

Reps order suspension of Multichoice subscription hike

● **As telecoms subscriptions hit 169.3m**

The House of Representatives has ordered Multichoice, the operator of DStv and GOtv, to suspend its planned subscription price increase, citing concerns over the economic hardship facing Nigerians. The lawmakers also launched an investigation into the recurring price hikes by the Pay-TV provider.

Multichoice had recently an-

nounced that, effective March 1, the DStv Premium package would rise from ₦37,000 to ₦44,500, while Compact+ subscribers would pay ₦30,000 instead of ₦25,000. The Compact bouquet was also set to increase from ₦17,000 to ₦19,000.

The directive followed a motion raised under Matters of Urgent Public Importance during Tuesday's plenary by Esosa

Iyawe (APC, Oredo Federal Constituency). Iyawe highlighted that this would be the second price hike in less than a year, with the last increase occurring in May 2024.

"Multichoice recently announced a hike in subscription rates across all its packages, citing rising operational costs. However, this marks the second increase in less than a year,"

Iyawe stated. He noted that past increments had sparked widespread public outrage, with many Nigerians, already struggling financially, abandoning their decoders due to the lack of competition in the pay-TV sector.

He further argued that Multichoice's dominance in the market meant that any price increase had a widespread impact, placing consumers under undue financial pressure.

Following the adoption of the motion, the House mandated its Committee on Commerce to investigate the frequent price hikes and recommend policies to ensure fair pricing for Nigerian consumers. The committee was given four weeks to submit its findings.

Meanwhile, the Nigeria's telecommunications sector has witnessed a robust recovery, with active subscriptions surging to 169.3 million in January 2025,

up from 164.9 million in December 2024.

The Nigerian Communications Commission made this known in an industry statistics on its website.

On Tuesday, the telecoms regulator said that this robust recovery followed a period of decline, which saw subscriptions plummet to 154,904,827 in September 2024.

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The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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Dangote, NNPC petrol price war to benefit consumers —Rewane

The ongoing price competition between Dangote Refinery and the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC) is expected to drive petrol prices lower until at least June 2025, offering relief to consumers, according to economist Bismark Rewane.

Speaking on Channels Television's Business Morning on Tuesday, Rewane, the Managing Director of Financial De-

velopments Company Limited, stated that the downward trend in fuel prices would persist in the coming months due to the intense rivalry between the two industry giants.

"So, generally, between now and June, we will see prices begin to decline. But after June, as things stabilize, depending on what happens in the global oil and currency market, we might begin to see some stabilization," Rewane explained.

He emphasized that while price wars are typically unsustainable, they tend to favor consumers in the short term. "In a price war, nobody wins; the consumers win in the short run, and then eventually, the market goes back to where it should be. But, at the end of the day, between now and June, the price leadership will be firmly established," he noted.

Rewane attributed Dangote Refinery's price cuts to

improved production cost efficiency and other economic factors.

Following Dangote Refinery's announcement of a petrol price reduction, fuel prices at MRS Holdings stations were set at ₦860 per liter in Lagos, ₦870 in the South-West, ₦880 in the North, and ₦890 in the South-South and South-East.

Similarly, Ardova Petroleum (AP) and Heyden stations adjusted their prices to ₦865

per liter in Lagos, ₦875 in the South-West, ₦885 in the North, and ₦895 in the South-South and South-East.

In response, NNPC swiftly lowered its pump price to ₦860 per liter across its stations in Lagos, intensifying the competition.

With both companies battling for market dominance, consumers remain the biggest beneficiaries as fuel prices continue to decline. However, industry experts caution that long-term trends will depend on global oil prices and currency fluctuations.

Ohonbamu urges PDP to stop inciting violence

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Commissioner for Information and Communications, Hon. Paul Ohonbamu, has called on the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to refrain from inciting violence and heating the polity ahead of the Election Petition Tribunal's judgment on the Edo State governorship election.

In a statement issued in Benin City, Ohonbamu emphasized the need for all Edo citizens to remain calm and allow the three-member panel, led by Justice Wilfred Kpochi, to deliver its verdict without external pressure.

He cautioned against making inflammatory remarks that could fuel unrest and destabilize. "In a democratic system, the opposition plays a crucial role in ensuring accountability. However, this must be done responsibly and constructively," Ohonbamu stated.

He reaffirmed Governor Monday Okpebholo's commit-

ment to peace and development, stressing that the administration will not tolerate any actions that threaten stability.

The commissioner warned that divisive rhetoric over the tribunal's decision could undermine economic growth, create insecurity, and weaken public trust in institutions like the judiciary.

He urged the PDP and its supporters to engage in constructive criticism rather than resorting to inflammatory language.

The Edo State government reassured the public that it is focused on fostering unity and cooperation, calling on all political stakeholders to prioritize the state's welfare over partisan interests.

Ohonbamu also dismissed allegations circulating on social media that Governor Okpebholo was attempting to interfere with the tribunal's ruling, describing such claims as baseless and intended to mislead the public.



NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL:

President Bola Tinubu (left), and National Chairman, All Progressives Congress (APC), Alhaji Ibrahim Ganduje, during the party's National Executive Council meeting in Abuja recently.

Push for women's inclusion gains momentum

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PSC appoints six DIGs, CPs for Enugu, Oyo

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NDSF registration surpasses 10,000 ahead March 7 timeline

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Canada hits US with retaliatory tariffs after warning of 'existential threat'

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Push for women's inclusion gains momentum

In a bold push to reshape Nigeria's political landscape, First Lady Senator Oluremi Tinubu has called on the National Assembly to expedite the passage of the Constitution (Alteration) Bill, 2024—commonly known as the Additional Seats Bill—which seeks to increase women's representation in governance.

Addressing stakeholders at the Art for Governance Exhibition in Abuja, Tinubu emphasized the urgency of gender inclusion in leadership, stating that Nigeria's progress depends on ensuring women have a stronger voice in decision-making.

Represented by Hajiya Fa-

tima Tajudeen Abbas, wife of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tinubu reinforced her long-standing commitment to gender equity, urging lawmakers, civil society, and the public to support the affirmative action bill, which proposes that at least 35% of legislative and executive seats be allocated to women.

She argued that true national development requires women's active participation, describing the bill as both a necessity and a matter of justice.

The exhibition, a collaboration between the Office of the Deputy Speaker and advocacy group ElectHER, served as a platform

● Tinubu, Kalu rally support for Special Seats Bill

to merge art with activism, highlighting the ongoing struggle for women's political representation. Deputy Speaker Rt. Hon.

Benjamin Okezie Kalu, the bill's sponsor, underscored its significance, framing it not just as a numerical adjustment but as a fight for fairness and lasting change.

He lamented the persistent barriers hindering women from leadership roles, vowing that the

10th Assembly would take decisive action to break them.

Ibajoke Faborode, CEO of ElectHER and Lead Curator of the exhibition, stressed that Nigeria's alarmingly low rate of female representation—less than 4% in the National Assembly despite women making up nearly half the population—was a major obstacle to inclusive democracy.

She argued that passing

the Reserved Seats Bill before the 2027 elections would be a transformative step toward correcting this imbalance.

The exhibition also honoured artistic contributions to the cause, with Segun Owolabi winning N2 million for first place, Chidinma Mordi taking second with N1.5 million, and Precious Samuel securing third place with N1 million.

In a show of commitment,

Kalu later doubled the prize money. The top three artists will have their work displayed at the National Assembly Library for three weeks and featured at the prestigious Echoes of Equity: Art for Governance event.

As the conversation around gender-inclusive governance gains momentum, the support from high-ranking officials signals a critical moment for the passage of the bill.

Retired public servants decry poor treatment under pension scheme

Retirees under the Contributory Pension Scheme in Edo State have voiced their frustration over what they describe as inhumane treatment, despite dedicating 35 years to public service.

Chairman of the Contributory Pension Scheme Retirees Welfare Association, Edo State chapter, Mr. Andrew Asemota, led a delegation to the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council in Benin, where he detailed their grievances.

Asemota lamented that the scheme, which they were compelled to join under the previous

administration, has not been beneficial.

He recalled that in 2010, the Adams Oshiomhole government passed a bill exempting workers with less than 10 years of service from the scheme.

"However, when former Governor Godwin Obaseki assumed office in November 2016, workers noticed unexplained salary deductions starting in January 2017.

"By March of that year, financial institutions began enrolling workers into the scheme without

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It said that the decline in subscriptions was largely due to the mass deactivation of over 42 million SIM cards in February 2024 and the sector's rebasing in September 2024.

The NCC, however, noted that the sector had gradually regained momentum, with subscriptions increasing to 164,926,599 in December 2024 before reaching the current high of 169,318,076 in January 2025.

"The growth was driven by two network operators, MTN and Airtel, that recorded an increase in their subscriber base in the month under review.

"This growth momentum has also boosted the country's teledensity, which measures the penetration of active telephone connections to 78.10 per cent, marking a significant increase from the 76.08 per cent recorded in December 2024," it said.

On market share, the industry statistics showed that MTN Nigeria solidified its position by increasing its market share to 51.7 per cent with 87.5 million subscribers in January 2025, up from 84.6 million in December 2024.

It said that Airtel also demonstrated resilience, expanding its subscriber base to 57.6 million with a market share of 34.1 per cent, up from 56.6 million in the preceding month.

Earlier and current NCC statistics showed that Globacom, which faced a decline in subscribers earlier in 2024 due to a regulatory audit, was gradually showing signs of recovery.

It showed that Globacom

grew its subscriber base from 20.1 million in December 2024 to 20.5 million in January 2025.

On the other hand, the statistics showed that 9mobile's market share continued to decline.

"This decline is a far cry from 9mobile's erstwhile dominance, when it boasted 23.4 million subscribers and a 15.7 per cent market share in 2015.

"The company's stagnant subscriber base, which has remained unchanged at 3.2 million for three consecutive months, further accentuates this decline," it said.

On porting activities, industry statistics showed that Nigeria's fourth mobile network operator, 9mobile, has continued to experience a decline in its subscriber base, with 6716 customers porting out of its network in January.

According to the NCC's report on incoming and outgoing porting activities of mobile network operators, a total of 8708 subscribers moved from one network to another in January.

The report showed that other operators recorded insignificant outgoing porting numbers compared to 9mobile.

According to the NCC, MTN lost 1188 customers, Airtel recorded 399 outgoing porting, Globacom recorded 405, while 9mobile lost 6716 in January.

In terms of incoming porting, MTN gained the most customers from other operators, with 5,551 subscribers joining its network, the regulatory body revealed.

The report showed that Airtel recorded 2414 incoming porting, while Globacom gained 736 customers.



COMMISSIONING:

Some of the fire-fighting and emergency response equipments inaugurated, during the commissioning of the remodeled Headquarters of the Rivers State Fire Service station in Governor Siminalayi Fubara's efforts to mitigate fire disasters and other emergencies in Rivers State, yesterday.

Pollution: Reps urge FG to improve waste mgt strategies

The House of Representatives has called on the Federal Government to strengthen waste management strategies to curb the rising threat of environmental pollution and its associated health risks across the country.

This followed the adoption of a motion sponsored by Julius Pondi, the lawmaker representing Burutu Federal Constituency, Delta State, during plenary on Tuesday in Abuja.

Presenting the motion titled "Waste Pollution and the Management of Its Impacts on Health and Environment," Pondi lamented the growing challenges Nigerians face in handling waste disposal, particularly in the oil and gas sector and manufacturing industries.

He noted that ineffective waste management had continued to endanger lives, particularly in communities where industrial activities take place.

"The House observes the recurring negative impacts that ineffective waste disposal practices have had on the health of citizens in communities and locations where oil and gas activities are conducted," he said.

Pondi further highlighted key contributors to environmental pollution, including hazardous industrial discharges, persistent gas flaring, crude and refined oil spills—particularly in the Niger Delta region—and poor domestic waste disposal practices.

Despite the existence of environmental protection laws, the lawmaker pointed out loop-

holes in enforcement, warning that the continued neglect of waste management could lead to severe health challenges, agricultural decline, and environmental degradation, especially in coastal areas.

Following widespread support for the motion, the House urged the Federal Government, through the Ministry of Environment, the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission, and the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency, to step up enforcement of environmental laws to ensure a cleaner and healthier environment.

It also called on state and local governments to collaborate

with relevant agencies to ensure that oil companies, manufacturing industries, and small and medium-scale enterprises adopt safer and more sustainable waste disposal methods to prevent disease outbreaks.

Additionally, the House mandated its Committee on Environment to conduct a nationwide survey to assess the extent of environmental pollution and evaluate the level of compliance with existing waste management regulations.

The committee is expected to submit its findings within four weeks for further legislative action.

Meanwhile, the NCC statistics noted that 9mobile recorded only seven incoming porting for January.

Murder of deaf man in Edo sparks outrage

The tragic killing of Mr. Efe Ogbeide, a deaf and mute man, has ignited calls for justice and urgent government intervention in Edo State.

Efe was shot at close range while overseeing a building project in Obazagbon Community, Oredo Local Government Area, leaving behind a wife, who is also deaf and mute and their children.

In response, the Network for the Advancement of People with Visible Disabilities (NAPVID), in collaboration with Concerned Government Reservation Area residents, took to the streets of

Benin in protest.

Led by NAPVID's Executive Director, Melody Omosah, the demonstrators marched through major roads before converging at the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Edo State Council.

Their demands were clear: justice for Efe and government support for his grieving family.

Omosah stressed that the loss of Efe, who was the family's breadwinner, has placed an enormous burden on his widow.

While no assistance can bring him back, he argued that the government must step in to

ensure his children's future, particularly their education.

"The widow and his children need government support. This may not replace his life, but at least, it will ensure these children continue their schooling," he stated.

Beyond welfare assistance, Omosah also urged the state governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, to ensure the perpetrators are swiftly apprehended and prosecuted.

"As the chief security officer of the state, it is his duty to see that justice is done. We are mourning, but we demand ac-

tion," he emphasized.

Responding to the protest, NUJ, Edo State Chairman, Dr. Festus Alenkhe, represented by the union's secretary, Mr. Andy Egbon, assured the protesters that their concerns were heard.

He expressed hope that the killers would be arrested and held accountable. "This is another dimension—not just seeking justice but also urging the government to support the bereaved family.

"My prayer is that those responsible will be caught and made to pay dearly for their crime," Alenkhe said.

Muslim media practitioners seek collaboration with Chief Imam of Benin

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

The Muslim Media Practitioners of Nigeria (MMPN), Edo State chapter, yesterday visited the

Chief Imam of Benin Central Mosque, Alhaji Abdulfatah Enabulele to explore ways at strengthening collaboration to ensure accurate and balanced reporting of Islamic matters.

The visit focused on building a strong working relationship between the MMPN and the Chief Imam's office, particularly in addressing misinformation surrounding Islam

and promoting positive narratives about the Benin Muslim community on the one hand and Islam generally.

Chief Imam Enabulele while welcoming the team, acknowl-

edged the crucial role of the body of Muslim media practitioners.

According to him, "I agree with you that we need to work together. Your coming at this period is timely. This collaboration is very strategic because the media is very key in whatever we do,"

Enabulele also highlighted the importance of involving other key Islamic stakeholders in State, including the League of Imams, the Edo State Council for Islamic Affairs, and Muslim traditional leaders, in the collaborative efforts.

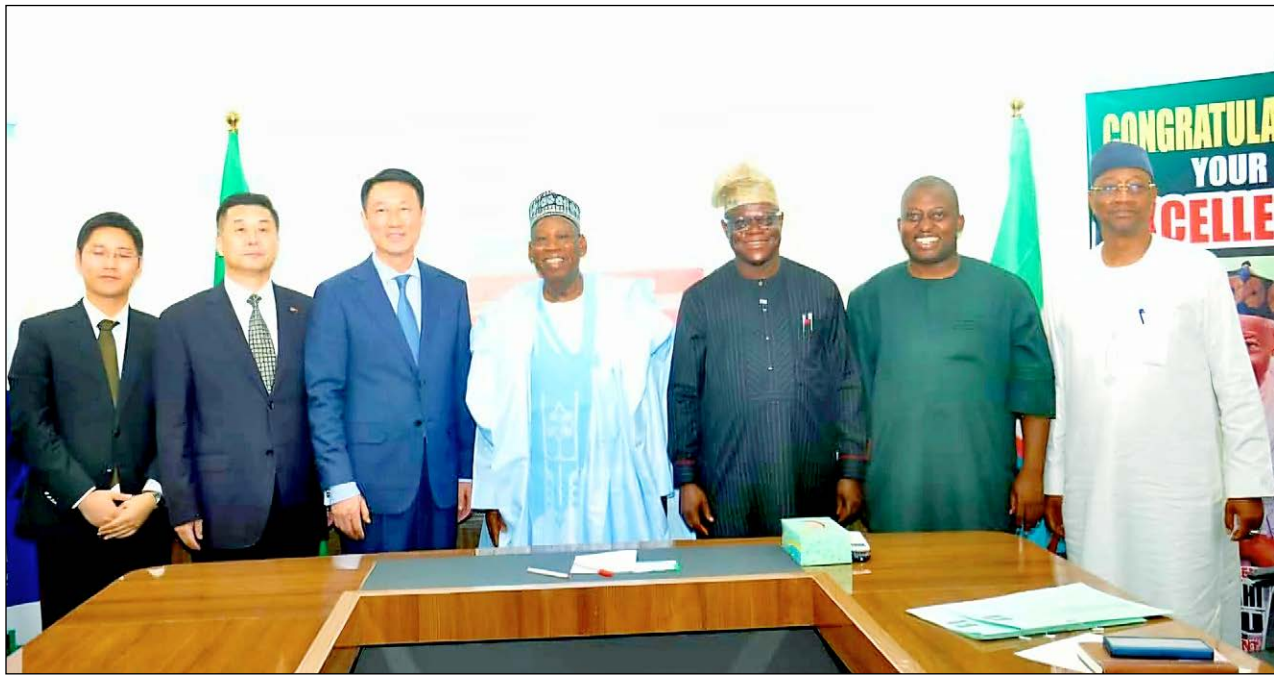
Discussions also centered on the ongoing Ramadan season which Imam Enabulele emphasized is significant in self-examination and strengthening for community support.

He encouraged Muslims to extend kindness and share whatever Allah has provided for them with the less privileged, highlighting the importance of prayer and good deeds during the holy month.

Earlier, the Acting President of MMPN, Edo State chapter, Mallam Abdullah Abdulkadir disclosed that the association has long been in existence having been registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) in 1997.

According to him, "Looking at the strategic nature of your office, we decided to visit you. In line with the aims and objectives as contained in the constitution of the association, our visit aims to explore areas of collaboration with your office as the Chief Imam for impactful progress and development of Islam in the State particularly in the area accurate and balanced reporting of Islamic matters.

"We aim to address the age long challenge of misinformation and misrepresentation of Muslims and Islam over the years and also promote the contributions of Muslim leaders and organizations towards building the society."



MEETING:

National Chairman of the All Progressive Congress (APC), Dr Abdullahi Ganduje, CON (middle); Chinese Ambassador to Nigeria, HE. Yu Dunhai (3rd left), with members of his delegation, and some members of the National Working Committee of APC, after a meeting at the Party's National Secretariat in Abuja, on Tuesday.

PSC appoints six DIGs, CPs for Enugu, Oyo

The Police Service Commission has approved the appointment of six Deputy Inspectors General of Police.

The newly appointed DIGs are Sadiq Abubakar, Commandant Police Academy, Wudil, Kano; Benjamin Okolo, AIG Department of Information Communication Technology, Force Headquarters Abuja; and Williams Adebawale, Commandant, Police Staff College Jos.

Bzigu Bali, AIG FCID, Annex Enugu; Idegwu Basil Ukuoma, AIG Zone 14, Katsina and Adebola Ayinde Hamzat, AIG Zone 16 Yenagoa.

A statement released on Tuesday by the PSC spokesperson, Ikechukwu Ani, announced that the commission also approved the promotion of the Commis-

sioner of Police, Enugu State Command, Kanayo Uzuegbu, to the rank of Assistant Inspector General of Police.

"CP Kanayo Uzuegbu, Commissioner of Police Enugu State Command promoted to the next rank of Assistant Inspector General of Police was a former Deputy Commissioner Operations Zone 9, Umuahia; Area Commander, Owerri; Area Commander Karu, Nasarawa state; Commander Switch Operation Switch, Portharcourt; Deputy Commissioner Finance and Admin Edo State Command, DCP, state CID, Osun State and Commissioner of Police Operations, Communication, Force Headquarters, Abuja," Ani added.

Ani added that the com-

mission also approved the appointment of new Commissioners of Police for Oyo and Enugu State Commands.

"CP Ademola Johnson, Principal Staff Officer to the Inspector General of Police, was appointed CP Oyo State.

He was also a former Deputy Commissioner of Police Delta State Command. CP Mamman Bitrus Giwa was appointed CP, Enugu State, to take over from newly promoted AIG Kanayo Uzuegbu. CP Giwa was former DCP Operations Kaduna and Imo State Commands; ACP Police Mobile Force, Force Headquarters Abuja; and CSP A, Commissioner of Police Mobile Force, Force Headquarters, among other postings in the Police Mobile Force."

Ani also disclosed that the commission approved the promotion of eight Chief Superintendents of Police to Assistant Commissioners of Police.

"They are Abdullahi Kamba Usman, Sani Abdu, Ifeanyi Owo, Vincent Orole, Elisha Atikinkpan, and Margaret Okonkwo. Others are Alhasan Aliyu Guga and Imo Owini Ezekiel.

"The newly promoted senior Police Officers were subjected to Written examinations and interactive oral interviews," he said.

The Chairman of the Commission, DIG Hashimu Argungu (retd.), urged the new DIGs to support the Inspector General of Police in ensuring that the Nigeria Police Force is well-positioned to secure the country and maintain law and order.

Poly amendment bill passes second reading

A bill seeking the amendment of the Federal Polytechnic Act on Tuesday, passed the second reading stage in the House of Representatives.

The bill, co-sponsored by the Speaker, Tajudeen Abbas and Lagos lawmaker, Fuad Laguda, seeks to further amend the Federal Polytechnics Act, Cap 17 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004, to make provisions for additional functions of polytechnics in Nigeria.

Leading the debate on the general principles of the bill on Tuesday during plenary, Laguda said the amendment of the Principal Act had become

necessary given the expanding scope and role of polytechnic education in the country.

He said, "The Principal Act, Federal Polytechnics Act Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004, is an Act of the National Assembly 2014 seeking to establish polytechnics in various parts of the country to provide full-time courses in technology, applied science management and other fields of studies and to make provisions for the general administration of such polytechnics.

"To drive efficiency and advancement of polytechnic education in Nigeria, the Act was amended in 2019 to increase the

retirement age of staff of polytechnics and harmonise the tenure of office of the Rectors and other Principal Officers of Polytechnics in Nigeria.

"Dear honourable colleagues, the bill before you seeks to further amend the Principal Act to meet the demands of the ever-changing world while adhering to the international best practices.

"The bill seeks to review and enlarge the membership of the Council with the inclusion of representatives of technical institutional bodies like the National Board for Technical Education and Manufacturers Association of Nigeria, enlarge

the scope of functions of federal polytechnics in Nigeria with clearer and result-oriented administrative structure."

The Lagos lawmaker also urged his colleagues to support the proposed legislation, stressing that "The overall objective is to improve the provision of technical education to Nigerian students through a better organised polytechnic system in Nigeria."

After the lead debate, Abbas, who presided over the plenary, subjected the bill to a voice vote, and following its adoption, the proposed law was referred to the Committee on Polytechnic and Higher Technical Education for further legislative action.

Court adjourns suit seeking to stop Kano LG allocations to April 14

The absence of the ninth defence counsel, Chief Adegboyega Awomolo, SAN, on Tuesday stalled the hearing in a suit seeking to stop statutory allocations to the 44 local government areas of Kano State.

The applicants in the suit are Abdullahi Abbas, Aminu Aliyu-Tiga, and the All Progressives Congress.

They, through their counsel, Sunday Olowomoran, filed a motion exparte dated October 28 and filed November 1, 2024.

However, the respondents in the suit are the Central Bank of Nigeria, the Federal Account Allocation Committee, Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission, Accountant-General of the Federation, Minister of Finance, Auditor General of the Federation, and Attorney General of the Federation.

Others are the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, the Kano State Government, Attorney General Kano, Kano State Independent Electoral Commission and the 44 Kano local governments.

The applicants are seeking a declaration that the 12th to 55th respondents are not dem-

ocratically elected and constituted pursuant to Section 7(1) of the constitution.

They are also asking the court to restrain the Federal Government, the CBN and the Accountant-General from disbursing statutory funds to Kano's 44 local government councils.

When the case came up for hearing on Tuesday, Justice Simon Amobeda of the Federal High Court, Kano, informed the court that the counsel for Kano State Government, Awomolo, SAN, had sent a letter seeking an adjournment as he was absent.

"Awomolo sent a letter seeking an adjournment until after the Easter vacation.

"I do not think, in the interest of justice, the case should be adjourned. This case has faced several adjournments. It is a civil case, not a criminal one.

"Why the delay? This is the last adjournment I will grant in this case," the judge said.

He ordered that all processes be filed and served before the next adjourned date.

Amobeda adjourned the matter until April 14, for a definite hearing.

Retired public servants decry poor...

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clear communication. The bill protecting workers with over ten years of service was effectively disregarded.

"The consequences became apparent in 2022 when retirees discovered they were receiving significantly lower gratuities than expected.

Senior officers on grade level 17 received less than ₦2.7 million, while those on grade level 16 got less than ₦2.3 million.

Some retirees were paid as little as ₦800,000 after 35 years of service, with no further monthly pension payments.

Asemota described the situation as dire, stating that many retirees have been left in financial distress, unable to afford basic needs, healthcare, or support their families.

He called on the current administration to urgently review the pension scheme to prevent more retirees from falling into hardship.

NEWS

Tinubu appoints Ogunjimi as Nigeria's Accountant-General

OLUWATUNMISE OMOSEYIN

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has appointed Shamsdeen Babatunde Ogunjimi as the new Accountant General of the Federation.

The was disclosed in a statement issued on Tuesday, March 4, 2025 by Bayo Onanuga, Special Adviser to the President on Information and Strategy.

Ogunjimi was first announced as Madehin's successor

in December 2024. His selection followed a competitive process involving Directors of Accounts in the Federal Civil Service.

The selection was conducted through a competitive, rigorous, and merit-based process. Candidates were assessed in three stages, which included a written assessment, an ICT proficiency test, and oral interviews.

The statement noted that his appointment will take effect on 7th March 2025, the same day the current Accountant General, Oluwatoyin Madehin, is scheduled to retire.

Ogunjimi holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Accountancy from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, which he obtained in 1990. He later earned

a Master's degree in Accounting and Finance from the University of Lagos.

He is a fellow of both the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria and the Chartered Institute of Taxation of Nigeria. Over the years, he has held various positions in the civil service, handling financial administration and accounting operations.

The President also urged Ogunjimi to carry out his responsibilities with diligence and professionalism and dedication to Nigeria's service.

The selection process reflects the President's commitment to ensuring that public service appointments are based on transparency, excellence, and competence.

Invest in agric, manufacturing, Afreximbank advises Nigeria

The African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) has advised Nigeria to reduce its debt burden by investing in Agriculture and Manufacturing.

This is as it listed the country alongside nine other African countries, as being responsible for 69 per cent of the continent's total external debt stock.

The report, African Debt Outlook: A Ray of Optimism, placed the country among the top three most indebted countries, with 8 per cent of Africa's total external debt.

South Africa was identified as the largest debtor with 14 per cent of Africa's external debt, followed by Egypt at 13 per cent.

Morocco and Mozambique each account for 6 per cent, while Angola holds 5 per cent. Kenya and Ghana have 4 per cent each, and Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal hold 3 per cent each.

The report attributes the high levels of debt to external borrowing driven by underdeveloped financial markets, volatility in foreign exchange earnings, and the need for infrastructure financing.

It read, "In the first half of

2024, ten African nations constituted 69 percent of the continent's total external debt stock, up from 67 percent in 2023. The countries leading this metric are South Africa (14 percent), Egypt (13 percent), Nigeria (8 percent), Morocco (6 percent), Mozambique (6 percent), Angola (5 percent), Kenya (4 percent), Ghana (4 percent), Côte d'Ivoire (3 percent), and Senegal (3 percent)."

Nigeria remains a key player in international capital markets, issuing a \$2.2 billion Eurobond in December 2024 to manage debt obligations.

The report highlights the increasing role of private creditors in Africa's debt structure as multilateral institutions like the World Bank and IMF scale back lending.

With private creditors offering higher-yield instruments, many African governments, including Nigeria, are turning to Eurobonds to finance fiscal shortfalls.

While this approach provides immediate capital, it also carries risks, as commercial borrowing tends to come with higher interest rates and shorter maturities than concessional loans.



COURTESY VISIT:

Chairman, Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council, Dr Festus Alenke (left), and a former chairman of the council, Comrade Godwin Erhahon, when the union paid a courtesy visit to the Palace of the Benin monarch, His Royal Majesty, Ewuare II, the Oba of Benin.

\$1trn economy: FG urges women to explore capital market investment opportunities

The Federal Government has called on women across the country to explore investment opportunities in the capital market, describing it as a vital tool for wealth creation and economic empowerment.

The appeal came during the launch of the Securities and Exchange Commission Podcast in Abuja on Tuesday, an event aimed at boosting financial literacy and inclusion.

The Director of Information and Public Relations at the Federal Ministry of Finance, Mohammed Manga, revealed this in a statement on X (formerly Twitter) on Tuesday.

The Minister of State for Finance, Dr. Doris Uzoka-An-

ite, who officiated the launch, emphasised the transformative potential of women's participation in the capital market.

She said, "Opening opportunities for women in the capital market would create a pathway to wealth creation.

"We need to come up with more policies, reforms, or frameworks that encourage more women to participate in the financial sector.

"By leveraging the capital market, Nigerian women can unlock new opportunities for wealth creation, economic growth, and prosperity."

The statement further tied the initiative to Nigeria's broader economic ambitions, noting, "As the country strives to

achieve its \$1 trillion economy target, the active participation of women in the capital market will play a vital role in driving sustainable development and economic transformation."

Highlighting the innate financial acumen of women, Uzoka-Anite noted their ability to manage resources effectively.

"Women are very good with investing; we know what to do with money. We know how to manage money in the house, and it will go around the whole family. If a woman learns how to make that money multiply and how to save it in a way that it will continue to add value and meet her needs and her family's needs, I think she will love that," she remarked.

The Minister also acknowl-

edged the unique challenges women face in balancing professional and familial responsibilities, calling for a dual approach to support their involvement in the financial sector.

"Assisting women in the capital market is a multi-pronged approach; the individuals need to do more to be heard.

"The institutional approach, where we encourage the institutions to give women a chance, to treat women based on their competencies, capacities, and encourage them, is equally critical," she explained.

The SEC Podcast, hailed as "very innovative and highly needed at this time" by Uzoka-Anite, is designed to bridge the knowledge gap about the capital market.

2027: Omo-Agege confident of APC victory in Delta, urges unity

Former Deputy Senate President and Delta State governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress in the 2023 election, Senator Ovie Omo-Agege, has expressed confidence that the APC will unseat the Peoples Democratic Party in the state's 2027 governorship race.

Speaking at a stakeholders' meeting in Koko, Warri North Local Government Area, on Tuesday, Omo-Agege declared, "2027 is our date with destiny.

"With President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's vision and achievements, along with our collective

resolve, Delta will flip," he stated.

Omo-Agege, however, called for "inclusive stakeholder engagement," emphasising that "2027 demands unity. We must put aside divisions between old and new members and work together towards a common goal."

Reflecting on the APC's narrow loss in the 2023 Delta State governorship election, the former Deputy Senate President vowed to unseat the ruling PDP in the next election.

"We came so close in 2023, but fell short by a whisker.

"However, we've learnt from our mistakes and are now more

determined than ever to win Delta State for the APC," he said.

Omo-Agege rallied supporters, addressed post-election grievances, and rejected the Independent National Electoral Commission's declaration of 4,000 votes for APC and 10,000 for PDP in Warri North, alleging systemic rigging by the PDP.

"Our votes were organic; theirs were products of writing," he claimed.

Defending Tinubu's economic reforms, Omo-Agege highlighted the removal of fuel subsidies and the unification of exchange rates.

While acknowledging the initial hardships, he framed these measures as crucial for Nigeria's and Delta State's future development.

"Although increased fuel, food, and forex prices cause pain, President Tinubu's wise decision-making will yield a better future," Omo-Agege added.

He noted that Delta State now receives more funds, as President Tinubu channels savings to states beyond Abuja.

This, he believes, will have a transformative impact, tying the APC's 2027 prospects to the president's Renewed Hope agenda.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public and members of the extended **Ojeme family** of Eko-Ojeme, Ewu in Esan Central Local Government Area, Edo State, are hereby informed that an application has been lodged with the Edo State Geographic Information Service (EdoGIS) to halt the further processing of **Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) No. EDL. 109891** in favour of **Mrs. Pamela Oriakhi**.

Please note that the application has been put on hold pending the amicable resolution of issues within the extended **Ojeme family**. The property in question is a jointly owned family heritage, and EDOGIS awaits the outcome of this resolution before taking further action.

SIGNED:

Pst. Mrs. Rose Isiraojie - 07045046478

Mrs. Martina Dudu - 08033062453

(For & on behalf of the family)

Foreign

NEWS

What pause in US military aid could mean for Ukraine

President Donald Trump's decision to pause all US aid to Ukraine is a bitter blow – not just for Kyiv but also European allies who have been lobbying the US administration to continue its support.

This is not the first time that the US has withheld military aid. Republicans in Congress blocked then-President Joe Biden's largest tranche of military assistance for Ukraine in the summer of 2023.

Then, Ukraine just about managed to eke out its existing stocks of ammunition with the help of Europe.

Congress finally approved the £60bn aid package in the

spring of 2024. It was just in time – Ukraine was struggling to fend off a renewed Russian offensive in Kharkiv. The arrival of the delayed US weapons helped turn the tide.

As in 2024, it may be months before the effects of cutting off US aid are felt – at least in terms of ammunition and hardware. European nations have slowly ramped up their production of artillery shells. Overall Europe now provides Ukraine with 60 percent of its aid – more than the US.

However, US military support is still vital to Ukraine. One Western official recently described it as “the cream” in terms of weapons.

Ukraine's ability to protect its people and cities has heavily relied on sophisticated US air defence systems – such as Patriot batteries and NASAMS – jointly developed with Norway.

The US has given Ukraine the ability to carry out long range strikes – with HIMARS and ATACM missiles. The US has limited their use inside Russia, but they have still been vital to hit high value targets inside occupied territories.

It is not just quality, but quantity too. As the world's most powerful military, it has been able to send hundreds of surplus Humvees and armoured vehicles – numbers

that smaller European armies could never match.

The absence of some of this aid may take time to filter down to the frontline. But there could be a more worrying immediate impact, not least in terms of intelligence sharing.

No nation can match the US in terms of space-based surveillance, intelligence gathering and communications. And it is not just provided by the US military, but commercial companies too.

Take Elon Musk's Starlink satellite communication network. Every Ukrainian position I have visited on the frontline has a Starlink dish.

They are used to relay the latest information on the battlefield. They have been essential to co-ordinate artillery and drone strikes.

In the past, the Pentagon has admitted that it has been funding this lifeline. Given that Elon Musk is a key figure in the US administration, it seems highly unlikely that he will now be willing to foot the bill. He too is a harsh critic of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Will the US prevent European countries from sending their US-made equipment to Ukraine? When Europe wanted to provide US-manufactured F-16 jets to Ukraine, it first had to receive the approval of Washington.

And then what about the maintenance of US-supplied equipment? The US has also been training Ukrainian forces and then helping them maintain US-supplied equipment.

Biden lifted restrictions on US contractors working in Ukraine towards the end of his term. F-16 jets in particular need engineers and spares to keep on running.

Trump's decision to pause aid may, to many in Ukraine and beyond, seem petulant. But there is also clearly a political aim to force them to the negotiating table sooner.

The hope among European allies is that it will just be a pause. Without US support, Ukraine will find it an even harsher struggle for survival.



US CUTS SUPPORT:

Could Europe fill the gap if the US cuts support for Ukraine?

Dolly Parton's husband, Carl Dean, dies aged 82

Carl Dean, the longtime husband of country music icon Dolly Parton, died on Monday at the age of 82.

Dean, who was famously private throughout his nearly 60-year marriage to Parton, died in Nashville, Tennessee, according to a statement she posted on social media.

“Carl and I spent many wonderful years together. Words can't do justice to the love we shared for over 60 years. Thank you for your prayers and sympathy,” the statement read.

The “9-5” singer met Dean outside a laundromat on the first day she arrived in Nashville as an 18-year-old aspiring singer.

Parton, 79, recalled their first meeting, saying, “I was surprised and delighted that while he talked to me, he looked at my face (a rare thing for me). He seemed to be genuinely interested in finding out who I was and what I was about.”

Two years later, on May 30, 1966, the couple exchanged vows at a private ceremony in Ringgold, Georgia.

Throughout their marriage, Dean remained out of the public eye, choosing instead to focus on his asphalt-paving

business in Nashville.

Though he largely stayed out of the limelight, Dean continued to influence Parton's work, most notably inspiring her classic hit “Jolene.”

She told US media in 2008 that the song was about a bank teller who developed a crush on Dean.

“She got this terrible crush on my husband,” Parton said. “And he just loved going to the bank

because she paid him so much attention. It was kinda like a running joke between us—when I was saying, ‘Hell, you're spending a lot of time at the bank. I don't believe we've got that kind of money.’ So it's really an innocent song all around, but sounds like a dreadful one.”

Parton and Dean's relationship remained such a mystery that rumours started that he

did not exist – but Parton joked about that.

“A lot of people say there's no Carl Dean, that he's just somebody I made up to keep other people off me,” she said to the Associated Press in 1984.

Parton and Dean had no children together.

He is survived by his siblings, Sandra and Donnie, Parton's statement said.

India's fighter jet battle: US v Russia in the skies

India faces a crucial choice in modernising its air force – but is a cutting-edge American fighter jet the answer?

During his Washington visit last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met US President Donald Trump, who announced they were “paving the way” for India to acquire F-35s, a jet primarily sold to close allies and partners.

The F-35 is a “fifth-generation” multi-role fighter jet with advanced sensors, AI-driven combat systems and seamless data-sharing capabilities. Built to evade radar, it's the most sophisticated jet in the skies – but at \$80m a pop, also one of the most expensive. (Stealth

is a key characteristic of a “fifth-generation” fighter.)

Many believe that with its fighter squadrons dwindling and China's military growing, India faces a high-stakes choice: splurge on the state-of-the-art but costly F-35 from the US or strengthen defence ties with Russia through local production of its most advanced stealth fighter jet Sukhoi Su-57.

Experts believe the reality is more nuanced, with the US-Russia “dogfight” largely a media hype – fuelled more recently by the appearance of both jets at Asia's biggest air show, Aero India, in the southern city of Bengaluru last month.

Trump's F-35 offer seems

more “symbolic” than practical, driven by his push to sell US weapons, according to Ashley J Tellis, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Integrating a “fifth generation” aircraft into the India air force (IAF) plans – centred on the homegrown Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) and more Rafales – would be challenging, especially without co-production rights. Being developed by India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), the AMCA is India's own stealth fighter.

“It is unlikely that the F-35 will be offered for co-production to India – any acquisition

Ghanaian MPs reintroduce controversial anti-LGBT bill

A group of 10 MPs in Ghana have resubmitted a controversial bill that would impose some of the toughest restrictions on LGBT rights in Africa.

The bill prescribes a three-year jail term for people who identify as gay, and five to 10 years for promoters and advocates.

The legislation was passed by parliament last year, but the former President, Nana Akufo-Addo, declined to sign it into law before leaving office in January, citing legal challenges.

It has been widely condemned by both local and international human rights groups, with some describing it as draconian.

At the dissolution of the previous parliament ahead of last December's general election, all bills that had not completed the legislative process, including receiving the president's signature, were dropped.

It is unclear whether the speaker of the new parliament will admit the bill for consideration.

Gay sex is already punishable by up to three years in prison in the conservative West African country.

President John Mahama has

said he would prefer the bill to be state-sponsored, ensuring broader support and consultation.

“I do think that we should have a conversation on it again so that all of us, if we decide to move that bill forward, move it forward with a consensus,” he said.

Supporters claim the legislation would help preserve what they consider to be Ghanaian culture and family values.

However rights groups have decried the legislation.

“The anti-LGBT rights bill is inconsistent with Ghana's long-standing tradition of peace, tolerance, and hospitality and flies in the face of the country's international human rights obligations,” said Human Rights Watch researcher Larissa Kojoué last year.

“Such a law would not only further erode the rule of law in Ghana, but could also lead to further gratuitous violence against LGBT people and their allies.”

Va-Bene Elikem Fiatsi, a Ghanaian trans woman and LGBT activist, told the Reuters news agency the bill's reintroduction was “disheartening and hard to process” but insisted LGBT activism would continue.

The bill's potential impact on Ghana's economy is a significant concern.

The country's former finance minister warned that passing the bill could result in Ghana losing up to \$3.8bn (£2.9bn) in development funding from the World Bank and affecting its \$3bn (£2.3bn) IMF support programme.

Opposition lawmaker John Ntim Fordjour told Reuters the country no longer needed to fear economic sanctions, citing the election of Donald Trump as US president.

“The global political climate is favourable for conservative values as demonstrated in the bold conservative pronouncements of President Donald Trump,” he said.

NEWS

Foreign

Gabon junta chief declares bid for presidency

Gabon's military leader Gen Brice Oligui Nguema has announced his intention to run for president in next month's election.

Nguema seized power in 2023 in a coup that ended the long-standing rule of the Bongo family. He then pledged to hand over power to civilians.

The country has however since passed a new constitution and electoral code that critics argue were designed to favour a bid for the presidency by the junta leader.

Nguema told the Gabonese people on Monday that he had decided to run in the 12 April election "after careful reflection and in response to your many appeals".

Addressing supporters during a heavy downpour in the capital, Libreville, he declared his readiness to change the fortunes of the oil-rich country.

"I am a builder and I need your courage, your strength, to build this country," the the coup leader, who had just turned 50, said.

The announcement followed months of speculation about his intentions to officially occupy the country's top seat.

On Saturday, Nguema told the military in a meeting that he was aware of their desire to see him run in the election and urged them to vote.

He told the defence forces he had heard their calls. "I listened to you and, believe me, I understood you," adding, "I will get back to you within the next few days".

There has been speculation that Nguema had left the army, as a requirement to run for the presidency - but that has since been denied by his spokesman.

A Facebook page associated with Nguema clarified on



FOLLOW A COUP:

Gen Brice Oligui Nguema took power following a coup in 2023

Gazans face tough choices as their future is debated on the global stage

The level of destruction in Jabalia when viewed from the air is truly astonishing.

A Hiroshima-like wasteland stretches as far as the eye can see. The mangled carcasses of buildings dot the churned-up landscape, some leaning at crazy angles.

Great undulating waves of rubble make it all but impossible to make out the geography of this once bustling, tightly packed refugee camp.

And yet, as a drone camera flies over the wreckage, it picks out splashes of blue and white where small tent camps have

been set up in patches of open ground.

And figures, clambering over broken buildings, moving along streets of dirt, where food markets are springing up under tin roofs and canvas awnings. Children using a collapsed roof as a slide.

After more than six weeks of Gaza's fragile ceasefire, Jabalia is slowly coming back to life.

In the neighbourhood of al-Qasab, Nabil has returned to a four-storey house that's somehow still standing, even if it lacks windows, doors and - in some places - walls.

He and his relatives have

made crude balconies out of wooden pallets and strung-up tarpaulin to keep out the elements.

"Look at the destruction," he says as he surveys Jabalia's ocean of ruins from a gaping upper floor.

"They want us to leave without rebuilding it? How can we leave. The least we can do is rebuild it for our children."

To cook a meal, Nabil lights a fire on the bare staircase, stoking it carefully with pieces of torn-up cardboard.

On another floor, Laila Ahmed Okasha washes up in a sink where the tap ran dry

months ago.

"There's no water, electricity or sewage," she says. "If we need water, we have to go to a far place to fill up buckets."

She says she cried when she came back to the house and found it wrecked.

She blames Israel and Hamas for destroying the world she once knew.

"Both of them are responsible," she says. "We had a decent, comfortable life."

Soon after the war began in October 2023, Israel told Palestinians in the northern part of the Gaza Strip - including Jabalia - to move south for

their own safety.

Hundreds of thousands of people heeded the warning, but many stayed, determined to ride out the war.

Laila and her husband Marwan clung on until October last year, when the Israeli military reinvaded Jabalia, saying Hamas had reconstituted fighting units inside the camp's narrow streets.

After two months of sheltering in nearby Shati camp, Leila and Marwan returned to find Jabalia almost unrecognisable.

"When we came back and saw how it was destroyed, I didn't want to stay here anymore," Marwan says.

"I had a wonderful life, but now it's a hell. If I have the chance to leave, I'll go. I won't stay one more minute."

Stay or go? The future of Gaza's civilian population is now the subject of international debate.

In February, Donald Trump suggested that the US should take over Gaza and that nearly two million Palestinian residents should leave, possibly for good.

Faced with international outrage and fierce opposition

from Arab leaders, Trump has subsequently appeared to back away from the plan, saying he recommended it but would not force it on anyone.

In the meantime, Egypt has led Arab efforts to come up with a viable alternative, to be presented at an emergency Arab summit in Cairo on Tuesday.

Crucially, it says the Palestinian population should remain inside Gaza while the area is reconstructed.

Donald Trump's intervention has brought out Gaza's famously stubborn side.

"If Trump wants to make us leave, I'll stay in Gaza," Laila says. "I want to travel on my own free will. I won't leave because of him."

Across the way sits a nine-storey yellow block of flats so spectacularly damaged it's hard to believe it hasn't collapsed.

The upper floors have caved in entirely, threatening the rest. In time, it will surely have to be demolished, but for now it's home to yet more families. There are sheets in the windows and washing hanging to dry in the late winter sunshine.

Macron floats one-month Ukraine truce: Would it work?

Could a partial month-long truce between Russia and Ukraine be the key to unlocking a lasting peace between the two sides?

President Emmanuel Macron of France believes so and he floated the idea during Sunday's summit of European leaders in London.

In an interview with Le Figaro newspaper, he proposed a four-week truce "in the air, at sea and on energy infrastructure". It would not cover ground fighting along the front line in the east.

"In the event of a ceasefire, it would be very difficult to verify [a truce] along the front was being respected," Macron told the newspaper.

In a separate interview, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said: "Such a truce on air, sea and energy infrastructure would allow us to determine whether Russian President Vladimir Putin is acting in good faith when he commits to a truce. And that's when real peace negotiations could start."

This so far appears more of an idea than a fully worked-out plan and hard details are scarce. But the essence of the

hypothesis would seem to divide the process of ending the fighting.

An initial short-term truce - something less permanent than a formal ceasefire - would provide a moment to test Russia's willingness to negotiate a peace. It would also potentially give an early political win for President Trump.

It would not involve any ceding of territory. And it could create the political space to allow serious talks to begin about a lasting peace.

Under the French proposal, a European "assurance force" would deploy to Ukraine to deter future Russian aggression only after any lasting ceasefire had been agreed.

Britain's Ambassador in Washington, Lord Mandelson, appeared to give credence to the idea on Sunday in an interview with ABC News when he said: "Ukraine should be first to commit to a ceasefire and defy the Russians to follow."

But on Monday UK government officials and ministers were cool about the French truce idea and emphasised it was not yet an agreed proposal. Armed Forces Minister Luke Pollard told the BBC's Today

programme: "A number of options that are being discussed at the moment. None of them have been agreed at this stage".

The prime minister's spokesman said: "There are clearly a number of options on the table. I'm just not getting into a running commentary on the options."

Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Anto-

nio Tajani was more blunt, saying the idea was "premature", according to the Italian news agency Ansa.

"I believe that everything must be done together, Europe and United States, sitting at a table with Ukraine and Russia to reach a fair and especially a long-lasting peace," Tajani said. "Therefore, it is still premature to see what to do, how to do it."

Canada hits US with retaliatory tariffs after warning of 'existential threat'

Canada has responded to new tariffs from the US with retaliatory import taxes of its own - after warning of an "existential threat" from its neighbour.

US President Donald Trump has imposed 25% tariffs on products entering the US from Canada and Mexico - which became effective overnight - and has increased a levy on goods coming from China.

Canada has responded with tariffs on tens of billions of dollars' worth of products imported from the US. Its provincial leaders have suggested going further.

Trump says he is protecting US jobs and manufacturing, and trying to prevent illegal

migration and drug trafficking. But experts say he is likely to push up prices for consumers in the US and abroad.

The three countries targeted are America's top trading partners, and the tit-for-tat measures have also prompted fears of a wider trade war.

Tariffs are a tax on imports from other countries, designed to protect against cheaper competition from elsewhere and boost businesses and jobs at home.

In addition to the 25% tariffs on products entering from Canada and Mexico, Trump is also charging a 10% tariff on Canadian energy.

Trump's team have characterised tariffs as a key negoti-

ating tool. The US president wants to clamp down on the powerful opioid fentanyl, and has variously blamed the other countries for the drug's arrival in the US.

A statement from Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said there was "no justification" for the new US tariffs, because less than 1% of the fentanyl intercepted at the US border came from Canada.

Trudeau also noted that his country had taken steps to further limit the flow of the drug during a month-long period in which Trump's new tariffs were paused.

Anticipating the start of the new American tariffs, Trudeau's statement outlined

Canada's retaliatory measures - under which a 25% tariff will be imposed on C\$155bn (US\$107bn; £84bn) of American goods.

Earlier on Monday, Foreign Minister Melanie Joly told reporters that Trump's tariffs represented an "existential threat to us", because jobs were at risk.

Immigration Minister Marc Miller warned that as many as a million jobs in Canada were at risk if the tariffs were implemented, given how intertwined trade was between the two countries.

"We can't replace an economy that is responsible for 80% of our trade overnight and it's going to hurt," he said on Monday.

Sports

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

Nathaniel breaks African 400m indoor records, eyes Egbunike's 44.17 all time Nigerian best

Ezekiel Nathaniel keeps on improving his profile in the quarter-miler; last weekend he clocked 44.74 seconds on the boards to set a new African 400m indoor record.

Running last weekend for his Baylor University Texas at the 2025 Big 12 Indoor Track and Field Championship held in Lubbock, Texas Nathaniel proved too strong for his competitors after he surged into the lead from an impressive 21.09 seconds opening lap run.

With his time Nathaniel has placed himself as the eighth fastest man in the world for the distance and marked his place as the sixth fastest in NCAA history while also achieving a meet record.

Athletics Federation of Nigeria officials are excited about his steady rise in the 400m and are hopeful he maintains his strides ahead of the World In-



door Championships billed for March 21-23 in Nanjing, China.

"He's been consistent in the 400m so far, last year he made it the semi-final of the 2024 Olympics and this year he has started on a good note," said an AFN official Monday.

"Hopefully, when the outdoor season begins, we are sure he can reproduce the form and perhaps target the long standing 44.17 national record set by Innocent Egbunike in 1987.

In 2022 during his freshman year Nathaniel broke the 48.50

seconds national 400m hurdles long standing record held by Henry Amike with 48.42, a time Nathaniel later bettered with 48.00 seconds' run.

Eniola Bolaji and four others set for Spanish Para Badminton International Championship

Nigeria's para badminton players, including Olympics bronze medalist Eniola Bolaji are set to compete in two major international tournaments in Spain, marking a crucial step in their quest for global recognition.

The first event, the 2025 Spanish Level 2 International Para Badminton Championships, will take place in Victoria, Spain, from March 4 to 9, 2025. Five Nigerian players will compete in the singles category: Eniola Mariam Bolaji, Okoro Chinyere Lucky, Chukwuemeka Ijeoma Gift, Eze Chukwuebuka Sunday, and Nnanna Chigozie Jeremiah.

NSC DG, Hon. Bukola Olopade, Urges Nigerian Para Badminton Team to Excel in Spain

The Director General of the National Sports Commission (NSC), Hon. Bukola Olopade, has charged Nigeria's para badminton team to give their best and make the nation proud as they prepare to compete in two major international tournaments in Spain.

The tournaments mark a crucial step for Nigeria's para badminton athletes in their quest for global recognition, providing them with an opportunity to compete against the world's best.

The first event, the 2025 Spanish Level 2 International Para Badminton Championship, will be held in Victoria, Spain, from March 4 to 9, 2025. Five Nigerian players will compete in the singles category, including:

- Eniola Mariam Bolaji (Women's SL3 - Singles)
 - Okoro Chinyere Lucky (Women's SL4 - Singles)
 - Chukwuemeka Ijeoma Gift (Women's SL4 - Singles)
 - Eze Chukwuebuka Sunday (Men's SL3 - Singles)
 - Nnanna Chigozie Jeremiah (Men's SL4 - Singles)
- Following this, three players will participate in the Spanish International Level 1 Para Badminton Championship in Toledo, Madrid, from March 12 to 16, 2025:
- Eniola Mariam Bolaji (Women's SL3 - Singles)
 - Nnanna Chigozie Jeremiah



(Men's SL4 - Singles & Doubles) - Eze Chukwuebuka Sunday (Men's SL3 - Singles & Doubles)

In addition to their individual events, Jeremiah and Eze will team up in the Men's SL3-SL4 Doubles category, further strengthening Nigeria's presence in the global para badminton circuit.

Hon. Olopade, in his message, emphasized the importance of these tournaments, stating that Nigerian para athletes have consistently demonstrated resilience and excellence on the world stage.

"This is another opportunity to showcase the immense talent that Nigeria possesses in para sports. I urge our players to stay focused, compete with determination, and continue to make the country proud. The NSC remains committed to supporting and elevating para sports in Nigeria," he said.

Kanu, Ikpeba, Amunike, others get Niger Delta Sports Festival Ambassadors role

The Organisers of the much anticipated Niger Delta Sports Festival have added colour to the event's organisation with the appointment of festival Ambassadors.

Nwankwo Kanu, Emmanuel Amunike, Victor Ikpeba and Blessing Oborodudu are among the strong field of accomplished athletes appointed as Festival Ambassadors for the sporting event scheduled to open from April 1-8 in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

It was a major step towards accomplishing the aspirational

value of the NDSF as envisioned by the organisers, Dunamis Icon, consultants to the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) for the project.

Announcing the Ambassadors, Itiako Ikpokpo, the lead consultant at Dunamis Icon, said the Festival Ambassadors were picked to inspire the upcoming athletes.

"What we have done is to take a careful look at past and present sportsmen and women from the nine mandate states of the NDDC who can inspire upcoming athletes with their achievements on and off the field", Ik-

pokpo told NDSF Media.

The other ambassadors are Efonwan Ekpo, Tamunosiki Atorudibo, Patience Igbiti, Enefiok Udo-Obong and Seun Ogunkoya.

"The ambassadors cut across different sporting events and gender.

"The selection is intentional and meant to tell the young

athletes that they can achieve greatness in any field whether they are male or female", further explained Ikpokpo who also is the Co-Chairman of the festival Main Organising Committee (MOC)

They will be formally unveiled at a ceremony in Owerri, Imo State, on Friday, March 7, 2025.

Edo Sports Commission, BFN organize Badminton training for 20 schools In Edo

KEHINDE OSAGIEDÉ

As part of its effort to encourage and promote school sports in Edo State, the Edo State Sports Commission in collaboration with the Badminton Federation of Nigeria has organized a 2-day grassroots Badminton outreach for secondary schools in Edo North Senatorial District.

The Badminton outreach which held between February 27 and 28, 2025 in Uzariue, Etsako LGA, at St Angela's Girls Grammar school, Uzariue, Auchi, started with badminton training for 20 game masters and mistresses drawn from 20 government secondary schools in Etsako land.



At least 20 teachers and 84 students from 20 secondary schools in Etsako land, as well as secondary schools from Igarra, Afuze and Ikpeshe benefited from the programme.

The training was conducted by three qualified "Shuttle Time" trainers, Godswill Afe-

jika, Olalekan Fajimiyo, and Blessing Osayomwanbo. The trainees were taken through shaped grip and the thumb grip techniques in the process. There was also court work with balloons. Balloons were used for services and smashing drills.

According to the organiz-

ers, the grassroots badminton training provides teachers and students the opportunity to learn the basics of the sport together at the same time. The training involved the theoretical aspect of the game and more importantly the practical area of badminton.

On the second day of the training event, the three trainers held a session with the games masters and mistresses. This was followed by a session with the students. The games masters and mistresses were taught the technical aspect of badminton which involves officiating, rules of the game, safeguarding, and the roles of the games masters and mistress in developing the game in their various schools.



Eguavoen, Fuludu, lead NFF team to Yenagoa for 3rd Prosperity Cup coaching clinic

The Organizers of Nigeria's largest and most prestigious grassroots football showpiece, the prosperity cup in Bayelsa State are putting a week coaching clinic together to update and sharpen the technical abilities of coaches participating in this year's edition of the competition.

The coaching clinic, which

will be conducted by seasoned football experts begins on Monday, 3rd to 7th of March, 2025 at the NUJ Press Centre, Ekeki, Yenagoa, the Bayelsa State capital.

Disclosing this to newsmen in Yenagoa, the Director General of the Prosperity cup Central Organizing Committee, Mr. Ono Akpe explained that the event, which is the first of

two coaching clinics that will hold in course of this year's football fiesta, will have fifty coaches in attendance.

He explained that the team of resource persons for the coaching clinic will be led by NFF Technical Director, Augustine Eguavoen.

Also expected to participate as a resource person is the chairman

of Nigerian Coaches Association and Bayelsa United coach, Ladan Bosso, ex- International, Edema Fuludu, Ibrahim Gwadabe and Fatai Adejumo.

"The essence of the coaching clinic is because we want Bayelsans, and football enthusiasts generally to watch quality games. Our intention is to holistically develop the game in the state.



SPORTS

NDSF registration surpasses 10,000 ahead March 7 timeline

EDWARD OSEGHE

The Nigeria Diaspora Sports Festival (NDSF) has seen over 10,000 participants register as the online portal nears its closure on March 7, organizers announced on Tuesday.

The event, scheduled for April 12-19 in Lagos, has drawn athletes and enthusiasts from the Nigerian diaspora across countries like the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Germany.

Launched last month, the registration portal at ndsf.com.ng has exceeded expectations, with football leading as the most popular sport, followed by basketball and athletics.

Dr. Joan Faluyi, head of the

organizing committee, said, "The response shows the passion Nigerians abroad have for sports and unity."

The festival aims to connect the diaspora with local talent through competitions and cultural events.

Participants range from amateur players to professionals, with team sports capped at 16 squads per category.

The committee urged those yet to register to do so before the Thursday timeline, noting that late entries will not be accepted.

Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu has backed the initiative, promising top facilities at venues like Teslim Balogun Stadium.

The NDSF follows a success-



NIGER DELTA SPORTS FESTIVAL MEDIA CHAT

ful debut in 2024, and organizers expect this year's edition to boost tourism and youth engagement.

Registration fees start at \$50 for individuals and \$300 for teams, with details available on the portal.

2026 World Cup qualifiers: Osimhen, Lookman headline Super Eagles' 35-man squad

CHIDINMA KALU

Super Eagles Head Coach, Eric Chelle, has unveiled a robust 35-man provisional squad as Nigeria gears up for two crucial 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifying matches against Rwanda and Zimbabwe later this month.

The squad, a blend of seasoned stars and emerging talents, reflects Chelle's strategic vision to secure Nigeria's ticket to the global showpiece, co-hosted by the USA, Canada, and Mexico.

Leading the charge are Galatasaray's prolific striker Victor Osimhen and Atalanta's in-form winger Ademola Lookman, both of whom have been instrumental in Nigeria's recent campaigns. Osimhen, who netted 10 goals in the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) qualifiers, and Lookman, fresh off a stellar season in Serie A, are expected to spearhead the attack as the Super Eagles aim to maintain their dominance in Group C.

Musa's Return and New Faces

A notable highlight is the return of captain Ahmed Musa, who last featured for Nigeria at the 2023 AFCON in Côte d'Ivoire, where the team clinched a silver medal. The Kano Pillars forward, Nigeria's all-time leading scorer with 37 goals, brings a wealth of experience to a squad brimming with youthful energy. Joining him is assistant captain William Troost-Ekong, the dependable center-back from Al Khalood in Saudi Arabia, and Southampton's versatile midfielder Joe Aribo, both of whom add leadership and stability.

Chelle has also injected fresh blood into the team, handing call-ups to six newcomers. Among them are three stand-out performers from the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL): Papa Daniel Mustapha of Niger Tornadoes, Kayode Bankole, and Ifeanyi Emmanuel Onyebuchi of Enugu Rangers.

This move underscores Chelle's commitment to tapping into domestic talent, a strategy that has sparked excitement among local fans eager to see homegrown stars shine on the international stage.

Injuries and Risks

Despite fitness concerns, Chelle has taken calculated risks by including SS Lazio's Fisayo Dele-Bashiru, who is nursing an ankle injury, Sevilla's Jerome Akor Adams, and goalkeeper Maduka Okoye, who has been

sidelined since December.

Their inclusion signals the coach's confidence in their potential to recover in time for the matches, though their participation remains uncertain pending medical updates.

The squad boasts an impressive array of talent plying their trade across Europe's top leagues. Defenders like Fulham's Calvin Bassey, Nottingham Forest's Ola Aina, FC Porto's Zaidu Sanusi, and Fenerbahçe's Bright Osayi-Samuel bring tenacity and versatility to the backline. In midfield, Leicester City's Wilfred Ndidi, Club Brugge's Raphael Onyedika, and Fulham's Alex Iwobi offer a mix of dynamism and creativity.

The forward line is equally formidable, featuring AC Milan's Samuel Chukwueze, Bayer Leverkusen's Victor Boniface, and Valencia's Sadiq Umar alongside Osimhen and Lookman. Other attacking options include Middlesbrough's Kelechi Iheanacho, Nantes' Moses Simon, and Southampton's towering striker Paul Onuachu, ensuring Chelle has a wealth of options to unlock opposition defenses.

The Road Ahead Nigeria, three-time African champions, face Zimbabwe on March 21, 2025, before taking on Rwanda five days later on March 26. Both matches are critical as the Super Eagles look to build on their strong start in the qualifiers. With the team currently topping their group, victories in these fixtures could solidify their position and edge them closer to a seventh World Cup appearance.

Chelle, who took the reins in 2024, has emphasized unity and discipline in his squad selection. "We have a talented group with a mix of experience and hunger," he said in a press statement. "Our focus is on delivering results for Nigeria and making our fans proud."

As the countdown begins, all eyes will be on Osimhen, Lookman, and the revitalized Musa to lead the Super Eagles to glory in this next chapter of their World Cup journey.

Full Provisional Squad:

- Goalkeepers: Maduka Okoye, Kayode Bankole
- Defenders: William Troost-Ekong (Al Khalood, Saudi Arabia), Bright Osayi-Samuel (Fenerbahçe, Turkey), Bruno Onyemaechi (Olympiacos, Greece)

Flamingos set to depart for Pretoria on Wednesday for S' Africa showdown



CHIDINMA KALU

Nigeria's U17 women's national football team, the Flamingos, are gearing up for their upcoming clash against South Africa in the 2025 Morocco qualifiers.

The team is scheduled to travel to Pretoria on Wednesday, ahead of the highly anticipated match.

The Flamingos, known for their impressive performances on the youth international

stage, are determined to secure a victory in this crucial encounter.

The game forms part of the qualification campaign for the 2025 FIFA U17 Women's World Cup, set to be hosted in Morocco.

The outcome of this match will play a significant role in determining Nigeria's path to the tournament.

The encounter will take place at the Lucas Moripe Stadium in Pretoria on Saturday.

Liverpool unfazed by PSG Champions League challenge, says Slot

CHIDINMA KALU

Liverpool manager, Arne Slot insists his team has nothing to fear as they prepare for a high-stakes Champions League showdown against Paris Saint-Germain at the Parc des Princes.

The Premier League leaders will take on the French champions in the first leg of their last-16 tie on Wednesday, aiming to move closer to their first Champions League title since 2019.

Despite suffering defeats in their previous two visits to Paris—in 1997 and 2018—Liverpool enter the clash in formidable form. Slot's side has lost just four times across all competitions this season, with their only Champions League defeat coming against

PSV Eindhoven in a match that had no impact on their qualification for the knockout rounds.

Having topped the league phase with seven wins from eight games, including a statement 2-0 victory over reigning champions Real Madrid, Liverpool has been equally dominant domestically. They currently hold a commanding 13-point

lead at the top of the Premier League, driven by the brilliance of Mohamed Salah, and are closing in on a record-equalling 20th English league title.

The Reds also have an opportunity to secure their first silverware under Slot when they face Newcastle in the League Cup final on March 16. With 20 league victories, Liverpool boasts the

best domestic record across Europe's top five leagues this season.

After a brief dip in form, Liverpool responded with back-to-back 2-0 wins over Manchester City and Newcastle, reinforcing their grip on the Premier League title race. A weekend off, thanks to their early FA Cup exit, provided further rest ahead of the PSG encounter.

Flying Eagles take break ahead Cote d'Ivoire 2025 preparations

EDWARD OSEGHE

Nigeria's U-20 men's football team, the Flying Eagles, have been granted a break from training following their recent activities, the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) confirmed on Tuesday.

The squad, preparing for the Africa U-20 Cup of Nations (AFCON) in Cote d'Ivoire later this year, was released after concluding a screening exercise for new players last week.

Head Coach Aliyu Zubairu supervised the trials, which saw 35 players invited to camp following the team's qualification in December 2024.

The Flying Eagles secured their spot in the 13-team tournament with a 5-2 aggregate victory over Ghana in the WAFU B U-20 Championship final.

The NFF stated that the break allows players to rest before resuming

preparations for the competition, scheduled from July 14-26, 2025, across three Ivorian cities. An NFF official said, "The boys have worked hard to qualify. This break is well-deserved, and we'll regroup soon to build on our momentum."

