

UBEC releases N434.5m, sets aside N5.18bn for nationwide schools upgrade

ABUJA

The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) has disbursed N434.5 million as the final tranche of intervention funds to complete thousands of ongoing school projects across the country, while earmarking a fresh N5.18 billion for a new round of infrastructure upgrades targeting underserved

communities.

The Executive Secretary of UBEC, Aisha Garba, disclosed this on Thursday in Abuja during the 2025 School-Based Management Committee-School Improvement Programme (SB-MC-SIP) implementation and disbursement ceremony, alongside the launch of the Learner Retention Programme.

Represented by the Deputy Executive Secretary (Techni-

cal), Rasaan Akinyemi, Garba said the N434.5 million disbursement would support the completion of 11,484 ongoing projects in beneficiary schools across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory.

She explained that the projects span minor infrastructure rehabilitation, construction of classrooms, provision of furniture, and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities, all

aimed at improving the learning environment in public schools.

Garba noted that the intervention underscores the Federal Government's commitment to strengthening community participation in school governance and expanding access to quality basic education nationwide.

She described the SBMC-SIP as one of UBEC's most impactful community-driven initiatives, stressing that schools perform

better when local communities actively participate in their management and development.

According to her, the programme empowers communities to identify priority needs, take part in project execution, ensure accountability, and support enrolment and retention of pupils.

Providing further insight, Garba revealed that since its inception, the programme has

supported 1,112 schools nationwide, with over N1.5 billion disbursed across multiple implementation cycles, resulting in 13,670 completed and ongoing community-led projects.

She added that the initiative is expected to bring more than 400,000 out-of-school children back into classrooms.

Looking ahead, the UBEC

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O The Nigerian OBSERVER

That The People May Know

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PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968

VOL. 47, NO. 1,249

THURSDAY 24TH APRIL, 2026.

#200

12 political parties to participate in Edo LG elections • As EDSIEC releases final list

ANDY EGBON

BENIN CITY

Twelve political parties have been cleared to participate in the forthcoming Edo State Local Government Council elections scheduled for Saturday, 11th July 2026, follow-

ing the release of the final list of candidates by the Edo State Independent Electoral Commission (EDSIEC).

In a statement signed by Abebe Emmanuel on behalf of the Commission, EDSIEC announced that the twelve parties successfully completed the

nomination process as of 4:00 p.m. on 16th April 2026 and will field candidates across the state for the polls.

The Commission explained that the publication of the final list marks the end of the statutory window for withdrawal and substitution of candidates.

It stressed that no further changes will be allowed, except in the event of the death

of a candidate or running mate before Election Day, in accordance with Section 34(1) of the Electoral Act, 2022.

Recall that on 17th April 2026, EDSIEC had published the personal particulars of candidates who emerged from party primaries ahead of the elections, in compliance with electoral guidelines.

According to the Commis-

sion, the newly released document represents the final list of duly nominated candidates contesting in the July 11 elections.

It added that the list contains key details including party affiliation, age, gender, and academic qualifications, and has been made accessible to the public through its Local Government offices, headquarters, official website, and social

media platforms.

Reaffirming its commitment to credible elections, EDSIEC restated its readiness to conduct free, fair, transparent, and peaceful polls across the state.

It urged all stakeholders to cooperate with the Commission and assured that the electoral process would be properly managed in line with democratic standards.

Okpebholo hosts City Boy Movement, declares support for Tinubu's 2nd term

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo, on Thursday declared that only individuals with deep urban understanding can effectively organise and brand a modern city, as he received leaders of the City Boy Movement at Government House, Benin City.

The governor used the occasion to emphasise the importance of structured, grassroots-driven leadership while reaffirming his administration's support for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's second-term ambition.

The delegation, led by its Grand Patron, Seyi Tinubu, included the Minister of State for Youth Development, Ayodele Olawande, and the Director-General of the movement,

Francis Oluwatosin Shola.

Welcoming the group, Okpebholo described their decision to commence their South-South regional tour in Edo as a recognition of the state's growing political relevance.

"You have not made a mistake coming to the South-South and choosing Edo State. I am happy to receive you," the governor said, noting that the movement appeared well-coordinated and driven by purposeful leadership.

He added that the emergence of organised youth platforms such as the City Boy Movement reflects a shift towards more strategic participation of young people in governance and national development.

The governor also commend-

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JONATHAN MEETS WITH TINUBU:

President Bola Tinubu (R) and former President Goodluck Jonathan, during their meeting at the Presidential Villa Abuja.

Edo rallies stakeholders to boost HPV vaccination, tackle cervical cancer

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Fubara backs Tinubu for 2nd term

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NMA crisis deepens as president suspended, caretaker c'ttee takes over

—Pg 5

Group unveils investment summit to drive Tinubu's \$1trn economy plan

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Edo rallies stakeholders to boost HPV vaccination, tackle cervical cancer

ANDY EGBON

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Primary Health Care Development Agency, in collaboration with the Youth Advocate for the Youth Initiative for Enhancing Long Term Delivery of HPV Vaccine, supported by IVAC-DCL (International Vaccine Access Centre & Direct Consulting and Logistics) has organised a town hall meeting in Benin City to raise awareness about Human Papillomavirus (HPV) infection,

cervical cancer, and the importance of HPV vaccination.

The meeting, attended by key stakeholders including religious leaders, market women, and non-governmental organisations, was held at the Ughekun Health Centre in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area of Edo State.

The session provided an avenue for stakeholders to deliberate on challenges affecting HPV vaccine uptake, while addressing community misconceptions and concerns surrounding the vaccine.

Participants were urged not only to serve as ambassadors but also to mobilise their communities, families, and friends to actively support and promote HPV vaccination.

Community stakeholders also made public commitments to sustain advocacy efforts aimed at increasing vaccine acceptance.

The Chairman of Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area, Hon. Eric Osawaru, represented

by Jeff Scott Emuakpo, commended the state government for organising the awareness programme.

He reaffirmed the council's commitment to supporting initiatives that promote preventive healthcare, particularly among vulnerable groups.

In her remarks, the wife of the council chairman, Mrs Onome Osawaru, pledged that her office would intensify awareness campaigns to ensure the

HPV vaccine reaches all parts of the local government.

The State Immunisation Officer, Mrs Omogun Elfrida, noted that HPV vaccination remains the only effective means of preventing cervical cancer.

Similarly, the State Health Educator, Mrs Irene Uabor, stressed the need to sustain advocacy campaigns to encourage widespread acceptance of the vaccine.

An official of the Youth Advocate for the Youth Initiative

for Enhancing Long Term Delivery of HPV Vaccine, Enwezor MacLean, explained that all sexually active individuals are at risk of HPV infection, adding that the vaccine offers long-term protection. He further observed that resistance to vaccination is not unique to Nigeria but a global phenomenon.

However, he said there is need for stakeholders to advocate for vaccine demand and uptake in the state.

UBEC releases N434.5m, sets aside...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

boss announced that under the 2025 SBMC-SIP cycle, N5.18 billion has been earmarked for disbursement to 518 communities nationwide, covering 14 schools in each state and the FCT, with priority given to areas facing severe infrastructure deficits.

She said the new intervention would focus on renovating dilapidated school structures, improving WASH facilities, and providing essential classroom furniture to enhance teaching and learning outcomes.

Garba emphasised that strict transparency, accountability and monitoring guidelines would guide the implementation process, with close collaboration between UBEC, State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs), and community stakeholders.

She also unveiled the Learner Retention Programme, a targeted initiative designed to address socio-economic barriers responsible for school dropouts.

The programme will, in its first phase, target one million learners across eight states with a budget of N5 billion.

According to her, the initiative aims to boost school attendance, reduce dropout rates, and strengthen parental commit-

ment to children's education.

Earlier, Minister of Education, Tunji Alausa, reaffirmed the Federal Government's resolve to strengthen basic education delivery through improved infrastructure, community ownership, and learner retention strategies.

Represented by the Director of Basic Education, Folake Olatunji-David, the minister said the initiatives align with national education frameworks, including the Universal Basic Education Act 2004 and the National Policy on Education, as well as Nigeria's commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education.

He added that the programmes would consolidate gains under existing interventions such as HOPE-EDU and the Better Education Service Delivery for All Additional Financing (BESDA AF), while reinforcing decentralised governance and grassroots participation in school development.

"Our children deserve quality education in safe, inclusive and supportive environments," he said, assuring that the Federal Government would continue to provide policy direction, funding support and leadership to the sector.

Okpebholo hosts City Boy Movement...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

ed President Tinubu for what he described as bold and decisive leadership, particularly the removal of fuel subsidy, a policy he said previous administrations had failed to implement.

"What others could not do, Asiwaju has done. Without chaos, he took that bold decision, and today the country is already positioning itself for greater economic stability and growth," he stated.

Reiterating Edo State's political stance, Okpebholo declared that the state had already endorsed Tinubu for a second term, aligning itself with what he described as a vision-driven and structured movement.

"For us in Edo, the decision is clear; we have already endorsed him for a second term. We are proud to align with a movement that reflects vision, structure and purpose," he said.

He further stressed his ad-

ministration's commitment to youth empowerment, noting that sustainable development depends on creating opportunities for young people to lead, innovate and contribute meaningfully.

Earlier, speaking on behalf of the delegation, Olawande said the City Boy Movement was established to bridge the gap between leadership and young Nigerians, while positioning youths strategically in governance and nation-building.

He explained that the South-South tour, which began in Edo State, would serve as a platform to mobilise and inspire young people across the region.

Other dignitaries present at the meeting included the Deputy Governor, Dennis Idahosa; the Secretary to the State Government, Umar Musa Ikhilor; the Head of Service, Anthony Okungbowa; and the APC State Chairman, Jarrett Tenebe, among others.



A TOWNHALL MEETING:

Chairperson, Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area, Mrs. Onome Osawaru (middle), flanked by her Personal Assistant, Omoruyi Ogheneovo (left) and Jeffery Scotch Emuakpo, during a townhall meeting on creating awareness on sustaining HPV vaccination held in Benin City.

IUO courts Engineering alumni for mentorship, industry partnerships at maiden homecoming

OKADA

Igbinedion University, Okada has called on alumni of its Abdulsalami Abubakar College of Engineering to play a more active role in mentoring students, strengthening industry linkages and investing in infrastructure to sustain academic excellence.

The appeal was the highlight of the College's maiden "Blue-Skye Alumni Legacy" Homecoming held in Okada, Edo State, where university authorities emphasised the need to bridge the gap between academic research and real-world industrial application.

Vice-Chancellor, Lawrence

Ezemonye, described alumni as indispensable partners in maintaining the institution's relevance, noting that their professional expertise represents a critical link between the university and industry.

He urged graduates to support students through internships and professional mentorship, collaborate with the institution in translating research into practical solutions, and contribute to the maintenance of world-class facilities.

Ezemonye stressed that the true value of a university lies in the impact of its graduates rather than its physical structures, urging alumni to see themselves

as part of a dynamic network capable of driving innovation and nurturing emerging talents.

He recalled that the College was founded by Gabriel Igbinedion to produce engineers who would create industries rather than merely seek employment, noting that its naming after Abdulsalami Abubakar reflects its commitment to national development.

Earlier, Dean of the College, Rowland Azike, said the institution currently runs eight undergraduate programmes across six departments and has produced over 1,700 graduates since the 2002/2003 academic session.

In a virtual presentation, guest speaker Michael Marshall

Harry highlighted the need for engineers to overcome internal limitations through deliberate mindset shifts, while alumna Mary Taiwo Ajide stressed sustained engagement and collaboration in building a vibrant professional community.

Delivering the keynote address, Danagogo Wenike-Briggs urged alumni and young engineers to work collectively to build a legacy of innovation for future generations.

The homecoming marked a renewed effort by the university to leverage alumni engagement as a strategic tool for advancing engineering education and innovation in Nigeria.

Don urges Nigeria to escape 'Entrepreneurship Wilderness'

BENIN CITY

Professor of Business Administration at Wellspring University, Patrick Stephen Ohikhena, has called for urgent reforms to dismantle structural and cultural barriers hindering Nigeria's economic independence.

Delivering the institution's third inaugural lecture, Ohikhena warned that decades of reliance on oil and foreign systems have left Nigeria a vulnerable, consumption-driven economy, insisting that a shift to innovation and production is imperative.

In his lecture titled "From Nigeria's Entrepreneurship Wilderness to Wealth: Overcoming the Five Key Retardation Forces," he identified pre-colonial leadership legacies, colonialism, government failures, a complacent national mindset, and the emerging digital neo-colonial order as key impediments to progress.

The don argued that Nigeria's over-dependence on crude oil has entrenched a monoculture economy and weakened local enterprise, urging a transition to a diversified, production-based system.

He rejected claims that Afri-

ca lacks entrepreneurial capacity, maintaining that pre-colonial Nigeria had thriving indigenous enterprise systems before colonial distortions.

Ohikhena also blamed successive policy failures, corruption, weak education and poor infrastructure for deepening the crisis, warning that the "Japa" trend and rise in fraudulent ventures signal a decline in productive values.

He described the prevailing "suffering and smiling" culture as a major psychological barrier to innovation and productivity, cautioning that the rise of artificial intelligence and

robotics could further marginalize Nigeria if urgent reforms are not undertaken.

Among his recommendations were visionary leadership, curriculum reforms to produce job creators, improved funding for small and medium enterprises, and the adoption of indigenous models such as the Igbo apprenticeship system.

He also advocated expanded access to education, particularly for girls and Almajiri children, stronger university-industry collaboration, and reduced dependence on foreign direct investment.

NEWS**Loggers invade Benin monarch's forest, defile ancestral Shrine**

MONDAY OISE

BENIN CITY

Suspected illegal loggers have invaded a protected forest belonging to the Benin monarch, desecrating the revered Ovia ancestral shrine and felling several timber trees in Iyowa Village, Ovia North-East Local Government Area of Edo State.

The suspects were apprehended on Tuesday, following a covert surveillance operation by youths mobilised by the Okaighele (youth leader) of the community, Ambassador Etionsa Ighodaro.

The arrest came a day after the loggers allegedly carried out the initial incursion into the forest on Monday, April 20.

The forest, regarded as sacred and held in trust for the Benin monarch, Oba Ewuare II, houses the ancient Ovia shrine, where entry is traditionally restricted.

Narrating the incident, Ighodaro said the loggers, led by one Reuben Omoiyekemwen Owie,

stormed the forest with motorised saws, felled multiple trees, processed them into logs and transported some to a sawmill.

He added that the group returned the following day to continue the operation before they were intercepted.

"We were shocked that a group of people could brazenly enter the Oba's sacred forest and begin felling trees. This is not only illegal but a desecration of our ancestral shrine," Ighodaro said.

He disclosed that the suspects were arrested with their equipment, including motor saws and a haulage truck, all of which have been impounded.

The arrested individuals and the seized equipment have since been taken to the Oba's palace by the community's Chief Priest, Henry Imadiyi, to formally report the incident.

Ighodaro linked the development to a protracted leadership crisis in Iyowa community, which he alleged dates back to 2014 and involves Reuben Owie and his associates.

According to him, the crisis

has been marked by violence, intimidation, arrests and prolonged litigation across courts in Benin City and Abuja.

He noted that relative peace had only recently returned following a High Court sitting in Okada, which affirmed him as the substantive Okaighele of Iyowa, recognised Henry Imadiyi as the Oyunkpo (Chief Priest), and upheld Pa S. A. Igbinawahia as Acting Head of Administration, with Festus Igbinawahia as a member.

However, Ighodaro accused Festus Igbinawahia of allegedly collaborating with others to reignite tensions in the community, claiming he was instrumental in the illegal logging and desecration of the sacred forest.

In separate interviews, some of the arrested workers denied knowledge of the alleged illegality of the operation.

A motor saw operator, Usman Momoh, said he was directed by his employer based in Benin City to meet a local contact in Iyowa, who led him and other workers into the for-

est for the logging exercise.

"I don't know anything about the arrangement. I was only asked to come and work," he said, adding that they had already cut eight tree stumps into

about 20 logs, some of which had been transported to a sawmill before their arrest. He identified the trees as corkwood, also known as white wood.

Similarly, the haulage truck

driver, Ademola Adebisi, said he was acting on the instructions of his employer, identified simply as Oduwa, whom he described as the contractor handling the operation.

Uwusan elders clarify leadership vacuum, appoint youth liaison, seek palace direction

Elders of Uwusan Community in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State have convened a meeting to address rising concerns over leadership structure in the community, particularly, the continued absence of a substantive Odionwere.

At the gathering, the elders categorically stated that Uwusan currently does not have an Odionwere, noting that no successor has been installed since the passing of the last recognised Odionwere, in line with the customs and traditional of Benin Kingdom.

They further clarified that, by extension, no Okaighele has

been appointed in the community, stressing that tradition does not permit the installation of an Okaighele without a duly recognised Odionwere in place.

Speaking during the meeting, Pa Imafidon Aimiemeanuwu, the Ozukpkogieva of Uwusan, moved to dispel circulating rumours and misconceptions regarding the leadership structure.

He stated that at no time did he assume the position of Odionwere, nor did he appoint or endorse anyone as Okaighele.

He, however, disclosed that the elders of Uwusan unanimously agreed to appoint Comrade Osaigbovo Ogbomo as a messenger and "eyes" of the elders, as well as to coordinate the youths of the community and ensure effective

communication between the elders and younger population.

Also speaking, Pa Ezelekhoe Imadomwinyi, the Ozukpkogieha, alongside other elders, reaffirmed that Benin tradition does not accommodate the appointment of an Okaighele in the absence of an Odionwere.

Nonetheless, they stressed the need for proper coordination among the youths to maintain order and unity within the community.

To that end, the elders unanimously agreed that Comrade Ogbomo should serve as a liaison between the elders and the youths, effectively acting as a youth administrative head and channel of communication for community directives.

**PATIENTS NAVIGATION TRAINING:**

A cross-section of participants at a Patients Navigation Training for oncology nurses on a critical step in strengthening cancer care delivery in Nigeria, organised by Project PINK BLUE in Abuja on Thursday.

Monitoring ensures quality project delivery —Fashanu

GLORIA OMORUYI

BENIN CITY

The Managing Director of the Edo State Public Building and Maintenance Agency, Arc. Emmanuel Fashanu has reiterated the state government's stance on contractors engaged by the Agency delivering quality projects.

Arc. Fashanu stated this while addressing Heads of Department of the Agency before a joint tour with the Projects Implementation and Monitoring Department (PIMD), Governor's office, to Edo North and Edo Central Senatorial Districts.

He charged them to ensure due diligence during the

course of their assignment.

The tour took the team to Jattu Market, the Passport Office along Otaru Road and the 2NR warehouses still under construction for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security in Auchi.

Other places visited included, the Irrua Market, Ogirrua's Palace and the Resort Center, Udomi being constructed.

Contractors/Project Supervisors conducted the team round the Sites, with EDPUBMA team navigating the plans as site supervisors spoke to the individual projects.

The joint team of EDPUBMA and PIMD also made stops at Forward Operating Base (FOB),

Udomi, 150-Bed capacity Hospital and the medical school at Uwessan in Esan Central Local Government Area of the State.

Other places visited included, the Ekpoma Market in Ekpoma, construction site of 2-in-1, 300 capacity Lecture theatre in Ambrose Alli University, 600 bed capacity hostel and the 1,500 capacity Lecture theatre, also in Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma, Esan West Local Government Area.

The team observed some structural defects and deviations from the original plan which situations were explained and promptly addressed.

The contractors used the occasion to draw attention to

some of the challenges affecting their operations and solicited for quick release of funds to enable them meet up with project timelines.

At the end of the tour, the joint team concluded that good monitoring keeps the projects on track, not only with budgetary provisions, but also with engineering specifications.

Speaking at the end of the tour, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Project Implementation, Engr. Phoebe Bello said that the exercise would be on a quarterly basis, to ensure progress of work on affected sites.

She stated that all stakeholders involvement in the projects would ensure timely delivery.

Fubara backs Tinubu for 2nd term

ELIZABETH AGBOEGBULEM

PORT HARCOURT

Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara, has called on Nigerians to support President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for a second term, urging continuity in what he described as a bold and transformative national development agenda.

Fubara made the appeal on Thursday while declaring open, a meeting of the Southern Nigeria Traditional Rulers Council in Port Harcourt, where he praised the President as a "dedicated and highly patriotic" leader deserving of another mandate.

According to the governor, Tinubu's administration has, within three years, recorded

significant milestones, particularly in economic reforms and infrastructure development, and should be allowed to consolidate on those gains under the Renewed Hope Agenda if re-elected in 2027.

"We are all witnesses to the transformation of our battered economy and the ongoing infrastructural revolution, including the remarkable coastal road project in the southern and other parts of the country in just three years," Fubara said.

He acknowledged that challenges persist in some regions but expressed confidence in the President's commitment to national security, economic revitalisation and equitable development across the country.

Vigilante Commander abducted in Rivers community

ELIZABETH AGBOEGBULEM

PORT HARCOURT

Tension is mounting in parts of Rivers State following the abduction of a local vigilante commander and growing allegations of bandit occupation of forests in Ikwerre communities.

The apex socio-cultural organisation of Ikwerre people, Ogbakor Ikwerre Worldwide, raised the alarm over what it described as increasing incidents of kidnapping, rape and other violent crimes allegedly perpetrated by armed groups operating from forest hideouts.

According to the group, the suspected bandits have established presence in several communities, including Ipo, Iguruta, Omagwa, Omademe, Ogbakiri, Emuoha and Elele, where residents now live in fear.

The development follows the abduction of Collins Ohahuru, commander of a local vigilante outfit codenamed OSPAC in Ipo community, Ikwerre Local Government Area.

Ohahuru was reportedly kidnapped earlier this month during a confrontation with the suspected bandits.

Spokesperson of the Rivers State Police Command, Blessing Agabe, confirmed in a statement last week that a pump-action rifle belonging to the abducted vigilante leader was recovered during a joint security operation. However, she gave no update on his whereabouts, stating only that investigations were ongoing.

The lack of clarity over Ohahuru's fate has heightened anxiety among residents, who fear for their safety amid the continued attacks.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is hereby put on notice that the plot of land measuring **4,612.250 square meters**, situate at **Evbuabogun/Evbuamoma Community along Benin/Sapele Road, in Ikpoba-Okhai LGA, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria**, with **Certificate of Occupancy No. ED 86045**, formerly belonging to Mr Enagbona Eboigbe, has been duly purchased by **NIPCO Gas Limited of 6, Lisabi Road, Apapa, Lagos**.

All required regularisation of the property with relevant authorities is being pursued in line with the sealed agreement with the vendor. A formal takeover by the new owner has also been activated.

The landed property now belong to **NIPCO Gas Limited** with necessary notices mounted on the property to confirm the identity of the new owner.

This publication has become necessary to put the general public on notice and ward off any trespassers to the land and all properties therein.

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The general public is hereby put on notice that the land measuring **963.252 square meters** situate at **Evbuobogun/Evbuomoma Community along Benin/Sapele Road, Ikpoba-Okhai LGA, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria** with **Certificate of Occupancy No. ED 64126**, formerly belonging to Mrs Osadolor Ojo, has been duly purchased by **NIPCO Gas Limited of 6, Lisabi Road, Apapa, Lagos**.

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All required regularisation of the property with relevant authorities is being pursued in line with the sealed agreement with the vendor. A formal takeover by the new owner has also been activated.

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**IROKHIN/EVBOKHI VILLAGE, WARD 9,
UHUNMWONDE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, EDO STATE**

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is hereby notified that one Mr Omorogiuwa Aiyevbekpen Omoruyi who is parading himself as the Odionwerie of Irokhin/Evbokhi without any traditional and customary installation at the village Edion and Ovia Shrines as it is done in our community, is not the oldest and not even in the Edionene ie the four oldest elders of the Village. In the hierarchy of seniority he is less than the 17th position in the community and he is trying to usurp the position of Odionwerie.

Notice is hereby given that the four oldest elders in the village in order of seniority in Edion age group are Pa. Paul Ehigie Oviasuyi, Pa Omafo David Ugiagbe, Pa Kingsley Edokpaigbe Idehen and Pa Friday Oviasuyi

The elders and good people of Irokhin/Evbokhi Village hereby warns anybody, group, land speculators and corporate bodies dealing with Omorogiuwa Aiyevbekpen Omoruyi and his cohorts in matters pertaining to the communal lands and others affairs of the village is doing so at his/their own risk as the matter his already in the Palace of the Oba of Benin.

Any dealings with him is deemed as illegal and is null and void. Please be warned. Any business/dealings regarding Irokhin/Evbokhi communal land and other matters should be directed to the undersigned who are the five oldest elders in the village.

SIGNED

1. Pa Paul Ehigie Oviasuyi
2. Pa Omafo David Ugiagbe
3. Pa Kingsley Edokpaigbe Idehen
4. Pa Friday Oviasuyi
5. Shadow Ovenseri

NMA crisis deepens as president suspended, caretaker c'ttee takes over

ABUJA

The crisis rocking the Nigerian Medical Association has escalated, with its National President, Prof.

Bala Audu, suspended over alleged constitutional breaches.

The decision was taken at an Emergency Delegates Meeting (EDM) in Abuja attended by 63 members, including chair-

men and secretaries from 23 states and the Federal Capital Territory.

The dispute is linked to the disqualification of six aspirants from contesting national offices at the association's forthcoming Annual General Meeting in Kano scheduled for April 27 to May 3.

Findings indicated that the candidates were disqualified by the National Officers Committee (NOC) over alleged incomplete documentation, a move that drew widespread concern among members.

Delegates at the meeting constituted a caretaker committee led by Dr Ekpe Phillips

to oversee the association's affairs pending elections and further review.

They also resolved that the disqualified aspirants should be allowed to participate in the election, following a vote moderated by Dr Omotayo Adetunji and Dr Fernandez Akinngabe.

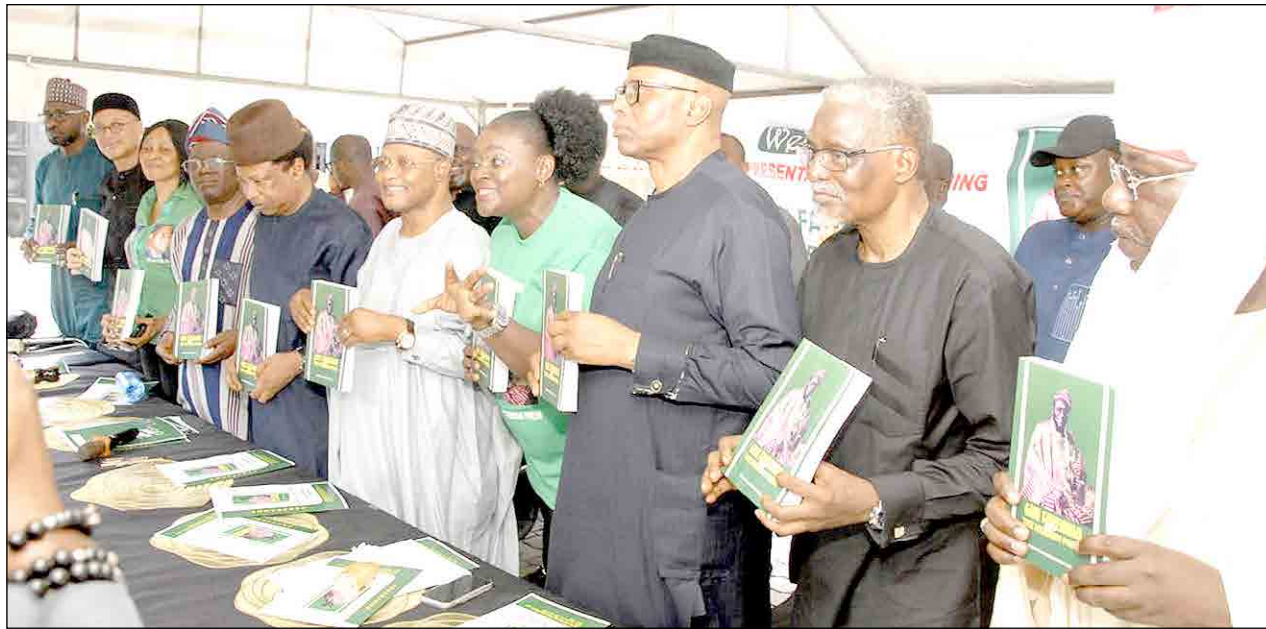
A member said the candidates had been duly nominated and submitted their forms before being informed of their disqualification, prompting calls for transparency and ad-

herence to due process.

Chairman of NMA-FCT, Dr Emeka Ayogu, backed the resolutions, noting that earlier attempts at dialogue failed.

"We want an association that remains united and focused on members' welfare," he said.

Also speaking, former Deputy Secretary-General, Dr Umezurike Ikechukwu, urged stakeholders to prioritise stability and preserve the association's tradition of orderly leadership transition.



BOOK PRESENTATION AND LAUNCH:

L-R: Former member of National Conscience Party (NCP), Tanko Yinusa; Special Guest of Honour/Co-Chief Launcher, Prof. Pat Utomi; Human Rights Activist, Joe Okei-Odumakin; Chairman of the Occasion, Chief Femi Falana; Sen. Shehu Sani; Governor Uba Sani of Kaduna State; Daughter of Gani Fawehinmi/Author of the Book, Basirat Fawehinmi-Biobaku; former Ondo State Governor, Dr. Olusegun Mimiko; Book Reviewer/Guest Lecturer, Prof. Akin Ibidapo-Obe; representative of Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammed Abubakar, during the Book Presentation and launch of Book "Gani Fawehinmi and the Nigerian Press in Lagos."

Policy stability key to unlocking investment —Oyedele

LAGOS

The Federal Government has stressed that policy stability and consistency are critical to attracting investment as Nigeria transitions from economic stabilisation to sustained growth.

Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Taiwo Oyedele, made this known at the Private Sector Outlook Forum organised by the Nigerian Economic Summit Group in Lagos.

Oyedele described the current phase as the most delicate stage of the reform cycle, noting that the focus is shifting from policy formulation to implementation and tangible outcomes.

"Reforms alone do not create growth. What drives growth is investment, skills and produc-

tivity," he said.

He acknowledged that recent reforms have improved fiscal discipline and transparency, but warned that inconsistency could undermine investor confidence.

"Nothing undermines confidence more than policy inconsistency. Investors need assurance that today's policies will remain predictable tomorrow," he said.

He emphasised the need for regulatory credibility, institutional accountability, and a predictable business environment to sustain investment inflows.

The minister added that government would prioritise ease of doing business, financial market development, and regulatory reforms, while leveraging platforms such as the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Speaker lauds Kukah's appointment as COOU Chancellor

AWKA

Speaker of the Anambra State House of Assembly, Dr Somotochukwu Udeze, has commended Governor Charles Soludo for appointing Bishop Matthew Kukah as Chancellor of Chuk-

wuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University.

Udeze described the appointment as meritorious and a major honour for the institution located in Anambra East Local Government Area.

In a statement issued by his Press Secretary, Mr Emma

Madu, the Speaker said the choice reflected the governor's commitment to advancing education in the state.

An alumnus of the university, Udeze expressed confidence in Kukah's intellectual depth and moral standing, noting that his leadership would promote academic excellence and ethical values.

He urged the university

community to support the new chancellor and create an enabling environment for him to contribute meaningfully.

Udeze also praised the appointment of Prof. Peter Onwualu as Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Governing Council, expressing optimism that both appointments would elevate the institution's profile.

Osun poll a litmus test for Nigeria's democracy —Kukah Centre

OSOGBO

The Kukah Centre has described the August 15 governorship election in Osun State as a critical test for Nigeria's democratic integrity ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Senior Programme Manager of the centre, Esrom Ajanya, stated this at a stakeholders' validation forum in Osogbo.

The forum, organised in collaboration with the National Peace Committee and supported by the European Union, reviewed findings from the Context Analysis and Compliance Assessment Report (CAR).

Ajanya said the election transcends a state-level exercise, serving as a precursor to the 2027 polls.

"It is a defining test of our collective commitment to

democratic integrity," he said.

He noted that while compliance with electoral procedures has improved, structural challenges persist, including weak internal party democracy and elite-driven candidate selection.

The report also highlighted limited inclusion of women, youth, and persons with disabilities, alongside concerns over transparency and accountability. Participants called for coor-

ordinated action to address risks such as political mobilisation patterns, unresolved local government issues, and security concerns.

The forum attracted stakeholders from Independent National Electoral Commission, security agencies, political parties, the Inter-Party Advisory Council, civil society groups, and traditional and religious institutions.

Group raises alarm over bandits' occupation of Rivers forests

PORT HARCOURT

The Ogbakor Ikwerre Cultural Organisation Worldwide has called for the immediate removal of suspected bandits occupying forests in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State.

The group also demanded the unconditional release of persons kidnapped in Ipo Community.

The President-General of the organisation, Dr Godspower Onuekwa, made the call in a statement issued in Port Harcourt.

Onuekwa condemned the alleged occupation of forests by armed bandits and the rising cases of kidnapping across Ikwerre communities.

He listed affected areas to include Ipo, Igwuruta, Omagwa, Omademe, Ogbakiri, Emohua

and Elele.

"The bandits, armed with sophisticated weapons, have made life unbearable for our people and halted economic and farming activities," he said.

He expressed concern that the insecurity was occurring in communities hosting the Port Harcourt International Airport, citing an incident on April 8 in Ipo Community where a couple was kidnapped

by suspected bandits.

"Efforts by a local vigilante group to rescue the victims failed, with the attackers overpowering them and abducting their leader.

"As at now, the fate of the abducted persons remains uncertain, raising fears among residents," he stated.

Onuekwa alleged that women had been attacked on farms, with cases of rape, maiming

and killings reported in affected communities.

"The rate of insecurity in Ikwerre land is unacceptable. These nefarious activities must stop now.

"Although we are peace-loving people, we will not fold our arms while criminal elements turn our land into a theatre of fear," he said.

He called on the Federal Government, Rivers State Government and security agencies to act decisively to dislodge the

bandits from forests in Ikwerre communities.

He also demanded the unconditional release of abducted persons and restoration of security through sustained operations.

Onuekwa urged residents to remain calm, vigilant and cooperate with security agencies to restore peace in the area.

The spokesperson of the Rivers Police Command, ASP Blessing Agabe, did not respond to enquiries on the matter.

NEWS

Troops repel ISWAP assault, kill commander, 24 fighters in Borno

MAIDUGURI

Troops of Operation HADIN KAI have foiled a coordinated attack on Kukareta community in Borno State, killing a top ISWAP commander, Abu Umar Bundi Munzir, alongside 24 other insurgents during a fierce overnight battle.

The Theatre Commander, Maj.-Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar, disclosed this on Thursday in Maiduguri while giving an operational update on the failed assault.

He said the terrorists launched the attack shortly after midnight in a bid to overrun the community but were decisively engaged by troops of Sector 2 in a sustained counter-offensive

that lasted until about 3:00 a.m.

According to him, Munzir was among those neutralised as troops repelled the attackers, forcing the remaining fighters into a disorganised retreat.

Abubakar confirmed that 24 other insurgents were killed, bringing the total number neutralised to 25, while one fighter was captured alive.

He added that troops subsequently conducted a sweep of the battlefield, recovering a large cache of arms and ammunition, including 18 AK-47 rifles, three General Purpose Machine Guns, two PKT anti-aircraft guns, three RPG tubes, two mortar tubes, four hand grenades, 18 AK-47 magazines, and large quantities of 7.62mm ammunition.

Two soldiers sustained gunshot wounds during the encounter and have since been stabilised, while an armoured vehicle had its tyres damaged

in the exchange of fire.

The commander said further exploitation operations were ongoing to recover bodies of fleeing insurgents and abandoned

equipment along escape routes marked by blood trails and medical supplies.

He described the operation as a significant success in on-

going counter-insurgency efforts, assuring that sustained pressure would be maintained against terrorist elements in the North-East.

Kaduna moves to review environmental policy for sustainability

KADUNA

The Kaduna State Government has commenced a comprehensive review of its 2019 Environmental Policy to address emerging ecological challenges and strengthen sustainable development.

Commissioner for Environment and Natural Resources, Malam Abubakar Buba, announced the initiative at a two-day stakeholders' engagement under the Strengthening Peace and Resilience in Nigeria (SPRING) programme.

Represented by Ibrahim Zakari, the commissioner described the review as critical to aligning the state's environmental framework with current realities and global best practices.

He said the engagement brought together government agencies, legislators, civil society groups, private sector actors and academics to foster collaboration.

Key issues identified include pol-

lution, global warming, overpopulation, unsustainable consumption and wildlife crime, alongside challenges such as rapid urbanisation and poor waste management.

Buba stressed the need to integrate climate action into state planning, improve water conservation and promote land restoration, while ensuring inclusion of vulnerable groups and local communities.

He commended SPRING and its partners, including the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), for supporting the initiative.

SPRING representative Barau Emmanuel highlighted the link between environmental governance and conflict prevention, while civil society leader Gloria Kasang Bulus underscored efforts to improve access to climate adaptation finance.

Participants expressed optimism that the review would produce a more responsive and inclusive environmental policy, strengthening resilience and sustainability across Kaduna State.

APC founding member Momoh joins Owan Reps race, seeks zoning to Ward 11

AFUZE (EDO)

The Secretary of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Manifesto Drafting Committee, Dr Saliu Momoh, has formally declared his intention to contest the Owan Federal Constituency seat in the House of Representatives.

Momoh, one of the 60 founding members of the party nationwide and among six from Edo State, made the declaration during a flag-off event held in Warrake, Owan East Local Government Area.

Speaking at a meeting with APC executives and leaders in

Owan East at Afuze shortly after the ceremony, he described himself as the most qualified aspirant, citing his extensive experience in party administration and governance.

He added that his academic credentials, including four postgraduate degrees in Public Administration with a specialisation in public finance, set him apart.

"I deemed it necessary to begin my consultations at the local government secretariat of my party to meet with the executive and leaders because party supremacy is enshrined in our constitution," he said.

**JULIUS BERGER MEET:**

L-R: Director of Administration, Julius Berger Nigeria Plc, Dr Abdulaziz Isa Kaita; Vice Chairman, Julius Berger Nigeria, PLC, Mr George Marks, President Bola Tinubu; Managing Director of Julius Berger Nigeria Plc, Dr Pear Lubasch; Chairman, Julius Berger Nigeria, Plc, Goni Sheikh, during their meeting at the Presidential Villa in Abuja.

C'River debunks 'New COVID-19 cases', confirms only one infection

CALABAR

The Cross River State Government has dismissed reports claiming the emergence of 10 new COVID-19 symptomatic cases, describing the information as misleading and inaccurate.

Commissioner for Health, Dr Henry Ayuk, clarified in a statement on Thursday that as of April 23, 2026, the state had only one confirmed case, involving a Chinese national currently receiving treatment and responding well.

He explained that the 10 individuals cited in the report

were merely contacts traced from the confirmed case and not symptomatic, stressing that they do not meet the criteria for suspected infections.

According to Ayuk, the individuals are under home isolation and are being monitored daily as part of standard public health protocols.

He emphasised that the pre-

cautionary measure should not be misconstrued as evidence of new infections, reiterating that no additional cases have been recorded in the state.

The commissioner urged residents to disregard misinformation and rely on official updates, while calling for calm and continued adherence to preventive measures.

Police nab suspect with human bones, ammunition in Ondo

AKURE

The Ondo State Police Command has arrested a 29-year-old man, Awomehinde Tope, over alleged possession of suspected human remains, ammunition and fetish items.

Police spokesperson, DSP Abayomi Jimoh, said the suspect was apprehended on April 11 in Ile-Oluji, Ile-Oluji/Okeigbo Local Government

Area, following a theft complaint lodged by his father, Awomehinde Kehinde.

Items reportedly stolen include three Boxer Bajaj motorcycles, nine goats, quantities of palm oil, four Android phones, two gas cylinders, gold items and rugs.

Jimoh said further investigation led to the discovery that one of the rugs had been sold to a buyer, identified as Olawale Sunday.

A search of the suspect's residence, he added, uncovered items suspected to be of ritualistic significance, including a bone believed to be human, native sponges, fetish charms, black soap, and an expended AK-47 round.

Two additional suspects, John Vincent, 22, and Olakintan Oladele, 29 were arrested at the buyer's residence during follow-up operations.

The police said the suspects

could not provide satisfactory explanations for the recovered items.

Commissioner of Police, Adebowale Lawal, has ordered a thorough investigation to determine the origin and purpose of the exhibits.

All suspects have made statements and will be charged to court upon conclusion of investigations, the command said, assuring residents of its commitment to security.

NNPC, Sonatrach seal deal on oil sector research, innovation

ABUJA

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Algeria's Sonatrach to strengthen research, technology exchange and innovation in the oil and gas sector.

The agreement, executed through NNPC's Research, Technology and Innovation Division in collaboration with the Petroleum Technology De-

velopment Fund (PTDF), was signed by Executive Vice President, Business Services, Sophia Mbakwe, and Sonatrach Managing Director, Khodjah Mohamed.

According to a statement by NNPC spokesman, Andy Odeh, the MoU establishes a framework for joint research and knowledge sharing between both national oil companies.

The signing took place during the 3rd Meeting of the African Petroleum Producers' Organisation (APPO) Forum

for Research and Development Directors in Nigeria.

Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), Sen. Heineken Lokpobiri, said the forum was designed to address challenges in energy transition, particularly in funding, technology and market access.

He noted that while the R&D forum tackles technology gaps, initiatives such as the African Energy Bank and the Central African Pipeline System would address financing and market integration.

NNPC Group Chief Executive Officer, Bashir Ojulari, stressed the importance of research and development in maintaining competitiveness, urging adoption of digital technologies, artificial intelligence and advanced engineering.

APPO Secretary-General Farid Ghezali called for practical, Africa-focused research outcomes, while PTDF Executive Secretary, Prof. Shu'aibu Aliyu, highlighted the role of the partnership in advancing decarbonisation.

FG commissions Kano agro facility, deepens food security push

KANO

Vice-President Kashim Shettima has inaugurated a multi-grain processing facility by Afcott Grains Ltd., a subsidiary of the Kewalram Chanrai Group, reaffirming the Federal Government's drive to strengthen food security and agro-industrial development.

Speaking at the inaugura-

tion, Shettima—represented by Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Sen. Abubakar Kyari—said the project reflects Nigeria's resolve to boost value addition, enhance productivity, and strengthen the agricultural value chain.

He described the facility as a milestone capable of improving export competitiveness, raising farmers' incomes, and creating jobs.

"Today's commissioning is not merely the inauguration of Afcott Grains Processing Facility, but a clear statement of our national resolve towards food sufficiency, value addition and agro-industrial transformation," he said.

He noted that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has prioritised food security under the Renewed Hope Agenda, stressing that sustainable gains require integrated industrial capacity across the value chain.

"Production must be matched with processing,

mechanisation with financing, and policy with private sector confidence and long-term investment," he added.

Shettima highlighted the Federal Government's Green Imperative Programme aimed at scaling mechanised agriculture across the 774 local government areas.

Vice Chairman of Kewalram Chanrai Group, Mr Navin Chanrai, said the facility would process 40,000 tonnes of sesame seeds and 25,000 tonnes of other grains annually.

Completed within 12

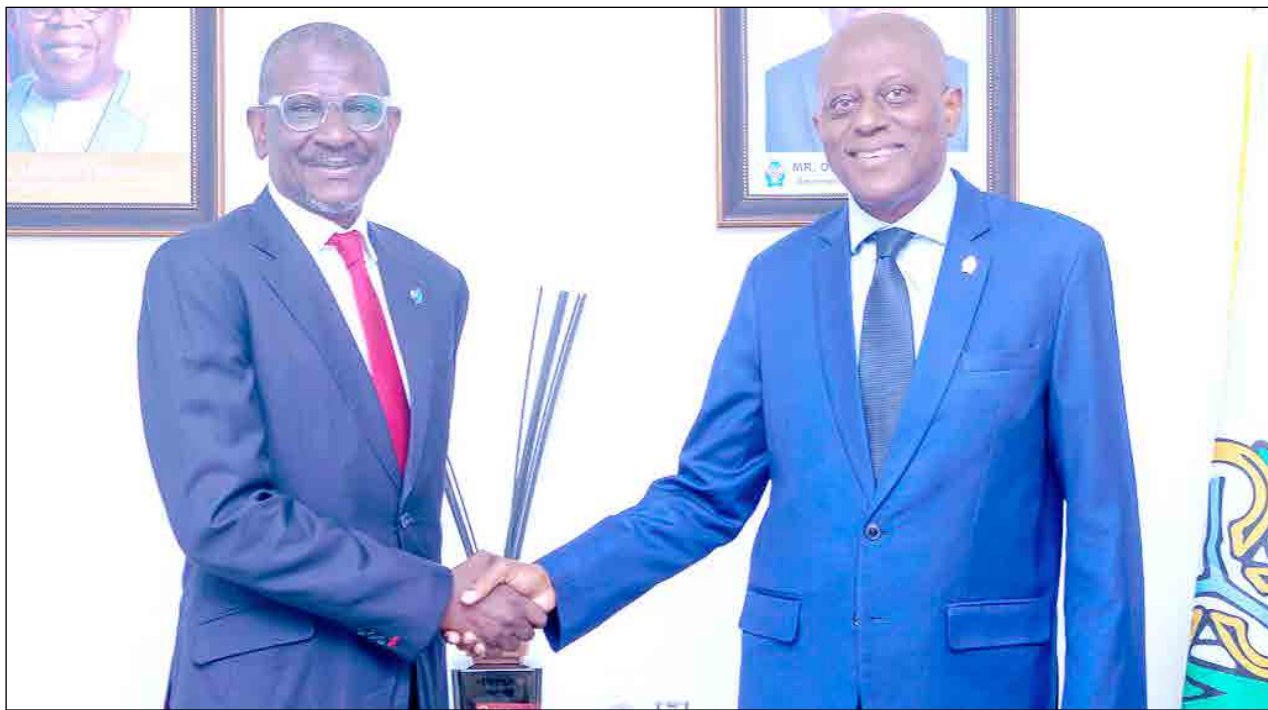
months, the project is expected to generate over 500 direct and indirect jobs, with at least 70 percent of employees drawn from Kano State.

He said the investment targets international markets, including Japan and Europe, while improving the livelihoods of farmers.

Governor Abba Ka-

bir-Yusuf, represented by Chief of Staff Dr Suleiman Wali, described the facility as a boost to the state's economy and a reinforcement of Kano's position as a leading agricultural hub.

He disclosed that the state had invested over N12 billion in agricultural machinery and recruited more than 1,000 extension workers to boost productivity.

**BELLO VISITS CARDOSO:**

Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian Export-Import Bank (NEXIM), Abba Bello (L) with the Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Olayemi Cardoso, during the visit of the Managing Director NEXIM to CBN headquarters in Abuja on Thursday.

Group unveils investment summit to drive Tinubu's \$1trn economy plan

ABUJA

The World Investment Summit Group has announced plans to host a global investment summit aimed at supporting the realisation of the Tinubu administration's \$1 trillion economy target by 2030.

Director-General and Convener of the group, Mr Adeniyi Matthew, disclosed this at

a news conference in Abuja, stating that the summit would hold from June 24 to June 26 in the Federal Capital Territory.

With the theme "Renewed Hope Transformation Agenda: Unlocking Capital, Accelerating Development, Sustaining Prosperity," the event is expected to attract top global and domestic stakeholders.

Matthew said the summit would serve as a strategic plat-

form to mobilise investment, foster partnerships, and deepen policy dialogue across sectors.

"It is not a routine gathering but a high-level platform to facilitate multi-stakeholder action in addressing global investment and development challenges," he said.

He added that participants would include heads of state, ministers, diplomats, CEOs of multinational corporations, regulators, and representatives of international organisations,

including the United Nations.

Matthew said about 8,000 participants, including 1,000 speakers, are expected, alongside delegations from countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, China, Japan, Bangladesh, and Fiji.

He noted that ongoing reforms by President Bola Tinubu, including exchange rate unification and infrastructure investments—are restoring investor confidence and positioning Nigeria for global capital inflows.

Adelabu quits as Power Minister to pursue Oyo governorship

ABUJA

Minister of Power, Adedunmi Adelabu, has resigned his position to pursue his governorship ambition in Oyo State, with effect from April 30.

His Special Adviser on Strategic Communications, Mr Bolaji Tunji, said the resignation letter dated April 22 was addressed to President Bola Tinubu and submitted through the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Sen. George Akume.

Adelabu said his decision

aligns with provisions of the Amended Electoral Act 2026, which bars serving political office holders from contesting elections.

He expressed gratitude to the president for the opportunity to serve, noting that his governorship ambition dates back to 2016 during his tenure as Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria.

In a three-page letter, the outgoing minister outlined key achievements, including implementation of the Electricity Act 2023, which decentralised the power sector and improved

the investment climate.

He said power generation rose to over 6,000 megawatts, driven by the Zungeru Hydro-power Plant and rehabilitation of thermal plants, while transmission capacity improved under the Presidential Power Initiative.

Adelabu also cited progress in the distribution segment, including improved revenue collection and reduction of Aggregate Technical, Commercial and Collection (ATC&C) losses.

He disclosed that tariff reforms and a N4 trillion debt

restructuring programme boosted market revenue from N1 trillion in 2023 to N2.3 trillion in 2025.

Despite the gains, he identified lingering challenges such as gas supply constraints, infrastructure vandalism, and the need for full commercialisation.

He proposed the creation of a coordinating minister for energy to harmonise reforms across power, gas, and related sectors, alongside measures such as cost-reflective tariffs, targeted subsidies, nationwide metering, and stronger regulation.

NGO trains oncology Nurses on breast cancer care

ABUJA

A leading cancer care NGO, Project Pink Blue, has trained oncology nurses in Abuja to strengthen breast cancer care, early detection, and prevention.

The training, organised in collaboration with the Network of People Impacted by Cancer in Nigeria (NePICiN) and the Abuja Breast Cancer Support Group, brought together over 50 nurses from various healthcare facilities.

Participants received intensive sessions on nutrition, lifestyle modification, and patient

education.

Mrs Sarah Abagai, a facilitator, stressed the role of proper nutrition in cancer recovery, advocating natural, home-prepared meals to improve patient outcomes.

Another facilitator, Ms Joachim Nnenna, highlighted the importance of early detection, noting that timely diagnosis significantly improves treatment success.

A participant and cancer survivor, Chinelo Ugwu, described the programme as impactful, saying it enhanced awareness of breast cancer risks and prevention strategies.

Army chief commissions rebuilt Imo health centre

ORSU (IMO)

Chief of Army Staff, Lt.-Gen. Waidi Shaibu, has inaugurated a remodelled health centre in Enugwu Okobia community, reinforcing civil-military cooperation.

Represented by General Officer Commanding 82 Division, Maj.-Gen. Oluremi Fadairo, the Army Chief said the project forms part of efforts to consolidate peace and strengthen community resilience.

The facility was facilitated by Maj.-Gen. Kelvin Ukandu, a native of the area.

Shaibu said the intervention would significantly improve healthcare delivery and noted

that the Nigerian Army has executed over 250 similar projects nationwide.

He commended President Bola Tinubu for supporting the military and urged residents to continue providing credible information to security agencies.

Ukandu said the project reflects his commitment to rebuilding the community after years of insecurity that destroyed key infrastructure.

Traditional ruler, Eze Oliver Ochonma, thanked the Army and pledged that the community would safeguard the facility.

The event featured presentation of souvenirs to military officers by the traditional ruler.

Kano Assembly sets up panel to screen dep governor nominee

KANO

The Kano State House of Assembly has constituted a 12-member committee to screen the nominee for Deputy Governor, Murtala Sule-Garo.

The development followed a letter from Governor Abba Kabir Yusuf requesting the House to screen and confirm the nominee.

The correspondence was read during plenary by the Speaker, Jibril Ismail Falgore.

According to the Speaker, the request was made pursuant to Section 191(3) of the 1999 Constitution.

The nomination follows the resignation of former Deputy Governor, Aminu Abdusalam, on March 27, 2026.

In his letter, Governor Yusuf

said Sule-Garo's nomination followed extensive consultations with socio-political, religious and cultural stakeholders.

He described the nominee as a seasoned public administrator with broad experience at grassroots and sub-national levels.

Sule-Garo previously served as Special Adviser on Inter-Party Affairs, Chairman of Kano Local Government, Chairman of the Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON), Kano chapter, and Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs.

The governor expressed confidence that the nominee's experience, loyalty and knowledge of Kano's political landscape would enhance governance and service delivery.

NEWS**FG moves to slash airlines' debt burden amid fuel crisis****ABUJA**

The Federal Government has moved to ease mounting financial pressure on domestic airlines, announcing plans to grant discounts on debts owed to key aviation agencies.

Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, disclosed this in Abuja during a meeting with airline operators, aviation stakeholders, and the Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil).

The intervention follows threats by the Airline Operators of Nigeria (AON) to suspend flight operations and hike airfares over the soaring cost of Jet A1 fuel.

Keyamo said the discount framework would be determined by President Bola Tinu-

bu, who has directed airlines to urgently submit formal requests for the proposed relief.

He further revealed that the president had approved the setting up of a committee to review multiple taxes, levies, and charges imposed on domestic flight tickets, with a view to reducing operational costs for airlines and easing the burden on passengers.

According to the minister, the government acted swiftly to avert disruption in the aviation sector following operators' warnings.

"A generous discount on debts owed to agencies such as the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA), Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), and the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) is under consideration," he said.

Minister of State for Petrole-

um Resources (Oil), Heineken Lokpobiri, represented by Permanent Secretary Mrs Patience Oyekunle, said discussions would be held with oil mar-

keters to address fuel pricing concerns.

Speaking for AON, Air Peace Chief Executive Officer, Allen Onyema, called for a

total waiver of airlines' debts and urged the government to strengthen the Bank of Industry to enable access to low-interest loans.

He described the reported 300 per cent rise in aviation fuel prices as abnormal and cautioned oil marketers against further increases.

Thieves strip FG staff buses in Suleja**SULEJA**

Suspected thieves have vandalised several staff buses belonging to Federal Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) at the Suleja Local Government Secretariat.

The attackers reportedly stole the brain boxes of seven buses on Sunday, in an incident now under investigation by the Suleja Divisional Police Headquarters.

Affected vehicles belong to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Federal Ministries of Agriculture, Budget and National Planning, the National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure (NASENI), the Sharia Court of Appeal (FCT), Office of the Head of Service, and the Ministry of Mines and Steel Development.

Mr Jimah Umar, a driver with the Budget and National Planning ministry, said he first discovered the theft.

"We came out this morning

to take the bus for repairs and found it had been tampered with. Initially, we thought it was the battery, but it was the brain box that had been removed," he said.

Secretary of the Suleja Staff Buses Association, Mr Amos Amodu, confirmed that multiple vehicles were affected after receiving an alert from another driver.

Drivers also raised concerns over rising insecurity at the parking facility, noting that theft incidents began around September 2025.

Mr Joel Arenkhanda of the Federal Ministry of Water Resources said cases of fuel siphoning, theft of tools, and disappearance of vehicle parts have become increasingly frequent.

Security personnel on duty, comprising two elderly guards and two vigilante members said they were unaware of the incident, suggesting it may have occurred during heavy rainfall and strong winds on Saturday.

A senior police officer confirmed that investigations are ongoing.

FG inaugurates CAC Governing Board to boost business environment**ABUJA**

The Federal Government has inaugurated the Governing Board of the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and the Intellectual Property Steering Committee to enhance transparency, boost investor confidence and stimulate economic growth.

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

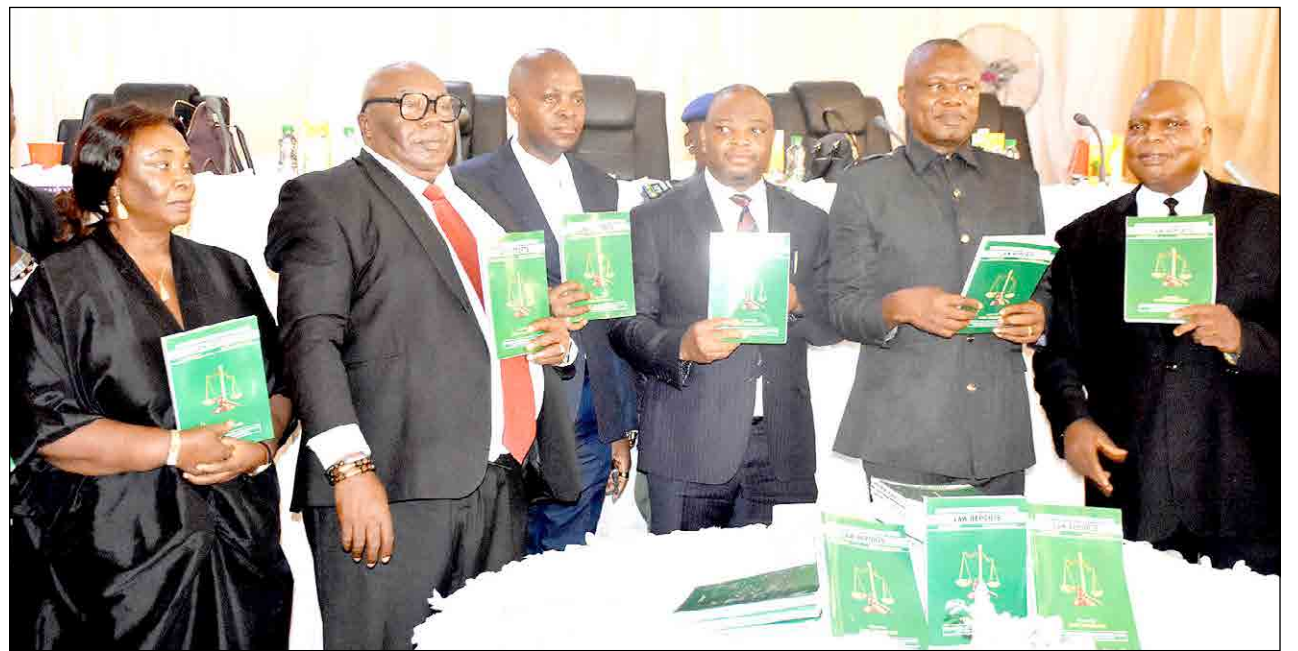
Oduwale described the CAC as a critical legal framework for Nigeria's economy, playing a vital role in business registration, governance and economic stability.

She said the appointment of board members reflected careful consideration by President Bola Tinubu, given the commission's importance to national development.

The minister expressed optimism that the board would strengthen Nigeria's business ecosystem and improve its global standing.

According to her, the CAC plays a key role in registering businesses, maintaining records and ensuring compliance nationwide.

She urged the board to drive reforms that promote transparency, attract investment and support infrastructure development and job creation.



PRESENTATION OF BOOK:

L-R: Chairperson, Customary Court, Nsude, Udi Local Government Area of Enugu State, Mrs Edna Agu; Professor of International Law and Jurisprudence, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Prof. Agu Gab-Agu; Justice Richard Emeka; representative of Enugu State Governor, Mr Osinachi Nnajeze; Book Reviewer, Justice George Nnamani and Justice Emmanuel Nnamani, during a presentation of Book titled, "Nigerian Customary Courts of Appeal Law Report" by Renaissance Law Publications Limited in Enugu on Thursday.

NASS vows boost in funding for agric research institute**ABUJA**

The National Assembly has pledged increased funding support for the Nigerian Stored Products Research Institute (NSPRI) to tackle post-harvest losses and strengthen food security.

Chairman, House Committee on Agricultural Institutions and Colleges, Rep. Abiodun Akinlade, made the commitment at the 3rd Post-Harvest Connect and Root, Tuber and Banana Con-

ference in Abuja.

Represented by his deputy, Salman Idris, Akinlade said post-harvest losses remain a major threat to Nigeria's food security and pledged sustained legislative backing, improved budgetary allocation, and advocacy for increased funding.

"We are determined to ensure that institutions under our purview remain accountable, efficient and aligned with national priorities for agricultural transformation," he said.

He described the con-

ference, themed, "Scaling Post-Harvest Technologies for Enhanced Productivity and Competitiveness," as a platform for collaboration among policymakers, researchers, and industry stakeholders.

Also speaking, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agricultural Colleges and Institutions, Sen. Sharafadeen Alli, said significant losses persist between harvest and consumption, particularly in root, tuber, and banana value chains.

He stressed that addressing such losses would improve farmers' incomes, expand market access, reduce food prices,

and strengthen national resilience.

Executive Secretary of the Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARC), Dr Adamu Dabban, noted that while investments in research have increased, a gap still exists between innovation and adoption.

"Technologies developed within our research institutes must be effectively disseminated, adapted and scaled to achieve meaningful impact,"

he said, urging stakeholders to prioritise practical outcomes in financing, extension services, and policy support.

Lagos CP strengthens military ties to bolster security**LAGOS**

The Commissioner of Police in Lagos State, Mr Fatai Tijani, has reinforced inter-agency collaboration through strategic visits to key military formations across the state.

According to police spokesperson SP Abimbola Adebisi, the visits covered the 9 Bri-

gade Nigerian Army at Lagbaja Cantonment, the 651 Base Service Group at Sam Ethnan Air Force Base, and the Nigerian Navy Ship Beecroft in Apapa.

At the 9 Brigade, Tijani was received by Commander Ayokunle Owolabi, where discussions centred on strengthening internal security operations and sustaining joint efforts to protect residents.

At the Air Force base, the CP and Commanding Officer M. A. Imam focused on enhancing professionalism, intelligence sharing, and operational cooperation.

During his visit to the naval base, he was hosted by Commander Aiwuyor Adams-Aliu, with talks aimed at improving security on Lagos waterways and ensuring structured mul-

ti-agency coordination.

Adebisi said the CP emphasised that effective policing in a complex state like Lagos requires seamless collaboration among security agencies.

He commended the military for its consistent support and stressed that synergy remains critical in tackling crime, maintaining order, and responding to emerging threats.

Customary Court reports key to legal reform —Mbah**ENUGU**

Governor Peter Mbah has described the Nigerian Customary Courts of Appeal Law Reports as a vital tool for strengthening the country's justice system.

Mbah made the remark at the public presentation of the law reports in Enugu, published by Renaissance Law

Publications Ltd.

Represented by Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Mr Osinachi Nnajeze, the governor emphasised the importance of customary law in Nigeria's legal framework, particularly at the grassroots.

He said proper documentation of judicial decisions would improve consistency, transparency, and public confidence,

while ensuring customary law evolves in line with modern legal standards.

The President of the Customary Court of Appeal, Enugu State, Justice George Nnamani, described the publication as a watershed moment for customary jurisprudence.

He noted that the absence of a structured reporting system had hindered consistency and

predictability in legal practice, expressing optimism that the reports would enhance adjudication quality and judicial credibility.

Editor-in-Chief of the reports, Prof. Agu Gab Agu, said the publication fills a critical gap by systematically documenting appellate decisions, thereby promoting clarity and consistency in customary law.



LEGAL RUDIMENTS

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Civil trial: The rudiments of civil litigation in Nigeria (3)

Being a paper presented by: **HON. JUSTICE P. A. AKHIHIERO** at the Young Lawyers Summit organised by the Young Lawyers Forum, Nigerian Bar Association, Benin Branch held on Thursday the 26th of March 2026 at the Constance Momoh Hall of the NBA Benin Secretariat (Bar House), Benin City.

CONTINUED FROM LAST EDITION

Cross-Examination is conducted by the opposing party after examination-in-chief. The purpose is to test the credibility, accuracy, and reliability of the witness's testimony. Leading questions are allowed during cross-examination. See: section 214(2) of the Evidence Act, 2011.

The point must be made that the sky is no longer the limit in cross-examination. It is now firmly established, that evidence led or extracted under cross examination which has not been pleaded by either of the parties, goes to no issue. See the case of *UDOFIA V. AKWA IBOM STATE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION & ORS* (2011) LPELR-4055(CA) (PP. 8 PARAS. A); and *DYEGE V. LAN & ORS* (2019) LPELR-48195(CA) (PP. 31-35 PARAS. E).

Re-Examination is conducted by the party who originally called the witness, after cross-examination. The purpose is to clarify issues raised during cross-examination and remove ambiguities. See: section 214(3) of the Evidence Act, 2011. Generally, no new matters can be introduced under re-examination except by the leave of the court. If by the leave of the court, a new matter is introduced, the adverse party may further cross-examine upon that matter. See: section 215(3) of the Evidence Act, 2011.

See: *OKORO V. STATE* (2012) LPELR-7846(SC) SC (31 PARAS. D).

7.0 INTERLOCUTORY APPLICATIONS

Interlocutory applications are requests made to the court during the pendency of a case, seeking temporary or procedural relief before the final judgment. They are crucial in litigation because they help preserve rights, maintain the status quo, or resolve urgent procedural issues while the substantive matter is still being determined.

An interlocutory application is a motion filed in the course of proceedings, not to decide the case finally, but to deal with an interim issue. It is distinct from a final application, which determines the substantive rights of the parties.

In the case of *ANAZONWU V. ILOGBU & ORS* (2013) LPELR-21204(CA) (16-17 PARAS. F), the Court of Appeal described interlocutory applications and proceedings as handmaids to enable the Court to reach the ultimate goal of doing substantial justice between the parties in the issues in litigation between them.

A Court must avoid the determination of a substantive issue at the interlocutory stage. It is never proper for a Court to make pronouncement in the course of discretion must be exercised within the confines of the law.

Judicial discretion must be exercised judicially and judiciously. This means that Courts are to act according to the rules of reason and justice, not according to private opinion, and according to law, not humour. See *RE:*

ALASE (2002) 10 NWLR (PT. 776) PG. 553; *OFFODILE V. EGWATU* (2006) 1 NWLR (PT. 961) PG. 421 *UBN PLC. V. ADJARHO* (1997) 6 NWLR (PT. 507) PG. 112.

7.1 COMMON TYPES OF INTERLOCUTORY APPLICATIONS

i. Interim and Interlocutory Injunctions prevent a party from taking certain actions until the case is resolved;

ii. Mareva Injunction: A Mareva injunction is a special type of interlocutory order used in common law jurisdictions, such as Nigeria, to prevent a Defendant from dissipating or hiding assets before the conclusion of a trial. It's sometimes called a "freezing order";

iii. Anton Piller Order: Allows entry into a Defendant's premises to secure evidence at risk of destruction;

iv. Interpleader Summons: Used when a third party holds property claimed by two or more parties and seeks the court's direction;

v. Applications for Extension of Time. To file pleadings or documents outside the prescribed period;

vi. Applications to Amend Pleadings. To correct or adjust claims or defences during trial.

7.2 PRINCIPLES GOVERNING INTERLOCUTORY APPLICATIONS

In every interlocutory application, the Court is expected to consider the following factors:

i. Serious Question to be Tried: Applicant must show a genuine issue requiring judicial determination;

ii. Balance of Convenience: Court considers which party would suffer greater hardship if the order is granted or refused;

iii. Irreparable Harm: Relief is granted if damages would not adequately compensate the Applicant;

iv. Undertaking as to Damages: Applicant may be required to compensate the other party if the order causes harm and the case fails;

v. Judicial Discretion: Relief is not automatic; the court weighs fairness and justice in each case. Failure to disclose material facts may lead to dismissal of the application.

In summary Interlocutory applications are vital tools in Nigerian litigation, ensuring fairness and protecting rights before final judgment. They require careful drafting, full disclosure, and must satisfy strict judicial principles.

8.0 FINAL ADDRESSES

Upon the conclusion of evidence, the parties or their counsel are expected to file final written addresses.

In Nigerian courts, the order of presenting final addresses is strictly regulated by the rules of court.

Generally, if the Defendant called evidence, his counsel will be the first to file a written address, but where the Defendant did not lead any evidence, the Claimant's counsel addresses first, followed by the Defendant's counsel, and then the Claimant's has the right



PARTICIPANTS AT THE LECTURE

of reply. This ensures fairness and gives the initiating party the last word. See: Order 30, Rules 14 to 17 of the Edo State High Court (Civil Procedure) Rules, 2018. See also the case of *OYERINDE V. ACCESS BANK PLC* (2014) LPELR-23461(CA) (PP. 15-17 PARAS. F).

Section 294(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides inter alia for the right of a party in a case to make final addresses after the conclusion of the evidence in the case before the Court delivers its decision in the case.

However, the courts have consistently held that the right to address the court can be waived by a party. See the following cases: *CO-OPERATIVE & COMM. BANK V MBACKWE* (2002) FWLR (109) 1678 AT 1687; *GITTO COSTRUZIONI GENERALI NIGERIA LTD & ANOR V. ETUK & ANOR* (2013) LPELR-20817(CA) (PP. 36-38 PARAS. E).

This written address summarizes the evidence, highlights legal authorities, and argues why judgment should be in favour of the party.

In the written address, the counsel highlights the strength of his case while pointing out weaknesses in the case of the opposing party.

During address, Counsel may challenge the credibility of witnesses, admissibility of evidence, or expound some legal principles.

Although the Address of counsel cannot be a substitute for evidence, a good address can assist the Court to appreciate the nature, strength and weakness in the cases of parties. It has the potential to bend the scale of justice in favour of a party who presents scintillating address. See the case of *OKEKE V. STATE* (2003) 15 NWLR (PT. 842) 25; and *STANBIC IBTC BANK V. LONGTERM GLOBAL CAPITAL LTD & ORS* (PP. 58-59 PARAS. E).

9.0 JUDGMENT

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) provide under Section 294 (1) thus:

"Every Court established under this

Constitution shall deliver its decision in writing not later than ninety days after the conclusion of evidence and final addresses and furnish all parties to the cause or matter determined with duly authenticated copies of the decision within seven days of the delivery thereof".

Thus, the Courts established under the 1999 Constitution (as amended) are required or are expected to deliver judgment within Ninety days after the final address of the parties. See: *DANGAJI V. ABDULKADIR & ANOR* (2020) LPELR-52183(CA) (PP. 19-21 PARAS. F).

Delivery of final judgment is the stage where the court formally pronounces its decision after hearing all evidence, arguments, and final addresses. It is the culmination of the trial process and determines the rights and liabilities of the parties.

In its judgment, the Court reviews oral testimony, documentary evidence, and exhibits tendered during trial. Credibility of witnesses and consistency of facts are weighed. Counsel's written and oral submissions are analysed. The judge considers legal authorities cited and arguments raised. Relevant statutes, case law, and procedural rules are applied to the established facts.

The judge delivers the decision in open court. Judgment may be oral (read out) or written (later made available to parties).

A good judgment must contain: Issues for determination; Findings of fact; Application of law; Final orders (e.g. Declaration, damages, injunctions, etc)

Costs may be awarded to the successful party.

10.0 EXECUTION OF JUDGMENT

Execution of judgment refers to the legal process of enforcing or carrying out the orders contained in a court's final judgment. It ensures that the successful party actually benefits from the decision, whether through payment, possession, or compliance with specific orders.

Once a judgment is delivered, it

does not automatically enforce itself.

The winning party (judgment creditor) must take steps to compel the losing party (judgment debtor) to comply.

Execution is the mechanism by which the court's decision is made effective in real life.

10.1 MODES OF EXECUTION IN NIGERIA

i. Writ of Fieri Facias (FiFa): Authorizes seizure and sale of the debtor's movable property to satisfy the judgment debt;

ii. Writ of Possession: Used in landlord/tenant or property disputes to place the judgment creditor in possession of land or premises;

iii. Garnishee Proceedings: Directs a third party (e.g., a bank) holding money for the debtor to pay it directly to the creditor;

iv. Writ of Attachment: Seizes property of the debtor to compel compliance;

v. Committal Proceedings: Imprisonment of a debtor for contempt if they disobey court orders; and

vi. Writ of Sequestration: Seizes and manages the debtor's property until compliance is achieved.

10.3 PROCEDURE FOR ENFORCEMENT OF JUDGMENT

To enforce a court judgment, the Judgment Creditor will apply to the court requesting to execute the judgment by any of the above methods. In the absence of any motion for stay of execution or order for stay of execution, the Court will approve the execution of the judgment after the period for appeal has expired.

The execution must be carried out by the Sheriff/Bailiff and other Court officials to carry out the order (e.g., seizing property, handing over possession).

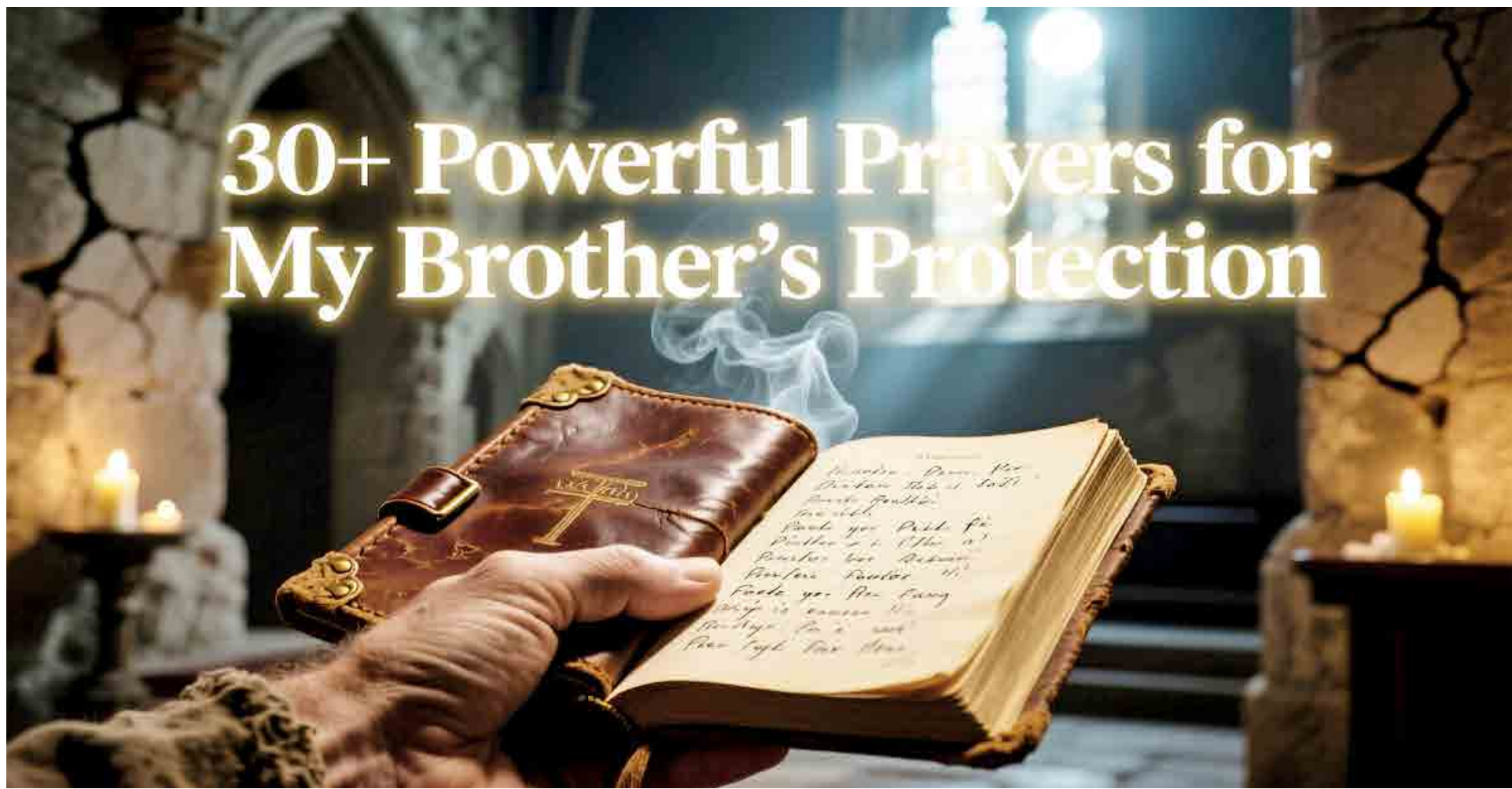
Once the debt or order is complied with, execution is complete.

Execution must follow due process; self-help or forceful enforcement without court approval is illegal.

END OF LECTURE

Friday Sermon

30+ Powerful Prayers for My Brother's Protection



Protecting the honour of your brother

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

All praise is due to Allah. We praise Him, we seek His help and His forgiveness, and we turn to Him in repentance. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil within ourselves and from the consequences of our actions. Whomever Allah guides, none can misguide; and whomever He leaves astray, none can guide. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah alone, without partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad peace be upon him, is His servant and Messenger.

O servants of Allah, I enjoin you and myself to have taqwa—to be mindful of Allah in private and in public, in our words and in our actions.

Today's sermon is titled: "Protecting the Honour of Your Brother."

In Islam, the honour, dignity, and reputation of a believer are sacred. Allah created human beings with dignity, and He commands us to preserve that dignity in one another. The tongue, though small, can either elevate a person or destroy them. Many people are careful not to harm others physically, yet they harm others deeply with words, whispers, and posts.

Allah says in the Qur'an (49:12), in meaning: "O you who believe, avoid much suspicion. Indeed, some suspicion is sin. And do not spy on one another, nor backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would detest it."

Reflect on this powerful imagery. Allah compares backbiting to eating the flesh of a dead brother—some-

thing naturally repulsive. Yet people engage in it casually, in gatherings, in conversations, and even online, without realizing the weight of their actions.

The Messenger of Allah peace be upon him explained what backbiting is. He asked his companions, "Do you know what backbiting is?" They said, "Allah and His Messenger know best." He said, "It is to mention about your brother that which he dislikes." It was said, "What if what I say about my brother is true?" He replied, "If it is true, you have backbitten him; and if it is not true, then you have slandered him."

So whether true or false, harming someone's honour is a serious matter. Slander (buhtan) is even worse, as it combines lies with harm.

Dear brothers and sisters, protecting your brother's honour means more than just avoiding backbiting. It means: Defending them when they are spoken ill of; Refusing to spread rumours or unverified information; Advising them privately instead of exposing them publicly; Thinking well of them unless there is clear evidence otherwise

Allah says in Surah An-Nur (24:15-16), addressing those who spread rumours: "When you received it with your tongues and spoke with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge, and you thought it was insignificant while it was, in the sight of Allah, tremendous."

How often do people forward messages, share stories, or repeat allegations without verification? In the sight of Allah, what we consider small may be enormous.

The Prophet peace be upon him, also said: "Whoever protects the honour of his brother, Allah will protect his face from the Fire on the Day of Judgment."

This is a promise. When you stand up for someone, when you stop a harmful conversation, when you refuse to participate in gossip, you are not just helping your brother; you are securing protection for yourself in the Hereafter.

Consider also that honour is not only about reputation; it includes a person's privacy, dignity, and feelings. Islam teaches us to conceal the faults of others.

The Prophet peace be upon him, said: "Whoever conceals the faults of a Muslim, Allah will conceal his faults in this world and the Hereafter."

This does not mean ignoring wrongdoing altogether. If there is harm being done or injustice taking place, it must be addressed—but with justice, wisdom, and proper channels, not through public shaming or destructive gossip.

Dear believers, the destruction of communities often begins with the destruction of trust. When people no longer feel safe from the tongues of others, unity collapses. Hearts become divided, and suspicion spreads.

Protecting your brother's honour strengthens the bonds of faith.

The Prophet peace be upon him said: "The Muslim is the brother of another Muslim: he does not oppress him, nor abandon him, nor belittle him."

Belittling includes mocking, exposing faults, and speaking in ways that reduce a person's dignity.

We live in a time where speech is no longer limited to gatherings. Social media has made it easy to harm others instantly and publicly. A single message, a comment, or a post can damage someone's reputation in ways that are difficult to repair. As believers, we must be more cautious than ever.

Before you speak, before you type, before you share—ask yourself: Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it beneficial? Would I say this if the person were in front of me?

If the answer is no, then silence is safer.

All praise is due to Allah. We thank Him for His guidance and His blessings. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah, and that Muhammad peace be upon him is His servant and Messenger.

O believers, part of protecting your brother's honour is developing a pure heart, a heart free from envy, hatred, and the desire to see others fall. Many times, people speak ill of others because of jealousy or insecurity. Islam teaches us to purify our hearts and wish well for others.

The Prophet peace be upon him said: "None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."

Ask yourself: would you like others to speak about your faults? Would you like your mistakes to be exposed? If not, then treat others the same way.

Another important aspect is hush ad-dhann—having good assumptions about others. When you hear something negative, pause. Do not rush to judgment. Look for excuses. Give your brother the benefit of the

doubt.

Scholars have said: if there is even one good interpretation for what someone said or did, take that interpretation and leave the negative ones.

Also, be among those who stop harm when they hear it. If people are backbiting in your presence, you have choices: Defend the person being spoken about; Change the subject; Remind others of Allah Or leave the gathering if necessary.

Do not be a silent participant. Silence in the face of wrongdoing can sometimes be a form of approval.

Dear servants of Allah, remember that words cannot be taken back once spoken. On the Day of Judgment, every word will be accounted for.

Allah says (50:18), in meaning: "Not a word does he utter except that there is an observer ready to record it."

Protect your tongue, and you protect your faith.

Let us strive to be people who build, not destroy; who protect, not expose; who unite, not divide.

O Allah, purify our hearts from hypocrisy, envy, and hatred. O Allah, protect our tongues from falsehood, backbiting, and slander. O Allah, make us among those who defend the honour of our brothers and sisters. O Allah, conceal our faults and forgive our sins. O Allah, unite our hearts upon truth and righteousness.

Indeed, Allah commands justice, excellence, and giving to relatives, and He forbids immorality, wrongdoing, and oppression. He reminds you so that you may take heed.

Abdul-Kadir Abdullah writes from the Muslim Media Practitioners of Nigeria (MMPN), Edo State Chapter.

Davido, Chris Brown's anticipated joint album set for release

After years of highly anticipation, the joint project between Davido and Chris Brown seems to be getting closer to a release date.

Giving insight about the progress of the colabo, afrobeats mega star Davido said the joint effort between himself and Chris Brown will hopefully be dropping later in 2027.

He said "there is definitely more music, me and Chris Brown got an album coming out hopefully at the end of next year"

In previous interviews, Davido has spoken highly of his friendship with Chris Brown whom he described as one of the greatest performers alive and with whom he has enough songs to create multiple albums.

After nearly two years of teasing a joint album, Davido's latest revelation suggests the highly anticipated album might become a reality.



CHRIS BROWN & DAVIDO



IBEH

Georgina Ibeh hits movie market with "Fruit of my Labour"

Nollywood screen goddess, Georgina Ibeh is back with a bang after hitting a major milestone last year when her movie "Abeni" pulled in 1.4 million viewers on YouTube.

The actress latest project titled "Fruit of my labour" is now streaming on her YouTube channel, Georgina Ibeh TV and it's already striking a chord with viewers.

The movie which gave an insight on harsh realities and sacrifices that often come with love follows a woman who

gave up everything for love to support her boy friend's dream of a better life believing they would build future together once the man succeeds, but when wealth finally came the reverse was the story as the love bird walks away leaving her to face the consequences of her foolish love life alone.

The movie which is expected to resonate with anyone who has ever been a victim of love and betrayal was released directly into the YouTube recently to reach her audience instantly.

How Rihanna helped boost my confidence, self-image —Ayra Starr

Ayra Starr has shared how her 2024 meeting with billionaire singer, Rihanna in Barbados helped to improved her confidence and self - image.

Speaking in an interview with W. Magazine, the 23 - year - old afrobeats artiste revealed she was struggling with low self - esteem at the time of the meeting as Rihanna's personality helped her to rediscovered herself.

She further stated that her best memory with Rihanna was "sitting with her while we watched my music videos. The fact that she was pointing out her favourites parts of my videos felt so unreal

"At that time, I was struggling with my self - image and confidence, so that moment meant everything to me"

She added that she felt "God has sent Rihanna to her" describing their first meeting as "one of the most amazing feelings and defining moment in her career".

Ayra Starr has been very vocal about her admiration for Rihanna, she has repeatedly mentioned her as her biggest inspiration and role model.



AYRA STARR



OMAH LAY

I will be Nigeria's wealthiest artiste soon —Omah Lay

One of Nigeria's fastest growing singer, Omah lay has predicted that he would soon be the wealthiest African artiste ever produce in Nigeria in a few years to come.

Speaking in a recent interview with kiss Xtra, the 28- year-old singer vowed to build system that would change the world.

The singer boasted that he is insanely talented, emphasizing that there is

needs to be creative to be alright.

"I am crazy, my head is not correct. I need to create art to feel good. I am going to be the wealthiest African artiste ever in a few years. I am going to build stuff that would change the world" he said.

On the people who inspired him to do music, he mentioned wizkid, Burna Boy, Drake, The Weeknd and Harry styles.

Influencer culture affecting music negatively —Kcee

Limpopo crooner, Kingsley Okonkwo popularly known as Kcee has shared his views on the impact of influencer culture on the Nigerian music industry.

Kcee in a recent interview argued that the rise of social media influencers has affected the organic nature of music, streams and charts.

The singer noted that while influencer culture has some benefits, the disadvantages outweigh the advantages.

He further claimed that the quality of music started declining after tech gurus replaced traditional A&R experts in sourcing and grooming talents.



KCEE



A CONDOLENCE VISIT:

Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, Deputy Governor of Edo State, listens as the leader of the delegation from the PMAN Edo Elders Forum, Roland Igbinigie (aka Akaba Man), delivers an address during a condolence visit over the passing of the mother of the Deputy Governor, Madam Esther Imaguomwanruo Idahosa.
PHOTO: MOSES OBOH

ArtsWorld with Francis Odupte 08023680030

Story of the traveling CartoonAFRICA SDG cartoon campaigns and 'ArtivismWritivism' workshops

The program, CARTOON AFRICA INTERNATIONAL BIENNIAL (CAIB) festival, was initiated in November, 2012, by Francis Umendu Odupte, an international media award-winning Nigerian journalist and visual artist. (Please watch our brief introductory video: <https://youtu.be/vNmt8e64DOY>. Also watch this engagement with teens/schoolchildren in one of the events in Benin City, Nigeria: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFcYrZN-qNck>).

Every other year, since 2012, the CAIB festival has attempted to consistently bring together – through their artworks - international cartoonists, comic artists, illustrators, cartoon animators, photographers and other visual storytellers, to lend their voices and draw attention to vital development issues and concerns not given the attention they deserved, in favour of Africa's productivity and sustainable development.

HOW IT ALL STARTED:

On 31 January, 2019, Marina Ponti, Global Director a.i. of UN SDG Action Campaign sent an invitation letter to Mr. Odupte which stated in part: "...I am writing to invite you to join us at the SDG Global Festival of Action which will take place from 2 to 4 May 2019 at the World Conference Centre in Bonn (Germany) and feature the Africa International Biennial (CAIB) Traveling Cartoon Campaign in the Festival's Exhibitions Zone.

"The Global Festival of Action for Sustainable Development is a ground-breaking annual event powered by the UN SDG Action Campaign with the support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the German Federal Foreign Office and other partners," Ponti wrote, adding that "The Festival gathers the global community taking action to make the SDGs a reality. With the assumption that the SDGs will only be achieved if everyone takes action, the Festival puts the spotlight on and celebrates innovators, mobilizers and change-makers who are transforming lives- through advocacy and inspiring actions- and who are joining the global movement for the SDGs.

"With over 1,500 participants from all over the world from a wide range of sectors (national and local governments, youth, civil society, private sectors, foundations, media and music sector) the SDG Global Festival of Action provides an unparalleled opportunity for scaling up and broadening the global movement for the SDGs and for forging new partnerships and coalitions for the SDGs..." Ponti wrote.

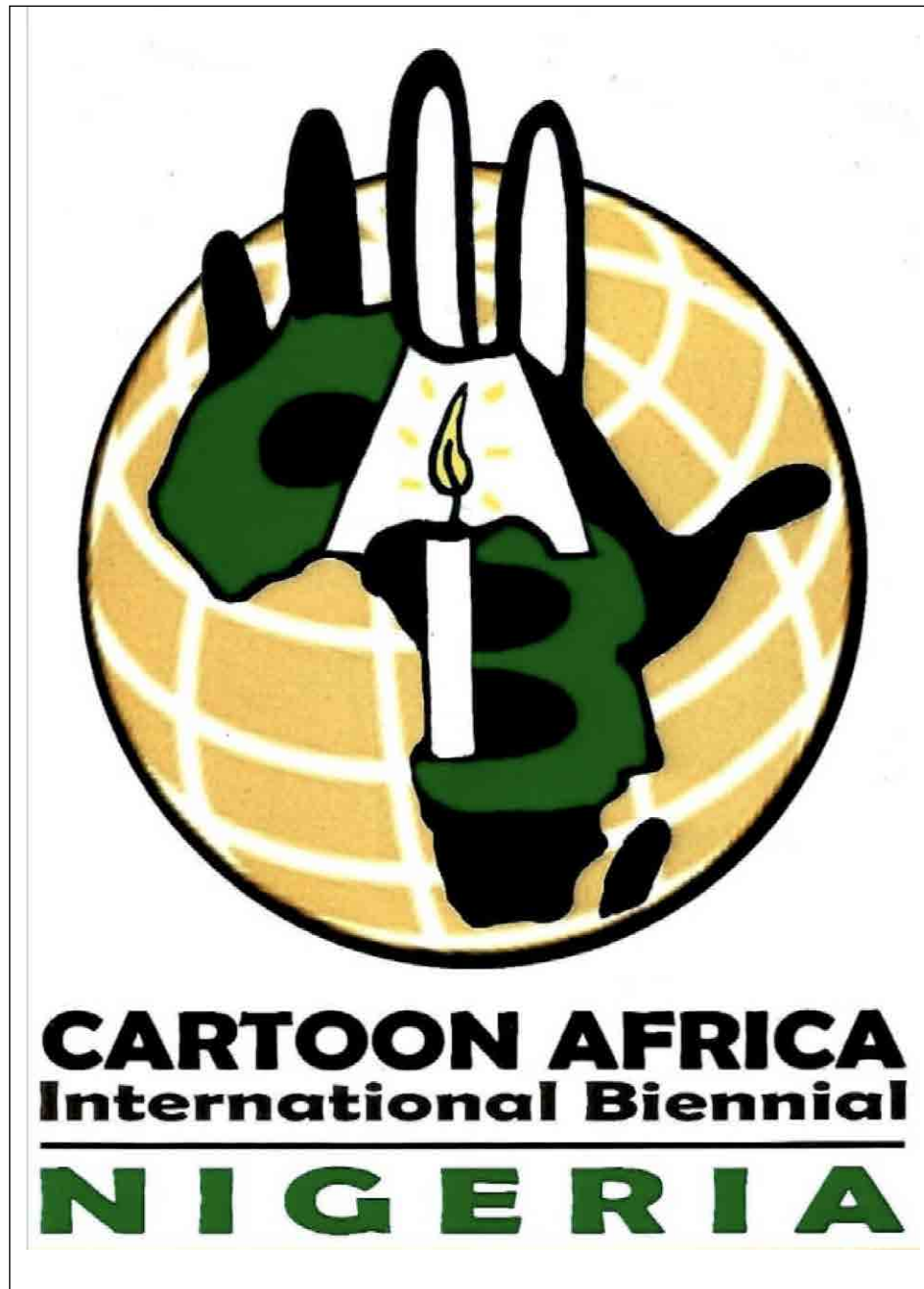
Eventually, a strategic "Cartoon Africa International Biennial (CAIB) SDG Cartoon Campaign..." held at the United Nations SDG Global Festival of Action which took place in Bonn (Germany) from May 2 to May 4, 2019.

From the UN SDG Global Festival of Action, the CartoonAFRICA SDG cartoon campaign started travelling when Bonnections, an NGO based in Bonn (Germany) wrote to Mr. Odupte, through its leader, Sandra Pruffer, requesting for permission to use the cartoons for some advocacy events around Bonn. The request was granted by Mr. Francis Odupte, on behalf of the implementing partners of the CartoonAFRICA SDG cartoon campaign/workshops.

Bonnections toured some communities in Bonn with the cartoons as strategic advocacy and creative education tools...

How the Build-up began:

As part of the Africa Liberation Day, Sandra Pruffer, on Friday, May 24, 2019, sent out an email to Bonnection partners globally:



PARTICIPANTS AT THE LECTURE

"Dear All, Here's a photo album of today's community event & opening of the CAIB Cartoon exhibit "The Future of Africa". More pics to follow; All the best, Sandra." The Engagement Team at Africans Rising, replied her email same day saying: "Dear Sandra, Thank you for reach-

ing out to us about your event for 25th May. We welcome your initiative and would add it to our map and database of activities. Can you kindly share with us your publicity materials, so we can share via social media? You can also reach out to us if you need any support or assistance

in regards to hosting your activity. Regards; Engagement Team, Africans Rising."

The organization had been hinted earlier in an email by Sandra Pruffer about the CartoonAfrica cartoon campaign, on Thursday, 23rd May 2019, at 15:48:

"Dear Imen & Africans Rising Team, Thanks for the info about the upcoming Africans Rising events and activities around the globe on May 25. At the very last minute, we are now again organizing a local African Liberation Day event this year. The "Africa of the Future" Cartoon exhibit will already open on Friday evening, but the exhibit will be included in a neighborhood walking tour organized by our Tannenbusch House friends on May 25.

"The anniversary celebration at the Tannenbusch House also includes a musical evening with Melchi, a young musician & singer-songwriter from Cameroon. At both events, we will present and/or read the Kilimanjaro declaration.

"Would it be still possible to add our #May2019 event to the global activity map? All the best; Sandra."

The Bonnections team leader dropped a strategic quote in her email broadcast to all collaborating organisations: "Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system. We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own - indeed to embrace the whole of creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder. Recognizing that sustainable development, democracy and peace are indivisible is an idea whose time has come." — Wangari Maathai (1940 - 2011), Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize Winner and Founder of the Green Belt Movement.

Sandra Pruffer also dropped a special invite with some explanation on Bonnections' collation with the CartoonAfrica team:

"You are cordially invited to an intercultural evening and Iftar community dinner on May 24 at the International Women & Family Forum in Tannenbusch. Join us to enjoy a traditional fast-breaking meal in the spirit of peace. The Iftar buffet opens after sunset (9.26 PM).

"Bonnections teamed up with the Cartoon Africa International Biennial (CAIB) to host an exhibit of the Cartoon artwork displayed earlier this month at the UN SDG Festival of Action and trigger a cross-cultural dialogue about the Sustainable Development Goals during the local SDG Days. #SDGGlobalfest. #Act4SDGS

"The "Africa of the Future" exhibit opens the day of the second global Fridays for Future strike (May 24) and on the eve of Africa Liberation Day (May 25). Therewith we like to highlight the demands and connecting struggles of the global climate justice movement and the Africans Rising movement. Africans Rising calls in its Kilimanjaro Declaration to build a Pan-African and global campaign that is:

- * Expanding space for civic and political action
- * Fighting for women's rights and freedoms across society
- * Focussing our struggles on the right to Equity and Dignity
- * Demanding good governance as we fight corruption and impunity
- * Demanding climate and environmental justice

The cartoons and other artwork will be displayed until June 1 at the forum during regular opening hours. The Forum also open its doors on May 25 (1 - 3 PM) for Africa Liberation Day and the Tannenbusch Tour (as part of anniversary celebrations)", Sandra Pruffer wrote.

(To be continued)

Entertainment

— with Davidson Imosime Izegaegbe —

My early Christian family upbringing shaped my musical identity and sound, Says THEBB02

THEBB02 (real name *Jesse Adesotu Woghiren*) is many things wrapped into one. He is a music producer, rapper, fashion icon/designer, performing/recording entertainer/artist, TV/social media personality, multi business mogul, philanthropist, and social activist. In this interview, he speaks of his craft and early experiences that shaped his musical identity and sound.

How would you describe THEBB02, both the artiste and the person behind the name?

You may have heard it said or floating around that someone is an enigma, often in the entertainment industry/spheres, as some like to use the word mindlessly. When I was given birth to, I was called 02. That's oxygen. You can feel oxygen everywhere, but you might not be able to see it. Does it have a colour? Yes. But then again, that will be a story for another day.

THEBB02 is an artiste and yet, more than an artiste. A burst of spontaneous fresh energy, but still, he is also an executive in the same breath. So, it's fair to say that it doesn't get any enigmatic than that.

I am blessed in Christ through the household of the

Woghiren Obamedo family via King Obanosa, King Esigie, and all the other Christian kings who reigned in the Benin Kingdom.

You have been in the music industry for a long time. What has been your motivation over the years?

My reality. Readily conspicuous, self-evidentiary applicable qualities. The truth; my true talents; the undeniable history and eventualities of the entertainment industry and the integrity of my work. In an industry/era where a typical artiste is hunting down studios for the next hit writer, beat maker, it is fair to say that such an artiste does not represent fairly the raw emotions that abound while those songs were being put together/written. If your life is lined up with biblical doctrines like mine, then I will take you to the section that says your gift will present you before kings (notice that the bible didn't say someone else's gift but yours).

As it is not fair in matters of medical emergency for someone to entrust their life to you when you didn't diligently go through the four walls of a university to become the applicable medical professional to attend to the situation, or for you to entrust the safety of your travel across the Atlantic to someone who is not a trained pilot, so it is with music. When you emotionally labour to put out a track, the stage presence is real and raw; you can see the synergy between the performer and the audience. This is why we call our group, the Liquid Emotion Music Lines (LEMLINES) because we represent real and raw energy. It's like how you mine gold. Like in the case of 'Eye Dey Red' and the process, frustration, emotion, synergy, energy and vibe it took to put that together.

No doubt, there's room for everybody (all categories of talent), but it's only fair for everyone to take their rightful place and stay humble. The entertainment industry is made up of a lot of bravado and braggadocio (which



JESSE ADESOTU WOGHIREN

It is my first love. I was exposed to a lot of foreign artistes like Michael Jackson, New Edition, Lionel Richie, and local artistes like Osayomore Joseph, Sunny Okosun, Victor Uwaifo, and others.

is also my brand swag and bragging rights, no cap). This is why THEBB02 rides his lane. Even though I have other things I could be doing, like my other estate portfolios, music is my first love. What has kept my longevity are just the hard facts and how Almighty Father God pours into my spirit, original songs. Take, for example, the book of Psalms addressed to the chief musician and thousands of years later, it is still relevant to our lives today, still impacting lives. That is where the mission of the THEBB02 rests upon, that when I finish my journey, I would say I gave it my all as given by my Father in heaven.

An artiste who is not coming from

the aforementioned antecedent, who does not operate on that vibration, is here today and gone tomorrow. That's unless they have a knowledgeable and strong-willed management team behind them who will have to toss up a lot of empty hypes about nothing, because, such narrative benefits them (puts money in their pocket). As we all know, every good song, talent, everything that is good comes from God and if you are not specifically called into this industry, you have to make up for it with a lot of BS; but, if you are called, you have less to do in terms of putting out quality work. That is why those who are not divinely/

naturally called cannot sustain longevity and end up getting involved in all sorts of entertainment industry-related vices in the absence of a strong management team behind them. These strong management teams that represent such false hypes fuel the corporate greed that is killing the soul of the entertainment industry, which every well-meaning industry practitioner has been complaining about over time.

What early experiences shaped your musical identity and sound?

Truth be told, giving honour and respect where they are due first; any response outside of Christ Jesus is not and cannot be right. All good things come from God. When people say worldly music, I don't like that at all. Some songs clearly glorify God and reverence Him wholly and directly; yet, as a Christian, you can write such works as 'Jesus walk' by Kanye West or 'Pray' by MC Hammer, etc, and it will still be okay. There is nothing wrong with you talking about clubbing with your street slang and giving one line or two to the aforementioned that you are proudly a Christian and our Baba

God will still not have a problem with that.

Have you ever read the Songs of Solomon? Take your time out and go listen and pay attention to that. God says we should carry and acknowledge Him wherever we go, in all our ways. He says we should pray without ceasing.

Sometimes, we wake up and the song in our mouths (hearts/mind) which people term "secular" can be used by God to send messages to us. One line from it could be something God is trying to tell you at that moment. God is all powerful and He can use anything to talk to you, like when he used the donkey, etc.

God lives in our truths. God knows how much time we have daily that we can spend in His presence and plug into him and be refilled. You ought to know that the spirit is the boss of the flesh. There is a time and a season for everything under heaven.

Being born into a Christian family and raised through my Catholic education informed my early choices and exposure to pop culture, also in a way that revolves around my perspective on the entertainment industry globally speaking. As a kid as early as 10, I was exposed to that lifestyle. I have always felt the spirit of God around me. In a way, there was a time when I was given an opportunity to choose and I chose music. It is my first love. I was exposed to a lot of foreign artistes like Michael Jackson, New Edition, Lionel Richie, and local artistes like Osayomore Joseph, Sunny Okosun, Victor Uwaifo, and others.

Michael Jackson was a great singer, but also in that era, Luther Vandross was a vocal powerhouse along the likes of Paul Johnson. Also, Michael Jackson was a great dancer and in that same era, there were Jeffery Daniels of the musical group Shalamar, and Michael Bugalo Shrimps of the break-dance movie.

Michael respected and cared for the profession and industry enough to the point of taking things to another level, which I believe was one of the reasons he was also chosen. Michael was a perfectionist. I can say I am similar to him in that regard. When I am in my creative sense, I don't give up until I see the final product in the flagship status that I envision. Folks who work with me can testify to this part of me as they call me a perfectionist, which is okay because, I don't accept mediocrity and neither do I take things for granted.

What continues to shape and evolve THEBB02's sound into ever futuristic musical themes (outlook) is the ability to evolve using current soundscape to produce my originally given musical motifs, not by following trends as they come and go, but using the original soulful components that can stand the test of time.

FEATURE**Foreign****Retired Maj-Gen Mohammed Ibrahim Gana arrived at the court in a wheelchair**

The court scheduled 27 April for bail hearings.

During proceedings on Wednesday, defence lawyers complained of restricted access to their clients, claiming they had been unable to meet them since September 2025 - which would mean they had been arrested ahead of the Independence Day parade.

According to the charge sheet, the six defendants "conspired with one another to levy war against the state to overawe" the president.

The court papers suggest the coup plot was led by Col Mohammed Alhassan Ma'aji, who was arrested along with other alleged accomplices, and is due to go on trial at a military court.

Prosecutors also allege the defendants had prior knowledge of Col Ma'aji's "treasonable act", but failed to inform authorities.

The charges include the suppression of intelligence, with prosecutors alleging the defendants were intent on destabilis-

ing the state and had failed to disclose information that could have helped prevent terrorism.

Money-laundering allegations form a significant part of the case - with accusations that money changed hands linked to the financing of terrorism.

Under Nigerian law, treason attracts severe penalties, including life imprisonment.

The allegations of a plan to overthrow President Tinubu surfaced in October 2025 when the government abruptly cancelled Independence Day parade.

Nigeria has experienced a period of unbroken civilian rule since 1999.

This case is being closely watched as one of the most significant coup-related prosecutions in recent Nigerian history.

For months, the secrecy and unanswered questions over the alleged coup plot created a fertile ground for rumours, with speculation ranging from wider military involvement to claims of political vendettas.



ARRIVED AT THE COURT:

Retired Maj-Gen Mohammed Ibrahim Gana arrived at the court in a wheelchair

Nigeria's suspected coup plotters deny treason charges

Six people, including a retired major general and a serving police inspector, have pleaded not guilty to plotting a coup to overthrow Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu.

The defendants appeared at the Federal High Court in the capital, Abuja, where they were ordered to remain in the custody of the Department of State Services (DSS), Nigeria's domestic spy agency.

A seventh person - a former governor and one-time oil minister, Timipre Sylva - has also been named as a conspirator but court documents said he was still at large.

Rumours of the coup plot surfaced when the government

abruptly cancelled a planned military parade to mark Nigeria's 65th Independence Anniversary on 1 October 2025.

At the time, officials cited security threats - but speculation quickly linked the cancellation to a possible coup plot.

The military initially denied the reports, but in January it announced that 16 officers were to be tried before a military court for attempting to oust the president.

Those to go on trial at the Federal High Court on charges of treason, terrorism and money laundering are civilians or retired military personnel alleged to have been part of the plot.

US Navy chief leaving post 'effective immediately', Pentagon says

US Navy Secretary John Phelan is leaving the Trump administration, the Pentagon has announced.

His departure will be "effective immediately", Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said in a social media post. Navy Undersecretary Hung Cao will serve on an acting basis in the role, which is largely administrative.

Phelan is the latest high-ranking military leader to leave the administration in recent months. His departure comes amid the US-Israel war with Iran and the continued US blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.

The Navy has not provided a reason. His exit came after tension within the American leadership over issues around shipbuilding, according to unconfirmed reports in US media.

"On behalf of the Secretary of War and Deputy Secretary of

War, we are grateful to Secretary Phelan for his service to the Department and the United States Navy," Parnell wrote. "We wish him well in his future endeavors."

It comes just weeks after US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth asked Army Chief of Staff Randy George to step down from his post.

Two other Army officials, Gen David Hodne and Maj Gen William Green, have also been removed from their roles recently.

Since entering the Pentagon, Hegseth has fired more than a dozen senior military officers, including the chief of naval operations and the Air Force's vice chief of staff.

Phelan was ousted from his job after he, too, ended up clashing with Hegseth over the implementation of Trump's shipbuilding initiative, according to sources who spoke to

the accident. Public broadcaster DR showed images of two yellow and grey trains, both with visible damage to the front, facing each other in a wooded area. Officials said the trains collided at 06:29 local time (05:29 BST) on Thursday and fire and rescue teams were alerted immediately.

Egetved, who is mayor of the Gribskov municipality, said those with critical injuries had been flown to the National Hospital in Copenhagen.

"The local track is used by many Gribskov residents, workers and students," she wrote on Facebook.

Local mayor Trine Egetved said she was deeply shaken by

the accident. Public broadcaster DR showed images of two yellow and grey trains, both with visible damage to the front, facing each other in a wooded area.

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Lebanon accuses Israel of targeting journalist killed in air strike

Lebanon's prime minister has accused Israel of war crimes after Israeli air strikes killed one journalist and wounded another in southern Lebanon on Wednesday.

The strike killed Amal Khalil, who worked for a Lebanese newspaper, and injured freelance photographer Zeinab Faraj.

Officials in Lebanon say they were deliberately targeted as they sought shelter in a home after an initial air strike hit the vehicle in front of them, killing two men.

The officials also accused the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) of intentionally targeting a marked ambulance as it tried to reach the journalists in the village of Tayri.

The IDF denied that it was preventing rescue teams from reaching the area and said it did not target journalists.

Journalists Khalil, 43, who worked for Lebanese newspaper Al-Akhbar, and Faraj, a freelance photographer, were travelling together. The two

men who died have not been named by officials. Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam said: "Targeting journalists, obstructing access to them by relief teams, and even targeting their locations again after these teams arrive constitutes described war crimes." He accused Israel of repeatedly targeting media workers in southern Lebanon in what he described as "an established approach". Salam offered condolences to Khalil's family and said that Lebanon would "pursue the crimes before the competent international forums".

In a statement, the IDF said it "does not target journalists and acts to mitigate harm to them while maintaining the safety and security of its troops".

The IDF said it identified two vehicles that had "departed from a military structure used by Hezbollah".

One of the vehicles had approached Israeli troops in a

would be working together to find out what had happened.

Pedersen told reporters it was far too early to know the cause of the crash.

Rail accidents are rare in Denmark and one expert suggested one of the train drivers had ended up on the wrong line by over-riding a stop signal as the train left a local station. The Gribskov line is not thought to have been updated with an automated safety system.

Trine Egetved told public broadcaster DR that it was shocking that two trains could collide head-on "and we must ensure it never happens again".

manner that was an "immediate threat" after crossing a "forward defence line", violating a ceasefire, the statement said.

The IDF said the Israeli Air Force then struck one of the vehicles, and that the "structure from which the individuals had fled was also struck".

The Lebanese health ministry said the IDF "pursued" Khalil and Faraj, "who had taken refuge from the first raid in a nearby house, targeting the house where they had sought shelter".

When a Lebanese Red Cross ambulance arrived to treat the wounded, Israeli forces directed a stun grenade and gunfire toward it, preventing it from reaching them, the ministry said in a statement.

"This constitutes a blatant double violation: obstructing the rescue efforts of a citizen known for her civic media activism, and targeting an ambulance clearly marked with the Red Cross emblem," the health ministry said.

South African court orders Zambia to return former president's body

Just hours after the Zambian government said it had taken possession of ex-President Edgar Lungu's body, a court in South Africa - where Lungu died - has ordered the body to be returned.

It is the latest twist in a 10-month saga over what should happen to his remains following a long-standing feud between Lungu and his successor, President Hakainde Hichilema.

The government has long maintained that, as a former head of state, Lungu should be honoured in the country and buried alongside his predecessors in the special presidential burial ground in the capital, Lusaka.

But Lungu's family wanted a private burial after negotiations

with the government over the funeral arrangements broke down.

Last August, the South African high court in Pretoria ruled that Zambia's government could repatriate the body and give him a state funeral - an outcome that left Lungu's relatives visibly distraught in the courtroom.

The family appealed against the decision but, in a surprise announcement late on Wednesday night, Zambia's government said Lungu's remains had been "formally transferred" to the state by the South African court.

According to the statement, the transfer occurred after Lungu's family were unable to "proceed with their case" at the

appeals court.

But just a few hours later, the same South African court ordered the Zambian government to return the body until the matter goes back to court on 21 May.

To complicate matters further, Two Mountains Burial Services, the funeral home where Lungu's remains were originally being kept, has reportedly said it will no longer accept the body and has asked the Lungu family to find an alternative.

Interviewed on a Zambian YouTube news channel, Lungu family spokesman Makebi Zulu disputed that the appeals process had lapsed, saying that the correct procedure had been followed.

The former president died of an undisclosed illness aged

68 at a clinic in South Africa's capital, Pretoria. Chaos ensued following his death, with mourners receiving conflicting information from the government and Lungu's political party, the Patriotic Front (PF).

Two separate mourning periods were announced and at one point there were competing condolence books.

Lungu, who led Zambia from 2015 until 2021, had numerous rows with Hichilema, who was the opposition leader for many years before finally unseating his bitter rival.

After Lungu's death, his family said the ex-president did not want Hichilema to be at his funeral or "anywhere near" his body.

US Senate clears key hurdle in bid to fund two immigration agencies

The US Senate has cleared a key hurdle as Congress looks to secure funding for two immigration enforcement agencies and allow the government to reopen in full.

In a late-night voting session, Republicans in the upper chamber of Congress used a procedural manoeuvre that did not require the support of opposition Democrats.

Democrats have been refusing to fund the two agencies, unless they are reformed in the wake of two deadly shootings by the agencies' operatives in the state of Minnesota.

Both Thursday's resolution, and a separate measure aimed at unlocking funding for the rest of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), now require approval from the House.

It is not clear when the lower chamber might take up either measure. House Republicans have sometimes taken a different approach to the issue to their colleagues in the upper chamber.

The measure passed in the early hours of Thursday is designed to specifically fund the two agencies, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP), until the end of President Donald Trump's

term.

The Senate had previously passed the separate measure that would fund the rest of the wider DHS, of which both agencies are a part.

The top Republican in the Senate, John Thune, hailed Thursday morning's result, but acknowledged that there was still "a multi-step process ahead of us".

Republicans used a procedure that allows lawmakers to pass spending-related matters with a simple Senate majority - after negotiations with Democrats proved ineffective.

It passed by 50 votes to 48. Two Republican senators who frequently break with the Trump administration joined Democrats to vote against it. Two senators, one Democrat and one Republican, also did not vote.

Voting dragged on until about 03:30 local time (07:30 GMT), as Democrats tabled a series of amendments in a process sometimes known as a "vote-a-rama".

Trump has said he wants a budget package to be on his desk for signature by 1 June.

DHS has gone without funding since a shutdown began on 14 February, as the two sides have struggled to agree on a funding deal.



ZAMBIA FORMER PRESIDENT:

Edgar Lungu said he did not want his successor at his funeral or "anywhere near" his body

Philippine ex-president Duterte to stand trial as ICC confirms crime charges

Rodrigo Duterte, the former president of the Philippines, will stand trial for crimes against humanity after judges at the International Criminal Court (ICC) confirmed his charges.

The 81-year-old is accused of the extrajudicial killing of thousands during his deadly "war on drugs" between 2011 and 2019.

Those charges that were "unanimously confirmed" by pre-trial judges, who had "substantial grounds to believe" that Duterte had committed the alleged crimes, the ICC said in a statement on Thursday.

The confirmation of Duterte's trial comes after several appeals by the ex-president to be released from detention, where he has been held for more than a year.

Duterte has refused to recognise the ICC proceedings, arguing that during his presidency

in 2019 the Philippines had pulled out of the Rome Statute, the ICC's founding agreement.

But on Wednesday, judges in the ICC's Pre-Trial Chamber ruled that the court could still hear Duterte's case, given that the alleged crimes had happened between 2011 and 2019 - while the Philippines was still a member of the ICC.

According to the ICC, judges have also authorised more than 500 victims to take part in proceedings.

At the heart of the trial is Duterte's "war on drugs" campaign, which human rights groups say targeted and killed small-time drug dealers while failing to nab the kingpins.

Duterte has denied the allegations - condemning the charges against him as "an outrageous lie". The police maintained that they only killed in self-defence.

Duterte's lawyers had argued that the former president was unfit to participate in ICC proceedings due to cognitive impairment.

But ICC judges rejected the argument and, citing medical experts' opinions, said they believed Duterte was fit to take part in the proceedings and effectively exercise his procedural rights.

Duterte's arrival at the Hague last year, after he was arrested at a Manila airport, was the result of a falling out between his daughter Sara and the incumbent president Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

A 'bittersweet' moment

The ICC trial has been hailed as a historic moment by critics of his deadly crackdown on drugs.

Leila de Lima, a member of the Philippines' House of Representatives and one of Duterte's staunchest critics, said the confirmation of his crimes against humanity

charges marked "a great day for the fighters against impunity and state-sponsored violence".

"The wheels of justice should have not taken this long to turn. But we take what we are dealt with for the sake of the rule of law," she said.

"Today we celebrate even as we grieve for those we lost to Duterte's madness."

Human rights organisation KARAPATAN described it as "vindication of the Filipino people's efforts to uphold and pursue justice and accountability for the killings of thousands under Duterte's bloody regime".

They added, however, that the development was "bittersweet".

"The thousands of lives taken by those who spit on human dignity cannot be brought back. Their families remain stricken with grief on their loss, and the majority remain as poor as ever," they said.

Migrants deported from US stranded, 'scared' in DR Congo

Spending the past five days scooped up in a hotel in the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo is not quite what a group of Latin Americans expected when they sought asylum in the United States.

But their predicament is far from the worst of it: the men and women told AFP on Wednesday that they arrived in Kinshasa after a 27-hour flight which they spent with their hands and feet shackled.

Gabriela, a 30-year-old Colombian sporting tattoos and clad like most of her fellow sufferers in a white T-shirt, summed up their plight.

"I didn't want to go to Congo. I'm scared, I don't know the language," she said.

She only found out where they were headed the day before being expelled from the United States.

The DRC — one of a number of African nations that have agreed to take in deported migrants — is one of the world's 15 poorest countries, thousands of kilometres from the Americas.

The first batch of deportees arrived last Friday in the central African country under a controversial US migration scheme to pack off undocumented foreign nationals to third countries.

Others include Cameroon,

Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Ghana, Rwanda and South Sudan.

The scheme has often been accompanied by US financial or logistical support.

Yet scant information is provided by the authorities in the host countries about the migrants' fate once they arrive on their soil.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), which takes charge of them once they have obtained short-stay visas, told AFP it can offer "assisted voluntary return to migrants who request it."

Waiting Since their arrival in Kinshasa, a megacity of more than 17 million people, the 15 South American migrants have been whiling away their time in a complex near the airport.

Rows of neat, white-walled little houses stand side by side. The migrants sleep there and say they are forbidden to leave the premises.

Police and army vehicles are parked outside and on occasion personnel can be seen from a private military firm which AFP was unable to identify.

Cast adrift by US President Donald Trump's immigration policy, the migrants spend their days on their mobile phones, trying to contact their families.

None speaks French, the DRC's official language.

Feature

Humanity at the edge: Global crises, bold solutions, and the stories that define us

GENERAL IWU COSMOS JP

The world today stands at a crossroads. Across continents, billions of people are navigating a storm of challenges while searching for opportunities that could reshape the course of history. From the skyscrapers of New York to the remote villages of Somalia, humanity is confronting urgent questions: How do we survive global crises, innovate responsibly, and build a future worth inheriting?

Perhaps the most visible challenge is climate change. Rising seas, extreme heatwaves, and unpredictable weather patterns are no longer distant warnings—they are everyday realities. In Bangladesh, floodwaters have swept away homes and livelihoods; in the Sahel region of Africa, prolonged droughts threaten millions of farmers. Yet amid disaster, human ingenuity thrives. Communities in Kenya are using solar-powered irrigation to sustain crops, while engineers in Germany design wind farms that power entire towns. These stories show that the fight against climate change is as much about human creativity as it is about science.

Inequality is another defining global challenge. In both developed and developing nations, the gap between rich and poor continues to widen. Millions of families still struggle to access clean water, education, and healthcare. But solutions often emerge in unexpected places. In India, young women lead education programs for girls in rural communities; in Brazil,



favela residents organize grassroots healthcare networks.

These initiatives prove that change can grow from the ground up, transforming the lives of millions.

Global health crises further illustrate the need for collaboration. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities across the world, from underfunded hospitals in South Sudan to overcrowded clinics in Italy. Yet it also sparked unprecedented cooperation: scientists shared research across borders, volunteers delivered essential

medicines to remote areas, and technology connected patients to healthcare providers via digital platforms.

The lesson is clear: health security is global, and no nation can solve these problems alone.

Technology, for all its promise, also tests humanity. Artificial intelligence, digital currencies, and renewable energy innovations present opportunities—and ethical dilemmas. Job displacement, privacy concerns, and digital inequality are growing challenges. Yet inspiring stories emerge

daily: a Nigerian app links small farmers to global markets, a Peruvian online platform brings remote classrooms to isolated children, and engineers worldwide develop solutions to reduce carbon emissions.

Technology is reshaping societies, but only if guided by responsibility and inclusivity.

Geopolitical tensions add another layer of complexity. Conflicts in Eastern Europe, contested waters in the South China Sea, and political unrest across Africa and the Middle East re-

mind us that global stability is fragile. Yet diplomacy and local peace-building efforts show that humanity can rise above division.

From community-led reconciliation programs in Colombia to youth movements advocating for social justice in Tunisia, ordinary citizens are rewriting what leadership looks like.

Underlying all these crises is a single, powerful truth: the world's challenges are interconnected. Climate, inequality, health, technology, and conflict do not exist in isolation. A drought in Africa affects food prices worldwide; a breakthrough in renewable energy in Europe benefits the entire planet; a conflict in Asia can ripple across global trade networks. In today's world, no nation is an island.

The stories that capture hearts and minds are deeply human. A Syrian teacher rebuilding a school destroyed by war, a young Canadian scientist inventing biodegradable plastics, a Ghanaian community transforming e-waste into energy—all illustrate the resilience and creativity defining our age.

The lesson for the global audience is urgent: humanity has the tools, talent, and ingenuity to solve these crises—but it requires courage, collaboration, and commitment. The headlines of tomorrow will tell one of two stories: either a world fractured by neglect or a world united by action.

The choice is ours, and the time is now. Bold leadership, active citizenship, and a shared vision can turn crises into catalysts for progress. Humanity is writing its next chapter—and the world is watching.

EDO: Illegal mining and conspiracy of silence

RAYMOND OSOGBE

Edo State is lavishly endowed with natural resources. Officially, on paper, it may appear as the tapping of these resources are yet to commence. Our discreet investigations, revealed that illegal and secret exploits of these resources are ongoing.

It is absolutely of essence to highlight some of these resources and their location. In Akoko Edo Local government area, we have, gold, copper, marble, kaolin, limestone, granite, charnolite, Dolomite and fieldspar. While in Etsako Central local government area, available minerals are: limestone, kaolin and gypsum. Also in Etsako East, limestone, fieldspar, clay, marble, granite, kaolin and gold are available. Similarly, Etsako West possesses: granite, kaolin, gypsum and limestone. Igueben local government area has kaolin just like Esan West local government area. Esan North East local government area, has bentonite and kaolin. Also Esan South local government area, has bentonite and kaolin as well, just like Esan Central local government area.

In Edo South Senatorial District, you have kaolin in Egor and kaolin and clay. In Uhumwode local government area, In Ikpoba Okha, you

have petroleum, clay and kaolin. Ore-do local government area has petroleum, kaolin and clay. Similarly Orhionwon has petroleum, gas, kaolin and clay. It's absolutely of essence to emphasize that, Oben in Orhionwon, has an unprecedented gas reserve. Ovia North East local government area has petroleum, kaolin and clay. Similarly, Ovia South West local government area has silical sand and kaolin. Owan East parade diorite, granite, marble, kaolin and limestone. In same hemisphere, Owan West local government area has , granite, gypsum, limestone, marble and clay.

The motive of this unfolding scenario is to enable Edo State government and the general public know the amount of untapped resources we have as a people. Our discreet investigations revealed that, some of these resources are being tapped, with the connivance of our people and some non indigin indigenes, foreigners as well.

This Writer is calling on the Governor Okpevbolo led administration, to beam her searchlight on this sector. This is with a view of creating a conducive investment atmosphere, to attracting potential Investors. Government should be proactive, to halting illegal minn of her minerals. Even

though, it's absolutely federal government jurisdiction, however, Edo State government will benefit from derivative principle and taxation, if potential Investors are on ground.

Our investigations revealed that, pockets of recent security breaches, such as kidnapping and banditry that spiraled across Edo are diversionary tactics. These strategies are often

ignited by illegal Miners to distract relevant authorities from scrutinizing their illicit activities.

As government is under pressure to satisfy the yearnings of the people, she needs to multiply her revenue sources. This Writer wants to admonish our people hobnobbing with foreigners to deplete our resources, to stop it.

The exploiters of these resourc-

es give you peanuts, while they cart away the chunk of money.

I am therefore of the view that government should constitute a Committee to oversee the mineral sector. This Committee should be replicated at local government, ward and village levels. Among its oversight functions should be proper security measures to stem the tide of of the ugly trend.



MINING SITE

FEATURE

The UK's Rwanda 2.0: What Nigeria Must Demand Before Taking Britain's Deportees

MARTHA OBI-DIKE

Britain has a deportation problem. Nigeria should not make it Nigeria's problem.

After the UK Supreme Court killed the Rwanda asylum deal in November 2023, and Labour formally scrapped it in July 2024, the search for a "third country" to process and house migrants resumed. By early 2026, Whitehall briefings point to Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya as "discussions ongoing". No treaty yet. But the music is familiar: cash for compliance, development aid tied to migrant intake, and moral language to mask political desperation.

Nigeria remembers Rwanda 1.0. We saw a £290 million payment to Kigali before a single plane took off. We saw courts block flights over safety. We saw the entire policy collapse under legal and ethical weight. Now Britain wants Nigeria to be Rwanda 2.0 — a holding pen for people it does not want, using money we cannot audit and promises it will not keep.

The answer is not "no" by default. The answer is "on what terms, and at what price?" Because if Nigeria gets this wrong, we import Britain's electoral problem and export our sovereignty.

1. What Britain Wants: Outsource the Unhappy Voter

The politics is simple. UK net migration hit 685,000 in 2023. "Stop the boats" is not policy; it is a slogan. Conservative and Labour governments both need deportation numbers before the next election. The voters they target do not care where migrants go. They care that they leave.

Rwanda failed because courts said it was not "safe". Ghana has been approached and refused publicly. Kenya is negotiating but wary. Nigeria is attractive for three reasons:

A. Scale: We can absorb numbers. Britain knows we already host 400,000+ refugees and 3.6 million IDPs. One more flight looks like a rounding error.

B. English: Deportees can be told "you'll manage" because of language.

C. Debt: Nigeria's N68.3 trillion 2026 budget spends 80–90% of revenue on debt service. We are cash-hungry. £500 million looks like oxygen.

Britain will offer three things: per-head payments, visa access for skilled Nigerians, and "development funding" for host communities. All three were offered to Rwanda. None survived contact with reality.

2. What Nigeria Has: 3.6 Million Reasons to Say Not Yet

Before we discuss taking Britain's caseload, count ours.

IDPs: 3.6 million Nigerians displaced by insurgency, banditry, and floods. Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe — the BAY states — have camps without water, schools, or jobs. UNFPA supported 1,141 safe deliveries there in February 2026 because women give birth on mats.

Refugees: 87,000 Cameroonians in Cross River and Benue. 40,000 Nigerians after the 2023 coup. We have not fully integrated them. They farm mar-



ginal land and compete with hosts.

Urban Pressure: Lagos adds 85 people per hour. Kano's informal settlements double every 12 years. No LGA can show a functional housing scheme for existing residents. Ehor Water Works in Uhumwode is dead. If we cannot pipe water to our own, where do we put deportees?

Adding 5,000 or 50,000 people from the UK does not happen in a vacuum. They need housing, policing, health, and jobs. Nigeria cannot provide those for citizens. The UK knows this. That is why it offers cash. Cash does not build a PHC. Contractors do. And contractors do not exist where the state is absent.

3. The Rwanda Lesson: Money Without Systems Is a Scandal

Rwanda took £290 million by 2024. By 2026, it has built two hostels and housed zero UK deportees. The money is spent. The accountability is vague. Kigali says it was for "economic development". The UK National Audit Office cannot track outcomes.

That is the template. Britain pays upfront. Nigeria takes the photo. Two years later, the deportees are either in legal limbo, have absconded, or are suing for rights. The money is gone. The headline moves on. The community that hosted them is left with resentment and no infrastructure.

Nigeria's governance record is worse than Rwanda's. If £290 million vanished in Kigali with a functional state, what happens in Abuja where audit reports are ignored and MDAs return unspent funds only after public shame?

Any UK deal that is not paid into an escrowed, third-party audited, project-specific fund with claw-back clauses is a setup. Nigeria should not take revenue. We should take infrastructure.

4. The Non-Negotiables: If We Talk,

These Are the Terms

If the Foreign Ministry is pressed to negotiate, Nigeria's floor should be public and brutal. No secret MoUs.

Term 1: No Processing, Only Returnees. Nigeria will not be a "processing centre" for Afghan, Syrian, or Albanian nationals who never lived here. We take only Nigerians whose citizenship is verified by NIN and biometrics. If the UK cannot prove nationality, they do not board. Nigeria is not a dumping ground for Britain's stateless problem.

Term 2: Infrastructure First, People

We can partner with the UK on returns of actual criminals after jail, with restitution. We can partner on skilled visas that take doctors and nurses we've trained — and pay to replace them.

Second. For every 1,000 returnees, the UK funds, builds, and commissions before arrival:

- 500 housing units with title, not camp tents.
- 1 fully staffed PHC with drugs, not a plaque.
- 1 primary school with teachers, not a foundation.
- 10km of farm-to-market road in the host LGA.

All delivered by UK contractors under Nigerian law, handed to LGAs with 5-year maintenance budgets prepaid. No cash to FG. No "budget support". Only assets.

Term 3: Economic Rights. Returnees must have work rights, business permits, and bank access on day one. If the UK claims Nigeria is safe, then Nigeria must treat them as citizens, not detainees. No camps. No curfews. No NGO vouchers. If they cannot work, they will re-offend or flee. Lagos does not need more desperate young men.

Term 4: Legal Liability. UK accepts full legal liability for any deportee who sues for wrongful deportation, in Nigerian courts, under Nigerian law. If Britain sends the wrong person, Britain pays, not Nigeria.

Term 5: Exit Clause. Nigeria can terminate and return all persons at UK cost if UK defaults on any payment, or if UK immigration policy changes. Sovereignty is not a subscription.

If Britain rejects these, there is no deal. Because any deal without them is Rwanda 2.0: money today, crisis tomorrow.

5. The Moral Case: Development Is Not for Sale

The UK will say "this is development partnership". It is not. Development is Ehor Water Works running. Development is 1,141 safe deliveries becoming 100,000. Development is Uhumwode girls in school because

the tap and the toilet work.

Development is not taking Britain's unwanted in exchange for aid. That is migration laundering. It tells 3.6 million IDPs that a deportee from London ranks higher than a widow from Gwoza. It tells LGAs that foreign policy pays better than service delivery.

Nigeria's moral authority in ECOWAS, in the AU, and in the Global South comes from saying no to unequal deals. We rejected the EU's EPA for 10 years because it hurt local industry. We should reject this for the same reason: it hurts local people.

We can partner with the UK on returns of actual criminals after jail, with restitution. We can partner on skilled visas that take doctors and nurses we've trained — and pay to replace them. We cannot partner on being a warehouse for human beings.

Conclusion: We Are Not Rwanda. We Are Not for Rent.

The 2027 election will be fought on the economy, security, and dignity. No party survives the photo of a UK-funded camp in Edo while Ehor's children fetch water from a stream. No governor survives explaining why a deportee has a new house while a teacher is owed salary.

Nigeria's leverage is simple: we do not need this deal. Britain does. Desperate buyers don't set prices.

So the message to Whitehall is clear:

You want Nigeria to help your politics. Fix Uhumwode first. Build the PHC, pave the road, wire the school, and title the houses. Then we'll talk about who lands at Lagos airport.

Until then, keep your flights. We have 3.6 million of our own to settle. We have a naira to stabilize. We have LGAs to resurrect.

We are not Rwanda 2.0. We are Nigeria 1.0 — unfinished, underfunded, and not for sale.

The UK can stop the boats. It cannot buy our shores.

FEATURE

AI and empty pockets: Can digital reform outpace infrastructure decay?

CLARETH SOLOMON

Nigeria wants to govern with algorithms while half the country still queues for petrol.

In 2026, policy documents talk about “AI adoption in governance”, “smart cities”, and “digital financial inclusion”. Budgets fund dashboards. Ministries launch apps. Press releases mention “Fourth Industrial Revolution”.

Meanwhile, manufacturers close because the grid fails. Students sit for exams by candlelight. And a N68.3 trillion budget commits 80-90% of revenue to debt service before a single server is bought.

The question for 2026 is not whether Nigeria can adopt AI. It is whether digital reform can outpace the decay of the physical infrastructure it runs on. If it cannot, we are building a smart layer on a collapsing foundation.

1. The Digital Push: What 2026 Actually Looks Like

There is real movement. The Nigeria Tax Act and related laws that took effect on January 1, 2026 are designed to “modernise revenue collection” and digitise compliance. The Nigeria Revenue Service now has a broader mandate, and the Joint Revenue Board is meant to harmonise state and federal systems.

UNFPA and private sector partners are pushing “financial inclusion for displaced women” through digital connectivity in the BAY states. The goal is to get cash transfers, health information, and GBV reporting onto mobile platforms.

In urban planning, Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt continue pilot “smart city” projects. The language is renewable energy integration, traffic sensors, e-governance portals, and data-driven service delivery.

AI appears in policy as a tool for tax fraud detection, budget monitoring, agricultural extension, and health diagnostics. Adoption is “moderate”, according to analysts. Blockchain uptake is “low”. Digital literacy gaps are wide.

None of this is fake. All of it is fragile.

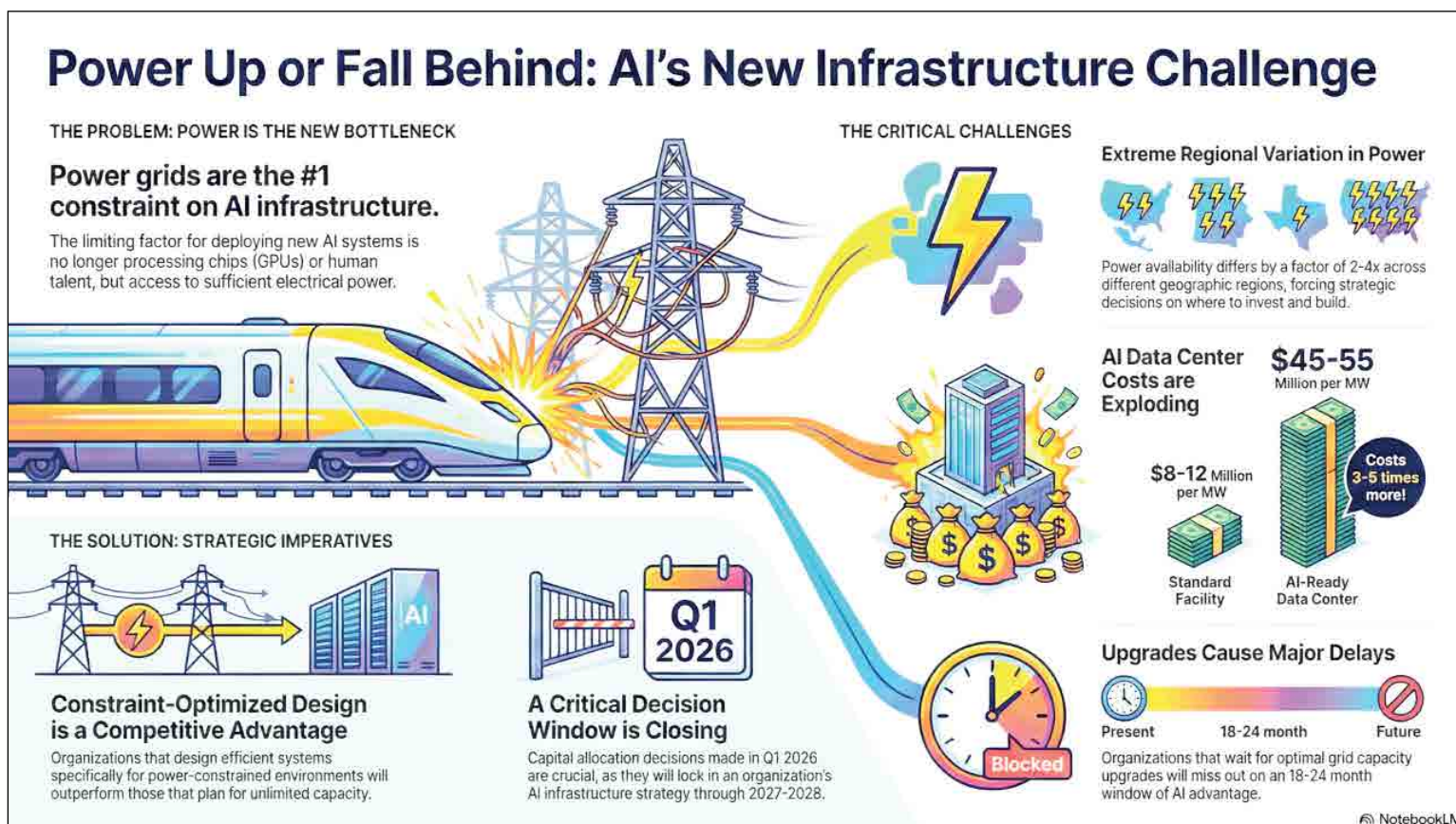
2. The Infrastructure Drag: Power, Connectivity, and Trust

Digital reform needs three physical things: power, connectivity, and hardware. Nigeria is short on all three.

The grid still collapses. Diesel is expensive. Solar is scaling, but not at the rate needed to power data centres, hospitals, or schools. A tax portal that times out because the server farm is on a generator is not modernisation. It is digitised frustration.

Broadband penetration is growing, but rural areas and IDP camps — where UNFPA wants digital inclusion most — remain patchy. Smartphone ownership is high in cities, low in the poorest deciles. Data costs eat household budgets already squeezed by 25%+ MPR and food inflation.

Then there is trust. Multiple agency audits, unclear tax guidelines, and allegations of discrepancies between



passed bills and gazetted versions have created “information asymmetry”. Dumebi Oluwole of Stears warned that people “still do not understand the potential benefit of these policies”.

You cannot ask citizens to trust an algorithm to assess their tax if they do not trust the human who wrote the law. You cannot ask displaced women to report GBV on an app if the nearest police post is 40km away and the network is down.

3. The Fiscal Contradiction: Building Code on a Deficit

The 2026 budget is N68.3 trillion. Debt service consumes 80-90% of revenue. The Central Bank projects N35.51 trillion in retained revenue. The arithmetic says most new spending is borrowed.

Borrowing for digital transformation is not inherently bad. Borrowing for digital transformation while power, roads, and ports decay is a sequencing error. AI cannot pave a road. A dashboard cannot stop bandits on a supply route. A smart city sensor cannot generate electricity.

BusinessDay put the national dilemma plainly: “The challenge now is whether the government can strengthen its finances without putting more pressure on households or scaring away investors”. Digital reform funded by aggressive taxation on a shrinking formal sector fails that test. It puts pressure on households, scares investors who need reliable power, and delivers apps that crash.

The “fiscal time-loop” risk applies here. Borrow to fund digital projects → fail to raise revenue because the real economy is strangled by infrastructure gaps → borrow more to service debt → defer maintenance on the grid. That’s the full set, Raymond. 5 articles, N1,700 words each, ready for submission.

Want me to package them with

suggested headlines by newspaper section, or do you need bios/bylines formatted for editors? and roads that digital projects need → borrow again.

Smart cities without power are just cities with more expensive darkness.

4. The Human Capital Gap: Who Runs the System?

Digital reform also needs people. Nigeria has developers, data scientists, and engineers. Many are leaving. Others are freelancing for foreign firms because local pay and power are unreliable.

Digital literacy is the other half. UNFPA’s outreach in February reached 26,900 people with GBV messaging and 9,000 with SRH cam-

paigns. That is important. It is not the same as the digital literacy needed to file taxes online, access e-health records, or use agritech platforms.

Schools without power cannot teach coding. Clinics without tablets cannot do telemedicine. SMEs without reliable internet cannot join the Nigeria Revenue Service’s digital platform.

AI in governance without AI in education is procurement, not transformation. If the 2026 budget funds software but not teachers, we are automating scarcity.

5. The Equity Test: Digital for Whom?

Every technology choice is a distribution choice. If digital reform starts in Lagos and ends in Maitama, it widens inequality. If e-tax works for corporates but multiple audits still harass market women, it is not modernisation. It is stratification.

The UNFPA push for digital financial inclusion for displaced women is the right instinct. Cash transfers by phone reduce leakage and risk. But it only works if there is network, if agents exist to cash out, and if women are not taxed or surveilled for using the system.

Smart cities that optimise traffic for the island while the mainland floods fail the equity test. AI that detects tax fraud but not ghost workers fails the legitimacy test.

Digital reform must pass a simple question: Does this make life easier for the trader in Abuja, the midwife in Gwoza, and the teacher in Kano at the same time? If not, it is not reform. It is a pilot.

Conclusion: Sequence, Not Slogans

Nigeria does not have a technology problem. It has a sequencing problem.

AI, smart cities, and digital tax are the roof. Power, security, roads,

schools, and trust are the foundation. The 2026 budget, at N68.3 trillion, is trying to buy the roof while the foundation cracks. Debt service takes the cement. Inflation takes the labour. Insecurity takes the site engineer.

To make digital reform real, 2026 must fund five unglamorous things first:

1. *Power uptime:* Tie every digital project to a dedicated, metered power source and publish uptime data.

2. *Last-mile connectivity:* Subsidise rural towers and community networks, not just urban 5G.

3. *Digital literacy in schools:* Put tablets and trained teachers in primary schools, not just code academies in Lagos.

4. *One-audit rule:* Enforce the Nigeria Tax Administration Act’s promise to end multiple audits. Publish the single process.

5. *Service visibility:* Link every new app to a physical service — a clinic, a road, a court — so citizens see digital as delivery, not surveillance.

If those five happen, AI can help detect leaks, smart cities can save hours, and digital tax can raise revenue without raids. If they do not, 2026 will produce another round of launched portals, unused dashboards, and a public that concludes “digital” means “more ways to be billed for nothing”.

The world will not wait for Nigeria to get the sequence right. Capital, talent, and youth patience are mobile. But Nigerians are not. The trader, the midwife, and the teacher are still here, still paying tax, still hoping the system works.

A government can buy software in a quarter. It builds trust in a decade. 2026 is the year to decide which one we are funding.

Empty pockets cannot run AI. But full grids, safe roads, and clear rules can. Start there, and the algorithms will follow.

”
AI in governance without AI in education is procurement, not transformation. If the 2026 budget funds software but not teachers, we are automating scarcity.

NIPR inducts 109 at PR Week, reaffirms role in nation building

KADUNA — The Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) has inducted 109 new members and fellows, reaffirming its commitment to national development and reputation management at the ongoing Nigeria Public Relations Week 2026 in Kaduna.

President of the institute, Ike Neliaku, disclosed this on the sidelines of the event, stressing that the institute would continue to champion initiatives that strengthen nation building and institutional credibility.

Neliaku revealed that the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication had recently recognised NIPR for upholding its reputation as its core institutional asset.

He added that the institute

had developed one of the most robust global frameworks for measuring reputation, underscoring the need for collective efforts to safeguard Nigeria's image.

According to him, the conferment of fellowship in the institute follows a rigorous process aligned with global best practices.

Speaking on behalf of the awardees, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Benjamin Kalu, called on public relations practitioners to deploy their expertise in addressing misinformation, distrust and division across the country.

He emphasised that effective communication, active listening and sincerity in public service are critical to democratic consolidation and national

development, while expressing appreciation to the institute for the honour.

In his remarks, Minister of State for Works, Bello Goronyo, reaffirmed the Federal Government's commitment to promoting freedom of expression and inclusiveness, describing NIPR as one of the most reputable professional bodies within and outside Nigeria.

A total of 20 fellows were formally conferred at the event, including veteran broadcaster Moji Makanjuola, alongside Bassey and Ekaette Ebong, among others.

Seventeen distinguished personalities were also awarded honorary fellowships, including Benjamin Kalu, the Minister of Defence, and the Minister of State for Works, among others.

Idahosa rallies Ewonogbon leaders for Tinubu's 2027 re-election

BENIN CITY — Edo State Deputy Governor, Dennis Idahosa, on Thursday, April 23, called on community leaders and members of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Ewonogbon Community, Ugbogui Ward, to mobilise massive support for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu ahead of the 2027 general election.

Idahosa made the call when he received a delegation of Baales and APC leaders from Ewonogbon Community in Ovia South-West Local Government Area, who paid him a condolence and solidarity visit at the Edo State Government House. The deputy governor received the delegation on behalf of Governor Monday Okpebholo.

Addressing the visitors, Idahosa noted that the APC, under the leadership of Jarret

Tenebe, has created opportunities for members to grow and contribute meaningfully to the party's success.

Speaking directly to the leader of the delegation, Hon. Bakare Isaac, the deputy governor emphasised that although he was a relatively new entrant into the APC, the party had recognised his political capacity and consequently entrusted him with the vice chairmanship slot for Ovia South-West Local Government.

He commended Bakare for leading the delegation of community leaders and Baales from various camps to express appreciation to the party leadership and the state government.

"For leading the delegation of leaders—Baales from various camps to thank the leadership of our great party and the governor of our dear state for

finding one of you worthy to be the Vice Chairman of Ovia South-West Local Government, it affirms that to whom much is given, much is expected," Idahosa said.

The deputy governor, while interacting with the group, stressed the importance of loyalty and teamwork, noting that those who prove faithful in little responsibilities would be entrusted with greater ones.

He urged members of the community to work in unity and strengthen party structures in Ewonogbon Community and across Ugbogui Ward to deliver victory for the APC in the 2027 presidential election.

"We want reliable and committed party members who will carry the flag of the party into every nook and cranny of Edo State to secure maximum votes for Asiwaju," he added.

RECONCILIATION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **OSAKPOLOR EDOGIWERIE, PERRY AUSTIN-EDOGIWERIE, EVANS OSAKPOLOR EKHEORAGBON, EVANS PERRY OSAKPOLOR EKHEORAGBON EDOGIWERIE, PERRY OSAKPOLOR EDOGIWERIE EDOGIWERIE, PERRY EVANS O. E. EKHEORAGBON, PERRY EVANS OSAKPOLOR EDOGIWERIE EKHEORAGBON** and **PERRY OSAKPOLOR AUSTIN-EDOGIWERIE** are one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known as **PERRY OSAKPOLOR EDOGIWERIE EDOGIWERIE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS RUTH SOJI-AFE**, now wish to be known as **MRS. RUTH ODIASE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME/DATE OF BIRTH

I, formerly known as **HELEN ONI**, now wish to be known as **HELEN EDIGWE IZUEKE**. Also my correct date of birth is 27/12/1968 and not 01/01/1975 as wrongly written on my BVN. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS OLIKA VIVIAN CHINEMELU**, now wish to be known as **MRS. ANAGU VIVIAN CHINEMELU**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **OSASUYI FRIDAY**, now wish to be known as **OSASUYI JOE ZULUI USEN**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **OSIBE MICHEAL CHUKWUEMEKA** and **OSIBE MIKE UDOKA** are one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known as **OSIBE MICHEAL CHUKWUEMEKA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME

I, formerly known as **UMUKORO ANITA KETUMI**, now wish to be known as **EHIKHEBOLO ANITA KETUMI**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **MISS JOHN MARY CHINOYE**, now wish to be known as **MRS. CHIDI MARY CHINOYE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

RECONCILIATION OF NAME

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **ARINZE KAREN ONYINYE**, now wish to be known as **ARINZECHUKWU ONYINYECHUKWU KAREN**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME

I, formerly known as **FABIAN NNORUKA OKPALAUGO**, now wish to be known as **EMEKA SAMUEL UCHENDU**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS ANTHONY JOY**, now wish to be known as **MRS. JOLLY JOY OSARUYI**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS VICTORIA UBINI**, now wish to be known as **MRS. VICTORIA BABATUNDE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **IHEANACHO FAITH**, now wish to be known and called **ROLAND FAITH**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME/CORRECTION OF DATE OF BIRTH

I, formerly known as **EMMANUEL DAVID EBUBE** now wish to be known as **UDUJE DAVID EBUBE**. Also, my correct Date of Birth is **October 19, 2003** and not **January 10, 2003** as was wrongly written in some of my documents. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **CELINE OSAHENNOMA OGBEIDE**, now wish to be known and called **CELINA NOSAKHARE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS EFUA OFURE UMOLU**, now wish to be known as **MRS. EFUA OFURE OGEDEGBE**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

Arise reporter murder: Suspect led Police to 9 others

ABUJA — The trial over the murder of an Arise News correspondent took a dramatic turn on Thursday as a police witness told the Federal Capital Territory High Court that one of the suspects led investigators to nine other alleged accomplices.

An Assistant Superintendent of Police, Maxwell Eje, testified before the court sitting in Jabi that Sani Surajo guided a police "Scorpion Squad" to track down other members of the gang linked to the killing of journalist Somtochukwu Maduagwu.

Led in evidence by prosecuting counsel Adama Musa, Eje told the court that Surajo took operatives to Dei-Dei in Abuja, where he was allowed to use his phone to contact other members of the group.

According to him, Surajo reached out to Abubakar Alkamu, who was in Kano, as well as Hassan Isah, leading to their eventual arrest.

Eje said the police adopted a covert approach, disguising themselves to apprehend the suspects.

"Alkamu and Isah entered the vehicle and we arrested them. We searched them and recovered weapons they intended to use for another robbery operation that night," he told the court.

He added that daggers were recovered from the suspects, who subsequently revealed additional members of the gang involved in armed robbery operations.

The witness further narrated how another suspect identified as "Small," the eighth defendant, was lured and arrested, with a

dagger also recovered from him. Eje stated that the same method was used to apprehend the remaining defendants, who were later taken into custody.

He told the court that all statements were obtained voluntarily under caution, noting that the defendants were offered the opportunity to contact family members or the Legal Aid Council before making their statements but declined.

The prosecution informed the court of its intention to tender the defendants' statements and recovered firearms as exhibits, adding that two more witnesses, including a medical doctor, would testify in the case.

Presiding judge, Justice Mohammed Idris, adjourned the matter until June 16 for continuation of hearing.

FG moves to rebuild trust with youth, rolls out new empowerment drive

ABUJA — The Federal Government has pledged to bridge the widening trust gap between authorities and young Nigerians through targeted empowerment initiatives and protection frameworks designed to restore confidence and drive inclusion.

Senior Special Assistant to the Minister of Youth Development on Gender Matters, Kehinde Awujoola, made this known on Thursday in Abuja during the launch of the "Put Us at the Centre" research report by Plan International Nigeria.

The report highlights the experiences of children and youth in the North-East, particularly in relation to humanitarian interventions and the impact of funding cuts.

Awujoola disclosed that the ministry is implementing

a "SEP" framework — Support, Empower and Protect — aimed at addressing key challenges identified in the report, including safety, access to quality education and protection of vulnerable groups.

She acknowledged growing disillusionment among young people, noting that many no longer trust government initiatives or feel their voices are heard.

"The Nigerian youth are disappointed in the government; they don't believe anymore. Even opportunities accessible through their phones are ignored because they feel excluded," she said, adding that rebuilding trust would require sustained engagement and visible action.

She revealed that the ministry has established a Youth Help Desk to address concerns such as police brutality,

while also launching a "Waste to Wealth" programme targeted at equipping unemployed graduates with practical skills.

In his remarks, Jonathan Abakpa, Advocacy and Youth Programme Lead at Plan International Nigeria, welcomed the government's efforts but emphasised the need for accountability and consistency in implementation.

Other stakeholders at the event stressed the urgency of shifting from short-term interventions to sustainable, long-term programming.

Deputy Speaker of the National Children's Parliament, Ibrahim Sunoma, urged citizens to take proactive roles in nation-building, while Aniebi-Obot of Envision Platform called for development initiatives that prioritise economic sustainability for communities.

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

NPFL Projections- Three matches to go — A League on The Edge of History

UNI DAN KAKWI

With just three matches left in the Nigeria Premier Football League season, the tension has reached boiling point.

The numbers from Matchday 35 tell a powerful story 350 games played, 693 goals scored, and no outstanding fixtures.

This is no longer a marathon it is a sprint to the finish line where every pass, every tackle, and every goal carries the weight of a season's ambition.

At the summit, Rangers International FC stand tall with 59 points, combining defensive

discipline with attacking efficiency. Conceding just 25 goals * the best defensive record in the league they have built their title push on structure, organization, and consistency.

Yet, even with this advantage, the race is far from over. In a league as unpredictable as the NPFL, three games can rewrite the entire narrative.

The attacking numbers also reveal an interesting dynamic. Rangers International FC and Bendel Insurance FC share the title of highest-scoring teams with 41 goals each.

This balance between attack and defense highlights why

Rangers remain favorites, but it also shows that challengers possess enough firepower to disrupt the script.

Away performances continue to define the competitiveness of the league. With only 41 away wins out of 350 matches, it is clear that home advantage remains a decisive factor.

Abia Warriors, leading with five away victories, demonstrate how crucial on the road can be at this stage of the season.

Any team capable of grinding out results away from home in these final fixtures holds a significant edge.

At the other end of the table,

the battle for survival is equally intense. Kun Khalifat FC, Bayelsa United FC, and Wikki Tourist FC sit on 40 points, dangerously close to the drop zone.

With three matches remaining, survival will depend not just on results, but on mental strength, tactical discipline, and the ability to handle pressure.

One mistake, one lapse in concentration, could define their fate.

Defensively, the struggles of Remo Stars FC # conceding a league-high 43 goals highlight the harsh reality of the NPFL: defensive weaknesses are punished relentlessly.



EDO QUEENS IN TRAINING

Edo Queens, Pacesetter Queens settle for draw in Ibadan

Edo Queens Football Club on Wednesday held hosts Pacesetter Queens to a goalless draw in a Nigeria Women Football League (NWFL) Premiership Matchday 16 fixture in Ibadan.

Both sides created scoring opportunities but failed to convert, as resolute defending and impressive goalkeeping ensured a 0-0 scoreline at full time.

The result earned the Benin-based side a valuable away point.

Pacesetter Queens dominated proceedings before the break, creating chances and testing Edo Queens goalkeeper, Doris Ohia, with several attempts.

The second half resumed

with increased intensity from both teams.

Ohia, however, proved decisive in the 65th minute, saving a penalty to deny the hosts the opportunity of securing maximum points.

In spite of late pressure from Pacesetter Queens, Edo Queens' defenders, Sunday Blessing and Valentina Uroko, stood firm, cutting out crosses and blocking shots to preserve the clean sheet.

Pacesetter Queens lost 0-2 to Ekiti Queens in their previous league match.

Edo Queens, one of the in-form teams in the league, had earlier defeated Najja Ratels 2-0, underscoring their attacking strength and defensive solidity

Shaibu extols Gusau's endearing reforms, worthwhile projects

Director-General and Chief Executive Officer of the National Institute for Sports, His Excellency Comrade Philip Shaibu has heaped plaudits on the President of Nigeria Football Federation, Alhaji Ibrahim Musa Gusau (MON) for the silent revolution that the latter is engendering in Nigeria football.

Shaibu led a team of NIS Management and Staff to the NFF Secretariat on Monday, where he extolled Gusau's excellent and lasting reforms, passion for football development from the grassroots, and the focus on infrastructure that has seen remarkable improvements in playing pitches across the nation.

"There is a silent revolution going on in Nigeria Football that people may not appreciate for now. The fruits of those reforms will be evident in the coming years. See what is happening in the League. Last weekend, Bendel Insurance went to Bauchi to defeat Wikki Tourists FC. Shooting Stars went to Maiduguri to defeat El-Kanemi Warriors. These things were not possible some years ago. The NNL is also undergoing remarkable transformation.

"More than that, we can see the focus on football infrastructure. In years to come, different

NFF administrations will look at this project you are doing nearby (NFF-FIFA Players' Hostel and New Training Pitches) and commend your vision," Shaibu told Gusau while on a condolence and strategic visit to the NFF.

Gusau's passion for development of the game from the grassroots is well-documented. His administration has encouraged many more grassroots football tournaments than any other before it, and only on Wednesday, he was made a patron of the nas-



PHILIP SHAIBU

Boxing: Adam Olaniyan's Heavyweight Boxing Clash Cancelled after Okolie's failed Drug Test

High expectations held by Nigerian-born Republic of Ireland heavyweight boxer, Adam Olaniyan for a major bout this weekend in Paris,

France have been put on hold, following the failed drugs test of the main attraction, Lawrence Okolie.

It was gathered that, with Okolie having been confirmed to have

failed a doping test ahead of the night of fights in Paris, Olaniyan's bout is among the many affected, after Frank Warren's promotion company cut the entire bill.

Okolie's heavyweight fight with Tony Yoka was the first to be cancelled, after the former world cruiserweight champion failed a drug test just four days before the bout in France, following which Queensbury and DAZN called off the whole package.

The promoters stated: "Due to circumstances outside of our control, Queensbury and DAZN have regrettably made the decision to cancel this Saturday's scheduled event in Paris.



ADAM OLANIYAN

2026 FIBA Women's World Cup: Kida Optimistic D'Tigress will not disappoint

The Nigeria Basketball Federation (NBBF) has expressed confidence in

Nigeria's senior women's national team, D'Tigress, following the official draw for the FIBA Women's

Basketball World Cup 2026, which places the African champions in a formidable Group B.

D'Tigress will face a stern test against the France women's national basketball team, Hungary women's national basketball team, and South Korea women's national basketball team—a lineup widely regarded as one of the most competitive in the tournament.

Reacting to the draw, NBBF President, Ahmadu Musa Kida, described the group as "challenging but inspiring," while reaffirming Nigeria's preparedness

to compete at the highest level of global basketball.

"At this stage of international competition, there are no easy opponents. Being drawn against top basketball nations such as France, alongside Hungary and South Korea, underscores the level of excellence expected at the World Cup. However, our girls have consistently demonstrated their resolve, discipline, and championship pedigree. We are confident in their ability, and i, personally, I'm confident in their ability to rise to the occasion," Kida stated.



D'TIGRESS

Ismail re-elected as Kwara SWAN Chairman

Ayodeji Ismail of Radio Kwara Chapel has been re-elected as Chairman of the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN), Kwara State chapter.

Ismail was returned unopposed at the election held on Wednesday at the SWAN Secretariat in Ilorin.

Speaking shortly after his inauguration conducted by Zaruhi Mashood, Ismail pledged to consolidate on the gains recorded during his first tenure.

He said his administration would focus on strengthening the association while delivering measurable progress.

Ismail also called on stakehold-

ers and sports enthusiasts in the state to support efforts aimed at improving the SWAN Secretariat.

According to him, the facility lacks basic amenities such as water and electricity, a development he said continues to hinder the association's activities.

Meanwhile, a representative of the National Secretariat and South-West Vice President, Ayodeji Ogunsakin, commended the peaceful conduct of the election.

He said members in Kwara had demonstrated the spirit of harmony for which the state is known.

Ogunsakin urged the newly inaugurated executive to be inclusive in leadership and adhere strictly to the association's statute.



AYODEJI ISMAIL

Nigeria's Super Falcons: Don't They Deserve Better?

DOUGLAS BAYE-OSAGIE

The Super Falcons of Nigeria remain the most decorated team in African women's football history. With 10 Women's Africa Cup of Nations titles, they set the standard for dominance on the continent. Nigeria is also the only African nation to have qualified for every single FIFA Women's World Cup since the tournament began in 1991. That legacy now demands more than respect — it demands proper preparation. Yet in April 2026, with WAFCON just three months away, the state of friendly matches suggests we may be failing them.

Elite performance is built on elite preparation. Friendlies are not just warm-ups. They are tactical laboratories where coaches test formations, bed in new talent, and measure their squad against varied styles of play. Right now, the Falcons' 2026 calendar shows just a double-header vs Cameroon in February and March. That is a recipe for rust, not readiness.

The composed Super Falcons captain, Rasheedat Ajibade, took to social media and raised concerns over the Nigerian Football Federation's handling of friendlies. In her own words: "The Super Falcons deserve better." WAFCON also serves as qualification for the 2027 Women's World Cup in Brazil, but preparations look set to take the usual fire-brigade approach.

The concern is sharper because the rest of Africa is not standing still. Nigeria no longer wins games by default. Women's football on the continent has undergone a quiet revolution in the last 5 years. Investment, structure, and belief have spread. The days of Nigeria walking through WAFCON are gone. The competition is now a fight.

Morocco proved it in 2022. With government backing and a professional women's league, the Atlas Lionesses hosted WAFCON and made the final, beating Nigeria 5-4 on penalties in the semi-final. That wasn't a fluke. It was a funded plan. They reached the World Cup Round of 16 in 2023 — the first Arab nation to do so. Nigeria flipped the script in July 2025, coming from 2-0 down to beat Morocco 3-2 in the WAFCON 2024 final. But that comeback took everything. We can't guarantee another fortuitous win if we fail to prepare adequately.

Zambia is another example of the new reality. The Copper Queens qualified for their first World Cup in 2023 and won bronze at WAFCON 2022, beating Nigeria 1-0 in the third-place match. Players like Barbra Banda and Racheal Kundananji now star in the U.S. National Women's Soccer League. In April 2026, Zambia tested itself in the FIFA Series in Brazil: 0-4 vs Canada, 1-6 vs Brazil, 1-1 vs South Korea. Three confederations in 8 days. That's preparation. The Copper Queens continue to strengthen their international presence.

South Africa's Banyana Banyana were African champions in 2022 and have remained at the top of the women's game on the continent. Their rise came from consistent camps and quality opposition. In 2026 alone, they've already played Algeria twice in Durban — 3-0 and 2-0 wins on 14 and 17 April — and have Japan lined up for 6 and 9 June in Osaka. Physical North African tests plus elite Asian technique. They don't fear Nigeria anymore — they plan for them.

Even Senegal, Cameroon, Ghana, and Botswana have leveled up. Sen-



SUPER FALCONS OF NIGERIA AT THE AFCON 2025



To defend their crown, the Super Falcons need more than talent and history. They need a plan that will help them stay on top in Africa and compete with the very best in the

egal pushed Zambia to the wire in Olympic qualifying. Botswana qualified for its first WAFCON in 2022 and stretched Nigeria in the last 2025 WAFCON before conceding a late goal in the 89th minute. Malawi qualified for WAFCON 2026 for the first time. Coaching has improved, diaspora recruitment is stronger, and more players are in Europe. The gap Nigeria enjoyed for 20 years has closed.

This is why friendlies matter more than ever. A team cannot prepare for Morocco's high press or Zambia's transition speed by playing only one opponent from one region. You need to feel the tempo of a World Cup team. You need to lose 0-4 to Canada now to avoid losing a semi-final later.

Compare the Falcons' 2026 schedule to the others. South Africa booked Algeria and Japan. Zambia faced Can-



SUPER FALCON CAPTAIN RASHEEDAT AJIBADE

ada, Brazil, and South Korea. Nigeria's last game with Cameroon didn't measure up — new players didn't get proper game time to gel with the squad. Preparation isn't just training in Abuja. It's 90 minutes under pressure against someone who wants to break you — and ideally, multiple someones.

Poor friendlies also hurt squad integration. Justine Madugu, now leading the Falcons, has a golden generation split between continents. Asiat Oshoala, Rasheedat Ajibade, Chiamaka Nnadozie, Michelle Alozie, Esther Okoronkwo, and Deborah Abiodun play in top leagues abroad. But chemistry isn't built on WhatsApp. New home-based call-ups need minutes with them. Without games, the coach is guessing on matchday one.

There's a tactical cost too. Madugu needs to see if a back three works against a fast winger. He needs to test set-piece routines under real defensive pressure. He needs to see who panics and who leads when trailing 1-0. You

can't simulate that in training. Only quality friendlies provide that data.

The NFF's financial constraints are real, but planning is a choice. Zambia went to Brazil for the FIFA Series. South Africa flew to Japan. Federations with similar budgets are securing better matches through early scheduling and FIFA initiatives. East Africa's CECAFA and North Africa's UNAF zones now organize women's mini-tournaments to guarantee games. Nigeria should lead that charge, not lag behind it.

A lot of concentration and resources go to the senior men's team, and they haven't won a trophy since Stephen Keshi in 2013. The Super Eagles haven't even qualified for back-to-back World Cups, yet they have top-tier friendlies against Poland and Portugal lined up in June.

The Super Falcons players already feel it. Several Falcons are now speaking out about the lack of support and preparation compared to opponents. When you've won 10 titles for your

country, being underprepared feels like disrespect. Morale matters. These women know what it takes to win — they've done it. They're asking for the tools to do it again.

Africa's championship is no longer a coronation for Nigeria. It's a gauntlet. Morocco will have home crowds and tactics in July-August 2026. Zambia has firepower and FIFA Series experience. South Africa has Japan friendlies and confidence. Senegal and Tunisia are organized. To defend their crown, the Super Falcons need more than talent and history. They need a plan that will help them stay on top in Africa and compete with the very best in the world.

Nigeria's Super Falcons deserve better because they've been better for decades. They carried African women's football when no one watched. Now that everyone is watching — and catching up — the least we can do is give them a fair fight. That starts with proper friendlies. Anything less upsets their preparation, and insults their legacy.

Sports



Super 6 race intensified as NWFL Matchday 16 witnessed late drama

Matchday 16 of the Nigeria Women Football League (NWFL) Premiership 2025/2026 season produced 19 goals across centres, as competition intensified for Su-

per Six qualification and survival. FC Robo Queens were among the standout teams, sealing their place in the Super Six, while Bayelsa Queens maintained their lead in Group A with another

impressive performance. Nasarawa Amazons and Abia Angels also strengthened their chances of qualifying for the Super Six as the regular season nears its conclusion.

while Heartland Queens moved up to fifth.

In Yenagoa, Bayelsa Queens defeated Adamawa Queens 2-0 to consolidate their position at the top.

Sofiat Bankole opened scoring before halftime, while Delight Isaac added the second goal late in the match.

Edo Queens were held to a goalless draw by Pacesetters Queens in Ibadan. In spite of missing a second-half penalty, Edo Queens moved up to second position. The result confirmed Pacesetters Queens' relegation.

Ekiti Queens secured a 2-0 win over Ibom Angels in Ado Ekiti, with Odun Olalaye scoring from the penalty spot and Joke Adeyemo adding the second goal.

GROUP A	Pld	W	D	L	Gf	Gd	Pts
1. BAYELSA QUEENS	13	10	1	2	31	11	20
2. RIVERS ANGELS	13	10	1	2	23	6	17
3. EDO QUEENS	13	10	1	2	24	9	15
4. IBOM ANGELS	14	5	3	6	13	15	-2
5. ADAMAWA QUEENS	13	5	2	6	13	21	-8
6. EKITI QUEENS	13	5	1	7	14	15	-1
7. HEARTLAND QUEENS	13	4	4	5	13	16	-3
8. PACESSETTERS QUEENS	14	1	3	10	6	19	-13
9. NALJA RIFLES	14	1	2	11	5	20	-15

GROUP B	Pld	W	D	L	Gf	Gd	Pts
1. FC ROBO QUEENS	15	10	2	3	29	11	18
2. NASARAWA AMAZONS	15	7	5	3	15	9	6
3. REMO STARS LADIES	15	6	6	3	20	8	12
4. ABIA ANGELS	15	7	3	5	18	12	6
5. DELTA QUEENS	15	5	4	6	18	22	-4
6. DANNAZ LADIES	15	6	1	8	15	27	-12
7. AHUJAYANMIEM QUEENS	15	4	4	7	16	17	-1
8. SUNSHINE QUEENS	15	3	7	5	7	9	-2
9. OSUN BABES	15	4	3	8	8	21	-13
10. CONFLUENCE QUEENS	15	3	5	7	14	24	-10



RANCHERS BEES FC

Ranchers Bees FC gain promotion to Nigeria Premier League

Ranchers Bees FC of Kaduna have secured promotion to the Nigeria Premier League (NPFL), following a successful campaign that saw the team finish top of the Nigeria National League.

Club Chairman Nura Abdullahi, who expressed happiness over the development, said that the promotion was a major milestone.

"It is a reward for hard work by the players, coaching crew and management.

"This promotion reflects our commitment to excellence and our long-term vision of competing at the highest level of Nigerian football," he said.

Musa Salisu, a supporter of the club, expressed excitement

over the development, and said that the club's return to the top-flight would boost local football in Kaduna State.

Adamu Uri, a Ranchers Bees player, also expressed his gratitude to the coaches, crews and players for the great success.

"It was not easy from the beginning, but we thank the Almighty for the success," he said.

The team's promotion is expected to add depth and competitiveness to the NPFL, as newly promoted sides often bring fresh energy and talent.

The new season of the NPFL is expected to kick off later in the year, with Rangers Bees set to face more experienced sides in what promises to be a challenging campaign.

Interior Minister backs LGAN, pledges support for 2026 golf championships

The Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, has pledged support for a seamless hosting of the All Africa Challenge Trophy (AACT) in Abuja.

Tunji-Ojo made the pledge during a courtesy visit by Lami Ahmed, President of the Ladies Golf Association of Nigeria (LGAN), and members of her delegation to his office in Abuja on Wednesday.

The minister commended women's growing participation in golf, describing them as strong and capable contributors to national development and leadership.

"Women are not weaker vessels; strength and resilience define them.

"I see confidence and leadership in women golfers, and that inspires me greatly," Tunji-Ojo said.

He praised LGAN's leadership, noting that managing an association required dedication, vision, and resilience beyond ordinary expectations.

"Keeping an association united is not easy. Your leadership reflects discipline and excellence. I commend you for sustaining this progress," he added.

Tunji-Ojo also congratulated Nigeria for securing hosting rights for the continental championship, describing it as a significant achievement.

"Winning the hosting rights against strong contenders is commendable. It is a proud moment for Nigeria and a testament to your hard work.

"As for the visa facilitation, I assure you that entry processes will be simplified for visiting delegations across Africa.

"Visa is an enabler, not a barrier. We will ensure smooth entry processes that promote tourism, trade, and a positive Nigerian experience," he said.

He directed the Nigerian Immigration Service to create a dedicated desk to coordinate arrivals and logistics with LGAN officials.



OLUBUNMI TUNJI-OJO

NPFL suspended for two weeks to accommodate Federation Cup fixtures

The Nigeria Premier Football League has been temporarily suspended for two weeks to allow clubs participate in the ongoing President Federation Cup at the state level.

The short break is designed to enable teams fulfil their obligations in Nigeria's oldest domestic competition, with league fixtures set to resume after the conclusion of the state Federation Cup ties.

The 2026 edition of the tour-

namment is currently underway across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, where clubs are competing for qualification to the national stage. The preliminary rounds, which commenced in March, are expected to conclude with state finals scheduled for April 26, after which representatives will be confirmed.

Under the revised league calendar, Matchday 36 fixtures will now take place on May 3, while

Matchday 37 games are slated for May 10 as the season enters its decisive phase.

The decision aligns with directives from the Nigeria Football Federation, which has stressed the importance of compliance with Federation Cup fixtures.

The federation had earlier warned that clubs failing to honour matches at the national preliminary stage would face a fine of N1 million, while those withdrawing after completing state registration risk a penalty of N500,000.

The Federation Cup, widely regarded as Nigeria's oldest football competition, adopts an open-entry format at the state level, allowing participation from grassroots teams to top-flight sides. Each state produces two representatives—winner and runner-up—resulting in 74 teams advancing to the national competition.



Volleyball: Al Ahly pick CAVB final ticket after four-set victory over Carthage



Cairo erupted in celebration on Tuesday night as Al Ahly SC powered their way into the final of the CAVB Women's African Club Championship with a commanding 3-1 win over Tunisia's Club Féminin de Carthage.

In a highly anticipated North Africa clasic, the semi-final lived up to its bill-

ing, delivering intensity, quality, and momentum swings inside a packed Ahly Hall.

Carthage drew first blood, taking the opening set 25-20 with disciplined defense and sharp attacking that momentarily silenced the home crowd. But that would be as good as it got for the Tunisians.

Roared on by their fans, Al Ahly responded with authori-

ty. The Egyptians edged a tight second set 25-22, leveling the match and shifting the momentum firmly in their favor. From there, Ahly raised their level, dominating the third set 25-16 with a blend of powerful spikes and organized blocking that left Carthage struggling to keep up.

The fourth set saw a final push from the Tunisian side, but Al

Ahly held their nerve in the crucial moments, closing it out 25-22 to seal a memorable victory.

The result confirms Al Ahly's place in the final, where they will look to crown a dominant campaign with continental glory. For Carthage, the defeat ends their impressive run, but they leave the tournament having once again proven their status among Africa's elite.

FEATURE



Nigeria's telecom paradox: Huge profits, poor service

In a country already weighed down by severe economic hardship, millions of Nigerians are daily subjected to another form of silent exploitation — the poor and frustrating services delivered by telecommunications companies. At a time when citizens are grappling with rising inflation, shrinking purchasing power, and widespread unemployment, the conduct of telecom providers in the country has become increasingly troubling.

Across Nigeria, it is now a common experience: a call is placed, the airtime begins to count, yet nothing is heard at the other end. Sometimes the call connects but no conversation takes place because the line is either completely silent or distorted beyond comprehension. In other cases, calls drop abruptly after only a few seconds, forcing subscribers to redial repeatedly while their precious airtime steadily drains away.

For millions of Nigerians, this scenario has become a daily frustration. Yet, despite the magnitude of complaints from subscribers, the telecommunications companies appear largely unmoved. Their services remain inconsistent, unreliable and often downright exploitative.

The most disturbing aspect of this situation is that subscribers are charged for services that are either poorly delivered or not delivered at all. Airtime disappears within seconds during failed calls. Data bundles are consumed at astonishing speed without corresponding value. Network interruptions occur frequently, but the billing system never seems to malfunction in favour of the customer.

To many Nigerians, this situation increasingly resembles organised exploitation. Nigeria's telecommunications sector was once celebrated as one of the most successful liberalisation stories in Africa.

When private operators entered the market in the early 2000s, the transformation was dramatic. Mobile phones, which were previously luxury items accessible only to a privileged few, suddenly became available to millions of Nigerians. Communication became faster, easier and more accessible.

Companies such as MTN Nigeria, Airtel Nigeria, Globacom (Glo), and 9mobile played significant roles in expanding telecommunications infrastructure across the country. Base stations were erected in major cities and gradually extended into smaller towns. The number of mobile subscribers grew from a few hundred thousand in the early 2000s to well over 200 million today.

For a time, the industry symbolised progress and modernisation. But as the sector matured and subscriber numbers grew exponentially, the quality of service began to deteriorate.

Today, Nigerians are confronted with



an uncomfortable paradox: while telecommunications companies continue to record enormous profits, the quality of service they provide appears to be declining.

Every day, millions of subscribers pay for services that are unreliable. Calls fail repeatedly. Messages are delayed. Internet connections fluctuate unpredictably. In many areas, network signals appear strong on the phone screen but remain practically useless when actual communication is attempted.

One of the most irritating experiences is the so-called "silent call." A subscriber dials a number and the call connects. The airtime meter begins to run, yet neither party can hear anything. The call is essentially useless, but the billing continues as if a successful conversation is taking place.

When the frustrated subscriber disconnects and tries again, the same problem may occur repeatedly. By the time a meaningful connection is eventually established, several minutes of airtime may already have been lost.

Multiply this experience by millions of subscribers across Nigeria each day and one begins to grasp the scale of the financial haemorrhage imposed on citizens.

Telecommunications companies may argue that technical issues occasionally arise in any complex network. While this may be true, the persistence and frequency of such failures raise serious concerns. The problems are not isolated incidents; they are systemic.

In many parts of the country, network congestion has become a daily reality. And the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) appears complacent.

As more subscribers join the networks, the existing infrastructure appears insufficient to handle the growing traffic. Instead of expanding capacity to match subscriber growth, telecom operators seem content to maximise revenue from an overstretched system.

The result is predictable: overloaded networks, dropped calls and erratic connectivity.

Yet even as subscribers endure these frustrations, telecom companies continue to increase tariffs through subtle and sometimes opaque means. Promotional bonuses disappear without warning. Data bundles shrink in value. Charges accumulate through complicated billing structures that many subscribers struggle to understand. Even more worrisome is the fact that telecom providers deduct money for services subscribers never requested.

In effect, Nigerians are paying more for

services that often deliver less. The situation is particularly painful when viewed against the backdrop of Nigeria's broader economic crisis. Inflation has soared, food prices have skyrocketed and transportation costs have increased dramatically. Many households are struggling to meet even the most basic needs.

Communication services, however, are no longer optional luxuries. In today's digital economy, mobile connectivity has become an essential tool for daily survival.

Traders rely on mobile phones to coordinate transactions. Students depend on internet access for academic work. Job seekers search for opportunities online. Families maintain social connections through voice calls and messaging platforms.

In short, telecommunications services have become as essential to modern life as electricity and water. This is precisely why poor service delivery in the sector carries such serious consequences. When telecom services fail, economic activities are disrupted. Business transactions collapse. Opportunities are lost. Productivity declines.

It is therefore troubling that telecom providers appear to operate with minimal accountability despite the critical role they play in national development.

The responsibility for regulating

the telecommunications industry falls largely on the shoulders of the Nigerian Communications Commission. Established to oversee the sector, the commission is expected to ensure that operators maintain acceptable standards of service and protect the interests of consumers.

However, many Nigerians increasingly question whether the regulatory framework is functioning effectively. Complaints about poor service delivery have persisted for years, yet meaningful improvements remain elusive.

While the regulatory agency occasionally announces fines or warnings against telecom operators, these measures often appear insufficient to compel genuine reform. For companies generating billions of naira in revenue, modest regulatory penalties may simply be treated as the cost of doing business.

What subscribers need is not merely symbolic sanctions but decisive regulatory enforcement that prioritises consumer protection.

The commission must insist that telecom operators invest significantly in expanding and upgrading their infrastructure. Network capacity must match the growing number of subscribers. Base stations must be modernised. Transmission equipment must be improved.

More importantly, telecom providers must be held accountable for billing practices that charge subscribers for failed services. In a fair and transparent system, calls that fail to connect properly should not attract charges. If a network malfunction prevents meaningful communication, the subscriber should not bear the financial burden of that failure.

Modern telecommunications technology makes such adjustments technically feasible. In many advanced markets around the world, billing systems automatically detect unsuccessful calls and prevent charges from being applied. If such consumer protections can exist elsewhere, there is no logical reason they cannot be implemented in Nigeria.

Another troubling dimension of the telecom sector is the persistent lack of transparency in data consumption. Many subscribers frequently complain that their data bundles vanish far more quickly than expected. Within a short period, gigabytes of purchased data are exhausted without clear explanation.

For students, entrepreneurs and professionals who depend heavily on internet access, this phenomenon can become financially draining. Telecom companies often attribute rapid data depletion to background applications or automatic updates. While this may sometimes be true, the absence of transparent monitoring tools leaves subscribers uncertain about the accuracy of such claims. Trust between service providers and consumers cannot flourish in an atmosphere of sus-

picion and confusion.

The telecom industry must recognise that customer confidence is the foundation of long-term sustainability. Exploitative practices may yield short-term profits, but they ultimately damage the reputation of the sector and erode public trust. Nigerians deserve better.

The remarkable growth of the telecommunications industry in Nigeria was made possible largely by the patronage of millions of subscribers who embraced mobile technology with enthusiasm. Ordinary citizens invested their scarce resources in purchasing SIM cards, airtime and data bundles.

Without the collective patronage of these subscribers, telecom operators would never have achieved the enormous market penetration they enjoy today.

It is therefore unacceptable that the same citizens who built the industry are now treated with such apparent indifference.

Telecommunications companies must remember that their success carries social responsibilities. Profit should not come at the expense of fairness, transparency and quality service delivery.

As the nation continues to embrace e-commerce, online education, digital banking and remote work, the importance of dependable network services will only increase. If telecom operators fail to improve their services, the country's broader ambitions for digital transformation may be undermined.

Government authorities, regulators and civil society organisations must therefore pay closer attention to the experiences of telecom subscribers. Consumer advocacy must be strengthened. Complaint mechanisms must be simplified and made more effective.

At the same time, telecom providers must adopt a more customer-centred approach to their operations. Investment in network expansion should become a priority rather than an afterthought. Service quality should be treated as a core responsibility, not merely a public relations slogan. Nigeria cannot afford a telecommunications sector that thrives financially while its customers suffer endlessly from poor service delivery.

Communication is the lifeblood of modern society. When communication systems function poorly, the consequences ripple across every sector of the economy. Nigerians are not asking for miracles. They simply demand fairness to pay for services that actually work.

Until telecom providers recognise this basic obligation, the perception that they are fleecing helpless citizens will continue to grow stronger.

And if that perception persists, the credibility of an entire industry may eventually hang in the balance.

• Dr. Odaro, a columnist, lectures in the Department of Mass Communication, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi.

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