.

He also commended the tribunal judges for delivering a verdict based on the evidence presented, describing it as a victory for democracy and the people of Edo State.

"The tribunal has resolved all issues, reaffirming my election as governor. This decision reflects the will of the people, and I am here to express my appreciation to the Oba of Benin and the citizens of Edo for their trust and

support," Okpehlo stated.

He assured the people that his administration would maintain its focus on development and good governance, promising to uphold the tenets of democracy.

The Oba of Benin, visibly pleased with the outcome, broke with tradition by personally offering prayers for the governor rather than delegating the task to a palace chief.

In a rare and symbolic gesture, the Monarch left his throne to lift Okpehlo from his kneeling position, declaring that the ancestors had directed him to do so.

He described the governor as a son of the palace and expressed confidence in his leadership, noting that his administration had already demonstrated commitment to the state's progress.

"The tribunal's judgment is a victory for Edo people. The Governor has shown dedication to the State's development, and we will continue to offer our prayers and support," the Oba affirmed.

He further encouraged Okpehlo to remain steadfast in his duties, acknowledging the immense responsibility that comes with governance.



TRIBUNAL JUDGMENT:

Governor Okpehlo (left), and his deputy, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, on their way to the Palace of the Benin Monarch, His Royal Majesty, Ewuare II, the Oba of Benin after they returned to Benin City from Abuja where the Tribunal delivered judgment in their favour.

Rivers administrator cancels MDAs' procurement, tender processes

The Sole Administrator of Rivers State, Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ibas, has cancelled all pending procurement and tender processes carried out by Ministries, Departments, and Agencies in the state.

Ibas said the cancellation became necessary following the Supreme Court judgment and the absence of an Appropriation Law within the period.

This was contained in a Special Government House

Announcement issued in Port Harcourt on Thursday, signed by the Secretary to the Rivers State Government, Prof. Ibibia Worika.

The Sole Administrator directed all MDAs that carried out such tender processes for projects in their respective offices to refund such tender fees to the respective contractors immediately.

The statement read, "In adherence to the Supreme Court

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VISIT TO THE PALACE:

His Royal Majesty, Omo N' Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Ewuare II, Oba of Benin (left), praying for Edo State Governor, Monday Okpehlo, during his visit to the palace after the Election Petition Tribunal delivered judgment in his favour. PHOTO: CHARITY OZIGBOESERE

Edo tribunal judgment validates democracy, calls for unity —Ohonbamu —Pg 2

FRC, NADP decry shortage of actuarial professionals in Nigeria —Pg 4

World leaders criticise Trump tariffs as 'major blow' —Pg 8

Latest FIFA rankings: Nigeria climbs 43rd globally, falls to 6th in Africa —Pg 11

Edo tribunal judgment validates democracy, calls for unity —Ohonbamu

The ruling of the Edo State Governorship Election Petition Tribunal dismissing the petition filed by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and its candidate, Asue Ighodalo, is a victory for democracy and the rule of law, according to Edo State Commissioner for Information and Communications, Hon. Paul Ohonbamu.

Ohonbamu described the judgment as a testament to the resilience of Nigeria's legal system in ensuring that only the rightfully elected individuals assume positions of power.

He stressed that the decision reaffirmed the supremacy of the law, which remains the cornerstone of any democratic society. With this verdict, Senator Monday Okpebholo has been legally and rightfully affirmed as the governor of Edo State.

According to Ohonbamu, the tribunal's ruling provides an opportunity for the people of Edo, irrespective of their political affiliations, to come together and support the administration in building a state based on justice, peace, and the collective well-being of its citizens.

He acknowledged that Nigerians often view politics with suspicion due to the failures of past leaders.

However, he noted that a new era of political awareness is emerging, where both the electorate and public officials are becoming more accountable and dedicated to service.

Ohonbamu commended Governor Okpebholo's leadership, describing him as a man of integrity, vision, and purpose.

He noted that even before assuming office, Okpebholo demonstrated his commitment to public service by providing essential amenities such as water, schools, and roads for his people.

Unlike the previous administration, which left Edo residents in frustration and despair, Governor Okpebholo has wasted no time in addressing the state's pressing issues.

He recalled that during the past eight years, the previous government, led by Governor Godwin Obaseki, alienated Edo citizens by employing external contractors and consultants, sidelining local workers, and dismantling key legacies of former Governor Samuel Ogbemudia under the guise of reforms.

This approach, Ohonbamu argued, left the state in a state of hopelessness and stagnation.

However, within just five months in office, Governor

Okpebholo has begun reversing this decline, implementing transformative policies and projects that are already making an impact.

Ohonbamu highlighted the governor's swift response to Edo's infrastructure crisis, including the launch of the state's first flyover bridge at Ikpoba Hill

and the commencement of repairs on major roads such as the Benin-Ekpoma highway.

The commissioner praised the governor's unwavering commitment to transparency and accountability, stressing that under Okpebholo's leadership, no individual, regardless of status, will be above the law.

According to Ohonbamu, the people of Edo are beginning to trust the governor because his actions consistently reflect his promises.

He urged all Edo indigenes, both within the country and in the diaspora, to rally behind the governor and support his vision for the state's development.

Ohonbamu concluded by stating that with the tribunal's judgment now settled, Edo State must move forward.

He assured the people that Governor Okpebholo is not only determined to change the narrative of governance but is also in a hurry to build a better Edo for all.



CONFERMENT OF DOCTORATE DEGREES:

National Women Leader, All Progressives Congress (APC) and Chairman, Board of Federal Medical Center, Asaba, Dr Mary Alile, with Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Barr. Nyesom Wike, during the conferment of honorary Doctorate degrees on him by the University of Calabar.

Tinubu approves N20bn for NASRDA to implement space regulation

The National Space Research and Development Agency is set to implement its space regulation and licensing mandate with a N20bn take-off fund approved by President Bola Tinubu.

The Director-General of NASRDA, Dr Matthew Adepoju, said this on Thursday in

an interview with newsmen in Abuja.

Adepoju said the regulatory function of the agency, as encapsulated in the NASDRA Act, 2010, had remained unfulfilled since its establishment in 1999.

He spoke against the background of the NASRDA stakeholders' workshop on space reg-

ulation scheduled for April 8.

The NASDRA DG said that on assumption of office, he raised a memo to President Bola Tinubu on the need to enforce the regulatory functions of NASDRA.

According to him, this is in line with the provisions of Sections 6 and 9 of the laws

establishing it, adding that Tinubu eventually approved the take-off fund.

"When I raised that memo stating that our space can no longer be unregulated, Mr President graciously approved the take-off fund of N20 billion a few months ago.

"This is to enable us to com-

mence the space regulation and spectrum management in Nigeria.

"Although times and lots of activities happen that have security implications, but if we don't take charge of our space sector, it will continue to be misused," Adepoju said.

Adepoju said the agency had yet to access the N20 billion, adding that the release of funds was always subject to availability.

"Within the framework of what is possible for us to do now, we've set up the platform, and we are commencing our regulatory and licensing functions," he told newsmen.

He explained that the space sector had three segments: the upstream, midstream and downstream.

"We have the upstream, which is deep space, the midstream, which is in between the space objects, such as satellites and the planet Earth.

"We have the downstream, which has to do with ground stations, activities and people who are utilising space products and services.

"In between these three sectors, activities must be regulated; otherwise, Nigerians

will be short-changed.

"People have to be licensed and issued guidelines, the spectrum within Nigeria has to be monitored, and the agency has been granted this power since 2010, which has many benefits," he said.

Adepoju said the licensing platform was ready and open to both public and private sector operators in the space arena.

The licensing, he said, was available for people using and providing space products and services.

He emphasised the need for strict oversight of satellite image providers, geographic information system operators, and satellite-based telecommunication and broadcasting services.

He also said that geographical data intelligence could be exploited by non-state actors for illicit activities if unregulated.

The Director-General further told newsmen that the initiative would enhance national security, economic diversification and local content development.

He said it would also generate revenue from sub-sectors such as oil and gas, shipping and telecommunications relied on space products for their operations.

FG orders 'immediate reopening' of Independence Bridge in Lagos after hours of gridlock

The Federal Ministry of Works has ordered the immediate reopening of the Independence Bridge in Lagos after a large number of Lagosians were locked in hours-long gridlock on Wednesday.

In a statement by the Federal Controller of Works, Lagos, O.I Keshu, the Minister of Works, David Umahi, "directed the immediate reopening of the Independence Bridge in Lagos to vehicular traffic."

"This directive followed the earlier closure of the bridge for planned maintenance and rehabilitation works," the controller said.

"Efforts are currently ongoing to ensure palliative works are carried out on the already opened bridge to make it motorable."

The Ministry regretted the inconvenience caused to the

motoring public by the closure and appealed for their understanding and cooperation.

It said, "the necessary repair works on the bridge would be carried out at a later time."

"The Ministry hereby expresses regret for the inconvenience caused to the motoring public by the closure and appealed for their understanding and cooperation.

The Federal Ministry of Works clarified that the necessary repair works on the bridge would be carried out at a later time.

Meanwhile, Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State has apologised to Lagosians who were left stranded in the hours-long gridlock owing to the repair work going on at the Independence Bridge.

The closure of the Independence Bridge for repair left

thousands stranded in traffic between Wednesday evening and early Thursday.

Videos and photos of stranded commuters had gone viral on social media following the traffic and prompting a backlash.

However, speaking to reporters on Thursday during a visit to the bridge to inspect the level of work, Sanwo-Olu apologised for the traffic situation, saying that the renovation work was necessary to prevent an imminent disaster.

The governor stated that more should have been done in communicating with residents of the state about the development.

He said, "First, I think what is appropriate is really to first tender apologies to all our citizens and to all Lagosians for the very, very difficult, erroneous practices that we experienced in

the last 24 hours in the city and within the island of Lagos.

"I think this apology is important so that we can take full responsibility as a government, both at the national and sub-national levels, for just taking our people through an unfortunate incident. It was all well intended, it was all for good causes, and it was all for us to avert a future disaster that was waiting to happen."

Sanwo-Olu, acknowledged the difficulties commuters faced, but said the closure was for the greater good of residents of the nation's commercial heartbeat.

"It was all for a good cause, it is all to avert future disasters waiting to happen. You know how life is — there is never a best time for you to do all you want to do, there will always be challenges even if you think it is the best time," Sanwo-Olu said.

Natasha's recall petition fails to meet requirements —INEC

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Units in 57 Registration Areas and five Local Government Areas that make up the Senatorial District, the commission ascertained 208,132 signatures/thumbprints from the submission made by the petitioners.

"This translates to 43.86% of the registered voters which falls short of the constitutional

requirement by 29,146 signatories.

"Consequently, the petition has not met the requirement of Section 69(a) of the Constitution. Therefore, no further action shall be taken on the recall of the Senator," INEC declared.

In line with the legal requirements, INEC also issued a Public Notice regarding the outcome of the review.

The notice, alongside a summary of the signatures/thumbprints disaggregated by Local Government Areas, is available for public viewing on INEC's official website and social media platforms.

In recent weeks, Akpoti-Uduaghan and Senate President Godswill Akpabio have been at the centre of a political crisis following her accusation of sexual

harassment against him.

Akpoti-Uduaghan had petitioned the Senate over the alleged misconduct, but on March 6, the Ethics Committee dismissed her claims and suspended her for six months without pay.

The controversy escalated last week when some of her constituents submitted a recall petition to INEC, seeking to remove her from office.

Rivers administrator cancels MDAs'...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

judgment upholding the Appeal Court ruling in Suit No. CA/ABJ/CV/133/2024 and in the absence of an Appropriation Law, the Sole Administrator, Vice Admiral (rtd) Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas, wishes to notify the general public that all procurement and tender processes that were carried out by Ministries, Departments and Agencies during the period

are hereby cancelled.

"Accordingly, all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies that carried out such tender processes for projects in their respective offices are, by this special announcement, mandated to refund such tender fees to the respective contractors immediately, pending the approval of a spending plan by the state, which shall be notified in due course."

Uromi Killings: Group commends Okpebholo, Yusuf for easing tensions, calls for justice

HAMEED BRAIMAH

Al-Bayan Interfaith Centre has urged the immediate prosecution of those responsible for the killing of Muslim travelers en route to Kano in Uromi, Edo State.

The call for justice follows reports of multiple arrests in connection with the gruesome act, which has sparked national outrage.

Commending Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo

and his Kano State counterpart, Abba Yusuf, for their swift intervention in calming tensions, the group emphasized the need for continued efforts to foster unity and eliminate mutual suspicions among Nigerians.

In a statement signed by its Executive Director, Imam Muhammad Jibrin Ndagi, Al-Bayan urged the governors to collaborate with their colleagues to strengthen national cohesion.

"We are deeply saddened

and outraged by this brutal act of violence, which is a clear violation of human rights and the fundamental values of compassion, tolerance, and respect for human life.

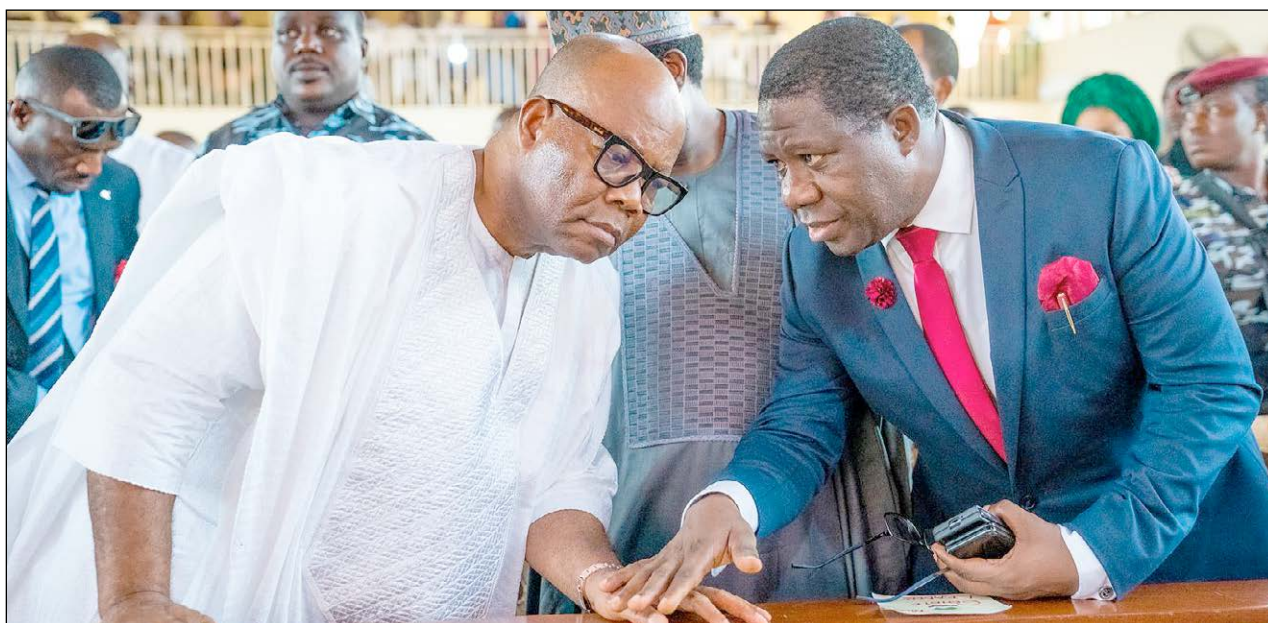
"Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the victims, and we pray that Allah grants them strength, comfort, and justice," the statement read.

Al-Bayan called on authorities to conduct a thorough investigation, ensure the per-

petrators face justice, and implement measures to prevent such senseless violence in the future.

The group also appealed to all Nigerians to condemn acts of terrorism, promote peace, and uphold mutual respect among all communities.

Pledging its commitment to enhancing security and peaceful coexistence, Al-Bayan reaffirmed its dedication to collaborating with stakeholders to foster safety and harmony nationwide.



HONOURARY DOCTORATE DEGREE:

L-R: Senate President, Senator Godwill Akpabio (left), and Senate Leader, Senator Opeyemi Bamidele, during the ceremony for the award of honorary Doctorate Degree of Law by the Ekiti State University (EKSU) on Senate Bamidele, in Ado Ekiti.

PHOTO: OMOYE AMINU

UNIBEN to plant 10,000 trees to combat climate change

The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin, Prof. Edoaba Omoregie has said that the institution would soon launch a campaign to plant 10,000 trees to mitigate the effects of climate change.

He disclosed this when the leadership of the Edo State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) paid him a courtesy visit in his office at the university in Benin.

Omoregie said the tree-planting initiative is part of his five-point agenda, which he outlined as key objectives to achieve for the institution.

"Since I assumed office, I have emphasised that the University of Benin must progress. The reason for my appointment is to make that possible.

"The university has existed

for 55 years and remains the only institution in the whole of Edo State that has endured for over five decades.

"Look around, whether in business or education, few institutions can trace their history back 55 years. That speaks to the importance of this university, not just to the government but to all stakeholders, including your council.

"I have a five-point agenda, carefully aligned with the university's strategic vision.

"We aim to improve the university's infrastructure and enhance environmental sustainability. We must continuously refine our surroundings to support academic activities and recreational purposes.

"As a university, we should be a model. That is why, upon

entering the campus, one immediately senses a distinct community, separate from the larger environment we all know.

"While our environmental outlook is already commendable, we are not satisfied. We seek further regeneration to enhance our ecological footprint.

"To this end, we will soon commence a campaign to plant 10,000 trees on campus. This initiative will extend beyond the university to the state at large, including Benin City.

"From Ugbowo to other parts of Benin, there are scarcely any trees, which is deeply concerning given that we are in a rainforest zone.

"Tree planting is not just for aesthetics; it serves environmental conservation purposes.

It impacts health, climate change mitigation, and ecological remediation. We take this campaign very seriously.

"Recall that upon assuming office, my first task as Vice-Chancellor was to plant trees," Omoregie said.

The Vice-Chancellor further assured the NUJ of the institution's willingness to collaborate in fostering a better and more vibrant society.

Earlier, NUJ chairman Dr Festus Alenkhe congratulated the Vice-Chancellor on his appointment, noting that since taking office, the institution had made significant strides in academic excellence.

Alenkhe assured Omoregie of the union's unwavering support in delivering on his five-point agenda for the university.

Oborewori aims to make Delta Nigeria's largest economy, says Oghenesivbe

AJUWA VICTOR

Dr. Fred Latimore Oghenesivbe, the Director General of the Delta State Orientation and Communications Bureau, has reiterated Governor Sheriff Oborewori's commitment to making Delta State Nigeria's largest economy within the administration's tenure.

Speaking during a live broadcast on Voice of Delta 97.7 FM, Oghenesivbe attributed the state's economic progress to the governor's strategic implementation of the MORE Agenda.

He highlighted the administration's prudent management of resources, transparency, and oversight as key factors driving sustainable economic growth.

Oghenesivbe commended

Governor Oborewori for appointing seasoned technocrats and financial experts to key positions, ensuring effective policy implementation.

"Under the governor's leadership, Delta State has witnessed significant advancements, with agricultural growth exceeding 13% in 18 months and infrastructure development creating thousands of jobs.

Oghenesivbe stated that Delta is now the fourth-largest economy in Nigeria, emphasizing that the best is yet to come.

"With Governor Oborewori's visionary leadership, we are set to witness further improvements in social welfare, financial grants for small businesses, and enhanced services across all sectors. The future of Delta is brighter than ever," he added.

Pensioners lament non-implementation of N32,000 hike

The Nigeria Union of Pensioners, South-West Zone on Thursday lamented the failure of the government to implement the N32,000 pension increase across board for the pensioners as directed by President Bola Tinubu last year September.

President Tinubu was said to have given the directive at the commencement of payment of 70,000 new minimum wage to also ensure that the pensioners were not excluded.

The Public Relations Officer of the union, Dr Olusegun Abatan raised this concern while addressing the press during the zonal meeting of the pensioners held in Abeokuta on Thursday.

Abatan said that among the six South-West states, only Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State has implemented a part of this pension increase, paying N17,500.

He explained that Makinde has also implemented the 33 per cent pension increase of 2020, the 20 per cent pension increase of January 2024, and raised the minimum paid for pensioners in the state to N25000.

Abatan said the Oyo government has equally completed plans to be paying N2bn every month for payment of pensions and gratuities adding that this kind gesture has brought lots of reliefs for the pensioners in the state.

The pensioners spokesman

has therefore called on other state governments to follow the good example of Gov Makinde and prioritise making life more rewarding for the pensioners in their old age.

He disclosed that "The are two circulars from the office of income and wages in 2024, the first one being a 20 per cent pension increase from January 2024, which has not been done by virtually all the state governments except Oyo State.

"In September 2024, the Commander-in-Chief of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, President Bola Tinubu, also gave a directive for the pensioners to have N32,000 added across board to their pensions based on the new minimum wage of N70,000.

"I, however regret to tell you that many of our States in the Southwestern have not done this. At the same time we want to thank the Governor of Oyo State for raising the minimum wage for pensioners to 25,000 and for factoring other pension increases such as the 33%, consequential adjustments of 2019, 20% of January 2024 pension increase, though he did not pay N32,000 as directed by Mr. President but he gave us N17500.

"The pensioners in Oyo State have had a serious leap from their pensions that I make bold to say that the Oyo State pensioners are the highest paid in the federation aside from the federal pensioners. We thank him for this.

Barau assures justice for Uromi killings, donates N16m to families of victims

CAROLINE AMEH

The Deputy Senate President, Senator Barau Jibrin, has reassured the families of the 16 victims killed in Uromi, Edo State, that justice will be served.

During a visit to Bunkure Local Government Area in Kano State, Barau sympathized with the bereaved families and pledged to push for accounta-

bility.

Speaking at the At-Taqwa Mosque in Sabon Fegi, Bunkure, the senator, accompanied by Minister of State for Housing and Urban Development, Hon. Yusuf Abdullahi Ata, and NWDC Managing Director, Professor Abdullahi Shehu Ma'aji, confirmed that security agencies had arrested 16 suspects linked to the attack.

He emphasized that author-

ities were intensifying efforts to bring all perpetrators to justice.

To support the grieving families, Senator Barau announced a donation of N1 million to each of the 16 affected families.

He also committed to sponsoring a motion in the Senate to address the killings and prevent a reoccurrence.

"I am here to sympathize with you over this tragic in-

cident. May Allah grant the departed Jannatul Firdaus and heal the wounded. The government is committed to ensuring that those responsible face the full weight of the law," he stated.

Responding, the Chief Imam of the area, Sheikh Zainul Abidina Auwal, thanked Senator Barau for his support and commended his dedication to justice and national unity.

PUBLIC NOTICE APOLOGY

I, ISRAEL IYIEWARE, sincerely apologise to the Association of Resident Doctors, University of Benin Teaching Hospital for assaulting three (3) doctors who were trying to resuscitate my late mother on March 31, 2025. I promise to be of good behavior and it won't happen again.

SIGNED: ISRAEL IYIEWARE

NEWS

FRC, NADP decry shortage of actuarial professionals in Nigeria

The Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria and the Nigerian Actuarial Development Programme have raised concerns over the severe shortage of actuarial professionals in the country, warning that the gap poses risks to credible financial reporting in key sectors such as insurance, banking, and healthcare.

Speaking at an event on Thursday themed “Building Capacity for Actuarial Excellence in Nigeria” at the University of Benin, the Executive Secretary/CEO of FRC, Dr. Rabiun Olowo, disclosed that Nigeria has only 28 qualified actuaries, a number he described as grossly inadequate for a nation of its size.

He noted that FRC and NADP were intensifying advocacy efforts at the grassroots

level, including university outreach, to encourage more students to take up the profession.

“To bridge the gap, we have put in place several incentives, such as covering tuition and examination fees, to support students in passing their actuarial professional exams,” Olowo stated.

He also highlighted ongoing initiatives aimed at strengthening the profession, including capacity-building programs, the development of actuarial practice regulations, and collaborations on mortality and mobility tables for Nigeria.

Professor Ismaila Adeleke of the University of Lagos, while speaking on the topic ‘Who Are Actuaries?’ explained that actuarial science applies mathematical and statistical models to assess financial risks, particularly in the

insurance and finance industries.

“Actuaries analyze data, predict future events, and assess financial impacts. Their work is crucial in setting insurance premiums, managing reserves, and evaluating the financial stability

of firms. They also contribute significantly to investment risk assessment and healthcare cost predictions,” Adeleke said.

He lamented that out of Nigeria’s 223 universities, only eight offer actuarial science as

a course, and despite having over 50,000 accountants in the country, none is an actuarial professional.

Other speakers at the event included Kingsley Miller, immediate past president of the

Nigeria Actuarial Association, who discussed career pathways in the field, and Olasunkanmi Ayinde, Head of the Directorate of Actuarial Standards at FRC, who spoke on the objectives and opportunities of the NADP.

Uromi killings: Ojuromi of Uromi condemns jungle justice, calls for urgent security reinforcement

ESE AMADASUN

UROMI

His Royal Majesty, the Ojuromi of Uromi, has strongly condemned the recent killing of travelers in his domain, describing the act as jungle justice and expressing deep sorrow over the tragedy.

The monarch extended heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims, the people of Kano, and all affected communities, emphasizing the urgent need for justice and comprehensive security intervention.

Addressing the media, the Ojuromi acknowledged the growing insecurity in Uromi and Esanland, marked by kidnappings and extrajudicial killings.

He stressed that while the recent incident is deplorable, it highlights a long-standing security crisis that has been continuously ignored by both state and federal authorities.

“For years, our people have cried out for help, urging authorities to address the worsening security situation in Uromi and Esanland. This tragic event underscores the immediate need for a reinforced security framework,” he stated.

Uromi, once a modest town, has rapidly grown into a thriving city, attracting a larger population and increasing security challenges.

The Ojuromi pointed out that the Uromi Divisional Police Station is inadequate to handle the escalating threats and called for the urgent establishment of a Rapid Response Team, paramilitary units, and a military forward base to enhance security in the region.

The monarch expressed grave concern over the failure of security agencies to intervene during the prolonged attack. “The fact that such a barbaric act lasted for hours without any police response is deeply troubling. It highlights the glaring lapses in security and the urgent need for reinforcements,” he said.

Edo Police Command gets Agbonika as CP

The Police Service Commission has approved the appointment of Monday Agbonika of the Police Mounted Troop as the new Commissioner of Police, Edo State command. He takes over from CP Betty Eneken Isokpan Otimenyin.

The new Edo State Commissioner of Police was at the Police Service Commission for a posting interview presided over by Chairman of the Commission, DIG Hashimu Argungu (rtd) mni and supported by Justice Paul Adamu Galumje, retired Justice of the Supreme Court who is representing the Judiciary in the Commission and Chief Onyemuche Nnamani, Secretary to the Commission.

The leadership of the Commission charged the new Commissioner to be proactive and to



AGBONIKA

settle down quickly so as to reduce the crime rate in the state.

He was also advised to look into the issues surrounding the recent killings in the state and was reminded that what he does or not with the arrested suspects from the killings will determine his success or not in the state.



ELECTION PETITION TRIBUNAL:

Crowd of supporters who came to welcome Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpephola and his deputy, Hon Dennis Idahosa from Abuja on Thursday after the Election Petition Tribunal delivered judgment in their favour.

Delta highlights ongoing flood control measures amid heavy downpour

Vehicular movements on Wednesday evening, were grounded at the Agbor, Ika South Local Government Area of Delta State, following several hours of heavy downpour.

Vehicles were trapped, and some motorcycles swept away as they battled to negotiate their way out of the flooded road.

Though, no casualty was recorded in the natural disaster but property worth millions of naira were destroyed.

The source speaking in the viral video said some motorcycles were carried away while property, including furniture, were destroyed.

The people recommended that there should be storm drainage on both sides along the Lagos-Asaba expressway.

Reacting to the viral video on Thursday, governor Sheriff Oborevwo of Delta State urged residents, stakeholders, and organisations to take collective and proactive measures in mitigating the impact of natural disasters.

Oborevwo, who spoke through the State Commissioner for Works (Rural Roads) and Public Information, Mr. Charles Anigwu, emphasized the need for

community engagement, preparedness, and sustainable practices to safeguard lives and property.

He said, “Yesterday most of you saw and witnessed the very heavy downpour across the state and then the havoc it wreaked on some properties particularly vehicles and motorcycles in the Ika axis.

“I am sure it happened in other places, but it wasn’t that devastating, and we needed to address it for individuals to know what is expected of them, even as governments have continued to take actions to mitigate such occurrences.

“We are also happy that in Asaba the rain was also quite heavy but we did not see that level of disturbance. We have before now as a government been able to pay good attention to flood control measures.

“I am happy that all of you are very much aware of it that for the majority of the roads we have constructed we ensure that we have dual drains.

“In some instances, we have proceeded to build storm drainage. You are also very privy to the fact that this administration has also

continued along that trajectory.

“Not long ago you accompanied the governor to inspect the storm drainage across the Ogbegonogo market which is one of the eight phases of the outcome of a study that was carried out by the previous administration.

“Some of you also accompanied us to the area behind the Asaba Specialist Hospital, where

you also saw a huge drainage and another storm drainage.

“You are aware of the effort to complete the storm drainage in the Owa-Alero axis and the storm drainage we are building in the Osubi, Okuokoko, Ugo-lo-Okpe, and the Warri axis, in addition to the many side drains that we are building along the roads that we are constructing.

NAF appoints new spokesman

The Nigerian Air Force has announced the appointment of Air Commodore Ehimen Ejodame as its new spokesperson.

He takes over from Air Vice Marshal Olusola Akinboyewa, who previously held the position.

A statement on Thursday by the Deputy Director of Public Relations and Information, Group Captain Kabir Ali, stated that Ejodame is a seasoned officer with vast experience in logistics, strategic planning, and defence management.

The statement added, “Ejodame is a member of the 45th Regular Course of the Nigerian Defence Academy.

“His appointment is expected to further enhance NAF’s public relations and strategic communication efforts, reinforcing the service’s commitment to professionalism and transparency.”



EJODAME

JAMB releases 2025 mock UTME notification slip for printing

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board has announced that the 2025 UTME Mock Notification Slip is now available for printing for candidates who registered for the optional test.

JAMB’s Public Communication Adviser, Dr. Fabian Ben-

jamin, said in a statement on Thursday that the slip contains key details such as the examination date, venue, time, and other essential instructions.

Candidates can print their slips by visiting www.jamb.gov.ng, clicking on “2025 Mock

Slip Printing,” entering their registration number, and selecting “Print Examination Slip.”

Benjamin confirmed that the mock examination will take place on Thursday, April 10, 2025, while the main UTME is scheduled to begin on Friday,

April 25, 2025.

He urged candidates to print their slips early and visit their assigned centres ahead of time to avoid last-minute challenges.

JAMB also wished all candidates success in their preparations.

DHQ denies Niger's withdrawal for MNJTF, vows to capture terrorist kingpin, Turji

The Defence Headquarters has dismissed reports that Niger Republic has withdrawn from the Multinational Joint Task Force, stating that such a move would have serious security implications.

Speaking at a press briefing in Abuja on Thursday, the Director of Defence Media Operations, Maj. Gen. Markus Kangye, clarified that the MNJTF remains a critical regional security collaboration and that efforts must be made to prevent any member state from leaving.

He said, "When you hear 'dem say,' it means the information lacks credibility. I think this

area has been a subject of discourse for the past few months, especially when some members of ECOWAS decided to form an alliance and attempted to exit ECOWAS.

"But, you know, the Multinational Joint Task Force was established by the Lake Chad Commission countries to address their common security concerns.

"Nigeria has been making significant efforts to ensure the sustainability of this task force. However, if for any reason a member decides to pull out, the implications will be substantial. The synergy we are supposed to

enjoy may no longer be there.

"It is not in our interest for any country to leave because whatever affects them also affects us. If a country withdraws, it creates a gap in effort and reduces the strength of the contingent from that country.

"Therefore, efforts must be made to prevent such a situation from happening. Do you understand? We will continue to examine the situation, and as we always do, we will provide further briefings when necessary."

Kangye also assured the public that security forces remain focused on apprehending notorious terrorist leader Bello Turji.

He dismissed claims that the military had downscaled operations against herdsmen, terrorists, and cattle rustlers, among others.

"Then on the aspect of whether the troops are not, or they have downscaled their operations against Cattle rustlers and some terrorists.

"No. As I read out, troops intercepted some trucks loaded with cows, and they recovered them, and they are still on the hunt for high-value terrorists. I have also read out the report for the quarter, some high-value terrorists that were eliminated during the quarter," Kangye stated.



A COURTESY:

Akwa Ibom State Governor, Umo Eno (right), and is open for business, and Chief Sales and Distribution Officer, MTN Nigeria, Mr. Sina Adegoke, during a courtesy visit by MTN management team led by Adegoke to Umo, in Uyo.

Ex-YCE scribe urges govts to tackle poverty, money politics

Elder statesman and former Secretary General of the Yoruba Council of Elders, Dr Kunle Olajide, has charged the federal and state governments to be deliberate in efforts to tackle poverty plaguing the majority of Nigerians.

Olajide, who said money-bag politics, vote selling and vote-buying in the country's political arena were functions of the deep-seated poverty in the country, said urgent steps should be taken to let citizens live above the poverty line and dissuade them from selling their votes.

The octogenarian spoke in Ado Ekiti on Thursday during a homecoming reception in his honour organised by the Ekiti

Council of Elders, where he was inaugurated into the Blue Cap category, a special privilege for elders aged 80 years and above.

President of the Council, Prof. Joseph Oluwasanmi, had said that the honour for the former YCE scribe was "to appreciate Dr Olajide, an exemplary and valuable son of Ekiti whose tenure as Secretary of YCE brought candour and life to the Council, which recorded immense success during the period"

Oluwasanmi, who said it was good to now have Olajide around in Ekiti, described his homecoming as "a good development to contribute his quota to the development of Ekiti."

The former YCE scribe, who

hailed the Ekiti Council of Elders for the honour, said it was indicative of the essence of YCE objectives, saying, "What is happening here today gives credence to the achievements of the YCE."

The elder statesman said something must be done about the monetisation of the country's political process, adding that the issue of poverty must be addressed by the state governors and local government chairmen, being the arms closer to the people.

He said, "Poverty is the issue. People are hungry, and they want food, then you come and campaign and somebody comes with money. The

hungry man will jump at the money and vote. It is a poverty matter; let us pray for the eradication of poverty in Nigeria.

"The governments, especially the state and the local governments, have the responsibility; they are nearest to the people, they know what they can do with the allocations that come to them in the interest of the people.

"They should go beyond amassing wealth to contest for the next election. They must make people the centerpiece of whatever they are thinking about. People should appreciate the value of their votes, and they should know what they are throwing away with the money they collect to vote."

N500,000 bill: Lagos hospital silent after death of pregnant woman

A private hospital (name withheld) in the Ibeju/Lekki area of Lagos State, where a doctor allegedly refused to treat a pregnant woman, known as Kemi, due to her husband's inability to make an upfront payment of N500,000, has remained silent over the incident.

The tragic incident, in which the pregnant woman reportedly died, was first shared by her husband, Akinbobola Folajimi, in February.

However, it resurfaced on social media on Tuesday, sparking widespread outrage.

According to reports, the hospital, located in the Lekki area of the state, allegedly refused to provide emergency care without the deposit.

In a viral video, Kemi, visibly weak, could be seen inside a car with her husband, who was desperately trying to keep her conscious.

Calling her name repeatedly, he pleaded, "My goodness, Kemi, look at me. Stay strong; look at me. Think about your kids, please. You need to be very strong for me."

Folajimi later revealed in a post that after being turned away by the private hospital, they were referred to a general hospital in Epe, where the wife died midway.

Expressing his grief, he wrote, "The doctor told me to deposit N500,000, and I begged him to start doing whatever was needed to save my wife while I ran around for the money, but they drove us out like they didn't care.

"Unfortunately, they blindly rejected us and asked me to take her to the General Hospital at Epe, even though the doctor knew that Epe from Lakwe is way too far for her condition. Before we rushed her to Epe, she was gone."

When newsmen visited the hospital's website on Wednesday, multiple calls to the phone number listed in the contact details went unanswered.

The alleged hospital's actions

have sparked widespread condemnation online, with many Nigerians demanding sanctions.

A lecturer, Dr Femi Yekinni, lamented in a post he shared on X.com, saying, "This is just so sad and heartbreaking. Save a life first, then do whatever you can to recover the money later.

"This is the acceptable standard all over the world. The National Assembly needs to make a law to address critical issues such as this."

Another social media user, Anthony Kene, pointed out, "The name of the hospital indicates it's affiliated with a religious body. I think it should be enshrined in our laws that hospitals must not reject anyone on monetary grounds."

Similarly, Damilola Olarewaju questioned the logic behind such policies, stating, "How does a dead person pay N500,000? Prioritising money over life makes no sense.

"Hospitals should treat first and sort payments later. What's the point of a deposit if the patient doesn't even survive to pay?"

However, some Nigerians criticised the husband's decision to rush the wife to another private clinic.

Some questioned why he did not take his wife to a public hospital earlier, where costs could have been lower. Others also took issue with him for making a video while his wife was in distress.

One user, @lordVolder2, remarked, "But why make a video in such a critical situation? May God have mercy upon us and Nigeria. I pray God consoles the husband."

Another user, @Blueplug11, condemned the act, saying, "During an emergency, every second counts. Devoting part of the scarce available time to making a video recording for whatever reason is reckless.

"Too much of this occurs these days, where victims are ignored and live videos are streamed just for clout chasing."

Global AI market to reach \$4.8trn by 2033, impact 40% of jobs —UN

The global artificial intelligence market is projected to reach \$4.8 trillion — roughly the size of Germany's economy — by 2033, the UN said Thursday, warning nearly half of jobs worldwide could be affected.

While AI is transforming economies and creating vast opportunities, the technology also risks deepening existing inequalities, the UN trade and

development agency UNCTAD warned in a report.

In particular, the report cautioned that "AI could impact 40 percent of jobs worldwide, offering productivity gains but also raising concerns about automation and job displacement."

While previous waves of technology mainly impacted blue-collar jobs, UNCTAD highlighted that knowledge-intensive sectors would

be left most exposed by AI.

This means advanced economies will surely be hardest hit, it said, adding, though, that these economies were better positioned to harness the benefits of AI than developing economies.

"The benefits of AI-driven automation often favour capital over labour, which could widen inequality and reduce the competitive advantage of

low-cost labour in developing economies," UNCTAD said.

In a statement, the agency chief Rebeca Grynspan underlined the importance of ensuring people are at the centre of AI development, urging stronger international cooperation to "shift the focus from technology to people, enabling countries to co-create a global artificial intelligence framework."



PREGNANT WOMAN WHO DIED AFTER ALLEGEDLY BEING DENIED TREATMENT OVER ₦500,000 DEPOSIT

Friday Sermon

End of Ramadan, the beginning of enduring transformation

Assalamu alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh.

Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar.

Dear brothers and sisters in Islam, As Muslims, with the echoes of Ramadan's spiritual symphony still resonating in our hearts, we are faced with a crucial juncture. The blessed month, a period of profound spiritual renewal, has concluded. Yet, its departure should not signify the end of our journey towards righteousness. Rather, it should mark the beginning of a sustained effort to embody the virtues we cultivated during this sacred time.

Ramadan was not merely a month of abstaining from food and drink. It was a comprehensive training programme, designed to elevate our souls, purify our hearts, and strengthen our connection with Allah (SWT). It was a time of introspection, self-discipline, and heightened spiritual awareness.

The nights were alive with the recitation of the Qur'an, the supplications of the faithful and the profound experience of Tarawih prayers. The days were filled with fasting, charity, and a renewed focus on good deeds.

However, the true measure of our Ramadan lies not in the intensity of our worship during the month itself, but in the lasting impact it has on our lives after its departure.

The challenge before us is to ensure that the spiritual gains we achieved during Ramadan are not ephemeral, but rather become ingrained in our character, shaping our actions and guiding our decisions throughout the year.

Allah (SWT) states in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:183):

"O you who have believed, fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you that you may become righteous."

The word "taqwa" (righteousness) in this verse is paramount. It encapsulates the essence of Ramadan's objective. Taqwa is not simply fear of Allah (SWT), but a deep sense of awareness, a consciousness of His presence in every aspect of our lives. It is the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, to choose the path of obedience, and to avoid that which displeases Him.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, as narrated in Sahih Muslim:

"Whoever fasts Ramadan out of faith and in the hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven."

This forgiveness is a profound blessing, a clean slate, a chance to start anew. But forgiveness is not an invitation to complacency. It is a catalyst for change, a motivation to strive for continuous improvement.

THE PERIL OF EPHEMERAL PIETY

Consider the analogy of students



graduating from a prestigious university. They have spent years acquiring knowledge and skills, but if they fail to apply these learnings in their professional lives, their education becomes a mere formality. Similarly, if we fail to translate the lessons of Ramadan into practical actions, our fast becomes an empty ritual, a fleeting experience with no lasting impact.

We must guard against the tendency to revert to our old habits, to return to the patterns of behaviour we sought to break during Ramadan. This is the danger of ephemeral piety, a transient state of righteousness that fades with the passing of the month.

THE ENDURING LESSONS OF RAMADAN

To avoid this pitfall, we must consciously strive to internalize the enduring lessons of Ramadan:

CULTIVATING TAQWA (GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS):

Ramadan taught us to be mindful of Allah (SWT) in every action, word, and thought. We were aware that He was watching us, even in our solitude. This awareness should become a constant companion, guiding our decisions and shaping our character. We should strive to maintain this constant awareness of Allah's presence in our lives. We should ask ourselves: Would I do this if Allah (SWT) was visibly present?

DEVELOPING PATIENCE AND SELF-DISCIPLINE:

Ramadan instilled in us the ability to control our desires, to be patient in the face of hunger, thirst, and other temptations. This self-discipline should extend to all aspects of our lives, enabling us to resist the allure of sin and to persevere in the face of adversity. This patience should be applied in dealing with people, in dealing with hardships, and in following Allah's commands.

"Whoever prays the night of Laylatal-Qadr out of faith and in the hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven." This night of power, and all of Ramadan, was a gift to us, a chance to purify our souls and strengthen our connection with Allah (SWT). If we treat it as a past memory, a fleeting experience, then we have failed to truly benefit from its blessings.

EMBRACING GENEROSITY AND COMPASSION:

We experienced the joy of giving in charity, feeding the hungry, and showing kindness to those in need. These acts of compassion should become a permanent part of our character, reflecting the mercy and compassion of Allah (SWT). We should continue to be generous with our time, our wealth, and our knowledge. We should be mindful of the needs of the less fortunate and strive to alleviate their suffering.

STRENGTHENING OUR CONNECTION WITH THE QUR'AN:

Ramadan provided us with an opportunity to deepen our relationship with the Qur'an, through recitation, reflection, and contemplation. This connection should remain strong, guiding us in our daily lives and illuminating our path. We should make it a habit to recite the Qur'an daily, to reflect on its meanings, and to apply its teachings in our lives. We should strive to understand the message of the Qur'an and to live by its principles.

MAINTAINING INCREASED PRAYER AND REMEMBRANCE OF ALLAH (SWT):

We spent our nights in prayer, seeking forgiveness and closeness to Allah (SWT). This habit of prayer and remembrance should continue, keeping our hearts alive and our souls nourished. We should not abandon the night prayers and the remembrance of Allah (SWT) that we cultivated during Ramadan. We should strive to maintain a consistent connection with Allah (SWT) through prayer, supplication, and remembrance.

BUILDING STRONGER FAMILY AND COMMUNITY BONDS:

Ramadan often brings families and communities together. This should be a continued practice. The act of sharing iftar, praying together, and engaging in community activities should be maintained. The strengthening of these bonds is a key part of our faith.

HUMILITY AND GRATITUDE:

Ramadan is a time of increased humility, where we realize our dependence on Allah (SWT). Gratitude should also be a constant. We must be grateful for the blessings Allah (SWT) has bestowed upon us and remember to be humble.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, as narrated in Sahih

Muslim:

"Whoever prays the night of Laylatal-Qadr out of faith and in the hope of reward, his previous sins will be forgiven."

This night of power, and all of Ramadan, was a gift to us, a chance to purify our souls and strengthen our connection with Allah (SWT). If we treat it as a past memory, a fleeting experience, then we have failed to truly benefit from its blessings.

THE PATH TO ENDURING TRANSFORMATION

To ensure that the lessons of Ramadan become ingrained in our lives, we must adopt a proactive approach:

CONSISTENT SELF-REFLECTION:

We must regularly examine our actions, thoughts, and intentions, seeking to identify areas where we can improve. This self-reflection should be a daily practice, a constant striving to align our lives with the teachings of Islam.

SEEKING KNOWLEDGE:

We must continue to seek knowledge of our religion, deepening our understanding of the Qur'an and Sunnah. This knowledge will provide us with the guidance we need to navigate the challenges of life and to remain steadfast on the path of righteousness.

SURROUNDING OURSELVES WITH RIGHTEOUS COMPANIONS:

We must seek out the company of those who inspire us to be better Muslims, those who encourage us to strive for excellence in our faith. The company we keep has a profound impact on our character and our actions.

MAKING DUA (SUPPLICATION):

We must constantly supplicate to Allah (SWT), asking Him to grant us the strength to remain steadfast on the path of righteousness, to protect us from the temptations of Shaytan, and to accept our good deeds.

APPLYING WHAT WE LEARNED:

The key is to take the lessons from Ramadan and apply them to our lives. If we learned to control our anger, continue to do so. If we increased our charity, continue to give. If we increased our prayer, continue to pray.

Let us not be like those graduates who fail to utilize their education, whose degrees become mere pieces of paper, devoid of practical value. Instead, let us be like those who take their knowledge and apply it to build a better future, to contribute to society, and to leave a lasting legacy. Let us take the lessons of Ramadan and apply them to build a better version of ourselves, a stronger Ummah, and a more righteous society.

May Allah (SWT) accept our fasts, our prayers, and our good deeds. May He grant us the strength to continue on the path of righteousness, to remain steadfast in our faith, and to be among those who inherit Paradise.

Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar.

Feature



ASUE IGHODALO



OLUMIDE AKPATA



DEREK IZEDONMWUN

Tribunal Victory: Redefining the role of opposition politics in Edo State

FRED ITUA

The recent ruling of the Edo State Election Petition Tribunal, which saw the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) lose its bid to overturn the election victory of Governor Monday Okpebholo, marks a defining moment in the state's political landscape. While elections and legal challenges are essential aspects of democracy, what follows is even more crucial—the role of the opposition in ensuring governance is accountable, effective, and people-centered. However, this must be pursued in a manner that prioritizes the development and stability of Edo State rather than fueling acrimony, political tension, and divisive rhetoric.

A vibrant opposition plays a crucial role in strengthening democracy. It is expected to provide constructive criticism, propose alternative policies, and ensure that the ruling government remains accountable to the people. However, for this role to be beneficial, it must be driven by the genuine interest of the people rather than personal vendettas, obstructionist tactics, or an attempt to undermine the legitimacy of the government.

In Edo State, the focus should now shift from post-election bitterness to responsible opposition politics. The people of Edo have made their decision through the ballot, and the legal process has affirmed it. It is now imperative that the opposition, especially the PDP, re-strategizes its approach by offering meaningful policy alternatives rather than engaging in actions that could destabilize governance.

One of the most damaging aspects of opposition politics in Nigeria is the tendency for acrimonious engagements that serve only to inflame



OKPEBHOLO

tensions rather than address pressing governance issues. When opposition leaders resort to inciting the public against the government, spreading misinformation, or engaging in character assassination, they create an environment of hostility that hinders governance rather than improving it.

Edo State cannot afford to be embroiled in unnecessary political squabbles that distract from the task of development. The challenges before the Okpebholo-led administration require cooperation, innova-

tive thinking, and a commitment to service delivery. Any opposition that seeks to continuously heat up the polity for selfish political gains is doing a disservice to the very people it claims to represent.

True opposition is not about opposing for opposition's sake; it is about providing credible alternatives and engaging constructively with the government of the day. There are many pressing issues in Edo State—economic development, infrastructure, education, security, and health-

The opposition, rather than being an obstacle, should be a partner in ensuring that democracy works for everyone. Politics should be a contest of ideas, not a battleground of personal or party rivalries. Edo State deserves better, and it is only through responsible and constructive engagement that true progress can be achieved.

care—that require the collective input of all stakeholders, including the opposition.

Rather than staging protests or engaging in campaigns to delegitimize the government, the opposition should leverage democratic institutions such as the State House of Assembly, public discourse forums, and the media to articulate well-thought-out policy alternatives. Political par-

ties that lost at the polls should focus on rebuilding, strengthening their grassroots engagement, and preparing robust policy proposals that can win public support in future elections.

Democracy thrives when all parties respect the electoral process and its outcomes. The people of Edo have chosen their leader, and the court has validated this choice. Any attempt to undermine Governor Monday Okpebholo's administration through disruptive tactics would not only be undemocratic but also counterproductive. The opposition must recognize that its role is not to create instability but to ensure that governance is people-centered and effective.

As Edo State moves forward, it is time for all political actors to set aside differences and focus on governance. The ruling party must be open to constructive criticism, while the opposition must act responsibly, engaging in issues-based politics rather than resorting to acrimony. The interest of Edo people must remain paramount, and every political action should be geared toward their well-being and progress.

Governor Monday Okpebholo has a mandate to govern, and he must be given the space to deliver on his promises. The opposition, rather than being an obstacle, should be a partner in ensuring that democracy works for everyone. Politics should be a contest of ideas, not a battleground of personal or party rivalries. Edo State deserves better, and it is only through responsible and constructive engagement that true progress can be achieved.

Fred Itua is the Chief Press Secretary to Edo State Governor.

World leaders criticise Trump tariffs as 'major blow'

Donald Trump's decision to impose new tariffs on all goods entering the US is a "major blow to the world economy", European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen has said.

Her comments echo those of a number of other countries, including China, which has expressed its opposition to the move and has warned it will take "resolute countermeasures" against the US.

Their words of warning come after the US president announced a universal 10% tariff on all imports into the US from 5 April. Around 60 countries will also be hit with steeper tariffs from 9 April.

Trump said the measures were payback for unfair trade policies, adding that he had been "very kind" in his decisions.

Trump has said the tariffs will be used to boost US manufacturing, saying on Wednesday that the move would "make America wealthy again".

Giving a statement on Thursday morning, von der Leyen said the new tax imports will see "uncertainty spiral", causing "dire" consequences "for millions of people around the globe".

She emphasised the impact on the most vulnerable countries, pointing out that some of those nations are now subject to some of the highest US tariffs.

The EC chief vowed Europe would take a unified approach and warned that the European Union - which will be subject to a 20% tariff - is preparing countermeasures in case negotiations fail.

"If you take on one of us, you take on all of us", she said.

Negotiations between dif-

ferent EU member states will begin next week, Bernd Lange, who chairs the European Parliament's Committee on International Trade said.

Italy's Giorgia Meloni, a Trump ally, said the decision was "wrong" but that she would work towards a deal with the US to "prevent a trade war".

Her Spanish counterpart Pedro Sánchez said Spain would "continue to be committed to an open world", while in Ireland, Taoiseach Micheál Martin said Trump's decision was "deeply regrettable" and benefited "no-one".

President Emmanuel Macron will meet representatives from business sectors hit by the new taxes at the Élysée Palace on Thursday, the French presidency said.

Government spokeswoman

Sophie Primas said on Thursday morning that France was "ready for this trade war".

Outside the EU, China - one of the countries deemed the "worst offenders" by the US president - was hit with a 34% tariff on goods, on top of an existing 20% levy, bringing total duties to at least 54%.

The ministry of commerce urged the US to "immediately cancel" the tariffs, adding that China would "resolutely take countermeasures to safeguard its own rights and interests."

Taiwan, which is set to face a 32% tariff for exports to the US, called the move "highly unreasonable".

Premier Cho Jung-tai also said it would make "serious representations" to the US.

South Korean acting President Han Duck-soo said the

global trade war "has become a reality" and his government would be looking at ways to "overcome the trade crisis" after the East Asian country was hit with a 25% rate.

Japan said its 24% levy was "extremely regrettable" and could violate World Trade Organization and US-Japan agreements, while Thailand said it would negotiate its 36% tariff.

Economic officials in Israel, which had scrapped all tariffs on American imports ahead of the announcement, were said to be in "complete shock" over its 17% tariff, local media reported.

"We were sure that the decision to completely cancel

tariffs on imports from the US would prevent this move", an official told local media.

White House officials said its levies were reciprocal to countries, such as China, which it said charge higher tariffs on US goods, impose "non-tariff" barriers to US trade or have otherwise acted in ways the government feels undermine American economic goals.

Leaders from countries subject to the 10% baseline rate have also reacted to Trump's measures, with Australia's Anthony Albanese saying Americans would end up paying the biggest price for what he called "unjustified tariffs".

Hungary to withdraw from International Criminal Court

Hungary's government has announced it is withdrawing from the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The move was announced by a senior official in Prime Minister Viktor Orban's government hours after Israel's leader Benjamin Netanyahu, who is sought under an ICC arrest warrant, arrived in Hungary for a state visit.

Orban had invited Netanyahu as soon as the warrant was issued last November, saying the ruling would have "no effect" in his country.

In November, ICC judges said there were "reasonable grounds" that Netanyahu bore "criminal responsibility" for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity during the war between Israel and Hamas. Netanyahu has condemned the ICC's decision as "antisemitic".

The ICC, a global court, has the authority to prosecute those accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Hungary is a founding member of the ICC, which counts 125 member states, and will be the first European Union nation to pull out of it. A withdrawal has no impact on on-going proceedings.

The ICC was a "respectable initiative", Orban's chief of staff Gergely Gulyas told Hungarian state-owned news agency MTI, but added it had deviated from its original purpose and become a political body.

He said the warrant issued against Netanyahu was

unacceptable and that the government did not want to participate in the court's work anymore. Hungary's parliament has never proclaimed the ICC's statute, so it is not part of the country's law, Gulyas added.

Israel meanwhile has thanked Orban for its "clear and strong moral stance alongside Israel," Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar wrote on X.

"The so-called 'International Criminal Court' lost its moral authority after trampling the fundamental principles of international law in its zest for harming Israel's right to self-defence," Sa'ar added.

Hungary's decision aligns with its broader foreign policy stance under Orban, who has cultivated close ties with Israel and adopted a critical view of international institutions perceived as infringing on national sovereignty.

While Hungary's withdrawal may carry symbolic weight and political implications, it does not significantly alter the ICC's operational capacity or legal framework.

The court has faced similar challenges in the past and continues to function with broad international support.

But Hungary's criticism of the ICC as "politically biased" and its decision to withdraw as Netanyahu visits may set a precedent for other nations to question or abandon their commitments to international justice based on political alliances or disagreements with specific rulings.



HUNGARY STATE VISIT:

The move was announced hours after Israel's leader Benjamin Netanyahu, who is sought under an ICC arrest warrant, arrived in Hungary for a state visit.

Deaths of British couple in France treated as murder-suicide

French officials investigating the deaths of a British couple in their home in south-west France have said it was murder followed by suicide.

The bodies of Andrew and Dawn Searle, who previously lived in East Lothian in Scotland, were found on 6 February at their home in Les Pequies, about a hour north of Toulouse.

Mrs Searle's body was found in the garden with severe wounds to her head, while her husband's body was found inside.

The prosecutor in charge of the case has told the BBC there is no evidence that another person was involved in their deaths.

Mrs Searle, 56, grew up in Eyemouth in the Scottish Borders, and Mr Searle was originally from England.

They previously lived in Musselburgh and married in France in 2023.

Prosecutors said they had lived in the Aveyron region for five years.

According to his LinkedIn

page, Mr Searle, 62, previously worked in financial crime prevention at companies including Standard Life and Barclays Bank.

Police were alerted to the incident in February by a neighbour of the couple who had gone to check on them when they failed to turn up for a planned dog walk.

The area around the property was sealed off while investigations took place, and local police called in expert help

from Toulouse.

A helicopter and drone were sent to the site.

Post-mortem examinations confirmed Mr Searle died from hanging and Mrs Searle, suffered "multiple blows to the head with a blunt and sharp-edged object".

Dawn Searle's son, the Hollywood actor Callum Kerr, issued a statement on social media at the time of the deaths.

He said: "At this time, Cal-

lum Kerr and Amanda Kerr are grieving the loss of their mother, Dawn Searle (née Smith, Kerr) while Tom Searle and Ella Searle are mourning the loss of their father, Andrew Searle."

He requested that the family's privacy be respected during this "difficult period".

Mr Kerr, 30, walked his mother down the aisle when she married Mr Searle at a ceremony in France in 2023.

Slovakia backs plan to shoot 350 bears after man killed in attack

The Slovak cabinet has approved a plan to shoot around a quarter of the country's brown bears, after a man was mauled to death while walking in a forest in Central Slovakia.

Prime Minister Robert Fico's populist-nationalist government announced after a cabinet meeting that 350 out of an estimated population of 1,300 brown bears would be culled, citing the danger to humans after a spate of attacks.

"We can't live in a country where people are afraid to go into the woods," the prime minister told reporters afterwards.

A special state of emergency allowing bears to be shot has now been widened to 55 of Slovakia's 79 districts, an area that now covers most of the country.

The government in Bratislava has already loosened legal protections allowing bears to be killed if they stray too close to

human habitation. Some 93 had been shot by the end of 2024.

The plans to shoot even more were condemned by conservationists, who said the decision was in violation of international obligations and could be illegal.

"It's absurd," said Michal Wiezik, an ecologist and MEP for opposition party Progressive Slovakia.

"The Environment Ministry failed desperately to limit the number of bear attacks by the

unprecedented culling of this protected species," he told the BBC.

"To cover up their failure, the government has decided to cull even more bears," he continued.

Wiezik argued that thousands of encounters a year passed without incident, and he hoped the European Commission would intervene.

Slovak police confirmed on Wednesday that a man found dead in forest near the town of Detva in

Central Slovakia on Sunday night was killed by a bear. His wounds were consistent with an attack.

The 59-year-old man had been reported missing on Saturday after failing to return from a walk in the woods.

He was found with what authorities described as "devastating injuries to the head". Evidence of a bear's den was found nearby, a local NGO told Slovak newspaper Novy Cas.

News

Foreign

Survivor challenges Israeli account of attack on Gaza paramedics

I'm the only survivor who saw what happened to my colleagues," Munther Abed says, scrolling through pictures of his fellow paramedics on his phone.

He survived the Israeli attack that killed 15 emergency workers in Gaza by diving to the floor in the back of his ambulance, as his two colleagues in the front were shot in the early hours of 23 March.

"We left the headquarters roughly at dawn," he told one of the BBC's trusted freelance journalists working in Gaza, explaining how the response team from the Palestinian Red Crescent, Gaza's Civil Defence agency and the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (Unrwa) gathered on the edge of the southern city of Rafah after receiving reports of gunfire and wounded people.

"Roughly by 04:30, all Civil Defence vehicles were in place. At 04:40 the first two vehicles went out. At 04:50, the last vehicle arrived. At around 05:00, the agency [UN] car was shot at directly in the street," he says.

The Israeli military says its forces opened fire because the vehicles were moving suspiciously towards soldiers without prior co-ordination and with their lights off. It also claimed that nine Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad operatives were killed in the incident.

Munther challenges that account.

"During day and at night, it's the same thing. External and internal lights are on. Everything tells you it's an ambulance vehicle that belongs to the Palestinian Red Crescent. All lights were on until the vehicle came under direct fire," he says.

After that, he adds, he was pulled from the wreckage by Israeli soldiers, arrested and blindfolded. He claimed he was interrogated over 15 hours, before being released.

The BBC has put his claims to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), but it is yet to respond.

"The IDF did not randomly attack an ambulance," Israel's Foreign Minister Gideon Saar claimed, when questioned at a news conference, echoing the IDF's statements.

"Several uncoordinated vehicles were identified advanc-

ing suspiciously toward IDF troops without headlights or emergency signals. IDF troops then opened fire at the suspected vehicles."

He added: "Following an initial assessment, it was determined that the forces had eliminated a Hamas military terrorist, Mohammed Amin Ibrahim Shubaki, who took part in the October 7 massacre, along with eight other terrorists from Hamas and the Islamic Jihad."

Shubaki's name is not on the list of the 15 dead emergency workers - eight of whom were Palestinian Red Crescent medics, six were Civil Defence first responders, and one was an Unrwa staff member.

Israel has not accounted for the whereabouts of Shubaki's body or offered any evidence of the direct threat the emergency workers posed.

Munther rejects Israel's claim that Hamas may have used the ambulances as cover.

"That's utterly untrue. All crews are civilian," he says.

"We don't belong to any militant group. Our main duty is to offer ambulance services and save people's lives. No more, no less."

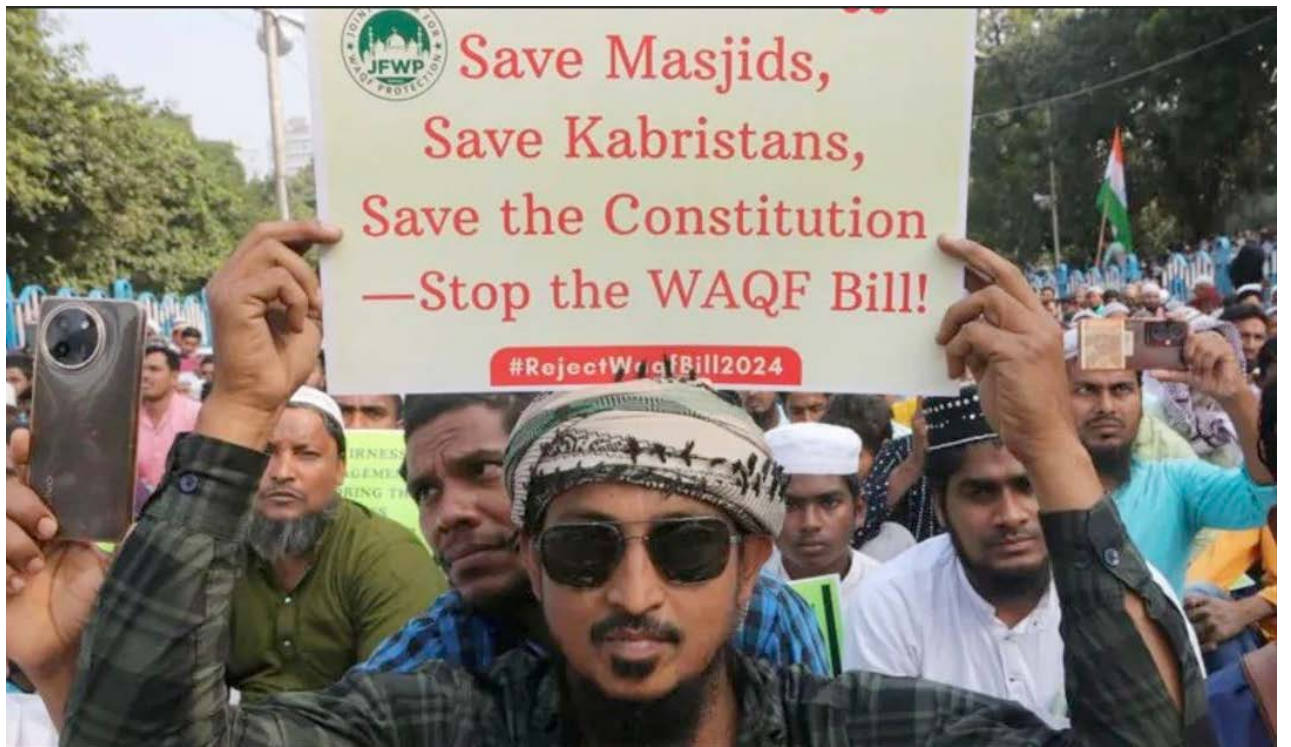
Gaza's paramedics carried their own colleagues to their funerals earlier this week. There was an outcry of grief along with calls for accountability. One bereaved father told the BBC that his son was killed "in cold blood".

International agencies could only access the area to retrieve their bodies a week after the attack. They were found buried in sand alongside the wrecked ambulances, fire truck and UN vehicle.

Sam Rose, acting director of Unrwa's Gaza office, says: "What we know is that fifteen people lost their lives, that they were buried in shallow graves in a sand berm in the middle of the road, treated with complete indignity and what would appear to be an infringement of international humanitarian law."

"But it's only if we have an investigation, a full and complete investigation, that we'll be able to get to the bottom of it."

Israel is yet to commit to an investigation. According to the UN, at least 1,060 healthcare workers have been killed since the start of the conflict.



BILL TRANSPARENCY:

The government claims the bill brings transparency but critics see it as an infringement on the rights of Muslims

Indian parliament passes controversial bill on Muslim properties

The lower house of India's parliament has passed a controversial bill that seeks to change how properties worth billions of dollars donated by Indian Muslims over centuries are governed.

The Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024 - which brings in dozens of amendments to an existing law - was passed late on Wednesday night after a heated debate that went on for over 12 hours.

The government says the bill will introduce transparency into the management of waqf, as the properties are called.

But opposition parties and Muslim groups have called it an attempt to weaken the constitutional rights of India's largest religious minority.

In the Lok Sabha, as the lower house is called, the bill was

passed with 288 MPs voting in favour of it, and 232 against (the halfway mark is 272).

It has now been sent to the Rajya Sabha, or upper house, for discussion and passage.

If it is passed by the Rajya Sabha, it will be sent to President Droupadi Murmu for her assent before it becomes law.

The bill was first tabled in parliament in August last year but was sent to a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) after an outcry from opposition members. The version that has been passed incorporates several changes suggested by the sharply divided committee. Opposition members who were on the panel have alleged that the JPC accepted the changes suggested by the BJP and its allies while rejecting all amendments they propose.

Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress MP and leader of the opposition in the Rajya Sabha, said the opposition was united and would work to defeat "the unconstitutional and divisive agenda of the Modi government on the Waqf Amendment Bill". But the numbers may not be in the opposition's favour.

Muslim groups have argued that the bill "aims to weaken the waqf laws and pave the way for the seizure and destruction of waqf properties".

Speaking in the Lok Sabha, Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi said the bill would "dilute the Constitution, defame minority communities, divide Indian society and disenfranchise minorities".

Federal Home Minister Amit Shah defended the bill, saying that the opposition was

scaring minorities by creating "an illusion that this bill would interfere in the religious activities of Muslim brothers and in their donated property".

What is the bill about? The waqf properties, which include mosques, madrassas, shelter homes and thousands of acres of land donated by Muslims, are managed by boards. Some of these properties are vacant while others have been encroached upon.

In Islamic tradition, a waqf is a charitable or religious donation made by Muslims for the benefit of the community. Such properties cannot be sold or used for any other purpose - which implies that waqf properties belong to God.

The government says that the waqf boards are among India's largest landholders. There

Myanmar leader heads to Bangkok as quake deaths climb to 3,000

Myanmar's junta chief Min Aung Hlaing is in Thailand for a regional summit as his country reels from an earthquake that killed thousands and left cities in ruins.

The earthquake in central Myanmar last Friday killed 3,085 people and injured 4,715, the junta has said. Hundreds more are missing and the toll is

expected to rise.

Min Aung Hlaing arrived in Bangkok on Thursday, according to AFP, on the eve of a summit that will gather leaders of the seven countries that border the Bay of Bengal.

His attendance, which was earlier confirmed by a spokesman for the Myanmar army, will be unusual as sanctioned

leaders are typically barred from these events.

Host Thailand, where the earthquake was felt and killed 21 people, has proposed that the leaders issue a joint statement on the disaster. Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka are also part of the summit.

In Myanmar, many earthquake-hit areas have yet to be reached by authorities, meaning the death toll figures are unlikely to be accurate.

Countries around the world have sent aid and rescue teams to Myanmar since the quake, but poor infrastructure and an ongoing civil war has complicated relief efforts.

The junta announced a temporary ceasefire late on Wednesday to expedite these efforts, after earlier rejecting proposals from armed ethnic rebel groups.

Before this, the military had continued its airstrikes in rebel-held areas, including those badly hit by the earthquake.

On Tuesday night, troops opened fire at a Chinese Red Cross convoy carrying relief supplies. The junta said the troops fired after the convoy refused to stop despite being signalled to do so.

Min Aung Hlaing is also expected to speak to Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra on the sidelines of the meeting in Bangkok, according to a Thai foreign ministry spokesperson.

Myanmar has been gripped by a bloody civil war since the military seized power in 2021, which led to the rise of an armed resistance that has been fighting alongside armed ethnic groups, some of which have been fighting the military for decades.

Lesotho is world's second worst-hit country by Trump's tariffs

US President Donald Trump has imposed tariffs of 50% on all imports from Lesotho, the second highest rate of any country in the world after China.

The tiny southern African country has a large trade surplus with the US, mostly made up of diamonds and textiles, including jeans.

Trump has announced a minimum rate of 10% on all countries' imports to the US

and additional "reciprocal tariffs" for dozens of countries, including 20 in Africa.

Other African countries hit with extra tariffs include 47% for Madagascar, 40% for Mauritius, 37% for Botswana and 30% for South Africa.

Nigerian exports will be hit too - at a rate of 14%.

Kenya, Ghana, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Senegal and Liberia were among those countries whose exports to the

US will be subject to the base-line tariff of 10%.

Trump said the reciprocal tariffs were "for countries that treat us badly".

Tariffs are additional taxes charged on goods imported from other countries.

During Wednesday's announcement at the White House, the Republican president said that the US had been taken advantage of by "cheaters" and had been "pillaged" by foreigners.

"Our taxpayers have been ripped off for more than 50 years, but it is not going to happen any more," Trump said.

"It's our declaration of economic independence," he added while holding up a chart showing a list of countries that charge higher tariffs on US goods, impose "non-tariff" barriers to US trade or have otherwise acted in ways US officials feel undermine American economic goals.

Sports

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

Maiden Niger Delta Sports Festival commences in Uyo with 3,400 Athletes

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The maiden Niger Delta Sport Festival began in Uyo, Akwa Ibom state capital on Tuesday, April 2, 2025 as scheduled with 3,400 Athletes, 560 Coaches, 418 Officials as 17 Sports are accredited for the nine mandate states' contingent.

The events are spread across Godswill Akpabio International Stadium, Uyo Township Stadium, Nwaniba Marina, Dakkada Skill Acquisition Centre, Utrafit Sports Centre, West Itam Secondary School and Cornelia Connelly College, Uyo as centers for sporting activities.

The maiden Niger Delta Sports Festival was officially declared open on Tuesday, April 2025 by president Bola Tinubu who was represented by the chairman, National Sports Commission Alhaji Shehu Dikko at the Uyo Township Stadium.

In an address, the Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission, Chief Samuel Ogbuku said that the Commission is sponsoring the sports fiesta for the oil rich region as part of impactful ac-

● Team Edo begins action with Gold, Silver in para powerlifting, others

tivities to mark the interventionists agency's 25 years of existence.

He added that the sports fiesta serves as a significant platform to celebrate the region's

talents in sports, music, comedy and entertainment, noting that sports and human capital development in the region are a part of the NDDC agenda.

According to him, "the event

aligns with Nigeria's new vision for sports development and president Bola Tinubu's mandate to foster national unity through talents development and innovation in sports.

Through the sports festival, we have brought together thousands of young athletes from the nine states of the Niger Delta region to allow them to showcase their talents."

"We understand the power of sports in transforming the society and as a key stakeholder in the Nigeria project, we are contributing our quota to sports development in the country.

Initiating the Niger Delta Sports Festival, our objective is to support the states in the discovery of sports talents, grooming them into national and international elite athletes to attain gainful professional careers in sports, and for self-reliance and economic independence." He said.

During the opening ceremony, the rich culture of Edo people was on display as the representatives of the heartbeat state of Nigeria showcased what makes them thick in cul-

ture as they filed out in their colourful red and white striped attires, dances, depicting peace and unity the Edo people enjoy.

Meanwhile, results have started coming in for team Edo as Osaro Abimbola Benedict and Philomena Edomwandagbon have won the first Gold and silver in male and female Para powerlifting events. Osaro Abimbola Benedict won the gold medal in the Male 54kg while Philomena Edomwandagbon won silver in the Female 67kg.

Edo Female Handball team also made a good start as they defeated Ondo 9 goals against 8 in the group stage. Team Edo male handball team also defeated Bayelsa 20 goals to 11

while the male football team shared the spoils with Delta after a 1-1 draw.

Team Edo Handball male team again defeated Team Abia 24 goals to 8 in their second group match.

Team Edo Volleyball male team suffered a loss to Team Imo 2 sets to nil in their first group match.

At the Dakkada Skill Acquisition Center, Edo girl Holzen-dorff Lorelay beat Delta's Daniela Edwin 4-0 -4-0 in, Tennis and qualified for the Quarterfinals of the energy saping even. Osato Okiri (female) suffered muscle strain in her clash with Timi of Rivers in tennis and could not complete her assignment.



Super Eagles celebrate Rashidi Yekini, Nigeria's 1st World Cup goal

EDWARD OSEGHE

The Super Eagles of Nigeria on Monday celebrated icon Rashidi Yekini for Nigeria's 1st World Cup goal.

Late Yekini is regarded as the father of goals and is the men's national team's all-time top scorer.

The Super Eagles remembered Yekini in a collaborative post with the Confederation of Africa (CAF) official social media platforms.

Along with the post was a message that said, "Tell me about passion, I'll tell you about Rashidi Yekini."

Yekini made history at the FIFA World Cup by scoring Nigeria's first goal. He scored a tap-in after latching onto a cross from Finidi George, and he then celebrated his goal with one of the most famous World Cup celebrations. The former African Footballer of the Year sprinted into the goals, seized the net, and screamed as loudly as he could after scoring Nigeria's first goal at the World Cup.

As a Nigerian international, Yekini scored 37 goals, played for his country in five major competitions, including two World Cups, and won the 1993 African Footballer of the Year award.

EPL only! Osimhen tells Juventus after 2-goal masterclass against Mourinho

EDWARD OSEGHE

Nigeria's Super Eagles forward, Victor Osimhen has reportedly decided on his next destination amid strong interest from Juventus.

As the summer window approaches, Victor Osimhen remains firmly in the news, with Europe's top clubs desperate to sign the Nigerian goal-machine.

The Nigerian international striker after adding two goals to his tally for Galatasaray, as they defeated Jose Mourinho's Fenerbahce 2-1 in the quarterfinal of the Turkish Cup, made it clear that English Premier League is his choice destination.

The brace against Fener-

bahce brings Osimhen's tally for the season to 29 goals.

Desperate for a new red-hot striker, Italian giants Juventus have been monitoring Osimhen's situation for months, believing the 26-year-old can be

the answer to their prayers.

However, according to a report from Football Italia, the Nigerian international was approached by Juventus to join them ahead of the 2025-26 season, but he declined the

offer in favour of a move to the Premier League.

Osimhen's €75m release clause becomes active this summer, and there will be no shortage of suitors.

Notably, the belief is that the former Lille man prefers a move to Chelsea, although Manchester United and Arsenal remain interested.

Osimhen will undoubtedly be an upgrade on the current attacking options of any of the aforementioned teams, especially the Red Devils, who are seriously lacking in firepower.

Recall that earlier this week, it was reported that Osimhen was offered to Barcelona, who are desperate to sign a successor to the ageing Robert Lewandowski.



Galatasaray wants Eagles new boy Arokodare for Osimhen as rivals renew interest

Galatasaray will now want new Super Eagles star Tolu Arokodare to replace Victor Osimhen should they fail to sign him on a permanent basis, while local rivals Trabzonspor have renewed interest in the Genk striker.

Genk coach Thorsten Fink has hailed Arokodare as the best striker in Belgium this season.

He has thus far netted 20 goals and made seven assists in 36 appearances.

Galatasaray interest, accord-

ing to Fotomac, comes at the same time that their local rivals Trabzonspor have also renewed their interest to sign the 24-year-old striker.

At the start of this season, Trabzonspor tabled a lucrative bid for the player.

Arokodare has a contract with Genk for two more years, but various reports out of Belgium have suggested he will make a major transfer this summer with a number of clubs in the Premier League also lurking



Latest FIFA rankings: Nigeria climbs 43rd globally, falls to 6th in Africa

EDWARD OSEGHE

Nigeria's senior male national team, Super Eagles, have been ranked as the 43rd-best national team in the world in the latest FIFA rankings.

According to the rankings released on Thursday, the Super Eagles moved up one place from the 44th position.

This shows a slight improvement for the Nigerian team who ended 2024 in 44th

position, their lowest ranking in six years, marking a significant drop from their 28th place standing at the start of the year.

However, the Super Eagles dropped one spot among the continent's powerhouses, leaving the fifth position for sixth.

The senior national team won twice and drew two other matches in the period under review, earning Eric Chelle's side enough points to move up.

The AFCON 2023 finalists

were displaced by Ivory Coast, who rose five places to become the 41st-best nation globally.

Nigeria's performance in the 2026 World Cup qualifying series has so far been subpar. The Eagles are in fourth place with seven points from six matches, the latest being a disappointing 1-1 draw against Zimbabwe.

Due to their results, the Super Eagles moved up to fourth place in their 2026 World Cup qualification group, but still

face the prospect of missing out on the tournament in the USA, Canada, and Mexico.

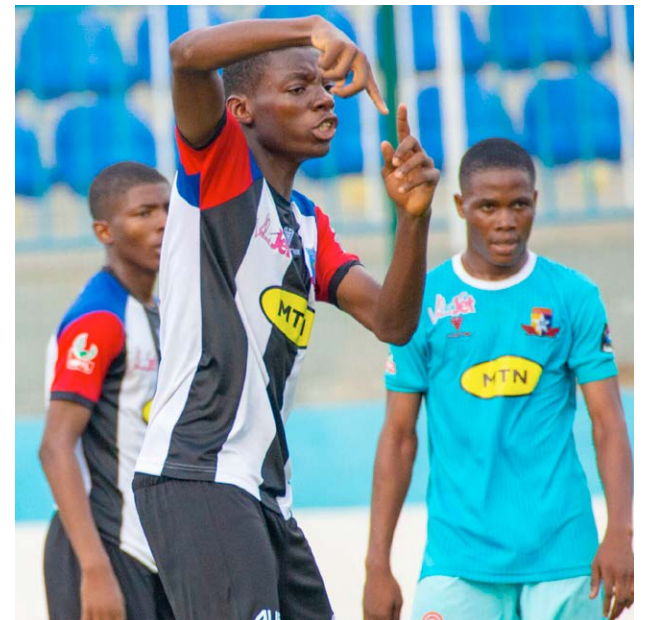
In a bid to improve their form and further develop the team under the guidance of Eric Chelle, Nigeria's Super Eagles will face off against Russia in a friendly game scheduled for June 6. They will also take part in the 2025 Unity Cup scheduled to hold in London from May 27-31.

Unbeaten Ivory Coast are top of Group F with 14 points and are yet to concede a goal.

Morocco remains the highest-ranked nation in Africa while Senegal, Egypt, Algeria and Ivory Coast occupy the remaining top five positions.

Argentina retained its position as the first-ranked nation globally while Spain moved into second ahead of France who dropped to third.

Myanmar are the highest climbers in the latest rankings, moving up seven places to 162nd, while Guinea-Bissau dropped eight places- the highest- to 128th on the back of four straight losses.



Edo Grassroots Youth Football League earns praise

The Grassroots Youth Football Development League (GRYFDL) has received widespread commendations as it progresses toward identifying top teams and players in the Under-14 and Under-17 categories.

Following an intense first round featuring over 20 teams across Edo-South and Edo-North senatorial districts, the second round now with over eight teams in both categories has continued to showcase thrilling matches and outstanding performances.

The league has provided a platform for young players to display exceptional skills, reinforcing the importance of grassroots football development. Organizers have expressed satisfaction with the discipline demonstrated by all stakeholders and are committed to expanding the initiative to ensure its long-term success.

With its growing reputation, the league is now attracting football enthusiasts and aspiring teams eager to participate in future editions. Clubs that missed the inaugural competition regret the lost opportunity and are looking forward to the next season.

Week after week, young talents are being discovered, with the Most Valuable Players (MVPs) receiving recognition for their outstanding performances. The league not only nurtures raw talent but also sets players on the path to professional careers, offering them a potential source of livelihood.

Currently, the GRYFDL operates through private sponsorship, driven by the collaborative efforts of its board

members: Alexander Amu Okokobioko (Chairman); Austin Iredia (Finance); Etinosa Onaiwu (Secretary) and Osabuohien Ogiemwenken (Treasurer). Others are Osagie Irabor (Welfare); Wahab Osaretin (Audit); Fuludu Ede- ma (Coaching Education & Training) and Kingsley Ogbeide-Ihama (Public Affairs).

Additionally, the Edo State Football Association (Edo FA) plays a crucial role in the league's management. The Edo FA is led by Fred Newton Erhunmuse (Chairman), Paul Obozua Ojeisekhoba (Vice Chairman), and Bisi Otupate (Secretary), among others.

With its growing impact, there is a strong call for government agencies, corporate sponsors, and other stakeholders to support the league. By doing so, they can contribute to youth development while enhancing their brand visibility through this prestigious grassroots football initiative.

Fixtures for Week 4 Matches:
Paulson FC vs Future Stars FC (Under 17)

Date: Sunday 6th of April
Time: 1 pm
Venue: Western Boys High School

Rolly FC vs Delight FA (Under 17)
Date: Sunday 6th of April
Time: 2:30 pm

Venue: Western Boys High School
Rolly FC vs Delight FA (Under 14)

Date: Sunday 6th of April
Time: 4 pm
Venue: Western Boys High School

Governor Sule receives National Sports Festival torch of unity

In a symbolic ceremony held at the Nasarawa State Government House, Lafia, on Thursday, the State Governor, Engr. Abdullahi Sule, received the National Sports Festival Torch of Unity from officials of the National Sports Commission.

The passing of the Torch of Unity ceremony ahead of the 22nd edition of the National Sports Festival tagged "GATEWAY25", to be held in Ogun State, kickstarted when Nigeria's President, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, flagged off the Torch's movement from the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, on 25th March, 2025, and will move across the 35 States of the Federation before climaxing at the hosts' State, Ogun, which will be a lead-up to the official commencement of the national, multi-sports, biennial event.

The Festival's Torch of Unity had gone through Abuja, Kogi, Niger, Kwara, Benue, before being received by Governor Abdullahi Sule today (Thursday), with the final destination in the North Central Zone being Plateau State, the following day (Friday).

In his remarks, Governor Sule expressed gratitude to the

National Sports Commission for passing the Torch of Unity to Nasarawa State, assuring the Commission of the commitment of his administration and Nasarawa State to ensuring the full participation and rewarding outing of Team Nasarawa at the main event next month (May).

"Thank you for being in Nasarawa State and for your kind comments about the reception you have received so far.

"I also thank our athletes and the State Ministry of Youth and Sports Development headed by Hon. Kwanta Yakubu, for receiving you the way they did. That's what we are all about.

"As a State, we are enjoying peace, harmony and friendship, which corroborate with what this event symbolizes - a united Nigeria.

"We thank the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the National Sports Commission for taking up this laudable initiative which is a lead-up to the commencement of the National Sports Festival.

"Thank you for your prayers about the performance of Team Nasarawa at various national sporting events.

"We might not be participating in all the sporting events at the Festival this year, but we sure-

ly will participate in sports where we have comparative advantage and have medal hopes, and by the grace of God, we will come out flying with medals in Ogun State", Governor Sule stated.

Speaking earlier, Leader of the National Sports Commission's delegation, Mrs. Ikana Mborra, said President Bola Ahmed Tinubu had given a mandate for the Sports Festival to commence.

"In compliance with the presidential directive to hold the 22nd edition of the National Sports Festival in Ogun State, next month, the National Sports Commission, as it's the tradition, is passing the Torch of Unity round the States of the Federation and FCT, Abuja, which aims to explain that sports unify people of different backgrounds, and an invitation to participate in the multi-sports biennial event."

She thanked Governor Sule for his passion for sports and proactiveness in receiving the delegation.

"We want to thank you for your dexterity, and suffice to say you are the first Governor since we began the passing of the Torch of Unity this year to personally receive the Torch of Unity.



NFF President Gusau expresses commitment to supporting the National U-20 team ahead of the Cairo 2025 Africa Cup of Nations

Alhaji Ibrahim Musa Gusau, president of the Nigeria Football Federation, has reiterated his commitment to supporting the Nigeria National U-20 male team's success at the 2025 Africa Nations Cup, which is scheduled to hold in Cairo,

Egypt.

NFF President Ibrahim Musa Gusau gave the assurance during an interview with SWAN members in Katsina while visiting the Muhammadu Dikko Stadium, where the national U-20 male team is camping.

The NFF president was

pleased with what he saw during the players' last training match.

Ibrahim Musa Gusau stated that the players appear healthy, fit, and eager to represent the country.

He noted that the three-week camping period in Katsina will allow the players to

prepare for the competition, which will take place in the coming weeks.

The NFF President used the visit to thank the Katsina State Government for hosting the national team throughout their stay, as well as the love from the state's wonderful people.





Uromi's jungle justice: A barbaric crime in a nation of armed hypocrisy

KELLY ODARO

The recent mob killing of sixteen northerners in Uromi, Edo State, is a horrifying act of jungle justice that highlights the dangerous descent into lawlessness in Nigeria.

These victims, who were in transit and allegedly accused of being kidnappers, were set ablaze by an enraged mob without due process. This barbaric act is not only a gross violation of human rights but also a potential trigger for ethnic tensions in a country already grappling with deep-seated divisions.

Governor Monday Okpebholo's swift visit to Kano State governor to commiserate with the state on its loss and the promise to apprehend the perpetrators and bring them to justice are laudable gestures.

Failure to bring the culprits to book will set a dangerous precedent, embolden other instances of mob justice, and reinforce the notion that people can take the law into their own hands without consequences. More importantly, such actions could incite reprisals in other parts of the country, threatening national peace and unity.

The media reported that these individuals were hunters, while eyewitnesses claim that the victims were in possession of firearms and allegedly 'wrongly' profiled as kidnappers, which seemingly justified their execution by an angry mob that had been grappling with recurring cases of kidnapping-for-ransom in Uromi for some time now. This opens a broader discourse on why certain ethnic groups in Nigeria are perceived to bear arms freely while others face strict apprehension.

This situation not only reflects deep-seated ethnic distrust but also exposes the failures of law enforcement agencies in ensuring equitable justice.

A major point of contention is the apparent disparity in the handling of illegal arms possession across ethnic lines. In many instances, herders and certain northern groups have been accused of openly carrying weapons without facing the same level of prosecution as their southern counterparts.

Meanwhile, other groups found with arms, even under the pretence of self-defence, are swiftly labelled as criminals and subjected to legal consequences. This discrepancy raises questions about selective law enforcement and whether certain groups enjoy state protection while others are targeted.

The issue of arms possession and ethnic profiling is also rooted in historical and political realities. Over time, armed groups in northern Nigeria, including bandits and insurgents,

have gained notoriety for carrying sophisticated weapons.

However, rather than treating such cases with uniform legal standards, authorities often approach them with negotiations and amnesty programmes, whereas similar considerations are rarely extended to criminal groups from the south. This uneven response fosters resentment and fuels perceptions of state bias.

Furthermore, mob justice thrives in societies where the public lacks trust in formal law enforcement institutions. The people who lynched the 'suspects' may have acted out of frustration, believing that if they handed them over to the police, they would eventually be released.

The frequent allegations that criminals with connections to powerful individuals evade justice further erode confidence in the judicial system. This frustration manifests in ethnic profiling, where an individual's identity determines whether they are perceived as a criminal or a victim.

To address these concerns, the Nigerian government must enforce arms control laws uniformly, irrespective of ethnic background. No group should enjoy impunity while others are criminalised for the same offence.

Security agencies must be reformed to eliminate ethnic bias in their operations, ensuring that justice is served fairly. Additionally, mob justice must be discouraged through public enlightenment and legal enforcement against perpetrators. Only when the rule of law is applied equally can Nigeria hope to achieve lasting peace and security.

Jungle justice, though illegal, remains prevalent in many parts of Nigeria due to multiple factors, including public distrust in the judicial system, frustration with law enforcement, and deep-rooted societal impatience for legal proceedings.

It is not uncommon to hear of people being summarily executed for alleged crimes such as theft, kidnapping, or even perceived witchcraft. However, the disturbing aspect of jungle justice is that many of those killed may be innocent. In a society where hearsay, rumours, and misinformation spread rapidly, a mere accusation can be a death sentence.

In Uromi's case, reports suggest that the victims were accused of being kidnappers, though no concrete evidence was presented before their execution. This raises serious concerns about the dangers of mob mentality and the ease with which people can be wrongly condemned. What makes this particular case even more alarming is its ethnic dimension.

The victims were reportedly of



northern origin, and their brutal execution in the southern part of Nigeria could fuel ethnic mistrust and provoke retaliatory attacks. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation with a history of violent conflicts stemming from ethnic and religious tensions. Any incident that pits one ethnic group against another must be handled with the utmost caution to prevent further

escalation.

Over the years, there have been numerous cases where ethnic profiling has led to violent reprisals. If immediate action is not taken to condemn and address the jungle justice in Uromi, the situation could degenerate into a cycle of revenge attacks between different ethnic groups.

Already, tensions between northern and southern communities over issues such as farmer-herder clashes, banditry, and political marginalisation have strained national unity.

A case like this, if left unchecked, could further divide an already fragile nation. As the chief security officer of Edo State, Governor Monday Okpebholo bears a significant responsibility in addressing this crisis.

One of the reasons jungle justice persists in Nigeria is the perceived failure of law enforcement agencies to protect citizens and ensure justice. The police and other security agencies must be equipped and empowered to handle criminal cases effectively, restoring public confidence in the legal system.

A stronger police presence in Uromi and surrounding areas would also help prevent further incidents of mob violence.

Moreover, many cases of jungle justice are driven by ignorance, misinformation, and mob hysteria. The government should launch campaigns to educate citizens on the dangers and legal consequences of taking the law into their own hands. Religious and traditional leaders should also play a role in discouraging mob violence and promoting peaceful conflict resolution.

Another major factor that fuels mob justice is the slow and often corrupt judicial process in Nigeria. People resort to taking justice into their own hands when they feel the legal system will not deliver timely justice.

Governor Okpebholo should work with the judiciary to implement reforms that speed up the prosecution of criminal cases, ensuring that suspects receive fair and timely trials.

Besides, promoting national unity and ethnic tolerance is crucial. Beyond legal and security measures, the government must actively promote unity among Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups. Community dialogues, peace-building initiatives, and media campaigns should be used to foster understanding and cooperation among different ethnic groups.

This aligns with the establishment of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in 1973 in Nigeria. The NYSC was not a mere administrative contrivance but a well-thought-out initiative designed to bridge the widening chasm of ethnic, cultural, and regional divides that had long threatened the fragile fabric of national unity.

The Uromi incident should serve as a wake-up call for Nigeria to address underlying ethnic tensions before they spiral out of control. One of the most distressing aspects of jungle justice is the ease with which people take the lives of fellow human beings.

A society that justifies lynching, burning, or stoning suspects without trial has lost its moral compass. A striking example of this was on May 12, 2022, when Deborah Samuel Yakubu, a 22-year-old 200-level Christian student at Shehu Shagari College of Education in Sokoto, was stoned and set ablaze for allegedly committing blasphemy. A team of 34 lawyers led by Prof. Mansur Ibrahim defended the two suspects who were subsequently acquitted by the court citing a non-showing of prosecution lawyers.

The alarming frequency of mob violence in Nigeria suggests a larger societal problem — the devaluation of human life.

It is essential for religious leaders, educators, and the media to work together in restoring a sense of value for human life. People must understand that due process is a fundamental principle of justice, and everyone deserves a fair trial, no matter how grave the accusation.

The jungle justice incident in Uromi is a stark reminder of the dangers of mob rule. If not addressed decisively, it could set a precedent for further lawlessness and ethnic strife.

Governor Monday Okpebholo must act urgently to bring the perpetrators to justice. Arrests must be made, trials must be conducted, and justice must be served to demonstrate that no individual or group is above the law.

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This raises serious concerns about the dangers of mob mentality and the ease with which people can be wrongly condemned. What makes this particular case even more alarming is its ethnic dimension.