

# Edo pilgrims offer special prayers ahead of hajj rites in Makkah

## ● **Laud Chairman Uduimoh's service delivery**

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

The Edo State pilgrims currently in Saudi Arabia for the 2025 Hajj exercise have held a special prayer session ahead of the of-

official commencement of Hajj rites proper.

In a report shared by Abdulateef Muhammad of Subtle Media Network, who is a member of the NAHCON National Media Team in the 2025 Hajj, the gathering,

which took place recently at Hotel Maqam Al Nokhba, their accommodation in Makkah, was marked by supplications for peace, good health of the pilgrims and guidance of Allah.

In a WhatsApp voice note by

the Chairman, Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Mallam Musa Muhammad Uduimoh who led the prayers together with the State Amirul-Hajj, HRH, Mallam Ali D. Sulayman and the Executive Secretary of the

Board, Alhaji Eranga AbdulKabir Muhammadkabir the prayer is a spiritual readiness to seek Allah's intervention before embarking on the sacred rites of Hajj.

He added that the prayer session also served as a moment of

reflection and unity among the pilgrims, many of whom expressed gratitude to the leadership of the pilgrims and the opportunity Allah has given them

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# The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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

PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968

VOL. 46, NO. 1,008

MONDAY 26TH MAY, 2025.

**Mining reforms attracted \$800m in investments in 2024 —FG**

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# Nigeria has only 50% skilled workforce needed in power sector —FG

The Federal Government has sounded the alarm over a severe shortage of skilled workers in Nigeria's power sector, particularly within the growing renewable energy industry.

Speaking during the launch of the Next Gen RESCO Programme, a joint initiative by the Rural Electrification Agency (REA), the National Power Training Institute of Nigeria (NAPTIN), and Eco-Innovation Empowerment Initiatives—NAPTIN

Director-General Ahmed Nagode revealed that the country currently lacks 50 percent of the skilled manpower required to effectively run the sector.

In a statement released by the REA on Sunday, Nagode emphasised the urgency of bridging the skills gap among Nigeria's youth to meet the energy sector's evolving demands.

He described the programme, themed "Empowering Future Leaders in Renewable Energy," as a deliberate attempt to identify,

train, and empower young Nigerians with practical skills relevant to the renewable energy industry.

Nagode noted that the initiative supports President Bola Tinubu's broader agenda of job creation and economic growth.

He pointed out that although Nigeria produces many graduates, few possess the technical competence needed in the field, underscoring the difference between academic qualifications and practical know-how.

He said this gap is precisely

what NAPTIN was created to address, particularly in the renewable energy space.

The programme focuses on key technical areas including solar photovoltaic installation and maintenance, PV supervision, mini-grid design, and energy efficiency.

As a recognised centre of excellence within the West African Power Pool and the Association of Power Utilities of Africa, NAPTIN prioritises hands-on skills over paper credentials.

Nagode expressed concern over the sustainability of solar infrastructure in the country, warning that many solar-powered systems, including streetlights in Abuja could fail within five years if not properly maintained.

He called for a stronger focus on local capacity building, stating that young Nigerians must be equipped to take ownership of the sector rather than relying on foreign expertise.

In response to the urgent need for skilled labour, the REA plans to create an additional 10,000 jobs in the renewable energy sector over the next few years to help close Nigeria's energy access gap.

REA Managing Director and CEO Abba Aliyu said that although Nigeria currently has about 70,000 jobs in the sector, far more are needed given the country's population and electricity needs.

He highlighted that the entire African continent accounts for

only 320,000 jobs in renewable energy, with Nigeria representing just a fraction of that figure.

Aliyu also revealed that through the Next Gen Programme, 120 new jobs are being created, and that Nigeria now boasts a 600-megawatt photovoltaic panel manufacturing capacity, an achievement made possible by deliberate policies under the Tinubu administration.

The programme, Nigeria's first public-private renewable energy talent pipeline, will offer selected graduates from all six geopolitical zones a three-month paid classroom training at NAPTIN, followed by a one-month internship with Renewable Energy Service Companies.

Top-performing candidates will then proceed to a nine-month paid placement with automatic job offers upon completion, ensuring a smooth entry into the renewable energy workforce.



**CLOSE DOOR MEETING:**

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo (left) and his Niger State counterpart, Muhammed Umaru Bago, during a close door meeting at the Niger State Liaison Office, Abuja recently.

## Edo Gov approves rehabilitation of Auchi-Igarra-Ibillo Road

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State has approved the comprehensive rehabilitation of over 45 failed portions of the Auchi-Igarra-Ibillo federal road.

This move is aimed at reviving economic activity across several towns and villages in the Akoko Edo Local Government Area.

According to a statement issued on Sunday by the governor's Chief Press Secretary, Fred Itua, the latest approval comes shortly after the completion of the Ikiran-Oke-Ikakkumoh road, also located in Akoko Edo.

The Auchi-Igarra-Ibillo stretch is one of several dilapidated federal roads in the state currently being fixed by the Okpebholo administration.

This critical route not only connects numerous Akoko Edo communities to the rest of Edo State, but also links Kogi and Ondo states, serving as a vital corridor for vehicles travelling from Abuja to Lagos.

Local residents, many of whom are involved in quarrying and cassava processing,

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**NDLEA destroys 77,000kg of skunk in C/River, Edo** —Pg 2

**Military arrests 20 oil thieves, destroys 19 illegal refining sites in N/Delta** —Pg 5

**Russia launches largest air attack yet on Ukraine** —Pg 6

**Athletics: Tobi Amusan blazes to Victory in Rabat with African lead record** —Pg 10

# NDLEA destroys 77,000kg of skunk in C/River, Edo

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has destroyed 77,000 kilograms of skunk

in separate operations across Cross River and Edo states.

According to a statement released on Sunday in Abuja by

the agency's Director of Media and Advocacy, Femi Babafemi, 75,000 kilograms of the psychoactive substance were set ablaze at Esuk-Odot village in Cross River State.

Further operations on Friday, May 23, and Saturday, May 24, in Edo State led to the destruction of an additional 1,957.5 kilograms in Ohosu forest, Ovia South West Local Government Area, and the Okhuse community forest in Owan West Local

Government Area.

In a related development, NDLEA operatives in Nasarawa State arrested two suspects, 51-year-old Sunday Daniel and 30-year-old Abu Peter, in Keffi on Saturday, May 24, after discovering 4,000 kilograms of skunk concealed beneath unprocessed wood in their lorry.

Another suspect, 39-year-old Godwin Obi, was arrested in Karu on Wednesday, May 21, with 154.5 kilograms of the same drug.

In Kaduna, a patrol along the Kaduna-Zaria expressway on May 21 led to the interception of 22-year-old Muhammad Hamza, who was caught with 57,750 pills of tramadol and diazepam. Similarly, in Yobe State, a stop-and-search operation on the Potiskum-Damaturu road resulted in the seizure of 55 parcels of Colorado, a potent synthetic strain of cannabis amounting to two kilograms.

The suspect, 29-year-old

Adum Muhammed, was reportedly attempting to smuggle the drugs into the Republic of Chad through the Ngamboru-Ngala border in Borno State.

NDLEA Chairman, retired Brigadier General Buba Marwa, commended the agency's operatives nationwide for their dedication, lauding their efforts to maintain a balance between reducing the supply of illicit drugs and addressing demand-related challenges.

## Advancing women's issues in elections, democracy: IPC begins consultations with NAWOJ, GOCOP

LAGOS, NIGERIA

In a renewed push to boost democratic participation and elevate the voices of women in Nigeria's political discourse, the International Press Centre (IPC), Lagos, has initiated a series of high-level consultative forums with key media stakeholders.

These engagements, supported by the European Union under the Support to Democratic Governance in Nigeria Phase II (EU-SDGN II) programme, are aimed at enhancing the capacity and professionalism of female journalists in reporting on women-centred issues related to elections, governance, and democratic processes.

Organised in partnership with the Nigeria Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) and the Guild of Corporate Online Publishers (GOCOP), the forum is scheduled for Saturday, 24 May

2025 in Port Harcourt and Tuesday, 27 May 2025 in Abuja.

The EU-SDGN II programme underscores the European Union's wider commitment to promoting a pluralistic, inclusive, and participatory democracy in Nigeria.

It comprises five strategic components that support INEC, the National Assembly and Judiciary, political parties, civil society, and the media, each geared towards strengthening democratic institutions through coordinated, long-term initiatives.

The overall goal is to cultivate a democratic environment where no voice is left unheard.

"At the heart of these consultations is our commitment to exploring innovative, solutions-driven approaches that will amplify women's voices in the media, especially in the context of elections and political participation," said Mr Lanre Arogundade, Director of IPC.

## Edo pilgrims offer special prayers...

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to fulfill this religious obligation.

The pilgrims are expected to proceed to Mina in the coming days as they prepare for the peak of Hajj which includes standing at Arafat, Muzdalifah and the symbolic stoning at the Jamarat.

Meanwhile, the Edo State pilgrims currently in Saudi Arabia for the 2025 hajj have lauded the Chairman of the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Mallam Musah Muhammad Uduimoh, for what they described as exemplary service delivery.

This commendation followed a heartwarming experience in Makkah, where pilgrims were treated to traditional Nigerian meals while awaiting the commencement of the Hajj rites.

According to a report filed by Abdullateef Muhammad of Subtle MEDIA Network, who is part of the NAHCON National Media Team for Hajj 2025, the thoughtful meal triggered widespread gratitude among the pilgrims, many of whom expressed deep appreciation to Chairman Uduimoh for his hands-on leadership and commitment.

The report quoted pilgrims chanting, "You are the best! You are the best!" over a phone call, as they relished a specially curated menu of beloved Nigerian dishes.

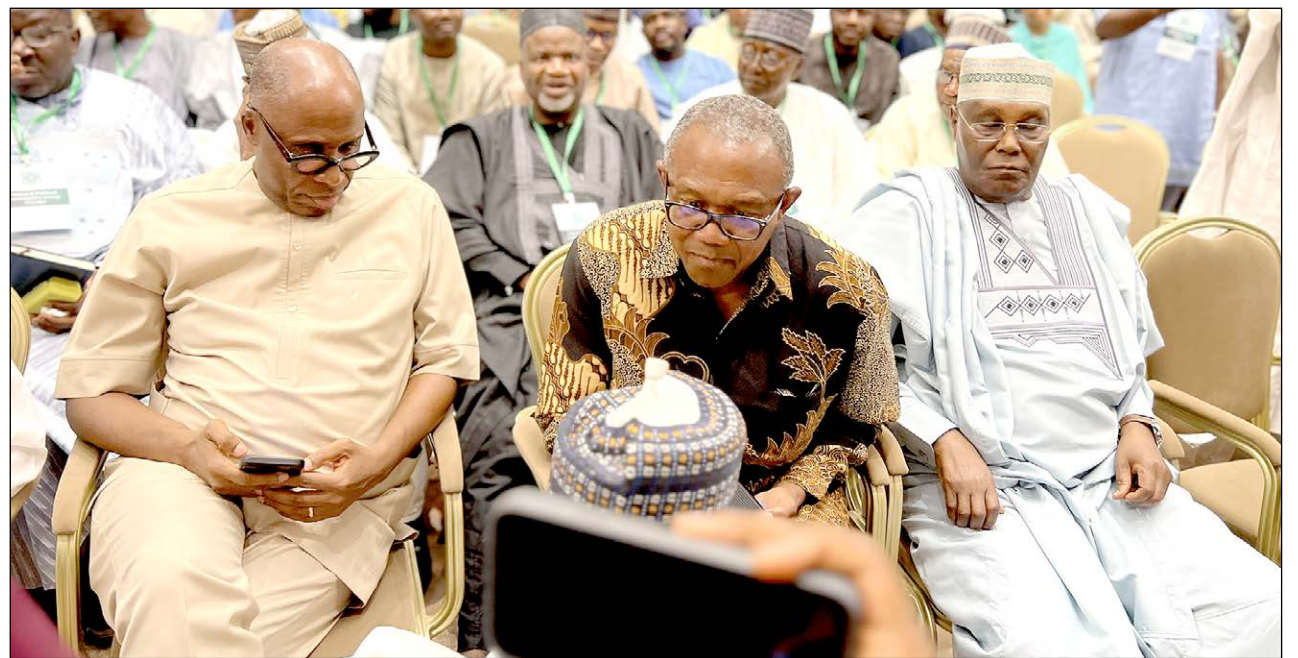
Alhaji Abubakar Akokhia, a chieftain of the APC in Etsako West Local Government Area, described the meals as "a comforting taste of home in a foreign land."

He revealed that the dishes included amala with ewedu soup and pounded yam served with rich egusi soup, offering both nourishment and nostalgia.

Another pilgrim, Alhaji Ismail Momoh, commended not just the food, but the overall welfare arrangements.

"This is the first time we are seeing this level of care. The Chairman treats us with respect and humility. He is both a father and a servant to us on this journey," he said.

Two other pilgrims, Musa Jafaru and Bekisu Yakubu, expressed delight at being served traditional meals in such a setting. "Eating amala and pando yam in Mecca was a surprise. God bless the organisers," they remarked.



COALITION MEETING:

L-R: Former Governor of Rivers State, Mr Rotimi Amaechi; presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), Mr Peter Obi, and former Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, during a coalition meeting of opposition leaders under the National Political Consultative Group (NORTH), in Abuja.

## Edo APC names Aigboboh acting Dep State Chairman

The Edo State chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) has announced the appointment of Honourable Sylvester Aigboboh as Acting Deputy State Chairman.

This development is part of efforts to reinforce the State Executive Council of the party ahead of critical political engagements.

Aigboboh, who played a prominent role in securing victory for the APC and Governor

Monday Okpebholo during the last governorship election, is expected to bring his strategic experience and political insight to bear in the new position.

The announcement, made through a press release from the party's state secretariat, also confirmed the regularization of Emperor Khalifa Jaret Tenebe as the substantive State Chairman. Tenebe had previously served in an acting capacity.

The APC further disclosed

that Pedro Esangbedo has been appointed Acting Vice Chairman for the Edo Central Senatorial District, following the defection of Chief Francis Inegbeniki to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

Inegbeniki had served as Vice Chairman until his exit from the party.

The party explained that the appointments were necessary to maintain organisational effectiveness and are in full accordance with its constitution.

"In accordance with the provisions of the APC constitution and for the continued efficiency of the party's operations, it became imperative to fill these positions with individuals of proven character and integrity," the statement said.

The new appointments, the party noted, are aimed at strengthening internal administration and ensuring seamless leadership as the APC continues to consolidate its position in Edo politics.

## Supreme Court upholds death sentence for armed robbery convict in Edo

● **As Attorney General reiterates commitment to justice, public safety**

The Edo State Government has secured a significant legal victory as the Supreme Court affirmed the conviction and death sentence of Sunday Osakpolor for armed robbery.

Clementina Agweda, the Public Relations Officer, Office

of the Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Edo State in a press statement said that this followed earlier judgments by both the Edo State High Court and the Court of Appeal in Benin.

The apex court, in a judgment delivered by Justice Mo-

ammed Baba Idris, dismissed Osakpolor's appeal, declaring it lacking in merit.

The Supreme Court upheld the concurrent findings of the lower courts, agreeing that the prosecution had presented compelling direct evidence justifying the conviction.

Arguing on behalf of the state at the Supreme Court, the Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Dr Samson Osagie, maintained that the trial and appellate courts were correct in their assessment of the facts and evidence.

He urged the court to uphold the conviction and sentence, a position the court accepted in its ruling.

In a related development, the Edo State Ministry of Justice has secured the conviction of Taiwo Omorede and four others in Charge No. B/CD/163c/2023.

The defendants were tried for offences, including armed robbery, conspiracy, assault occasioning harm, and malicious damage.

The first three were sentenced to death by hanging, while the fourth and fifth were handed five-year prison terms.

The prosecution in the case was led by Oshirekun Otokurin, Esq., Assistant Director, and Mrs Okonofua, Principal State Counsel, both of the Ministry of Justice.

Delivering judgment, Justice Imadegbello found that the evidence presented by the prosecution placed the accused persons at the scene of the crimes and discredited their claims of alibi.

These recent legal successes underscore the Edo State Government's unwavering commitment to justice and the fight against criminality.

## Edo Gov approves rehabilitation of Auchii...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

have long lamented the hardship posed by the poor state of the road, which has made transporting goods to markets increasingly difficult.

A commercial driver operating along the corridor said the deteriorated condition of the road has discouraged many of his colleagues from using the route, causing a sharp rise in transportation costs.

Mr Bajwa Hammed, the

contractor assigned to the project, assured residents that all failed portions of the road will be fully rehabilitated to meet the standards expected by the governor.

Following a preliminary inspection, he acknowledged the urgency of the situation.

"There are many failed spots on this road that need urgent attention for the safety of both commuters and vehicles. I understand the standard the governor expects, and we will

meet it," he said.

The decision to fix the road comes just days after youths in Akoko Edo staged a protest on 21 May, blocking the road to draw attention to the rising cases of kidnapping in the area, which they blamed on the road's poor condition.

The demonstration caused a significant gridlock, leaving travellers and heavy-duty vehicles stranded for hours.

During the protest, the youths voiced their frustration over the

ongoing abduction of Labour Party chieftain Okasime Olowojoba, who had remained in captivity for nearly a month despite a ransom exceeding five million naira reportedly paid by his family and friends.

It took the intervention of the Otaru of Igarra, Oba Adeche Saiki, who sent emissaries to the protesters and also wrote to the state government about the state of the road and the escalating insecurity, to persuade the youths to reopen the route for traffic.

## NEWS

# Seplat Energy JV enhances eye health in Edo

## ● Over 110,000 eye treatments recorded since launch

MONDAY OISE

**BENIN CITY**

The 2025 edition of the NEPL/Seplat Energy Joint Venture's flagship

healthcare initiative, "Eye Can See," culminated in a grand ceremony at the Oba of Benin's Palace in Benin City.

Now in its 13th year, the three-day outreach continues to provide free eye care services,

ranging from consultations and reading glasses to cataract surgeries and health education on eye-related conditions and associated illnesses like glaucoma, hypertension, and diabetes.

The initiative targets residents

of the host communities of the Joint Venture (JV).

Delivering the opening remarks, Seplat Energy's Director of External Affairs & Social Performance, Chioma Afe, represented by Esther Icha,

Senior Manager, Corporate Social Investment and Social Performance—reaffirmed that the programme is entirely free for all beneficiaries.

"Every part of this programme is free of charge," Icha said. "For those with additional health challenges, including hypertension or diabetes, we have doctors on ground to attend to them."

Representing Edo State's Commissioner for Health, Dr Cyril Adams Oshiomhole, the Director of Medical Services, Dr Edward Aisowieren, lauded Seplat Energy JV for the initiative's far-reaching impact, noting that the "Eye Can See" programme is truly changing lives for the better.

He added, "More than half the causes of blindness are preventable or treatable. This initiative has given many their sight back and is a commendable intervention."

The Obkhavbaye of Benin, Chief Raphael Oronsaye, who

represented the Oba of Benin, expressed appreciation to the Seplat JV and encouraged community members to embrace such impactful initiatives.

Representing NEPL, Owunari Tomikeimieye praised the turnout and urged parents to sensitise their children and wards on the importance of preserving oil and gas infrastructure.

He noted that the revenue generated from such resources funds life-changing projects like "Eye Can See."

Speaking on behalf of the beneficiaries, Dennis Laure thanked the Seplat JV for helping many overcome long-standing eye problems that had negatively affected their daily lives and livelihoods.

Since its inception, the "Eye Can See" initiative has recorded impressive achievements, including 110,634 eye treatments, 55,382 reading glasses distributed, and 4,752 successful cataract surgeries.

**PRESENTING A PLAQUE:**

Chairman, Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council, Comrade Festus Alenkhe (right), presenting a plaque for an award of excellence to Mr Fred Itua, Chief Press Secretary to Edo State Governor, courtesy of Pinnacle Builder Homes and Properties, Benin City.

## We're determined to serve you better, Uduimoh tells Edo pilgrims in Mecca

ABDULLAH ABDUL-KADIR

The Chairman of the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Mallam Muhammad Musa Uduimoh, has assured Edo State pilgrims currently in the Holy Land that the Board remains committed to providing them with improved services throughout the pilgrimage.

According to Abdullateef Muhammad of Subtle Media Network, who is part of the NAHCON National Media Team for the 2025 Hajj exercise in Saudi Arabia, Chairman Uduimoh emphasised that the welfare and general care of Edo

pilgrims is a top priority for the Board.

Uduimoh encouraged pilgrims in Makkah to remain calm, focused, and cooperative with the Board and the leadership of the pilgrims in Saudi Arabia.

"Whenever you encounter any challenge while in Makkah, don't hesitate to draw our attention to it. One thing is certain, we are determined to serve you better than ever," he stated.

Many Edo pilgrims commended the Chairman for the quality of care and support provided both in Madinah and Makkah, noting that he has demonstrated competence and

experience in managing their affairs.

However, some pilgrims pointed out that the accommodation provided in Madinah was more convenient due to its proximity to the Haram, compared to the lodging in Makkah, which they said was farther away.

Responding to the concerns, Chairman Uduimoh explained that the accommodation arrangements in Madinah and Makkah are structured differently.

He noted that first-time pilgrims often expect the same standard or better facilities in Makkah after experiencing

Madinah, but the realities vary.

"Sometimes, things may not turn out exactly as expected. The accommodation setup in Makkah differs from that in Madinah. For your information, we've already been commended for the arrangements we secured in Makkah, especially when compared to what other states have," Uduimoh said.

He added, "Taking care of Edo pilgrims in the areas of accommodation, feeding, and all other aspects of the Hajj is my utmost priority. Please always report any complaints to us for prompt and appropriate action."

## Oborewori committed to legacy projects in Delta, says Latimore

AJUWA VICTOR

Director General, Delta State Orientation and Communications Bureau, Dr Fred Latimore Oghenesivbe Esq, has said that Governor of Delta State, Rt Hon Sheriff Oborewori, has positively impacted the socio-economic and infrastructure spheres of the state through his legacy projects.

The director general made the assertion while speaking to newsmen on the sideline of the ongoing Nigeria Public Relations Week, and Annual General Meeting of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations, NIPR, taking place at the Ceedapeg Hotels Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, South-South Nigeria.

Delta State he said has become an investment and tourism destination, rated as the fourth largest economy in Nigeria, and one of the most peaceful states in the country.

Dr Oghenesivbe assured that Delta State under Oborewori's administration shall sustain her enviable position as the undisputed economic nerve centre of Nigeria, being the number one oil producing

state as a result of its Development strides as observable in the enhanced peace and security across the three senatorial districts.

The Director General of Delta State Communications Bureau, further stated that the governor intentionally focused on legacy projects to fast track economic and infrastructure development.

And on Nigeria's reputation management, Barrister Oghenesivbe congratulated Dr John Momoh and members of the Nigeria Reputation Management Group Body of Advisers, which was inaugurated at the ongoing NIPR Week, saying that President Bola Tinubu's economic remodelling policies tailored towards economic recovery, growth and infrastructure development require deliberate and strategic public relations efforts locally and internationally.

He said the advisory team was chaired by renowned broadcaster and fellow of NIPR, Dr John Momoh would ensure that the nation's image is rebranded to reflect the noble intentions of Mr President as contained in the Renewed Hope Agenda.

## BUVEL at 50: Customers, staff celebrate integrity, excellence, legacy

EDWARD OSEGHE

Business Ventures Limited (Buvel), one of Nigeria's foremost private petroleum marketers has celebrated 50 years of inspiring Nigerians with a legacy grounded in integrity, service excellence, and customer satisfaction.

Founded in Uromi in 1975 by Prince Clement Kennedy Okoeguale, Buvel has grown to operate over 11 filling stations across Edo State.

The golden jubilee celebra-

tion took place simultaneously at all Buvel filling stations and at the founder's residence in Benin City.

The event drew government officials, customers, staff, community leaders, and well-wishers.

At the stations, raffle draws were held, rewarding loyal customers with various prizes. Branded souvenirs such as umbrellas, notebooks, sip cups, and pens were distributed, while music, refreshments, and goodwill messages enliven

the atmosphere.

Speaking to journalists at Buvel's Murtala Mohammed Way head office in Benin City, Prince Okoeguale reflected on the company's journey: "It has not been easy. We've faced court cases, fire outbreaks, and theft, but we stood firm," he said. "Our watchword is integrity."

He also credited his wife's support for his resilience, saying, "The energy I had came from my wife's unwavering cooperation."

Commenting on the challenges of social vices, Prince

Okoeguale stressed, "We didn't build Buvel on cheating, we built it on trust." He encouraged young Nigerians to embrace honest work, including farming and entrepreneurship.

Professor Kevin Okoeguale, Director of Business Ventures Limited and eldest son of the founder, described the milestone as a defining moment for the Buvel family.

"Fifty years says it all," he said, recounting Buvel's evolution from the fuel scarcity era of the 1980s to the deregula-

tion and heightened competition of the 2000s.

He reaffirmed Buvel's commitment to quality service, transparent metering, and fair pricing.

The celebrations culminated in a grand evening party at the founder's residence, where guests enjoyed music, dance, food, drinks, and dessert.

Commemorative souvenirs were shared, and two symbolic toasts were made—one to the past five decades and another to the future, followed by the cut-

ting of the golden jubilee cake.

The evening's highlight was the presentation of an Award for Remarkable Leadership in Mentoring to the Founder and Managing Director of Buvel, Prince C.K. Okoeguale.

The award, presented by his son and protégé, Engr. Kenneth Okoeguale, Managing Director of Buvel Haulage Limited, recognised Prince Okoeguale's influential mentorship and his role in guiding Buvel Haulage through 15 years of incorporation.

# Mining reforms attracted \$800m in investments in 2024 —FG

The Minister of Solid Minerals Development, Dele Alake, has announced that Nigeria attracted over \$800 million in processing investments in the solid minerals sector in 2024.

He attributed this surge to the Tinubu administration's reforms, which prioritise in-country value addition and enforce stricter licensing regulations.

Alake also reported that sector revenue rose to more than ₦38 billion in 2024, a significant leap from ₦6 billion in the previous year, despite the ministry receiving just 18 per cent of its ₦29 billion budget allocation.

These details were revealed in a statement issued Sunday by the Special Adviser to the President on Information and Media Strategy, Bayo Onanuga.

The Minister made the remarks during an interview for an upcoming State House documentary marking President Tinubu's second year in office.

He noted a marked uptick in investor interest, highlighting several major ongoing projects,

including a \$600 million lithium processing plant near the Kaduna-Niger border set for commissioning this quarter.

Another \$200 million lithium refinery near Abuja is nearing completion, while two more plants in Nasarawa are expected to begin operations before the third quarter of 2025.

"These investments reflect our insistence that no mining licence will be issued without a clear plan for local processing. The era of exporting raw minerals from pit to port is over," Alake declared.

"When we came in, the sector generated just ₦6 billion annually. By the end of 2024, it was ₦38 billion, achieved with only 18 per cent of our budget. That shows how effective our policies have been."

He added that in the first quarter of 2025 alone, the Mining Cadastral Office and the Mines Inspectorate recorded revenues of ₦6.9 billion and ₦7 billion respectively.

Looking ahead, the Minister said 2025 would be a landmark

year, with ₦1 trillion allocated to mineral exploration to produce internationally certified geological data.

"Exploration is essential. When we took office, Nigeria had spent only \$2 million on exploration, compared to \$40 million in Sierra Leone, \$148 million in Côte d'Ivoire, and

over \$300 million in South Africa. Without credible data, serious investors stay away," he explained.

He reiterated that the administration is focused on converting mineral resources into domestic economic value, jobs, technology, and industrial development.

As part of broader reforms, Alake said the ministry is tackling illegal mining and integrating informal miners into the formal economy.

He disclosed that over 300 illegal miners were arrested in 2024. Of those, 150 cases are currently in court, with nine convictions secured, including some involv-

ing foreign nationals.

"We've adopted both enforcement and empowerment strategies. Through the Mining Marshals, we've strengthened enforcement, but we're also supporting locals by forming them into cooperatives, enabling access to finance and revenue sharing," he said.



**PLEASANTRIES:**

Speaker, Edo State House of Assembly, Hon. Blessing Agbebaku (right), exchanging pleasantries with former Deputy Speaker of the House, Hon. Marian Edekor, at the main chamber of Anthony Enahoro complex

## Sugar industry vital to Nigeria's \$1tn economy vision —FG

The Minister of State for Industry, John Owan Enoh, has underlined the strategic role of Nigeria's sugar sector in advancing President Bola Tinubu's aspiration of building a \$1 trillion economy.

In a statement made available on Sunday, Enoh spoke at a public hearing organised by the House of Representatives Committee on Industry, which is currently reviewing the National Sugar Development Council (NSDC) Establishment Act.

He referenced a recent Federal Executive Council meeting, where President Tinubu underscored the sector's importance.

"Just two weeks ago, the President addressed the FEC on the sugar industry — a clear signal of how vital this commodity is, both industrially and domestically. Nigeria must take it seriously," he said.

"The sugar sector is key to achieving our \$1 trillion economy target. It must contribute significantly to employment and rural development."

Echoing the Minister's remarks, the NSDC's Executive Secretary, Mr Kamar Bakrin, stressed that fully implementing the Nigeria Sugar Master Plan (NSMP) could save the country over \$1 billion annually in for-

ign exchange.

He said the plan could stimulate job creation, attract major investments, and boost rural economies.

Bakrin noted that the proposed legislative amendment would redefine the council's mandate and ensure its financial operations align with the 1999 Constitution.

"To fully realise the NSMP, we need about \$4.5 billion in investments. That will only happen if investors see transparency and rule-based governance," he said.

He raised concern over a recent directive requiring that 50 per cent of the sugar levy be paid into the Consolidated Revenue Fund, warning that it could derail the sector's progress.

"The sugar levy was never meant as a general revenue tool. It was created to support sector-specific development. Redirecting it would defeat its purpose," Bakrin cautioned.

NAFDAC, represented by Iba Edward, acknowledged the bill's intention but warned against regulatory overlaps.

"Some of the bill's provisions infringe on NAFDAC's responsibilities under Section 5 of our Act. We urge lawmakers to clearly define roles to avoid duplication," she said.

during a ceremony marking the fourth anniversary of Pinnacle Builders Homes and Property, held in Benin City.

The event also featured a quiz competition involving secondary school students from across Edo State.

Mrs Anani was represented at the occasion by Hajia Nimata Umar Ikhilor, wife of the Secretary to the State Government.

## Presidency dismisses fake White House rejection statement

The Presidency on Sunday described as fake and malicious a viral statement claiming that President Bola Tinubu had turned down a White House invitation for a working visit due to domestic priorities and aircraft limitations.

Bayo Onanuga, Special Adviser to the President on Information and Strategy, debunked the claim via his official X

(formerly Twitter) handle, labelling it the work of "disinformation agents, hoax peddlers, fake news propagators, and clickbaiters."

"Whoever you are, one day, the law will catch you," Onanuga warned in a strongly worded post, which included a screenshot of the alleged statement stamped with a "FAKE NEWS ALERT" label.

The fabricated release, made

to resemble a genuine State House communiqué, falsely claimed that the Tinubu administration had declined a U.S. working visit due to "critical domestic priorities" and "logistical constraints, including the unsustainability of presidential aircraft for long-distance travel."

It was falsely attributed to Onanuga, bearing his name and official designation.

However, Onanuga categor-

ically denied the statement, clarifying that neither the Nigerian government nor the White House had issued or acknowledged such a communication.

The forged message concluded with a claim that Nigeria remains committed to strong bilateral ties with the United States — another assertion Onanuga dismissed as baseless.

## Ologbo community begs Oba Ewuare II for forgiveness of suspended Enogie, Prince Owen Akenzua

### BENIN CITY

The people of Ologbo community in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State have formally appealed to His Royal Majesty, Oba Ewuare II, seeking clemency for their suspended Enogie, Prince Owen Akenzua.

In a letter made available to journalists in Benin City, the appeal was signed by Chief Friday Aihanuwa on behalf of the elders

and Comrade Osagie Ozigbo representing the youths.

The signatories expressed regret over the circumstances that led to the suspension of the Enogie and requested royal forgiveness.

According to the letter, after the suspension, community leaders held a meeting with Prince Akenzua to ascertain the facts.

They claim the Enogie acted based on misinformation from

the former head of all Enigies.

"The authority of our revered Oba cannot be questioned. We can only continue to plead as loyal subjects," the letter read.

"The offence of the Enogie is one borne by all of us in Ologbo, for we are all subjects of the Oba within his sacred dukedom."

They pledged unwavering loyalty to the monarch, describing him as a divine king whose reign they continue to revere.

They prayed for divine guid-

ance and ancestral blessings for Oba Ewuare II, to enable him to continue his leadership of the Benin Kingdom.

In a show of collective remorse, the community had earlier gathered at the entrance to the Oba's palace to physically appeal for leniency.

The gathering called for mercy on behalf of Prince Owen Akenzua, noting that he is now contrite and deeply regrets the actions that led to his suspension.

## Anani honoured with Pinnacle Builders' award of excellence for service, dedication

GLORIA OSEMUDIAMHEN

In recognition of her steadfast commitment to nurturing young minds and contributing to societal development, Mrs Edesili Okpebholo Anani, Coordinator of the Office of the Edo State First Lady, has been presented with the Pinnacle Builders' Award of Excellence.

The award was conferred

during a ceremony marking the fourth anniversary of Pinnacle Builders Homes and Property, held in Benin City.

The event also featured a quiz competition involving secondary school students from across Edo State.

Mrs Anani was represented at the occasion by Hajia Nimata Umar Ikhilor, wife of the Secretary to the State Government.

Speaking on her behalf, Hajia Ikhilor thanked Pinnacle Builders for their philanthropic efforts and highlighted the symbolic importance of their gesture.

"I want to appreciate Pinnacle Builders for this noble effort. They are not just building homes, but also building the future through their support for children, who are the leaders of tomorrow. It is especially time-

ly, as we mark the Month of the Child," she said.

Reaffirming her commitment to child-focused initiatives, Mrs Anani expressed her enduring passion for education and youth empowerment.

"Mrs Edesili Okpebholo Anani has consistently promoted children's education, and this award will only reinforce her resolve to advance

educational development within her capacity as Coordinator of the First Lady's Office," Hajia Ikhilor added.

"This award came as a surprise, no lobbying, no anticipation. It goes to show that someone is always watching. As public servants, we must remain diligent, even when no one is looking," he said.

Hon Otunba Bankole Balogun, Chairman of the Edo State Internal Revenue Service, commended the Governor Okpebholo-led administration for its effective fiscal management.

"Senator Okpebholo's leadership has enabled the state to sustain infrastructure projects without borrowing a kobo. Our revenue has increased significantly under his tenure," he noted.

## NEWS

# Edo Security Corps recruits to report at NYSC camp by today —Commissioner

The Edo State Government has directed all newly recruited members of the Edo State Security Corps (NYSC) Permanent Orientation Camp in Okada no later than Monday, May 26, 2025.

This directive was issued by the Commissioner for Information and Communication, Hon. Paul Ohonbamu, in a statement released in Benin City.

According to the statement, the recruits were initially scheduled to begin reporting at the NYSC Camp on Thursday, May 22, but

all are now expected to be in camp by the close of day on Monday.

“Anyone not in the NYSC Camp, Okada, by Monday, May 26, 2025, will not be allowed to join the training,” Ohonbamu stated.

The training exercise forms part of the state’s broader ef-

forts to strengthen its grassroots security framework and ensure better coordination in the fight against criminal activities, including cultism, kidnapping, and armed robbery.

The Edo State Security Corps, launched as a community-based response to insecurity, is expect-

ed to complement the efforts of conventional security agencies in maintaining law and order across the state.

Government officials have

urged the recruits to adhere strictly to the reporting deadline, warning that non-compliance will result in disqualification from the training programme.



## DECORATING PARTNER:

Edo State Commander, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Mitchell Ofoyeju, while decorating the Senior Special Assistant to Edo State Governor on Drug Policy, Ogheneovo Andrew, as a War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) partner, during his visit to the command in Benin City.

## Commissioner Ohonbamu vows tough measures against cultism, kidnapping in Edo

### ● As Ugolor lauds bold stance against insecurity

#### BENIN CITY

Edo State Commissioner for Information and Communication, Hon. Paul Ohonbamu, has reiterated the government’s commitment to tackling cultism, kidnapping, and other forms of violent crime, warning that individuals and property owners found aiding such activities will face severe consequences.

Speaking during a press briefing in Benin City, Ohonbamu issued a stern warning to landlords across the state, stating that any property found to be harbouring cultists will be subject to legal action.

“Any landlord whose building is discovered to be accommodating a cultist will face the wrath of the law,” he said.

“Cult-related activities will be aggressively tackled, with perpetrators and their enablers facing the full weight of the law.”

The Commissioner clarified that actions such as the demolition of buildings linked to criminal operations are only carried out when backed by credible intelligence or direct confessions.

He urged landlords to take responsibility by monitoring the activities of their tenants and reporting any suspicious behaviour to the authorities.

Ohonbamu also addressed the

role of families in curbing youth involvement in criminal activity. He warned that parents who fail to check their children’s involvement in cultism or other crimes would be treated as accomplices.

“Parents who ignore this warning or fail to correct the delinquent behaviour of their children will be seen as accomplices to crime,” he stated.

The Commissioner’s remarks come amid intensified efforts by the Edo State Government to combat rising insecurity, including cult violence, ritual killings, illegal firearms, and attacks by armed herders.

Hon. Ohonbamu, known for his longstanding advocacy

for justice and public accountability, reaffirmed the administration’s resolve to restore public safety and reinforce citizen trust through a combination of law enforcement and community engagement.

He also commended Governor Monday Okpebholo for his proactive leadership, describing the government’s current anti-crime strategies as both decisive and people-centred.

“As the state continues to confront security challenges, we will not tolerate negligence or complicity from any quarter,” Ohonbamu said. “This is a collective fight, and every citizen has a role to play.”

## Police arrest armed robbery suspect in Edo hotel raid

The Edo State Police Command on Sunday said it has arrested a suspect and recovered arms in its sustained raids against criminals in the state.

The PPRO of the State Police command, Moses Yamu, who revealed this in a statement on Sunday, said officers acted on a credible intelligence to effect the arrest.

He stated that a manhunt has been launched for four other suspects who escaped during the raid, while noting that four cars were recovered

during investigation.

According to the statement, “In its sustained raids against criminals through credible intelligence, some persons suspected to be armed robbers/kidnappers/cultists were hibernating at Kendrona Hotel, operatives of the Anti Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing Unit of the State Criminal Investigations Department raided the location off Country Home Road Benin-City recently

“During the operation, one Endurance Oviojie (22yrs) was

arrested, while others later identified as Clinton, Jeff, Mike, and Emmanuel alias Slim Khalifa (surnames yet unknown) escaped by jumping the fence to neighboring compounds.

“The following exhibits were immediately recovered in their possession; one English Beretta pistol, one locally fabricated pistol, one ammunition, 18 live cartridges, five phones of various make, one electronic tablet, charms and illicit drug.

“Further investigations led to

the recovery of Four Mercedes-Benz vehicles of different make.

“The arrested suspects have been charged to court for prosecution while the manhunt for the fleeing members of the gang continues.

“CP Monday Agbonika warns all criminals to either relocate from the State or face the music. He assures the good people of the Edo State that the Command would sustain its commitment against crime until everyone feels safe anywhere he/she is.”

## Military arrests 20 oil thieves, destroys 19 illegal refining sites in N/Delta

Troops of the Nigerian Army have arrested 20 suspected oil thieves, destroyed 19 illegal refining sites and recovered 589, 000 litres of stolen products in the Niger Delta region.

The Acting Deputy Director 6 Division Army Public Relations-Relations, Lt. Col. Jonah Danjuma disclosed this in a statement issued in Port Harcourt on Sunday.

Danjuma said the feat was achieved during a week-long operation conducted in four states of the region in collaboration with sister security agencies.

He listed the states as River’s, Bayelsa and Delta, pointing out that the fight against oil theft and pipeline vandalism is yielding results.

According to the statement, “The ongoing anti Crude Oil Theft operations in the Niger Delta Region is progressing with several successes recorded.

“In multiple operations conducted across the NDR between 19 and 25 May 2025, troops of 6 Division, Nigerian Army with other security agencies have successfully dismantled 19 illegal refining sites, with 20 suspected oil thieves apprehended, and over 589,000 litres of stolen products recovered.

“The anti Crude Oil Theft operations conducted by the troops in Rivers State, around Okolomade, Orashi and Ozochi Forests in Abua/Odual Local Government Area, uncovered several illegal refining sites, eight cooking ovens and massive storage facilities filled with over 300,000 litres of illegally refined Automotive Gasoline Oil, over 250,000 litres of stolen crude oil, seven reservoirs, six receivers and a generator were recovered.”

“Relatedly, at the fringes of the Imo River, nine illegal refining sites were taken out, with 23 drum pots, ten drum receivers, 321 sacks and over 16, 000 litres of stolen products handled in consonance with operational mandate.”

Danjuma further said troops of the Division, projected operations into Ndoni at Ogba/Ndoni/Egbema, where 245 sacks filled with 12,500 litres illegally refined AGO were recovered.

“Similar, operations was conducted around Ogbonga Forest in Bonny LGA, where troops apprehended a suspected oil thief with a fibre hand pulled boat and a 400 meters hose, evidently stained with crude oil, four spanners, a TECHNO T353 mobile phone amongst several other items recovered.”

## Boundary commission uses drones to improve border security —DG

The National Boundary Commission has announced its commitment to integrating research and technology, including drones, into boundary management.

The Director-General, Mr Adamu Adaji, disclosed this on Sunday in Abuja while evaluating the impact of President Bola Tinubu’s administration after two years in office.

Adaji told newsmen that the commission has transitioned from analogue to digital and electronic systems in managing boundaries.

He said that, with President Tinubu’s support, the commission has made significant strides in addressing Nigeria’s boundary issues.

“For those of us in mapping and surveying, we have progressed from traditional analogue methods to electronic systems.

“Now, with satellite imaging, aerial mapping, and drones, we can assess areas that would have been difficult to access on foot. So, we are truly embracing technology,” he said.

He reiterated the commission’s dedication to leveraging available technology to obtain accurate, real-time data for efficient boundary definition.

The Director-General also noted that research plays a crucial role in data collection to support the delineation of internal, international, and maritime boundaries.

He added that the commission’s Research and Policy Analysis Department is well-equipped to provide relevant data for informed decision-making in effective boundary management.

“Going forward, we will capitalise on Tinubu’s ‘Renewed Hope Agenda’ to deepen the adoption of technology and research in defining and demarcating internal and international boundaries.

“This will ultimately deliver the dividends of democracy to the people, especially those residing in border communities.

“We will focus on the physical definition of boundaries, particularly in areas where disputes have been resolved.

## NEWS

## Foreign

# Russia launches largest air attack yet on Ukraine

Russia has intensified strikes on Ukraine, with the highest number of drones and missiles launched in a single night yet.

At least 14 people, including three children, were killed and dozens injured, officials said. The attack came a day after the Ukrainian capital Kyiv suffered one of the heaviest assaults of the war.

Russia has been ignoring calls for a ceasefire.

"Without really strong pressure on the Russian leadership, this cruelty cannot be stopped," Ukraine's president said. "America's silence will only encourage Putin" - Volodymyr Zelensky added in an apparent effort to exert pressure on President Donald Trump who has said the Russian leader is interested in ending the war.

Putin launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and Moscow currently controls about 20% of Ukrainian territory.

This includes Crimea - Ukraine's southern peninsula

annexed by Russia in 2014.

Rescuers were working in more than 30 cities and villages after the "massive" strike, Zelensky said in a statement on Sunday morning.

"Russia is dragging out this war and continues to kill every day," he said.

"The world may go on for a weekend, but the war continues, despite weekends and weekdays. This cannot be ignored.

In terms of the numbers of drones and missiles launched, Saturday night was the highest yet.

Russia is able not only to just manufacture them at a faster rate, but they are also evolving. Shahed drones are now being packed with more explosives and improved technology to evade detection.

Ukraine's Air Force said that since 20:40 on Saturday local time (17:40 GMT), Russia had carried out strikes using 367 missiles of various types, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and drones.

The air force said it had shot down 45 cruise missiles and

destroyed 266 UAVs, with most regions in Ukraine affected and hits recorded in 22 locations.

Deaths were reported in several regions.

Russia's defence ministry said it had inflicted damage on targets including military airfields, ammunition depots and electric warfare stations, claiming damage across 142 areas.

According to Ukraine's Minister of Internal Affairs, Ihor Klymenko, 13 regions were attacked, with more than 70 people injured, 80 residential buildings damaged, and 27 fires recorded.

He called it a "combined, ruthless strike aimed at civilians".

Of the 12 people killed, three were children aged eight, 12 and 17 in the Zhytomyr region, Ukraine's state emergencies service DSNS said.

Klymenko said they were from the same family and their parents were in hospital.

Two women, aged 85 and 56, were killed after a house in Kupiansk was hit, according to Oleh Syniehubov, head of the

Kharkiv regional office.

In the Kyiv region, four people were killed and 16 injured, including three children, DSNS said.

In Kyiv, local officials reported 11 injuries, multiple fires and damage to residential buildings, including a dormitory.

Hundreds of people headed to the city's deep metro stations for shelter. The din of drones filled the air, occasionally punctuated by the booms of air defences, or the moments of impact. Several fires were reported.

A BBC colleague messaged to say a block of flats had been destroyed, just a five minute drive from where she lived.

The strikes come as the capital marks its annual Kyiv Day holiday.

In Russia, the defence ministry said 110 Ukrainian drones were destroyed and intercepted over 12 Russian regions and the Crimea peninsula between midnight and 0700 local time.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin reported that 12 drones heading towards the capital were shot down.

## Second suspected sabotage in France as power cut hits Nice

A second power outage in two days has hit the French Riviera region after a fire at a substation in Nice overnight, which authorities said was caused by a malicious act.

At least 45,000 homes were affected after the blaze broke out at around 02:00 local time (01:00 BST) on Sunday, a day after nearby Cannes suffered a massive blackout that was blamed on suspected sabotage.

Police in Nice say "tire tracks" were found and the door to the substation, in the west of the city, was "broken", according to local media reports.

Nice Airport, the tramway network, and neighbouring towns of Saint-Laurent-du-Var and Cagnes-sur-Mer, were impacted before power was restored later in the morning.

Nice's mayor Christian Estrosi said on X that he "strongly denounced" the "malicious acts that affect our country".

The city's deputy mayor, Gaël Nofri, said the substation

fire was "probably of criminal origin".

It came a day after Cannes suffered a major blackout during the international film festival. Officials said it may have been caused by an arson attack on a substation.

Around 160,000 homes in the city and surrounding areas lost power.

Several screenings were interrupted by the power cut in the morning, before festival organisers were able to switch to private generators.

At the moment, no link has been established between the two incidents.

Estrosi said authorities would reinforce the security network around the Nice's electric sites. An investigation into "organised arson" has been opened.

Nice prosecutor Damien Martinelli was quoted by AFP news agency as saying investigations were underway, in particular "to clarify the damage and the manner in which the act was committed".

## School bus attack caught in tensions between Pakistan, India

When I heard the attack happened, the ground fell from beneath my feet. All the parents started running towards the bus, no-one could understand what was going on," Nasir Mehmood, a sergeant in Pakistan's army tells us.

Nasir and I are in the city of Quetta, sitting in the waiting room of the largest military hospital in the province of Balochistan. His 14-year-old son Mohammad Ahmad told him he was flung across the army school bus in a bombing in Khuzdar, a few hours' drive away.

The bus was carrying around 40 schoolchildren when it exploded at about 07:40 local time (02:40 GMT) on Wednesday.

"I reached the hospital, and there were screams of children everywhere, it was the only thing you could hear," Nasir said. "My eyes just kept searching for my son."

Only the most serious cases were airlifted to the Combined Military Hospital. The military have said the death toll has now risen to eight, with six children killed and dozens injured. No group has admitted carrying out the attack.

It is rare for foreign journalists to be allowed to enter the province, south-west of Pakistan, let alone a hospital on the army's compound. The military said they wanted international media to witness the impact of the attack themselves.

Pakistan alleges India is linked to the attack, though there is no independent evidence - and it is a claim Delhi firmly denies.

India and Pakistan are in the midst of a fragile ceasefire, after a two-week conflict that was their

most significant one in decades. It saw them exchange drone attacks, missiles and artillery fire, and left dozens of casualties.

This attack in Balochistan is now in the middle of the tensions, with news channels broadcasting pictures of the children who were killed, most of them girls between the ages of 12 and 16, alongside accusations of an "Indian terror campaign". Images of scrapped metal, children's shoes and abandoned backpacks strewn along the scene highlight the tragedy.

As we walked through the intensive care unit, some children lay unconscious on their beds, others thrashed in pain. One young girl kept calling out for her mother as nurses tried to calm her. Doctors told us several children were in critical condition, having suffered extensive trauma, burns and fractured bones. The night before we arrived, another child had died.

Pakistan's Minister of Information, Attaullah Tarar, says there is a history of Indian proxies operating in Balochistan. In turn, India says that Pakistan has been harbouring militants who wage attacks on Indian-administered Kashmir for years.

The killing of 26 people in April, most of them tourists in Pahalgam, sparked the most recent conflict. Pakistan has called for an open investigation led by an independent party.

However, Tarar denied that such an investigation was necessary in Balochistan.

"Pahalgam was a one-off incident," he told us. "We are the victims in this case. We have been suffering. There is a history. We have evidence. So what can I say?"



**DRONE STRIKE:**

Firefighters work at a site of a Russian missile and drone strike in Khmelnytskyi, Ukraine

## France impounds UK vessel accused of illegal fishing

A British fishing vessel has been impounded by the French authorities, accused of illegally fishing in their waters.

It was seized in the English Channel and is being held at the port of Boulogne, unable to leave while the French authorities consider bringing a prosecution.

The vessel was stopped at sea by the French Navy on Thursday night, with its crew alleged to have been fishing in French waters without a licence.

The incident comes days after Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer was criticised by British fishermen over his reset deal with the European Union, which gives

EU fishing vessels access to UK waters for 12 more years.

The Foreign Office said it was offering support to a British national in France and was in touch with local authorities.

"As the vessel remains subject to an ongoing investigation by French fisheries authorities, we are unable to comment further at this time," a government spokesperson added.

According to the French Coastguard, the navy patrol vessel Pluvier was conducting inspections in their waters overnight on 23 May, finding the British vessel to have been allegedly operating without a licence.

The fishing vessel was diverted

to Boulogne "for the purpose of initiating prosecution".

The Conservatives accused the French authorities of "shameful double standards" over the arrest.

Shadow home secretary Chris Philp said they had failed to stop thousands of migrants crossing the Channel in small boats, accusing France of "taking no action whatsoever at sea and often ushering the illegal immigrants into UK waters".

"Yet when a UK fishing vessel is in French waters all of a sudden they are magically able to act. If the French can now intercept boats then they should start stopping the boats with

illegal immigrants - as international law obliges them to do."

The UK and the EU have struck a deal that covers fishing, trade, defence, energy and strengthening ties in a number of policy areas still up for negotiation.

A key part of the deal involves giving European fishing boats a further 12 years of access to British waters in exchange for easing some trade frictions.

Critics from the Conservatives and Reform UK described the deal as a "surrender" to the EU, while the Liberal Democrats said the government had taken some "positive first steps" to rebuilding ties with Europe.

## Foreign

## NEWS

## North Korea makes arrests over botched ship launch

North Korea has detained three shipyard officials over an accident during the launch of a new warship on Wednesday, state media say.

Parts of the 5,000-tonne destroyer's bottom were crushed during the launch ceremony, tipping the vessel off balance.

An investigation into the incident, which North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un described as a "criminal act", is ongoing.

KCNA, North Korea's official news agency, identified those detained as the chief engineer of the northern Chongjin shipyard where the destroyer was built, as well as the construction head and an administrative manager.

The report said that the three were "responsible for the accident".

On Friday, KCNA said the manager of the shipyard, Hong Kil Ho, had been summoned by law enforcers.

Satellite images showed the vessel lying on its side covered by large blue tarpaulins, and a portion of the vessel appeared to be on land.

North Korea's state media

did not mention any casualties or injuries at the time, downplaying the damage.

KCNA reported that there were no holes on the ship's bottom - contrary to initial reports.

"The hull starboard was scratched and a certain amount of seawater flowed into the stern section," the agency said.

Kim said on Thursday the accident was caused by "absolute carelessness, irresponsibility and unscientific empiricism".

He added that those who made "irresponsible errors" would be dealt with at a plenary meeting next month.

It is not clear what punishment they might face, but the authoritarian state has a woeful human rights record.

It is uncommon for North Korea to publicly disclose local accidents - though it has done this a handful of times in the past.

This particular accident comes weeks after North Korea unveiled a similar 5,000-tonne destroyer, the Choe Hyon.

Kim had called that warship a "breakthrough" in modernising North Korea's navy and said it would be deployed early next year.

## Malaysia wants Myanmar ceasefire extended amid ASEAN ban on coup leaders

Malaysia has urged for the extension and expansion of a post-earthquake ceasefire in Myanmar due to run out by the end of May, as ongoing fighting calls into question its effectiveness.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan issued the call in a meeting with fellow Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) foreign ministers in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday, a day before the leaders' summit.

The regional bloc has so far led fruitless diplomatic efforts to end Myanmar's conflict since the military staged a coup and deposed civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021. Myanmar's failure to implement a five-point peace deal reached in April 2021 has led ASEAN to exclude the coup leaders from attending its annual meeting.

"We call on the stakeholders in Myanmar to cease hostilities, and to extend and expand the ceasefire, to facilitate the long and difficult path towards recovery, and ease the suffering of the people of Myanmar," Mohamad said in his opening remarks.

He proposed that the ceasefire be extended and expanded "beyond the currently affected zones".

Malaysia currently holds the rotating chairmanship of ASEAN.

Mohamad earlier said the bloc has to step up efforts as Myanmar's problems had spilled over borders, with a growing number of refugees fleeing to neighbouring ASEAN nations

and rising trans-border crime.

Malaysia's efforts now focus on de-escalation of violence and greater access to humanitarian aid, but he said plans for political dialogue between the conflicting parties would be challenging due to a "trust deficit".

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing-led military government initially declared a truce in the many-sided civil war after a massive earthquake in late March killed nearly 3,800 people and left tens of thousands homeless.

The truce has been extended before, although conflict monitors say fighting has continued, including regular military government air attacks.

In April, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim met Min Aung Hlaing in Bangkok and urged him to respect the truce.

Anwar said after the meeting that ASEAN had expressed "concern" and wanted to slowly build consensus to ensure "fair and free elections" - something analysts have said will be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

ASEAN's longstanding policy of noninterference in the domestic affairs of its member states has also hampered it from helping resolve the conflict.

The United Nations and independent conflict monitors say the military government has continued its deadly campaign of aerial bombardment despite the armistice.

In mid-May, witnesses said, a military air attack hit a school near the earthquake's epicentre in Sagaing region, killing 22 people, including 20 children.



**SECOND ANNIVERSARY:**

A man holds an image of George Floyd at a vigil on the second anniversary of his death.

File: Eric Miller/Reuters

## Outrage, horror after Israeli attack kills nine children of Gaza doctor

An Israeli strike has killed nearly the entire family of a Khan Younis doctor while she was at work, Gaza health officials said.

The attack hit the home of Alaa al-Najjar, a paediatrician at the southern city's Nasser Hospital, on Friday, setting it ablaze and killing nine of her 10 children, according to the head of the hospital's paediatrics department, Ahmad al-Farra.

The dead children, two of whom remain under the rubble, range in age from seven months to 12 years old, said Gaza's Government Media Office. It named them as Sidar, Luqman, Sadin, Reval, Ruslan, Jubran, Eve, Rakan and Yahya.

Al-Najjar's husband was critically injured in the attack.

He has severe chest and head wounds, including a skull fracture, and is now receiving treatment in Nasser Hospital's intensive care unit, al-Farra told Al Jazeera.

The couple's only surviving child, 11-year-old Adam, is also severely injured. He is currently "in the moderate ICU department with his mother", said al-Farra.

"It is unbelievable," al-Farra said of the attack's impact. "You can't imagine the shock that [al-Najjar] had when she heard about that [attack]. But up until now, she is trying to be near her son and her husband to survive."

He called on people around the world to "be on the right side of humanity" and speak

out against the bombardment. "These children, they have no voice. Their mother ... she's [in shock]," he said. "Please, I ask everyone to be her voice [in] this world. Please."

'New phase of genocide'

The UN's special rapporteur for the Palestinian territory, Francesca Albanese, slammed the attack on the al-Najjar home as part of a "sadistic pattern" of a "new phase of genocide" facing Palestinians in the besieged enclave.

Hamas said it followed a routine of Israel "deliberately targeting ... medical personnel, civilians and their families in an attempt to break their will".

The Israeli military said it had struck suspected fighters operating from a structure next

to its forces in an area where civilians had been evacuated. "The claim regarding harm to uninvolved civilians is under review," the military added.

On Monday, Israel issued forced evacuation orders for Khan Younis, Gaza's second-largest city, warning of an "unprecedented attack". There has been heavy, deadly bombardment in the area daily.

The al-Najjar children were among dozens killed in Israel's attacks on Friday and Saturday.

According to Gaza's Health Ministry, the bodies of 79 people killed in Israeli attacks were brought to hospitals between Friday and midday Saturday. That count does not include facilities in the north of the enclave that are inaccessible, it said.

## Five years after George Floyd's death, why misinformation still persists

Five years ago on May 25, 2020, a white police officer in the United States killed George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, during an arrest.

A bystander's video showed officer Derek Chauvin kneeling on Floyd's neck for about nine minutes in Minneapolis, Minnesota, as Floyd pleaded that he couldn't breathe. The footage sparked weeks of global protests against police brutality and racism. It contributed to a jury's murder conviction against Chauvin and a federal investigation into the Minneapolis Police Department.

Although ample evidence showed that Chauvin and police misconduct were to blame for Floyd's death, another narrative quickly emerged - that Floyd died because of a drug overdose.

Five years later, that falsehood is central to calls for President Donald Trump to pardon Chauvin.

Representative Marjorie

Taylor Greene, a member of Trump's Republican Party from Georgia, for example, recently revived her longstanding and long-debunked take that Chauvin did not cause Floyd's death.

"I strongly support Derek Chauvin being pardoned and released from prison," Greene wrote in a May 14 X post. "George Floyd died of a drug overdose."

In 2021, a Minnesota jury convicted Chauvin of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. Chauvin also pleaded guilty to twice violating a federal criminal civil rights statute - once against Floyd and once against a 14-year-old in 2017. The state and federal sentences that Chauvin is serving concurrently each exceeded 20 years.

In 2023 after a two-year investigation sparked by Floyd's death, the US Department of Justice found that the city of

Minneapolis and its police department engaged in a pattern of civil rights violations, including use of excessive force and unlawful discrimination against Black and Native American people.

The narrative that Floyd died of an overdose persisted through the involved police officers' criminal trials and beyond their convictions, in part because powerful political critics of the racial justice movement sought to rewrite history with false claims. It was one of many false statements about Floyd's actions, his criminal history and the protests that followed his murder.

Experts said systemic racism contributes also to the proliferation of the inaccurate narratives and their staying power.

"The core through-line that emerges is the kind of long-standing, deep racist narratives around Black criminality and also the ways people try to jus-


tify who is or isn't an 'innocent victim,'" Rachel Kuo, a University of Wisconsin-Madison professor who studies race, social movements and technology, said of the falsehoods.

The summer 2020 protests built on 2014 and 2016 protests against police brutality, but with Floyd's case as a catalyst, racial justice advocates achieved global visibility and corporate attention, Kuo said.

That visibility came with a price.

When people of colour achieve visibility for their social movements or political demands, an effort to delegitimise those demands quickly follows, Kuo said. Misinformation plays a part by trying to "chip away" at the belief that what happened to Floyd was unjust or to undermine the protest movement overall, she said.

How conservative influencers distort an autopsy report to push overdose claim.

 <p><b>The Nigerian Observer</b> ...That the people may know</p>	<h2 style="margin:0;">ADVERTISEMENT RATES (PRINT)</h2>
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FULL PAGE	517,344	556,145	369,500	397,213	325,150	349,536	665,156	715,043	443,440	476,698
13 X 4	369,500	397,213	295,600	317,770	206,938	222,458	443,500	476,763	369,550	397,266
10 X 4	340,000	365,500	273,500	294,013	177,400	190,705	370,000	397,750	295,600	317,770
HALF PAGE	295,600	317,770	236,500	254,238	147,800	158,885	340,000	365,500	273,450	293,959
10 X 3	221,700	238,328	147,800	158,885	118,300	127,173	266,000	285,950	251,300	270,148
13 X2	206,900	222,418	133,000	142,925	103,500	111,263	221,800	238,435	147,810	158,896
QUARTER PAGE	192,150	206,561	118,250	127,119	88,690	95,342	236,500	254,238	133,000	142,975
CENTER SPREAD	1,356,968	1,466,992						B/W	1,148,181	1,241,276
HALF CENTER	991,590	1,071,989						B/W	887,272	959,212

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

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BACK PAGE	ADD 60% SURCHARGE			
PAGES 4 & 5	ADD 40% SURCHARGE			
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**EFFECTIVE FROM FEBRUARY 1, 2023**

# Sports

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

## Gov. Abiodun hails athletes' spirit during 2024 Gateway Games tour

Governor Dapo Abiodun of Ogun State has praised the impressive display of skill and sportsmanship at the ongoing Gateway Games 2024, describing the performances by young athletes as "truly inspiring".

During a tour of several key venues, the governor made his first stop at the Alake Sports Centre, where he observed spirited male and female volleyball matches.

"The energy and skill on display were remarkable," he said, expressing pride in the athletes' performances.

The governor's next stop was the Ijeja venue, where he watched gymnasts, table tennis players, and handball teams in action. Commending the participants, he noted the high level of discipline and dedication evident in each event.

"These young competitors are not just representing their states, but the future of Nigerian sport," he remarked.

A key moment of the day came at the MKO Abiola International Stadium, where Governor Abiodun witnessed a series of thrilling athletic races. He was particularly moved

by Team Ogun's victory in the 4x400m Mixed Relay and personally presented the gold medals to the winning team.

"It was a proud and unforgettable moment for us all," the governor said, adding that Ogun State remains committed to developing grassroots sports and providing opportunities for young talent to flourish.

According to the official medal table released by the Main Organising Committee at 11am, Ogun State currently sits third on the log with a total of 69 medals – 27 gold, 16 silver, and 26 bronze.



## Ogun Games: Medal rush for team Edo, dominates Crickets, Gymnastics as team closes top 3 bracket

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

It was a spectacular performance from Team Edo in the ongoing National Sports Festival in Ogun state, Abeokuta on Saturday as their Gymnasts swept all the eight Gold medals and one silver available in the men category of the game on to help the state climb up in the medal table.

Like a tsunami, team Edo's volcano erupted at the Cricket Pavilion with Favour Eseigbe captained Edo Cricket (female) team picking up their first Gold after triumph over Team Lagos in the early hours of the day.

Edo Male Cricket Team also won Gold in the T20 event after beating Kaduna. Kaduna scored 72 runs all out, while Team Edo chased the score with only the loss of 2 wickets in 9 overs to secure victory with 8 wickets remaining to domi-



nate the sport as expected.

The Gold medal rush continues at Alake Sports Complex as Abel Shedrack smashed Lagos opponents 2-1 to pick Gold in Squash.

The team Edo's hurricane fully swept through Alake Sports Complex ferociously as team Edo sweeps all 8 Gold, 7

silver and 1 bronze in Gymnastics (Men) category.

At the Baptist Boys High School, Edo Kickboxing athletes Emeka Daniel showed no mercy as he ruthlessly rushed his opponent aside to win Gold in the 81 kg male kickboxing event.

They also got a consolation in Cycling after picking Bronze

in the female 10km individual time trial event.

Speaking of the achievements of team Edo gymnasts, Head coach Oni Erhunmwunsee said that it was not over yet as he expects more gold from the female category taking place on Sunday. He added that it is normal for the state to retain and maintain its pride of place in the game God has blessed the state with abundant talents

Also speaking, the Head Coach of Edo Cricket Theophilus Ibodeme said that victory is sweet. He expressed the optimism that something very good will also come out of the female team whose finals games will also hold on Sunday.

Team Edo has currently made it to the Semifinals in many games including Handball male team who sailed through to the semi finals after beating Sokoto 20-15.

## Former Enyimba coach, Olanrewaju delighted to bag UEFA B certificate

Former Enyimba FC head coach, Yemi Olanrewaju has bagged a UEFA B certificate in coaching after the successful completion of his theory and practical classes.

The young tactician, who completed the coaching course under Scottish Football Association, expressed excitement after been awarded the certificate.

According to Olanrewaju, "I am glad to successfully un-

dertake the UEFA B theory and practical classes under the Scottish FA and then pass the subsequent examinations.

"I am now a proud UEFA B Certificate holder. Thank you to everyone that has been part of my journey so far."

He concluded. Olanrewaju, was part of the title-winning team with Enyimba FC under his former boss, Finidi George in the 2022/23 NPFL season.



## 22nd National Sports Festival: Flamingos reach final as Golden Eaglets lose to Team Ogun

The Golden Eaglets will contest for the bronze medals of the male football event of the ongoing 22nd National Sports Festival, after they lost 1-2 to Team Ogun in the second semi finals of the event in Ikenne-Remo on Sunday.

In the first semi final, Team Kwara defeated Team Kaduna by a lone goal to qualify for the final of the male football event, which will be held on Tuesday at the MKO Abiola Sports Complex.

In the female event, Nigeria's U17 boys, Flamingos flew their way into the final after a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Team Ogun. Shakirat Moshood made no mistake from six yards after the 2022 FIFA World Cup bronze medallists were awarded a penalty with minutes left in the encounter.

They will now face Team Delta in Tuesday's grand finale, after the latter dismissed Team Osun 4-1 in the first semi final.

The third-place matches

will take place at the Remo Stars Stadium, while the final of the male and female events will hold at the MKO Abiola Sports Complex in Abeokuta.

The Golden Eaglets and

Flamingos are participating in the 22nd National Sports Festival as part of the praiseworthy Invited Junior Athletes (IJA) initiative of the National Sports Commission.



## Ex-Edo deputy Governor Philip Shaibu appointed NIS DG

Former Deputy Governor of Edo State, Rt. Hon. Comrade Philip Shaibu, has been appointed as the Director General of the National Institute of Sports (NIS), reports BSNSports.com.ng.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on Saturday named Shaibu as the new chief executive of the nation's principal citadel of sports science and research, to take over from Professor Olawale Moronkola with immediate effect.

Comrade Shaibu's unmatched passion for sports development was evident, as under his stewardship, sports in Edo State witnessed a historic revival in football and other sporting disciplines.

Bendel Insurance Football

Club was not only revived from obscurity but rebranded into a formidable force in Nigerian football.

Edo Queens flourished with new energy and purpose, becoming a beacon of women's football excellence.

The Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium became a world-class facility, hosting national and international tournaments under his watch. As a former soccer player, Comrade Shaibu brings invaluable first-hand experience to the Nigerian Institute of Sports.

His track record as a distinguished sports administrator and policymaker further assures us that this appointment will usher in a new dawn for sports development nationwide.

# SPORTS

## NPFL25: Bendel Insurance makes top five finish as league ends

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

As the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) 2024/25 season came to an end on Sunday, May 25, 2025, Bendel Insurance Football Club of Benin finished among the top five teams in the elite division.

Though succumbed to a 2-1 defeat at the Cathedral, Nnamdi Azikiwe stadium in Enugu in the last fixture against already relegated Lobi Stars but the loss has no effect on the Benin Arsenal who fought from the relegation zone in the first round to become contenders in the Continental battle.

In the Match day 38 and last of the season, Uche Collins raised the hope of Insurance finishing on a winning note with an early lead goal (Penalty) scored in the 5th minute of action, only for Lobi Stars to come from behind to score twice (Kumaga 28, Kunduahima 53') for a 2-1 result in fa-

avour of the hosts.

Bendel Insurance finished fifth on the table after winning 15 games, drew 11 and 12 losses to record 56 points, four points behind third placed. Abia Warriors who will be playing in the CAF Confederation and three points close to fourth place finishers Ikorodu City.

On return from the NNL in the 2022/2023 seasons, In-

urance FC shocked the big guns and finished in the fifth position on the table after the Super six tournament in Lagos but went ahead to beat Rangers 1-9 in the FA Cup final in Asaba to secure CAF Confederation ticket with Coach Monday Odigie as the Head Coach and Technical Director of the team.

The Benin Arsenal finished in the 10th position in the

2023/24 season.

In the season that just ended, the Benin based team started poorly ending their first game of the season in a goalless draw at home with Rivers United on September 7, 2024. Their poor form and struggle gave way to a remarkable turnaround towards the end of the first round, rising from 19 position to 5th on the last day of the season.



### Nigeria players' union applauds Philip Shaibu's appointment

The Nigeria Players Union, the National Association of Nigerian Professional Footballers (NANPF) heartily congratulates one of their own, Ex-Footballer, and former deputy governor of Edo State, Comrade Philip Shaibu on his well-deserved appointment as the Director General of the National Institute for Sports (NIS).

Your unwavering support for the development of sports in Edo State particularly football

during your tenure as Deputy Governor is deeply appreciated. Your unconfined passion and commitment in fostering unity and peace within the then-PFA remains commendable.

NANPF is confident that your leadership and experience will greatly enhance the progress and repositioning of the NIS.

Once again, congratulations on this remarkable achievement. We wish you success in your new role.

## EPL Final Day: Colwill's goal secures Champions League return for Chelsea

Levi Colwill's decisive strike early in the second half ensured Chelsea secured a spot in next season's UEFA Champions League with a narrow 1-0 win over Nottingham Forest at the City Ground on Sunday.

The victory capped off a strong end to the Premier League campaign for Enzo Maresca's men, who finished fourth in the table. Forest, who had been aiming for a top-five finish, instead dropped to seventh and will now compete in the UEFA Conference League next season.

Colwill capitalized on a defensive lapse from Forest, latching onto a low cross from Pedro Neto to score at the far post in the 50th minute. The goal silenced the home crowd and proved to be the game's turning point in a match with few clear chances.

Chelsea's return to Europe's premier club competition comes after a two-year absence, and it marks a successful end to what had been a turbulent season. Maresca, under scrutiny from fans for his defensive tactics, guided his side to five wins

in their final six league fixtures.

Forest, who remained in the top three for several weeks during the campaign, faltered at the crucial moment, failing to win any of their final four home matches. Despite the disappointment, their seventh-place finish is the club's best since finishing third in 1994-95, a notable improvement from their relegation battle just a year ago.

Pre-match, Forest players were met by passionate fans with red flares and balloons. The atmosphere intensified with the

emotional appearance of striker Taiwo Awoniyi, who had recently recovered from a serious abdominal injury that required surgery and an induced coma.

The first half was marked by missed chances, including a wasted opportunity from Pedro Neto and a close-range volley over the bar by Forest's Chris Wood. Chelsea's lineup, the youngest average age in Premier League history at 24 years and 36 days, showed maturity when it mattered most.

Colwill's winner came after Neco Williams failed to clear effectively, allowing Neto to deliver the assist. As word spread of Newcastle trailing Everton, hope briefly reignited among Forest supporters, but Chelsea remained composed and saw out the result.



### Rivers Angels Battle Nasarawa Amazons In 2025 Women's President Federation Cup Final

Multiple Federation Cup winners, Rivers Angels will battle Nasarawa Amazons in the final of the 2025 Women's President Federation Cup.

Rivers Angels saw off the stiff challenge of Ikom Angels of Uyo 1-0 in Aba, while Nasarawa Amazons bumped Edo Queens 2-0 in Ayingba.

Cup holders Rivers Angels, who have won the competition nine times, will have their hands full against 2005 and 2019 champions Nasarawa Amazons of Lafia.

Semi-Final Results (Women) Rivers Angels (Rivers) 1-0 Ikom Angels (Akwa Ibom)

Edo Queens (Edo) 0-2 Nasarawa Amazons (Nasarawa)

## Athletics: Tobi Amusan blazes to Victory in Rabat with African lead record

Nigeria's sprint queen, Tobi Amusan, reaffirmed her status as a global hurdling force with a commanding performance at the Rabat Diamond League on Sunday, clocking a season's best and African lead of 12.45s to win the women's 100m hurdles.

The world record holder delivered a flawless race, storming past the field to not only secure victory but also set a new Meeting Record in the Moroccan capital. Her time stands as the fastest by any African ath-

lete this year, underlining her return to peak form ahead of a crucial Olympic year.

Dutch hurdler Nadine Visser finished second in 12.57s, while Poland's Pia Skrzyszowska claimed third in 12.69s, but the night belonged to Amusan, who looked composed, explosive, and in control throughout the race.

This performance marks a significant milestone for the Nigerian star, who has steadily built momentum this season after an injury-plagued 2023.

It also sends a strong message to her rivals as the Paris 2024 Olympics draw nearer.

"I'm trusting the process, staying patient, and putting in the work," Amusan said after the race. "Tonight was about executing and getting the job done, and I'm grateful it all came together."

With this victory, Amusan adds another Diamond League win to her name and remains a firm favourite to defend her continental and world status in the months ahead

## 22nd NSF Ogun Games: Team Edo shines in Para Powerlifting, Karate, Judo

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

As team Edo continued with its impressive performance in the ongoing National Sports Festival in Ogun state, the para athletes and Karate on Sunday made their contri-

butions as Daniel Omogbai in 107kg (male) category, of para Powerlifting, clinched a Gold medal with a lift of 200kg to defeat Obinna from Abia state.

On the same Parapowerlifting event

Musa Muhammad also won

Silver in the +107kg just as Hycent Nnaji won Silver in the 72kg as they round off with 2 Gold, 6 Silver and 4 Bronze

In Karate, Wilkinson Agbeishoma clinched Gold in the +84kg Male Kumite category of the combat sport