

The ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) on Monday described Nigeria's opposition parties as weak and disorganised ahead of the 2027 general elections, saying they appear to be "merely breathing but not competing."

Also, the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, urged the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to use a recent court

Opposition party weak, says APC

ruling as an opportunity to rebuild and reposition itself.

The Lagos State spokesman of the APC, Mr Seye Oladejo, in a statement issued in Lagos, said the nation might be heading towards one of the most predictable electoral cycles in its democratic history due to the inability of opposition parties to present a credible and organised alternative to the ruling party.

According to him, parties expected to challenge the APC and offer alternative programmes of governance have instead been engulfed in internal crises, leadership struggles and political opportunism.

"As the nation approaches the 2027 elections, Nigeria may be heading towards one of the most predictable electoral cycles in its democratic history.

"The reason is simple:

Apan opposition repeatedly showing a lack of coherence, courage and constructive engagement with the pressing needs of Nigerians," Oladejo said.

He noted that instead of building strong institutions and policy-driven platforms capable of addressing national challenges, opposition parties have largely focused on media campaigns

and constant criticism of the government without presenting practical solutions.

"Rather than building strong institutions or policy-driven platforms, the opposition has largely confined itself to media theatrics and perpetual complaints," he said.

Oladejo also pointed to what he described as intense rivalry among opposition leaders, saying personal ambition and the struggle for political control

have further weakened their capacity to mobilise support and present a united front.

"Instead of building consensus and strengthening party structures, leading figures appear trapped in relentless contests of individual aspirations.

The result is a fragmented political bloc unable to present a coherent national alternative," he said.

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The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968

VOL. 47, NO. 1,214

TUESDAY 10TH MARCH, 2026.

NAF launches course to reduce civilian casualties in air operations

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Okpebholo breaks ground on mega power, LNG project, promises jobs, industrial growth

OLOGBO (EDO)

Edo State Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo has announced that his administration is fostering a business-friendly environment designed to boost manufacturing, create jobs, and drive sustainable economic growth.

The governor made the declaration on Monday during the groundbreaking ceremony for a 100MW Power Generating Plant and a 300 Metric Tons Per Day Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facility at Taihu Industrial

Park in Ologbo, Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area.

Describing the project as a milestone for industrial growth, energy security, and economic transformation, Governor Okpebholo said it will generate prosperity for Edo residents and attract further private sector investment.

"We are happy that this great investment is happening in our time. We do not sign fake MoUs; we follow the law to develop Edo State. Today marks another achievement in industrial growth, energy security, and eco-

nommic transformation," he said.

Welcoming the investors, he added, "When we were approached about this power plant project, we acted swiftly, partnering with the company and offering free land. What matters is investment, not money. Edo State is committed to providing an enabling environment for businesses to thrive."

Governor Okpebholo also highlighted that the project aligns with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's "renewed hope agenda," where power remains the backbone of industrialization.

He called on the host community to protect the investment and maintain peace, urging collaboration between investors and local residents.

Local government chairman Hon. Eric Osawaru described the groundbreaking as "a significant milestone for Ikpoba-Okha, Edo State, and Nigeria's energy sector," adding that it promises job creation, skills development, infrastructure growth, and community empowerment.

Deacon Osazuwa, speaking for the host community, commended the governor for improving inves-

tor confidence in Edo State.

"We thank you for choosing Ologbo for this investment; your name will forever be remembered as this project boosts local economic activity," he said.

Commissioner for Power, Mr Paul Usebor, emphasised that the 100MW power plant will strengthen electricity supply within Edo State and beyond, while the LNG facility will enhance cleaner energy

usage and energy security.

Representing MD Taihu, Mr Jiang Fan assured that the plant, set for completion in six months, will guarantee reliable power for industries and communities.

Phase one of the Taihu Benin Industrial Park will cover 29 hectares, developed by CCETC as the major contractor, and is expected to support regional energy supply and industrial growth.



GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo (5th left) performing a groundbreaking ceremony for the establishment of a 100MW Power Generating Plant and 300 Metric Tons Per Day LNG facility, Taihu Industrial Park in Ologbo, Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area. With him are, the State Deputy Governor, Hon Dennis Idahosa (3rd left); Speaker, Edo State House of Assembly, Hon Blessing Agbebaku (left), and other officials of government and Taihu Industrial Park project.

Gov Lawal of Zamfara formally defects to APC

GUSAU

Governor Dauda Lawal of Zamfara State has formally defected to the All Progressives Congress (APC), ending speculations over the past weeks.

Lawal's defection was announced by Alhaji Nuhu Salihu-Anka, Director-General, Media and Communication, Office of the Governor, in Gusau on Monday.

"The Government and APC family of Zamfara State wish to formally inform the general public of an important political development following extensive consultations with stakeholders, political leaders, elders, and supporters across the state.

"After careful consideration, and in the overriding interest of stability, progress, and the sustainable development of Zamfara State, Dauda Lawal, the Executive Governor of Zamfara, has decided to for-

mally defect from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the All Progressives Congress (APC)," Salihu-Anka said.

He said Lawal's decision was reached after wide consultations with political stakeholders and supporters, particularly in view of the prolonged internal crisis, leadership disagreements, and unresolved structural challenges within the PDP at both the national and state levels.

"These challenges have continued to create uncertainty and distractions that could hinder effective governance and the delivery of democratic dividends to the people of Zamfara.

"The governor emphasised that his primary responsibility remains the peace, security, and development of Zamfara.

"Consequently, it became necessary to align with a political platform that provides greater unity, stability, and

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I-G pledges to reclaim Kwara communities from terrorists

ILORIN

The Inspector-General of Police, Mr Tunji Disu, has assured Kwara residents that security agencies will reclaim communities currently under threat from terrorists.

Disu made the pledge on Monday during an operational visit

to the Nigeria Police Force command in Ilorin, where he engaged stakeholders to review strategies against rising insecurity.

According to him, the visit aimed to strengthen collaboration with critical stakeholders and assess security measures to counter emerging threats in the state.

He urged the public to cooperate with security agencies, emphasising that collective action is crucial in tackling nationwide insecurity.

"I am in Kwara to meet stakeholders and discuss ways to tackle terrorists tormenting our people. Criminals cannot

drive us from our communities. We are determined to take back our communities from terrorists," Disu said.

He also assured that police welfare would remain a priority and promised additional security operations to restore public confidence and main-

tain Kwara's reputation as a peaceful state.

Disu cautioned against profiling cattle rearers, noting that not all Fulani herders should be regarded as criminals, and urged residents to promptly report suspicious movements or intelligence to security agencies.

Kwara Commissioner of Police, Adekimi Ojo, commended the I-G for selecting the state for his first operational visit since assuming office.

"We are grateful the I-G chose Kwara. We will continue to cooperate to achieve lasting peace," Ojo said.

Gov Soludo tours schools in Anambra

AGUATA (ANAMBRA)

Governor Chukwuma Soludo of Anambra State on Monday toured some primary and secondary schools in Isuofia, Aguata Local Government Area, in a move aimed at ending the Monday sit-at-home disruption.

Soludo, who interacted with students and teachers during the visit, described the resumption of normal academic activities on Mondays as a significant step towards restoring productivity in the state.

The schools visited include; Community School, Unique Nursery and Primary School, Unique Secondary School, and Central School Primary School.

Others are, Holy Child Secondary School, Community Secondary School, Amaorji Primary School, Ikemee Primary School and Model Primary School, all in Isuofia.

The governor said: "I am delighted to see students and teach-

ers in classrooms on a Monday, a day that had been affected by forced closures for years.

"This development signifies that normalcy is gradually returning to all sectors of the state's economy.

"Monday is a regular school day and one of the most important days of the week for setting the tone for productivity.

"I urge our students to embrace hard work and integrity. They must be properly developed in all aspects to compete globally."

Soludo also highlighted government's partnership with mission authorities in the management of returned schools.

He explained that while the state subsidizes the schools and supports teachers, the missions provide infrastructure and maintain conducive learning environments.

The governor assured residents that adequate security measures had been put in place and directed school administrators to ensure proper attendance records of students.



ACCIDENT SCENE:

An accident scene opposite High Court/Correctional Centre on Sapele Road, Benin City yesterday.

Court sets May 18 for trial of man allegedly calling for military coup

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja has fixed May 18 for the trial of Innocent Chukwuma, accused of using social media to call on the military to overthrow the

Bola Tinubu-led government.

Justice Joyce Abdulmalik adjourned the case following a request by the prosecution, David Kaswe, for more time to study the case file after it was recently transferred to his office by the Department of State Services (DSS).

Chukwuma was arraigned following his alleged inciting post on his "X" handle, "@TheAgroman," where he urged a coup and called for the suspension of the Nigerian government.

He reportedly made statements including: "A coup in Nigeria is needed. Dispose of APC, suspend the Nigerian Government, and join the

AES. That is all we need now."

DSS operatives arrested him in Oyigbo, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

The case, Federal Republic of Nigeria vs. Innocent Chukwuma, is marked FHC/ABJ/CR/610/2025.

The court has adjourned proceedings to May 18 and 19 for trial.

Gov Okpebholo appoints Aguinede as EDSAA GM

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has approved the appointment of Hon. Patrick Aguinede as substantive General Manager of the Edo State Signage and Advertisement Agency (EDSAA).

In a statement, Secretary to the State Government, Umar Musa Ikhilior, Esq., disclosed that the appointment takes immediate effect.

According to the statement, Aguinede is an accomplished Nigerian politician and public

administrator with a distinguished record of service in both legislative and executive roles.

He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Education, as well as a Master's Degree in Educational Administration and Foundation.

The new EDSAA General Manager has served in several key public offices during his career.

He was a member of the Edo State House of Assembly, Commissioner for Basic Education, and also Chairman of Esan West Local Government Council.

Gov Lawal of Zamfara formally...

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stronger cooperation with the Federal Government for the benefit of the people.

"The final deliberation leading to this historic decision was held at the Government House in Gusau under the coordination and leadership of the Deputy Governor, alongside senior government officials and key political stakeholders," Salihu-Anka said.

He added that Lawal expressed deep appreciation to members and supporters of the PDP for their cooperation and support over the years.

"However, he noted that the present political realities and the unresolved crisis within the

party have made it necessary to take this bold step in the interest of good governance and the future of Zamfara.

"By joining the APC, the governor reaffirmed his commitment to strengthening unity, improving security, accelerating development, and ensuring that Zamfara benefits fully from stronger collaboration with the federal government.

"The government, therefore, calls on all citizens, political leaders, party supporters, and stakeholders to remain calm, peaceful, and supportive as the state enters this new political phase aimed at promoting unity, stability, and development," Salihu-Anka said.

IWD 2026: FONWIP calls for Reserved Seats Bill, greater leadership roles for women

ABUJA

The President of the Forum of Nigerian Women in Politics (FONWIP), Hon. Dr. Florence Igbinigie, has called on government institutions, political parties, civil society organisations and Nigerians to support the passage of the Reserved Seats Bill and adopt policies that will expand opportunities for women to participate in leadership and governance.

Igbinigie made the call in a message to mark the 2026 Inter-

national Women's Day, urging stakeholders to promote gender equality, protect the rights of women and girls, and create more opportunities for women to take up leadership roles.

She noted that the future of Nigeria cannot be effectively built without the active participation of women in decision-making at every level.

According to her, the global celebration of International Women's Day, with the United Nations theme, "Rights, Justice, Action for All Women and Girls," provides an opportunity to recognise the resilience, achievements

and contributions of women to national development.

"As the world celebrates International Women's Day 2026, I join millions of women and men across Nigeria and the globe to honour the strength, courage, resilience and remarkable achievements of women," she said.

Igbinigie observed that women have remained the backbone of families, communities and the nation, yet continue to face barriers to equal representation, opportunities and recognition.

"Women have always been the backbone of our families,

communities and nation. Yet, despite our immense contributions to national development, women continue to face barriers to equal representation, opportunities and recognition. This must change," she stated.

She reaffirmed FONWIP's commitment to advocating greater inclusion of women in leadership and governance.

"International Women's Day reminds us that empowering women is not just about fairness, it is about building stronger societies, advancing democracy and ensuring sustainable development," she said.

Opposition party weak,...

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He added that there was little evidence that opposition parties were preparing seriously for the next general elections, noting that beyond occasional statements aimed at reminding the public of their existence, Nigerians had seen little organisation, mobilisation or policy articulation from them.

"Beyond occasional blabbing to remind the public they are politically breathing, Nigerians have seen little organisa-

tion, mobilisation or policy articulation. Unfortunately, this pattern may remain largely unchanged in the months ahead," he said.

The APC spokesman, however, acknowledged that a weak opposition was not healthy for the growth of democracy, stressing that democratic systems function better when there is a responsible and organised opposition capable of presenting viable alternatives to the electorate.

"Democracy functions best with a responsible and organ-

ised opposition capable of presenting viable alternatives to the electorate. Unfortunately, the current situation reflects the opposite," he added.

Oladejo said that despite the situation within opposition ranks, the APC remained focused on governance and the implementation of reforms aimed at improving the lives of Nigerians.

He cited economic restructuring initiatives, investments in infrastructure, and social intervention programmes across the country as examples of the party's efforts to strengthen governance and promote na-

tional development.

According to him, these programmes and reforms have reinforced public confidence in the APC and contributed to the growing belief that continuity and stability may shape voters' decisions in the 2027 elections.

"It is therefore unsurprising that as 2027 draws closer, Nigerians increasingly look towards continuity, stability and proven leadership. Elections should be competitive and inspiring, but when alternatives fail to present credible visions, outcomes naturally become more predictable," Oladejo said.

NEWS

Teenage pregnancy low in Edo, Lagos as northern states record highest rates —Report

ABUJA

Edo and Lagos states have recorded some of the lowest rates of teenage pregnancy in Nigeria, even as several northern states continue to face significantly higher levels, according to the 2025 State of Health of the Nation Report released on Sunday in Abuja.

The report, produced under the National Health Act (2014), examined adolescent reproductive health trends nationwide and revealed sharp regional disparities.

Findings from the report, which relied on data from the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) 2024, showed that only about three percent of girls aged 15–19 in Edo and Lagos had experienced pregnancy.

The figure contrasts sharply with northern states, such as Kebbi, Zamfara and Kaduna, where teenage pregnancy rates

remain among the highest in the country.

According to the report, 32 percent of girls aged 15–19 in Kebbi had been pregnant, while Zamfara and Kaduna each recorded about 30 percent.

The report noted that the large gap between states underscored the need for targeted interventions to address adolescent reproductive health challenges across different regions of the country.

It warned that teenage pregnancy remains a serious public health concern in Nigeria, as it increases the risk of maternal and child morbidity and mortality while also contributing to social problems such as school dropout among adolescent girls.

The report further observed that the prevalence of teenage pregnancy declines significantly with higher levels of education.

It indicated that pregnancy rates dropped from 34 percent

among girls with no schooling to four percent among those with education beyond secondary school, highlighting the protective role of education in reducing early pregnancies.

The report also stated that the health sector in 2025 expanded adolescent-focused interventions aimed at improv-

ing reproductive health outcomes and advancing Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

According to the report, these interventions included strengthening primary health-care services and expanding community outreach programmes across the country.

Investments were also direct-

ed towards adolescent-friendly services at primary healthcare facilities, including family planning, HIV prevention and the management of sexually transmitted infections.

The measures were aimed at improving access to reproductive health services and encouraging greater utilisation

among teenagers.

The report noted that community-based health workers were also deployed to provide counselling and selected family planning services, particularly to adolescents in remote communities, thereby improving access to reproductive health information and support.



COUNTERFEIT US DOLLAR BILLS:

Printed counterfeit US dollar notes seized by Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) from suspects arrested for alleged involvement in various offences, ranging from printing of counterfeit US dollar notes, unlawful possession of firearms, fabrication of local firearms and criminal conspiracy in Abuja on Monday.

Psychiatrist urges Journalists to prioritise mental health amid work stress

LAGOS

A leading psychiatrist has urged journalists to adopt effective coping strategies to safeguard their mental wellbeing and reduce the risk of stress-related health issues.

Dr Maymunah Kadiri, Medical Director of Pinnacle Medical Services, made the call during a webinar organised by the Health Writers Association of Nigeria (HEEAN) in Lagos to mark the 2026 International Women's Day (IWD).

Themed "Give to Gain," this year's IWD highlights the power of reciprocity, investment, and collaboration in advancing gender equality. Kadiri spoke on "The Invisible Cost of Telling Health Stories: Protecting the Mental Wellbeing of Nigerian Health Journalists."

She stressed the importance of recognising personal stressors, setting boundaries against

daily exposure to trauma, and seeking professional help whenever overwhelmed.

"Making time each day to care for our mental health is crucial. Scheduling therapy, relaxation activities, and achievable goals can help manage stress and prevent burnout," Kadiri said.

She warned that prolonged stress weakens the immune system and may trigger mental and physical health issues, including depression and anxiety disorders.

Kadiri also highlighted the vital role of sleep, describing poor sleep and stress as gateways to mental illness. "The brain detoxifies the body during sleep. Sleep deficiency has been linked to depression, anxiety, and mental distress," she said.

Echoing her sentiments, Mrs Ifeyinwa Omowole, Head of Lagos Operations at NAN, advised journalists to prioritise rest, healthy eating, exercise, and other self-care practices to maintain overall wellbeing.

Masari's elevation reflects Tinubu's confidence in his political judgement —APC Chieftain

BENIN CITY

A chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and pro-government advocate, Engr. Abdullahi Garba Ramat, has said that the recent elevation of Alhaji Ibrahim Kabiru Masari to the position of Special Adviser to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on Political and Other Matters reflects the President's strong confidence in his political judgement and leadership capacity.

Ramat made the remark in a statement he signed and made available to journalists in Be-

nin City, describing Masari's appointment as a recognition of years of dedication, strategic engagement and commitment to public service.

According to him, those who are familiar with Masari's contributions to the nation's political landscape would not find the development surprising, noting that the new responsibility is a natural progression in a career defined by quiet sacrifice and consistent service.

He recalled that before the latest appointment, Masari had served since 2023 as Senior Special Assistant to

the President on Political and Other Matters, stressing that the elevation underscores the President's trust in his ability to handle delicate political responsibilities and navigate Nigeria's complex political environment with discretion.

Ramat described Masari as a strategist whose leadership style is anchored on humility, sincerity and loyalty, adding that his influence is often felt through the opportunities he creates and the trust he commands rather than through publicity.

He observed that in a political climate where many seek visibil-

ity and recognition, Masari has built a reputation for working behind the scenes to strengthen relationships and advance constructive political engagement.

The APC chieftain further noted that Masari's leadership has helped shape the growth and confidence of many individuals who have benefited from his guidance and encouragement over the years.

Ramat also described him as a deeply religious and trustworthy personality whose integrity and sense of responsibility have earned him the respect of colleagues and associates alike.

C'River lawmaker arrested for alleged domestic violence

CALABAR

The Cross River Police State Command has confirmed the arrest of a state lawmaker, Mr Ovat Agbor, over allegations of domestic violence.

ASP Sunday Eitokpah, the state police spokesperson, said Agbor was taken into custody on Monday morning and is currently being interrogated at the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) in Calabar.

The incident had sparked

widespread reactions on social media. In response, the Cross River House of Assembly had suspended Agbor on Thursday, condemning the alleged violent conduct as unbecoming of a lawmaker.

The assembly resolved to place Agbor on indefinite suspension and constituted a committee to investigate the matter and report back for further legislative action.

Agbor, who represents Obubra I State constituency, issued a public apology to the State Governor, Assembly, his constituents, and the wider Cross River community.

IWD 2026: NUJ FCT urges stronger support for women

ABUJA

The Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Council, has called for stronger collaboration between government and stakeholders to dismantle barriers hindering women's participation and advancement across sectors in Nigeria's development.

Chairman of the council, Grace Ike, made the call in a statement issued to journalists in Abuja to mark the 2026 celebration of International Women's Day.

The theme for the 2026

celebration is "Give to Gain," which underscores the importance of investing in women's advancement and expanding opportunities for sustainable development.

Ike said that empowering women produced far-reaching benefits, noting that inclusive newsrooms encouraged richer storytelling, strengthened governance, promoted fairness in representation, and helped build more equitable societies.

She observed that women in journalism continued to demonstrate resilience, professionalism and dedication to truth despite numerous challenges, contribut-

ing significantly to public service and the strengthening of democratic values.

According to her, female journalists are breaking new ground by covering difficult beats, shaping public discourse, mentoring younger colleagues and consistently proving that professional excellence knows no gender.

"Today, as the world marks International Women's Day, I join millions across the globe in celebrating the strength, resilience, brilliance and boundless potential of women everywhere.

"The 2026 theme, 'Give to Gain,' reminds us that when we intentionally invest in

women through education, mentorship, opportunities and resources, we strengthen families, communities, institutions and nations.

"Our celebration must go beyond recognition and translate into action by mentoring young female journalists, creating safe workplaces, providing leadership opportunities and ensuring women's voices are heard.

"These are the investments that will yield the greatest returns for journalism and society. The United Nations theme, 'Rights. Justice. Action. For All Women and Girls,' reinforces our collective responsibility," she said.

Joint security raid nets 99 suspects in Ondo

AKURE

The Police Command in Ondo State has said that a coordinated inter-agency operation has led to the arrest of 99 suspects linked to various criminal activities across the state.

The command's spokesperson, DSP Abayomi Jimoh, disclosed this in a statement made available to newsmen on Monday in Akure.

Jimoh said the intelligence-led raid, conducted on Sunday, involved the Ondo State Police Command, the 32 Brigade Artillery of the Ni-

gerian Army, and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Ondo State Command.

He added that other security agencies that participated in the operation included the Directorate of State Services (DSS) and the Ondo State Security Network Agency, Amotekun Corps.

"The intelligence-led operation targeted identified criminal hideouts, black spots and flashpoints across several parts of the state known for criminal activities.

"The coordinated operation resulted in the arrest of 99 sus-

pects linked to offences such as armed robbery, burglary, theft, cultism and other related crimes.

"During the operation, several items suspected to have been used for criminal activities, as well as suspected stolen properties and other incriminating exhibits, were recovered from the suspects," he said.

Jimoh said the suspects were currently undergoing screening and profiling, adding that those found culpable would be charged to court.

According to him, the state Commissioner of Police, Adebawale Lawal, commended the professionalism, synergy and

commitment displayed by all participating security agencies during the operation.

The spokesperson said the commissioner emphasised that such collaboration remained critical in the fight against crime and criminality in the state.

"The CP further reiterates the command's unwavering commitment to sustaining intelligence-driven policing and joint security operations aimed at dismantling criminal networks and maintaining law and order in the state.

"Lawal once again warns criminal elements to desist from engaging in unlawful ac-

tivities within the state, stressing that Ondo will not serve as a haven for criminals.

"Security agencies will continue to intensify operations to identify, track and decisively deal with offenders regardless

of where they operate or attempt to hide," he said.

Jimoh also called on members of the public to continue supporting security agencies with timely, credible and actionable information.

Police inaugurate Eko Strike Force headquarters to boost Lagos security

LAGOS

The Police Command in Lagos State has inaugurated a new divisional headquarters for the Eko Strike Force aimed at strengthening security operations across the state.

Speaking during the inauguration held on Monday in Shomolu, the Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Mr Olohundare Jimoh, said the Eko Strike Force was created to support the operations of the Rapid Response Squad (RRS) and strengthen the state's security architecture.

Jimoh said the facility, donated by the Chairman of Shomolu Local Government, Mr Abdulateef Ashimi, would enhance the operational capacity of the rapid response team and improve response time to distress calls.

He explained that the new facility was not established to rival the RRS but to complement its operations and ensure quicker responses to criminal incidents.

According to him, the strategic location of the head-

quarters will enable officers to respond swiftly to incidents on both the mainland and island areas of Lagos.

He said the presence of the team would also help reduce the fear of crime among residents, noting that public confidence in security was essential for economic and social activities to thrive.

"The fear of crime is often worse than the crime itself. Our goal is to remove that fear and ensure that people can go about their daily activities safely," he said.

The commissioner thanked Ashimi for donating the facility, describing the gesture as a strong example of community support for security agencies.

He urged residents to cooperate with the police by providing timely and useful information that could help prevent crime, noting that effective policing requires collaboration with the public.

Jimoh also thanked the former Inspector-General of Police, Mr Kayode Egbetokun, for his guidance, encouragement and commitment to improving policing in the country.



INAUGURATION OF 2026 FARMING SEASON:

L-R: Meteorological Manager, Oyo State NiMET, Mr Emmanuel Udoh; a farmer, Mr Samuel Olakojo; Chairman, Oyo State House Committee on Agriculture, Oyo State House of Assembly, Peter Ojedokun; Commissioner for Agriculture, Oyo State, Mr Olanikanmi Olaleye; Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Oyo State, Mrs Esther Owuoye at the inauguration of 2026 farming season dissemination and domestication of 2026 weather forecast, in collaboration with NiMET in Ibadan on Monday.

Maritime Academy moves to partner Liberia institute on training, capacity building

UYO

The Maritime Academy of Nigeria (MAN), Oron, has concluded plans to establish a strategic partnership with the Liberia Maritime Training Institute (LMTI) and the Liberia Maritime Authority (LiMA) to promote maritime education and

capacity development.

The Head of Public Affairs of the academy, Mrs Domo Umoeke, disclosed this in a statement made available to newsmen in Uyo on Monday.

Umoeke said the partnership was aimed at strengthening maritime education, professional training and human capacity development across

West and Central Africa.

According to her, the proposed collaboration would include a lecturer-exchange programme, Maritime Education and Training (MET) resource sharing and peer review of MET curricula in areas of expertise.

She added that the partnership would also involve promoting courses offered by both institutions on each partner's communication platforms and websites, as well as the training of Liberian youths at the academy.

Umoeke explained that the partnership arrangement was secured during a tour of the Liberia Maritime Training Institute led by the Chairman of the academy's Governing Council, Mr Kehinde Akinola.

She quoted Akinola as saying that the visit formed part of the Federal Government's ongoing efforts to strengthen regional maritime cooperation and position Nigeria as a hub for maritime operations in the sub-region.

According to him, the visit underscored the Federal Government's commitment to advancing maritime education

and international best practices in line with the Renewed Hope Agenda for the Marine and Blue Economy sector.

"The proposed agreement will strengthen sub-regional cooperation and fast-track collective growth within the blue economy sector," Akinola said.

The Acting Rector of the academy, Dr Kevin Okonna, reaffirmed the institution's commitment to producing highly skilled and globally competitive seafarers.

Okonna said the academy's pool of competent workforce, state-of-the-art training facilities and enhanced curriculum had positioned it among the leading maritime education and training institutions in the world.

He noted that the partnership would open new pathways for knowledge exchange, institutional collaboration and practical training for cadets, instructors and maritime operators across the sub-region.

"We acknowledge Liberia for its significant role in the global maritime community,"

ABUJA

Stakeholders of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Oyo State have called on the party's leadership to zone the 2027 governorship ticket to the Oke-Ogun axis to ensure what they described as a decisive electoral victory.

The stakeholders, under the aegis of "Tinubu Authentic Time for Grassroots Connect," made the call at a news conference in collaboration with the "Concerned Oyo Citizens" in Abuja on Monday.

National Coordinator of the group, Mr Musibau Oladipo, said the proposal was a strategic move aimed at ending the nearly eight-year rule of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the state and returning Oyo to the progressive fold.

He said the stakeholders believed that zoning the governorship to Oke-Ogun would energise the party's base and send a strong message of fairness, renewal and balanced representation across the state.

"Following extensive consultations, community engagements and political assessments across the state, we have

reached a firm and strategic conclusion.

"For APC to secure a decisive and unifying victory in the 2027 governorship election, the gubernatorial ticket should be zoned outside Ibadan, with serious and deliberate consideration given to Oke-Ogun.

"This position is not based on sentiment but on political reality and electoral arithmetic.

"The Oke-Ogun axis represents a strong voting bloc and has consistently demonstrated loyalty and commitment to the progressive movement," he said.

Oladipo argued that a fair zoning arrangement would address long-standing perceptions of marginalization, deepen internal cohesion and mobilise unprecedented grassroots support for the party.

He also linked the state's internal zoning to the broader national interest, saying that a unified APC in Oyo would strengthen President Bola Tinubu's re-election prospects in the state.

Oladipo said the zoning would position the APC for a comprehensive electoral victory.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, formerly known as **OZONDO EMMANUEL CHINONSO**, now wish to be known and address as **OZONDO EMMANUEL CHUKWUNONSO**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, formerly known as **AMADIN LISA OSAROBO**, now wish to be known and address as **KENNETH LISA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, formerly known as **MISS IDALU MARCELINA OSIREKHAI**, now wish to be known and address as **MRS. AIGBOVBIOISA MARCELINA OSIREKHAI**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, formerly known as **MISS JULIET ORITSETSEMAYE OKOTIE**, now wish to be known and address as **MRS. JULIET ORITSETSEMAYE NEBURAGHO**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

NAF launches course to reduce civilian casualties in air operations

ABUJA

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) has launched the Basic Civilian Harm Mitigation (CHM) Course 1/2026 as part of efforts to reduce civilian casualties and strengthen professionalism in air operations across the country.

The course was inaugurated on Monday at the Air Warfare and Doctrine Centre (AWDC) by the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Sunday Aneke, represented by the Director of Air Operations, AVM Ayo Bamidele.

In his remarks, Aneke described the course as a milestone

in the professional evolution of the NAF, noting that modern air operations were increasingly conducted in complex environments, making the careful application of air power critical.

"Civilian harm mitigation is not only a moral and legal responsibility, it is a strategic enabler that strengthens mission legitimacy, public trust and long-term operational success," he said.

The Chief of the Air Staff added that the AWDC would conduct quarterly CHM courses and introduce a Training-of-Trainers programme later in the year to deepen institutional capacity. He urged participants to internalise

the principles of civilian harm mitigation in operational planning and execution.

Also speaking, the Chief of Civil-Military Relations, AVM Edward Gabkwet, said the initiative reflected the evolving nature of NAF operations and the service's commitment to safeguarding civilian lives while carrying out its constitutional duties.

According to him, military success today is equally measured by how operations are perceived, how harm is prevented or addressed, and how lessons are institutionalised.

He explained that the CHM initiative was anchored on prevention through improved

decision-making, institutional learning and accountability, as well as building public trust through transparency and respect for civilian lives.

"The course translates policy into practical capability by integrating civilian harm considerations into operational planning, intelligence, targeting and command decisions.

"NAF has also established a Civilian Harm Mitigation Governing Board to provide policy direction and oversight for the programme across the service," he said.

Earlier, the Commandant of AWDC, AVM Garba Jibia, said the centre served as the intel-

lectual hub of air power development in the NAF, making it an appropriate platform for the training.

Jibia noted that the complexity of modern security environments, particularly in counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations, required deliberate institutionalisation of civilian harm mitigation principles.

"The Basic CHM Course is designed to deepen understanding, sharpen decision-making and promote honest reflection on the challenges of operating where civil-

ians and combatants are often intermingled," he said.

He added that the centre had recently been mandated to conduct both Civilian Harm Mitigation and Air-Ground Integration training for the Armed Forces of Nigeria to enhance joint operations and minimise collateral damage during missions.

"The Basic Civilian Harm Mitigation Course 1/2026 will expose participants to scenario-based learning aimed at improving operational judgement and ensuring air power is applied with precision while safeguarding civilian lives," he added.



2026 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY:

Members of ECOWAS Community Court of Justice, Justice Dupe Atoki (M); Justice Edward Asante (10th L); President of ECOWAS Court of Justice Women Forum (ECJWF), Oluwatoyin Nguher (9th L) and other members of ECJWF, during the 2026 International Women's Day celebration in Abuja on Monday

IWD: NAWOJ seeks greater opportunities for women in leadership

YOLA

The Nigeria Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), Adamawa State chapter, has called for deliberate actions and supportive legislation to promote greater inclusion of women in leadership and governance.

The Chairperson of NAWOJ in the state, Ms Felicia Dauda, made the call at a news conference on Monday in Yola to mark the 2026 International Women's Day.

International Women's Day is celebrated annually on March 8, with the 2026 theme: "Give to Gain."

Dauda said the association joined the global community in celebrating women's achievements and contributions to society.

"The 2026 theme, 'Give to Gain,' underscores the need to invest in women and create opportunities that enable them to contribute meaningfully to national development.

"When women are supported through inclusive policies,

access to opportunities and representation in decision-making processes, societies benefit from stronger institutions, sustainable development and balanced governance," she said.

Dauda noted that despite the vital roles women play in community development and democratic growth, their representation in political leadership and governance remained low.

She commended the resilience and achievements of women across Adamawa and the country who continue to make significant contributions in various sectors despite existing challenges.

She said NAWOJ remained committed to responsible journalism that amplifies the voices of women and girls while advocating gender equality and policies that promote national development.

She called on government institutions, policymakers, civil society organisations and community leaders to intensify efforts toward empowering women and ensuring their meaningful participation in all spheres of life.

Army highlights nurses' role in troop readiness, healthcare delivery

KADUNA

The Nigerian Army Medical Corps has commenced the first stream of the 2026 Mandatory Continuing Professional Development Programme (MCPDP) for nurses, with a focus on strengthening public health nursing and promoting health equity.

The programme, organised by the Directorate of Nursing Services of the Nigerian Army

Medical Corps in collaboration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria, is themed: "Public Health Nursing and Health Equity: Leaving No One Behind."

Declaring the programme open in Kaduna on behalf of the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt-Gen. Waidi Shuaibu, the General Officer Commanding (GOC) 1 Division Nigerian Army, Maj-Gen. Abubakar Wase, said the training was vital to sustaining high

professional standards among Nigerian nurses.

Wase commended the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria and the MCPDP committee for their commitment to maintaining excellence in education and ethical practice within the nursing profession.

According to him, the dedication of Nigerian nurses has continued to position them among the most sought-after healthcare professionals globally.

He noted that the programme's theme aligned with global health priorities, in-

cluding the aspirations of the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals aimed at promoting healthy lives and well-being for all.

"As a commander, I see how nurses and midwives maintain the readiness of our troops through healthcare delivery on a daily basis.

"Within our medical facilities, your professionalism is the bridge between ill-health and recovery.

"Without a motivated and skilled nursing workforce, we cannot be truly secure," he said.

Fintiri imposes 24hr curfew on Lamurde over renewed violence

YOLA

Governor Ahmadu Fintiri of Adamawa State has imposed a 24-hour curfew on Lamurde Local Government Area with immediate effect following renewed violent attacks in some communities.

The Chief Press Secretary to the governor, Humwashi Wonosikou, disclosed this in a statement issued on Monday in Yola.

A similar 24-hour curfew had earlier been imposed on December 8, 2025 following what authorities described as a fresh eruption of communal hostilities and attacks on the Bachama community.

Wonosikou said the latest directive followed renewed violence and breach of peace that reportedly claimed the lives of some residents in the affected communities.

He said the governor described the disturbances as

unacceptable and directed security agencies to enforce the curfew strictly.

According to him, anyone or group found violating the directive would be arrested and dealt with in accordance with the law.

The governor said the curfew would remain in place until further notice.

He also directed security agencies to maintain law and order in the area while enforcing the restriction.

Fintiri urged residents to comply with the curfew and provide useful information to security agencies to ensure peaceful coexistence.

"Government will not condone acts of violence and will take necessary measures to restore peace and order," he said.

The governor appealed to residents to cooperate with security agencies to restore normalcy, reaffirming government's commitment to protecting lives and property.

NOA seeks stronger partnership with NDLEA to combat drug abuse

KANO

The National Orientation Agency (NOA) in Kano State has pledged to intensify collaboration with the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) to combat the growing menace of drug abuse in the state.

The State Coordinator of NOA, Nura Liman, made this known while speaking with

newsmen in Kano on Monday. Liman said the agency was stepping up awareness campaigns on the dangers of drug abuse, particularly among youths.

He explained that the collaboration with NDLEA was aimed at educating the public, especially young people, about the harmful effects of drug abuse.

"Investigations reveal that it is spreading in Kano, a worrying trend requiring collective

action, and so NOA is boosting awareness on the health, social and economic risks," he said.

He also linked youth involvement in drug abuse to rising social vices and crime, noting that tackling the problem could significantly reduce criminality.

Liman commended the efforts of the state government in curbing phone snatching and thuggery, adding that the

measures demonstrated commitment to peace and security.

He stressed that public sensitization remained a collective responsibility and called on community leaders, parents, civil society organisations and the media to support ongoing efforts to educate the public.

According to him, such collaboration will help achieve the state's goal of reducing drug abuse and related crimes.

NEWS

Global oil prices 'll still shape fuel costs despite local refineries —Expert

LAGOS

The Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise (CPPE) has said the emergence of domestic refineries in Nigeria cannot completely shield the country from fluctuations in global fuel prices.

Founder of CPPE, Dr Muda Yusuf, disclosed this in a statement on Monday in Lagos, explaining that crude oil, the major input in refining is priced using international benchmarks.

According to Yusuf, the recent sharp rise in global crude oil prices is being driven by escalating geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

The economist noted that crude oil prices had risen from about 65 dollars per barrel to over 100 dollars per barrel within a few weeks, representing an increase of more than 50 per cent.

He said the surge had pushed up the cost of refined petroleum products globally, including Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), diesel, aviation fuel and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG).

"Petroleum products are traded in an integrated global market. Consequently, fluctuations in crude oil prices are transmitted to domestic fuel prices in most economies, including Nigeria," he said.

Yusuf noted that although many Nigerians expected do-

mestic refineries to automatically result in cheaper petroleum products, the economics of refining does not support that assumption.

He explained that crude oil supplied to refineries is priced using international benchmark prices and denominated in U.S. dollars regardless of the refinery's location.

"Even crude supplied by local producers or the national oil company is priced using international crude oil benchmarks.

"Additionally, domestic refineries typically pay a premium of between three and six dollars per barrel to secure crude supply," he said.

The economist added that although some domestic crude transactions might be settled in naira under special arrangements, the valuation was still largely based on the naira equivalent of global crude prices.

He said this meant domestic refining operations remained substantially exposed to global crude oil price movements, with no price advantage in crude procurement.

Yusuf, however, said domestic refining still offered certain economic advantages, particularly in reducing logistics and freight costs associated with fuel imports.

He explained that importing petroleum products involved significant costs including shipping, marine insurance, port

handling and demurrage, which could be reduced when crude oil was sourced and refined locally.

According to him, the advantage becomes more pro-

nounced during periods of global supply disruptions when shipping costs tend to surge.

Yusuf also said domestic refining significantly strengthened

Nigeria's energy security by reducing the country's reliance on imported petroleum products.

He recalled that for decades Nigeria depended heavily on

imported fuel despite being a major crude oil producer, a situation that frequently exposed the country to supply disruptions and fuel shortages.



WELFARE PACKAGES:

Commandant, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, FCT Command, Dr Olusola Odumosu (left), presenting welfare packages to a beneficiary during the distribution of relief materials to wives of fallen heroes and other less-privileged persons in support of Muslims observing Ramadan fasting in Abuja at the weekend.

ICT expert advocates community-driven innovation for sustainable devt

ABUJA

An Information and Communication Technology expert, Dr Precious Agbebia, has called for community-led strategies and grassroots innovation as key drivers of sustainable development in Nigeria.

Agbebia made the call while speaking with newsmen in Abuja on Monday

He said that eco-friendly design of innovative projects would ensure their sustainabil-

ity and create a resilient framework for long-term societal advancement.

According to the Green Innovation Design specialist, developing manual and semi-automated machines using locally available materials could significantly reduce construction costs and make housing more accessible and sustainable.

She explained that affordable housing solutions had become increasingly urgent as rapid urbanization continued to create

a housing deficit, particularly for low-income families.

Agbebia, who supports innovation hubs in the country, also highlighted the role of digital learning platforms in bridging educational gaps.

She noted that initiatives such as the Nigeria Learning Passport had provided digital learning resources to more than 1.7 million learners, helping to close the digital education gap.

According to her, millions of Nigerian children still face limited access to quality educa-

tion, particularly in rural areas.

"Partnerships with UNICEF and local organisations ensure access to education even in underserved communities," she said.

Agbebia also emphasised the need for more community-based healthcare initiatives, noting that many rural communities lacked access to adequate healthcare facilities and trained professionals.

"Local government projects that establish mobile clinics, telemedicine hubs and community health worker programmes are initiatives that can bring healthcare closer to people," she said.

Ramadan: Cleric urges peaceful coexistence, religious tolerance

OSOGBO

A Muslim cleric in Osun State, Mallam Yusuf Adepoju, has called on Nigerians, particularly residents of the state, to embrace peaceful coexistence and religious tolerance.

Adepoju, the leader of the Academy of Islamic Propagation (ACADIP), made the call in an interview with newsmen in Osogbo on Monday.

He said religious teachings should promote harmony, peace, discipline and moral uprightness within communities.

The cleric urged Muslims to use the Ramadan period for reflection on their relationship with God, stressing that faith should guide believers towards spiritual fulfilment and responsible living.

"I want to encourage resi-

dents of Osun to live peacefully with one another, irrespective of religious differences, because mutual respect and tolerance play essential roles in community development.

"Also, acts of kindness, charity and compassion should be prioritised during Ramadan, as they help strengthen bonds among people," he said.

Adepoju also revealed that 12 people embraced Islam during Sunday's ACADIP Ramadan Lecture titled "Establishing the Climate of Truth and Enduring Conviction."

He described the development as spiritually fulfilling and a new beginning for the converts.

According to him, the new adherents pledged to remain committed to the teachings of Islam and to live peacefully with members of other faiths in their communities.

Troops eliminate notorious 'TikTok bandit' Commander Alti in N' West

ABUJA

Troops have neutralised a notorious bandit commander identified as Alti, who had terrorised communities along the Gusau-Funtua road and surrounding areas in North-West Nigeria.

A credible Army Headquarters source disclosed that Alti was killed during a recent military operation, dealing a major blow to criminal networks

operating across Zamfara, Katsina and parts of Sokoto states.

Despite his youth, Alti had reportedly risen to become one of the most influential commanders among armed bandit groups in the region.

Security sources said he operated bases from southern Gusau to areas around Jibiya and Funtua, from where his fighters allegedly carried out kidnappings, ambushes and improvised explosive device (IED) attacks

along major highways.

He was widely known among bandits as "the money bank" because of his control over ransoms from multiple kidnapping operations.

Alti also gained notoriety online, appearing in TikTok videos where he flaunted weapons and issued threats.

Security analysts believe his elimination could disrupt kidnapping syndicates along the strategic Zamfara-Katsina cor-

ridor and weaken armed cells loyal to him.

They noted that the operation underscored ongoing military efforts to dismantle organised criminal networks in North-West Nigeria.

Residents across the region have endured repeated abductions and attacks, often paying large ransoms for the release of victims, making the elimination of bandit leaders such as Alti crucial to restoring security.

Be courageous in decision-making, IGP tells newly promoted DIGs

ABUJA

The Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Mr Olatunji Disu, has urged newly promoted Deputy Inspectors-General of Police (DIGs) to demonstrate courage in decision-making and fairness in leadership.

Disu gave the charge on

Monday in Abuja during the decoration ceremony of the newly promoted senior officers.

He called on them to remain steadfast in upholding the core values of professionalism, accountability and service to the Nigerian people.

According to the police chief, the strength of any police institution lies not merely in its

authority but in the integrity, discipline and sense of duty of those entrusted with leadership.

"The responsibilities that come with this rank require courage in decision-making, fairness in leadership and unwavering commitment to the rule of law.

"I therefore urge you to see this elevation not only as recognition of your past service but as

a renewed call to national duty.

"Lead with honour, serve with integrity and continue to work collectively towards building a Nigeria Police Force that is respected, trusted and capable of meeting the security aspirations of our nation," he said.

The IGP urged the senior officers to bring their vast experience to bear in strength-

ening intelligence-led policing, deepening inter-agency cooperation, enhancing operational coordination across commands and reinforcing accountability within the ranks.

According to him, their leadership must inspire confidence within the force and build trust among the citizens the police are sworn to protect.

"Let your tenure at this level be defined by discipline, fairness, transparency and service.

"The rank you wear today places you as custodians of the institutional values of the Nigeria Police Force.

"Your actions, decisions and leadership style will continue to shape the culture, direction and public perception of our organisation," he said.

JUDICIARY

NEWS

Appeal Court upholds order barring INEC from recognising PDP Ibadan convention

ABUJA

The Court of Appeal in Abuja on Monday affirmed the judgment of a Federal High Court restraining the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

from recognising the outcome of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) national convention held in Ibadan in November 2025.

The convention, conducted between November 15 and 16, 2025, produced a leadership

team led by Kabiru Turaki.

Justice James Omotosho of the Federal High Court in Abuja had earlier, on October 31, 2025, restrained INEC from recognising the outcome of the convention.

Delivering judgment on

Monday, a three-member panel of the appellate court unanimously resolved the four issues raised for determination against the PDP, holding that the appeal filed by the party lacked merit.

The court ruled that the Federal High Court acted within its jurisdiction in granting all the reliefs sought by the plaintiffs and faulted the PDP's argument

that the trial court lacked jurisdiction to entertain the case.

According to the appellate court, the plaintiffs had the legal standing to institute the suit as part of efforts to protect their democratic rights.

The court also dismissed the PDP's claim that it was denied fair hearing during proceedings at the trial court.

As part of the ruling, the appellate court ordered the PDP faction led by Turaki to pay N2 million as costs, describing the appeal as frivolous.

The crisis followed the suspension of some members loyal to the Minister of the Federal

Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, during the Ibadan convention. The affected members subsequently challenged their suspension in court.

On December 22, 2025, INEC rejected requests by the Turaki-led leadership for recognition of the party's new National Working Committee (NWC), citing existing court judgments and unresolved legal processes.

The electoral commission referenced two Federal High Court rulings delivered in Abuja in October and November 2025, which restrained it from giving effect to the outcome of the Ibadan convention.



A VISIT:

Director-General, National Agency for the Great Green Wall (NAGGW), Mr Saleh Abubakar (L), receiving the Executive Director, Lake Chad Research Institute (LCRI), Prof. Babagana Kabir, during a visit to the NAHGE in Abuja.

IWD: SAN calls for stronger policies to support women in legal profession

LAGOS

Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Mr Usman Sule, has called for stronger institutional support, deliberate policies and systemic reforms to advance women in the legal profession and across other sectors of society.

Sule made the call in a goodwill message to mark the 2026 International Women's Day (IWD), joining the global community in celebrating women and advocating greater gender equality.

The senior lawyer commended

the resilience, excellence and growing influence of women in the legal profession and other fields, describing them as indispensable pillars of justice, development and social progress.

International Women's Day, observed annually on March 8, celebrates the achievements of women while advocating gender equality and the protection of women's rights worldwide.

Sule urged governments, institutions and professional bodies to intensify efforts to empower women and create equal opportunities for them to thrive.

According to him, women's contributions remain critical to building a more inclusive and prosperous society.

The learned silk noted that female lawyers in Nigeria and across the world have continued to distinguish themselves through dedication, integrity and professional competence.

He said their achievements were particularly remarkable given the challenges often associated with balancing career demands and societal expectations.

"The legal profession has witnessed outstanding contributions from women who continue to break barriers and

inspire younger generations to pursue careers in law.

"On this special day, I celebrate the courage, strength and achievements of women everywhere.

"I particularly commend female lawyers who continue to uphold the principles of justice, fairness and the rule of law in our courts and institutions," Sule said.

He added that the increasing presence of women in leadership positions within the legal profession, the judiciary and corporate organisations demonstrates steady progress toward gender equality.

Woman docked for allegedly biting off msn's finger

SANGO-OTA

A 37-year-old woman, Mariam Yusuf, was on Monday arraigned before an Ota Magistrates' Court in Ogun State for allegedly biting off a man's middle finger.

Yusuf, whose address was

not provided, is facing a charge of assault.

She pleaded not guilty to the charge.

The prosecution counsel, ASP E.O. Adaraloye, told the court that the alleged offence occurred at about 7.45 p.m. on February 23 at No. 1 Isokan

Olorunsogo Street, Iloye, Ota.

Adaraloye alleged that the defendant bit off the middle finger of one Ezekial Olatunji, causing him permanent injury.

He said the offence contravenes Section 335 of the Criminal Code, Laws of Ogun State, 2006.

The Magistrate, Mrs O.O. Fa-

dairo, admitted the defendant to bail in the sum of N300,000 with one surety in like sum.

Fadairo added that the surety must reside within the court's jurisdiction and be gainfully employed with evidence of tax payment to the Ogun State Government.

The case was adjourned until March 12 for further hearing.

Woman docked over alleged land trespass in Ibadan

IBADAN

A 40-year-old woman, Dasola Jimoh, on Monday appeared before an Iyaganku Magistrates' Court in Ibadan over alleged land trespass.

Jimoh, whose address was not disclosed, is facing charges of conspiracy, trespass

and conduct likely to cause a breach of peace.

She, however, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The prosecutor, Insp. Olalekan Adegbite, told the court that the defendant allegedly committed the offence on March 7 at about 11.00 p.m. at the Iletuntun area of Ibadan.

Adegbite alleged that Jimoh

conspired with others to trespass on plots of land belonging to Olak Ventures and commenced construction without the consent of the company.

He further told the court that the defendant conducted herself in a manner likely to cause a breach of peace.

According to him, the offences contravene Sections

249(d) and 516 of the Criminal Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

The Magistrate, Mrs Kausarat Ayofe, granted the defendant bail in the sum of N200,000 with one surety in like sum.

Ayofe ruled that the surety must be a blood relation of the defendant and adjourned the case until May 19 for hearing.

Court remands 4 men over alleged cocoa farmland grabbing

ILE-IFE

An Ile-Ife Magistrates' Court on Monday ordered the remand of four men over alleged forceful entry and illegal occupation of a cocoa farmland.

The defendants — Bello Moshood, 55; Adebayo Raimi, 69; Adebayo Hammed, 49; and Adesola Adebayo, 55 are facing charges bordering on land grabbing and illegal occupation.

Their counsel, Mr Musibau Raheem, urged the court to grant them bail in liberal terms, assuring that they would not abscond.

However, the Magistrate, Mrs Abosede Sarumi, refused the application and ordered that the defendants be remanded at the Police Station, Area Commander's Office, Moore, Ile-Ife.

She subsequently transferred the case to the Ifetedo Magistrates' Court for mention on March 10.

Earlier, the prosecutor, ASP Emmanuel Abdullahi, told the court that the defendants allegedly committed the offence on February 20 at about 1.00 p.m. at Onilare Village via Ile-Ife.

Abdullahi alleged that the defendants conspired to commit felony by forcefully entering and illegally occupying a cocoa farm belonging to Mr Olalekan Adebayo and Sooko Adebayo.

According to him, the offences contravene Sections 3(1), (2) and (3b) and are punishable under Section 4 of the Osun State Forceful Entry and Illegal Occupation of Landed Properties (Prohibition) Law, 2019.

EFCC witness says Yahaya Bello not linked to fresh documents in money laundering trial

ABUJA

A prosecution witness in the ongoing money laundering trial involving former Kogi State Governor Yahaya Bello on Monday told a Federal High Court in Abuja that the ex-governor's name did not appear in fresh documents tendered by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

The witness, Mahmoud Abdulazeez, an employee of Dantata and Sawoe Construction Company Limited, gave the testimony while being cross-examined by defence counsel, Joseph Daudu, SAN, before Justice Emeka Nwite.

Abdulazeez, the 10th prosecution witness (PW-10), had earlier identified two documents sought to be tendered by the EFCC during the last adjourned sitting.

The documents included an Irrevocable Power of Attorney between Dantata and Sawoe and Azar Real Estate Limited, as well as a Deed of Assignment between Dantata and

Azar Real Estate Limited.

The defence had objected to the admissibility of the documents, prompting the judge to adjourn for ruling.

In his ruling, Justice Nwite admitted the documents into evidence and marked them as Exhibits 42 and 43.

During cross-examination, Abdulazeez admitted that Exhibit 43 did not indicate the value of the property involved in the transaction.

The witness, who said he had worked as an accountant for over 25 years, also acknowledged that in his experience he had not previously handled property documents that failed to state the value of the property being sold.

He further told the court that former Governor Bello neither participated in the transaction nor appeared at the company's office during the process.

"Dantata and Sawoe gave consent and assigned Azbar to execute the deed and Azbar gave us these two documents. Our directors signed on behalf of Dantata and Ali Bello signed on behalf of Azbar," he said.

NEWS

Foreign

Guinea opposition leader urges 'direct resistance' after 40 parties dissolved

Guinea's main opposition leader Cellou Dalein Diallo has said that "direct resistance" to the country's coup leader-turned-president is now the only remaining path to change, after the authorities dissolved 40 political parties.

The authorities accused the parties of not complying with the law - a charge they have rejected.

The move comes two months after former junta head Mamady Doumbouya was sworn-in as president, following an election that saw some key challengers barred from running.

Doumbouya, who came to power in 2021 after overthrowing Condé, has been accused of cracking down on democratic

freedoms.

Among the parties dissolved were the Rally of the People of Guinea of former President Alpha Condé and Diallo's Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea. Diallo is currently in exile.

Late last Friday, Guinea's ministry of territorial administration and decentralisation announced in a decree that the headquarters and local offices of 40 political parties would be closed, and their logos, acronyms and other symbols banned from use.

The parties' assets have been confiscated and all offices sealed.

The ministry said the parties had failed to comply with legal requirements, including submitting mandatory financial

statements. Several of the dissolved groups have rejected the allegations, insisting they met all obligations under the law, the Reuters news agency reported.

In a video statement released on social media on Sunday, Diallo said the decree showed that "war has been openly declared" on those challenging President Doumbouya.

He said political change would not happen through dialogue or democratic processes.

"The head of the junta and his malevolent clique want to rewrite the country's history by erasing from the political landscape all forces likely to overshadow his nascent one-party state," he added.

Jean-Marc Telliano, a former minister and president of the Rally for the Integrated Development of Guinea, also criticised the decision. Reuters quoted him as saying that his party would fight to assert its rights and "will use all legal means to have our rights restored".

The dissolution of the parties comes two months ahead of legislative elections, another major step on the transition from military to civilian rule.

Guinea's move follows a similar decision in Burkina Faso, where authorities banned all political parties on 29 January as the junta there sought to consolidate power in the coup-hit nation.

Istanbul's ex-mayor on trial for corruption charges

The former mayor of Istanbul has appeared in court as the central defendant in a mass corruption trial that his opposition party and rights groups say is politically motivated. Ekrem Imamoglu, 55, faces more than 140 charges including corruption and running a criminal organisation. Prosecutors are seeking a jail term of up to 2,430 years.

He and his Republican People's Party (CHP) deny any wrongdoing. They accuse Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his allies of launching a crackdown over the leader's decline in popularity.

Prior to the trial, which got off to a chaotic start on Monday, Imamoglu was widely seen as one of the few politicians capable of defeating Erdogan, who has been at the top of Turkish politics since 2003.

Another 407 of Imamoglu's supporters have also been put on trial, accused of running a criminal corruption network headed by the opposition figure, who prosecutors describe as its "founder and leader".

Imamoglu was greeted by his supporters with cheers and whistles as he entered the courtroom in the Marmara prison on Monday.

But it was not long before proceedings were brought to a halt by the judge after the politician contested the judge's decision to hear the testimony of other defendants before his in the trial.

The judge called the protest

disrespectful and ordered a recess until the afternoon, just 15 minutes after the hearing had started.

Present in the courtroom were Imamoglu's wife, Dilek, and CHP leader Ozgur Ozel.

Imamoglu was arrested in March last year on the day he was named as the CHP's presidential candidate for 2028.

His detention triggered the country's largest street protests in more than a decade, followed by hundreds of arrests and a police crackdown.

Apart from the corruption case, prosecutors have accused him of a raft of other offences including espionage and forging his university degree, a qualification he would need to become president and that has since been annulled.

Turkish authorities deny that the judiciary is being used as a political tool.

But the trial has been strongly criticised by rights groups.

"The trial of Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu follows more than a year of weaponising the criminal justice system against his party and other CHP elected officials while he sits in jail," Benjamin Ward, deputy Europe and Central Asia director at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement last week.

"Looking at these cases as a whole, it's hard to avoid the conclusion that prosecutors are trying to remove Imamoglu from politics and discredit his party in ways that undermine



IRIS DENA WARSHIP:

Iranian warship Iris Dena sank after being hit by a US submarine on 4 March

India offered sanctuary to Iranian ship three days before US sank it

The Iranian warship Iris Dena was given permission by India to dock three days before it was torpedoed by a US submarine, India has said.

Foreign Minister S Jaishankar said Iran had sought permission for three of its ships to dock at Indian ports on 28 February - the day the US and Israel began a war on Iran - and permission was granted by India on 1 March.

The ships' movements between 1 and 4 March are not clear and nor is why only one of them made it to India.

The sinking of the Iris Dena, with 130 sailors on board, in international waters off Sri Lanka's southern coast on 4 March marked a dramatic widening of the war - and raised questions about India's authority in its backyard.

It was the first military strike outside the Middle East since the US and Israel launched their war on Iran. President

Donald Trump has said destroying Iran's navy is one aim of the assault.

The three Iranian ships - Iris Dena, Iris Bushehr and Iris Lavan - had all participated in a military exercise hosted by India between 15 and 25 February in the coastal city of Visakhapatnam.

They left Indian waters on 25 February and were likely to have been in international waters on 28 February - when the US and Israel began attacking Iran.

"The Iranian side had requested permission on 28 February for three ships in the region to dock at our ports. This was accorded on 1 March," Jaishankar told parliament on Monday. "Iris Lavan actually docked on 4 March in Kochi. The crew is currently in Indian naval facilities. We believe that this was the right thing to do."

Reuters An explosion on what the U.S. Department of Defense says is an Iranian war-

ship, at the sea, in this screenshot obtained from a handout video released on 4 March 2026.Reuters

Iris Dena and two other Iranian warships participated in a military exercise hosted by India between 15 and 25 February

On 4 March, Iris Dena sank after being hit by a torpedo fired from a US submarine, killing at least 87 of its crew members.

According to the Indian Navy, the Iris Dena was operating about 20 nautical miles - roughly 23 miles (37km) -

west of Galle in waters that fall under Sri Lanka's designated search-and-rescue zone on the day it was struck.

The US tracks vessels across the world's oceans, and a quarter of its submarine fleet of 65-70 is at sea at any given time, according to analysts.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said last week the US had "perpetrated an atrocity at sea, 2,000 miles away from Iran's shores" and that the warship was "struck in international waters without warning."

Alleged Bondi gunman seeks order to suppress family's identity

Alleged Bondi Beach gunman Naveed Akram has sought a court order to prevent media from publishing details of his immediate family over concerns about their safety.

The 24-year-old, who faces 59 charges including 15 counts of murder over the 14 December attack on a Jewish festival, did not appear in person at Monday's hearing.

His lawyer applied to the court in Sydney on his behalf for a non-publication order on the names, addresses and places of work and school for his mother, brother and sister.

Magistrate Greg Grogan granted a temporary order, citing global interest in the case - but noted that the name of Akram's mother had already been widely published.

"Hasn't the horse already bolted on that?" he asked.

A lawyer for News Corp Australia - which owns Sky News

Australia and numerous prominent newspapers - present at the hearing at the Downing Centre Local Court said the company would likely challenge the order. The matter is due to return to court briefly next week.

Akram's mother spoke to media in the aftermath of the shooting to defend her son.

His father, Sajid Akram, was shot and killed in a shootout with police at the scene of the attack.

Naveed Akram, who was critically injured, has yet to enter a plea. He said only one word when he appeared in court for the first time last month, answering "yeah" when asked if he had heard a discussion about an extension of different suppression orders.

Prosecutors have alleged that the two gunmen, inspired by Islamic State, acted alone and were not part of a wider cell. The attack was Australia's worst mass shooting since the 1996 Port Arthur attack.

Georgia school teacher killed after students' prank goes wrong

A high school teacher in Georgia was accidentally run over and killed outside his home when a toilet-paper prank carried out by his students went terribly wrong, officials said.

Jason Hughes, 40, came out of his home to surprise the students who were tossing toilet

papers over trees as part of a practical joke known as rolling.

But Hughes tripped and fell on the ground which was slick from rain, and as the students tried to run away from the scene in two separate cars, he was inadvertently run over by the driver of one of the cars, police said.

The student who was driving

the car has been charged with vehicular homicide, but the teacher's family say they want the charges dropped.

In a statement to the New York Times, Laura Hughes, Jason Hughes' wife, who is also an instructor at the same high school, said that her husband was beloved by the students.

She said he knew about the prank and "was excited and waiting to catch them in the act".

The student driver, identified as Jayden Ryan Wallace, 18, and two others stopped to try to help Hughes before emergency responders arrived and took him to the hospital, the sheriff's office said.

Foreign

NEWS

G7 to take 'necessary measures' to support energy supplies

G7 nations have said they are ready to take "necessary measures" to support the global supply of energy after the US-Israel war with Iran sent oil prices surging.

However, a meeting of G7 finance ministers and the International Energy Agency (IEA) ended without an agreement to release strategic crude reserves.

The oil price reached nearly \$120 a barrel on Monday over fears of a lengthy disruption to supplies, leading to global stock markets falling.

At the virtual meeting, the option of releasing oil from stockpiles was one of several discussed as Fatih Birol, head of the IEA, said global oil markets "have deteriorated in recent days".

Birol said: "In addition to the challenges of transit through the Strait of Hormuz, a substantial amount of oil production has been curtailed. This is creating significant and growing risks for the market."

"IEA member countries currently hold over 1.2 billion barrels of public emergency oil stocks, with a further 600 million barrels of industry stocks held under government obligation."

Following the meeting, French finance minister Roland Lescure said, "we are not there yet," on the question of whether emergency stocks will

be released.

If reserves are released it would be the first time since 2022 following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

In a statement following the meeting, the G7 said: "We stand ready to take necessary measures, including to support global supply of energy such as stockpile release."

Major disruption to energy supplies from the region threatens to push up prices for consumers and businesses around the world. Rising inflation could lead to fewer interest rate cuts by central banks.

About a fifth of the world's oil supply is usually shipped through the Strait of Hormuz. But traffic through the narrow passage has all but halted since the war started more than a week ago.

The US and Israel launched fresh waves of airstrikes across Iran over the weekend, hitting multiple targets including oil depots.

Meanwhile, Iran targeted energy infrastructure in neighbouring Gulf states. Overnight, Saudi Arabia said it had intercepted and destroyed two waves of drones heading towards a major oilfield.

Last week the markets had been relatively relaxed about the seemingly nightmare scenario of millions of barrels of crude and liquefied gas trapped in the Gulf.

Carney calls three by-elections in Canada that could grant him a majority

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has announced three by-elections on 13 April - races that could give his party a majority in the government.

Carney's Liberal government is just three seats shy of a majority.

Two of the by-elections will be held in Toronto, in constituencies that are considered strongholds for Carney's Liberal party, while the third will be a closely watched contest in Montreal where his party won by just one vote last year.

If they win all three seats, the Liberals would secure a narrow majority government, allowing the prime minister to pass legislation more easily and avoid an election for three more years.

The Liberal government currently has 169 seats in parliament, just three shy of a majority in Canada's House of Commons.

Carney has been able to get so close to a majority, in part, due to recent defections by three former Conservative members of parliament.

The two Toronto seats up for a by-election were left vacant after the resignation of Chrystia Freeland, who stepped down after accepting a voluntary role advising Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and Bill Blair, who was appointed as Canada's envoy to the UK.

Freeland's former seat in University-Rosedale, and Blair's former seat in Scarborough Southwest, have both been occupied by Liberal MPs since 2015.

The third constituency — a suburb of Montreal called Terrebonne — had been held by the separatist Bloc Québécois since 2015. It had flipped to the Liberals in 2025 thanks to one singular vote.

A by-election in Terrebonne was ordered by the Supreme Court of Canada, however, after the Bloc Québécois candidate called for a do-over due to reports that a Bloc voter's mail-in ballot was returned because of a misprint.

The upcoming Terrebonne election will be a re-match between Liberal candidate Tatiana Augustine and Bloc Québécois candidate Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné.

The Liberal Party has already begun its ground campaign in the Montreal suburb, organising calls and knocking on doors in an effort to win over voters.

In recent months, the Carney government has attracted several former Conservative MPs to its ranks - a move the opposition Conservatives have called "undemocratic", accusing the Liberals of using "pressure tactics" on their members.

Recent polls suggest the Liberals could win a majority government if an election were to be held today.



IRAN'S NEW SUPREME LEADER:

Mojtaba Khamenei, 56, is expected to continue the hardline rule of his father.

Iranians deeply divided over Mojtaba Khamenei's rise to power

Mojtaba Khamenei has been named Iran's new supreme leader and successor to his father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed on the first day of the war with the US and Iran.

Some pro-establishment crowds have taken to the streets to celebrate the appointment of a hardliner close to the powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

But other Iranians have told the BBC that they believe it will not bring about change.

"Even the thinnest of chances for a change are no more within the system," said a man in his 30s in the capital, Tehran.

He said the Assembly of Experts - an 88-member clerical body that chooses the supreme leader - could not have selected anyone closer to Ali Khamenei.

"So, everything will remain

much the same; they don't even need to change their chants to support the [new leader]," he added.

For years, there have been rumours that Mojtaba Khamenei held considerable influence behind the scenes in Iran.

Many expect him to continue his father's hardline policies.

A woman in her 20s in Tehran said she believed Mojtaba Khamenei would be "even more oppressive than his dad".

She told the BBC: "I really hope their [senior officials'] lives end in the war, otherwise if we're under his rule, we will all die."

Another Tehran resident in his 30s said: "He's vengeful. They killed his father and he won't let go."

"If he can't take revenge on the US, he will take it out on our ordinary people. I hope that Israel and the US will target him."

Since Sunday night, Iranian state TV news channel IRINN has been showing pro-establishment rallies held for Mojtaba Khamenei in different cities including Tehran, the holy city of Qom, and the north-eastern city of Mashhad, his birthplace.

In the footage, crowds are seen waving the flag of the Islamic Republic.

But Mojtaba Khamenei himself has yet to make a public appearance or speech.

One woman told the channel: "We're very happy. Thanks to the Assembly of Experts. The hand of God is protecting us. Khamenei is still our leader."

Another woman said: "It couldn't have been better than this. Our hearts were warmed."

BBC Persian and BBC Verify have also verified video posted on social media on Sunday night which included chants of

"Death to Mojtaba" and "Death to the lackey" in opposition to Mojtaba Khamenei, as well as chants of "Allahu Akbar" ("God is greatest") in support.

Supporters held posters showing Mojtaba Khamenei with his late father Ayatollah Ali Khamenei at rallies in Tehran.

The 56-year-old cleric largely kept a low profile during his father's rule, but there were longstanding rumours about his influence as a gatekeeper to the late supreme leader.

US diplomatic cables, published by WikiLeaks in the late 2000s, described him as "the power behind the robes" in the regime who was widely regarded as a "capable and forceful leader".

In addition to being close to the IRGC, he has been accused of interfering in presidential elections and commanding the paramilitary Basij force.

Hundreds of teenagers report for duty as Croatia reinstates conscription

More than half of the 800 conscripts reporting for service today are volunteers

Hundreds of teenage Croatians have reported for compulsory military service - for the first time since their country scrapped the requirement in 2008.

Training will take place at barracks in three locations around Croatia, with recruits expected to report to the facility nearest to their homes.

There, they will receive their kit and dormitory assignments. For the next two months, they will have to submit to military discipline.

"They have now been torn from the civilian environment," said Tihomir Kundid, Chief of

the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Croatia.

In case that sounded rather brutal, the general was quick to reassure any anxious parents that their offspring would be handled with care.

"We will acclimatise them step by step, so that they do not experience too much stress," he added.

Many among the recruits will also be relieved to hear that there are "no special restrictions" on mobile phones, beyond a ban on using them during training.

Around 800 people are in the first batch of conscripts. Notably, more than half of them did not wait for their call-up papers, but volunteered for service. One in ten are women, who are under no obligation to serve.

Croatian officials have also been keen to point out that just 10 people have so far registered as conscientious objectors. They will have to spend four months in civilian service instead - receiving less than half the €1,100 (£953; \$1,273) monthly allowance granted to military recruits.

General Kundid promises a "very dynamic, very interesting" programme for the conscripts. Training will cover everything from traditional skills through to "basic drone control and drone protection skills" and cyberwarfare techniques and countermeasures.

The situation in Croatia used to be stable but is now "completely different," Defence Minister Ivan Anusic said.

The uncomfortable proximity of the war in Ukraine prompted Croatia's move to reinstate compulsory military service. Only Hungary separates Croatia from the conflict.

"The situation in Croatia and all around our neighbourhood was stable. Right now, it's completely different," Croatia's Defence Minister, Ivan Anusic, tells the BBC.

"For four years now, we've been looking at not just the Russian aggression in Ukraine, but the proxies of Russia all around Europe doing their jobs."

Where Croatia leads, its neighbours may follow. Ahead of this month's parliamentary elections, Slovenia's largest opposition party has been pushing a return to conscription.

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FEATURES

How *Bloomberg's* \$1m award for Benin City validates Governor Okpebholo's vision for urban renewal

DR PATRICK AKHERE EBOJELE

Benin City's story has always been one of resilience, history, and reinvention. From its origins as the political and cultural heart of the ancient Benin Empire, the cradle of black civilisation, to its modern role as the capital of Edo State, the heartbeat of Nigeria, the city has consistently demonstrated an ability to evolve with the times. Just now, that evolution is taking a bold new shape as global recognition meets local transformation.

When Bloomberg Philanthropies announced weekend that Benin City is one of the global winners of the prestigious Bloomberg Mayor's Challenge, awarding the city \$1 million for urban innovation, for many, it is more than a ceremonial accolade. It represents an international validation of a vision that the Akpakorecue Governor Monday Okpebholo has been steadily pursuing — the transformation of Benin City into a modern, efficient, and globally competitive urban centre.

Worldwide, the Bloomberg Mayor's Challenge is regarded as one of the most competitive global platforms for cities seeking innovative solutions to urban problems. It is on record that out of over 600 cities worldwide, only 25 cities across 20 countries made the final list. In the African continent Benin City emerged as one of only four cities to secure a place among the winners. For this historic Nigerian city often defined by its past glory, the award signals a decisive shift toward a future anchored in innovation, infrastructure, and improved public services.

But a few will disagree that for decades, Benin City faced the same pressures confronting many rapidly expanding African urban centres: heavy traffic congestion, ageing infrastructure, rapid population growth, and the challenge of balancing historical preservation with modernization. In the last few months, this narrative has begun to change, driven by a deliberate strategy of urban renewal championed by Governor Monday Okpebholo.

Central to this transformation are key infrastructure projects that are gradually redefining the city's landscape. Among them are the strategically designed flyovers at Ramat Park and Sapele Road, projects conceived not merely as road expansions but as long-term solutions to mobility and economic efficiency in the city.

Ramat Park has historically been one of the busiest intersections in Benin City. For years, motorists endured frustrating delays, with traffic gridlocks stretching for kilometres during peak hours. Commuters often spent over forty minutes navigating a junction that should ordinarily take minutes to cross. The construction of the Ramat Park flyover is designed to permanently resolve that challenge, ensuring smooth vehicular movement and drastically reducing travel time.

Beyond easing traffic congestion, the flyover represents a broader vision of urban planning that recognizes mobility as the backbone of economic productivity. Efficient transportation systems enable businesses to move



goods faster, reduce operational costs, and improve access for workers and consumers alike.

Similarly, the Sapele Road flyover project addresses another strategic corridor that connects Benin City to neighbouring communities and commercial routes. Sapele Road serves as a vital economic artery, linking industrial and residential zones while facilitating intercity trade. For years, persistent congestion along the route slowed commerce and increased transportation costs for businesses operating in the area.

Governor Okpebholo's intervention through the construction of a modern flyover is expected to unlock the economic potential of the corridor, improving connectivity while encouraging investment along the route. Infrastructure experts note that projects like these often trigger a ripple effect across local economies, attracting new businesses, boosting property values, and enhancing urban mobility.

Yet what distinguishes Benin City's transformation is not simply the scale of infrastructure development, but the strategic thinking behind it. The city's success in the Bloomberg Mayor's Challenge reflects a broader governance

philosophy that prioritizes innovation, sustainability, and inclusive growth.

The award recognizes cities that propose creative and practical solutions to urban challenges. In Benin City's case, the focus on healthcare innovation played a crucial role in securing the global recognition. Through forward-looking initiatives in public health management and service delivery, the city demonstrated that technology, strategic planning, and strong leadership can significantly improve access to healthcare.

Governor Okpebholo emphasized this point while reacting to the international recognition.

"This recognition is a testament to innovation, resilience, and the unwavering commitment of our team to transform healthcare delivery in Edo State. It reinforces that bold ideas from Benin City can compete — and win — on the global stage," the governor said.

The governor further congratulated the Edo State Ministry of Health and the team responsible for developing the initiative that earned the city the prestigious global recognition.

He noted that the award reflects the growing reputation of Edo State as a hub

for progressive governance, innovation, and impactful public sector reforms.

Equally important is the broader economic impact of the administration's infrastructure agenda. Already, areas surrounding major construction projects have begun to experience increased commercial activity. Property developers and investors are paying closer attention to the city, encouraged by visible improvements in urban infrastructure.

Business owners also report that improved road networks and traffic flow are gradually enhancing logistics efficiency, reducing transportation delays, and improving the overall business environment.

Infrastructure development has also provided significant employment opportunities. During construction phases alone, hundreds of skilled and unskilled workers have been engaged, generating economic activity and providing income for many households.

The governor's urban renewal strategy has also strengthened investor confidence. In recent months, several local and international companies have shown renewed interest in exploring investment opportunities in Benin City, citing improved infrastructure and a

stable governance environment.

This pattern reflects a well-known development model: when governments invest in strategic infrastructure, the private sector often follows. Roads, bridges, and modern transportation systems create the foundation upon which industries, commerce, and innovation flourish.

The \$1 million Bloomberg award further strengthens this momentum. Beyond the financial value of the prize, the global recognition places Benin City within an elite network of cities recognized for bold and innovative urban solutions.

For policymakers and urban planners, the award offers both validation and opportunity. It confirms that the city's approach to governance and development is aligned with international best practices while also providing resources to expand and refine innovative initiatives.

Critics who initially questioned the scale and cost of the administration's infrastructure investments are increasingly confronted with the tangible results now visible across the city. The ongoing construction at Ramat Park and Sapele Road stands as a powerful demonstration of how vision can translate into real development when backed by political will and strategic planning.

Importantly, modernization efforts have not ignored the cultural identity that defines Benin City. Governor Okpebholo's administration has emphasized the preservation of historical landmarks and heritage sites that reflect the city's centuries-old civilization.

This delicate balance between preservation and progress remains crucial. Benin City's cultural heritage — from its historic palaces to its traditional institutions — forms the foundation of its identity. Sustainable development must therefore integrate modern infrastructure with cultural continuity.

As the transformation continues, the synergy between international recognition through the Bloomberg Mayor's Challenge and local action through infrastructure development is creating a powerful momentum for change.

Benin City is gradually redefining itself — not merely as a historic capital of an ancient kingdom, but as a modern African metropolis capable of innovation, competitiveness, and sustainable growth.

Governor Okpebholo captured this optimism while addressing the people of Edo State following the announcement of the award.

"Congratulations to my hardworking team and to the great people of Edo State. The world is watching, and we are just getting started," he said.

Indeed, the journey of Benin City's renaissance is still unfolding. But with strategic leadership, international recognition, and a determined citizenry, the city appears poised to reclaim its historic reputation — not only as a centre of cultural greatness, but also as a beacon of modern urban progress in Nigeria and beyond.

• Dr Patrick Akhere Ebojele, PhD is the Chief Press Secretary to Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo

We need peace, care, development and empowerment for our children, not war and death

(Save the children, build the youth & save the world)

JOHN LMONBHIO ABHUERE

I write to express sorrow over the tragic death of school children - Little Girls in Iran who in their innocence went to school only to be brutally killed by missiles from abroad. Tragic. Seeing the small coffins lined up for burial saddened me ever since. We believe that the World can be made safer, and its leaders can do far much better here than they are doing. The World needs peace, care and love, opportunities for Development and Empowerment for our children to grow and participate in global affairs, not war and death we are witnessing today. As we join others in mourning the death of these innocent school girls, condole with their parents, all of us at the Centre for Child Care and Youth Nigeria pray to God to accept their Souls. Rest in peace our dear little Children who were killed for what they know nothing about.

We hereby appeal to all parties for peaceful settlement to prevent further destruction and stop the flowing of more blood of our children and youth- the future of our World. We call for greater care and more opportunities for their growth, development and participation in global affairs.

The importance of child care and education in shaping a strong, responsible, and progressive society. Children



represent the future of every nation, and the quality of care and education they receive in their formative years greatly influences the development of their character, intellect, and values.

Proper child care ensures that children grow in a safe, nurturing, and

supportive environment. When children receive adequate attention, protection, and emotional support, they are more likely to develop confidence, discipline, and a sense of responsibility. Parents, guardians, teachers, political leaders and the community all play

vital roles in providing the guidance necessary for children to grow into responsible adults.

Equally important is access to quality education. Education equips children with the knowledge, skills, and critical thinking abilities required to

navigate the complexities of modern society. It opens doors to opportunities, reduces poverty, and promotes social equality. A well-educated child is better prepared to contribute positively to the economy, community, and nation at large.

Investing in child care and education is therefore not only a responsibility but also a long-term investment in national development. Governments, organizations, and individuals must work together to ensure that every child has access to safe care environments and quality learning opportunities regardless of their background. Wars, Terrorism etc are not part of the agenda for Child Care and Youth Development

In conclusion, prioritizing child care and education will lead to the development of productive citizens and a more prosperous society- a better world. It is our collective duty to support policies and initiatives that protect children and promote their educational, social, economic and even political growth and development- not wars, violence and death as we have in many parts of the world today.

Save the children, build the youth and save the world.

• By John lmonbhio Abhuere FNIM FIMC, Centre for Child Care and Youth Development (CCYD) Abuja, Nigeria.

When the mic lost its might: The tragic romance between Nigerian journalists and power

ADEBAYO FALEKE

There was a time, not too long ago, when the Nigerian press stood as the soul of our struggle, the voice of our collective conscience, and the heartbeat of our liberation. Newspapers were not just ink on paper; they were weapons of resistance. Radio was not a platform for sycophancy; it was a clarion call for freedom. Our journalists faced guns, prison cells, exile, and death just to tell the truth.

From the anti-colonial crusades of Herbert Macaulay, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, and Anthony Enahoro, to the fearless pages of West African Pilot and The Nigerian Tribune, the press became the intellectual and ideological engine that challenged British imperialism and laid the foundation for our independence. These were not men and women chasing appointments, they were chasing purpose.

During the military years, the media didn't retreat. In the face of tyranny, the Nigerian journalist stood upright. Names like Dele Giwa, Kunle Ajibade, Nosa Igiebor, Chris Anyanwu, and Chief Tola Adeniyi come to mind; journalists who risked or lost everything to remind Nigeria of what freedom should feel like. Even when bullets flew, the pen held firm. Even when voices were silenced, the echoes remained.

But now, in the very democracy that journalism fought to birth, the Nigerian press is bleeding from within. What military oppression couldn't kill, money and access have murdered. What General Abacha couldn't crush with Decrees, politicians have bought over with brown envelopes and meaningless appointments.

Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, we expected journalism to become even stronger, bolder, freer, more daring. Instead, what we see today is a nation gasping for breath, choked by bad governance, visionless leadership, and economic hopelessness; while the media, once its last hope, stands either in silence or in praise-singing suits.

How did we get here? where the average radio or TV presenter now twists his content just to please a local politician? Where headlines are bought and praise is scheduled? Where governors become overnight "performers" because they've bought airtime, sponsored jingles, or handed out iPhones and rice at media parley events?

Even worse, what do journalists get in return for this betrayal of their sacred calling? Peanuts.

A few thousand naira.

Or, if lucky, an appointment as Special Adviser on Media, Chief Press Secretary, or Communication Aide titles that come without dignity, stripped

of independence, and loaded with the duty to launder bad governance.

Is this what the likes of Ernest Ikoli, Mokwugo Okoye, and Abidina Coomassie fought for?

Is this the reward for the media that once stood against jackboots and decrees?

Is this what Dele Giwa died for?

Is this what democracy promised us?

Today, the poor masses, ignorant, hungry, and deceived are fed with sweetened lies by those whose duty was to inform them. And the politicians? They have mastered the game. They have weaponized poverty not just to silence the people, but to colonize the press.

It is no longer just the masses who are hungry; the media is now hungry too.

A hungry journalist cannot hold power to account.

A compromised newsroom cannot produce revolutionary truth.

A rented voice cannot speak freedom. What we have now is a chorus of microphones singing to power while the nation drowns.

But not all of us have bowed. Some of us still remember the weight of this calling.

As for me, I have chosen the hard path to speak truth in season and out of season.

Not because I seek attention, money, political favour, or patronage but

because I cannot stand and watch Nigeria burn in silence.

Through the lens of journalism, the boldness of poetry, the intensity of film, and the power of satire, I have tried within my means to wake up a sleeping nation and confront the beasts in designer agbadas.

I have produced albums like 'National Cake' (1 & 2), 'Banana Republic', 'Epistle to Baba Maigaskiya', 'Revelation', and others, not as entertainment, but as weapons of conscience.

I have written the book 'The Dilemmas of a Country' to document the tragedies and contradictions of Nigeria.

I have created and aired several social satires like 'Ilu Ariremase', 'Ilu Jogbo', and more on radio and my TvAfrikana channel.

And in a country where survival itself is a daily miracle for the average broadcast journalist, I summoned personal courage and gathered scarce personal resources to produce a bold, A-class cinema movie titled 'The Rubicon' which screened across cinemas nationwide; all in a determined bid to pass a message that must be heard. That, too, was a cry for national awakening.

I have written articles, not to trend, but to trouble consciences.

I have used my voice not to flatter politicians, but to remind them they are accountable.

This is my own little wake-up call.

This is my contribution to the nation of our dreams.

This is me, standing in the gap.

And yes, I know I am not alone; there were, and still a few uncompromised voices in the wilderness of Nigerian journalism. Journalists like Dele Giwa, Chris Anyanwu, Nosa Igiebor, Kunle Ajibade, Fisayo Soyombo, and Chief Tola Adeniyi. Names whose integrity has remained largely untarnished. They remind us that not all pens have price tags, and not all microphones are for hire.

Yet the system mocks us. Society dismisses us. And in the end, what you hear most often is the cynical echo:

"Everyone has a price tag."

But no, not everyone does.

Some of us still bleed when Nigeria bleeds.

Some of us still believe that journalism is a calling, not a contract.

We are at a crossroads. The nation is choking. And the mic must find its might again.

If journalism dies, democracy won't just collapse, it will vanish without a sound.

Let this not be our legacy. Let the Nigerian journalist look back and remember who he was before he sold his voice, his pen, and his soul.

• Written by Adebayo Faleke, Broadcast Journalist, Author & Filmmaker

Sports

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

2nd Niger Delta Games title: Gov Okpebholo to toast triumphant Team Edo today



EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN HON AMADIN DESMOND ENABULELE

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Celebration continues in the camp of team Edo as plans have been concluded for the Edo state Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo to

to accord the champions of the second Niger Delta Games a grand reception.

According to the correspondence from Government House in Benin, the grand reception for the victorious team

Edo led by their Executive Chairman Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele, is scheduled for Tuesday, March 10, 2026, beginning from 12 noon inside the new Festival Hall, Government House, Benin city.

The entire Edo contingent and sports stakeholders invited are expected to be at the venue an hour before 12pm.

Confirming the state government's reception for the victorious team Edo, the Sports Commission chairman said that the state Governor has graciously invited the victorious team for reception and added that he has extended invitation to Bendel Insurance FC Supporters Club led by chief Osadolor Ogiefa to be in the train of celebration.

He expressed gratitude to the governor of the state for the opportunity given him and his board to serve. According to Enabulele, the state government's reception for team Edo in appreciation for emerging champions at the just concluded second Niger Delta Games, is a huge motivation and encouragement for them to do more for Edo State in the subsequent national sports fiesta.



World Cup playoffs could be postponed amid Middle East crisis

The intercontinental playoffs for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, scheduled for March 23–31 in Guadalajara and Monterrey, Mexico, face potential disruption due to the ongoing conflict in Iran and the closure of multiple Middle Eastern airspaces.

Iraq, set to play the winner of Suriname vs. Bolivia in the final of its playoff bracket on March 31 in Monterrey, is encountering significant logistical hurdles.

The closure of Iraqi airspace, widespread flight cancellations in the region, and the shutdown of several embassies are complicating visa processing and preventing many squad members primarily domestically based players from traveling to Mexico.

Iraqi national team coach Graham Arnold, together with the Iraqi Football Federation,

has formally requested FIFA to postpone the fixture, citing the impossibility of preparing and fielding a team under fair conditions.

Their proposal suggests allowing the Suriname-Bolivia match to proceed as planned, while postponing Iraq's final to a date closer to the start of the World Cup.

FIFA has yet to issue a public decision but is reportedly "monitoring the situation closely" in coordination with the Iraqi federation and the Asian Football Confederation.

A key question remains:

if Iraq's request is granted, will only its final be affected, or will adjustments be needed for the other half of the playoff draw, including the bracket featuring Jamaica, New Caledonia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Sadiq Umar impresses and shines against Deportivo Alavés in the 2025/26 Laliga Season

Nigerian international striker Umar Sadiq delivered another influential performance for Valencia CF during their thrilling 3–2 comeback victory against Deportivo Alavés on Matchday 27 of the 2025/26 La Liga season at the iconic Mestalla Stadium.

The Nigerian forward played a crucial role in Valencia's resurgence during the match, showcasing his technical quality, intelligence, and attacking presence.

With Valencia trailing, Sadiq stepped up early in the second half to spark the comeback. In the 47th minute, he produced a moment of composure and creativity by setting up teammate Javi Guerra for the equalizing goal, bringing the score to 1–1 and reigniting the energy inside the Mestalla.

Beyond the assist, Sadiq remained a constant menace to the Alavés defense throughout the match.

His movement off the ball, ability to hold up play, and physical strength created space for Valencia's attacking midfielders to operate.

Time and again he stretched the opposition's backline, forcing defenders into uncomfortable positions and opening passing lanes for his teammates.

The performance highlighted Sadiq's growing importance in Valencia's attacking setup since his return to regular action in early 2026. Operating as a central forward, he combined effectively with the midfield and demonstrated the tactical awareness required in Spain's top flight.

His presence gave Valencia both a direct attacking outlet and a reliable link between midfield and attack.

His impressive outing against Alavés is part of a strong run of form for the Nigerian striker in recent weeks. During February and March 2026, Sadiq has consistently contributed to Valencia's push in the league, including a goal in the derby clash against Levante UD and several impactful performances that underline his value to the team.



SADIQ UMAR

Barau FC staff face harassment, abuse from Club General Manager, seek urgent action from DSP

Staff, coaches, and some players of Barau FC have expressed anger over what they described as harassment and abuse by the club's General Manager, Dominic Iorfa.

Sources within the club, who spoke anonymously, alleged that since his appointment, Iorfa has been running most of the club's activities through his close associates despite the presence of several staff members assigned to different roles.

According to insiders, the club's coach Madu Muhammad, who has been with the team since its days in the Nationwide League One (NLO), was suspended on Wednesday while the team was preparing to travel from Kano to Kazaure for a three-day camping ahead of their match against Kano Pillars on Sunday.

"One Wednesday, before we left Kano for Kazaure, Dominic Iorfa suspended Coach Madu Muhammad over a minor misunderstanding with his associate, Eugene Agagbe," a source said.

The source further alleged that many staff members feel intimidated in the club.

"We constantly face abuse, harassment, and bullying from Dominic Iorfa. Many of us are uncomfortable working under him, but we endure it because we are trying to keep our jobs," the source added.

The insider questioned why only Coach Madu Muhammad was suspended when the misunderstanding involved both parties.

"My surprise is why only Madu Muhammad was suspended while he and Eugene Agagbe had just a minor disagreement. It would have been better if action was taken against both of them," the source said.

Coach Madu Muhammad has reportedly been in charge of the club since its participation in the Nationwide League One, guiding the team through promotion to the

Nigeria National League (NNL) and eventually to the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL).

Sources also claimed that before the team departed Kano for Kazaure, the club's welfare officer, Mukhtar Ahmad Zico, was suspended by the General Manager



Dominic Iorfa, the General Manager of Barau FC, celebrated the victory against Plateau United yesterday by breaking the fast with his boss and Deputy Senate President, Jubril Barau.

for reasons that remain unclear.

Meanwhile, the club's technical consultant, Jabir Hassan, reportedly resigned two weeks ago, citing intimidation and workplace pressure allegedly linked to the club's management.

The club, which has been financially supported over the years by the Deputy President of the Senate, Barau Jibrin, is now facing internal tensions that staff say are affecting the working environment.

Sources also recalled that Iorfa previously faced allegations of financial mismanagement and administrative misconduct during his tenure as Vice Chairman of Lobi Stars, which reportedly led to his removal by the Benue State Government in 2024.

Sports

Eberechi Eze reveals: I'm trying to perform in every single game



EBERECHI EZE

Arsenal's Nigerian-born dazzler, Eberechi Eze is still basking in the euphoria of his stunning goal for The Gunners in Saturday's FA Cup victory over Mansfield and declared that he keeps on trying to perform well in every game.

The former Queens Park Rangers and Crystal Palace ace was Arsenal's outstanding player once again, as he netted his side's second goal in a 2-1 win that helped them book a spot in the FA Cup quarterfinals.

He admitted afterwards that it is a welcome change to recent flak that hit him from Arsenal's fans, when he failed to keep a place in the squad, then acknowledged that he often does

better at the start of every year.

The Nigerian-born England international is now hoping that his renewed form will continue all the way till the last kick of the season, as he fights for a spot in the FIFA World Cup squad and help Arsenal win the EPL title.

Eze said: "I am trying every single game to perform, to score goals and to win. It just seems to fall more so at this time of the year. I hope it is the same this year. This is where it matters.

"These are the end points that you want to arrive in. For sure, I will be working as hard as I can to push for it. I just pray that we continue to build the team, to keep working and winning games



Team 33 Kicks off Live Coverage of Nigeria National League

Team 33 Production has officially commenced live broadcast of the Nigeria National League (NNL), signalling the first major milestone in the partnership between Tiptier Sports Management Limited (TSM) and the league body.

The collaboration is primarily focused on repositioning and rebranding the NNL, significantly enhancing its visibility and commercial appeal. With the new live production initiative, NNL matches can now be streamed and viewed by audiences across the globe, marking a new era of accessibility for Nigeria's second-tier league.

Tiptier Sports Management (TSM) investors who fully came on board ahead of the second stanza of the 2025-26 season have prioritized key structural reforms. Their focus includes improved match production, image rebranding, digitisation processes, indemnity frameworks, and the establishment of strong governance structures designed to provide a solid foundation for sustainable growth.

Beyond visibility, the initiative is also expected to create new opportunities for clubs and players. With matches now accessible to a global audience, teams can effectively showcase and pitch their players for potential transfers abroad.

The TSM investors have put in place a functional and transparent system designed to benefit every stakeholder involved, from the league body and clubs to players, partners, and fans.

The positive impacts of the partnership was continue this weekend as Seven Matches were live this weekend, including: the clash between First Bank FC and Rovers FC, was broadcast live on Friday, while Saturday's thrilling 1-2 encounter between Gateway FC and Beyond Limits FC at the MKO Abiola Arena, in Abeokuta, Heartland FC vs Smart City FC in Owerri which ended 3-1 in favour of the host, Adamawa United vs Bichi First, Kada Warriors 1 vs 1 Sokoto United and Doma FC 1vs 0 FC Basir were also beamed live, courtesy of Team 33 Production.

FULL RESULT: Friday

First Bank 1-0 Rovers FC

Saturday

Osun United 1-0 Akwa United
Heartland 3-1 Smart City
Inter Lagos 5-0 Abia Comets
Gateway 1-2 Beyond Limits
Edel FC 2-1 Crown FC
Kada Warriors 1-1 Sokoto United
City FC 1-0 Mighty Jets
Lobi Stars 2-0 ABS
Doma 1-0 FC Basira
Ranchers Bees 3-0 Jigawa GS

Here are Sunday matches to be streamed live:

Sporting Lagos vs Abakaliki FC
Gombe United vs Yobe Desert Warriors.

This development represents a significant step forward in elevating the profile, professionalism, and global competitiveness of the Nigeria National League.



STADIUM CAMERAMAN

D'Tigress Land in Lyon, France for FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup Qualifying Tournament

Nigeria's senior women's basketball team, D'Tigress, have arrived in Lyon, France, ahead of the 2026 FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup Qualifying Tournament, where they will battle some of the world's top teams for supremacy.

The five-time consecutive African champions touched down in France and are already settling down as preparations begin in earnest for the tournament scheduled to hold from March 11 to March 17, 2026. Training sessions are expected to commence immediately as the team fine-tunes strategies ahead of their opening game.

D'Tigress, widely regarded as the most dominant women's basketball team in Africa, head into the competition with strong confidence after winning the 2025 FIBA Women's AfroBasket Championship, a victory that further cemented their status as continental powerhouse. The Nigerian side has won the AfroBasket title five consecutive times (2017, 2019, 2021, 2023 and 2025) and remains the only African women's team to reach the quarterfinals of both the Olympic Games and the FIBA Women's World Cup.

At the qualifying tournament in Lyon-Villeurbanne, Nigeria will face a competitive lineup that includes France, Germany, South Korea, Colombia, and the Philippines in a round-robin format. The tournament forms part of the global qualification pathway for the 2026 FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup, with teams competing for available slots in the final tournament scheduled to hold in Berlin, Germany.

Nigeria will open their campaign on March 11 against Colombia, before taking on South Korea, the Philippines, France,

and Germany in subsequent fixtures during the week-long competition.

Head coach Rena Wakama has named a 12-player squad that blends experienced campaigners with emerging talents as the team aims to maintain its reputation on the global stage.

Players Unveiled for the Qualifiers are; Promise Amukamara, Elizabeth Balogun, Blessing Ejiofor, Nicole Enabosi, Rita Igbokwe, Ezinne Kalu, Pallas Kunayi-Akpanah, Victoria Macaulay, Murjanatu Musa, Sarah Ogoke, Amy Okonkwo and Ifunaya Okoro.



D'TIGRESS

Akuh purity targets Olympic Qualification through ranking Series

National wrestling coach Akuh Purity has revealed that he and his athletes are intensifying preparations in a bid to secure qualification for the next Olympic Games through the international ranking series.

Akuh explained that the coaching crew is focused on ensuring that Nigerian wrestlers gain valuable ranking points ahead of the Olympic qualification process, which is expected to begin next year.

"We are working very hard

with the athletes so that we can have wrestlers who will compete and advance in the ranking series," Akuh said.

According to the coach, the ranking competitions play a crucial role in determining which athletes will eventually qualify for the Olympic Games.

"These ranking series are very important because they help athletes improve their positions and stand a better chance of qualifying," he explained.

Akuh admitted that missing

the first two ranking tournaments this year was a setback for the team's preparations.

"Unfortunately, we were unable to participate in the first and second ranking series," he noted.

However, the coach expressed optimism that the team could still recover lost ground by competing in upcoming continental competitions.

"We are hopeful that we can attend the continental championship in Egypt," he added.

Akuh believes that participating in the African championship will give Nigerian wrestlers the opportunity to earn ranking points and remain in contention for Olympic qualification.

"If we compete in the continental championship, we can still have ranked athletes who can qualify for the Olympics," he said.

Nigeria has a proud tradition in wrestling, with several athletes achieving success at major international competitions including the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games and African championships.



AKUH PURITY

SPORTS

The Nigerian Observer
 ...that the people may know

2026 President Federation Cup: Clubs to pay ₦1m for failure to honour matches

Clubs that fail to honour matches in the national preliminaries of this year's President Federation Cup competition will be fined the sum of N1 million.

NFF's Director of Competitions, Ruth David, made this clear in a statement on Monday, in which she also announced that the State preliminaries of the nation's oldest football competition will take place between 22nd March and 26th April.

The State preliminaries kick off on Sunday, 22nd March, and any club that fails to show up for any match after concluding registration for the competition at the State level will be made to pay the sum of N500,000.

The Final Matches in the State competition must be played either on Saturday 25th April or Sunday 26th April, with each Football Association in the States and the FCT to submit its two representatives for the National competition on either of these two days.

Decisions Of The Meeting Of The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) Disciplinary Committee Held On 3rd March, 2026 On The Protest Lodged By Gombe United Fc Against The Decision Of The Nigeria National League (NNL) On The Match Played Between Gombe United Fc, Gombe And Jigawa Golden Stars Fc, Jigawa, On 21st December, 2025 At Pantami Stadium, Gombe

FINDINGS:

1. The Committee found that at 90 + 4 minutes, the Centre Referee awarded a goal kick.
2. The Committee found that as a result of the decision of the Centre Referee, the Home Team (Gombe United FC) Fans encroached into the field of play and forced the Centre Referee to changed it to a penalty kick in breach of Rule 16 (1), Nigeria National League (NNL) Rules.
3. The Committee found that the Centre Referee issued two (2) conflicting and irreconcilable reports.
4. There is no evidence to substantiate the allegation of duress against the Centre Referee.
5. That the players of Jigawa Golden Stars FC refused to continue with the match in protest to the decision of the Centre Referee to award a penalty kick.

DECISION

Based on the findings, the Committee hereby states as follows;

1. That Gombe United FC is found guilty of encroachment and is hereby fined the sum of One Million Naira (N1,000,000) only.
2. That Terwase Chia (Centre Referee) is hereby suspended for the rest of the Season for professional misconduct that brings the game to disrepute.

duct that brings the game to disrepute.

3. That Jigawa Golden Stars FC is hereby fined the sum of Five Hundred Thousand Naira (N500,000) only, for refusing to continue with the match.

4. That the match is hereby considered conclusive with the result standing at 0:0 in favour of both teams.

5. That the above decisions are without prejudice to the right of appeal.

In attendance: Barr. Jude Obikwelu (Chairman), Barr. A.I. Abdulrahman (Vice chairman), Barr. Bello Galadi (Member), Barr. Wole Ademoyegun and Queen W. Otarakpo, Esq. (Secretary)

Decisions Of The Meeting Of The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) Disciplinary Committee Held On 3rd March, 2026 On The Protest Lodged By Wikki Tourist Fc Against The Decision Of The Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) On The Match Played Between Wikki Tourist FC, Bauchi And Katsina United Fc, Katsina, On 8th February, 2026 At Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Stadium, Bauchi

FINDINGS:

1. The Committee found that, Wikki Tourist FC failed to provide adequate and effective security, in that after the first half, unauthorized persons gained access to restricted areas.
2. The Committee found that the supporters of Wikki Tourist FC threw dangerous objects such as stones into the field.
3. The Centre Referee informed the Committee that even though he was hit by a stone, he was not injured.
4. The Committee found that there was no evidence to substantiate the allegation of injury on any of the match officials and away team officials.
5. The Committee found that the supporters of Wikki Tourist FC exhibited conducts capable of bringing the game to disrepute.

DECISIONS:

Based on the above findings, the Committee decides as follows:

1. That the Committee adopts Sanction No.1 in the Summary Jurisdiction (Form 16) and upholds the two Million Naira (N2,000,000) fine against Wikki Tourist FC for failure to provide adequate and effective security.
2. That the Committee disagrees with the decision in Sanction No.2 of the Summary Jurisdiction (Form 16) and therefore sets aside for want of evidence.
3. That the Committee adopts Sanction No.3 in the Summary Jurisdiction (Form 16) and upholds the One Million Naira (N1,000,000) fine against Wikki Tourist FC for unsporting behavior capable of bringing the game to disrepute.

4. That the Committee adopts Sanction No.4 in the Summary Jurisdiction (Form 16) and upholds the One Million Naira (N1,000,000) fine against Wikki Tourist FC for throwing of dangerous objects into the field of play.

5. That the Committee disagrees with the decision in Sanction Nos. 5 of the Summary Jurisdiction Notice form 16, and it is therefore set aside.

6. An order that all subsequent home fixtures of Wikki Tourist FC for the remainder of the 2025/20026 season be played in the Jos is hereby reduced to Five (5) match ban to

run concurrently from the date of the sanction.

7. That the above decisions are without prejudice to the right of appeal.

In attendance: Barr. Jude Obikwelu (Chairman), Barr. A.I. Abdulrahman (Vice chairman), Barr. Bello Galadi (Member), Barr. Wole Ademoyegun and Queen W. Otarakpo, Esq. (Secretary)

Decisions Of The Meeting Of The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) Disciplinary Committee Held On 3rd March, 2026 On The Protest Lodged By Kwara United Fc Against The Decision Of The Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) On The Match Played Between Kwara United Fc, Ilorin And Rivers United Fc, Port-Harcourt, On 18th February, 2026 At Rashidi Yekini Main Bowl Stadium, Ilorin

FINDINGS:

1. The Committee found that, Kwara United FC failed to provide adequate and effective security which resulted into unauthorized persons gaining access into restricted areas.
2. The Committee found that Kwara United FC failed to ensure the proper conduct of their supporters which resulted into harassment and injuries to the Centre Referee and the away team (Rivers United FC) players and officials.
3. The Committee found that the supporters of Kwara United FC threw dangerous objects such as stones, woods and metals into the field of play.
4. The Committee found that the

supporters of Kwara United FC exhibited conducts capable of bringing the game to disrepute.

DECISIONS:

Based on the above findings, the Committee decides as follows:

1. That the Committee adopts Sanction No.1 in the Summary Jurisdiction (Form 16) and upholds the two Million Naira (N2,000,000) fine against Kwara United FC for failure to provide adequate and effective security.
2. That the Committee adopts Sanction No. 2 in the Summary Jurisdiction (Form 16) and upholds the One Million Naira (N1,000,000) fine against Kwara United FC for failure to ensure the proper conduct of their supporters.
3. That the Committee disagrees with the decisions in Sanction Nos. 3 of the Summary Jurisdiction Notice form 16, and is therefore set aside, having been taken care of in Sanction Nos. 6 and 7 below.
4. That the Committee disagrees with Sanction No. 4 of the Summary Jurisdiction (Form 16) and is therefore set aside, having been taken care of under Sanction No. 2 above.
5. That the Committee disagrees with Sanction No. 5 in the Summary Jurisdiction (Form 16) and is therefore set aside for want of evidence.
6. That the Committee adopts Sanction No. 6 in the Summary Jurisdiction (Form 16) and upholds the Two Million Naira (N2,000,000) fine against Kwara United FC as compensatory cost of treatment and damages inflicted on the match officials and away team officials in line with Rule C 12, NPFL Framework and Rules, 2025/2026 Season.
7. That the Committee adopts Sanction No. 7 in the Summary Jurisdiction (Form 16) and upholds the Order deducting 3 points 3 goals from accrued points of Kwara United FC for assault on match officials in line with Rule C 11, NPFL Framework and Rules, 2025/2026 Season.
8. That the Committee partially adopts Sanction No. 8 in the Summary Jurisdiction (Form 16) to the extent that the Order moving Kwara United FC to MKO Abiola Stadium, Abeokuta for the rest of the season is hereby reduced to Five (5) match ban to run concurrently from the date of the sanction.
7. That the Committee adopts Sanction Nos. 9 and 10 in the Summary Jurisdiction (Form 16) and upholds the decisions in their entirety.
8. That the above decisions are without prejudice to the right of appeal.

In attendance: Barr. Jude Obikwelu (Chairman), Barr. A.I. Abdulrahman (Vice chairman), Barr. Bello Galadi (Member), Barr. Wole Ademoyegun and Queen W. Otarakpo, Esq. (Secretary)

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The Committee found that there was no evidence to substantiate the allegation of injury on any of the match officials and away team officials.

