

KARU (NASARAWA)

About eight percent of Nigerians are currently living with diabetes, according to the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.

Dr Alayo Sopekan, National Coordinator of the Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Division of the ministry, disclosed this on Thursday in Mararaba, Nasarawa State, during an interview on the sidelines of a workshop on public financing

8% of Nigerians living with diabetes —Health official

and implementation of the NCD Multi-Sectoral Action Plan.

He added that 14 per cent of Nigerians are affected by hypertension, while about 25 per cent carry the sickle cell gene.

The workshop was organised by the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the Legislative Initiative for Sustainable Development, and the Global Health Advocacy Incu-

lator to strengthen response to non-communicable diseases nationwide.

Sopekan said the figures were based on a recent STEP survey on the burden and trends of non-communicable diseases, noting that many Nigerians remain unaware of their health status and require routine medical screening.

He said Nigeria's response to

NCDs is constrained by inadequate funding and limited partner support, despite the growing burden compared to communicable diseases that attract more resources and attention.

Although government is making efforts to fund interventions, he noted that financing remains low, stressing that early detection, prevention and management are critical to reducing

complications and slowing disease progression nationwide.

He emphasised that preventive measures such as early screening and health education are the most effective, but require sustained funding, calling for increased allocation from taxes on alcohol, tobacco and beverages.

Also speaking, Mr Muntasar Liman said non-communicable

ble diseases account for about 30 percent of deaths recorded annually across Nigeria.

He cited a 2023 national survey involving more than 24,000 adults, which revealed significant gaps in awareness, diagnosis, treatment and control of conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and cardi-

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The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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WATCH OUT
The Nigerian Observer newspaper returns to newsstand Tuesday April 14, 2026.

Farmers proffer solutions to Nigeria's \$10bn post-harvest loss crisis
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Nigeria spends \$10bn annually on food imports —SAA

ABUJA

The Sasakawa Africa Association has revealed that Nigeria spends about \$10 billion annually on the importation of wheat, rice, sugar, fish and tomato paste, despite ongoing efforts to transform the agricultural sector.

Dr Godwin Atser, SAA Nigeria Country Director, disclosed this at the 2026 Annual Stakeholders Workshop and

the celebration of the organisation's 40th anniversary on Thursday in Abuja.

The SAA, he said, aims to increase farmers' income and improve food and nutrition security through the promotion of market-oriented, sustainable, resilient, regenerative and nutrition-sensitive agricultural innovations, while also building the capacity of extension agents and farmers.

SSA is an international non-governmental organisa-

tion that works to improve agriculture in African countries, including Nigeria.

Its main focus is helping smallholder farmers increase productivity through better farming methods, training, access to markets, and extension services.

The workshop, themed "SAA @ 40: Deepening Impact and Expanding Reach at Scale," provided a platform for reflection and future planning.

Atser attributed the high im-

port bill to Nigeria's low production capacity to meet local demand, stressing the need to make appropriate technologies available to farmers through effective extension and advisory services.

According to him, available data show that Nigeria has one extension agent to about 10,000 farmers, a ratio he described as grossly inadequate for transforming the agricultural sector.

He said the workshop was

a high-level event designed to review the organisation's 2021–2025 Strategic Plan and chart a path forward for agricultural development in the country.

"SAA has been supporting agricultural transformation in

Nigeria for 33 years, contributing to improved productivity, enhanced livelihoods, and strengthened extension systems.

"This workshop is not merely ceremonial; it is a strategic and data-rich forum for reflection, accountability and knowledge sharing," he said.

Atser added that the meet-

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2025 REPORT PRESENTATION:

R-L: Senator Monday Okpebholo, Governor of Edo State; HRH Mallam Ali Suleyman, the Oghieaga of Ivbie and Barr. Hamza Umar, Acting Coordinator, Edo State Musaabaqah, during the presentation of the 2025 report of the State and National Qur'anic Competition held in Maiduguri, Borno State, to the governor at Government House, Benin City, on Thursday.

Okpebholo seeks early hajj planning as 2026 pilgrims number drops

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo, has received the report of the 2025 Hajj exercise, urging early planning for future pilgrimages amid a sharp drop in the number of intending pilgrims for 2026.

The report was presented by the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, led by the Amirul Hajj, HRH Mallam Ali D. Suleyman, the Oghieaga of Ivbie.

The governor also received the report of the 2025 State and National Quranic Competition held in Maiduguri, Borno State, presented by the Acting State Coordinator of Edo State Musaabaqah, Barr. Hamza Umar. He commended Edo State participants for their outstanding performance, praising their dedication and excellence at the competition.

Speaking while receiving

the delegation, Okpebholo described Hajj as a long-established religious obligation requiring deliberate and timely planning, noting that it is "a culture we grew up to meet."

He expressed concern over the late submission of requests to government, which he said limited the state's ability to intervene effectively for the 2026 Hajj.

"When problems are brought early, they can be solved early. But when something is happening tomorrow and you bring the request today, it becomes difficult to address," the governor said.

He regretted the delays and urged stakeholders to begin preparations for subsequent pilgrimages well in advance, recommending that planning should commence at least nine months ahead, with particular attention to the health and readiness of intending pilgrims.

The governor reaffirmed his administration's commit-

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PTDF targets energy transition, AI in 2026 overseas scholarship selection
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Why Nigeria must link democracy with economic transformation
—Jonathan —Pg 5

Trump criticises Nato as alliance chief describes meeting as 'very frank'
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Nigeria overlooked as FIFA names 170 referees for 2026 World Cup
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Okpebholo, Oshiomhole lead condolence visit to Idahosa over mother's death

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo, on Wednesday led top government officials and leaders of the All Progressives Congress to pay a condolence visit to the Deputy Governor, Dennis Idahosa, over the death of his mother, late Mrs Esther Imaguomwanruo Idahosa.

The governor was accompanied by APC State Chairman Jarrett Tenebe, Deputy State Chairman Sylvester Aigboboh, party Secretary Lawrence Okah, Secretary to the State Government Musa Ikhilor Esq, commissioners, top government officials, and other party leaders.

Speaking during the visit, Ok-

pebholo thanked God for a life well spent, noting that death is inevitable and a debt all must pay.

He urged the children to take solace in the fulfilled life their mother lived.

"Your mother has lived a good and fulfilled life and for her to have successful children like you, it shows that she lived well. Death is indispensable, it's a debt that all must pay; only God can console your family," he said.

He added that the people of Edo State would continue to pray for the deputy governor and his family during the difficult period.

"Her death has left a vacuum in your life and that of the family. I pray God gives you the fortitude to bear the loss. We will continue to pray for you

because you need our prayers at this difficult time," he said.

Also speaking, Senator representing Edo North Senatorial District and former governor, Adams Oshiomhole, described the deceased as a mother to all in the party and the state.

He urged the family to remain strong, thanking God for her fulfilled life and the suc-

cessful children she raised.

"I am here with the governor to pay this condolence visit. I know how you feel because you were very close to your mother, and her departure will be greatly felt. She is not only your mother but mother to all of us," he said.

Responding on behalf of the family, Idahosa thanked the governor and his entourage for

visiting less than 24 hours after his mother's death.

"I appreciate you and your entourage despite your busy schedule. This visit shows your love for the family," he said.

He disclosed that while the family had hoped for her recovery, she passed on, adding that burial arrangements would be announced after consultations.

The deputy governor also commended the governor for his support and guidance.

"You are my boss, principal, and now my senior brother. Your advice has been very helpful in my political career," he said.

He described his late mother as a fulfilled woman who lived a successful life and prayed for her children

Nigeria spends \$10bn annually on...

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ing would provide a critical platform to redefine stakeholders' ambitions, exchange ideas, share lessons, and align strategies for greater coherence and collective impact.

He noted that SAA selects annual themes to address emerging challenges and guide interventions, particularly in regenerative agriculture, markets, and nutrition-sensitive practices.

According to him, the 2026 theme reflects both the organisation's achievements and the urgent need to address evolving challenges such as climate variability, population growth, and shifting economic realities.

"The mission of Sasakawa is to empower smallholder farmers with knowledge, technologies, markets and inclusive extension systems to achieve sustainable food, nutrition and income security for resilient and thriving

livelihoods," he said.

In a keynote address titled "The Role of Private Sector in Agricultural Development in Nigeria," Suzuki Hideo, Ambassador of Japan to Nigeria, said the country's agriculture is driven by millions of smallholder farmers who form the backbone of food security and rural livelihoods.

He noted that agriculture employs about 34 percent of Nigeria's labour force and contributes about 25 percent to the nation's GDP, stressing that advancing mechanisation, reducing post-harvest losses and strengthening market linkages are crucial to boosting productivity.

Hideo added that for the past 40 years, SAA has worked tirelessly to enhance Nigeria's agricultural production capacity.

"The organisation's unwavering commitment and innovative approaches have significantly transformed the agricultural landscape," he said.

8% of Nigerians living with diabetes...

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ovascular diseases.

"Diabetes prevalence was 4.7 percent, with low awareness and management: only 24.6 per cent diagnosed, 22 percent on treatment, and 11 per cent achieved controlled blood glucose levels.

"Raised cholesterol affects 14.7 percent of adults, while 12.1 percent aged 40–69 face high cardiovascular risk, including existing disease or 10-year risk projections exceeding 20 percent.

"Hypertension affects 22.9 per cent of adults, yet only 32.5 per cent are aware, 17.9 percent on treatment, while just 6.4 percent achieve controlled blood pressure," he said.

Liman identified challenges including weak health infrastructure, funding gaps, policy issues, task-sharing constraints and sociocultural factors, stressing the need to strengthen primary healthcare and expand workforce capacity nationwide.

"Nigeria needs strong action to prevent these diseases. Peo-

ple need healthier diets, exercise opportunities and support to quit smoking and reduce alcohol use for improved long-term health outcomes.

"Health services must improve screening and treatment for hypertension, diabetes and cholesterol. These steps will help Nigerians live healthier lives and reduce future disease burden significantly," he added.

Prof. Alhassan Emmanuel of the Global Health Advocacy Incubator said non-communicable diseases account for about one-third of deaths, describing the trend as alarming.

"It is estimated that one-third of deaths are caused by NCDs; this figure used to be one-fifth. This is alarming, and funding for NCDs has remained very challenging," he said.

He called for prioritisation of public health financing, while Mr Olympos Adebajo of the Legislative Initiative for Sustainable Development and Mr Marcel Sati also urged improved collaboration and innovative funding strategies nationwide.



ARMY CANVASS FOR ENROLLMENT:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo (right) and Brigadier General M. U. Ikobah, who led a delegation, of the Nigerian Army on a courtesy visit to Government House, Benin City, during a nationwide sensitisation campaign to the State to canvass for enrollment into the Nigerian Army in Benin City.

Edo to host 5th Diaspora Summit in Benin

BENIN CITY

Edo State Government will host the 5th State Diaspora Focal Point Officers National Summit from April 12 to 15, 2026, in Benin City, as part of efforts to strengthen diaspora engagement for national development.

The summit, organised by the Edo State Diaspora Agency, in collaboration with the

Nigerians in Diaspora Commission, is themed, "Bringing the World Home: Harnessing Diaspora Health Expertise for National Development."

It is expected to attract key stakeholders, including the Chairman of NiDCOM, members of the National Assembly Committees on Diaspora, delegates from Nigerian diaspora communities, and focal point officers from about 35 states.

According to the programme, activities will begin on April 12 with the arrival of over 70 special guests.

The main event on April 13 will feature keynote addresses, a special address by the host governor, and presentations on diaspora-driven initiatives across states.

The day will also include technical and discussion sessions, as well as the commissioning of the

Edo State Diaspora Headquarters and the launch of the state's diaspora policy.

On April 14, participants will visit selected sites of interest, followed by a dinner and cocktail session, while departure of guests is scheduled for April 15.

All events will take place at the Festival Hall of the Government House, Benin City, from 9:00 a.m. daily.

Africa losing 40% of health funds to inefficiency —Africa CDC warns

ABUJA

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa-CDC), has said that nearly 40 percent of health resources in Africa were being lost to inefficiency and poor governance.

Dr Tolbert Nyenswah, Director for Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response, Africa-CDC, disclosed this on Thursday during its weekly

high-level regional press briefing

Nyenswah said that the situation could however be reversed to unlock billions of dollars without additional funding.

He stressed that strengthening governance, improving efficiency, and ensuring accountable public financial management were critical to transforming Africa's health systems.

"Fixing these inefficiencies is not just about more money; it is about smarter use of existing resources," he said,

He said that countries could redirect billions into essential services without increasing budgets.

The briefing also highlighted progress in some countries, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is moving toward allocating 14.5 percent of its national budget to health, a target set by the "Abuja Declaration."

He noted that a growing number of public health events were linked to climate and envi-

ronmental factors, adding that challenges like antimicrobial resistance (AMR) were putting additional pressure on already stretched health systems.

He said that to tackle these threats, the continental agency had secured over 250 million dollars in strategic investments, including funding from the EU, Global Fund, and Pandemic Fund, aimed at strengthening One Health initiatives, climate-resilient systems, and pandemic preparedness.

Okpebholo seeks early hajj planning as 2026 pilgrims number...

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ment to the welfare of Muslims in the state, assuring continued support for pilgrimage activities and peaceful coexistence.

"I assure you we will continue to support the Muslim community in Edo State. We will continue to live together peacefully," he said.

Okpebholo also disclosed plans to explore the possibility of securing approval for Edo State to serve as a departure point for

pilgrims in the South-South, noting that such a move could boost the state's economy through increased commercial activities.

He commended the Amirul Hajj and the delegation for what he described as a successful 2025 Hajj exercise, stating that their efforts made a positive impact.

Earlier, the Amirul Hajj, HRH Mallam Ali D. Suleyman, commended the governor for his support during the 2025 Hajj, describing it as one of the most successful outings for the state.

He said government intervention improved pilgrims' welfare, including better accommodation close to the Ka'aba, provision of Nigerian meals, and enhanced medical services.

According to him, the quality of arrangements attracted attention beyond Edo State, with officials of the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria and pilgrims from other regions benefiting from Edo's facilities.

Despite the successes recorded in 2025, he highlighted chal-

lenges affecting the forthcoming 2026 Hajj, particularly the impact of a strict payment deadline imposed by Saudi authorities.

He disclosed that over 351 intending pilgrims were affected, leaving only 93 able to participate in the 2026 exercise.

The traditional ruler also appreciated the governor for sponsoring 50 pilgrims for the 2026 Hajj, though noting that not all could be accommodated due to the payment constraints.

NEWS

‘My mum made me who I am’ —Idahosa

BERNADETTE IDALU

BENIN CITY

Edo State Deputy Governor, Dennis Idahosa, on has paid glowing tribute to his late mother, declaring that her influence shaped his life and values.

“Whatever I am today, my mum played a significant role in it. For that, I am forever grateful

to her. I emulate a lot of things that she taught me, and that inspired me to work harder and to be more committed in whatever I do,” he said.

Idahosa spoke at his residence while addressing sympathisers who paid condolence visits following the death of his mother, Madam Esther Imaguomwanruo Idahosa (née Enabulele), who passed away in

the early hours of Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at the age of 95.

Describing her as a woman who lived a remarkable life, the deputy governor said that his mother was known for spreading goodwill and touching lives wherever she went.

His residence witnessed a heavy influx of visitors, including civil servants, dignitaries, political associates and family

members, who trooped in large numbers to commiserate with the family.

Idahosa expressed appreciation for what he described as the overwhelming “commitment and support of people at this time of grief.”

Addressing staff of the Office of the Deputy Governor, he reiterated that his mother lived “a very impactful life,” noting her

rare ability to win people over, even at first encounter due to her warm and friendly disposition.

He added that the numerous tributes and condolence messages from distinguished personalities were clear attestations to her character.

Responding to remarks earlier delivered by the Permanent Secretary, Mrs Abieyuwase Oyenwense, on behalf of staff, Idahosa described his late mother as one of his closest confidants.

“My mum was one of the closest human beings to me, my confidant and my gist partner. Today feels like a nightmare that she has passed to be with the Lord. My consolation is that she knew God before she passed, which means we will meet again to part no more,” he said.

He appealed for prayers, support and guidance from the

public on behalf of the family.

Guests at the residence expressed mixed emotions, noting that although death is inevitable, the matriarch’s longevity was a divine blessing that allowed her to raise her children and witness their achievements, including that of her son as deputy governor.

They urged the family to sustain her legacy, remembering her as a cheerful and warm-hearted woman.

Among those who visited or sent condolences were former Edo State Deputy Governor and Director-General of the National Institute for Sports, Hon. Philip Shaibu; former Deputy Governor, Hon. Lucky Imasuen; Chairman of the Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele, alongside board members; Hon. Andrew Uzamere; Hon. Bright Iyamu; Hon. Sunday Aghedo; political appointees; and members of the Ovia South West All Progressives Congress (APC).



INAUGURATION OF CBPP-TWG:

L-R: Lead, National Program for Control of Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia Disease Technical Working Group (CBPP-TWG), Dr Abdulkareem Durosinlorun; representative of the Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Livestock Development, Dr Nurrauaha Abubakar; Minister of Livestock Development, Alhaji Idi Maiha; Technical Officer, WHO Country Office Nigeria, Dr Laxmikant Chavan and the National President, Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, Alhaji Baba Othman-Ngelzarma, during the inauguration of CBPP-TWG by the minister in Abuja on Thursday.

Edo Musaabaqah Board disowns Auchi meeting, declares outcomes null, void

The Edo State Musaabaqah Board has disowned a purported meeting allegedly held on April 6, 2026, at the palace of the Otaru of Auchi, declaring it unauthorised and its outcomes invalid.

In a statement, the Acting Chairman, Aliyu Kelvin Danesi, said that the meeting had been officially cancelled prior to the date and urged stakeholders to disregard any resolutions emanating from it.

According to the Board,

the cancellation directive was conveyed through the Acting Coordinator of the Edo State Musaabaqah, Hamza Umar Usman, after it was discovered that the meeting was convened without due process, proper consultation, or approval.

Describing the development as “highly unfortunate and regrettable,” the Board said it was disturbing that some individuals proceeded with the gathering in defiance of the directive, adding that such actions con-

stituted a breach of established procedures and an attempt to mislead the public.

The Board categorically stated that the meeting did not represent its authority and that all decisions purportedly taken are “null and void and of no effect whatsoever.”

It reaffirmed that Danesi remains the Acting Chairman of the Board pending the formal return of leadership to the Otaru of Auchi, while also reiterating respect for the traditional ruler and offering prayers for his health.

On disciplinary issues, the

Board maintained that Ibrahim Oyarekhua remains suspended, pending the outcome of an investigation by a committee chaired by Hon. (Dr.) Lukman Muhammad.

The Board further cautioned individuals against exploiting the Otaru’s health challenges to foment disunity within the Muslim community in Edo State, urging restraint and respect for the traditional institution.

It called for calm among Muslims and the general public, assuring that a new date for an official meeting would be announced in due course.

Dekeri empowers over 1,176 in Etsako

● Rolls out mega intervention

OKPELLA

The member representing Etsako Federal Constituency in the National Assembly, Anamero Dekeri, has empowered over 1,176 beneficiaries in a large-scale intervention programme targeting artisans and small business operators.

The beneficiaries, drawn from across the constituency, included farmers, automobile repairers, traders, electricians, tailors, hair salon operators, members of the Nigerian Automobile Technicians Associa-

tion (NATA), Alumaco workers and other groups.

Speaking at the event held at Eveva Primary School, Okpella, Dekeri said his mission at the National Assembly was solely to serve the interests of his constituents.

“I have no other business at the National Assembly than to serve your interest. Whatever I need to do to ensure that all that belongs to Etsako Federal Constituency gets to us, I will do it,” he said.

“I have committed myself to your service and will continue to serve to the best of my ability. I have moved bills that will secure

sustainable development in our constituency. With me as your representative, Etsako Federal Constituency is in safe hands.”

He added that democracy must translate into tangible benefits for the people.

“We are here to share in the dividends of democracy. Democracy will lose credibility if it does not add value to human life. I will continue to empower our people and create opportunities that make life worth living,” he said.

Dekeri disclosed that the programme would not be the last, revealing that another mega empowerment initiative was already planned for later in the year.

He also expressed gratitude

to Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo, and Senator Adams Oshiomhole for their leadership, mentorship and support in creating an enabling environment for development.

Beneficiaries, who expressed satisfaction with the initiative, described Dekeri’s representation as impactful, citing projects such as solar-powered boreholes, school infrastructure, healthcare support, solar streetlights, NYSC lodge interventions, and youth and women empowerment schemes.

They noted that his interventions had enabled students to sit for WAEC examinations without delay, as he had consistently taken responsibility for examination fees across the constituency.

Rotation row: Owan leader tells Ihonvbere to step aside after 8yrs

A former Chairman of Owan West Local Government, Hon. Barr. Godwin Aigbodion, has warned that any move to retain the House of Representatives seat in Owan West beyond eight years would amount to a breach of a long-standing power rotation agreement between Owan East and Owan West in Edo North.

Aigbodion, in a press statement he signed as Political Leader and former Chairman of Owan West Local Government Council, said that he had followed “with keen interest” the ongoing political discourse in the Owan East/Owan West Federal Constituency and found it necessary to speak “clearly and firmly” as a leader from Owan West.

He recalled that leaders and stakeholders from both Owan East and Owan West had entered into a “clear, simple, and honourable understanding” that political power at the federal level would rotate between the two local government areas to ensure fairness, inclusiveness, and a sense of belonging for all parts of the constituency.

According to him, Owan East had already held the House of Representatives seat for eight years, while Owan West had also completed its own eight-year tenure, making it, by “every standard of justice, equity, and fairness,” the turn of Owan East to produce the next representative.

Aigbodion, therefore, condemned reported moves by the current lawmaker representing the constituency, Prof. Julius Ihonvbere, to seek another term in the Green Chamber,

describing such ambition as “completely unacceptable.”

He argued that having served eight years, any attempt by Ihonvbere to remain in the House of Representatives would amount to “a breach of trust, a violation of our collective agreement, and a direct insult to the spirit of equity that has guided our politics.”

“A leader who has enjoyed the benefit of rotation should not be the one to destroy it,” Aigbodion said, insisting that if the lawmaker wished to continue in national service, “the honourable and proper path is to aspire to a higher office, not to cling to a seat that, by agreement and by conscience, should now return to Owan East.”

The former council chairman cautioned against the use of “principal positions” or “ranking status” as justification for extending tenure, warning that such arguments could undermine the foundation of trust within the constituency.

By the same reasoning, he noted, Ihonvbere’s predecessor could have remained in office indefinitely.

“An agreement is an agreement,” he stressed, adding that once rules are altered to favour one individual, “we destroy the very foundation of trust that holds us together.”

CHANGE OF SURNAME/ ADDITION OF NAME

I, formerly known as **EMUDHE VIVIAN**, now wish to be known and address as **ONOSAKPONOME VIVIAN OGHENEFEJIRO**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS QUEENDALINE OKECHUKWU**, now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS. QUEENDALINE CHINEMELUM EZEANI**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **HASSAN IYABOR**, now wish to be known and address as **MUSTAPHA IYABOR**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

NMA poll: Crisis brews over disqualification of presidential aspirant

CALABAR

The Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) is facing a looming internal crisis amid allegations of interference in its forthcoming presidential election by powerful interests within its National Officers' Committee.

Chairman of the association in Cross River State, Dr Ezoke Epoke, raised the alarm on Thursday while addressing journalists in Calabar, expressing concerns over the credibility of the electoral process.

Epoke said the controversy was centred on the disqualification of a presidential contender, Prof. Ofem Enang, a development that has triggered widespread concern among members and stakeholders nationwide.

Enang, a former Second Vice President and State Chairman of the association, was barred from contesting the top leadership position ahead of the election scheduled to hold in Kano during the NMA's An-

nual Delegates Meeting from April 26 to May 3, 2026.

Describing the disqualification as unconstitutional, Epoke warned that the decision could spark unrest and deepen divisions within the association, while undermining confidence in its electoral system.

He noted that stakeholders had criticised the action as biased and illogical, arguing that it threatens the democratic principles guiding the association's elections.

According to him, the NMA constitution clearly outlines eligibility and nomination procedures and does not empower the National Officers' Committee to disqualify candidates under any circumstance.

He further argued that administrative requirements, such as submission of multiple curriculum vitae and passport photographs, cannot override constitutional provisions governing eligibility for elective positions.

"This development has heightened tensions across branches, with many doctors alleging attempts to impose a preferred candidate, thereby undermining due process and

weakening institutional integrity," he said.

Epoke called on past presidents and elders of the profession to intervene and restore credibility, warning that continued interference could

fragment the association along political and sectional lines.

He added that the crisis was unfolding amid broader concerns over brain drain, industrial disputes and policy inconsistencies in the health sector,

which could weaken the association's national influence.

Also speaking, Prof. Enang described his disqualification as arbitrary, alleging that it was driven by vested interests opposed to a transparent and

competitive process.

He said his nomination was duly submitted and acknowledged but that he was later listed among disqualified candidates over alleged incomplete documentation.



2026 VoN FORUM:

L-R: Director-General, Voice of Nigeria (VoN), Ndaci Jubril; Deputy Senate President, Sen. Barau Jubrin; Minister of Information and National Orientation, Alhaji Mohammed Idris and the Etsu of Nupe, Alhaji Yahaya Abubakar, during the 2026 VON Forum in Abuja on Thursday.

Police arrest 27yr-old over alleged murder of motorcyclist in Ogun

SANGO-OTA (OGUN)

The Ogun State Police Command has arrested a 27-year-old man over the alleged murder of a commercial motorcyclist in the Igbesa area of Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area.

The command's Public Relations Officer, DSP Oluseyi Babaseyi, disclosed this in a statement issued on Thursday in Abeokuta.

He said the incident occurred on Wednesday at about 7:00 a.m., when the suspect reportedly engaged the services of the victim, identified as Sunday Ogbu, 36, before attacking him in a bid to steal his motorcycle.

According to Babaseyi, the attack led to a violent struggle.

"A witness raised the alarm, prompting police to respond swiftly. The victim was rescued and rushed to hospital but was confirmed dead by the doctor on duty," he said.

He added that the suspect was immediately apprehended, while the motorcycle and the knife used in the attack were recovered.

The case has since been transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), Elewera, Abeokuta, for further investigation and prosecution.

The Commissioner of Police, CP Bode Ojajuni, condemned the act and assured that justice would be served.

Otti to honour Aba women's riot heroines with monuments

UMUAHIA

Governor Alex Otti of Abia State has pledged to approve the erection of monuments in honour of the heroines of the 1929 Aba Women's uprising and other notable women in the state's history.

Otti made the announcement during the burial of Mrs Chiamaka Joyce Ibekwe, wife of the lawmaker representing Bende North State Constituency, Mr Nnamdi Ibekwe, in Igbere, Bende Local Government Area.

He said the initiative was aimed at recognising the contributions of women to society and encouraging future generations. "Our women have always

been great. We have, however, failed to give them due recognition. I assure you that this request will not only be considered but approved," he said.

The governor noted that women play critical roles in food production, education and economic stability, stressing the need to accord them proper recognition.

He also lamented the absence of female lawmakers in the State House of Assembly and advocated greater inclusion of women in governance.

Otti described the late Mrs Ibekwe as a divine gift and urged mourners to remain hopeful, expressing belief that she was in a better place.

Kogi rewards outstanding PHC workers, LGAs with cash incentives

LOKOJA

The Kogi State Primary Health Care Development Agency has rewarded outstanding health workers and local government health authorities as part of efforts to strengthen primary healthcare delivery across the state.

Executive Director of the agency, Dr Muazu Omeiza, commended Governor Ahmed Ododo for fulfilling his pledge of cash rewards to high-performing health officers.

Speaking in Lokoja during the presentation of cheques at the Primary Health Care Leadership Challenge Awards, Omeiza said the initiative was designed to

recognise excellence and boost performance at the grassroots.

Seven Local Government Health Authorities, seven Officers-in-Charge and one Health Management Information System (HMIS) officer received N250,000 each.

Ogori-Magongo Local Government Area emerged overall best, clinching N5 million, while Mopamuro and Bassa LGAs received N3 million each.

Kogi, Ofu and Ajaokuta LGAs were awarded N2 million each for their contributions to improving service delivery.

Omeiza also praised the Commissioner for Health, Dr Abdulazeez Adeiza, for facilitating the successful disburse-

ment and providing strategic guidance to the agency.

He stressed that the Primary Health Care Leadership Challenge is a continuous, performance-driven initiative aimed at sustaining excellence and enhancing accountability among health workers.

According to him, performance indicators such as responsiveness to emergencies, work ethic and timeliness in data submission will continue to be closely monitored.

He said the initiative promotes stronger local government and community ownership of health-care services, ensuring increased participation and accountability at the grassroots level.

Omeiza noted that funding support from the Federal

Government and the World Bank was targeted at revitalising health facilities, improving infrastructure and enhancing service delivery statewide.

He emphasised that improved health outcomes require collaboration among stakeholders, including local government chairmen, traditional rulers and religious leaders.

Addressing awardees, he said the funds must be used strictly to improve healthcare delivery, warning that implementation of submitted work plans would be closely monitored and any deviation sanctioned.

He added that the work plans were jointly developed and endorsed by local government chairmen to ensure seamless implementation.

PTDF targets energy transition, AI in 2026 overseas scholarship selection

IBADAN

The Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF) has prioritised energy transition, renewable energy, climate change and artificial intelligence (AI) in the selection of candidates for its 2026 Overseas Scholarship Scheme (OSS).

PTDF Head of Human Resources, Mrs Bolanle Agboola, disclosed this on Thursday during the South-West screening of shortlisted candidates in Ibadan.

Agboola, who also leads the regional selection exercise, said the fund was aligning its human capital development strategy with evolving trends in the global energy industry.

She noted that while PTDF remains committed to traditional petroleum disciplines, it is increasingly focusing on emerging areas shaping the future of energy.

"The current issues in the energy world include transition, renewables and climate change, and these are our major focus areas this year. AI is also on the table, though we are not neglecting the petroleum aspect," she said.

She explained that PTDF supports fields relevant to the oil and gas industry, including engineering, geological sciences, environmental studies, energy studies, management, law and computing.

According to her, the scholarship scheme remains a flag-

ship intervention aimed at building indigenous capacity for Nigeria's energy sector.

Agboola disclosed that 38,399 applications were received for the 2026 scheme, which began in February, with over 500 candidates shortlisted from the South-West centre.

She said the screening was being conducted simultaneously across six centres nationwide.

She added that beneficiaries are expected to return to Nigeria after their studies to contribute to the development of the oil and gas sector.

"We expect them to come back and deploy the knowledge and experience gained abroad to strengthen the industry," she said.

Agboola warned candidates against engaging in malpractice, including certificate forgery and impersonation, noting that offenders would be prosecuted.

"Last year, about 10 people were caught in Abuja. We have equipment to verify credentials, and anyone caught will face the law because forgery is a criminal offence," she said.

A member of the interview panel, Prof. Wasiu Raji of the University of Ilorin, described the quality of candidates as impressive, noting that only the best made the shortlist.

Raji, a 2007 PTDF PhD scholarship beneficiary, commended the fund for maintaining a transparent and rigorous selection process.

NEWS

Borno deploys 20 electric buses to ease fuel cost burden

MAIDUGURI

The Borno State Government has rolled out 20 electric buses for public transportation as part of measures to cushion the impact of rising petrol prices on residents.

This was disclosed in a statement issued on Thursday in Maiduguri by Mr Dauda Illiya, spokesperson to Governor Babagana Zulum.

Illiya said the initiative is part of a broader intervention

earlier inaugurated by President Bola Tinubu on December 20, 2025, which also included 3,000 electric bicycles, 500 electric tricycles and 100 electric vehicles aimed at improving transportation services across the state.

According to him, the rollout, which commenced on April 3, comprises 17 buses with a seating capacity of 49 passengers, two 37-seaters and one 28-seater.

He explained that the buses are being deployed across ma-

yor routes within Maiduguri metropolis and its environs to ease commuting challenges.

Illiya added that the fully air-conditioned and energy-efficient vehicles can travel over 400 kilometres on a single charge.

“To ensure seamless operations, the governor has also established the largest electric vehicle charging terminal in the country, with the capacity to charge up to 50 vehicles at a time,” he said.

He further noted that the

governor has directed the Borno Express Transport Service to maintain a subsidised fare of N50 per trip to shield residents from the effects of rising fuel costs.

The spokesperson said the intervention is already yielding positive results, including reduced congestion and improved access to affordable transportation, with commuters describing the initiative as timely and impactful.

He added that the deployment aligns with the state gov-

ernment’s drive to promote green energy, modernise trans-

portation and provide relief to vulnerable residents.

Ebonyi APC chair urges lawmakers to emulate Nwebonyi’s devt drive

EBONYI

The Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Ebonyi State, Chief Stanley Okoro-Emegha, has called on federal lawmakers from the state to emulate Senator Onyekachi Nwebonyi in driving infrastructure and human capital development.

Okoro-Emegha made the call while leading a government delegation to inspect projects executed by the lawmaker across constituencies in Ebonyi North Senatorial District, which comprises Abakaliki, Ebonyi, Izzi and Ohaukwu Local Government Areas.

Nwebonyi, the Deputy Senate Whip, has executed projects including roads, classroom blocks and pipe-borne water schemes across the district.

The APC chairman described the volume and quality of the projects as remarkable, noting that they place the senator on a higher pedestal among federal lawmakers from the state.

“You are complementing the governor’s infrastructure strides and the party is taking notice,” he said, adding that other National Assembly members who are underperforming would be assessed in due course.

He also alluded to the relationship between the state governor and President Bola Tinubu, expressing optimism about Nwe-

bonyi’s future political prospects.

Okoro-Emegha noted that the inspection, which began at about 8 a.m., could not cover all project sites due to their spread and volume.

In his remarks, Nwebonyi said effective representation must go beyond lawmaking to include delivering tangible benefits to constituents.

“Laws become mere academic exercises when they do not translate into solutions to the people’s problems,” he said.

He outlined his interventions to include the construction of several kilometres of concrete-paved roads with reinforced stone base and asphalt overlay, as well as the distribution of over 300 motorcycles, 70 tricycles and 50 buses to farmers and youths.

The lawmaker assured constituents that more projects were underway, pledging sustained focus on infrastructure, agriculture and human capital development.

Also speaking, the Deputy Leader of the Ebonyi State House of Assembly, Chief Joseph Ononu, described Nwebonyi’s achievements as unprecedented in the district’s history and urged other lawmakers to emulate him.

“Action speaks louder than words and what we have witnessed is practical governance with direct impact on the people,” he said.



5TH YEAR MEMORIAL:

L-R: Chairman, Centre for Memories (CFM), Mr Patrick Okigbo; Chairman, *Thisday* Newspaper Editorial Board, Mr Olusegun Adeniyi; Chief Executive Officer, Afrinvest, Dr Ike Chjioko; Executive Director, Project Alert, Mrs. Josephine Effah-Chukwuma, and member, Innocent Chukwuemeka Chukwuma Empowerment Foundation (ICCEF), Ms. Chidinma Chukwuma, during the 5th year memorial event of Innocent Chukwuemeka Chukwuma Impact and Legacy Lecture Series in Enugu on Thursday.

FG urges Defence Space agency to deepen role in military operations

ABUJA

The Federal Government has tasked the Defence Space Administration (DSA) to sustain and strengthen its role in enhancing military operations through the deployment of space-based technologies and intelligence capabilities.

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Defence, Mr Richard Pheolangwah, gave the charge during a familiarisation visit to the agency’s headquarters in Abuja.

This was contained in a statement issued on Thursday by Queenet Iheoma-Hart on

behalf of the ministry’s Director of Press and Public Relations.

Pheolangwah described the DSA as a critical enabler of operational effectiveness for the Armed Forces, noting that it provides geo-spatial intelligence, satellite imagery and real-time data required for planning and execution of military operations.

He said the agency’s contributions have significantly improved surveillance, reconnaissance and situational awareness, leading to more coordinated and precise operations across various theatres.

According to him, the evolu-

ing nature of modern warfare demands the integration of advanced technologies, stressing that the DSA remains central to Nigeria’s efforts to address contemporary security challenges.

The permanent secretary urged the agency to consolidate its achievements and deepen collaboration with other security and intelligence organisations to further enhance operational outcomes.

He assured the agency of the ministry’s continued support in addressing key challenges, particularly in funding, infrastructure and capacity development.

Earlier, the Chief of Defence Space Administration, Major-Gen. Phillip Ilodibia, said

the agency remains focused on delivering actionable intelligence to support military operations.

Ilodibia noted that the DSA’s capabilities in geo-spatial intelligence, data fusion and cyber operations continue to play a vital role in countering security threats and supporting mission success.

He, however, highlighted challenges including inadequate accommodation and funding constraints, and called for greater inclusion of the agency in national security decision-making processes.

The visit featured a tour of key operational facilities, including the Geo-spatial Intelligence Centre, Cyber Centre and Data Fusion Laboratory.

Police arrest 3 over murder of graduate, recover stolen tricycle

LOKOJA

The Police Command in Kogi State has detained three suspects linked to the gruesome killing of a young graduate and recovered his stolen tricycle.

The command’s spokesperson, ASP Afusat Saliu, disclosed this in a statement on Wednesday in Lokoja.

She said the suspects were arrested during a well-coordi-

nated, intelligence-led operation on March 25 at Otokiti Estate in Lokoja.

According to her, two of the suspects, who allegedly posed as construction workers, lured the victim to a secluded area where they killed him with a shovel and made away with his tricycle.

Saliu said the victim was declared missing by his family on March 18 after he left home on his tricycle, while his lifeless body was discovered the

following day around the CBN Zone 8 area of Lokoja.

She explained that investigations led to the arrest of the two suspects, who confessed to the crime and revealed that they sold the stolen tricycle to a third suspect.

The police spokesperson said the tricycle was recovered alongside four other stolen motorcycles from the third suspect in Anyigba, Dekina Local Government Area.

Further investigation revealed that the suspects are ex-convicts previously linked to multiple murder and armed robbery cases.

Saliu said the suspects have been charged to court and reaffirmed the command’s commitment to ridding the state of crime.

She added that the Commissioner of Police, Naziru Bello Kankarofi, commended the operatives for their diligence and urged residents to remain vigilant.

Why Nigeria must link democracy with economic transformation —Jonathan

ABUJA

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) has advised motorists to restrict travel to essential journeys and avoid speeding during the Easter celebrations to reduce road accidents.

The Itori Unit Commander, Mr Baba

: Former President Goodluck Jonathan has called for a strategic alignment of democratic governance with sound economic policies to ensure long-term sustainability of Nigeria’s political system.

Jonathan made the call at the national convening and launch of a research report by the Goodluck Jonathan Foundation (GJF) on Thursday in Abuja.

The research report is titled: “Strengthening the Nexus between Democracy and Economic Growth in Nigeria.”

The former president urged policy makers to move beyond mere elections and focus on building transparent and accountable institutions that

would create an environment where innovation and enterprise could flourish.

Jonathan noted that the gathering came at a critical moment when democracy was under increasing strain globally due to economic hardship, social pressures, insecurity and growing distrust in public institutions.

Reflecting on the effectiveness of various systems of government, he noted that while some non-democratic nations had achieved significant development, the unique value of democracy lies in the guarantee of freedom.

“Sometimes when I look at the topics, I ask myself, can we really say that democracy will lead to better governance than other forms of government like we see in the Arab world, the monarchies?”

“Most of you go to Dubai, the centre of the world. I know of some American friends that send their children to go and school in Dubai and it’s not a democracy there,” he said.

Marwa seeks intelligence integration to tackle rising insecurity

ABUJA

Chairman of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), retired Brig.-Gen. Buba Marwa, has called for urgent efforts to bridge critical gaps in intelligence sharing as a key strategy for addressing Nigeria's worsening security challenges.

Marwa made the call on Thursday at the Army War College Nigeria (AWCN) Course 10/2026 Interagency Seminar in Abuja.

He said Nigeria is confronted with a complex security landscape, including insurgency and terrorism in the North-East, farmer-herder conflicts in the North-West and North-Central, secessionist agitations in the South-East, and organised crimes such as drug trafficking and abuse in the South-South and South-West.

The NDLEA boss stressed the need for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, noting that crim-

inal networks are becoming increasingly sophisticated by exploiting technology, institutional gaps and transnational linkages.

He highlighted the nexus between drug trafficking and the financing of other security threats, stressing that addressing these challenges requires coordinated collaboration among the armed forces, law enforcement, intelligence agencies and civil society.

"The notion of security as purely a military or law enforcement concern is no longer sufficient.

"There must be stronger operational synergy among the Nigeria Police Force, Department of State Services, NDLEA, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Nigeria Immigration Service and Nigeria Customs Service," he said.

Marwa advocated a seamless and secure mechanism for real-time intelligence sharing, cross-agency training and scenario-based drills to improve interoperability and build mutual trust.

He also underscored the role of civilians in intelligence gathering, stressing the importance of community policing and

public confidence.

The seminar, themed "Enhancing Intelligence Sharing Across Nigeria's Security Ecosystem: From Friction to Collaboration," was described by Marwa as a platform for fostering inter-agency cooperation and developing actionable strategies for a safer Nigeria.

In his lecture titled "Bridging Intelligence Gaps Among Security Agencies for Enhanced National Security," former Chief of Defence Intelligence, retired Maj.-Gen. Samuel Adebayo, warned that intelligence gaps remain a major vulnerability in

Nigeria's security architecture.

Adebayo said intelligence gathering extends beyond traditional agencies such as the police, Department of State Services, National Intelligence Agency and Civil Defence Corps to include correctional centres, local communities and the general public.

He noted that such gaps often result in delayed warnings, fragmented situational awareness and incomplete threat assessments, which are frequently exploited by insurgents, criminal networks and other non-state actors.

IMF, World Bank, WFP pledge support for nations hit by Middle East crisis

ABUJA

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank Group and the World Food Programme (WFP) have pledged coordinated support for countries affected by the ongoing Middle East crisis, with a focus on economic stability and food security.

The commitment was contained in a joint statement issued on Thursday following a high-level meeting of the heads of the three institutions.

The organisations said the conflict is disrupting lives and livelihoods across the region and beyond, triggering one of the most significant shocks to global energy markets in modern history.

They warned that rising prices of oil, gas and fertilisers, coupled with transport bottlenecks, would lead to increased

food prices and heightened food insecurity worldwide.

"The burden will fall most heavily on vulnerable populations, particularly in low-income, import-dependent economies," the statement said.

The institutions expressed concern that surging fuel and food prices would strain countries with limited fiscal space and high debt burdens, reducing their ability to protect vulnerable citizens.

They pledged to closely monitor developments and coordinate the deployment of available tools to support affected countries.

"In line with our mandates and existing response mechanisms, we will act to safeguard lives and livelihoods while laying the foundation for a resilient recovery that promotes stability, growth and job creation," the statement added.

FG inaugurates NCX Board to drive commodity trade, non-oil exports

ABUJA

The Federal Government has inaugurated the Governing Board of the Nigeria Commodity Exchange (NCX) as part of efforts to strengthen commodity trading and accelerate the country's transition to a non-oil, export-driven economy.

The Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr Jumoke Oduwale, performed the inauguration on Thursday in Abuja.

Oduwale said the move is aimed at modernising commodity markets, boosting export competitiveness and unlocking value in agriculture and solid minerals.

She noted that the initiative aligns with the government's agenda on economic diversification, job creation and food security, while positioning Nigeria more competitively in regional and global markets.

The minister highlighted Nigeria's access to over 1.4 billion consumers under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) as a major opportunity for export growth.

She, however, stressed the need to address challenges such as poor traceability, infor-

mal trading systems and infrastructure deficits.

According to her, the reactivation of the exchange would enhance transparency, standardise trading processes and improve price discovery.

Also speaking, the Permanent Secretary of the ministry, Dr Chris Isokpunwu, represented by Mr Obasi Edozie, described the inauguration as a landmark step in strengthening Nigeria's commodity export ecosystem.

Chairman of the board, Alhaji Dalhatu Abubakar, thanked President Bola Tinubu and the minister for the confidence reposed in the board, pledging to reposition the exchange as a globally competitive platform.

He outlined key priorities, including strengthening governance, upgrading warehouse and digital trading infrastructure, building capacity for farmers and market operators, and deepening partnerships with financial institutions and international commodity markets.

He added that the inauguration underscores the Federal Government's commitment to driving export growth, rural prosperity and sustainable economic development.



REPORT LAUNCH OF DEMOCRACY DIVIDEND:

L-R: Former Presidential Candidate of Labor Party, Mr Peter Obi; representative of the Secretary to Government of the Federation, Dr Ibrahim Kana; former President Goodluck Jonathan; representative of Vice President Kashim Shettima, Aliyu Modibo; Deputy Head of Mission and Counselor, Embassy of Switzerland, Siamak Rouha and Executive Director, Goodluck Jonathan Foundation (GJF), Ann Iyonu, during the launch of report of Democracy Dividend: Governance and Growth in Nigeria, in Abuja on Thursday.

Farmers proffer solutions to Nigeria's \$10bn post-harvest loss crisis

LAGOS

Farmers and agricultural stakeholders have outlined practical measures to tackle Nigeria's mounting post-harvest losses, estimated at about \$10 billion annually.

The stakeholders, who spoke in separate interviews with journalists in Lagos on Thursday, said the country loses between 30 and 50 per cent of its annual agricultural output to post-harvest waste.

The losses, put at between ₦3.5 trillion and ₦5 trillion annually, or roughly \$3.7 billion to \$10 billion, are largely

driven by poor storage systems, inefficient transportation and limited processing capacity, particularly affecting perishable crops such as fruits, vegetables and tubers.

An agricultural analyst and crop farmer, Mr Omotunde Banjoko, identified poor road infrastructure, multiple taxation and inadequate storage facilities as key drivers of the losses.

"Before now, we used to estimate Nigeria's post-harvest loss at about ₦3 trillion annually, but recent reports put it closer to ₦5 trillion. That is a huge concern.

"Most losses occur because

farmers cannot transport their produce from farms to markets or off-takers on time due to poor road conditions," he said.

Banjoko explained that many farm roads are in deplorable condition, discouraging transporters, while those who attempt to access farms often get stuck, delaying delivery and causing spoilage.

He called on local, state and federal governments to prioritise the grading and rehabilitation of roads linking farms to markets.

He also decried multiple taxation and frequent checkpoints by security personnel, which delay the movement of farm produce.

Recounting a personal ex-

perience, he said a truckload of vegetables he transported from Ogun State to Lagos was delayed for over a day at checkpoints, leading to total spoilage.

"By the time the truck was released, the produce had gone bad and could no longer be sold," he said.

Banjoko further stressed the need for cold chain infrastructure, including cooling trucks and storage facilities in markets, to preserve perishable goods and extend shelf life.

Also speaking, the Secretary-General of the All Farmers Association of Nigeria, Mr Femi Oke, emphasised the need for stronger collaboration between farmers and government.

FG unveils leasing model to end exploitative transport financing

ABUJA

The Federal Government has partnered with

Century Information Systems Ltd. (CIS) and the National Commercial Tricycle and Motorcycle Owners and Riders Association of Nigeria to introduce a structured leasing model aimed at eliminating exploitative hire purchase arrangements for motorcycle and tricycle operators.

The development was disclosed in a statement issued on Thursday by the Head of

Media and Corporate Communication of the Equipment Leasing Registration Authority (ELRA), Mr Adebola Sunday.

According to the statement, the Registrar and Chief Executive Officer of ELRA, Mr Donald Wokoma, described the initiative as a major step towards financial inclusion and economic empowerment for operators in the informal transport sector.

Wokoma said the model would ease access to motorcycles and tricycles by removing heavy upfront costs and rigid repayment conditions that

have long burdened operators.

He explained that the scheme offers flexible and structured leasing arrangements, enabling riders to preserve capital, improve productivity and increase earnings, while providing a clear path to asset ownership.

"Leasing opens the door to economic participation for many who were previously excluded," he said.

He added that access to newer and well-maintained vehicles would reduce breakdown-related losses and improve operational efficiency.

The Managing Director of CIS, Dr Abdul Balarabe, said the initiative would deploy technology-driven solutions, including advanced tracking systems, to enhance monitoring, safety and accountability.

He noted that the tracking technology would help curb theft, improve asset recovery and boost overall security for both riders and passengers.

Balarabe added that the company would continue onboarding trade associations, cooperatives and other stakeholders into the leasing ecosystem.

NEWS

JUDICIARY

Lagos judiciary trains 141 magistrates on digital criminal system

LAGOS

The Lagos State Judiciary on Thursday trained 141 magistrates in batches on the Lagos Criminal Information System (LCIS) to strengthen digital justice delivery and improve efficiency in the state's criminal justice system.

Justice Rahman Oshodi, speaking on behalf of the Chief Judge, Justice Kazeem Alogba, at the "Do It Yourself" LCIS

training in Ikeja, said LCIS has replaced guesswork with accurate data, correcting long-held public misconceptions about the criminal justice process.

"Many believe no fewer than 90 percent of inmates are awaiting trial, shaping perceptions that the courts are ineffective," he said.

Citing national statistics, he added that 64 percent of 80,812 inmates are awaiting trial, describing this as concerning.

LCIS, however, presents

a different reality in Lagos, showing that fewer than 10 percent of inmates await trial, while about 60 percent are already undergoing trial.

"LCIS captures when a defendant transitions from awaiting trial to active trial status," Oshodi said.

"The system, introduced in 2018, has processed over 74,000 cases. It is biometric, comprehensive, and publicly accountable. It helps courts identify custodial locations accurately, reducing duplication and avoiding multiple warrants."

He cited a case where LCIS

revealed a defendant detained for years after his case was struck out, leading to his arraignment and eventual conviction.

The training, facilitated by Mr Musbau Famuyiwa of Global T&T New Solutions, aimed to build magistrates' capacity in managing digital case files and accessing real-time information.

Famuyiwa explained that LCIS improves coordination with law enforcement, ensures transparency, enables courts to track documents, verify uploads, and interface seamlessly with agencies including the

police.

Chief Registrar Mr Tajudeen Elias said the training would reduce delays in accessing case updates and stressed that magistrates must move away from relying on WhatsApp for case status inquiries.

"LCIS is essential for managing criminal information and decongesting correctional centres," he said.

Magistrate McDavies Amore described the programme as enlightening and necessary to

meet the demands of a modern digital justice system.

He said the training clarified misconceptions between persons awaiting trial and those undergoing trial, enhancing transparency and public understanding of detention records.

He urged the media to sensitise the public and build trust in the justice system, while commending the Chief Judge and organisers for advancing justice delivery in Lagos State.



STRATEGIC LEASING INITIATIVE:

Executive Secretary of NATOMORAS, Madona Corossi (3rd L); Registrar/CEO, Equipment Leasing Registration Authority (ELRA), Donald Wokoma (3rd R); Managing Director, Century Information Systems Ltd, Dr Abdul Balarabe(R); National President of NATOMORAS, Usman Buba Gwoza (2nd R) and others during a strategic leasing initiative to help riders access motorcycles and tricycles without heavy upfront costs or rigid repayment terms in Abuja on Thursday.

Lagos man docked over alleged N10m fraud

IKORODU (LAGOS)

Police arraigned 40-year-old Gbadebo Fawole on Thursday at Ikorodu Magistrates' Court for allegedly obtaining N10 million by false pretence.

The defendant faces two charges of obtaining money by false pretence and stealing. Prosecutor ASP Aminu Isaac alleged Fawole forged documents of Adewale Emporium

Company to fraudulently obtain N10 million from Prince Adebawale Emporium. He was eventually arrested.

The offences contravene sections 287 and 361 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015. Magistrate Mr B.A. Sonuga granted bail of N1 million with two sureties, ordering verification of their addresses.

The case was adjourned to April 16 for mention.

2 women face trial for alleged N150,000 theft

IBADAN

Patient Ogbeta, 30, and Mary Adekola, 19, appeared before Mapo Grade A Customary Court on Thursday charged with breaking into a house and stealing N150,000.

The defendants pleaded not guilty to a three-count charge of conspiracy, breaking in, and stealing.

Prosecutor Insp. Ayodele Ayeni said the offences occurred on March 10 at 5 p.m.,

at No. 31 Adediran Street, Oke-Itunun area. Ogbeta allegedly colluded with Adekola to steal the money from the home of Joy Okonkwo.

The offences contravened sections 516, 412, and 390 (9) of the Criminal Code Cap 38 Vol. II Law of Oyo State, 2000.

Court President Mrs O.E. Owoseni granted bail of N200,000 each with two relatives as sureties, requiring National Identification Numbers, IBEDC bills, and tax evidence.

The case was adjourned to April 30 for hearing.

Court remands man for alleged culpable homicide

KAFANCHAN

Chief Magistrates' Court in Zonkwa has ordered the remand of 33-year-old farmer Hosea Julius in a correctional centre for alleged culpable homicide.

Julius was charged by the Nigeria Security and Civil De-

fence Corps (NSCDC) with abduction and culpable homicide, contrary to sections 246 and 189 of the Kaduna State Penal Code Law.

NSCDC Prosecutor Marcus Audu told the court that the complainant, Peter Patrick, reported that Julius visited his house in Kagoro during his

absence and took his 21-year-old daughter. The complainant searched for his daughter but could not find her.

Eighteen days later, Julius called to inform him that she had been admitted at Kafanchan General Hospital.

She was found in a coma and died two days later.

Presiding Judge Michael Bawa could not take the suspect's plea for lack of jurisdiction and directed the prosecutor to forward the case file to the State Director of Public Prosecution for legal advice.

The matter was adjourned to April 29 for further mention.

Couple arraigned over alleged marriage certificate forgery

IBADAN

Adeboye Adeyemo, 65, and his wife, Bolanle, 50, were arraigned before a Mapo Grade A Customary Court on Thursday for allegedly forging their marriage certificate.

The couple pleaded not guilty to a three-count charge

of conspiracy, unlawful possession, and forgery.

Prosecutor Insp. Ayodele Ayeni said the crime occurred on March 20 at about 9 a.m. in Mapo, Ibadan.

He alleged that Adeyemo forged the certificate on September 12, 2006, and tendered it as evidence in a divorce suit.

Bolanle opposed its admissibility, saying no certificate was issued before they started living together.

Investigations revealed that the Ibadan North Local Government Registry denied issuing any certificate, confirming the document was fake.

The offences contravened sections 516, 465, and 430 of

the Criminal Code Cap 38 Vol. II Law of Oyo State, 2000.

Court President Mrs S.M. Akintayo granted bail of N200,000 each with two civil servants sureties on grade level 12, requiring pay slips and National Identification Numbers.

The case was adjourned to June 8 for hearing.

Man arraigned for allegedly stealing N1.2m motorcycle

IBADAN

Police on Thursday arraigned 25-year-old Toheeb Hamzat at Mapo Grade A Customary Court for allegedly stealing a motorcycle worth N1.2 million.

He pleaded not guilty to the one-count charge of stealing.

Court President Mrs O.E. Owoseni granted bail of N450,000 with two reliable sureties, one being a blood relative with evidence of tax

payment and valid identification.

The matter was adjourned to April 30 for hearing.

Prosecutor Insp. Ayodele Ayeni said the offences occurred on March 13-14 at Labiran area, and the stolen

TVS motorcycle with registration 219VID belonged to Mr Kazeem Suleiman.

Hamzat was arrested following police investigations.

The offence contravenes section 390 (9) of the Criminal Law of Oyo State.

Fubara hails NLNG success, says PPP model key to resilience

ELIZABETH AGBOEGBULEM

PORT HARCOURT

The Governor of Rivers State, Siminalayi Fubara, has attributed the sustained success of Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Limited to the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model adopted at the inception of the company.

Fubara made the remark while receiving the new Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of NLNG, Adeyeye Falade, who paid him a courtesy visit at Government House, Port Harcourt.

The governor noted that NLNG, which is jointly owned by Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation with 49 percent equity, Shell Gas B.V. with 25.6 percent, Total LNG Nigeria Ltd with 15 percent, and Eni International with 10.4 percent, has thrived due to a structure that allows for shared risks, costs, and technical expertise.

He observed that despite operating in a challenging business and political environment, the company has recorded steady progress in its nearly three decades of existence, attributing this to the Federal Government's decision to allow multinational firms with the requisite expertise to manage operations, while government plays a supervisory role.

"I'm very proud to say that if there is one establishment that has shown resilience, that has survived in the face of all the political issues prevalent in this country, it is the NLNG," Fubara said.

"The reason is simple. Government has no business in business. Leave business to those who can operate it, while government ensures compliance with laws, maintains standards, and places the right people with the needed expertise in charge. That is why NLNG continues to record success."

Foreign

NEWS

Israeli strikes in Lebanon 'grave violation' of ceasefire, Iran minister tells *BBC*

An Iranian minister has told the BBC that Israeli strikes in Lebanon on Wednesday constituted a "grave violation" of the US-Iran ceasefire agreement.

Deputy Foreign Minister Saeed Khatibzadeh said Lebanon was covered by the two-week deal agreed on Tuesday - something the US and Israel dispute - and said the US must choose "between war and ceasefire".

The Lebanese health ministry has said at least 203 people were killed on Wednesday in air strikes on what Israel called Hezbollah command centres and military sites.

Pressed on whether Tehran would likewise ask Hezbollah to stop firing rockets towards Israel, Khatibzadeh claimed the Iranian-backed militant group

had "abided" by the ceasefire.

Hezbollah said on Thursday that it had fired at Israel overnight in response to what it called ceasefire violations.

It has also threatened to keep up its attacks until "Israeli-American aggression" against Lebanon comes to an end.

Speaking to BBC Radio 4's Today programme, Khatibzadeh said Tehran had sent a "crystal clear" message to the White House late on Wednesday which could be summarised as "you cannot have cake and eat it at the same time".

"You cannot ask for a ceasefire and then accept terms and conditions, accept all the areas that a ceasefire is applied to, and name Lebanon, exactly Lebanon in that, and then your ally just starts a massacre."

Pressed on whether this meant Iran would also ask Hezbollah to stop attacking Israel, Khatibzadeh responded that Hezbollah was a "Lebanese freedom movement" which he was "not shy to say" received "support" from Iran.

He said the deal that was reached - "which Trump called a workable framework" - meant Iran, Washington and each of their allies were to adhere to the ceasefire, and claimed Hezbollah had "very much abided by that".

At least 200 people were killed after Israeli strikes in Lebanon on Wednesday, according to health officials.

The minister was also asked about Tehran's warning that ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz without its permission "would be tar-

geted and destroyed" despite the ceasefire, during which ships are meant to be allowed through the vital waterway - and whether this could be considered an act of war.

Khatibzadeh said Iran would abide by international law, while arguing that the international shipping channel comprised the territorial water of Oman and Iran and that both countries had in the past allowed safe passage through it out of "goodwill".

He said that, if the US withdrew its "aggression", Iran would "provide security for safe passage".

Asked if this meant Iran would not be charging ships for passage or threatening them, the minister said Iran wanted the strait to be "peaceful".

'Endless fears': Even if fighting stops, the damage to Iran's children will endure

A woman and her child look at the aftermath of an air strike in Tehran.

The war is inside his head now. A slamming door or cutlery being dropped makes him jump. The ceasefire doesn't change that.

"Before the war, I had no stress at all," says Ali. "But now even the smallest sound causes my brain to react very badly."

Although he is only 15, Ali - not his real name - understands how fear created by the sounds of US and Israeli airstrikes on Iran settle into the mind and won't let go. It triggers an automatic "startle response" to any loud noise.

"The sound of explosions, the shock waves, and the sound of fighter jets flying over the city can have a very serious effect," he says.

More than 20% of Iran's population is under the age of 14 - approximately 20.4 million children. What Ali and many others are experiencing is what psychologists call "hyper arousal" and it can be an early warning of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Ali watches his parents' reactions to what is happening. He looks for the familiar safety of home life but cannot find it. His father is out of work because of the war; his mother constantly apprehensive.

"My mother stays at home, and whenever fighter jets fly overhead, she becomes frightened and stressed and shows clear signs of anxiety and fear. As for myself, I am very afraid," he says.

"I have no contact with my friends... I should be able to study, to work and become an independent person in the future. [I should] not be constantly worrying about politics, living in stress, thinking about bombs falling... [with] endless fears."

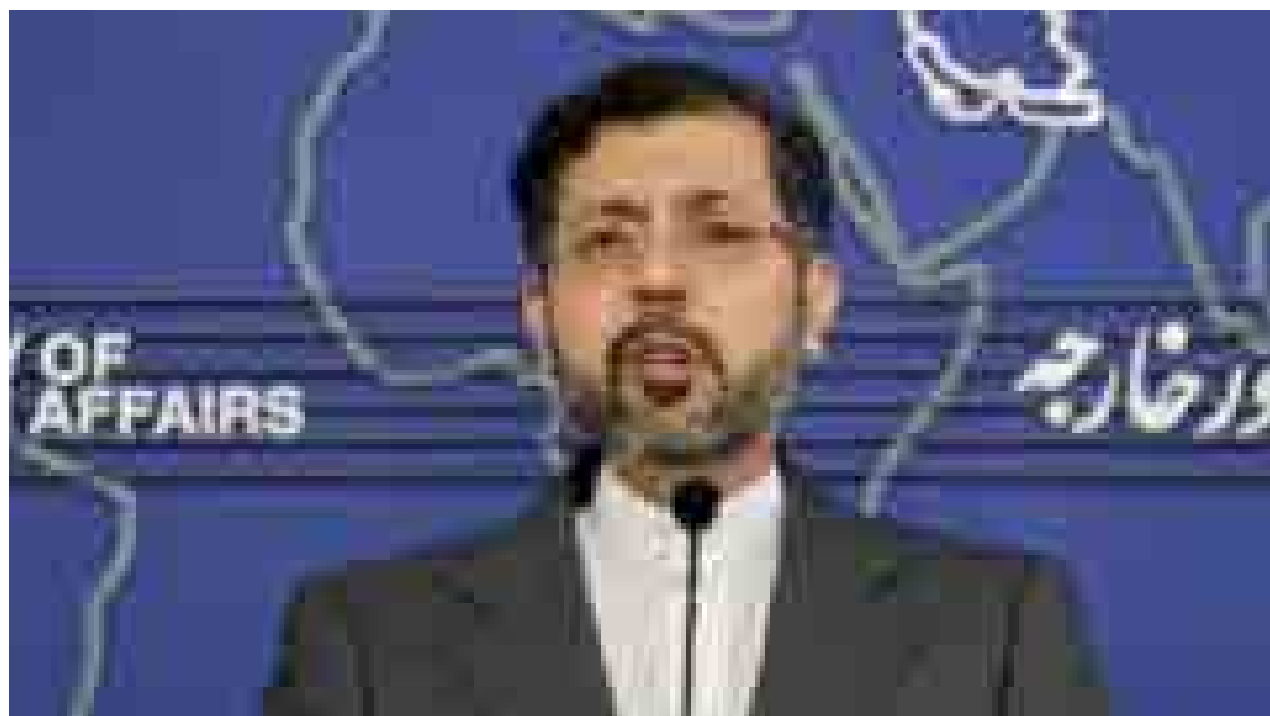
The children's world has shrunk.

With schools closed, the constant threat of attack by US and Israeli aircraft - until the ceasefire - and the streets patrolled by the regime's militia, Iranian families are cooped up in their homes. There is nothing to do except wait and hope the ceasefire holds.

Across the region - from Iran to Israel, the Gulf and Lebanon - the war is bringing fear to the lives of the young.

With the help of trusted sources on the ground, the BBC has been able to obtain testimony from parents and those trying to help children deal with war trauma. Some names have been changed for their safety.

At a human rights centre in Tehran, Aysa - whose name has been changed - is counselling a distressed mother on the telephone.



IRAN MINISTER:

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister, Saeed Khatibzadeh

Trump criticises Nato as alliance chief describes meeting as 'very frank'

Donald Trump has again attacked Nato for not supporting the US in the Iran war, following a private meeting with its Secretary General Mark Rutte at the White House.

In a post shared to Truth Social after the meeting, the US President said: "NATO WASN'T THERE WHEN WE NEEDED THEM, AND THEY WON'T BE THERE IF WE NEED THEM AGAIN."

Meanwhile, Rutte has described his meeting to CNN with Trump as "very frank" and "very open", despite clear disagreements.

Ahead of the talks, Trump had toyed with the idea of quitting the trans-Atlantic military alliance after several Nato countries resisted his calls to help reopen the Strait of Hormuz to ease rising global oil prices.

The White House did not disclose details of the talk.

The Secretary General was at the White House for over two hours on Wednesday, although it is unknown how long the meeting with Trump was.

The meeting was expected to cajole and convince Trump that it's in his interest, and America's, to stay in the Nato alliance.

What is clear, however, is that Trump still has deep misgivings about the alliance and the member countries that he believes did not help the US enough before and during Operation Epic Fury.

In recent weeks, Trump has threatened to withdraw from the 32-member transatlantic alliance.

Asked about Nato's role in the ongoing conflict with Iran, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt on Wednesday

said in a direct quote from the president that Nato was "tested and they failed".

Leavitt said Nato countries had "turned their backs on the American people," who fund their nations' defense, and that Trump would have a "very frank and candid conversation" with the Nato chief.

Meanwhile, much of Rutte's message to Trump appears to be that many European countries did not stand in the way.

The Secretary General told CNN that he pointed out that "the large majority of European nations has been helpful with basing, with logistics, with overflights".

"It's therefore a nuanced picture," Rutte said.

Whether or not that point - and the Secretary General's own warm relationship with Trump - are enough for the US

president remains to be seen.

Asked if the world was safer now than it was before the war, Rutte said "absolutely" and credited that to Trump's "leadership" in degrading Iran's nuclear threats.

He added Nato members do not see the war in Iran as illegal, and most agreed it was important to degrade Iran's nuclear capabilities.

At the end of 2023, the US Congress did vote to prohibit any US president from unilaterally withdrawing from Nato without the approval of a two-thirds Senate majority or an act of Congress.

The relationship between the administration and the Nato alliance was already in a difficult place before the war with Iran, largely as a result of disagreements over Trump's plans for Greenland.

Al Jazeera condemns killing of journalist in Israeli strike in Gaza

Witnesses said Mohammed Wishah was driving along Gaza's coastal road when his vehicle was struck.

Al Jazeera has condemned the killing of one of its Palestinian journalists in an Israeli strike in the Gaza Strip, describing it as a "deliberate and targeted crime".

Mohammed Wishah, a correspondent for the Al Jazeera Mubasher channel, and one other person were killed in a drone strike on a vehicle in Gaza City on Wednesday, the Qatar-based network and local health officials said.

The Israeli military alleged that Wishah was a " Hamas terrorist" and said it carried out the strike because he posed a threat to its forces in the area.

There was no immediate response from Al Jazeera, but both the network and Hamas have previously denied that Wishah was affiliated with the armed group.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) also said it condemned the killing of Wishah "in the strongest possible terms".

He is the 11th Al Jazeera journalist to be killed since the start of the war in Gaza, where a fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas has been in place for six months.

when it was hit by a missile fired by an Israeli drone.

Videos posted online in the aftermath showed the vehicle engulfed in flames.

On Thursday, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) confirmed that its troops targeted Wishah and accused him of being "a key terrorist in Hamas' rocket and weapons production headquarters" who "operated under the guise of an Al Jazeera journalist". It said he was "actively involved in planning attacks against IDF troops, and posed a concrete threat to forces in the area".

As evidence, it cited a February 2024 post from the IDF's Arabic spokesman, which included photos that he said showed Wishah operating weapons, including a rocket-propelled grenade launcher. He said the photos were found on a computer that troops confiscated in Gaza.

At the time, Al Jazeera and Hamas denied Wishah had any affiliation with the group.

A statement issued by Al Jazeera on Wednesday said it "strongly condemns the heinous crime of targeting and killing" its correspondent.

"This constitutes a new and flagrant violation of all international laws and norms, and reflects a continued systematic policy of targeting journalists and silencing the voice of truth," it added.

NEWS**Foreign****Deported to Eswatini:
Cambodian refugee questions
controversial US policy**

A Cambodian refugee long-settled in the United States, ex-convict Pheap Rom, remains bewildered at how he wound up behind bars in the African nation of Eswatini for months after being swept up in Donald Trump's deportation blitz.

When Rom and nine other men -- shackled and escorted onto a plane by US authorities -- landed in the kingdom of Eswatini in October, they were greeted on the tarmac by a squad of "military guys with guns and masks", the 43-year-old said. "I didn't know what was going to happen," he told AFP in an interview in the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh, where he was repatriated in late March. "I didn't understand why I was being deported to Africa because I'm Cambodian."

Rom is one of around 20 men the United States has deported to landlocked Eswatini -- bordering South Africa and Mozambique -- under a Trump administration scheme challenged in courts and described by rights advocates as akin to "human trafficking".

Eswatini, Africa's last absolute monarchy, is among several "third countries" accepting migrants under shadowy deals enabling the US president's push for mass deportations. The nation formerly known as Swaziland agreed to accept up to 160 deportees in exchange for around \$5.1

million, with plans to forward them to their home countries after Washington said their direct repatriations were denied.

But Rom -- living in the United States with "permanent resident" status since 1985 after his family fled Cambodia's genocidal Khmer Rouge regime -- is just the second to be repatriated from Eswatini, after a Jamaican was returned home last year. The remainder may still be trapped inside the deportation process, opaque even to those inside it. - 'In good hands' - Rom served a 15-year prison sentence in the United States after pleading guilty to attempted murder for firing a gun during two neighbourhood disputes, leaving several people wounded. "I know what I did was wrong," he said. "I accepted my punishment." He was detained by immigration authorities upon his release in November 2024, and his green card was revoked after an immigration judge ordered his deportation due to his felony conviction.

He expected to be sent to Cambodia. But landing in Eswatini was like turning back the clock to his prison term, Rom said. His jailers seemed unaware that the men had served their time and looked at them as if they were "criminals because of what the (US) administration was portraying us to be".

**Irish army asked to move some
vehicles in fuel 'blockades'**

Travel in parts of the country, including on the M50 near Dublin, is being affected

The army is being called in to help remove vehicles blocking roads during fuel protests in the Republic of Ireland, with the Irish police now treating protests at fuel depots as "blockades".

Travel in parts of the country is being affected for the third day in a row, with slow-moving convoys protesting against high fuel prices caused by the US and Israeli war against Iran. There are long tailbacks on the M50.

The Irish Minister for Justice, Jim O'Callaghan, said there would be "legal consequences" for the protests.

"It might not arise today or tomorrow but people have licences to drive vehicles, those licences will be affected."

O'Callaghan added that he expected insurance coverage to become "void as a result of the owner of the equipment deciding to voluntarily get involved in such illegal activity".

Gardaí (Irish police) can request the assistance of the Irish army in "aid to the civil power... when required".

In a statement to the media on Thursday, a spokesperson for the gardaí said the force was "moving to an enforcement phase" unless those blocking

access to critical infrastructure "desist and disperse".

They said blockades were putting food, fuel, clean water and animal feed supplies at risk.

Earlier, O'Callaghan said that owners of vehicles removed by the Defence Forces "should not complain later about any damage caused... during removal".

A number of motorways and roads across the country have been blocked by protesters.

Protesters are continuing to blockade fuel sites this afternoon in Cork, Limerick and Galway.

Kevin McPartlan, chief executive of Fuels For Ireland, said some forecourts were now running out of stock as a direct result of the blockades.

"The position is straightforward. If access to fuel terminals and refineries is obstructed, fuel cannot be loaded and delivered as normal," he told Irish broadcaster RTÉ.

Meanwhile, a truck containing chemicals for the treatment of drinking water was delayed leaving a fuel depot in Foynes, County Limerick, for a plant in County Antrim on Thursday, NI Water has said.

However a spokesperson said chemical stocks at its plants had "sufficient storage to mitigate against travel and weather disruption" so there was no impact on the County Antrim water treatment plant.

**DEPORTED TO ESWATINI:**

The photo released by the El Salvador's presidential press office shows US deportees being matched from a parked aircraft.

**Trapped miner rescued from flooded
Mexican tunnel after 14 days**

Mexican army divers have rescued a miner from a flooded underground tunnel two weeks after he was first trapped.

Francisco Zapata Nájera, 42, was stuck 300m (985ft) below ground after an embankment collapsed at the gold mine in the northern Mexican state of Sinaloa.

Video of the rescue shows him standing in waist-deep water, telling his rescuers that he never lost faith during his ordeal.

The search continues for another miner who is still missing.

Twenty-five workers were inside the gold mine when the tailings dam - a structure

which holds mining waste - burst on 25 March.

Twenty-one managed to get out, but four were trapped.

José Alejandro Cástulo was rescued after five days underground, and another miner died, but it took rescuers a full 13 days to locate Francisco Zapata.

Following more than 300 hours of searching, divers finally spotted the blinking of the miner's torch light, which Zapata had turned on and off to alert them to his location.

"How are you, how are you?" rescuers asked as they reached him.

Once they had identified themselves as specialised military

divers, they tell the miner that "your torchlight helped us a lot".

"It guided us," one of the divers added.

"I didn't lose faith, I didn't lose faith," Zapata told his rescuers.

While Zapata appears visibly relieved in the footage, his ordeal was not yet over.

Due to the flooding in the tunnel leading to his location, the divers could not immediately extract him.

Instead, they left him behind with water, cans of tuna and energy bars - and a promise to return soon.

After 20 more hours in which the rescue teams used

pumps to lower the water level in the flooded tunnels, Zapata could finally be taken to the surface.

Wrapped in a thermal blanket and sitting on an electric cart he emerged from the mine on Wednesday and was taken by helicopter to hospital, where he was able to reunite with his family.

Doctors said he was frail but stable and would receive the necessary treatment.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum praised the Mexican army and Zapata's faith and resilience, which she said had made the "astounding rescue" possible.

**US plans to automatically register men
for military draft eligibility**

The US military has relied on an all-volunteer force since 1973.

Young American men could be automatically registered for eligibility for the military draft as soon as December, ending decades of self-registration.

The new rule, proposed by a government agency, would see men being registered automatically rather than being asked to do so themselves within 30 days of their 18th birthday.

Proponents of the plan say that automatic registrations will save the government millions of dollars that are spent every year reminding those eligible that registration is required by law for men between 18 and 25.

The rule is still being reviewed and must be approved before implementation, though it has prompted fears of mandatory US conscription in the event of a crisis.

The last US military draft took place in 1973 after years of massive public opposition during the Vietnam War.

The government agency, the Selective Service System (SSS), submitted the proposal to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs on 30 March, according to the office's website.

The SSS website notes that the change "transfers responsibility for registration from individual men to SSS" through integration with other federal data sources, which it believes will result in a "streamlined" process.

In the US, most men between the ages of 18 and 25 are already required to register. Failing to do so is a crime, and can theoretically lead to five years in federal prison.

While prison sentences are virtually non-existent, failing to do so can also lead to an individual being made ineligible for federal student financial aid and federal jobs. Non-citizens who do not register can also be denied US citizenship.

A vast majority of US states and territories also automatically register men for selective service when driver's licenses

are issued.

Despite those rules, compliance fell to 81% in 2024, according to government data.

The new change in favour of automatic registration was approved by Congress in December as part of the National Defense Authorization Act, which authorises funding for the US military and its operations around the globe.

Pennsylvania Democratic Representative Chrissy Houlahan, who sponsored the language, was quoted as saying at the time that the move would allow the government to "re-dedicate resources".

"Basically that means money, towards readiness and towards mobilisation," Houlahan was quoted as saying by Military Times. "Rather than towards education and advertising campaigns driven to register people."

The change, however, prompted fears among some Americans that the US is moving towards a military draft if

the war with Iran escalates or a crisis breaks out in the future.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt directly addressed a question on the draft and the possibility of US troops on the ground in Iran during an interview with Fox News in early March.

"It's not part of the current plan right now, but the president, again, wisely keeps his options on table," Leavitt responded. "There's no greater priority or responsibility to this president than, of course, protecting the American people and protecting our troops."

A wartime draft has been implemented by the US government six times in the country's history, most recently during the Vietnam War.

Approximately 1.8 million Americans were drafted during the war, which ultimately led to the creation of an all-volunteer military in 1973. Selective service registration was reinstated by then-President Jimmy Carter in 1980.

Entertainment

— with Davidson Imosime Izegaegbe —

Film archive and its debacle in Nigeria

The rhythmic flickering light of a film projector is often likened to a heartbeat, mechanical art pulse that brings stories to life before the creative minds of the diverse heterogeneous audiences. In Nigeria, however, we may say the heartbeat is faint, struggling against the suffocating weight of neglect, climatic hostility, and systemic indifference by those who are suppose to look at it with a different eye and mind. This might seem a bit weird but again, it is the sad reality, the bitter truth. What value do we place on our creative abilities, the various art forms, how do we intend or how have we fared in managing its potential and future after the present?

We do know that the Nigerian film industry, popularly known as Nollywood, has blossomed into a global titan of content production, however, it still suffers from a tragic case of cultural amnesia. We are a nation that tells a thousand stories a day but forgets them by nightfall, and sadly now see it as a philosophy. The state of film archiving in Nigeria is not merely a technical challenge, but a full-blown debacle that threatens to erase the audiovisual DNA of our national identity.

This may sound like a cracked record attempting to entertain a generation of zoomers, but far from it as few years from now, what many generations suffered would all be rolled in one single catastrophe. To understand the gravity of the current debacle, one may be lured to look back at the celluloid era, a period between the 1960s and the late 1980s. This was the age of icons like Hubert Ogunde, Adeyemi Afolayan (Ade Love), Eddie Ugbomah, and Ola Balogun. These pioneers shot and interpreted their stories on 16mm and 35mm film, creating masterpieces that captured the post-colonial euphoria and the sociocultural shifts of a young nation through a period.

Today, many of those original negatives are gone with the wind of time. Some have rotted away in forgotten humid storerooms, victims of vinegar syndrome, a chemical breakdown that turns film into a sticky, acidic mess. While still lamenting in the manner we lost some of our historical materials, others were lost during the various chaotic transitions of government agencies, or worse, discarded by heirs who saw old film cans as junk rather than jewels, or never believed in continuity. What we as Nigerians failed to realise is that when we lose films by the likes of Ogunde, Ugbomah or Balogun, we do not just lose a movie; we lose the captured history of sight, sound, and soul of an era. We lose the ability to see how we once walked, talked, dreamt of the way of life of a unique period with its unique challenges. If a period in the history of our nation could boldly lose the captured essence of their creative existence and expression, what would ours look like?

The institutional custodian of our cinematic heritage is the National Film Video and Sound Archive (NFVSA), located in Jos. In theory, it is the fortress where our visual history should



be safe smile towards being re-appreciated in years to come. In reality, it has long been plagued by the "Nigerian Factor" and the rest is we talk about it now. Archiving is the soul of history. Sad truth is, it is an expensive, high-precision endeavor that requires 24-hour climate control, specialized scanners, and highly trained conservators whose mindsets are designed to protect these materials for the future.

In a country where power supply is erratic and the budget for culture is often the first to be slashed, the NFVSA has struggled like an embryo not willing to be aborted. While there have been sporadic efforts to digitize this data collection, the pace is glacial compared to the rate of decay within its thinking space. The debacle in all lies in the fact that Jos, once chosen for its temperate climate, is no longer enough of a shield against the lack of consistent funding plaque with it. Without a massive infusion of technology and political will, the NFVSA risks becoming a graveyard or abandoned cemetery rather than a film hi-tech library.

One might argue without difficulties but facts that the New Nollywood and the digital revolution have solved the problem. If you believe that, then I can tell you for free that lions, goats and yams are kept in same cage in present day zoos. You may hear that nowadays, everything is on hard drives and cloud for data storage right? Again, it's like telling you a prostitute delivered of a baby as a virgin. This myopic talk about data storage in Nigeria is a dangerous misconception. Digital files are surprisingly fragile as we all know. Hard drives fail, file formats become obsolete, and cloud subscriptions lapse. Do we never get tired of evaluating or solving critical problems like Nigeria politicians?

I may not be far from truth if I say

It is time to treat our cinematic heritage not as a discarded hobby, but as a sacred trust. The cameras are still rolling, but until we intentionally save what has already been captured, we are simply filming our own disappearance

that the "Home Video" boom of the 1990s shot on VHS and VCD, may currently be facing its own extinction ceremony. The magnetic tapes of the classics of that unique era before the CD are de-magnetizing. We may find excuses for our hatred or creative ignorance by saying we may not have the masters tapes because these films were produced in a guerrilla fashion-ista, because many producers did not keep master tapes in archival conditions and so on. Of course we can, if such lies can enable us move like politicians avoiding salient facts.

As we move further into the 4K and 8K future, the low-resolution digital artifacts of our recent past are being left behind, un-upscaled and un-preserved and allowed to evaporate like a fart noticed by all for a while before it's smell vanished into oblivion. We are effectively burning the bridge behind

us as we move each step up the ladder.

The debacle is not just sentimental; it is economic. A well-maintained and structured film archive is a goldmine. In Hollywood and Europe, studios make billions by licensing archival footage, releasing restored "Criterion" editions, and selling clips to documentarians.

Nigeria is currently witnessing a "nostalgia wave" in fashion and music, yet filmmakers who want to create periodic pieces or documentaries about Nigeria history often have to buy footage from the British Pathé or Reuters. Are we not so blessed? Just imagine being forced to buy back our own history in foreign currency from those sensible enough to see the value in what we under value simply because we failed to keep the receipts of the history of ourselves. By neglecting our archives, we are leaving billions of Naira on the table and depriving the next generation of filmmakers of a visual reference point. The neglect of archival evidence of an existence is a dark humor in an unlit pathway in the night and yet expect unguarded children to laugh at it as a joke.

It would be remiss and a disservice to ignore the few who are fighting back. Truly, many private initiatives and academic interventions have attempted to plug the gap. Institutions like the June 12 Cultural Centre and private collectors have made efforts to salvage what remains, but how do you squeeze poured milk on the sand back into the milk tin or jar? International collaborations, such as the restoration of the 1970 film Kongi's Harvest, truly shows what is possible when expertise deliberately meets intent. However, the burden of national heritage cannot rest solely on the tiny shoulders of private individuals. It requires a centralized, state-backed mission. We

may yet not know it, but we do need a "National Emergency on Film Preservation."

The laws regarding "Legal Deposit" must be deliberately and intentionally strengthened, by making every filmmaker who receives a censorship board classification on his submitted film, be made to deposit a high-quality master copy into a revamped national archive. Let government offer tax incentives to tech companies that provide the infrastructure for digital archiving to also help this process. Imagine a "Nollywood Vault", a state-of-the-art facility powered by renewable energy, dedicated to the restoration of every Nigerian film from 1960 to the present. This may seem like a folklore but it is realistic and practicable.

Our universities can intentionally be part of this process to save our history. Film preservation can become a core part of the curriculum in our film schools and other related departments. We must train a new generation of "Film Doctors" who know how to treat a moldy reel and how to migrate data across formats. Any nation without an archive is like a person with amnesia, functional in the moment, but devoid of an identity. The debacle of film archiving in Nigeria is a silent crisis, but it is not an irreversible one. Every day we wait, another foot of film turns to dust, and another hard drive clicks into silence of death. Our films are the mirrors of our lives. If we allow these mirrors to shatter and fade, we will eventually look at ourselves and see nothing but a blank space. It is time to treat our cinematic heritage not as a discarded hobby, but as a sacred trust. The cameras are still rolling, but until we intentionally save what has already been captured, we are simply filming our own disappearance.

ArtsWorld with Francis Odupute 08023680030

Deconstructing love and fear through Bali Audu's "A Letter To You"

OLUSHOLA OLAJOBI

In the quiet, unspoken spaces between people, there lays a profound tension which reminisces a delicate tug-of-war between the desire to connect and the terror of being truly seen. In the contemporary Nigerian art scene, only few artists have captured this internal struggle with as much meticulous grace and precision as Bali Audu.

Her striking 2025 piece, "A Letter To You," is not merely a painting but a psychological map rendered through acrylic in charting the fragmented nature of human emotion.

To fully appreciate the depth of Bali's work, one must first look at her artistic roots with a degree in Textile Arts from the University of Lagos in 2015.

Bali's practice is inherently informed by the rhythm of patterns since transitioning into full time studio painting practice in 2022, where she has taken the intricate geometry of traditional Henna dot patterns and elevated them into a sophisticated contemporary visual language.

In "A Letter To You," this signature technique is masterfully deployed. The canvas transforms into a mosaic of meticulously placed circular disks of varying sizes and colours. These dots evidently are not just stylistic choices; they act as visual metaphors. They represent the myriad, isolated moments, traumas, and memories that collectively form our identity.

Bali visually reminds us that we are never just one solid entity but rather an amalgamation of fragments holding onto each other, trying to form a cohesive whole.

The painting immediately draws the view-

er into a moody, atmospheric blue void. In the foreground stands a solidly rendered female figure, her skin a rich tapestry of copper, amber, and deep brown dots. She looks downward, her posture quiet and contemplative, clutching what appears to be the titular letter, a physical manifestation of unsaid words, heavy with the weight of consequence.

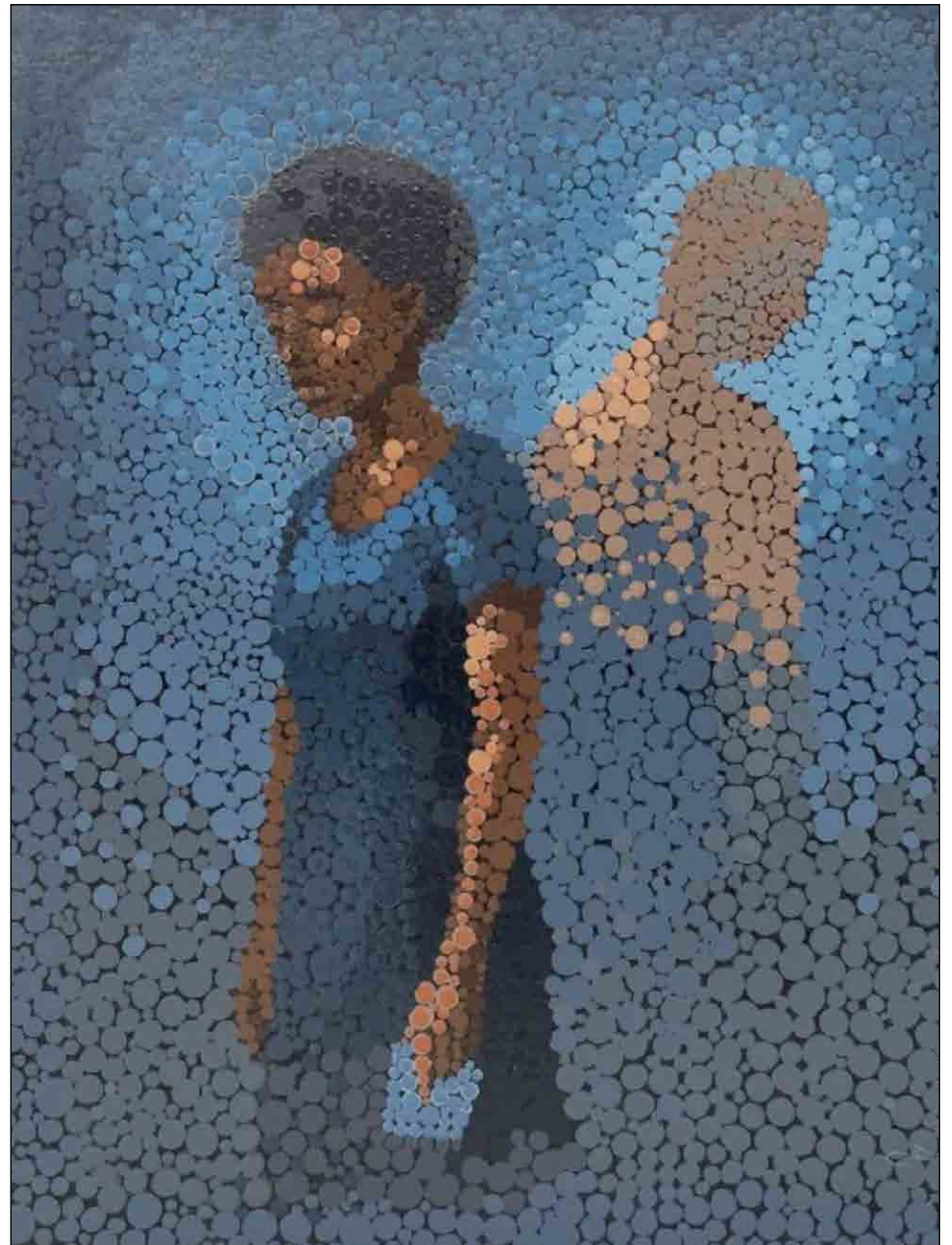
But it is the presence of the second figure in the background that elevates the painting from a portrait to a profound narrative visual experience. Facing the opposite direction is a translucent, sandy-hued silhouette, seemingly dissolving into the background.

Is this the intended recipient of the letter walking away? Or is it a ghostly projection of the subject's own past self, her doubts, or her internal "other"?

The physical proximity of the two figures, coupled with their divergent gazes, perfectly encapsulates what Bali describes in her notes as "the tension between longing for connection and the fear of vulnerability."

Bali's own reflection on the piece states that it explores "the quiet inner conflicts that shape who we become." This resonates deeply within the modern African context and indeed, the global human experience especially in the age where strength is often prioritised over vulnerability, and emotional walls are built high for self-preservation.

"A Letter To You" gives us permission to be fragmented. The blurring edges of the silhouettes suggest that our feelings of love and fear are never static; they are constantly shifting, bleeding into our environment and into the people we hold dear.



With this art piece, Bali Audu proves once again why she is a distinct and resonant voice in contemporary African art. By marrying her textile heritage with profound psychological inquiry, she has created a visual poem about the

courage it takes to reach out. In a modern world increasingly defined by digital pixels and fleeting interactions, Bali's meticulously painted dots remind us of the analog, messy, and beautiful reality of the human heart.

Traditions! Traditions! Traditions!

OSIKE MICHAEL

The Macmillan English Dictionary defines tradition as a very old custom, belief, or story.

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines tradition as a belief, custom, or way of doing something that has existed for a long time among a particular group of people.

THE EVIL PARTS OF TRADITION

Tradition, as defined by several dictionaries, is a belief or practice passed from one generation to another. However, it also has an evil side that can be inhuman in nature.

This negative side of tradition has caused great harm to the lives of many people. It has also favoured some individuals who benefit from the suffering of others—those who find pleasure in reaping from other people's pain.

These individuals are not demons, nor are they aliens from space; rather, they are our fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters. They too are captives

of these evil traditions.

FOUNDERS OF TRADITIONS

Traditions did not create themselves; they were created by people whom the community looked up to—those held in high regard and considered wise.

These were the individuals who made traditions according to the knowledge they had at that time. But those individuals have been dead for thousands of years, and things have changed with time.

Nothing in this world, except the land, the moon, the sun, the stars, and the clouds, is fixed—change is constant.

If change is constant, it means things are no longer the way they once were during the days of our elders who made these traditions. They created traditions according to the knowledge available to them then.

During those times, there were no televisions, telephones, cell phones, airplanes, motor cars, or motorbikes. People worshipped idols because that was all they knew. But today, knowledge has increased—we are no longer

ignorant as our founding fathers once were. We now know what is evil and what is good.

THE LIVES OF THE 21ST CENTURY AS REGARDS TO TRADITION

We are living in the 21st century; we are no longer in the Stone Age. We are civilised people.

It would be shameful and show a lack of adequate information for anyone to continue practicing traditions created by people with limited knowledge compared to the present.

As civilised individuals, we must review and question inhuman traditions, and we must change those that cause harm.

We must prove that we are not ignorant or uncivilised. We are not in the Stone Age anymore.

If we continue harmful traditional practices out of greed or personal benefit without considering the pain they cause others, then we are no different from those who were ignorant.

If those who created these traditions were alive today, they would have changed them because they

would have gained new knowledge.

THE INTENTIONS OF OUR FOUNDING FATHERS

Our founding fathers were not evil people. They were men who had the best interests of their people at heart—that is why they were chosen as leaders.

If they had known better, they would have created traditions that were not harmful.

But now that we are alive and know better, it would be wickedness for us to continue following the harmful paths of the past.

Traditions were made by people and for people; they did not come from space. Therefore, it is our responsibility to change any traditional practice that is evil or abusive to human existence.

Every ethnic group should review its traditions and make the necessary changes that promote human dignity and progress.

TRADITION'S GOOD VALUES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS TO EMULATE

Tradition is a belief system meant

to guide future generations. It has both good and bad sides.

The younger generation should embrace the good values of tradition and reject the harmful ones.

For example, the Benin bronze artefacts are slowly fading away. Therefore, the youth and upcoming generations should engage in creating bronze artworks to preserve Benin culture.

In line with this, the Oba of Benin ordered that women should not wear Okuku during their traditional marriages in order to preserve its cultural value.

HARMFUL CULTURAL PRACTICES

Harmful cultural practices—often based on fear, ignorance, and superstition—deny people their human rights.

Though tradition is important for identity, not all traditional practices should be maintained.

Societies must question and correct all harmful practices and replace them with values that promote respect for life, dignity, and progress

Friday Sermon

Warning against consuming alcohol

MAJOR M. Y. BABANGIDA

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, who made Islam prevail over all other religions, for He, the Exalted, said: "Indeed, the religion with Allah is Islam." He sealed all messages with His message, all books with His book, and all messengers with His messenger. So praise be to Allah for the blessing of Islam and faith, and I bear witness that there is no god but Allah.

He alone has no partner, the Almighty who cannot be defeated or humiliated, and the Everlasting, for everything else is transient. He accepts those who repent, breaks the backs of the tyrants, destroys the oppressors, and helps those in distress. Glory be to Him, blessed be God, Lord of the worlds.

O people, God Almighty said: O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, idols, and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful. Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred through intoxicants and gambling. In wine and gambling, and it hinders you from remembering God and from prayer. So will you not desist?

In this verse, God Almighty has forbidden and warned against the drinking of alcohol. It has been narrated that Uthman ibn Affan (may God be pleased with him) said, "Avoid alcohol, for it is the mother of all evils." Whoever does not avoid it has disobeyed God and His Messenger and deserves punishment for disobeying God and His Messenger.

Abdullah ibn Umar said that alcohol is the greatest of sins and is undoubtedly the mother of all evils, as the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Every intoxicant is alcohol, and all alcohol is forbidden."

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) also said: "The drunkard is like an idol worshipper. And wine is anything that clouds the mind, whether it is wet or dry, eaten or drunk."

The Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "God has cursed wine, its drinker, its server, its seller, its buyer, its presser, its extractor, and its distributor. And the one who carries it and the one to whom it is carried"

On the authority of Abdullah bin Umar, he said: Do not greet the one who drinks wine, do not visit them when they are sick, and do not pray over them when they die. And indeed, the wine drinker will come on the Day of Resurrection with his face blackened, his tongue hanging out on his chest, and his saliva dripping. Everyone who sees him and knows him to be a drinker of alcohol will find him repulsive.

On the authority of Abu Hurairah, on the authority of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), he said: "A thief does not steal while he is a believer, an adulterer does not commit adultery while he is a believer, and a

HOW ALCOHOL AFFECTS THE BODY

UnityPoint Health

BRAIN

- Headaches are common with alcohol use. Long-term use causes damage, such as stroke and dementia.

MENTAL HEALTH

- Existing anxiety and depression tend to be worse with alcohol.

LIVER

- Fatty liver, alcoholic hepatitis, fibrosis and cirrhosis can develop in heavy drinkers.

HEART

- Chronic, heavy drinking is linked to heart disease.

PANCREAS

- Heavy drinking can cause inflammation and pancreatitis (acute or chronic).

STOMACH

- Gastritis and peptic ulcers are caused by alcohol-induced inflammation and sores.

DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

- Alcohol-induced irritation in the gut leads to diarrhea and vomiting.

REPRODUCTION

- For men, alcohol decreases sperm count and quality. In women, the risk of miscarriage and pre-term births are higher.

NERVES

- Alcohol can cause neuropathy and permanent nerve damage.

MUSCULOSKELETAL

- Excessive drinking causes muscle cramps and increases the risk of osteoporosis and gout.

METABOLISM

- Metabolic syndrome can develop in heavy drinkers, which causes high blood pressure, elevated blood sugar and excess fat.

IMMUNE SYSTEM

- Drinking impacts the body's ability to recover from an illness.

person who drinks alcohol does not drink it while he is a believer."

In the Hadith, whoever commits adultery or drinks alcohol, God removes faith from him as one removes a shirt from one's head. O servants of God, the one who drinks alcohol corrupts his religion and his health, squanders his wealth, trifles with his dignity and virtue, and hastens towards evil and corruption with his hands and feet, and malicious towards morals and religions.

O people, God has made your blood, your wealth, and your honour sacred, just as the Sacred House is sacred in the Sacred Month in the Sacred Land.

God Almighty said, "And do not consume one another's wealth unjustly and bribe the rulers."

The Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, said: Every Muslim is inviolable to another Muslim in his blood, his wealth, and his honour.

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "Injustice will be darkness on the Day of Resurrection."

He also said, "Beware the supplication of the oppressed, for it is carried upon the clouds. Indeed, in that is a reminder for whoever has a heart or gives ear while he is present."

O servants of God, The sins of God's servants are recorded with Him in three registers: a register that will not be forgiven, which is associating partners with God, the All-Powerful, the Firm; a register that will not be overlooked, which contains the rights of all people and the dues of the op-

pressed against the oppressors, and everything is recorded in a clear register; and a register that God forgives.

And the record is with God; He forgives what is in it for whomever He wills and punishes for it whomever He wills. And your Lord is not unjust to His servants. It is in it that your sins with God and your negligence and shortcomings in fulfilling religious obligations are recorded, and you will surely know its consequences after a while.

Indeed, there are noble guardians over you. And indeed, there are noble scribes over you. O people, whoever is content with Allah as his Lord, with Islam as his religion, and with Muhammad as his Prophet and Messenger, how can he wage war against Allah with sins and not fear a Day

”


Do not greet the one who drinks wine, do not visit them when they are sick, and do not pray over them when they die. And indeed, the wine drinker will come on the Day of Resurrection with his face blackened, his tongue hanging out on his chest, and his saliva dripping.

that will turn children's hair white? The sky will be rent asunder by it. His promise is ever fulfilled. And how can he disobey the Quran and follow Satan, when Satan is a betrayer of mankind?

Brothers and sisters in Islam, alcoholism has destroyed many of our able bodied men and women who would have been very useful in keeping our society stronger. Many have gone mentally destroyed by alcoholism. The society has suffered losses more than it has gained from alcoholism.

O Allah, grant glory to Islam and the Muslims, and humiliate polytheism and the polytheists. Destroy Your enemies, our enemies and the enemies of the religion, and grant victory to Your believing servants. Peace be upon the Messengers, and praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

• Major M. Y. Babangida is the 4-Brigade Central Mosque Imam in Benin City.

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FP 4X2	73,000	78,475	80,700	86,753	4 X 2	45,260	48,655	34,400	36,980
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Sports

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

Nigeria U-18, U-20 teams storm Semi-Finals at IHF Trophy Africa Zone 3



Nigeria's Under-18 and Under-20 men's handball teams have both qualified for the semi-finals of the ongoing IHF Trophy Africa Zone 3 tournament in Lomé following impressive victories over Benin and Ivory Coast respectively.

The Coach Abdulhakim Yakubu tutored Under-18 side delivered a dominant performance, thrashing Benin Republic 41-19 to book their place in the last four.

The defending champion of the Youth Category of the IHF Trophy Africa Zone 3, controlled the game from start to finish, showcasing attacking flair and defensive solidity to overwhelm their opponents.

The victory confirms the Under-18 team's strong run in the competition, as they continue to assert themselves as

one of the standout teams in the tournament.

Meanwhile, the Under-20 team, guided by Coach David Emmanuel, also secured a convincing semi-final berth with a commanding 28-10 win over Ivory Coast. Nigeria established early control, taking a 10-5 lead into halftime before turning on the style in the second half to seal a comprehensive victory.

Both teams have now underlined their credentials as serious contenders in the tournament organised by the International Handball Federation, as they move a step closer to the title.

With semi-final spots secured, attention now shifts to the knockout stage where Nigeria will be aiming to maintain their unbeaten run and push for qualification to the continental phase of the competition.



PATRICE MOTSEPE

CAF President visits Senegal amid AFCON title controversy

President of the Confederation of African Football, Patrice Motsepe, has arrived in Dakar for high level talks following the controversial decision to strip Senegal of their Africa Cup of Nations title and award it to Morocco.

The visit comes nearly a month after CAF overturned Senegal's 1-0 victory over Morocco in the final played on January 18, a decision that has generated widespread debate across the football community and drawn sharp reactions from Senegalese authorities.

Motsepe had earlier announced plans to visit both Senegal and Morocco, stressing the need for unity and collaboration in advancing African football despite the growing criticism

facing the continental body.

During his stay in Dakar, the CAF president is expected to meet with Senegal's leader, Bassirou Diomaye Faye, at the presidential palace, with both sides set to address the situation and its broader implications. A joint press conference is also scheduled as part of the visit.

The controversy stems from CAF's ruling on March 17, which cited disciplinary regulations after Senegalese players, alongside head coach Pape Thiaw and officials, walked off the pitch in protest during the final moments of the match in Rabat. The protest followed the awarding of a stoppage time penalty to Morocco, which was ultimately missed by forward Brahim Diaz.

Unity Cup returns to London as Nigeria, Jamaica, Zimbabwe, India clash in 2026 edition

The Unity Cup, a flagship international football tournament celebrating Afrocentric heritage and global diaspora communities, will return to its historic home in South London from May 26 to 30, 2026.

Organisers have confirmed that the iconic The Valley, home of Charlton Athletic FC, will host the four-nation competition featuring Nigeria, Jamaica, Zimbabwe and India.

The 2026 edition carries added emotional significance, marking a return to the venue that staged the landmark 2004 tournament involving Nigeria, Jamaica and the Republic of Ireland—an event widely credited with establishing the Unity Cup's unique fusion of football and cultural celebration. Soccer

Nigeria's senior national team, the Super Eagles, head into the tournament as defending champions, having lifted the 2025 title in Brentford. Nigeria Football Federation president, Ibrahim Musa Gusau, expressed confidence that the team would aim to retain the trophy.

"The Super Eagles will look to retain their title again this summer, even as they will not under-rate India, Jamaica and Zimbabwe. The tournament promises to be explosive," Gusau said.

RIVALRIES RENEWED IN OPENING FIXTURES

The competition will kick off on May 26 with a high-profile semi-final clash between Nigeria and Zimbabwe, a rematch of their recent encounters in the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers. The fixture is expected to reignite a growing rivalry between the

Super Eagles and the Warriors.

A day later, Jamaica will face India in what organisers have branded a "Culture Clash," blending football with vibrant expressions of Dancehall and Desi traditions, reflecting the diversity of diaspora communities in the United Kingdom.

FESTIVAL ATMOSPHERE ON FINALS DAY

The grand finale on May 30 will feature a third-place playoff followed by the championship match, alongside a rich cultural programme designed to transform The Valley into a festival ground.



SUPER EAGLES WITH CELEBRATE WITH THE UNITY CUP

Transfer: Ex-Liverpool star tells Osimhen Premier League club to join

Former Dietmar Hamann has advised Nigerian striker Victor Osimhen to consider a move to Newcastle United if he decides to leave Galatasaray.

Osimhen has repeatedly been linked with a switch to the Premier League in recent seasons, with clubs such as Chelsea, Arsenal and Manchester United previously showing

interest in the forward. Soccer

The Nigeria international spent the 2024-25 campaign on loan at Galatasaray, where he played a key role in helping the club secure a domestic double. His performances convinced the Turkish side to complete a permanent transfer from Napoli last summer.

Despite that move, speculation

continues to grow around his future, with reports linking the 27-year-old striker with a possible exit from the Turkish Super Lig champions at the end of the current season.

Hamann believes Osimhen possesses the qualities needed to thrive in England, pointing to his pace, strength and finishing ability as attributes that would make him a success in the Premier League.

The former Liverpool midfielder also suggested that Newcastle United could be a suitable destination, particularly if the club decides to part ways with striker Nick Woltemade.

According to Hamann, Osimhen would fit seamlessly into Newcastle's attacking setup and could make an immediate impact if the move materialises, further strengthening the club's ambitions in domestic and European competitions



VICTOR OSIMHEN

Nigeria overlooked as FIFA names 170 referees for 2026 World Cup

The Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) on Thursday revealed the comprehensive list of Referees for the 104 games of the 2026 World Cup with no Nigerian on the schedule.

52 Centre Referees, 88 assistant Referees and 30 video match officials were unveiled for the tournament which begins this summer across the North American countries of United States, Canada and Mexico.

The absence of Nigeria referees at global events has continued to be a source of worry for football stakeholders who expected at least a representative from the country going by their famed football prowess.

Among those who made the cut after the stringent conditions was Atcho Pierre, a 33-year-old Gabonese who is among the 52 centre referees confirmed for the football fiesta.

According to a statement from FIFA, "The FIFA Team One cohort includes 52 referees, 88

assistant referees and 30 video match officials, who hail from all six confederations and 50 Member Associations, in what is the most comprehensive line-up of match officials in FIFA World Cup history. The appointments were made on the basis of FIFA's long-standing "quality first" principle, while consideration was given to the consistency of the performances delivered by candidates at FIFA tournaments, as well as in international and domestic competitions in recent years."

Pierluigi Collina, FIFA's Chief Refereeing Officer and chairman of the FIFA Referees Committee, said: "The selected match officials are the very best in the world. They were part of a wider pool of officials that was identified and monitored over the past three years. They have attended seminars and officiated at FIFA tournaments. In addition, their performances in domestic and international matches were regularly assessed."

2026 President Federations Cup: Bendel Insurance FC advance to Semi finals after 2-1 triumph over Delight FA

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Bendel Insurance Football Club, on Thursday, April 9, 2026 began the defence of Edo State FA Cup title brilliantly as they defeated Delight Football Academy 2-1 to advance to the semifinals stage.

Kayode Oke gave the defending champions an early lead 11 minutes into 3rd quarter final match at the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium, Benin.

Delight FA however rose to the occasion and got an equalizer through Chuka Nwaigwe in the 32nd minute of the game.

Skipper Efe Enabulele with a curled free kick struck from about 22 yards in the 77th minute to seal victory for the Benin Arsenal.

Bendel Insurance FC have been on bye since the start of the challenge Cup and will be facing ST. Andrews FC in the semifinals.



BENDEL INSURANCE FC CELEBRATING

3rd National Para Games: Enabulele rewards Medalist as team Edo presents trophy

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Impressed by the performance of team Edo at the recently concluded 3rd National Para Games in Abuja, the Executive Chairman Edo State Sports Commission Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele has promised Edo Para athletes improved welfare and adequate space for representation in subsequent tournaments.

The Edo Sports Commission boss made the promise on Thursday, April 9, 2026 during the reception ceremony he organized in honour of the team who returned with 3rd position trophy.

Enabulele commended the team Edo Para athletes for their commitment, determination and discipline throughout the championship. He announced Fifty Thousand Naira (50,000) each for every gold Medalist as a token of appreciation for their exceptional performance.

"Let me welcome you back home and to commend you for your adequate representation. You made us proud. We went to the Abuja games with the smallest size of contingent yet you finished third. I am proud of you and I want to assure you that henceforth, we are going to give you more space and increase the size of your team to any major tournament.

"You have demonstrated that you have strong character and resilience, therefore you deserve more. We are giving you improved welfare and respect.

You represented Edo well in Abuja. We did not hear of any complaints or issues. I did not expect much from you but you

people proved your worth and performed beyond my expectations. Thank you for what you have done and we want more at the National Sports Festival holding in Enugu later this year." He said.

The Executive Director, representing Edo North in the Edo State Sports Commission, Hon Frank Ilaboya who represented the Executive Chairman at the ceremony supported the chairman's cash reward for the athletes with his personal cash donation.



EDO PARA ATHLETES

Ikenne to host Super Falcons friendly matches against Cape Verde

The Remo Stars Stadium in Ikenne, Ogun State, has been confirmed as the venue for the upcoming international friendly matches between Nigeria's Super Falcons and their counterparts from Cape Verde.

The two nations will face each other in a double header scheduled for Wednesday, April 15 and Saturday, April 18, with both fixtures expected to draw significant attention as prepara-

tions intensify ahead of major continental engagements.

The friendlies form part of both teams' build up to the 2026 Women's Africa Cup of Nations, where they will be aiming to make strong impressions. For Nigeria, the matches present another opportunity to fine tune tactics, assess squad depth and strengthen team chemistry as they prepare to compete for continental honours once again.

The Super Falcons head into the encounter with a strong record against Cape Verde, following their previous meetings during the 2023 Women's Africa Cup of Nations qualifiers. On that occasion, Nigeria secured a hard fought 2-1 victory away from home in the first leg before returning to dominate the reverse fixture with a comprehensive 5-0 win.

With that history in mind, expectations will be high for another solid performance from the African champions, although the friendlies are expected to serve more as a platform for experimentation and tactical adjustments rather than purely results driven contests.

Preparations for the fixtures are set to begin with the team expected to open camp in Abuja later this weekend. The coaching crew will use the period to evaluate players, integrate new options into the squad and reinforce key tactical approaches ahead of the tournament.



SUPER FALCONS

NNL: Inter Lagos return to NPFL

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Inter Lagos have successfully secured promotion to the Nigeria Premier Football League, marking a significant milestone in the club's Soccer history.

Their promotion was confirmed on Monday after they settled for a 1-1 draw against Smart City. Although it was not a victory, the single point gained from the encounter proved sufficient to seal their place in Nigeria's top-flight league.

Inter Lagos have enjoyed an impressive campaign in the Nigeria National League, where they currently lead the Conference A standings. The team has accumulated 29 points from 15 matches, demonstrating consistency and resilience throughout the season. Their performances have set them apart as one of the standout sides in the division.

With this achievement, Inter Lagos become the second club to earn promotion to the NPFL this season, following Doma United, who had earlier confirmed their own spot in the elite league.

The promotion represents a historic breakthrough for Inter Lagos, as they will be competing in the NPFL for the very first time. It is a major step forward for the club, reflecting their steady growth and ambition to establish themselves among Nigeria's football elite.

Despite the confirmation of two promoted teams, the race is not yet over in the NNL. Two additional promotion slots remain undecided, with several clubs still battling for a chance to join the NPFL next season. The remaining fixtures are expected to be highly competitive as teams push to secure the final available tickets.



INTER LAGOS IN TRAINING

Nigeria U-18, U-20 Teams storm Semi-Finals at IHF Trophy Africa Zone 3

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NIGERIA U-18, U-20 TEAMS

Sports

Akiotu pledges unity, reform in BON acceptance speech

Newly elected Chairman of the Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria (BON), Senior High Chief Tony Akiotu, has pledged to lead an inclusive, forward-looking administration focused on sustainability, digital transition, and industry growth.

Akiotu made the commitment on Wednesday in his acceptance speech following his election as BON chairman, describing his victory as a collective mandate that reflects the trust of members across the organisation.

He thanked stakeholders for

● **Dedicate his victory to all BON members, Nigerian media industry**

the confidence reposed in him, stressing that the responsibility of leading BON would be approached with humility and a strong sense of duty.

The chairman also acknowledged his co-contestant, Raymond Dokpesi Jr, noting that both camps share a common commitment to the development of broadcasting in Nigeria.

Akiotu paid tribute to past leaders and pioneers of the industry, including the late High Chief Raymond Dokpesi,

for their contributions to the growth of radio and television broadcasting in the country.

He assured members that his leadership would be open and inclusive, giving equal voice to all stakeholders, regardless of size or ownership structure.

According to him, key priorities of his administration will include strengthening the sustainability of broadcast institutions, supporting the transition to digital broadcasting, enhancing professional skills,

and promoting collaboration within the industry.

Akiotu also commended the outgoing executive committee for laying a solid foundation, promising to build on their achievements with renewed energy and cooperation.

He expressed appreciation to his supporters, campaign team, and associates for their contributions to his emergence as chairman, dedicating the victory to all BON members and the Nigerian media industry.



TONY AKIOTU

NPFL26: Bendel Insurance mgt apologizes to league body, Nigeria Referee Association over Plateau Utd incident

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The management of Bendel Insurance Football Club has tendered unreserved apologies to the management of the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) and the Nigeria Referee Association (NRA) over the ugly incident involving the head coach Kennedy Boboye and the referees that officiated match day 32 encounter between Bendel Insurance FC and Plateau United on Saturday, March 28, 2026 at the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium.

After a careful review of the circumstances surrounding the incident and the consequences there-in, the management expressed disgust and condemned the action of head coach Kennedy Boboye and described the incident as ugly and unfortunate.

The management has also cautioned coach Kennedy Boboye and his crew against a repeat of such action(s), insisting such behaviours will not be tolerated as Insurance FC remain a disciplined and law abiding club.

Management has however advised its coaches, players and officials to learn from the unfortunate incident and avoid overheated arguments with match officials during any match home or away, as their actions will not change decisions of referees but only aggravate punishment.

Meanwhile, as the Benin Arsenal prepare to take on Abia Warriors under a closed door

● **Cautions Coach Boboye, others**

arrangement, following the NPFL sanctions, placing Insurance home matches behind closed doors for three consecutive fixtures, management of Bendel Insurance FC has appealed to fans and Supporters club to stay away from the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium premises within the period as the club is in compliance with the directive, beginning with the match day 34 involving Bendel Insurance FC and Abia Warriors on Saturday, April 11.



COACH KENNEDY BOBOYE

● **Passing of Madam Esther Idahosa: Edo State Sports Commission commiserate with Edo State Deputy Governor, Idahosa**

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The Executive Chairman, management and staff of the Edo State Sports Commission commiserate with His Excellency, Rt. Hon. DENNIS IDAHOSA, DEPUTY GOVERNOR, EDO

STATE and his family over the passing of their beloved mother Madam Esther Imaguomwanru Idahosa (née Enabulele).

Friday Aghedo, Chief Press Secretary to the Deputy Governor had broken the news of the passing of the mother of Rt Hon Dennis Idahosa earlier to-

day (Wednesday) at the UBTH, at the age of 95 years.

The sports commission chairman and management expressed deep sadness over news of the passing of Madam Esther Imaguomwanru Idahosa and their heartfelt condolences to the deputy governor and family.

"We extend our heartfelt condolences to you on the passing of your beloved mother. We share in your grief and want you to know that we mourn with you also.

"We pray that God grants you and your family the fortitude to bear the irreparable loss.

We also pray that God grants Mama's soul eternal rest.

"Please accept our deepest sympathies as you endure this difficult times"...



HON. DENNIS IDAHOSA AND LATE MADAM ESTHER IDAHOSA

● **Boxing: Fury wants British heavyweight clash with Joshua after comeback fight**

Joseph Parker v Fabio Wardley - The O2, London, Britain - October 25, 2025
Tyson Fury before the fight Action Images via Reuters/Andrew Couldridge Sports

Tyson Fury wants to fight Anthony Joshua in a long-awaited clash of British former heavyweight world champions if he wins his comeback against Canada-based Russian Arslanbek Makhmudov in London on Saturday.

Fury, 37, has come out of retirement for the fifth time in his career to get back into the ring at the Tottenham Hotspur stadium and is looking well beyond the weekend.

"I've got Arslanbek Makhmudov to think of on Saturday night, but all going well (Joshua is) the fight I want next," he told BBC radio on Wednesday.

"I know he just had his fight with Jake Paul, whatever... a fight's a fight, really. So yeah, I'll be ready for that straight away after this."

Joshua, 36, last fought in December when he dealt American Jake Paul a reality check with a savage sixth round knockout in Miami.

A few days after that, the former WBA, IBF and WBO champion was taken to hospital in Nigeria following a car accident that killed two close friends.



TYSON FURY

UEFA Champions League: Atletico Madrid storm Camp Nou with 2-0 win



Atletico Madrid took a firm grip on their Champions League quarter-final on Wednesday as goals from Julian Alvarez and Alexander Sorloth earned a 2-0 first-leg victory over 10-man Barcelona at the Camp Nou.

Barcelona dominated proceedings, but Atletico's rock-solid defence combined with swift counter-attacks paid off after Pau Cubarsi was sent off for hauling down Giuliano Simeone in the 42nd minute as the last man.

Alvarez brilliantly curled the resulting free kick from 25 metres into the top corner in first-half stoppage time to silence the sold-out Catalan stadium.

Marcus Rashford struck the crossbar from a free kick soon after halftime but Diego Simeone's side remained disciplined and doubled their lead in the 70th minute when Matteo Ruggeri crossed from the left and Sorloth volleyed in from close range, sealing a decisive away win that left Barca with a

mountain to climb.

The winners of the two-legged tie will face either Arsenal or Sporting in the last four.

"We're delighted with the win, but there's still a lot of work to be done. The semi-final is still a long way off. We need to stay calm and confident, but keep our feet on the ground," Antoine Griezmann told Movistar Plus.

With captain Raphinha and Frenkie De Jong absent, Barca manager Hansi Flick hand-

ed Rashford a start. Pairing the former Manchester United forward with Robert Lewandowski and teenage winger Lamine Yamal, Rashford was lively down the left, constantly stretching the Atletico defence.

He volleyed narrowly wide in the 13th minute and thought he had given Barca the lead five minutes later, turning in Yamal's low cross at the far post, but the celebrations were cut short when VAR ruled Yamal offside in the build-up.



2027 GENERAL ELECTIONS

Can the ADC weather the storm?

The clock is steadily ticking towards Nigeria's next electoral cycle. With the 2027 general elections approaching, the nation's political landscape is gradually coming alive once again with renewed manoeuvring, alignments, and realignments. Political actors are beginning to calculate their chances, parties are recalibrating their strategies, and aspirants are quietly positioning themselves for the contests ahead.

The process, while familiar, has taken on a distinct intensity in recent months, signalling a highly competitive season that promises to test, both the strength of incumbency and the resilience of opposition forces.

Amid these developments, the activities of political parties have intensified. Across the country, subtle campaigns, backroom negotiations, and, most notably, defections from one party to another are increasingly visible. Such movements are a well-established feature of Nigeria's political culture, reflecting both personal ambition and strategic calculation. Yet, what is particularly noteworthy in the current climate is the steady gravitation of politicians towards the ruling party, despite widespread criticism of the government's handling of economic and social challenges.

This phenomenon raises critical questions: why do politicians continue to align with a ruling party that faces significant public scrutiny? Why does the party retain its magnetic pull despite pervasive public dissatisfaction? The answer, in part, lies in the structural and strategic advantages inherent in incumbency. The ruling leadership possesses the ability to consolidate support, influence alliances, and leverage state structures to create an environment conducive to political dominance.

Politics in Nigeria has seldom been driven solely by ideology or party principles. Historically, personal ambition, strategic calculation, and the imperative of political survival have defined political action.

Party loyalty, while rhetorically emphasised, is often subordinated to expediency, particularly when proximity to power offers tangible benefits in terms of appointments, access to resources, and visibility. This dynamic has consistently shaped the pattern of political realignments and defections observed across successive electoral cycles.

Within this context, the strategic acumen of the current president, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, is a decisive factor in the unfolding electoral landscape. Long before assuming the presidency, Tinubu established himself as one of Nigeria's most formidable political organisers. His ability to negotiate alliances, consolidate support, and maintain complex political structures has consistently enabled him to attract influential actors and sustain coalitions, both within Lagos State and across the

broader national terrain. This reputation for strategic foresight underpins his capacity to utilise incumbency as an instrument of electoral influence.

For many politicians, alignment with the ruling party represents more than a choice of political platform; it is a pathway to relevance, influence, and survival within the corridors of power. Nigeria's highly centralised political system places the presidency at the heart of resource allocation, appointments, and political opportunities. The structural power of incumbency, therefore, acts as a magnet for political actors seeking stability and access to national influence, particularly as the election approaches.

Indeed, historical patterns of defections illustrate this dynamic. In past electoral cycles, prominent politicians from opposition parties have repeatedly migrated toward the ruling party, often citing the need to ensure influence within decision-making circles. These movements, while sometimes criticised in public discourse, reflect a pragmatic understanding of Nigeria's political realities: alignment with the centre of power frequently affords strategic advantages that cannot be secured through opposition platforms alone.

Yet, while such defections may consolidate the ruling party's position, they simultaneously underscore the structural and organisational challenges faced by opposition political parties, such as the African Democratic Congress (ADC). Maintaining internal cohesion, resolving leadership disputes, and articulating a consistent ideological vision remain persistent challenges, particularly as the party seeks to expand its national footprint in anticipation of the 2027 elections. Internal divisions, if left unaddressed, threaten, not only the party's electoral prospects, but also, its credibility among a more politically aware electorate.

Leadership credibility is another critical determinant of electoral success. Political parties thrive under leaders who possess integrity, competence, and strategic foresight. In this regard, the advantages of incumbency become evident.

The current leadership has consistently demonstrated an ability to navigate complex political terrains, build coalitions across diverse interests, and leverage federal structures to reinforce political dominance. For the opposition, replicating such strategic cohesion remains a formidable challenge.

Grassroots mobilisation is central to this discourse. Nigerian voters are increasingly aware of their political power and the stakes of electoral participation. Parties that maintain strong connections with local communities, engage ward-level structures, and empower community leaders are better positioned to consolidate influence and withstand political turbulence. For the ADC, expanding its grassroots presence across Nigeria's diverse regions repre-

sents, not merely a tactical necessity, but a strategic imperative. Strengthening local networks can foster loyalty, mitigate defections, and enhance the party's ability to mobilise voters effectively.

Economic and security considerations continue to dominate the political narrative. Rising inflation, high costs of living, and declining purchasing power have placed immense pressure on ordinary citizens. At the same time, insecurity in the form of insurgency, banditry, communal clashes, and kidnapping continues to erode public confidence and threaten social stability. Political actors are judged, not only by their rhetoric, but by the perceived capacity to deliver solutions to these pressing issues.

Here again, incumbency offers distinct advantages. Control over federal institutions, access to resources, and the ability to shape policy narratives allow the ruling party to present itself as a capable administrator, thereby reinforcing electoral credibility.

Coalition politics further complicates the electoral landscape. History demonstrates that alliances often determine outcomes in Nigeria. The ability to anticipate, negotiate, and capitalise on strategic partnerships has repeatedly proven decisive.

The ruling party, under Tinubu's leadership, has displayed a consistent capacity for coalition-building, balancing competing interests within the party, and absorbing potential challengers from other platforms. Opposition parties, while potentially capable of forming coalitions, often struggle with internal fragmentation, personal ambitions, and trust deficits that impede the creation of cohesive alliances.

Political communication and media strategy are additional instruments of influence. In a landscape increasingly shaped by digital platforms, social media, and online news outlets, effective messaging can extend a party's reach and shape public perception.

The ruling party's ability to deploy these tools strategically, coupled with the resources afforded by incumbency, enhances its capacity to set narratives, counter criticism, and influence electoral sentiment.

Opposition parties, constrained by resources and organisational capacity, face an uphill battle in achieving comparable visibility and impact.

Defections, while often highlighted in public discourse, must be understood within this broader strategic framework. They are symptomatic of structural advantages enjoyed by the ruling party and the political calculus of actors seeking to secure influence. Opposition parties such as the ADC must contend, not only with losing members, but also, with the challenge of retaining credibility, articulating policy alternatives, and demonstrating internal stability, all of which are critical to presenting a viable challenge in 2027.

Institutional strength is therefore paramount. Parties that survive and thrive are those capable of building enduring organisational frameworks that extend beyond personalities. Internal democracy, transparent candidate selection, and inclusive decision-making are central to credibility, particularly among an electorate increasingly attentive to governance standards. For the ADC, developing such structures is essential if it hopes to present itself as a credible alternative and avoid being overshadowed by the structural and strategic advantages of the incumbency.

Regional considerations also play a significant role. Nigeria's diverse socio-political landscape demands that parties maintain relevance across states, ethnic groups, and constituencies. The ruling party has, over time, demonstrated an ability to deploy its influence strategically across regions, balancing appointments, projects, and political attention to secure loyalty and manage dissent. Opposition parties, by contrast, often face the challenge of uneven regional penetration, which can weaken national coherence and voter mobilisation efforts.

Voter awareness and civil society engagement continue to shape the political environment. Increasingly, Nigerians are attuned to governance issues, party performance, and the credibility of electoral promises. The media plays a central role in this, scrutinising party actions, exposing weaknesses, and amplifying successes.

Here, incumbency again provides a subtle advantage, as access to information channels, resource mobilisation, and institutional knowledge can be leveraged to guide narratives and reinforce perceptions of competence.

The 2027 elections will also test the ADC's capacity to articulate policy alternatives that resonate with voters' immediate concerns. Economic recovery strategies, security frameworks, youth employment initiatives, and public service delivery are all areas where opposition parties must demonstrate clarity and practicality. Without a compelling policy platform, the ADC risks being perceived as reactive rather than proactive, further accentuating the incumbency advantage of the ruling party.

Ultimately, the question posed by this column remains: can the ADC withstand the political dynamics of 2027? The party's success depends on internal cohesion, credible leadership, grassroots mobilisation, and effective policy articulation. However, it must contend with the formidable advantages of incumbency: structural power, resource access, strategic foresight, and coalition-building capabilities that enable the ruling party to consolidate influence and shape electoral outcomes proactively.

Political storms are familiar to Nigeria's democratic journey. Parties rise and fall, alliances shift, and fortunes change with remarkable speed. Yet

history demonstrates that resilience, organisation, and strategic utilisation of power often determine electoral outcomes more decisively than rhetoric or ideology. For the ADC, navigating these challenges will be critical, but the structural and strategic advantages enjoyed by the incumbent party present a substantial hurdle.

As the countdown to 2027 continues, the political drama is only beginning. Whether the ADC can withstand the currents of realignment or whether the strategic and institutional power of incumbency will secure the ruling party's dominance remains a question that only time, strategy, and the electorate can answer.

The 2027 elections are not merely a contest between parties; they are a test of organisational discipline, strategic foresight, and the capacity to leverage, both structural and political resources. While opposition parties must work diligently to strengthen their institutional frameworks and connect meaningfully with voters, the ruling party's incumbency provides a formidable platform from which to influence alliances, consolidate support, and project continuity across the federation.

For the African Democratic Congress, the road ahead is fraught with challenges. Political defections, leadership tussles, and the need to expand grassroots influence constitute real obstacles. Yet, history shows that well-structured, visionary, and strategically minded parties can navigate turbulent electoral waters. For the ruling party, the interplay of incumbency, coalition-building, and resource leverage creates a scenario that positions it favourably as the 2027 elections approach.

As the political season intensifies, all stakeholders—politicians, parties, and voters must remain mindful of the structural realities that shape Nigeria's electoral contests. While the ADC strives to consolidate its relevance and articulate compelling alternatives, the ruling party continues to wield the strategic, organisational, and institutional tools that historically have influenced electoral outcomes decisively.

In this unfolding narrative, the power of incumbency is unmistakable. The ability to attract political actors, maintain alliances, manage party structures, and influence policy perception provides the ruling party with a strategic advantage that opposition parties will find challenging to counter. The question is not simply whether the ADC can weather the storm, but whether it can do so while contending with the structural and strategic advantages that define the current political order.

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