

Lassa fever spreads to 18 states as NCDC warns of rising deaths

ABUJA

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) has raised fresh alarm over a surge in Lassa fever cases across 18 states and 67 Local Government Areas, warning that operational lapses at the state level are fuelling sustained transmission and rising fatalities.

The agency said Bauchi, Ondo, Taraba, Edo and Benue states account for more than 80 percent of confirmed cases recorded during the 2026 peak transmission season, under-

scoring the concentration of infections in known endemic zones.

Director-General of the NCDC, Dr Jide Idris, who disclosed this in a statement in Abuja on Tuesday, described the situation as troubling, particularly with the growing number of infections among healthcare workers.

So far this season, 28 health workers have been infected, with three deaths recorded.

Idris said field investigations revealed that while most cases were emerging from endemic areas, weak implementation of

established outbreak response frameworks had worsened the spread and pushed up the case fatality rate.

He identified key gaps to include infections occurring in general outpatient and maternity settings, poor adherence to Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) protocols, and inadequate pre-positioning of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Other factors driving transmission, he said, are delayed presentation of patients due to financial constraints, inconsistent activation of State In-

cident Management Systems, weak contact tracing, persistent stigma, and substandard isolation centre conditions.

The NCDC boss stressed that within Nigeria's federal structure, outbreak response and health service delivery rest largely with state governments.

He therefore urged affected and high-risk states to urgently activate and closely monitor their Incident Management Systems to ensure timely coordination and effective response at all levels of healthcare delivery.

He also called for the imme-

diated release of response funds, strict enforcement of IPC compliance in both public and private health facilities, and the continuous availability of PPE and other critical supplies.

Idris advocated accelerated financial protection mechanisms to reduce late presentation and fatalities, as well as sustained rodent control and environmental sanitation measures under a One Health approach.

He advised healthcare workers to maintain a high index of suspicion and adhere strictly to IPC guidelines, while urging members of the public to

keep their surroundings clean, prevent rodents from entering homes, store food properly, and seek prompt medical care when symptoms arise.

Noting that Lassa fever is treatable with better outcomes when detected early, Idris added that Nigeria is simultaneously battling other epidemic-prone diseases, including Cerebrospinal Meningitis, Diphtheria, Mpox and Cholera.

He reiterated the NCDC's toll-free emergency line, 6232, for reporting suspected cases and obtaining further information.

The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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FG unlocks \$552m Hope-Edu fund to drive basic education reforms

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PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968

VOL. 47, NO. 1,210

WEDNESDAY 4TH MARCH 2026.

Edo APC endorses Tinubu, Okpebholo for 2nd terms

BENIN CITY

The newly elected executive of the Edo State chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) has formally endorsed President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Governor Monday Okpebholo for

second terms, citing their "outstanding performance" and development records.

Delegates from all 192 wards across the state converged in Benin City on Tuesday to elect a new 36-member state executive.

In a unanimous voice affirmation, Jarrett Tenebe was returned

as chairman, leading the executive for another four-year term.

In his acceptance speech, Tenebe announced the executive's endorsement of Tinubu, Okpebholo, and former governor and current senator representing Edo North, Adams Oshiomhole, for re-election.

He hailed the trio for "quality leadership and service to Nigerians and Edo residents," and pledged that the party would continue to prioritise the welfare of Edo people while supporting Governor Okpebholo's SHINE Agenda.

"This is a call to duty. We are ready to pilot the affairs of the party to greater heights," Tenebe said, thanking delegates and party faithful for their

trust and support.

Hon. Kabiru Ajana, chairman of the National Congress Committee that supervised the election, described the exercise as a demonstration of unity, noting that all 36 positions were returned unopposed with no appeals.

Oshiomhole praised the delegates for a seamless exercise that symbolises party cohesion in Edo State, attributing the unity to Governor Okpebholo's leadership.

Other dignitaries present included Minister for Regional Development Abubakar Momoh.



MEETING:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo (centre), in discussion with officials of BEDC, led by the Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Jonathan Lawani (left), during a meeting at Government House, Benin City, on measures to address the persistent epileptic power supply in Edo State.

FG suspends pilgrimages to Israel amid Middle East crisis

ABUJA

The Federal Government, through the Nigerian Christian Pilgrim Commission (NCPC), on Tuesday announced the immediate suspension of all pilgrimages to Israel due to escalating security tensions in the Middle East.

Bishop Stephen Adegbite, Executive Secretary of NCPC, disclosed this in a statement signed by Mr Celestine Toruka, Deputy Director and Head of Media and Public Relations of the commission, in Abuja.

Adegbite said the move was necessary to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of Nigerian pilgrims.

"The recent developments in the Middle East, including the imposition of a state of emergency in Israel, have led to the suspension of all pilgrimage exercises.

"This includes trips organ-

ised by private operators until the situation stabilises," he stated.

The NCPC is closely monitoring the situation and thanked stakeholders and the media for their cooperation. Adegbite also urged Nigerians to pray for peace in Jerusalem and across the region.

He confirmed that the 2025 Main Pilgrimage to Israel and Jordan was successfully concluded, with the last batch of pilgrims returning safely to Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos, on March 3.

The Executive Secretary expressed gratitude to President Bola Tinubu, First Lady Sen. Oluremi Tinubu, and Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Sen. George Akume, for their support, noting that their backing made it possible to conduct five pilgrimages since his appointment two years ago.

Edo govt pledges broader stakeholder engagement to solve power crisis

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Edo govt pledges broader stakeholder engagement to solve power crisis

BENIN CITY

Governor Monday Okpebholo on Tuesday convened a high-level stakeholders' meeting to address electricity supply and billing challenges in Edo State, following a recent peaceful

protest in Benin City over prolonged outages and metering issues.

Speaking at Government House, the governor noted the complexity of the problem and called for broader engagement with all actors in the power value chain.

"We need a holistic solution. BEDC is a service provider; we must consider all links in the chain," he said, emphasising fairness and improved service delivery.

Governor Okpebholo, who described himself as a telecom

expert familiar with metering systems, clarified that certain meter deductions are structured repayment mechanisms, allowing residents to start consuming power before gradually paying.

He directed that a larger stakeholders' meeting be convened to include generation and transmission companies, distribution firms, and other key players, to ensure sustain-

able solutions.

The governor also appealed for calm and law-abiding behaviour from residents.

BEDC Managing Director/CEO, Engr. Jonathan Lawani, explained that the company currently receives about 260 megawatts of electricity, far below the 760 megawatts needed to serve its franchise area adequately.

He also warned against ille-

gal sales of meters under the Federal Government's free meter programme.

The meeting brought together representatives from "Edo Against BEDC Oppression," BEDC, NDPHC, Azura Power West Africa, and senior state officials including the Chief of Staff, Commissioner for Power, and other government functionaries.

LUTH boss urges more hospitals to ease tertiary health burden

LAGOS

The Chief Medical Director of Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH), Dr Wasiu Adeyemo, has called for the establishment of more public hospitals nationwide to ease the strain on tertiary health institutions.

Speaking to newsmen on Tuesday, Adeyemo warned that the increasing patient load at tertiary facilities is partly due to the underperformance of secondary and primary healthcare centres (PHCs).

He urged that all patient referrals to tertiary hospitals be preceded by proper notification to allow readiness and bed

allocation.

"A significant number of cases that should be handled at secondary or primary levels end up at tertiary hospitals, often without prior notice. This causes overcrowding and strains our capacity to provide adequate care," he said.

Public health physician Dr Adebayo Ogba added that many Nigerians still believe the best care is only available at tertiary hospitals.

He recommended equipping PHCs with skilled personnel and resources, alongside public sensitization campaigns, to shift patient preference and reduce pressure on higher-level facilities.

FRSC cracks down on misconduct among officers

IBADAN

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) has pledged strict action against officers found engaging in extortion, reckless enforcement, or other unethical practices.

Corps Marshal Mallam Shehu Mohammed issued the warning on Tuesday at a discipline and training programme in Ibadan. Represented by the Corps Public Education Officer, Olusegun Ogungbemi, Mohammed noted a decline in professionalism and command control in some field commands, which has eroded

public trust.

"Such behaviours violate our regulations and core values, and endanger the credibility of the corps," he said, emphasising that discipline and accountability will now be strictly enforced.

Oyo Sector Commander, Mrs Rosemary Alo, described the programme as timely, noting that adherence to command structures and ethical conduct strengthens operational efficiency and public confidence.

She encouraged the public to use FRSC mobile apps to report incidents and provide feedback on the corps' services.

Radda rolls out ₦10.3m ramadan relief for APC faithful in Katsina

KATSINA

Governor Dikko Radda has unveiled a ₦10.3 million Ramadan support package for APC members and community leaders in Katsina Local Government under the Maituraka Foundation.

The cash disbursement, launched on Tuesday in Katsina, is aimed at cushioning the effects of economic hardship on beneficiaries during the fasting period.

Radda described the intervention as a humanitarian gesture reflecting the spirit of Ramadan, which he said embodies compassion, sacrifice and generosity.

He stressed that governance must remain people-centred,

adding that supporting citizens remains a key priority of his administration.

The governor noted that strategic partnerships with well-meaning individuals and groups would continue to complement government efforts at poverty alleviation.

He also commended APC members for their maturity and unity during the recently concluded party congresses, saying the outcome had strengthened the party's grassroots structures across the state.

"After the APC congresses, our party has emerged stronger and more united than ever before. This unity will translate into better service delivery and political stability," he said.



VISIT TO NAN:

Managing Director, News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Malam Ali Muhammad Ali (M); President, Ladies Golf Association of Nigeria (LGAN), Lami Ahmed (2nd L); AACT Ambassador, LGAN, Maryam Shehu (2nd R); Vice President, North, Matina Saleh (2nd L) and Lady Captain, TYB, Golf Club, Jummai Adamu (R), during a visit to NAN headquarters by LGAN delegation in Abuja on Tuesday.

NAS, UBTH launch free cancer screening for 120 Edo residents

BENIN CITY

No fewer than 120 indigenes of Edo State are set to benefit from free breast, cervical and prostate cancer screenings, alongside general medical checks, at the Centre for Disease Control, Department of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of Benin Teaching Hospital, Benin City.

The one-month screening exercise, which commenced on Friday, February 27, 2026, is being organised in collaboration with UBTH and sponsored by the National Association of Seadogs (NAS) chapters, including Arabella, Batavia Subsea, Hispaniola X and Terra Kona.

Speaking to journalists, a member of the Project Execution Committee, Comrade Mowang Eddie George, said the initiative was informed by the high prevalence, morbidity and mortality rates associated

with cancer and other common diseases in the country.

He noted that the collaboration between NAS and UBTH was aimed at providing free, accessible and professional screening services to members of the public.

According to him, many cancer-related deaths could be prevented if cases were detected early and treated promptly.

He stressed that a significant number of Nigerians lack adequate awareness about cancer and other prevalent ailments, making the screening programme not only a medical intervention but also an avenue for public education.

"As an advocacy group, NAS will continue to lead the fight against cancer and other diseases responsible for avoidable deaths through deliberate and systematic efforts, including collaborations, sponsorships and partnerships," he said.

George described the initiative as part of efforts to give

back to underserved communities across the state and called on well-meaning individuals and corporate organisations to support the campaign against cancer and other preventable or manageable diseases.

He also urged residents to take advantage of the free screening and referral services to UBTH, particularly for cases that may be detected at early, non-critical stages.

Representing the Chief Medical Director of UBTH, Prof. Idia Ize-Iyamu, Dr. Adebola Ozi commended NAS for underwriting the cost of the screenings.

She expressed the management's appreciation of the gesture and appealed to other organisations to emulate the group in supporting the fight against cancer and other prevalent diseases.

The Assistant Coordinator of the Centre for Disease Control, Department of Public Health and Community Medicine, UBTH, Dr (Mrs) Oby Okwara, explained that the exercise goes beyond breast, cervical and prostate cancer screenings.

She disclosed that tests for Hepatitis B and C, HIV, hypertension, cholesterol levels, blood sugar, glaucoma, as well as optical and dental conditions, are also being conducted.

Okwara emphasised that the importance of early detection of cancer cannot be overstated and applauded NAS for its sustained humanitarian contributions to public health.

Beneficiaries of the programme expressed gratitude for the intervention. Mrs Ijeamaka Helen recounted her earlier difficulty in accessing screening services before learning about the NAS initiative.

"When I came previously, I was asked to return the following month for one of the tests. Luckily, I saw the NAS banner and participated. May God bless them richly," she said.

Another participant, Mrs Regina George, also lauded the sponsors, praying for greater blessings upon the association for easing the financial burden on residents seeking essential health checks.

Court orders FCT Minister Wike served over controversial demolition

ABUJA

An Abuja High Court has granted permission for notices of commitment proceedings to be served on the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, following a demolition exercise allegedly carried out in defiance of a court order.

Justice Hamza Mu'azu authorised Mykas Grid Ventures Limited to serve Forms 48 and 49 on the minister via publication in two newspapers circulating within the Federal Capital Territory.

The court also approved substituted service of the writ of summons and related documents on the second defendant,

Italia Company Ltd, through newspapers in Lagos and Abuja.

The order, certified as true on Tuesday, comes after Mykas Grid filed an ex-parte motion seeking to restrain the defendants from forcefully taking possession of Plot No. A06/4583, Maitama District, Abuja, pending the hearing of the matter.

A previous order from Feb-

ruary 10 had directed parties to maintain the status quo.

Despite this, officers of the FCDA, accompanied by security personnel, allegedly demolished the site's fence and security house on February 24 on the minister's instruction.

The court has adjourned the matter to March 9 for further hearing.

CISLAC, partners launch coalition to strengthen legislative accountability

ABUJA

Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) has called for closer collaboration among civil society organisations (CSOs) to boost legislative accountability and transparency in Nigeria.

Executive Director Auwal Rafsanjani made the appeal at a Strategic Stakeholders' Coalition Convening organised by the Coalition for Legislative Governance Accountability in Nigeria (CoLGAN) on Tues-

day in Abuja.

The initiative, part of the ERGAF-Africa NASS Barometer Report Project, is anchored on advocacy, capacity building, and legislative monitoring. Rafsanjani stressed that while many organisations operate independently, a coordinated network would consolidate efforts and drive sustainable impact.

"This network will focus on information sharing, performance tracking, legislative polls, and technical support for data verification. It's about pro-

moting knowledge of the legislature, which many Nigerians currently lack," he said.

Rafsanjani added that collaboration with the media at both Senate and House levels would amplify civil society perspectives, and the network would extend to state Houses of Assembly to institutionalize legislative accountability nationwide.

Speaking at the event, Temitope Fashola of Christian Aid West and Central Africa reaffirmed his organisation's commitment to strengthening

public oversight, while Chibuzo Okereke, President of ERGAF-Africa, highlighted the role of data-driven tools in empowering citizens to influence policy and participate in democratic governance.

The session also featured a live demonstration of the NASS Deliberative and Policy Focus Productivity Report, which tracks the activities of National Assembly members. The project aims to foster transparency, responsiveness, and citizen engagement across Nigeria's legislative institutions.



MEETING:

Auwal Rafsanjani, Executive Director CISLAC and Head Transparency International (centre); Chibuzo Okereke, President, ERGAF-AFRICA (left) and Ugochukwu Munachi, Programme Manager, Christian Aid (right) at a meeting in Abuja on Tuesday.

Former PDP Chairman elected APC State Chairman in Enugu

ENUGU

Former Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman in Enugu State, Dr Martin Chukwunweike, has been elected as the new State Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

Chukwunweike's emergence came through affirmation by delegates from the state's 17 Lo-

cal Government Areas at the party's State Congress held Tuesday at Okpara Square, Enugu.

Other elected officials include Peace Nnaji as Deputy Chairman, Nnamdi Nwafor as Vice Chairman (Enugu East), Fabian Onah as Vice Chairman (Enugu North), and Esther Edeh as Woman Leader.

Governor Peter Mbah congratulated the new executive, de-

scribing the congress as a model of internal democracy and unity.

He urged the party to communicate government achievements to citizens and credited President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration for stabilising the naira and strengthening the economy.

Outgoing Caretaker Committee Chairman Dr Ben Nwoye said the congress concluded a reconciliation process that united previously divided party factions, including new

members and PDP defectors.

APC Deputy National Chairman (South), Chief Emmanuel Eneukwu, called on the new executives to focus on grassroots mobilisation ahead of the 2027 elections.

In his acceptance speech, Chukwunweike pledged loyalty to the party and governor, promising to strengthen party structures and consolidate unity for electoral success.

The three Delta stories remain untouched as requested.

INEC promotes 2,339 staff

ABUJA

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has promoted 2,339 staff under its 2025 Senior Staff Promotion exercise, signalling a major boost in leadership capacity ahead of future elections.

The announcement was made in Abuja on Tuesday by INEC's Director of Voter Education and Publicity, Mrs Victoria Eta-Messi, following the commission's meeting on February 26.

According to Eta-Messi, 45 deputy directors on Grade Level (GL) 16 were elevated

to directors on GL 17, with 18 remaining in active service and 27 scheduled for retirement shortly after promotion.

Additionally, 91 assistant directors moved to deputy directors, 82 chief officers advanced to assistant directors, and 2,121 intermediate officers across GL 07-13 were promoted.

"The exercise follows established public service guidelines and reflects INEC's commitment to merit, dedication, and institutional stability," she said.

Eta-Messi urged the promoted officers to uphold professionalism and integrity in their duties.

Police bust kidnap syndicate, recover AK-47, ammunition; arrest armed suspect

AJUWA VICTOR

ASABA

The Delta State Police Command has dismantled a suspected kidnap syndicate operating in Ughelli and neighbouring communities, recovering an AK-47 rifle and live ammunition, while also arresting an armed suspect in a separate operation.

The breakthrough was recorded under the leadership of the Commissioner of Police, CP Aina Adesola.

In a major operation, three suspected kidnapers earlier handed over by the Area Commander, Ughelli, were interrogated by operatives of the CP Special Assignment Team (CP-SAT).

The suspects — Usman Ayuba, 22, of Iyede Community; Ibrahim Abubakar, 22, of Akwa Ibom State and Haruna Dahiru, alias "Bodere," 23, also of Iyede reportedly provided information that led to the recovery of arms and ammunition.

On February 26, 2026, at about 8:10 p.m., they led operatives to a bush along the Iyede axis where a magazine loaded with 25 rounds of live ammu-

nition was recovered.

The following day, at about 3:45 p.m., they guided the team to their hideout within the same area, resulting in the recovery of an AK-47 rifle.

Police said the suspects were identified by a female victim abducted on February 4, 2026, at Olu Avenue, Ughelli, and released three days later after a ransom of ₦2 million was paid.

The suspects remain in custody as investigations continue.

In a separate operation on February 27, 2026, at about 5:00 a.m., operatives of the Dragon Patrol Team intercepted Shuabu Adams, 55, during stop-and-search duty along the Abraka-Oghara axis near Western Delta University.

A search led to the recovery of a locally made cut-to-size gun concealed in a pullover bag and loaded with two live cartridges. He was immediately arrested and is under investigation.

Commending the operatives, CP Adesola reiterated that Delta State would not serve as a safe haven for kidnapers and other criminal elements, urging residents to continue providing credible information to security agencies.

Delta govt urges calm as Ibusa protests alleged encroachment by Ogwashi-Uku

AJUWA VICTOR

ASABA

The Delta State Government has appealed for calm following renewed tension between Ibusa and Ogwashi-Uku communities over a long-standing land dispute.

The Chief of Staff, Government House, Asaba, Prince Johnson Erijo, made the appeal while addressing members of the Ibusa community who staged a peaceful protest at Government House over alleged encroachment on their land.

The protesters displayed placards urging the state gov-

ernment to enforce what they described as subsisting court judgments on the disputed boundary.

Speaking on behalf of Governor Sheriff Oborewori, Erijo commended the protesters for their peaceful conduct and assured them that the government had already begun taking steps on the matter.

He stated that the government had received correspondence on the dispute prior to the protest and was following established procedures to address it.

Erijo assured both com-

Oborewori to commission Enerhen Flyover as DTSG concludes final inspection

AJUWA VICTOR

WARRI

The Delta State Government has carried out a final inspection of the Enerhen Junction Flyover in Warri, signalling the imminent completion and commissioning of one of the state's flagship urban infrastructure projects.

The inspection team was led by the Commissioner for Special Projects, Chief (Barr.) Funyei Manager, alongside top

officials of the ministry and representatives of Julius Berger Nigeria Plc, the project contractor.

Addressing journalists after the exercise, the commissioner described the visit as a pre-handover inspection ahead of formal commissioning by Governor Sheriff Oborewori.

He said the team inspected the flyover from the Enerhen Junction axis through to the First Marine Gate corridor, examining the structure and

associated components.

Expressing satisfaction with the quality of construction and compliance with specifications, Manager noted that the project was designed to ease traffic congestion and improve vehicular movement in Warri and its environs.

Engineer Neels Spretoius, representing Julius Berger, commended the state government for its support, which he said ensured timely and quality completion.

Residents and commuters also praised Governor Oborewori, stating that the flyover has significantly reduced gridlock at Enerhen Junction while enhancing security and improving the aesthetic appeal of the area.

The state government had in September 2023 approved the construction of three flyovers and major road expansion projects in Warri and Effurun, with the Enerhen Junction Flyover as a key component.

CONTINUE ON PG 4

NEWS

UniCal slams 2yr suspension on 9 students over exam fraud, forged results

CALABAR

The University of Calabar (UniCal) has suspended nine students for two academic sessions over alleged examination malpractice and submission of forged results.

The decision, announced in a statement by the institution's Registrar, Dr Chukwuka Icha, followed deliberations at the university's 252nd Senate meeting, where reports from the Ad-Hoc Senate Committee on Examination Malprac-

tice and the Senate Students' Disciplinary Committee were considered.

According to the registrar, five of the affected students were found culpable of examination malpractice, while four

were indicted for presenting forged academic results to the university.

"After reviewing the reports and recommendations of the committees, management resolved that the affected students be suspended for two academic sessions, effective from the 2024/2025 academic year," Icha stated.

Those suspended for examination malpractice are Akwuba Enestina, Udom Ibora and Nwankwo Daniel (all of the Pharmacy Department), as well as Ore Israel and Chisom Ejafa, both 500-Level Pharmacy students.

Others sanctioned for submitting forged results include Lazarus Ebogo (Home Eco-

nomics), Ele Godwin (Zoology), Ofem Patrick (Science Laboratory Technology) and Makailu Pamilo (Linguistics and Communication Studies).

The university has directed heads of departments, deans of the affected faculties and the Acting Chief Security Officer to ensure strict compliance with the suspension order.

FG warns PMAN against copyright infringement, piracy

GBONGAN

The Federal Government has cautioned members of the Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria (PMAN) against copyright infringement and piracy.

The warning was issued by the Director-General of the Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC), Dr John Asein, at a workshop on intellectual property rights organised by PMAN's Osun State chapter in Gbongan, Ayedaade Local Government Area.

Represented by the NCC State Coordinator in Ibadan, Mrs Oluropo Oke, Asein noted that copyright is a legal right granted to authors, lamenting that many professional musicians unlawfully use other people's works without approval.

He explained that under Section 19 of the Copyright Act, literary, musical or artistic works, other than pho-

tographs, enjoy protection for 70 years after the author's death, while sound recordings are protected for 50 years after being made public with the author's consent.

Asein described piracy as the unauthorised duplication or replication of copyrighted works for commercial purposes and warned that offenders risk stiff penalties.

He said individuals found guilty of copyright infringement face a minimum fine of N100,000 or at least one year's imprisonment, or both, while corporate bodies risk a minimum fine of N2 million.

The NCC boss urged musicians to register their works and always obtain permission before using protected content.

In his remarks, Osun PMAN Governor, Mr Akintayo Akinbade, described the workshop as enlightening and pledged members' commitment to comply with the Copyright Act.

Group demands review of 2026 Electoral Act, insists on mandatory e-transmission

ABUJA

A civic group, FixPolitics, has urged the National Assembly to revisit the 2026 Electoral Act and make real-time electronic transmission of election results mandatory ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Addressing journalists in Abuja, the organisation's Executive Director, Mr Anthony Ubani, said Nigerians were demanding greater transparency, accountability and stronger safeguards for their votes.

Ubani expressed concern that despite public opposition and calls from civil society groups and election observers, the legislature passed the bill without making electronic transmission compulsory.

"Real-time electronic transmission of results from polling units is not a luxury; it is a democratic safeguard. It protects results where they are most vulnerable, reduces human interference and builds public confidence," he said.

He warned that weakening the provision could erode trust

in the electoral process and endanger democracy.

The group called on lawmakers to urgently initiate corrective legislation within the time left before the 2027 polls, insisting that failure to do so would cast doubt on the credibility of future elections.

Ubani urged Nigerians to remain peaceful and vigilant while pressing for reforms through lawful civic engagement, stressing that the demand was for correction, not chaos.



SENATE PRESIDENT,
GODSWILL AKPABIO



INAUGURATION OF COMMITTEE:

L-R: The Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr Olawale Edun (left) and Director-General, Infrastructure Concession Regulatory Commission (ICRC), Dr Jobson Ewalefoh, during the inauguration of the Project Development Committee for the Ikom Multipurpose Dam and Hydropower Project in Abuja on Tuesday.

Army intercepts 296 wraps of suspected cannabis in Ogun

ABEOKUTA

Troops of the 35 Artillery Brigade of the Nigerian Army have intercepted 296 large wraps of suspected cannabis along the Abeokuta-Igboora Road in Ogun State.

The Assistant Director, Army Public Relations, 35 Artillery

Brigade, Maj. Samuel Akari, disclosed this in a statement on Tuesday, explaining that the operation followed a strategic tip-off on the planned movement of the illicit substance.

According to him, the interception occurred at about 4:30 a.m. on Sunday, with the suspected cannabis concealed in

three large sacks.

Akari said the suspect fled into a nearby bush on sighting the troops, abandoning a motorcycle used for conveying the items.

The exhibits, including the recovered motorcycle, have since been handed over to the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Ogun State Command, for further investigation and necessary

action.

He reiterated the brigade's resolve to make Ogun unsafe for drug traffickers and other criminal elements, urging those involved in illicit trade to embrace lawful ventures or face arrest.

The Army assured residents of its continued commitment to safeguarding lives and property through sustained security presence across the state.

Ondo L-PRES trains 100 livestock farmers to boost feed security, productivity

ILARA-MOKIN

The Ondo State Livestock Productivity and Resilience Support (L-PRES) Project has trained 100 livestock farmers on fodder production and value addition as part of efforts to enhance productivity and commercialisation across the state.

Speaking at a 2-day capacity-building programme in Ilara-Mokin, Ifedore Local Government Area, the State Project Coordinator, Mr Olufemi Adeogun, said the trainees were se-

lected from the three senatorial districts as lead farmers who would in turn train others.

The training, themed "Capacity Building on Fodder Production and Value Addition, Including Sustainable Hydroponic Fodder Production and Crop Residue Treatment and Utilisation for Sustainable Livestock Production," focuses on improving feed availability and quality through fodder establishment, hay and silage production, and safe crop residue treatment.

Adeogun noted that the initiative aligns with the broader

objectives of L-PRES to enhance livestock productivity, strengthen resilience to climate shocks, promote value addition and improve rural incomes.

He identified seasonal feed shortages, rising commercial feed costs, under-utilisation of crop residues and increasing climate variability as persistent challenges confronting livestock farmers in the state.

"These are proven, low-cost technologies that farmers can adopt immediately to stabilise feed supply throughout the year," he said, urging participants to

serve as knowledge multipliers within their communities.

Also speaking, the Commissioner for Agriculture and Forestry, Engr. Leye Akinola, represented by the Permanent Secretary, Mrs Foluke Daramola, commended the project for supporting farmers to ensure reliable feed supply year-round.

Representatives of pig, sheep and goat farmers' associations described the initiative as timely, expressing optimism that it would significantly improve livestock production and farmers' incomes in the state.

Delta govt urges calm as Ibusa protests alleged encroachment...

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munities that the government would ensure law and order and arrive at a decision that would be fair and justifiable

in the overall interest of peace and stability.

Speaking for the Ibusa community, Barrister Peter Lotobi traced the history of the dispute, noting that the High

Court judgment was affirmed by the Court of Appeal in 1982 and later upheld by the Supreme Court in Appeal No. SC.32/1985.

He described Ibusa as a

peaceful and law-abiding community and urged the state government to ensure enforcement of the court judgments in the interest of justice and sustained peace.

FG unlocks \$552m Hope-Edu fund to drive basic education reforms

ABUJA

The Federal Government has unveiled a \$552 million HOPE for Quality Basic Education for All (HOPE-EDU) programme to fast-track sweeping reforms in Nigeria's basic education sector.

The initiative, facilitated by the Federal Ministry of Education, is aimed at improving foundational learning, expanding access to quality basic education and strengthening education systems across participating states.

In a statement issued in Abuja by the ministry's Director of Press and Public Relations, Bo-

riowo Folasade, the Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa, described the programme as a defining milestone in the country's education transformation drive.

Alausa said HOPE-EDU aligns with the Nigeria Education Sector Renewal Initiative (NESRI) and is structured to promote measurable, transparent and results-based reforms.

He noted that the activation of the \$552 million fund within 12 months represents the fastest mobilisation of education financing of such magnitude in Nigeria's history.

"The unlocking of the \$552 million HOPE-EDU funding

in just 12 months reflects clarity of vision, strong intergovernmental coordination and our unwavering commitment to delivering measurable results for Nigerian children," he said.

The minister further disclosed that federal allocation to education has risen by more than 302 per cent since 2022, underscoring government's prioritisation of human capital development.

According to him, N3.520 trillion was earmarked for the sector in the 2026 fiscal year — the highest allocation to date — complemented by increased sub-national funding to address local priorities and

targeted interventions.

"Under the leadership of President Bola Tinubu, we are demonstrating that reform can be decisive, accountable and impactful. These resources will directly strengthen foundational learning, expand access and reinforce system-wide accountability across participating states," he added.

The HOPE-EDU programme is co-financed by the World Bank and the Global Partnership for Education and is designed to enhance learning outcomes, promote equitable access and strengthen institutional capacity nationwide.

FRSC vows crackdown on extortion, abuse by officers

LAFIA

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) has vowed to clamp down on personnel involved in extortion, harassment and reckless enforcement of traffic regulations.

Corps Marshal Shehu Mohamed made the declaration during a sensitization programme on "Discipline, Reinforcement and Strengthening of Command and Control" for field commands in Lafia.

Represented by Deputy Corps Marshal Emmanuel Dung, Mohamed expressed concern over what he described as a disturbing decline in discipline, professionalism and effective command structures in some field formations.

He warned that misconduct, unethical practices and abuse

of authority were unacceptable and damaging to the corps' credibility.

"Every act of unprofessional conduct damages the image of thousands of disciplined staff. Extortion and abuse of authority are not only illegal but a betrayal of the oath we swore to," he said.

Mohamed disclosed that senior officers had been deployed across states to strengthen discipline, reinforce leadership accountability and restore effective command and control mechanisms.

The Nasarawa State Sector Commander, Yahaya Sabo-Adikwu, said the command had introduced reward systems for outstanding personnel and secured approval from Governor Abdullahi Sule for 10 patrol vehicles and a tow truck to boost operations.



APC ENUGU STATE CONGRESS:

L-R: Governor Peter Mbah of Enugu State, Chairman All Progressive Congress (APC), Enugu State Caretaker Committee, Dr Ben Nwoye; APC Deputy National Chairman, South, Chief Emma Enuoku and Sen. Osita Ngwu, during APC, Enugu State Congress in Enugu on Tuesday.

COAS charges commanders on tactical leadership for combat readiness

ABUJA

The Chief of Army Staff, Lt.-Gen. Waidi Shaibu, has tasked commanding officers to deepen tactical-level leadership to enhance combat readiness within a joint and multi-agency operational environment.

Declaring open the First Commanding Officers' Workshop 2026 in Abuja, Shaibu said the theme, "Enhancing Tactical-Level Leadership in a Joint and Multi-Agency Environment," aligns with his command philosophy and the Nigerian Army's transformation agenda.

Represented by the Chief of Transformation and Innovation, Maj.-Gen. Olusegun Abai, the Army Chief emphasised that commanding officers occupy a critical link between operational and tactical command levels.

He urged participants to leverage the workshop to reflect on unit performance, retrain

troops and strengthen discipline, regimentation and junior leadership.

"As commanding officers, you bear the responsibility of translating strategic directives into favourable operational outcomes. You must guide young officers and soldiers who look up to you for leadership and mentorship," he said.

The Commander, Army Headquarters Garrison, Maj.-Gen. Maxwell Dangana, underscored the need for adaptive and collaborative leadership in tackling asymmetrical and transnational security threats.

Similarly, the Chief of Training, Maj.-Gen. Valentine Okoro, said the initiative supports efforts to build a more professional, adaptable and combat-ready force.

The workshop is focusing on command efficiency, group administration, cyber security awareness, objective performance evaluation and equipment maintenance in the field.

Scrap DISCOs now, Abuja power users tell FG

ABUJA

Electricity consumers in parts of the Federal Capital Territory have called on the Federal Government to scrap Electricity Distribution Companies (DisCos), citing persistent poor service delivery, overbilling and infrastructure neglect.

In separate interviews, residents of Lugbe, Kuje and Area 1 expressed frustration over what they described as

non-performance by the privatised distribution firms.

Mr Kinsley Edozor, a civil servant in Lugbe, lamented that consumers were often compelled to fund repairs of faulty transformers despite paying electricity bills.

"What is the duty of the DisCos if we must repair transformers after paying our bills? Government should scrap them and put alternatives in place to ensure steady electricity," he said.

Mrs Ngozi Obi, also of Lugbe, accused the companies of failing to invest in infrastructure to improve supply, alleging that communities were routinely asked to contribute money to fix network faults.

In Kuje, Mr Solomon Umokoro, a welder, said many consumers pay bills without enjoying commensurate service, urging government to either scrap the firms or compel them to meet their obligations.

Mrs Moji Adesola maintained

that stable electricity would only be achieved if the distribution companies were removed, while Mr Thomas Oche of Area 1 decried alleged overbilling and poor service delivery.

Eleven DisCos were created following the privatisation of the power sector.

They are responsible for maintaining distribution networks, repairing and upgrading lines, transformers and substations to ensure safe and reliable electricity supply.

Abia warns of heavy rains, urges climate-smart farming

UMUAHIA

The Abia State Government has released its 2026 Climate Outlook and Agricultural Advisory, projecting above-normal rainfall and urging farmers to adopt climate-smart practices ahead of the new farming season.

The Commissioner for Agriculture, Dr Cliff Agbaeze, said the outlook aligns with the

Seasonal Climate Prediction issued by the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet) and provides critical guidance for farmers across the state.

Quoting NiMet, Agbaeze said Abia is expected to record annual rainfall totals ranging between 1,800mm and 2,200mm in 2026.

He disclosed that the rainy season is projected to commence between late March and early April and end between

late October and early November, lasting seven to eight months and supporting multiple cropping cycles.

Peak rainfall is anticipated between June and September, raising the risk of flooding, particularly in low-lying communities.

The commissioner advised farmers to cultivate raised ridges, plant early-maturing and flood-resistant crop varieties, and ensure proper drain-

age systems on their farms.

He also encouraged regular engagement with extension services for real-time weather updates and technical support.

Agbaeze reaffirmed Governor Alex Otti's commitment to agricultural transformation and rural development, promising the distribution of updated cropping calendars, improved climate-resilient seedlings and strengthened extension services statewide.

Ohanaeze unveils sweeping reforms as Otti pledges backing

NVO SI (ABIA)

Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide has announced far-reaching institutional reforms aimed at repositioning the organisation and strengthening its leadership structure.

President-General, Sen. John Azuta-Mbata, disclosed this during a visit to Governor Alex Otti in Nvosi, Isiala Ngwa South Local Government Area.

Represented by his deputy, Chief Okey Nwadinobi, Azuta-Mbata said the leadership had focused on consolidating the organisation since assuming office in January 2025.

He revealed that a strategic

retreat had been held to define clear goals, alongside the development of a four-year work plan to guide implementation and ensure measurable progress.

According to him, construction of a modern national secretariat complex is about 85 per cent complete, marking a significant infrastructural milestone.

Azuta-Mbata further announced plans to establish seven professorial endowment chairs, one in each South-East state, to promote Igbo language and culture.

A new draft constitution has also been prepared and will soon be presented to the general assembly for ratification.

NEWS

Midwives cut maternal, neonatal death risks in conflict-hit Yobe — Study

ABUJA

Nigeria's community midwifery programme is significantly improving maternal and newborn health outcomes in conflict-affected rural communities of Yobe State, a new study has revealed.

The research, conducted by the EQUAL Research Consortium and unveiled in Abuja, found that community-trained midwives are strengthening staffing levels and expanding access to lifesaving services in underserved primary healthcare centres.

Dr Emilia Iwu, Senior Tech-

nical Adviser at the Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN), disclosed the findings at the close-out and dissemination meeting of the five-year multi-country EQUAL project implemented across Nigeria from July 2021 to April 2026.

According to the study, community-trained midwives were nearly twice as likely as graduates of the basic programme to originate from rural communities and to remain working in primary healthcare facilities serving their own areas.

Within six months of graduation, 67 per cent of trainees

had secured employment, while 64 per cent were deployed directly to underserved rural health facilities across Yobe.

Service delivery indicators were also strong. Nearly all the midwives reported conducting deliveries, 90 per cent provided antenatal care, and 70 per cent offered family planning services, significantly widening access to essential maternal and reproductive healthcare.

The study projected that modest increases in midwife-delivered interventions could prevent 22 per cent of maternal deaths and 23 per cent of neonatal deaths statewide.

However, Iwu warned that systemic challenges could under-

mine long-term sustainability.

She cited irregular salaries, political interference in postings, poor working conditions and limited career progression as major threats to retaining skilled personnel in rural areas.

Attrition, she noted, is highest within the first five years of practice, as many midwives migrate to better-paid urban or NGO positions offering improved security and welfare.

Despite recorded progress, gaps persist in newborn care, patient communication and emotional support.

Women surveyed cited financial hardship, family influence and cultural barriers as reasons for delayed care-seeking.

The researchers recommended harmonised salaries, improved facility security, mental health support, protected funding and formal recognition of midwife roles within the civil service structure.

Dr Ebere Anyachukwu, Health Adviser at the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, reaffirmed the United Kingdom's commitment to supporting maternal and newborn health in fragile settings, stressing that women and infants in conflict-affected communities face the greatest survival risks.

Dr Emmanuel Udontre, representing the Registrar of the Nursing and Midwifery Coun-

cil of Nigeria, commended the research team for producing solution-driven evidence.

Mrs Hadiza Sabo, Provost of Shehu Sule College of Nursing Sciences, described the findings as an eye-opener, highlighting excessive workloads, low pay and weak career structures as hidden pressures within the workforce. She called for a state-level service scheme to formalise career progression and improve retention.

She clarified that while council-regulated midwives hold certified qualifications, traditional birth attendants remain unregulated, limiting their formal integration into Nigeria's healthcare framework.

Lagos APC returns Ojelabi as Chairman in consensus congress

LAGOS

Pastor Cornelius Ojelabi has been returned as Chairman of the Lagos State chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) following a consensus-based State Congress held at the Mobolaji Johnson Arena.

More than 2,000 delegates from across the state endorsed Ojelabi and other executive members through voice affirmation.

Re-elected alongside him were, Mr Moshood Mayegun (Deputy Chairman), Dr Adedola Jokomba (Secretary) and Mr Oluseye Oladejo (Publicity Secretary), among other state officers.

Chairman of the State Congress Committee, Mrs Stella Okotete, described Lagos as the heartbeat of progressive politics and emphasised that the congress followed consti-

tutional guidelines and due process.

Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu commended the peaceful conduct of delegates, declaring that the APC structure in Lagos remained unmatched nationwide.

He charged the new executives to deepen inclusivity, fairness and unity while consolidating the party's structure ahead of future elections.

Ojelabi pledged continued commitment to strengthening party structures, expanding grassroots engagement and sustaining electoral victories.

The congress was attended by senior party leaders, including former Governor Akinwunmi Ambode, former Deputy Governor Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire and other political stakeholders. Officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission monitored the exercise.



2026 ANNUAL RAMADAN LECTURE:

L-R: Chairman, Ramadan Annual Lecture Committee, Nigeria Union of Journalist (NUJ), Lagos Council, Alhaji Jamiu Alonge; Chairman, Nigeria Union of Journalist (NUJ) Lagos State Council, Adeleye Ajayi and Guest Speaker, Dr Abdullahi Shuaib, during 2026 Annual Ramadan Lecture in Lagos on Tuesday.

FG urged to withdraw 'Cancer-Risk' grinding machines nationwide

ABUJA

The Nigerian Stored Products Research Institute has called on the Federal Government to phase out grinding machines fabricated from mild steel and galvanised iron, warning that their continued use poses serious public health risks.

Executive Director of the institute, Prof. Lateef Sanni, said most grinding machines used in markets across the country were made from corrosive

metals that could contaminate food and potentially increase cancer risks.

He urged authorities to mandate the replacement of such machines with stainless steel models, stressing that food processing equipment must meet established safety standards.

"All the grinding machines in the country are made of steel and galvanised iron. They are corrosive and may contribute to rising cases of cancer and other diseases," he said.

Sanni added that food

preparation surfaces should strictly be stainless steel to prevent contamination and protect public health.

He also advocated the deployment of nutritionists and food scientists across local government areas to monitor food safety practices, eliminate unsafe equipment and educate traders on associated risks.

On grain preservation, Sanni disclosed that the institute, in collaboration with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, had trained farmers on safer storage techniques and developed NSPRI Dust, capable of

preserving soybeans and cowpeas for six to seven months by preventing weevil infestation.

He lamented resistance to safer methods among some farmers, noting that many revert to traditional practices considered cheaper or faster.

Prof. Vincent Aduramigba of the Institute of Agricultural Research and Training warned against the use of cement for preserving beans, describing it as dangerous, and called for improved funding of Agricultural Development Programmes and strengthened extension services nationwide.

Middle East crisis: PETROAN pushes for stronger local refining

ABUJA

The Petroleum Products Retail Outlets Owners Association of Nigeria (PETROAN) has urged the Federal Government to urgently consolidate and strengthen domestic refining capacity to shield Nigeria from global geopolitical shocks.

National President of PETROAN, Dr Billy Gillis-Harry, said the ongoing military escala-

tion involving the United States, Iran and Israel has heightened volatility in global energy markets, with serious implications for Nigeria's petroleum sector.

He noted that hostilities around the strategic Strait of Hormuz have disrupted global supply chains, triggered price volatility and threatened energy stability.

According to him, maritime operations at Saudi Arabia's Ras Tanura refinery were halt-

ed, LNG production in Qatar was suspended, and Brent crude surged towards 80 dollars per barrel, with warnings that prices could exceed 100 dollars if the Strait is closed.

"For Nigeria, these developments underscore the fragility of our reliance on imported refined products," he said, warning that sustained increases in crude prices would reflect directly at local pump stations and worsen foreign exchange

pressures and inflation.

PETROAN called for steady crude supply to local refineries, enabling policies to support operations, and sustained implementation of the Naira-for-Crude policy to ease foreign exchange strain.

Gillis-Harry also stressed the need to fully rehabilitate the four government-owned refineries to reduce dependence on imports and stabilise domestic fuel pricing.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS MORDI NGOZI BLESSING**, now wish to be known and address as **MRS. ZIKENA NGOZI TONDIDEKE**. All former documents remain valid. General public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS IDUOZEE OSASUMWEN FAITH**, now wish to be known and address as **MRS. IGBINOBA OSASUMWEN FAITH**. All former documents remain valid. General public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS OMAMUDU JENNIFER ERHIGA**, now wish to be known and address as **MRS. UWHUSEBA JENNIFER ERHIGA**. All former documents remain valid. General public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME/DATE OF BIRTH

I, formerly known as **OSAGBEWENRWE LOVETH OSARODION**, now wish to be known and address as **JOHN OSAGBEWENORHUE LOVETH**, and also my correct date of birth is **20/4/2001** and not **20/4/1996** as appeared in some of my documents. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

ADDITION/REARRANGEMENT OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **ANTHONY CHIBUEZE CHRISTIAN** and **ANTHONY CHRISTIAN**, are one and the same person as appeared in some of my documents. Henceforth, I wish to be known and address as **ANTHONY CHIBUEZE CHRISTIAN**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME/DATE OF BIRTH

The general public is hereby notified that **UBAMADU CAMILLUS** and **UBAMADU UCHE CAMILLUS**, are one and the same person as appeared in some of my documents. Henceforth, I wish to be known and address as **UBAMADU UCHE CAMILLUS** and also my correct date of birth is **21/2/1999** and not **21/2/1989**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **OKUNDAYE KINGSLEY OSAZEE** and **OKUNDAYE KINGSLEY**, are one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known and address as **OKUNDAYE KINGSLEY OSAZEE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

RECONCILIATION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that I am the same person known as **IGBINIGIE OSASENAGA** and **IGBINIGIE JEFFEREY** as appeared in my Bank Verification Number and International Passport. Henceforth I wish to be known and addressed as **IGBINIGIE OSASENAGA**. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities are the general public should please take note.

JUDICIARY

NEWS

Service hitches stall El-Rufai's N1bn rights suit against ICPC

ABUJA

The N1 billion fundamental rights enforcement suit filed by former Kaduna State Governor, Nasir El-Rufai, against the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and others suffered a setback on Tuesday after his lawyer failed to serve the respondents.

The matter, slated for mention before Justice Joyce

Abdulmalik of the Federal High Court, Abuja, could not proceed as there was no representation for the respondents.

Counsel to the former governor, Ubong Akpan, informed the court that although the case was scheduled for mention, the respondents had not been served. Justice Abdulmalik subsequently adjourned the case until March 11 for further mention.

El-Rufai is seeking N1 bil-

lion in general, exemplary and aggravated damages over what he described as an unlawful search of his Abuja residence.

Named as respondents are the ICPC; the Chief Magistrate of the FCT Magistrate's Court; the Inspector-General of Police; and the Attorney-General of the Federation.

Through his legal team led by Oluwale Iyamu, SAN, the former governor is asking the court to nullify a February 4 search warrant issued by the

FCT Chief Magistrate, describing it as defective and unconstitutional.

In the suit marked FHC/ABJ/CS/345/2026, filed on February 20, El-Rufai is praying the court to declare the search of his residence at House 12, Mambilla Street, Aso Drive, Abuja, on February 19 as a violation of his fundamental rights to dignity, personal liberty, fair hearing and privacy under Sections 34, 35, 36 and 37 of the Constitution.

He is also seeking an order restraining the respondents from relying on any materials seized during the search and demanding their immediate return with a detailed inventory.

The former governor broke down the N1 billion claim into N300 million as compensatory damages for psychological trauma; N400 million as exemplary damages to deter future misconduct; and N300 million

as aggravated damages over what he termed a malicious and oppressive operation.

He is further seeking N100 million as cost of filing the suit.

Iyamu argued that the warrant contravened relevant provisions of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, 2015, and the ICPC Act, insisting it lacked specificity, probable cause and proper legal foundation.



VICORY DANCE:

L-R: Deputy governor of Akwa Ibom State, Senator Akon Eyakeyin; Akwa Ibom State Governor, Pastor Umo Eno; Senate President, Godswill Akpabio and former Sole Administrator, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Dr Efiog Akwa, in a vicory dance after the inauguration of new officers of the Akwa Ibom State chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC), in Uyo yesterday.

PHOTO BY OMOYE AMINU

Kano Court sentences 2 to death for murder of newly-wed groom

KANO

A Kano High Court on Tuesday sentenced two men to death by hanging for the brutal killing of a newly-wedded groom during a robbery attack.

Justice Amina Adamu-Aliyu

convicted Aliyu Hussaini and Amir Zakariyya of conspiracy, armed robbery and culpable homicide over the murder of Yazid Haruna.

The prosecution told the court that at about 2:47 a.m. on June 11, the convicts armed themselves with knives and a

machete, robbed the victim of two mobile phones and N19,500, and stabbed him in the stomach, chest and head, leading to his death.

The court held that the prosecution proved its case beyond reasonable doubt.

The judge described the act as inhuman and lamented the rising trend of phone-related

robberies.

The convicts were sentenced to one year imprisonment each for conspiracy, life imprisonment for armed robbery, and death by hanging for culpable homicide.

The court recalled that on October 20, 2025, the same convicts were sentenced to death for killing a lecturer in a separate robbery incident.

Jigawa JSC retires Shari'a judge over corruption allegations

DUTSE

The Jigawa State Judicial Service Commission (JSC) has approved the compulsory retirement of a Shari'a Court judge, Sadiu Muhammad-Haruna, over

misconduct bordering on corruption and illegal detention.

In a statement issued in Dutse, the commission said the decision followed a petition and subsequent investigation which found the judge guilty of demanding unauthorised

fees and unlawfully detaining a litigant.

The JSC described the conduct as a gross violation of judicial ethics and abuse of office, stressing that the action sends a strong warning against corruption within the judiciary.

At the same meeting, the commission approved the promotion of over 80 staff members and announced fresh appointments within the Shari'a Court of Appeal to strengthen administrative efficiency.

Tenure row: Lawyer withdraws suit against Egbetokun after resignation

ABUJA

An Abuja-based human rights lawyer has withdrawn his suit challenging the tenure elongation of former Inspector-General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun,

following the officer's resignation.

The plaintiff, Maxwell Opara, informed Justice Umar Mohammed of the Federal High Court that the matter had become academic after Egbetokun stepped down on February

24.

Egbetokun had been appointed I-G in June 2023 and was serving a four-year term under the amended Police Act before his resignation, which was accepted by President Bola Tinubu.

The President subsequently appointed Tunji Disu as acting Inspector-General, subject to approval by the Nigeria Police Council.

Justice Mohammed struck out the suit after Opara formally withdrew the case.

Alleged N300m illegal eviction: Court adjourns arraignment of developer, others

ABUJA

An Abuja High Court sitting in Maitama has adjourned until April 24 the arraignment of a property developer, Mr Cecil Osakwe, and two others over an alleged N300 million illegal eviction.

Justice Samira Bature fixed the new date following the absence of the third defendant, Edith Erhunmuse.

The prosecution disclosed that the Director of Public

Prosecutions of the Federation had ordered a fresh review of the case.

The defendants are accused of unlawfully breaking into a residence on Mekong Street, Maitama, and forcibly evicting the occupant, causing extensive property damage.

Counsel to the complainant criticised the repeated adjournments, warning that the delays undermine the Administration of Criminal Justice Act's provisions on speedy trial.

Man arraigned over alleged N1.1m tiling fraud in Ogun

SANGO-OTA (OGUN)

A 26-year-old man, Victor John, has been arraigned before an Ota Magistrates' Court for allegedly obtaining N1.1 million under false pretence.

The prosecutor alleged that the defendant collected the

sum in 2025 on the promise of carrying out tiling works but converted the money to personal use.

He pleaded not guilty.

The court granted him bail in the sum of N200,000 with one surety in like sum and adjourned the matter until March 10 for further hearing.

Ikorodu Court remands 2 over N2.1m vehicle parts theft

IKORODU

An Ikorodu Magistrates' Court has remanded two men in a correctional centre after they pleaded guilty to stealing vehicle parts valued at N2.1 million.

The prosecutor told the

court that the defendants stole 33 alternators worth N1.5 million and 40 kick starters valued at N594,000 from a complainant in Itamaga area of Lagos.

The magistrate ordered their remand pending review of facts and sentencing on March 5.

NRC expands Abuja-Kaduna train services from March 6

LAGOS

The Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) has increased the number of trips on the Abuja-Kaduna Train Service corridor to meet rising passenger demand.

Chief Public Relations Officer of the corporation, Mr Callistus Unyimadu, said the revised timetable will take effect from Friday, March 6.

The corridor had previously suffered disruptions following the March 28, 2022 bomb blast and the August 26, 2025 derailment, which reduced rolling

stock and necessitated temporary speed restrictions.

With stability restored, the NRC has expanded services.

Under the new schedule, three trips will operate on Fridays and Sundays, as well as Saturdays and Mondays, while two trips will run on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Unyimadu advised passengers to familiarise themselves with the new timetable and reiterated the corporation's commitment to improving safety, reliability and passenger experience across its network.

NEWS

Foreign

Six US soldiers killed in Iranian strike on Kuwait base

Six American soldiers were killed in an Iranian strike against a military facility in Kuwait on Sunday, the US has confirmed.

The US embassy in Bayan, Kuwait, was also struck during an Iranian attack.

US Central Command originally said three soldiers died in the incident but officials confirmed on Monday that the death toll had doubled, after one person succumbed to their injuries and two more bodies were found in the rubble.

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth confirmed a US bunker in

Kuwait was hit when a retaliatory strike launched by Iran evaded air defences. "Every once in a while you might have one," he said in a briefing on Monday.

The six deaths are the only fatalities confirmed by the US military since it launched a new war against Iran with Israel.

In the briefing, Hegseth said a "powerful weapon" struck a "tactical operations centre that was fortified", without providing further details about the site's location.

Three US military officials with direct knowledge of Iran's attack told the BBC's US part-

ner CBS News that the service members killed in Kuwait were hit in an apparent drone attack. They had been working in a makeshift office space.

They questioned whether the building had been adequately fortified, telling CBS News a trailer was being used as an office, with 12ft (3.7m) steel-reinforced concrete barriers to shield it.

The US has a long-standing defence relationship with Kuwait, and more than 13,000 American soldiers are stationed in the Gulf nation.

Iran has responded to attacks

against it by launching missiles at Gulf countries allied with the US. Bahrain, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Qatar have all also seen strikes.

Separately in Kuwait, the US confirmed three fighter jets were downed after what it described as an incident of "friendly fire" on Monday.

Footage showed the jets spiralling to the ground. The pilots involved all managed to eject and survived the incident.

Iran state media claimed the Iranian military had shot down the jets, without providing evidence.

Why Europe's leaders have struggled to speak as one on Iran

Europe knew this may be coming. For weeks, leaders and policy makers watched the US military build-up in the Middle East. They heard the threats of the Trump administration to Tehran: Give up all nuclear aspirations - or else!

But since the US-Israeli attack started on Iran three days ago, this continent has looked at best uncoordinated, if not fractured and decidedly without leverage, caught up in the maelstrom of events.

Each European country is understandably angsty about its citizens in the region - whether and how they may need to evacuate what would be tens of thousands of people in total.

European governments worry too about the impact the unfolding Middle East crisis may have on consumers back home. On energy and food prices, for example. European gas prices have soared to an extent not seen since the launch of Russia's fullscale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Politically, Europe is clearly struggling to find a united voice on the fast-paced dizzying developments in the Middle East.

The continent's Big Three, France, Germany and the UK, did manage to issue a joint statement at the weekend, warning

Iran they were ready to take "defensive action" to destroy its ability to fire missiles and drones unless Tehran stopped its "indiscriminate attacks".

Since then, the UK has agreed to a US request to use two British military bases for "defensive" strikes on Iranian missile sites - although president Trump has been critical that the UK hasn't been more active. France is bolstering its Middle East presence after an Iranian strike hit a French base in the United Arab Emirates and Germany says its soldiers remain ready for "defensive measures" should they be attacked but nothing beyond that was being planned.

All three countries stopped short of questioning the legality under international law of the US-Israeli strikes. Querying Washington was also conspicuously absent from the raft of tweets the EU's foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, has been posting.

A top consideration of all these European leaders is not wanting to alienate Donald Trump. They desperately hope events in the Middle East will not be another distraction for the US president, preventing him - again - from engaging in finding a sustainable solution to another conflict, this one on their own continent: Ukraine.



US EMBASSY IN KUWAIT:

The US embassy in Bayan, Kuwait, was also struck during an Iranian attack.

Gas and oil prices soar and shares tumble on fears conflict could escalate

Gas prices have spiked and global stock markets tumbled as the conflict in the Middle East intensified and concerns grew over how long it will last.

The UK gas price surged by more than 46%, following sharp gains on Monday pushing it to its highest level for three years. Brent crude oil briefly rose above \$85 a barrel.

In the US, the Dow Jones Industrial Index plunged by more than 2% in morning trade. The S&P 500 and the Nasdaq saw similar declines, following sharp falls in Europe.

Since Israel and the US launched strikes on Iran and Tehran retaliated, investors have been weighing the potential economic impact, including what it could mean for inflation and interest rates.

There are fears the fight in a region that plays a key role in global energy supplies and shipping routes could have a similar impact to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine four years ago which pushed up the cost of energy, causing price rises for businesses and consumers around the world.

In its latest fiscal outlook document, the UK's Office for Budget Responsibility said the escalation of the conflict could upset its forecasts, warning it could have "very significant impacts on the global and UK economies".

Market reaction, especially in the US, had been relatively muted on Monday - a bet that the conflict would prove short-lived.

But investors are now "reassessing the situation", as shipping traffic in the region comes to a standstill and the White House's timeline for the war remains uncertain, said Philip Palumbo, founder of Palumbo Wealth Management.

"As long as this war continues - which, it can continue longer than people think - it can be an issue for the price of oil... which can be impactful to an overall economy," he told the BBC. "That's why you're seeing the markets de-risk at this moment."

A prolonged rise in energy costs could scramble bets on the direction of interest rates, and weigh on the artificial intelligence (AI) industry, which has huge energy demands and had helped drive stock market

gains, Thierry Wizman of Macquarie Group warned in a note.

"That the current war may be 'inflationary' is what's panicking traders today," he said.

UK gas prices rose above 165p a therm on Tuesday, which it last traded at a year after the start of the Ukraine war. It fell back to 146p a therm by early afternoon.

The boost to the gas price came after QatarEnergy, one of the world's biggest exporters, halted production following "military attacks" on its facilities.

It subsequently announced that it would stop producing other materials including aluminium, methanol and urea used for fertiliser.

UK gas prices have now doubled since the US and Israel began a wave of air strikes on Iran on Saturday.

A line chart titled 'Gas prices shot up after attacks on Iran', showing the futures (April contract) price for UK natural gas, in pence per therm. At the end of December, the price was around 39p. That rose to a high of 217p in late August 2022 after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, before falling again.

It then rose sharply again to around 161p on 3 March 2026, after the US's attacks on Iran. The source is Bloomberg.

Higher gas prices could put pressure on household energy bills, although any impact would not be seen in the UK until July because a price cap has been put in place until then.

Oil prices have not risen as sharply as there is greater flexibility in sourcing additional crude compared to gas. Brent crude is 17% higher than Friday's close.

Nevertheless, rising oil prices can affect the economy by making things such as motor fuel, transport and food more expensive.

If inflation - the pace of price rises - picks up, then this may make central banks less likely to cut interest rates in the months ahead.

In the UK, the FTSE 100 was 2.9% lower. Germany's Dax fell 4% while in France, the CAC-40 slid by 3.5%.

A line chart showing the FTSE 100 index from 27 February to 3 March 2026. Over the period, it falls from 10,855 on open, to 10,522 at 09:57 on 3 March. The source is Bloomberg.

Mexican drug lord 'El Mencho' buried in golden coffin

Infamous Mexican drug lord Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, also known as "El Mencho", was buried in a golden casket by his family on Monday.

The cartel leader died after being wounded in a firefight between his bodyguards and Mexican special forces personnel deployed to capture him in late February.

The 59-year-old founder of the feared Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) was the country's most-wanted man, while the US had offered a \$15m (£11.2m) reward for information leading to his arrest.

His death triggered widespread retaliatory violence in which cartel members set fire to vehicles and blockaded roads across 20 Mexican states.

Members of the National Guard were out in force to prevent fresh violence from breaking out during the colourful funeral near Guadalajara in Jalisco state, a stronghold for the cartel.

Large floral tributes were seen being carried into the funeral home ahead of the ceremony, including one shaped like a rooster in a reference to his love of cockfighting.

According to AFP news agency, five lorries were needed to take all the tributes to the cemetery, most of which had been sent anonymously.

The funeral procession was accompanied by a band playing ranchero music and narco-

corridos - songs praising drug lords.

The traditional song El Muchacho Alegre (The Cheerful Boy) was played as Oseguera's gold-coloured coffin arrived at a chapel located inside the cemetery grounds, local media reported.

After an hour-long ceremony, the mourners - many of whom concealed their identities using face masks - followed the coffin as it was carried to the grave.

Mexican media noted that the plot was relatively plain compared with those of other drug lords, which are often topped by large mausoleums.

Under Oseguera's leadership, the CJNG became a powerful transnational criminal organisation which spread from its stronghold in Jalisco into many other Mexican states, where it engages in drug production and trafficking.

Oseguera's killing by Mexican special forces has been seen as a victory for President Claudia Sheinbaum's government, which has come under increasing pressure by her US counterpart Donald Trump to do more to combat drug trafficking.

But there have been fears that the vacuum left behind by the powerful cartel leader could trigger a surge in violence in the short term, as different factions within the criminal group - which is estimated to have tens of thousands of members - fight for control.

Foreign

NEWS

Anglican divisions deepen as rebel clerics pick rival to first female leader

Clergy from a conservative grouping of the Anglican Church are meeting this week in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, to choose a rival to the first female Archbishop of Canterbury.

The UK's Sarah Mullally will officially be installed as the leader of the world's Anglican communion at a lavish ceremony later this month but her appointment has divided opinion in Nigeria, and elsewhere.

Many conservative Christians believe that only men should be consecrated as bishops.

The Vining Memorial Church Cathedral in Nigeria's main city Lagos was full of women in gold, green and purple "geles" or headwraps and men resplendent in white-flowing "agbada" robes for its weekly highlight, the Sunday service.

Some of the hymns and liturgy were the same as those sung by Anglicans around the world, but there were also differences, like the upbeat worship music that had the congregation dancing in the pews.

Some congregants, like Bunmi Odukoya, were supportive of the appointment.

"The work of God is an individual thing. If you're called - you can be a man, you can be a woman - you need to fulfil the calling of the Lord," he told the BBC.

Others, like Uche Nweke, strongly disagreed: "I don't think it's Christian. When you look at the Bible and the apostles, there was no woman in there, so a woman being the head of the Anglican church in England, I don't think it's going to go well."

In addition to being the most senior cleric in the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury is also "primus inter pares" - or first among equals - of the primates of the worldwide Anglican Communion, meaning she is the spiritual leader of almost 95 million Anglicans.

At its four-day meeting that

has just started in Abuja, Gafcon, which describes itself as a global movement of "authentic Anglicans, guarding God's gospel", plans to elect its own "first among equals", just weeks ahead of Archbishop Mullally's installation at Canterbury Cathedral.

The move threatens to turn divisions within the global church into a full-on split.

"This is a schism, even if they don't want to say that," Diarmaid MacCulloch, Emeritus Professor of the History of the Church at the University of Oxford in England, told the BBC.

"This is a set of leaders, all male, going to a conference in Africa to assert [an] identity which no longer satisfies many Anglican churches - that is an all-male episcopate calling the shots."

Gafcon was formed in 2008 in response to theological differences within the Anglican Communion over the issue of same-sex unions.

In recent years those divisions have deepened, and in 2023 the group rejected the leadership of the previous Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, over proposals to bless same-sex couples, a position also held by his successor, Dame Sarah.

The group says it speaks for the majority of the world's Anglicans, although that is contested.

It does draw much of its support from Africa, but the view on the continent is by no means monolithic.

For example, the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, and Kenya's first female bishop Emily Onyango, both celebrated Sarah Mullally's appointment.

And while Gafcon accuses the Church of England of maintaining a colonial relationship with churches in the Global South and imposing its more progressive views, some of the organisers of this week's conference are based in the Americas and Australia, where the organisation also has a presence.



PRESIDENT UKRAINE:

Ukraine fears soaring oil prices and a possible shortage in air defences, after the start of the war in Iran

UK still working closely with US, minister insists after Trump criticism

The UK is still working closely with the US, a cabinet minister has insisted, after President Donald Trump said the relationship was "obviously not what it was".

Darren Jones, the chief secretary to the prime minister, said he understood the president had not been satisfied that the UK was not involved in the initial joint US-Israeli strikes on Iran.

But he insisted "operationally" the relationship was "the same", with British fighter jets supporting the American military in the Middle East and the two allies continuing to cooperate on intelligence-sharing and trade.

Jones was responding to remarks by Trump, who criticised Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer in an interview with the Sun newspaper.

On Monday, Sir Keir told MPs the UK government "does

not believe in regime change from the skies" and defended his decision not to allow the US to use British bases for the initial wave of attacks on Iran.

The prime minister has since agreed to give the US access to those bases for "defensive" strikes in response to Iranian retaliatory attacks on the UK's citizens and interests.

"It's very sad to see that the relationship is obviously not what it was," President Trump told the newspaper on Tuesday.

Trump told the newspaper Sir Keir had "not been helpful", adding he "never thought I'd see that from the UK".

"It's a different world, actually," Trump said. "It's just a much different kind of relationship that we've had with your country before."

When asked about accusations that Sir Keir was pandering to Muslim voters for polit-

ical reasons, the president said: "It could be."

Trump told the newspaper Sir Keir "has got his own difficulties".

Darren Jones said operationally the UK-US relationship was "the same".

The US and Israel launched strikes on Iran on Saturday, killing the country's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other senior figures.

Iran responded by launching missiles and drones across the region, targeting countries including Israel, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia as well as ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz.

An RAF base in Akrotiri in Cyprus has come under fire as well.

The government will deploy a Royal Navy warship, HMS Dragon - a Type 45 Destroyer -

to the Mediterranean to bolster security around the base.

Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper said 130,000 Britons had registered their location and contact details to receive direct Foreign Office updates on the situation in the Gulf.

She said a government charter flight will fly from Oman's capital, Muscat in the coming days, prioritising vulnerable nationals.

Sir Keir has faced significant political challenges in recent weeks, not least the loss of a parliamentary by-election in Greater Manchester to the Green Party.

The prime minister has sought to foster a close relationship with Trump, despite their differences on issues ranging from the US's attempts to take control of Greenland and the UK's recognition of a Palestinian state.

Sudan government says drone attacks came 'from Ethiopian territory'

Sudan's army-aligned government has accused Ethiopia of involvement in recent drone strikes, saying attacks launched "from inside Ethiopian territory" targeted sites in Sudan in February and March.

In a statement on Monday, Sudan's foreign ministry warned Ethiopian authorities of what it called the consequences of these "hostile acts", describing the incidents as "clear aggression." The statement did not specify who carried out the attacks, how many occurred, or which locations were hit. It marks the first time Khartoum has officially accused Ethiopia of interference in Sudan's nearly three-year-long war between the regular army and the para-

military Rapid Support Forces.

The conflict has increasingly drawn in regional and international actors. At a recent UN Security Council meeting, British Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper said the absence of a ceasefire was due to military leaders believing victory was still possible as they continue to acquire more lethal weapons, citing external support from multiple states.

Sudanese officials have also accused the United Arab Emirates of increasing arms shipments via Ethiopia to the RSF since late 2025, allegations Abu Dhabi denies. Meanwhile, army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan is backed by Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

Zelensky fears Trump's Iran war could hurt Ukraine

President Volodymyr Zelensky has warned that the war in the Middle East could leave Ukraine struggling to source air defence missiles.

He also said there was "a risk" Ukraine's allies could be distracted by the conflict, and forget his country's defence against Russia's full-scale invasion.

"We could find ourselves having difficulty obtaining missiles and weapons to defend our skies," he told Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera. "The Americans and their allies in the Middle East might need them to defend themselves, for example Patriot missiles."

Asked if there was a risk the United States and the European Union could forget Ukraine's defence while focused on the Middle East, Zelensky replied: "Of course, it's a risk. But I

hope the Iranian crisis remains a limited operation and doesn't turn into a long war. We know first-hand how bloody it risks being."

For years Ukraine has become accustomed to being in the eyes of the world. Last week the streets of Kyiv thronged with Western leaders marking the grim, fourth anniversary of the moment Russia launched its all-out war.

But a few days later, people here in Ukraine's capital have felt an almost tangible shift of focus away to another conflict. Some here have pointed out the reaction of Gulf residents to drone strikes that in Kyiv would prompt no more than a shrug. But more fear what the fighting in the Middle East might mean for them.

Zelensky's remarks illustrate that uncertainty. On one hand

he is gloomy, pointing to the risks that Ukraine's defence against Russia becomes a forgotten war. There is already uncertainty about whether the latest planned talks with the US and Russia will take place.

He is also aware the vast numbers of air defence interceptor missiles being fired off by Gulf countries could lead to a global shortage, making such weapons more expensive and harder to find.

That was certainly true last summer when Israel and the US attacked Iran's nuclear facilities. "Israel was under Iranian attack then, and missile delivery programs for us were slowed down," Zelensky said. "It hasn't happened yet, but I fear it could happen again."

On Truth Social, President Trump claimed the US had an "unlimited supply" of arms. But

he also used his post to mock Zelensky as "PT Barnum", a 19th-Century US showman and hoaxer, suggesting Ukraine's leader had tricked President Joe Biden into giving away too many US weapons for free.

Nonetheless, Zelensky has also looked for positives. Iran has sold Russia tens of thousands of Shahed drones that almost nightly wreak deadly havoc on Ukraine. That may stop. "I think attacking Iranian military targets was a good decision," he said. "The Iranians produce a lot of weapons for Russia, especially drones and missiles, although I don't think they'll be able to do that anymore."

Analysts point out however that Russia now also produces Shaheds domestically, after taking Iran's design and modifying it for attacks on Ukrainian cities.

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Sports

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NOC to host IOC-backed advanced gender-inclusive governance course in Abuja

In a strategic move aligned with national sports reform and global governance standards, the Nigerian Olympic Committee (NOC) is set to host an advanced gender-inclusive governance course, supported by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

The three-day intensive pro-

gramme will take place from March 23 to March 25, 2026, at the Media Centre, Package B, Moshood Abiola National Stadium, Abuja.

Supported by Olympic Solidarity, this initiative is specifically designed for former female athletes and women currently serving on the Boards

of National Sports Federations.

The programme underscores the NOC's commitment to strengthening governance structures, promoting inclusive leadership, and enhancing institutional effectiveness across Nigeria's sports ecosystem.

The course will be officially declared open by the President of the NOC, Engr. Habu Ahmed Gumel, who maintains that sustainable sports development would rely heavily on transparent, accountable, and inclusive frameworks.

According to him, institutional reform requires competent and inclusive leadership. By investing in the capacity of women leaders, we are

strengthening governance, improving compliance with international standards, and reinforcing the foundation for sustainable sports development in Nigeria

To be delivered under the IOC's global educational framework, the curriculum is based on the IOC Sports Administration Course manual.

The participants will receive internationally recognized training in governance reform and strategic planning; financial oversight and organisational accountability; ethical leadership and safeguarding principles; and policy implementation and institutional management.



NIGERIAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (NOC) COMMITTEE

World Cup on alert: U.S. intelligence warns of possible Iranian retaliation after Khamenei's death

The killing of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, in joint Israeli and U.S. strikes has sent shockwaves through global security networks, and now the ripple effects could extend far beyond the Middle East, potentially casting a shadow over the next FIFA World Cup.

A U.S. intelligence assessment reviewed by Reuters warns that Iran and its proxies could launch retaliatory attacks against American interests, with officials bracing for cyber disruptions and targeted operations in the homeland. While a large-scale physical assault is deemed unlikely, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) says the threat of persistent, lower-level attacks is real and evolving.

For global sporting bodies — especially FIFA — such warnings are impossible to ignore. The FIFA World Cup is not just football's grandest stage; it is one of the most visible international gatherings in the world. In a tense geopolitical climate, such events inevitably become high-value symbolic targets. Football kits

According to the February 28 DHS threat assessment produced by the Office of In-

telligence and Analysis, Iran-aligned actors "probably" pose a risk of targeted attacks inside the United States, particularly if the reports of Khamenei's death are confirmed, which Tehran has now done.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said she is coordinating directly with federal intelligence and law enforcement agencies to monitor and thwart potential threats.

Low-level cyber operations,

including website defacements and distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks.

Targeted retaliatory actions, either carried out by Iranian proxies or inspired by lone actors.

Iran is also expected to intensify operations against U.S. and allied targets in the Middle East while blaming senior U.S. officials for unrest linked to calls for regime change by President Donald Trump.

With the FIFA World Cup scheduled to be hosted in North America — across the United States, Canada, and Mexico — security planners are likely recalibrating risk assessments in real time.

Major U.S. venues such as MetLife Stadium in New Jersey, SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles, and AT&T Stadium in Texas are expected to host matches, drawing millions of fans and billions of global viewers.

Super Eagles coach Eric Chelle marries a second wife in Mali

Reports from Mali indicate that Super Eagles head coach Eric Chelle has allegedly taken a second wife, a development that has sparked conversation in both Nigeria and Mali.

According to sources cited in Malian media, the woman is said to be in her 30s. While there has been no official confirmation from Chelle, reports suggest he is currently in Mali with the alleged new bride.



COACH ERIC CHELLE

Chelle, 48, has been married to a French woman for approximately 25 years, and the couple are parents to twin children — a boy and a girl. The coach has not publicly addressed the claims, and no formal statement has been issued by the Nigeria Football Federation as of the time of reporting.

The former defender maintains strong ties to Mali, reflecting his maternal heritage. Prior to his appointment as head coach of Nigeria's senior national team in January 2025, Chelle managed the Malian national side in a brief but notable stint that elevated his profile within African football circles and contributed to his eventual move to Nigeria.

Concern grows as kidnapers seek ₦20m ransom for Nigerian footballer's release

The family of Ihotu John Rebecca has appealed for urgent assistance following her abduction along the Benin Expressway, with kidnapers reportedly demanding a ransom of ₦20 million for her release.

Rebecca, who plays for Pace-

setter Queens FC in the NWFL Premiership, was said to have been kidnapped while returning home. Details surrounding the incident remain limited, but family members say the abductors have established contact and issued a ransom demand.

Describing the situation as

critical, the family called on well-meaning Nigerians and key stakeholders in the football community to intervene and assist in securing her safe release.

"This is a young woman who has dedicated her life to representing Nigerian women's football at the highest domestic

level," a family representative said. "Right now, she is in danger, and time is of the essence."

The appeal has been extended to football administrators, club executives, sponsors, government officials and members of the public who may be in a position to offer support.



VICTOR OSIMHEN

Galatasaray to rest Osimhen for cup game

Turkish Super Lig giants Galatasaray have decided to rest Nigerian forward Victor Osimhen for their upcoming domestic Cup fixture during the week.

Osimhen has been instrumental for the Red and Yellow in recent matches, finding the back of the net in games against Juventus and Alanyaspor.

His impressive form has boosted the Turkish champions as they continue their push on multiple fronts this season.

However, the club's technical crew has opted to give the Nigerian striker a breather ahead of a busy run of fixtures.

He will sit out the Cup clash

against Alanyaspor as part of a squad rotation strategy aimed at maintaining fitness levels.

Osimhen will not be the only notable absentee, as Davinson Sanchez, Mario Lemina, and Mauro Icardi are also expected to miss the encounter.

The decision underscores the club's intent to carefully manage key players while competing in domestic and continental competitions.

Galatasaray are expected to field a rotated squad for the tie as they balance their ambition for silverware with the need to keep their star players fresh for crucial league and European assignments

Southwest handball federation begins 4-day coaching clinic

The Southwest Zone of the Handball Federation of Nigeria (HFN) has started a four-day coaching clinic for coaches across the region's six states.

The programme, tagged "Train the Trainer", began on Monday at Rowe Park Sports Centre and ends on Thursday, March 5.

The initiative, led by the zonal representative's office, aims to strengthen coaching capacity and promote handball development in the Southwest and across Nigeria.

The zonal office sponsored three coaches from each Southwest state, bringing the number of state-sponsored participants to eighteen.

Additional coaches from

handball academies within the zone are also participating in the intensive training programme.

Southwest Zonal Representative, Gbenga Adewusi, represented by Adegboyega Makinde, said the clinic was designed to reposition handball in the region.

Makinde, former General Manager of the Oyo State Sports Council, thanked Southwest states for supporting the federation during its recent elections.

"We are grateful to the Southwest states for standing firmly with the federation during the elections. Your support has strengthened our resolve to deliver on our promises," he said.



SOUTHWEST ZONE OF THE HANDBALL FEDERATION

Super Falcons star Oshoala reacts to Super Eagles' World Cup play-off exit

Super Falcons striker Asisat Oshoala has expressed disappointment over the Super Eagles' failure to secure qualification for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, stating that the team's current form suggests they could have made a significant

impact at the tournament. The expanded global showpiece — set to be co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico — will run from June 11 to July 19 across 16 cities.

Nigeria initially missed out on an automatic qualification

spot before progressing to the African play-offs. However, the Super Eagles were edged out of a place in the intercontinental play-offs by DR Congo.

Despite the setback, the Nigeria Football Federation has lodged a protest with FIFA, alleging that DR Congo fielded ineligible players during the November 2026 World Cup African play-offs. The petition centres on claims of improper nationality switches by certain players. FIFA has yet to issue a ruling on the matter.

Reacting on social media to the impressive performances of several Nigerian players in European leagues, Oshoala suggested the team's current form would have translated into a

strong World Cup campaign.

"Nigeria for cook for that World Cup show, all our boys just dey cook this season," she wrote, implying the side could have excelled on the global stage.

The intercontinental play-offs are scheduled to take place from March 26 to 31 in Mexico, increasing anticipation for FIFA's verdict. DR Congo have been drawn to face the winner of the tie between New Caledonia and Jamaica for one of the two remaining World Cup slots.

As Nigerian fans await a decision, Oshoala's remarks echo a broader sentiment among supporters who believe the Super Eagles' recent resurgence could have been showcased on football's biggest stage



ASISAT OSHOALA

Kigali hosts key FIFA programme to strengthen African coaching standards

Kigali has taken centre stage in African football development this week as the Rwandan capital hosts the FIFA Coach Educators Development Pathway Assessment, a strategic initiative aimed at elevating coaching standards across the continent.

The week-long programme has brought together 19 coach educators and technical leaders from nine Member Associations, further cementing Rwanda's growing reputation as a host of major international football events.

Delegates are participating from Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mauritius and South Sudan, highlighting FIFA's continued commitment to strengthening technical expertise and institutional capacity within African football.

The assessment is part of FIFA's global framework designed to professionalise the role of coach educators within its Member Associations. Through the introduction of modern methodologies, advanced evaluation tools and harmonised training standards, the initiative seeks to ensure that best practices at elite level cascade effectively through grassroots, youth and senior football structures.

Addressing participants during the opening session

in Kigali, Patrice Ndagijimana, President of the Rwanda Football Federation (FERWAF), welcomed delegates and underscored the significance of Rwanda hosting such a high-level technical programme.

He described the event as a critical step toward strengthening coaching education systems across Africa and building sustainable football development models. Ndagijimana also urged participants to seize the



FIFA COACH EDUCATORS DEVELOPMENT

Nigeria Wheelchair Basketball begins preparations for 2026 Commonwealth Games qualifier

The Nigeria Wheelchair Basketball Federation has invited 16 players to a closed camping programme ahead of the 2026 Commonwealth Games' qualifiers in Angola.

The national camp will take

place at Package 'B' of the Moshood Abiola National Stadium from March 8 to 21.

In the men's category, the invited players are Shittu Musbau, Adetayo Emmanuel Kehinde, Abel Oluwaseun, Akinde Tony,

Bailey Oluwasegun, Durowoju Taiwo Babalola, Mohammed Muritala and Rilwan Abubakar.

For the women's team, those invited include Olabisi Ijigbamigbe, Nofisat Adefala, Amakor Patricia, Aishat Yahaya, Christiana Olowolagba, Grace Nwaozuzu and Folashade Obagbemi.

The Commonwealth Games qualifiers will take place in Luanda, Angola, from March 22 to 27.

President of Nigeria Wheelchair Basketball Federation, Oluwaseyi Johnson, expressed confidence that Nigeria will excel at the championship.

Johnson said, "We are fully prepared and determined to excel at the 2026 IWBF Africa 3x3 Championship, which serves as the Commonwealth Games qualifiers



NIGERIA WHEELCHAIR BASKETBALL

NSC Chairman Inaugurates New Badminton Federation Board, says Htchfree Election is another plus for the Commission

National Sports Commission Chairman Mallam Shehu Dikko on Monday 2nd March, inaugurated the newly elected Board of the Badminton Federation of Nigeria (BFN). Mallam Dikko believes the successful election is another testament to the Commission's resolve to have functional Sports Federations.

His words, "This is another plus for the Commission. We have consistently delivered on Federations elections without rancour. This is in furtherance of the mandate from President Bola Ahmed Tinubu GCFR for us to get the Federations fully functional. The Federations are the backbone of what we are doing here. Our destinies are intertwined. If you succeed, we

succeed. If you fail, we fail. This is why all we do here is geared towards the success of the Federations."

The NSC Chairman challenged the Bar. Francis Orbih-led 15-member Board on the task ahead.

He continued, "Mr. President (Orbih) you have gotten another mandate. This speaks to your good works in

the last tenure. You are in the continental and global bodies so it will help the growth of badminton in the country. I have always clamoured for our sports administrators to get involved in the continental and global bodies. This is a debt you owe to the people that re-elected you and to Nigerian badminton in general, to take the sport to the next level."



WAFCON 2026: CAF Turns Attention To Algeria

The Confederation of African Football has approached Algeria to step in as host of the 2026 Women's Africa Cup of Nations following a request for postponement from the original host nation.

In what observers have described as a dramatic development, CAF is understood to have opened discussions with the North African country after the initially designated host cited logistical challenges and formally sought a delay of the tournament.

The Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) remains a critical fixture on the continental calendar, with the 2026 edition set to serve as the qualification

tournament for the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup scheduled to take place in Brazil.

While CAF has yet to make an official public announcement confirming a change of venue, sources indicate that Algeria is being considered as a viable alternative due to its existing infrastructure and recent experience hosting major continental competitions.

Any decision to relocate the tournament would need swift ratification to ensure that preparation timelines, stadium readiness, and team logistics are not compromised ahead of the qualifiers for the global showpiece in 2027

AFCON Final: CAF Head of Judicial Panel dismissed

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) has dismissed Yassine Osman Robleh from his position as head of its judicial bodies following the controversies that trailed the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations final.

Robleh, a Djiboutian football administrator, had served in the role for six years before his removal was confirmed, *BSNSports.com.ng* reports

His dismissal is reportedly connected to the disciplinary decisions taken after incidents involving Senegalese players during the final between Morocco national football team and Senegal national football team.

The final of the Africa Cup of Nations was overshadowed by post-match controversies, with reports of misconduct and altercations that led to disciplinary

reviews by CAF's judicial panel.

The rulings that followed generated mixed reactions across the continent, with some stakeholders questioning the severity and consistency of the sanctions imposed.

While CAF has yet to release a detailed statement outlining the specific grounds for Robleh's dismissal, sources within the African football governing body suggest that the decision was part of broader internal restructuring aimed at restoring confidence in its disciplinary processes.

Robleh's exit marks a significant development within CAF's governance structure, particularly at a time when the body is under increased scrutiny over officiating and disciplinary standards in its flagship competitions



YASSINE OSMAN ROBLEH

FEATURE

The rising promise of Edo: Why the wind of massive support is blowing towards President Bola Tinubu



PRESIDENT BOLA TINUBU

SENATOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO

GENERAL IWU COSMOS JP

Politics is often described as a mirror of the people's expectations, hopes, and frustrations. In Edo State today, the political atmosphere is gradually changing, and many observers believe a new direction is forming.

With recent developments across the state and the growing momentum of grassroots mobilization, there is increasing confidence among supporters that Bola Ahmed Tinubu could secure overwhelming support in Edo State in future political contests.

Much of this optimism is closely connected to the energetic leadership and developmental drive of Monday Okpebholo.

Across towns, markets, and communities in Edo, conversations about governance have shifted from complaints to expectations. Many residents are beginning to see signs of renewed political seriousness, particularly in the actions and public engagement of Senator Monday Okpebholo. Since assuming office as the senator representing Edo Central, he has projected himself as a leader who understands the urgency of development and the

need to connect government directly to the people.

One of the strongest factors shaping political opinion in Edo today is the growing belief that leadership must produce visible results. Senator Okpebholo has consistently emphasized infrastructure, empowerment, and community development as key priorities.

Supporters point to road interventions, youth support initiatives, and continuous consultations with local stakeholders as evidence that a new style of representation is emerging.

Beyond physical projects, the senator's political style has also drawn attention. Unlike the traditional distant approach often associated with public office, Okpebholo has maintained a visible presence among his constituents. Community visits, meetings with youth groups, engagement with traders, and collaboration with local leaders have helped create a perception of accessibility. For many residents, leadership that listens is the first step toward leadership that delivers.

This growing grassroots confidence is gradually influencing broader political alignments within the state.

Analysts note that when voters see commitment at the local level, they often extend their support to the larger political platform associated with that leadership. In this case, that platform connects strongly with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

President Tinubu's administration has consistently spoken about economic reform, infrastructure expansion, and national development. While national policies sometimes take time to translate into everyday impact, political allies at the state and regional levels often serve as the bridge between federal vision and local results. Supporters in Edo increasingly view Senator Okpebholo as one of those bridges—someone capable of translating federal opportunities into real benefits for communities.

Another factor strengthening this perception is the senator's message of inclusive development. Observers frequently describe him as a leader determined to fix Edo State irrespective of political affiliation. In a political climate where divisions can easily slow progress, such an approach resonates strongly with citizens who simply want better roads, jobs, schools, and

security rather than endless political arguments.

In many communities, development has become the new campaign language. Youths want opportunities, market women want improved infrastructure, farmers want better access to markets, and small business owners want policies that encourage growth. The belief among many supporters is that a cooperative relationship between Edo leadership and the federal government would accelerate these improvements. This expectation naturally translates into growing support for President Tinubu.

Political momentum is rarely built overnight. It grows through trust, visible effort, and consistent engagement. Senator Monday Okpebholo's supporters argue that his seriousness about development is already laying the groundwork for a major political shift in Edo State.

They believe that if the current pace of engagement and community-focused initiatives continues, the political landscape of the state may experience a significant transformation.

What makes this moment particularly interesting is the rising partic-

ipation of young people in political conversations. Many youths are increasingly evaluating leaders based on performance rather than long-standing party loyalties. In such an environment, leaders who show energy, accessibility, and a practical development agenda tend to gain rapid popularity.

As Edo State looks toward the future, the intersection of federal leadership and local commitment could play a defining role. For many political observers and supporters, the determination shown by Senator Monday Okpebholo signals a broader movement—one that could translate into massive electoral support for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

Whether in rural communities or urban centers, one message appears to be spreading: Edo people are watching closely, evaluating leadership carefully, and aligning themselves with individuals they believe are ready to move the state forward. If the current political momentum continues, supporters are confident that the ballot boxes in Edo State may eventually reflect that growing conviction in a very significant way.