

# Security forces raid Edo forest hideout, arrest 2 over kidnapping

RICHARD EWEKA

## BENIN CITY

Security operatives in Edo State have intensified the crackdown on kidnapping, raiding a suspected hideout in a forest in Amah community, Etsako West Local Government Area, and arresting two suspects.

The operation was carried out

by a combined team of the Edo State Special Security Squad, the Edo State Security Corps and the Nigeria Police Force.

It was led by the Principal Security Officer, Saturday Okoh, with operatives assembling at Eko-Waya community in Esan Central Local Government Area before advancing to the forest location.

The team successfully

stormed the hideout, leading to the arrest of two individuals suspected to be linked to a kidnapping syndicate operating within the area.

Speaking to journalists after the operation, spokesperson for the Special Security Squad, Eribo Enwata, said that the raid followed credible intelligence on the activities of a suspected kingpin identified

simply as "Best."

"We received a tip-off that a suspected mastermind of kidnapping in this area, identified simply as Best, has been operating from a hideout within this forest," he said.

Enwata declared the suspect wanted and assured that efforts were ongoing to apprehend him.

He warned criminal elements, particularly kidnap-

pers, to leave the state or face decisive action, while urging residents and community leaders to support security agencies with timely information.

"We urge community leaders to help secure their environments by providing timely information. Security is a collective responsibility," he said, adding that the identified hideout would be demolished to

prevent further criminal use.

Also speaking, the Zonal Commander of the Edo State Security Corps, Joel Aidamebor, alleged that the wanted suspect had been recruiting kidnapers from other parts of the country into forest locations across Edo State.

According to him, dismantling such networks remains a

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#200

## Aviation fuel hike: Stakeholders seek FG's intervention to ease 2026 Hajj operation

### ABUJA

Aviation stakeholders have called on the federal and state governments to urgently address the increase in aviation fuel prices to ease the transportation of Nigerian pilgrims for the 2026 Hajj.

The stakeholders, under the aegis of Concerned Aviation Stakeholders, said something needs to be done immediately to save the 2026 Hajj operation

from severe logistical and financial challenges, following the rising cost of aviation fuel.

President of the group, Alhaji Bukalti Usaman Gamawa, made the call in a statement on Sunday.

Gamawa said that the skyrocketing cost of Jet A1 aviation fuel had continued to threaten the airlift of thousands of Nigerian pilgrims to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

"Many of the airlines contracted for the 2026 Hajj operation

are expected to lease aircraft to meet capacity demands. With the current fuel price increase on both legs, much of their projected profit margin has already been wiped out.

"In some cases, airlines may end up operating at break-even or even at a loss, effectively flying for free after covering lease and operational expenses.

"If urgent action is not taken, some airlines may find it financially impossible to even commence operations from Nigeria

or sustain return operations from Saudi Arabia," he said.

The president of the group said that the federal and state Governments no longer provide direct subsidies for Hajj operations in Nigeria.

He, however, said that stakeholders believed that urgent policy measures, like pricing regulation, forex support, or strategic fuel supply arrangements, may be necessary to prevent the operation from collapsing.

Gamawa said that without swift intervention, coordination, and emergency action from the government, regulators, airlines, and marketers, the 2026 Hajj operation may witness one of the highest fare increases in history.

He said that, in the worst-case scenario, it could even witness operational failure.

"In simple terms, the soaring cost of Jet A1 on both the Nigerian and Saudi sides is the clearest reason why Hajj fares are

expected to rise sharply in 2026.

"When Hajj contracts were negotiated and signed, Jet A1 was selling at approximately N1,000 per litre in Nigeria, while the average price on the Saudi side was around \$0.68 per litre.

"Airlines structured their fares, logistics, and operational plans around these benchmarks. Today, however, the situation has changed dramatically.

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### INDUCTION OF ALIKO DANGOTE:

L-R: In-law of Dr Aliko Dangote, Alhaji Alhassan Dantata; Group Executive Director, Dangote Industries Ltd, Hajiya Fatima Dangote; Group Executive Director, Dangote Industries Ltd, Ajiya Mariya Dangote; President/Chief Executive, Dangote Industries Ltd, Dr Aliko Dangote; President, Nigeria Academy of Engineering, Prof. Rahamon Bello and the Vice President, Nigeria Academy of Engineering, Prof. Umar Danbatta, during the Nigeria Academy of Engineering induction of Aliko Dangote, as Honorary Fellow of the academy, in Lagos recently.

## Edo seals hajj preparations, completes pilgrims' vaccination

### BENIN CITY

Edo State has concluded key pre-Hajj preparations for the 2026 pilgrimage, successfully completing the distribution of kits, uniforms and vaccination of intending pilgrims across its three senatorial districts.

Chairman of the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Musa Muhammad Uduimoh, confirmed that the state is fully set for a seamless and well-coordinated Hajj exercise.

The exercise, which commenced in Edo South on Saturday, was extended to Edo Central and Edo North on Sunday in line with the Board's implementation schedule.

Speaking to journalists at the Board's office in Benin City, Uduimoh said comprehensive arrangements had been put in place to ensure a hitch-free pilgrimage.

"We are well prepared for a seamless Hajj operation. We have secured a vendor to provide Nigerian meals for our pilgrims and arranged accommodation close to the Haram," he said.

The Executive Secretary of the Board, Eranga Abdulkabir Muhammadkabir, described the exercise as a critical phase of the preparation process.

He explained that activities included orientation sessions, medical screening and the distribution of Hajj kits and travel bags to intending pilgrims.

According to him, the programme moved seamlessly across the three districts, completing all scheduled activities within the stipulated timeframe.

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Flood alerts: NEMA embarks on massive sensitisation in Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu —Official

Trump unhurt after shots fired at White House correspondents' dinner

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Bendel Insurance retain Edo FA Cup after beating Westgate FC 2-0

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# Okpebholo leads APC delegation to console Ologbo traditional head over wife's death

Governor Monday Okpebholo has led a high-powered delegation of government officials and leaders of the All Progressives Congress (APC) on a condolence visit to the Okao of Ologbo, Chief Emmanuel Iyase, following the death of his wife, Mrs Mandaline Iyase.

The visit, which attracted key figures in Edo State's political circle, was marked by solemn reflections and expressions of sympathy for the bereaved family.

Speaking during the visit, the governor said he was accompanied by the local government chairman and other party leaders to personally commiserate with Chief Iyase over the painful loss.

"I'm here with my local government chairman and other party leaders as a group to sympathise with you over the death of your wife. It is painful, but you have to bear it. No matter how much you cry, she will never come back. And I believe God will give you the heart to bear it," he said.

Governor Okpebholo urged the bereaved family to remain strong and focus on moving forward despite the grief,

warning against the health implications of prolonged sorrow.

"By the grace of God, you still need to continue in life. If you continue to think, you will have a lot of health issues. So you have to forget. I know it is difficult, but you just have to take heart," he added.

Responding on behalf of the family, Chief Iyase, who also serves as APC Chairman of Egor Local Government Area, expressed deep appreciation for the governor's personal visit and support during their time of mourning.

A family representative described the governor's presence as a rare gesture of empathy and leadership.

"How grateful we are cannot be expressed in one word. We want to salute you for the courage to come and see us in this period of our grief. It has not been easy for us. Mr Governor, you are personally here to commiserate with us. This is an uncommon record. Any other governor would just send a message," the family said.

They added that the visit would remain a lasting memory, noting that the governor's humility and personal outreach had left a profound impression.

"The fact that you have personally come means you are writing history today for us,

and it will resonate for many years. I told someone, if you are angry with the governor, avoid

seeing him because when you see him, the annoyance will vanish because of his humility. We thank you very much, sir. It shall be well with you," the statement added.

Other dignitaries present at the visit included the Deputy Governor, Dennis Idahosa; the Secretary to the State Government, Umar Musa Ikhilor; the APC State Chairman, Jarrett



**TOWN HALL MEETING:**

A group photograph of participants in a town hall meeting organised in Benin City by 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) to raise awareness about Human Papillomavirus (HPV) infection, cervical cancer, and the importance of HPV vaccination.

## Aviation fuel hike: Stakeholders seek FG's intervention...

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Across major departure points such as Abuja, Kano, Lagos, Maiduguri, Yola, Sokoto and Birnin Kebbi, Jet A1 is now being sold for as much as N3,000 per litre.

"This represents a 200 per cent increase from the original price used in contract projections," he said.

According to him, this sharp rise has placed airlines in a difficult financial position.

"If they are forced to absorb the increased fuel cost, many may be operating at a loss.

"If pilgrims are made to ab-

sorb it, Hajj fares will rise sharply. If government intervenes, it may require emergency support mechanisms despite the removal of Hajj subsidies in Nigeria," he said.

Gamawa said that for a single aircraft consuming 70,000 litres of Jet A1 per flight, that at the contract benchmark of N1,000/litre, N70 million would be required, while at N2,500/litre N175 million would be required.

"Even if the Nigerian government or local suppliers stabilise Jet A1 prices for the first leg of the Hajj operation from Nigeria to Jeddah or Medina, the return flight remains a major unresolved challenge.

## Security forces raid Edo forest...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

priority for security agencies.

The suspects, who are said to have come from outside the state, told journalists that they were recruited by the wanted suspect.

Items recovered from the

hideout include charms and an army uniform.

The operation, officials said, was in line with the directive of Governor Monday Okpebholo, who has reiterated his administration's zero-tolerance stance on crime and criminality in the state.

## Edo seals hajj preparations, completes...

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As part of the preparations, medical personnel provided health guidance to pilgrims, with Dr Mahmoud stressing the importance of both physical and mental readiness for the spiritual journey.

Pilgrims were subsequently immunised against yellow fever, oral polio and meningitis as part of mandatory health

requirements. An Islamic scholar, Harun Umar, also delivered a lecture on the rites and obligations of Hajj and Umrah, offering guidance on proper observance of the pilgrimage.

The Board had earlier made participation in the exercise compulsory for all intending pilgrims as part of efforts to ensure a smooth and successful 2026 Hajj operation.

## Edo schools resume for third term today

**BENIN CITY**

All public and private primary and secondary schools in Edo State are to resume today (Monday) for the third term of the 2025/2026 academic session, the state Ministry of Education has announced.

In a statement signed by the Permanent Secretary of the ministry, Mrs Ebomoyi E. A., academic activities are expect-

ed to commence immediately on the first day of resumption across all schools in the state.

The ministry urged parents and guardians to ensure that their children and wards return to school promptly and are adequately prepared for academic work.

It disclosed that a Back-to-School Task Team would be deployed to enforce compliance, ensuring that all school-age children are in school dur-

ing official hours.

"In addition, authorised Education Officers, as well as Chairmen of the State Senior Secondary Education Board (SSEB), State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), Board for Technical and Vocational Education (BTVE), and the Director-General of the Directorate of Educational Quality and Accountability (DEQA), will monitor compliance across all schools in the

state," the statement said.

The ministry stressed that all stakeholders must take note of the directive, warning that strict adherence is expected, while defaulting schools would face sanctions in line with extant laws.

It further called on parents, school heads and proprietors of public and private nursery, primary and secondary schools to comply fully with the resumption date.

## Delta CP orders probe into alleged Police assault of woman

**WARRI**

The Delta State Police Command has launched an investigation into a viral video alleging that police officers assaulted a woman and subjected her to over forty strokes of cane.

The directive for a full probe was issued by the Commissioner of Police, CP Yemi Oy-

eniya, following the circulation of the video in which the victim recounted her ordeal.

In a statement, the Police Public Relations Officer, SP Bright Edefe, said preliminary steps were already underway to verify the incident and identify the officers involved.

He added that the matter had been referred to the appropriate investigative unit for

discreet handling.

Edefe called on the victim and other witnesses to come forward with information that could assist in identifying those allegedly responsible.

The Command condemned all forms of brutality and abuse, stressing that such actions are inconsistent with the values of the Nigeria Police Force.

The Commissioner of Po-

lice warned that any officer found culpable would face disciplinary action in line with existing laws, reiterating that professionalism and respect for human rights remain a priority.

The Command also urged members of the public with useful information or evidence to assist in the ongoing investigation.

## Edo govt, stakeholders rally for skills devt, as 4,000 youths benefit from CEEDI

**BENIN CITY**

The Edo State Government and key development stakeholders have reaffirmed their commitment to youth empowerment, skills acquisition and poverty reduction, as over 4,000 youths benefitted from programmes of the Centre for Edo Delta Development Initiative (CEEDI).

The commitment was reiterated at the CEEDI Beneficiary Week, Public Lecture, Exhibition and Graduation Ceremony held in Benin City, where participants stressed the importance of sustained collaboration

in tackling unemployment and promoting self-reliance.

Representing the Commissioner for Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Dr. Olabisi Idaomi, the Permanent Secretary, Dr. Efofa Aisien, conveyed the Commissioner's goodwill, noting that she had briefly attended the event before proceeding to official duties at Government House.

Aisien reaffirmed the Ministry's dedication to empowerment programmes under the SHINE Agenda, targeted at youths, vulnerable groups and persons in IDP camps.

He said Governor Monday

Okpebholo remains committed to partnerships that promote inclusive growth, poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods across the state.

According to him, the Ministry has developed policies and programmes aimed at equipping unemployed persons with relevant technical and vocational skills, while strengthening collaboration with non-governmental organisations operating within the humanitarian space.

In his remarks, the Senator representing Edo South Senatorial District, Senator Neda Imasuen, commended the initiative and pledged continued

collaboration with CEEDI to expand its reach and impact.

He also lauded stakeholders for their sustained efforts towards grassroots development.

Also speaking, Hon. Kerimu Shehu Kelly, who represented the Chief of Staff to the Edo State Government, Hon. Yakubu O. Musa, said over 4,000 youths were trained under the programme in the past year.

Kelly, who doubles as the Managing Director of the Edo State Skills Development Agency (EdoJobs), pledged continued partnership with CEEDI and donated two sewing machines to support vocational training.

**NEWS**

# Edo Govt Partners Youth Advocate, EDSPHCDA to Boost HPV Vaccine Uptake

**ABUJA**

The Edo State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development has reaffirmed its commitment to advancing public health awareness, particularly among young people.

This was the outcome of a courtesy visit on the Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Hon. Eugenia Abdallah by a youth-led advocacy delegation championing the long-term delivery of the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine in Edo State.

Speaking during the visit, Youth Advocate for the Edo Youth Project, Maclean Eneuzor, emphasized the urgent need for sustained education and awareness to improve the uptake of the HPV vaccine across the state.

He noted that the initiative is focused on ensuring long-term delivery through structured health education, particularly targeting young people who

are most at risk.

Eneuzor, who led the advocacy effort, was accompanied by Irene Uabor, State Health Educator who represented the Edo State Primary Health Care Development Agency (EDSPHCDA). The team underscored the importance of collaborative engagement with key government institutions to strengthen vaccine acceptance and public confidence.

He explained that the visit aimed to foster strategic partnerships that would enhance community sensitization and address misconceptions surrounding the HPV vaccine, adding that youth-driven advocacy remains critical in bridging information gaps at the grassroots level.

Also speaking, the State Health Educator, EDSPHCDA, Irene Uabor, emphasized the importance of the HPV vaccine in preventing cervical cancer and other HPV-related diseases.

She highlighted the agency's ongoing efforts in promoting im-

munization across the state and stressed the need for increased awareness, especially among parents and caregivers, to ensure eligible children are vaccinated.

In her response, the Honourable Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Hon. Eugenia Abdallah, expressed appreciation for the delegation's visit and their proactive approach to improving public health outcomes. She reiterated the Ministry's readiness to partner with the group in driving widespread sensitization campaigns on the importance of HPV vaccination.

**OSENI'S DECLARATION:**

APC Governorship Aspirant in Oyo State, Sen. Sharafadeen Alli (2nd R); member representing Ibarapa East/Ido Federal Constituency in Oyo State, Rep. Aderemi Oseni (R) and other party chieftains, during Oseni's declaration to contest for Oyo South Senatorial District election, in Ibadan on Sunday (26/4/26).

## Edo Govt, stakeholders champion skills devt at CEEDI beneficiary week

Youths empowerment advocates have reaffirmed their commitment to youth empowerment, skills acquisition, and poverty reduction at a Beneficiary Week, Public Lecture, Exhibition, and Graduation Ceremony of the Centre for Edo Delta Development Initiative (CEEDI).

Speaking at the ceremony, the Commissioner, for Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Dr. Olabisi Idaomi,

Esq., expressed the state government's willingness to partner with instructions that promote youth empowerment.

Represented by the ministry's Permanent Secretary, Dr. Efosa Aisien, the Commissioner reaffirmed the state government's commitment to the youth empowerment programmes under the SHINE Agenda, particularly the vulnerable groups, and persons in IDP camps.

He further emphasized

that Governor Monday Okpebholo remains committed to partnerships that promote inclusive growth, poverty reduction, and sustainable livelihoods across the State.

He also noted that the Ministry has developed policies and programmes aimed at equipping unemployed persons with relevant technical and vocational skills, while strengthening collaboration with NGOs operating within the humanitarian space.

The Senator representing Edo South Senatorial District in the National Assembly, Sen-

ator Neda Imasuen, expressed delight at the initiative and pledged continued collaboration with CEEDI to expand its impact.

He also commended stakeholders for their sustained efforts in grassroots development.

Hon. Kerimu Shehu Kelly, representing the Chief of Staff to the Edo State Government, Hon. Yakubu O. Musa, and Managing Director of the Edo State Skills Development Agency (EdoJobs), disclosed that over 4,000 youths were trained under the programme in the past year.

## Minister urges NUPENG's new president to sustain gains

**LAGOS**

Mr Muhammed Dangyadi, the Minister of Labour and Employment, has urged new NUPENG president, Salimon Akanni Oladiti, to sustain achievements of predecessor, Williams Akporeha.

Dangyadi gave the charge on Sunday in a goodwill message at the union's sixth Quadrennial Delegates Conference in Lagos.

Represented by TUSIR Director, Mr Falonipe Amos, Director, Trade Union Services and Industrial Relations, the minister recalled cordial relations between NUPENG and stakeholders across the oil and gas value chain.

He urged the leadership to sustain industrial harmony by prioritising dialogue in addressing labour issues.

"The Federal Government values NUPENG's contributions to national development.

"Akporeha's commitment to constructive dialogue while advancing workers' welfare is exemplary. We urge the incoming executive to take a cue," he said.

Oladiti and 15 other national officers were elected unopposed for a four-year term.

In his acceptance speech, Oladiti commended Akporeha for achievements, including improved remuneration and construction of NUPENG

Towers' national secretariat.

He also cited introduction of health and life insurance schemes for staff and tanker drivers.

He pledged to build on these gains and strengthen the union.

"Your dedication, sacrifices, and steadfast leadership have laid a strong foundation upon which we shall continue to build.

"We are committed to strengthening our union and upholding the dignity of labour," he said.

Oladiti assured members of continued engagement with government, employers and other stakeholders to improve welfare and working conditions.

"At the same time, we will continue to engage employers through constructive dialogue to secure better conditions of service.

"The rights and welfare of our members will remain our priority," he said.

He announced plans to establish a truth and reconciliation committee and to work closely with past leaders.

Earlier, Akporeha highlighted achievements of his administration, including enhanced staff welfare, infrastructure development and workforce rejuvenation.

"The crowning achievement is the commissioning of NUPENG Towers in December 2024," he said.

## Vaccines prevent 1.8m deaths in Africa annually —WHO

**ABUJA**

The World Health Organization (WHO) has said that vaccines prevent about 1.8 million deaths annually in Africa, underscoring their critical role in public health.

In a statement on Sunday marking African Vaccination Week (April 24-30), themed "For Every Generation, Vaccines Work," Mohammed Janabi, Regional Director for Africa, emphasised that immunisation saved lives and strengthened families.

He added that vaccination allowed communities to thrive without the disruption of disease outbreaks.

According to him, since 2000, roughly 500 million African children have been protected through routine vaccination.

He said that protection extended beyond childhood, with HPV vaccines helping prevent cervical cancer in adolescent girls and maternal vaccines safeguarding both mothers and newborns, while booster doses maintained immunity into adulthood.

Janabi highlighted progress across the continent, including innovations such as digital tracking systems, solar-powered cold storage, and community-driven outreach.

"Malaria vaccines are now being introduced in 25 countries, and in December 2025, Cape Verde, Mauritius, and Seychelles became the first in the WHO African Region to eliminate measles and rubella.

"Through initiatives like the Big Catch-Up, nearly 8.75 million previously unvaccinated children were reached, while coverage for diseases like diphtheria, tetanus, and whooping cough has rebounded to pre-pandemic levels.

"However, challenges remain, with about 6.7 million children still unvaccinated and 9.5 million under-immunised, often in conflict-affected or remote areas."

Janabi called for renewed commitment, increased domestic funding, and stronger partnerships, stressing that immunisation was not only lifesaving but also economically beneficial, yielding an estimated 44 dollars return for every dollar invested.

## 2027: Accord disowns Ibadan coalition, reaffirms independent presidential bid

**ABUJA**

The Chris Imumolen-led Accord Party says it was not part of the coalition meeting of opposition political parties held on Saturday in Ibadan, alleging that its name and logo were used without authorisation.

Imumolen, in a statement issued on Sunday in Abuja by the factional National Secretary, Muktar Abdallah, said the party remained independent and was focused on presenting its own presidential candidate for the 2027 general elections.

The coalition of opposition parties had, at the end of its summit in Ibadan, resolved to work towards presenting a single presidential candidate to challenge the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) in 2027.

In a communiqué issued after the meeting, the coalition stated that the proposed consensus candidate would be

jointly agreed upon and supported by all participating opposition parties.

Prominent opposition figures reported to be involved in the coalition include former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, 2023 Labour Party presidential candidate Peter Obi, Governor Seyi Makinde, Sen. David Mark, Sen. Rabiun Kwankwaso, and former Osun governor Rauf Aregbesola, among others.

However, Imumolen, while threatening legal action, issued a 48-hour ultimatum to the conveners of the Ibadan meeting to publicly explain how and why the Accord Party's identity was used without its consent.

The professor described the inclusion of the party's flag in the coalition as "political impersonation and misrepresentation," stressing that it was "not a misunderstanding."

"Failure to do so will trigger immediate legal action against all individuals and groups involved.

# EDHA 2027: Enahonna bids to represent Igueben

## ● assures of people-centered representation

HAMEED BRAIMAH

### BENIN CITY

The political temperature of Igueben, the administrative headquarters of Igueben Local Government Area of Edo State was on a high over the weekend as a renowned businessman and politician, Hon. Charles Ekholowa Enahonna, formally declared his intention to contest for the Edo State House of Assembly seat for the Igueben State Constituency under the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

The ceremony which bore the marks of a mini carnival drew thunderous ovation at the party secretariat in Igueben where political heavyweights, party members, relatives and

well-wishers converged to make the event a success.

On hand at the flag-off were the Igueben political leadership led by Hon. Chris Eni (the APC Chairman for Igueben LGA), High Chief Ekpen Ekhoje, Hon. Iredia Sunday and other prominent chieftains.

Enahonna, a philanthropist, consummate entrepreneur, supply chain virtuoso, and an embodiment of visionary leadership, electrified the gathering with a declaration many observers have described as a paradigm shift in grassroots politics, pledging to serve only a single term of four years when elected.

With a promise to apply all inclusive governance, Enahonna declared with an air of certainty: "I am your choice. I know

what you want, and I will give you what you want".

"I will not disturb the leaders. Just one term is enough for me to execute all I have to do. By the special grace of God, we

will move," he affirmed.

In a tone that typifies his humility and steely resolve, the urbane and sagacious aspirant assured party leaders and constituents that his ambition was

devoid of personal aggrandizement, stressing that he would not seek re-election after his first tenure.

Anchoring his campaign on collaboration, inclusiveness and pragmatic governance, Enahonna, whose business

empire spans hospitality, construction and manufacturing, including the Nigeria and UK registered Macderic Bakers Ltd, promised to usher in a new era of accelerated development across all ten wards of the constituency.

## Navy nabs fraudulent shipping agent, clears personnel of misconduct

### CALABAR

The Nigerian Navy has apprehended a suspected fraudulent shipping agent, Mr Nsikak Ekpo, over allegations of extorting money under false pretenses linked to a maritime rescue operation in the Calabar Channel.

The suspect has been handed over to the Nigeria Police Force Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in Calabar for further investigation and possible prosecution.

The Director of Naval Information, Navy Capt. Abiodun Folorunsho, disclosed this in a statement at the weekend.

Folorunsho said the arrest followed a directive from Naval Headquarters after a complaint was received through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs alleging that N400,000 was

paid for security services to Nigerian Navy personnel.

According to him, the money was allegedly paid during an incident involving Motor Vessel CHIMBA Express, a Cameroonian-registered vessel.

"The incident occurred on Dec. 22, 2025, when personnel of Nigerian Navy Ship (NNS) Victory, NNS Ose, and Forward Operating Base (FOB) Ibaka responded to a distress call involving a fire outbreak onboard the vessel," he said.

The naval spokesman said the coordinated response led to the successful rescue of the vessel and its crew.

He said allegations later emerged claiming that naval personnel received payment for security services and abandoned the vessel without refund.

## 2027: Nwifuru assures level playing field for Ebonyi aspirants

### ABAKALIKI

Governor Francis Nwifuru of Ebonyi has said he will not impose any candidate on the people in the forthcoming general elections.

The governor said this at the wedding of his younger brother, Paulinus Nwifuru and his heartthrob, Immaculata, at the Government House Chapel.

According to him, I have not made up my mind to support anybody except President Bola Tinubu, who has demonstrated love and support to us as a state.

"Another person is Goodluck Mbam of Ebonyi State House of Assembly, whom the constituents have equally endorsed," he stated.

Nwifuru called on aspirants to be mindful of their conduct and comments to avoid overheating the polity, urging them to align their faith with destiny.

"You can only be there, when God says so. Let us be

calm, let us be humble.

"I will meet with the stakeholders of the State to discuss how to achieve a seamless electoral process.

"We will start zonal meetings on Wednesday and it will run through Thursday to Friday when I might have finished meeting with the leaders of the state."

"We will discuss the Senate, House of Representative, State House of Assembly and Governorship.

"We will not discuss the President's position, because that one is a no go area. We have only one Presidential candidate, which is President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

"He is the only president who has started a project here and will commission it. We are giving him our votes a hundred percent," he added.

Nwifuru congratulated his brother and his wife and wished them matrimonial bliss.



### FORMAL DECLARATION:

Hon. Charles Enahonna, leading aspirant for the Igueben State Constituency seat at the Edo Assembly greets APC leaders and supporters, during his formal declaration at Igueben over the weekend.

## Flood alerts: NEMA embarks on massive sensitisation in Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu —Official

### ENUGU

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) says it would embark on massive sensitisation in some council areas in Anambra, Ebonyi and Enugu States on the 2026 Flood Predictions.

The Information Officer of NEMA Enugu Operations Office, Mr Ezeani Nnanyelugo, disclosed this at the weekend in Enugu.

Nnanyelugo said that the Agency, its partners and stakeholders would carry out robust sensitisation in the affected states.

The sensitisation followed the 2026 Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet) Seasonal Climate Prediction and the

Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency (NIHSA) Annual Flood Outlook released on Feb.10 and April 15, respectively.

Nnanyelugo said that the two agencies in their predictions noted that there would be high rainfall and high risk of flood in the three states under the NEMA Enugu Operations.

According to him, we have fliers on flood risk reduction activities and actions in both English and Igbo indigenous language to distribute to flood prone communities identified in the prediction.

He said, "We have started and would sustain public enlightenment on the prediction through television, radio and online news platforms.

"Recently, the NEMA South-East Zonal Director and Information Officer shared information on NTA on NEMA preparedness plan.

"NEMA is also partnering with NiMet and NIHSA officials to ensure that their predictions are discussed among stakeholders in various meetings, trainings and workshops for the purpose of reducing flood risk in the states."

He also said that the Agency would be conducting flood sensitisation programmes including drills/simulation exercises with other stakeholders in major flood prone council areas within the states.

He said that NEMA had started downscaling of flood

early warnings to identified hot-spot council areas and would soon commence direct writing to the authorities of councils and communities involved.

Nnanyelugo said, "We have started sharing weekly alerts forecast from NiMet/NIHSA to all relevant stakeholders via WhatsApp forum/meetings notwithstanding numerous stakeholders meetings. The public is advised to stay informed.

"The Director-General of NEMA, Mrs Zubaida Umar, has reaffirmed the Agency's commitment to strengthening partnerships with international humanitarian organisations – KSRELief, UNOCHA, World Food Programme (WFP) and International Office for Migration (IOM).

## Soludo offers automatic employment to 37 first-class graduates during convocation

### AWKA

Governor Chukwuma Soludo of Anambra has offered automatic employment to 37 first-class graduates of the Chukwue-meka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) at its 16th convocation ceremony.

Soludo made the announcement at the university's main campus in Igbariam, Anambra East Local Government Area.

The governor also donated N4 million to the overall best graduating student, Mr Augustus Umeh of the Department of Economics.

Umeh graduated with a cumulative grade point average of 4.85 on a 5.0 scale.

Speaking at the event, the governor urged the graduates to seize the moment and emerge as beacons of hope, disruptive thinkers and agents of change in the society.

"The Nigeria of 2026 is a country facing difficult challenges but on a path of necessary transformation. This is our country, and we must rise to the occasion rather than dwell on lamentations," he said.

Soludo further charged the institution to focus on producing problem-solvers rather

than mere enumerators.

He added that his administration would continue to prioritise human capital development to build the desired future.

Also speaking, the Chancellor of the university, Bishop Matthew Kukah, commended the state government for its significant investment in education.

"Statistically, Anambra is performing well in education among the 36 states.

"As the new Chancellor, we will not only strive to achieve the university's goals but surpass them," Kukah said.

Earlier in her address, the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Kate

Omenugha, disclosed that 3,155 students were awarded first degrees across various disciplines in the undergraduate programme.

She added that 803 graduates obtained postgraduate degrees in different fields.

Giving a breakdown, Omenugha said 37 students graduated with first-class honours, 888 with second-class upper division and 1,712 with third-class degrees.

She congratulated the graduates and urged them to uphold the university's values and represent the institution with pride.

**NEWS**

# Kogi strengthens China partnership for Agro-industrial dev, SAPZ implementation

**LOKOJA**

The Kogi Government has signed a strategic cooperation agreement with China's Hezheng Holdings Group to build a modern agricultural science and technology industrial park.

The state's Commissioner for Information and Commu-

nications, Mr Kingsley Fanwo, who disclosed this in a statement on Sunday in Lokoja, described it as a major step towards fast-tracking its Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zone (SAPZ) programme.

He noted that the deal transitioned the SAPZ from planning to implementation and aimed to position Kogi as a leading

agro-industrial hub in Nigeria.

"The SAPZ initiative is designed to boost food production, enhance processing capacity, create employment, attract private investment, and position Kogi as a leading agricultural and industrial hub," Fanwo said.

According to him, central to the partnership is a modern agro-tech industrial park

that will drive agro-processing, technology transfer, equipment deployment, enterprise incubation, logistics, cold chain systems, export infrastructure, and sustainable power solutions.

He explained that the Kogi SAPZ structure included the Ajakuta Agro-Industrial Hub, Agricultural Transformation Centres in Anyigba, Alape, and Osara, and the Zariagi Agro-Air Hub.

He added that the programme would integrate existing farmer clusters with an additional

150,000 hectares of farmland per zone for large-scale, tenant-driven production.

"Priority value chains are rice, maize, cassava, livestock and poultry, sesame, cashew, oil palm, and greenhouse farming.

"Support systems will cover warehousing, cold chain logistics, power, compressed natural gas, CNG, agric technology, equipment, and export infrastructure."

Fanwo said the move reflected Kogi's strategy to attract "credible technical partners, industrial park operators, investors, and global business platforms" into the SAPZ ecosystem.

"In China, the team toured Hezheng facilities, including its investment promotion centre, agric industry exhibition hall, global launch hall, and live-streaming incubation base.

"Talks focused on industrial park development, technology transfer, processing infrastructure, enterprise incubation, park management, investment mobilisation, and equipment deployment.

"Both sides expressed strong alignment on the project vision and implementation roadmap," Fanwo said.

He added that in the coming

months, technical and commercial workstreams would advance toward full mobilisation, including groundbreaking and setting up coordination offices in China, Kogi, and Abuja.

"This engagement underscores the commitment of the Kogi State Government to transitioning the SAPZ programme from planning to execution, while positioning the State as a competitive destination for agro-industrial investment," Fanwo said.

He added that Kogi remained resolute in building "a bankable and investment-ready agro-industrial ecosystem" to enhance food security, promote value addition, create jobs, strengthen farmer-market linkages, support export growth, and unlock new economic opportunities.

He stated that the state delegation was led by the Auditor General and Project Investment Adviser, Yakubu Okala, representing Gov. Ahmed Ododo.

Others were Agriculture Commissioner, Mr Ojomah Timothy; Technical Adviser, Dr. Abdullahi Ozomata; Chief Economic Adviser Aliyu Salami, and Project Consultant, Mr. David Obatolu.



**SIGNING OF A STRATEGIC COOPERATION AGREEMENT:**

Kogi State and Chinese firm officials in a group photograph, during the signing of a strategic cooperation agreement with China's Hezheng Holdings Group for a modern agricultural science and technology industrial park.

## World Malaria Day: Emzor Calls for coordinated action to eliminate scourge • Urges Investment in API, others

**LAGOS**

As the global community commemorates World Malaria Day 2026, Emzor Pharmaceutical Industries Limited has called for urgent, coordinated action to eliminate the scourge by strengthening local pharmaceutical manufacturing, advancing innovation.

Other areas of focus the pharmaceutical company noted should be the expansion of access to life-saving treatments, particularly for children and vulnerable populations.

Marked under the theme

"Driven to End Malaria: Now We Can. Now We Must", Emzor noted that despite significant global progress, malaria remains one of the most pressing public health challenges in sub-Saharan Africa, with Nigeria bearing the heaviest global burden.

According to the World Health Organization, Nigeria accounts for approximately 27% of global malaria cases and nearly one in three malaria-related deaths. With children under five being disproportionately affected, Emzor has stated that access to effective, child-friendly treatment

is not just a medical necessity, but a moral imperative.

The Strategic Imperative: Sufficiency through Local Manufacturing

According to Emzor, achieving malaria elimination at scale will require more than periodic interventions; it demands resilient health systems and industrial self-reliance.

It stressed that local pharmaceutical manufacturing has emerged as a critical lever in this effort, ensuring that high-quality, affordable medicines are consistently available while reducing reliance on imports that are often vulnerable

to global supply disruptions.

"Local manufacturing is no longer optional, it is central to our national health security, economic stability, and the long-term sustainability of malaria control efforts," said Uzoma Ezeoke, Executive Director at Emzor Pharmaceutical Industries Limited.

"To truly end malaria, we must close identified critical access gaps. This means building a system where we produce high-quality, WHO-compliant anti-malarials right here at home, protecting our patients from the volatility of global supply chain disruptions."

## ADC attack: Presidential aide defends Tinubu's democratic credentials

**ABUJA**

Mr Sunday Dare, Special Adviser to President Bola Tinubu on Media and Public Communications, has criticised the African Democratic Congress (ADC) attacks on the Tinubu administration, describing them as baseless and politically motivated.

Dare stated this on Sunday in a response titled "What's That Noise!" directed at Hon. Nnenna Ukeje and the ADC Forum of National Legislators.

He said the opposition party had begun attacking the president and questioning the electoral process even before the

official commencement of the election season.

According to him, the strategy is aimed at blackmailing the government, discrediting institutions and attracting foreign sympathy.

Dare described the outing by the ADC legislators as theatrical and lacking substance, restraint and constitutional fidelity.

He said what Nigerians witnessed was not a principled defence of democracy but an attempt to weaponise rhetoric and distract from internal divisions within the party.

The presidential aide noted that the opposition itself acknowledged Tinubu's democrat-

ic record, including his role in strengthening opposition politics and resisting authoritarian rule.

He said it was contradictory to praise the president's democratic credentials and then accuse him of undermining democracy without evidence.

"You cannot spend the first half of a press conference affirming a man's lifelong commitment to democracy, and the second half alleging without proof that he has abandoned it," he said.

Dare added that Tinubu did not mention the ADC directly or indirectly in the remarks that triggered the reaction.

He said the party's assumption that the comments referred to it

amounted to self-indictment.

On allegations of judicial interference, Dare said Nigeria's judiciary remained constitutionally independent.

He warned that attempts to discredit the courts on the basis of political disagreements could weaken democratic institutions.

The aide also dismissed claims involving the Chief of Staff, saying isolated comments taken out of context could not be used as evidence of executive interference.

According to him, the ADC's major problem was internal fragmentation, leadership disputes and lack of ideological cohesion.

## Economic hardship: Civil servants express hope as FG approves welfare boost

**ABUJA**

Civil servants have expressed cautious optimism following the Federal Government's approval of increased allowances and welfare benefits, amid rising economic hardship.

They made this known in an interview with our correspondents on Sunday in Abuja.

Didi Walsen-Jack, Head of the Civil Service of the Federation on Friday announced a major increase in peculiar allowances and welfare benefits for civil servants.

The increase aims at improving take-home pay and morale for civil servants across cadres.

Some workers who spoke to NAN said the announcement had raised expectations, especially as inflation continues to drive up food prices nationwide.

Ms Benita Solomon expressed joy at the announcement, while thanking President Bola Tinubu's administration for listening to the cries of civil servants in the country.

"Life has not been easy for every typical civil servant, especially those of us with children and several dependents.

"I am a widow with three children and you cannot imagine how my life has been, since the removal of subsidy. It has been from one struggle to another.

"I am very excited about this increase and hope sincerely it will be implemented accordingly, as it will go a long way to cushion the effects of rising living costs and improve our overall well-being," Solomon said.

Mrs Esther Ibrahim, a Grade Level 12 officer, said the review could provide temporary relief if implemented promptly.

"We have heard similar announcements before. What matters now is the implementation. Food prices are rising daily, and salaries no longer meet basic needs," she said.

Mr Musa Abu, a junior civil servant, said the increase in Duty Tour Allowance and other benefits could ease work-related financial burdens.

"Transport, feeding and even training costs come from our pockets sometimes. If these changes take effect, it will make a huge difference," he said.

Another worker, Miss Ifeoma Okeke, noted that the new exit benefit scheme could restore confidence in public service.

"At least people can look forward to retirement with some dignity. But again, it depends on how faithfully the pronouncements are implemented," she said.

However, some civil servants expressed skepticism, noting that past welfare pronouncements had not always translated into actual salary improvements.

Mr Sunday Adeyemi, a senior officer, said previous approvals did not reflect in workers' earnings.

"We have seen policies announced that never got implemented or led to actual increase in our take home.

"Although this is a welcome development, many of us will remain cautious, until we see the increase in our payslips," he said.

# Probe clears vaccines in Lagos twins' death —LASG

## LAGOS

The Lagos State Government says investigations into the death of twin infants following vaccination at a primary healthcare centre have found no link between the vaccines administered and the fatalities.

Dr Ibrahim Mustafa, Permanent Secretary of the Lagos State Primary Health Care Board (LSPHCB), made the disclosure in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria on Sunday.

According to him, the outcome of preliminary findings set up by the government indicates that the vaccines given are not responsible for the babies' deaths.

"We have conducted toxicology and post-mortem analyses, and so far, there is no evidence linking the outcome to the vaccines," he said.

Mustafa noted that the affected children were among several who received doses from the same vaccine batch, none of whom experienced similar outcomes.

The permanent secretary acknowledged that adverse events following immunisation (AEFI)

could occur, but stressed that such reactions were generally mild and temporary.

"These can include fever, irritability, or mild discomfort after vaccination. In most cases, these symptoms resolve quickly with basic care such as tepid sponging or use of paracetamol."

Serious complications, particularly those resulting in death, he emphasised, are extremely rare.

Mustafa stressed that transparency was crucial to maintaining trust in immunisation programmes, especially in settings where misinformation could undermine vaccine uptake.

Besides, he also pointed to stringent regulatory processes governing vaccines used in Nigeria, emphasising that all vaccines undergo rigorous testing and approval by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) before being deployed.

"There is no vaccine administered in this country that has not been certified safe and effective," he said.

He added that any unsafe or substandard product would be detected and barred from use.

Mustafa further said both

federal and state governments worked closely to ensure that only approved vaccines were

distributed and administered nationwide.

He noted that routine im-

munisation services in Lagos were provided free of charge, as part of broader efforts to en-

sure equitable access and protect children from vaccine-preventable diseases.



## MONTHLY ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION EXERCISE:

L-R: Special Adviser to Lagos State Governor on Tourism, Arts and Culture, Mr Idris Aregbe; Chairman, Lekki Residents Association, Mrs. Shareefah Andu, and Senior Assistant to the Governor on Transport and Logistics, Mr Adekoya Hassan, after observing the re-introduced monthly environmental sanitation exercise at Lekki Peninsular in Lagos on Saturday.

## Lawal seeks stakeholders' joint action to tackle Zamfara banditry

### GUSAU

Governor Dauda Lawal of Zamfara says he deflected to the All Progressives Congress (APC) to align with the four former governors and the Federal Government in efforts to restore law and order in the state.

Lawal spoke while hosting a one-day APC stakeholders' meeting at the Government House, Gusau, ahead of the party's congresses scheduled to begin on April 28.

Lawal reiterated the need for a united front among top politicians in the state to tackle the insecurity confronting the state.

The governor noted that the meeting was the first of major APC stakeholders since he joined the party in March.

Lawal arrived at the venue with the four ex-governors of the state including, Sen. Ahmad Sani, Alhaji Mahmuda Shinkafi, Sen. Abdulaziz Yari and Minister of State for De-

fence, Bello Matawalle and other top party faithful as a show of unity among them.

He lauded President Bola Tinubu for "navigating the complex challenges in the country" and for his support to Zamfara with security infrastructure, personnel and logistics to tackle insecurity in the state.

The governor said the meeting would deepen cohesion and unity, while consolidating ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Lawal restated his administration's commitment to collaborate with all stakeholders to address insecurity and ensure lasting peace.

He highlighted his administration's giant strides in transforming the state and lifting the people out of poverty, while assuring all party members of fairness and due process.

The four former governors took turns to assure the president of their commitment and loyalty to his administration and his 2027 re-election bid.

## MSF links malaria to child malnutrition in Nigeria

### KATSINA

Malaria remains one of the leading illnesses affecting malnourished children in Nigeria, according to Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), also known as Doctors Without Borders.

Dr Alibaba Nuraddeen, acting Medical Team Leader with MSF in Katsina, said this while speaking to news men to mark World Malaria Day 2026.

Nuraddeen said malaria ranked among the top three diseases treated in the organisation's Inpatient Therapeutic Feeding

Centres (ITFCs) in 2025.

He said the centres, which catered to severely malnourished children, recorded about 26,000 paediatric admissions, many involving cases of co-infection.

According to him, malaria cases were recorded alongside acute watery diarrhoea and sepsis, forming a major threat to child survival in northern Nigeria.

"Malaria and malnutrition are deeply interconnected. Malaria reduces appetite and food intake, while malnutrition weakens immunity, making children more susceptible to severe infection," he said.

Nuraddeen warned that failure to properly diagnose malaria in malnourished children could prolong illness and delay recovery.

"A child with untreated or recurrent malaria over weeks may eventually slip into malnutrition," he said.

He added that MSF had made malaria screening mandatory for every child admitted into its feeding programmes.

According to him, World Health Organization (WHO) data shows that Nigeria accounts for 24.3 per cent of global malaria cases and 30.3 per cent of related deaths, contributing more

than half of cases in West Africa.

He further said that the Federal Government was expanding its malaria vaccination programme as part of efforts to curb infections.

"The National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) said the programme, initially piloted in Bayelsa and Kebbi, has now been extended to Bauchi and Ondo states.

"The agency's Executive Director, Dr Muyi Aina, said the expansion was part of renewed strategies to reduce malaria burden and child mortality in the country".

## NARD suspends planned nationwide strike after FG commitments

### ABUJA

The The Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) has suspended its planned indefinite nationwide strike following fresh commitments by the Federal Government on allowances, arrears, and training funding.

The decision is contained in a communiqué issued at the end of a virtual emergency National Executive Council (NEC) meeting held on Saturday.

The communiqué was signed

by the President, Dr Mohammad Suleiman; the Secretary-General, Dr Shuaibu Ibrahim; and the Publicity and Social Secretary, Dr Abdulmajid Ibrahim.

According to the communiqué, the suspension followed high-level engagements with key government officials and stakeholders.

NARD said that the NEC meeting reviewed the outcomes of interventions by the Vice President, as well as the Ministers of Health, Labour, and Finance.

It also considered engage-

ments with key agencies, including the Budget Office, the Office of the Accountant General, and IPPIS.

Other stakeholders involved in the engagements included the Nigerian Medical Association and the Department of State Services, among others in the health and public service sectors.

The association noted that its earlier decision to embark on a total and indefinite strike arose from the Federal Government's reversal of the implementation of the reviewed Professional Al-

lowance Table (PAT) and other welfare concerns.

However, it observed that the decision to halt the implementation of the reviewed PAT had been reversed, with implementation expected to reflect in April salaries and subsequent months.

The NEC also noted that the Federal Government had renewed its commitment to the payment of all outstanding promotion arrears and salary arrears owed to resident doctors in affected institutions nationwide.

## APWEN, stakeholders drive push for investment-ready, sustainability ventures

### LAGOS

Stakeholders at the SHEnnovation Hackathon 2026 webinar on Saturday have urged innovators to prioritise solution-driven ideas and investment readiness to scale sustainability-focused business ventures.

They emphasised that strong business models, data-backed impact and clear value propositions are critical to attracting funding and ensuring long-term viability.

The webinar organised by the Lagos Chapter of the Association of Professional Women Engineers (APWEN) had the theme "Business Development and Investment Readiness for Sustainability-Focused Innovators and Startups".

The webinar encouraged participants to address real economic and environmental challenges while ensuring scalability.

In her welcome address, Chairman, APWEN Lagos

Chapter, Bosede Oyekunle, said the third webinar marked a shift from ideation to capital mobilisation for sustainability-driven innovations.

Oyekunle noted that previous sessions focused on environmental sustainability, waste management, digital technology and artificial intelligence, laying the foundation for problem-solving and design thinking.

She said creativity without a business model remains an idea,

while sustainability without funding remains unrealised potential.

She added that the initiative aims to equip women and young engineers with skills to transform technical prototypes into investable and scalable ventures.

Delivering a keynote, Seun Oluwalade, CEO, Renewable Lifestyle Engineering and EV World Africa, shared insights from his transition into clean energy and electric mobility entrepreneurship.

Oluwalade said his experience highlighted the importance of identifying real problems and building practical, scalable solutions around them.

He noted that electric vehicles offered cost efficiency through reduced maintenance and operational expenses compared to fossil fuel-powered systems.

According to him, integrating renewable energy with electric mobility can significantly reduce operating costs for indi-

viduals and organisations.

Oluwalade said startups often fail not due to poor ideas but lack of focus on solving clear and valuable problems.

He stressed that investors prioritise scalable solutions, competent teams and measurable impact over ambitious projections.

He urged innovators to present ideas using simple business models that clearly show value creation, revenue streams and cost structures.

**NEWS****JUDICIARY**

# Court orders arrest of lawyer, police officer for evading arraignment

**ABUJA**

Justice Samira Bature of an Abuja High Court has ordered the arrest of a lawyer Victor Giwa and a police officer, Edith Erhunmuuse for

evading arraignment.

The judge granted the order on Friday following an application by the prosecution counsel, Aderonke Imana.

The police charged Cecil Osakwe, Giwa, and Edith Er-

hunmuuse with criminal conduct involving the forceful eviction of occupants and damage to property estimated at N300 million.

Justice Bature in her ruling held that she had gone through the records of the court, and cannot fail to agree with the Prosecution Counsel.

She noted that all the letters and medical records being served on the court by Giwa, were mere delayed tactics.

"As a legal practitioner, he ought to know better.

"Indeed, this matter was filed in 2023.

It commenced before this court on July 16, 2024.

"Unfortunately, up till today, being the 24th day of April, 2026, approaching two years now, arraignment has not been possible for one reason or the other," she noted.

Justice Bature agreed with the prosecution counsel that if indeed Giwa was ill, he could have alerted his office before now.

"As a delay tactic, he chose to send in this letter today to stall proceedings once again.

"The 2nd defendant, on the last adjourned date, had insinuated that the prosecution is delaying this trial, but the circumstances clearly show that it is the other way round.

"The third defendant, who appeared only once in this case, has chosen to completely stay away from these proceedings, as she has consistently been absent.

"The court registrar was instructed to write to the Legal Aid Council of Nigeria to secure representation of counsel on her behalf.

"The court has been reliably informed that the third defendant has declined the offer by Legal Aid Council to rep-

resent her in this case, as the council had already been assigned the case to defend her, but she refused" the judge held.

"Courts are not for play. They are for serious business.

"Since the second and third defendants have chosen to show disrespect to this court by refusing to appear for their arraignment, again, for the umpteenth time, the court has no option.

"On Mr Aboje's submissions that there are pending applications, particularly the one dated February 2, let me state that the position of the law, as rightly pointed out by the prosecution counsel, is that jurisdiction of the court in criminal matters is activated after a valid arraignment" she held.

She held that all applications can only be taken after arraignment.

"Therefore, this court shall proceed with arraignment irrespective of any pending applications.

"In the meantime, the prosecution's application is granted, a bench warrant is ordered for the arrest of the second and third defendants" The judge ordered.

**HAJJ KITS DISTRIBUTION:**

Intending pilgrims in Edo State, during the just concluded Hajj kits distribution and vaccination exercise across the state.

## Court restrains rival Edo HOSTCOM group's inauguration, adjourns suit to May 18

**BENIN CITY**

Benin High Court presided over by Justice Mary Itsuelli has restrained members of Registered Trustees of Host Communities of Nigeria Oil and Gas (HOSTCOM) from conducting, organizing, supervising, participating in, or in any manner whatsoever giving effect to the inauguration of a self constituted executive of the Edo State chapter of the association.

The said inauguration was

scheduled for Saturday, April 25, 2026 in Benin City.

In suit No: B/276/2026, Kenneth Aduwaye, Prince Odion Abumenre, Dr. Osasu Isibor and Comrade Andrew Nosa Oyegue for themselves and on behalf of members of the Edo State chapter of HOSTCOM are challenging the legality of Registered Trustees of HOSTCOM reportedly headed by one Mr. Robinson Aikpitanyi, Patrick Erumusele, Victor Okunoghae, Stanley Osayande, High Chief Benjamin Tamara-

neibi, Godday Koru and Kenneth Aigbe, Odiase Glory.

In a motion ex-parte by A O. Asenoguan, counsel to the claimants, applicants argued that the said executive of the chapter did not emerge from any valid election conducted in accordance with the constitution, zoning arrangement and electoral guidelines of Registered Trustees of HOSTCOM, and prayed the court to restrain them pending the hearing and determination of the motion on notice.

Justice Itsuelli ruled: "I have given deep thought and consideration of this application be-

fore me. I have read the affidavit of urgency, and I am satisfied that there are sufficient grounds to grant the order as prayed.

"Consequently, I hereby grant an order of Interim Injunction restraining the defendants, whether by themselves, their agents, privies, servants, officers, assigns, or any person or authority acting through or in concert with them from conducting, organizing, supervising participating in or in any manner whatsoever giving effect to the purported inauguration of a self constituted executive of the Edo State chapter of the 9th defendant

## Sanitation: Lagos defends exercise, says residents' rights intact

**LAGOS**

The Lagos State Government says the reintroduction of the monthly environmental sanitation exercise does not violate residents' right to freedom of movement, contrary to some media reports.

Lagos state reintroduced the monthly exercise on April 25 to run from 6.30 a.m. to 8.30 a.m.

Mr Lawal Pedro (SAN), Lagos State Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice,

in a statement said the state acted within the Law to restrict movement.

According to Pedro, the subsisting court of appeal judgment in CA/L/381/2015, delivered on November 23, 2021, is in favour of the state government.

"So, it is incorrect narration in the media about the court of appeal's ruling on environmental sanitation in the state."

He said that the court held that the environmental sanitation exercise in Lagos was valid

and backed by law, and that the fundamental right of the applicant was not breached.

Pedro noted that the applicant, who was dissatisfied with the judgment, approached the Supreme Court and the apex court was yet to set aside the court of appeal's judgment.

"This was a case I personally prosecuted.

"The supreme court is yet to set aside the judgment of the court of appeal and unless there is a subsequent judg-

ment, which I am not aware of, that restrained the conduct of environmental sanitation in Lagos State, it will not be unlawful to have controlled movement during the monthly exercise," Pedro said.

The attorney-general also said a November 2019 judgment of the court of appeal in the case of Faith Okafor vs. Lagos State Government & Anor, stated that it could not be regarded as the extant position of the law.

## Bias claim: Judge's refusal to recuse sparks lawyers' walkout

**BIRNIN KEBBI**

Defence counsel to Mr Saffiyanu Bala, factional State Chairman, African Democratic Congress (ADC) in Kebbi, Ahmad Fingilla, and his co-lawyers, staged a walkout from the court on Friday, citing bias in a case filed against Bala by his rival, Abdulrazak Abubakar.

Fingilla had accused the Presiding Magistrate, Abubakar Abdullahi-Koko, of Chief Magistrates' Court I, sitting in Birnin Kebbi, of bias and having an interest in the ongoing trial of his client.

Drama ensued after the court resumed at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, when Magistrate Abdullahi-Koko ruled that the preliminary objection could be taken only after the defendant had entered his plea, citing *Yahaya Bello v. FG* and Section 376 of the Nigerian Constitution, as well as the Kebbi State Administration of Criminal Justice Law, 2021.

Dissatisfied with the ruling, Fingilla asked the presiding magistrate to transfer the case to another judge.

"From the ruling just delivered by the court, it is very clear that this court has pre-empted the outcome of our prelimi-

nary objection.

"Your Lordship, we raised a preliminary objection in a direct criminal complaint filed by one Abdulrazak Abubakar in Case No. KB/62DC/2026.

"The case at hand now is CP v. Engr. Saffiyanu Bala, which has nothing to do with Abdulrazak Abubakar. The parties are different and it is a new case.

"Based on the reasons stated above, with due respect, from Monday till today, it is obvious that this court has an interest in this case. We do not have confidence in this court, and the case should be transferred to another judge," he pleaded.

However, the Senior State Counsel, Hanafi DanMaigoro urged the court to continue with the case, arguing that defence counsel could not point out a single reason to prove the court was biased and that if dissatisfied, he could appeal the ruling.

In his ruling, Magistrate Abdullahi-Koko affirmed his neutrality in the case and asked the parties to continue with the matter.

However, Fingilla and his co-lawyers, Mudasir Sani, Muhammed Usman and Nura Lawal, walked out of the court even as the magistrate repeatedly asked them to sit down.

## Alleged inconsistencies: NDC prays court to strike down sections of new Electoral Act

**ABUJA**

Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC) has prayed the Federal High Court in Abuja to strike down Sections 138 and 77(5) of the new Electoral Act, 2026, for being inconsistent with the 1999 Constitution (as amended).

NDC was registered by the

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on February 5, 2026.

The party's lawyer, Vincent Ottaokpukpu, prayed Justice Mohammed Umar for the order.

The party, in the originating summons, marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/635/2026, sued the Attorney-General of the Federation

(AGF) and Clerk of the National Assembly (NASS) as 1st and 2nd defendants.

It also joined Senate President and Chairman of the National Assembly, Sen. Godswill Akpabio, and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as 3rd to 4th defendants respectively.

Ottaokpukpu, who filed the

suit on March 27, sought four questions for determination in the suit marked:

He wants the court to determine "whether upon the construction of the new Section 138 of the Electoral Act, 2026, the express exclusion of qualification as a ground of challenging the return of a candidate for House of Representatives

or Senate, House of Assembly, President and Governor, is not inconsistent with Sections 65 (2) (a) and 106 (1) (c).

Others are sections 31 (1) (d), 177 (1) (d) and 66 (1) (i), 107 (1) (i), 137 (1) (j) and 182 (1) (j) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) and therefore null and void of no effect.

"Whether in view of the clear

and unambiguous provisions of Sections 40 and 65 (2) (b), 106 (1) (d), 131 (1) (c) and 177 (1) (c) of Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended), the provisions of the new Section 77 (5) of the Electoral Act, 2026, does not unlawfully circumscribe the constitutional right to form, participate or belong to any political party?

## Foreign

## NEWS

## Trump cancels US envoys' trip to Pakistan for talks on Iran war

Donald Trump cancelled a planned trip by US officials to Pakistan for talks on the Iran war on Saturday, shortly after Tehran's delegation had left Islamabad.

The US president said special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner would be wasting "too much time", adding that if Iran wanted to talk "all they have to do is call".

Earlier, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi held talks with mediator Pakistan, saying afterwards he had shared Iran's position on ending the war but was yet to see whether the US was "truly serious about diplomacy".

Diplomatic efforts have stalled despite Trump's extension of a ceasefire that had been due to expire on 22 April to allow talks to continue.

Both sides have been locked in a standoff over the Strait of Hormuz, with Iran restricting passage through the key shipping route in the wake of the US and Israel commencing strikes in February, as well as over Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

The US has since increased its naval presence in the strait - through which roughly a fifth of the world's oil supply passes - to block Iranian oil exports.

The White House had said the Iranians "want to talk" when the trip was announced on Friday, but Iran said there were no plans for a direct meeting.

Trump said the ceasefire would hold on Saturday despite hopes of another round of face-to-face talks fading.

Asked whether the cancelled US trip meant the war would resume, he told news site Axios:

"No, it doesn't mean that. We haven't thought about it yet."

Announcing the trip had been called off on Saturday, Trump said there was "tremendous infighting and confusion" within Iran's leadership and that "nobody knows who is in charge, including them".

He wrote on his Truth Social platform: "Also, we have all the cards, they have none! If they want to talk, all they have to do is call!!!"

The White House said on Friday that US Vice-President JD Vance had been "on standby" to join the talks had they proved successful.

He had led the US delegation in the first round of talks earlier this month and his absence from the initial planned delegation perhaps signalled that a major breakthrough was not

expected.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian previously said Tehran remained open to talks but that "breach of commitments, blockade and threats are main obstacles to genuine negotiations".

Pakistan has mediated contact between the two sides in recent weeks, including talks between senior US and Iranian officials on 11 April that ended without agreement.

Araghchi, whose trip also includes visits to Oman and Russia, wrote in a post on X that his visit to Pakistan had been "fruitful".

He added that he had "shared Iran's position concerning [a] workable framework to permanently end the war on Iran", but said he had "yet to see if US is truly serious about diplomacy".

## Mexico says US agents killed in crash weren't permitted to operate there

The Mexican government says two US agents who died last weekend in a car crash had not been authorised to operate in the country.

The officials, who reportedly worked for the CIA, had taken part in a raid on suspected drug labs in the northern state of Chihuahua before their vehicle skidded off a mountain road and exploded.

Following an investigation ordered by President Claudia Sheinbaum, Mexico's security ministry said that "neither had formal accreditation to participate in operational activities" and that federal authorities had not been informed of their presence.

The incident comes amid at-times fraught relations between Mexico and the US on a number of issues including counter-narcotics.

Sheinbaum has come under intensifying pressure from US President Donald Trump to crack down on drug trafficking, but has repeatedly declined offers of US-led counter-narcotics operations in the country.

She has been adamant that foreign officials can only operate on Mexican soil if given prior clearance by the federal government, and has insisted the Latin American nation's sovereignty should not be breached.

Mexico's security ministry said on Saturday that immigration records showed one of the agents

had entered the country as a "visitor", while the other had travelled on a diplomatic passport.

"Neither had formal accreditation to participate in operational activities within national territory," the ministry said in a statement, noting that Mexican law prohibits foreign agents from taking part in operations without federal approval.

US media previously reported that the two individuals, who have not been named, had worked for the CIA as part of an expanded effort to combat narcotics trafficking in the region - a key focus of the Trump administration.

The crash occurred on 19 April, when a convoy returning from an operation targeting suspected methamphetamine labs in a remote, mountainous area veered off the road and plunged into a ravine. Two members of the Chihuahua State Investigation Agency were also killed, officials said.

Chihuahua State Attorney General César Jáuregui told a news conference that the US officials were "instructor officers" from the US embassy engaged in "training work as part of the general and normal exchange we have with the US authorities".

However, Sheinbaum said last week that, while intelligence-sharing with Washington was ongoing, there were "no joint operations on land or in the air".



**ILLEGAL DRUG SITE:**

The two US agents were returning from an operation to destroy illegal drug labs in the northern state of Chihuahua.

## Explosions and gunfire as armed groups launch co-ordinated attacks across Mali

Explosions and sustained gunfire have been reported in Mali's capital, Bamako, as armed groups launched co-ordinated attacks across the country.

Mali's military said on Saturday evening that efforts to repel the attacks were under way, and some militants had already fled.

Fighting has also been reported around Kati, home to a major military base outside the capital, as well as in Gao and Kidal in the north, and the central cities of Ségou and Mopti. One analyst described it as the largest jihadist attack in years.

Mali has for years been plagued by insurgencies by groups affiliated with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group, as well as a separatist movement in the country's north.

Reports suggest the assault

by the separatist Azawad Liberation Front (FLA) - which seeks a breakaway ethnic Tuareg state - was primarily focused on northern cities, while the jihadist group Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) had staged simultaneous attacks on multiple locations across the country.

"We had been working on this operation for a long time, in a well-planned manner, and in fact, in alliance with [JNIM]," Mohamed Elmaouloud Ramadan, spokesman for the FLA, told the BBC.

"It is difficult to find any solution without their participation, and there was co-ordination."

Meanwhile, JNIM confirmed in a statement that the attacks had been part of a joint operation with the FLA.

Mali's military said it was fighting what it described as

"terrorist groups", which had been "routed" with "several hundred" killed.

The BBC has not been able to independently verify this claim, and there are indications that fighting continues in areas.

"We are in Kidal and it has not fallen completely," Ramadan said. "There are still elements of the Malian army and Russian mercenaries there. All of Gao's gates have fallen, but the camps of the army have not."

He earlier wrote on social media that the FLA's forces had taken control of Kidal and were expanding their presence in the centre of Gao.

Ramadan posted unverified footage purporting to show militants taking over a camp occupied by the Malian army and Russian mercenaries in Kidal, as well as a military

helicopter supposedly shot down near Gao.

An FLA field commander involved in the assault on Kidal told the BBC the group had been preparing for the offensive "for months", and was attempting to block the road between the city and Tessalit to prevent army reinforcements arriving.

"Our main goal now is to control Gao and then Timbuktu will be easy to fall," he said.

FLA spokesman Mohamed Elmaouloud Ramadan said the attacks had been planned "for a long time"

In Bamako, checkpoints have been established on roads leading to the airport and vehicles are being searched, according to reports. A curfew has been imposed from 21:00 to 06:00 local time for the next three nights.

## Palestinians in West Bank, some in Gaza vote in local elections

Palestinians have voted in local elections on Saturday, including the first poll of any kind to be held in Gaza since 2006.

Elections took place across the occupied West Bank, as well as in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza, where Hamas operates.

Hamas was not allowed to stand and several other factions have boycotted it over a requirement that candidates recognise the authority of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), which dominates the Palestinian Authority (PA) governing the parts of the occupied West Bank not under Israeli control.

Fatah, the faction led by President Mahmoud Abbas and which dominates the PLO, was violently ousted from Gaza after the last elections there, which Hamas won, triggering a power struggle between the two groups.

More than a million voters across the Palestinian territories are eligible to take part, according to the Ramallah-based Central Elections Commission, including 70,000 in Deir al-Balah, where 12 polling stations were scheduled to operate. Results are expected late on Saturday or on Sunday.

While Hamas was not on the ballot in Deir al-Balah, news agency Reuters reported that one slate of candidates was widely seen as being aligned with it.

The central city was chosen as

the sole Gaza area where elections would take place as it was not as badly damaged as other places during the Israel-Hamas war. A fragile ceasefire is in place as part of US President Donald Trump's 20-point peace plan, which halted the fighting in October last year.

Hamas continues to operate in parts of Gaza where Israeli forces have withdrawn from, and Reuters reported that its police force was involved in security operations around polling stations.

The group's popularity has fallen in Gaza because of the war, which some Gazans partially blame on Hamas for launching its attack on southern Israel on 7 October 2023, triggering Israeli military retaliation.

But it has surged in the West Bank where there is widespread disillusionment with the PA run by Abbas and his Fatah party. The PA is seen by many Palestinians as corrupt and ineffective and having failed to improve the economic lives of ordinary people or end Israel's decades-long military occupation.

With Fatah the only major faction on the ballot across the Palestinian territories - and guaranteed victory in some districts because no opposition candidates are running - these elections are a reminder of the continued lack of unity among the two main Palestinian factions.

**NEWS****Foreign****France voices concern about the spread of Islamist extremism in Sahel**

France's foreign minister on Friday voiced concern about the spread of Islamist extremism in west Africa, after talks with his Togolese counterpart in the capital Lome.

Violence by jihadist groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the Islamist State group has blighted the Sahel region for the last decade.

It is now spreading into northern regions of coastal countries such as Togo, after the military regimes in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger forced the withdrawal of French troops involved in the fight against militants.

Jean-Noel Barrot's visit to Togo is the first by a French foreign minister in 10 years. France is the former colonial power and Lome remains a rare ally of Paris in the region, even as it forges closer ties with Russia.

"We have a common con-

cern, namely the security of the sub-region and, of course, the terrorist threat, which we all want to stem and contain," Barrot told reporters after talks with his counterpart, Robert Dussey.

"France is supporting regional initiatives to contain this scourge and enable countries in the sub-region to fully assume their security and sovereignty," he added.

Barrot arrived in Lome late Thursday and immediately held talks with Togo's leader, Faure Gnassingbe, praising Togo's role as mediator in places such as the Democratic Republic of Congo.

He said the country was also playing a "pivotal role" in the Sahel to find solutions at a regional level to fight against "the advance of the terrorist threat".

France is co-hosting a major summit on Africa in Nairobi next month.

**Orbán steps down from Hungarian parliament after landslide defeat**

Hungary's outgoing Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has said he will not take up his seat in parliament after his party was defeated in a landslide that ended his 16-year rule.

"I am now needed not in parliament, but in the reorganisation of the patriotic movement," he said in a video statement released on social media on Saturday evening.

Despite his nationalist party Fidesz going from 135 seats to 52 in the 12 April vote, Orbán was re-elected as an MP on its proportional representation list.

Tisza, led by former Fidesz insider Péter Magyar, won more than a two-thirds majority in the 199-seat parliament, paving the way for a reset of both Hungary's domestic policies and its global relationships.

Following a meeting of Fidesz officials, Orbán, 62, said the party's parliamentary bloc would be led from Monday by Gergely Gulyás, who until now has served as the minister overseeing the prime minister's office.

"The mandate I obtained as the lead candidate of the Fidesz-KDNP list is, in fact, a parliamentary mandate of Fidesz. For this reason, I have decided to return it," Orbán said.

About half of Hungary's parliamentary seats are divided among political parties according to their national vote share, while the other half represent individual constituencies.

Orbán has held a seat through one electoral format or the other since 1990, and has led Fidesz throughout that period. He has served as Hungary's prime minister since 2010, becoming the predominant figure in Hungarian politics.

However, voters abandoned him in their droves amid brew-

ing public unhappiness over allegations of corruption and graft while living standards slipped.

Hungary's incoming PM has promised to reverse Orbán-era changes to education and health, tackle corruption, restore the independence of the judiciary and kill off the widely loathed system of patronage known as NER that helped enrich party loyalists and squander state resources.

While Orbán aligned himself with US President Donald Trump and Russia's Vladimir Putin, "Russians go home" was an oft-heard chant of Tisza supporters during the campaign.

Instead of being a stumbling block for the EU and Ukraine, Magyar has pledged to seek more cordial ties with Brussels and Kyiv.

The Tisza leader has urged a swift handover of power, and Hungary's new parliament is due to hold its first session on 9 May.

Orbán's fate as Fidesz leader, meanwhile, will be decided at a party conference in June, he said as he vowed to continue shaping the nationalist movement.



**CORRESPONDENTS' DINNER:**

Many guests ducked under tables after shots were heard at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner.

**Trump unhurt after shots fired at White House correspondents' dinner**

United States President Donald Trump has been evacuated from the White House correspondents' dinner in Washington, DC, after shots were fired outside the event.

Trump was rushed offstage at the Washington Hilton hotel on Saturday evening after gunfire broke out outside the ballroom where the annual media gala was taking place.

The president, First Lady Melania Trump, and Trump's Cabinet were unharmed in the attack.

In a news conference after the incident, Trump said a man armed with multiple weapons had charged a security checkpoint and was "taken down" by the Secret Service.

Trump described the suspect as a "very sick person" and a "thug" who had attacked the US Constitution.

A Secret Service officer was shot in the attack, but he was saved by his bulletproof vest and was "doing great," Trump said.

"As you know, this is not the first time in the past couple of years that our republic has been attacked by a would-be assassin who sought to kill," the president said.

"In light of this evening's

events, I ask that all Americans recommit with their hearts in resolving our differences peacefully," Trump said.

Asked by a reporter if he believed he was the target of the attack, Trump responded: "I guess".

The Secret Service said the shooting had occurred at a "screening area" and that one individual was in custody.

"The condition of those involved is not yet known, and law enforcement is actively assessing the situation," the agency said.

Shortly before his news conference, Trump posted images on Truth Social of the suspect face down on the ground, as well as a clip of a surveillance video showing a man running past security personnel, who then drew their guns and opened fire.

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Jeanine Ferris Pirro, the US attorney for the District of Columbia, said the suspect would be charged with using a firearm during a crime or violence and assault on federal officers using a dangerous weapon.

FBI director Kash Patel said officers had begun examining the suspect's background and

urged members of the public with any relevant information to come forward.

"No piece of information is too small; no piece of information is inadequate. We will evaluate it all," Patel said.

Multiple US media outlets identified the suspect as Cole Tomas Allen, 31, of Torrance, California.

Trump, a ferocious critic of journalists who has sued multiple media outlets, had been due to speak at the annual celebration of press freedom for the first time as president.

Footage from the dinner's venue showed Trump and other attendees taking cover behind their table after shots rang out, as people yelled "Get down!" and "Stay down!"

Trump was then rushed from the scene as heavily armed members of his security detail swarmed the table.

Al Jazeera producer Chris Sheridan said he heard what he believed to be five gunshots outside the ballroom.

"We could smell the powder. We immediately dove to the ground. It was directly behind me," Sheridan said.

"I couldn't tell how many feet away, but it was definitely

behind the doors to the entrance to the ballroom."

Sheridan said that while there was "airport-level" security around the ballroom itself, anyone with a ticket to the dinner could enter the hotel and descend to the lower level where the ballroom is located.

"You could have gotten down to the lower level, the ballroom level, and been outside," he said.

World leaders including Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum condemned the attack and expressed their relief that Trump was unharmed.

"Violence has no place in a democracy and must be unequivocally condemned," Modi said in a post on X.

Trump has been targeted in multiple assassination attempts, including a near-miss shooting during his 2024 presidential campaign.

Thomas Crooks fired eight shots at Trump during a campaign event in Butler, Pennsylvania, killing one bystander and wounding the then-candidate's right ear, before he was shot dead by the Secret Service.

**Netanyahu orders army to 'vigorously attack' Hezbollah in Lebanon**

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has ordered his military to "vigorously attack Hezbollah targets" in Lebanon, two days after a ceasefire was extended by three weeks.

Fresh Israeli attacks followed the directive, which came after at least six people were killed in strikes on southern Lebanon on Saturday.

Further cross-border exchanges between the two sides have strained the truce agreement, highlighting the precariousness of the ceasefire.

The agreement, which has

seen a reduction in fire rather than a complete halt, was extended on Thursday after talks between the countries' envoys in Washington.

Earlier on Saturday, Israeli strikes on a truck and a motorbike in the town of Yohmor al-Shaqeef in the Nabatieh district killed four people, Lebanon's health ministry said, according to Agence-France-Presse.

Another two people were killed and 17 injured in an attack on the town of Safad al-Battikh, in the Bint Jbeil district, it said.

The Israel Defense Forces

(IDF) said it had "eliminated" three Hezbollah members on Saturday who were driving "a vehicle loaded with weapons", as well as another one riding a motorcycle.

It said two more armed members of the group were killed in the Litani area, where Israel has kept soldiers in the self-declared buffer zone, saying they "posed a threat to the IDF soldiers operating in southern Lebanon".

The IDF later said a "suspicious aerial target was identified" in the area of Malkia, adding the "incident constitutes an additional violation of

the ceasefire".

Hezbollah, meanwhile, said it targeted an Israeli army vehicle in south Lebanon in retaliation for the attack on Yohmor al-Shaqeef, AFP reported.

Following Netanyahu's order to attack the group, Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported a pair of strikes in quick succession in a town in Bint Jbeil district, another on a town in Tyre district, and strikes on two more towns in Nabatieh district.

The Israeli military said it "struck Hezbollah terrorist infrastructure used for military pur-

poses across southern Lebanon".

It said it would "continue to operate decisively against threats directed at Israeli civilians and IDF soldiers, in accordance with directives from the political echelon".

Israel continues to occupy a much of southern Lebanon and has been carrying out large-scale demolitions there.

An international press advocacy group said on Saturday attacks on journalists in Lebanon were "unacceptable", after a journalist was among those killed in Israeli attacks on Wednesday.

# Sports

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

## Bendel Insurance retain Edo FA Cup after beating Westgate FC 2-0

● **Edo Queens are also champions after beating Fortress Ladies 2-0**

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

**B**endel Insurance Football Club, Sunday, April 26, 2026 defeated Westgate FC 2-0 to emerge champions of this year's Edo State President Federation Cup.

Alex Oweifaleya and Kayode

Oke scored in the 10th and 88th minutes to give the Benin Arsenal the deserved victory against the new comers. Yazid Adamu's assist from his trademark curled cross from the left flank found well positioned Alex Oweifaleya for the clinical header.

The little known opponents



BENDEL INSURANCE

however showed class and why they got to the finals as they staged a good fight with compact teamwork but the defending champions Bendel Insurance players proved tough and difficult for rookies to disgrace.

Westgate FC gained numerical strength in the 81st minute when Insurance captain Efe Enabulele was sent off for petulance. Against all expectations that Westgate FC would have upper hand and capitalize on the decimated Insurance side, but Insurance tactician Kennedy Boboye immediately effected a tactical switch, leaving only Kayode Oke upfront as a lone strike after substituting Anyanwu Promise for highly experienced right back Stanley Okorom who brought stability to the

team. Seven minutes later Kayode Oke capitalized on Westgate FC's defensive error and slotted in the Benin Arsenal's second goal into an empty net.

Both teams have already qualified as Edo State representatives at the national stage of the competition before the result.

The Benin Arsenal are the most decorated side in the state as they have consistently won it since 2019. Insurance FC won the national FA Cup in 2023, and have won it three times since inception and are as well two times league champions.

Bendel Insurance FC on the road to the 2026 FA Cup finals, defeated Delight FC 2-1 in the quarter-finals and also thrashed ST. Andrews FC 3-0 in the semi-finals.



CHUKWUEBUKA ENEKWECHI

## Athletics: Nigeria shot put Star delivers 21.74m to earn podium finish

**N**igeria's Chukwuebuka Enekwechi delivered an impressive performance to finish second in the men's shot put at the Drake Relays, marking a strong start to his outdoor season.

Enekwechi recorded a best throw of 21.74 metres, narrowly missing out on top spot in a highly competitive field.

The event was won by Roger Steen, the reigning World

Indoor medalist, who secured victory with a throw of 21.93 metres.

Jamaica's Rajindra Campbell finished third with an effort of 21.72 metres, just two centimetres behind Enekwechi.

The result underlines Enekwechi's consistency on the global stage and provides a solid platform as he builds momentum for the rest of the outdoor campaign.

## CAF to introduce Festival-style concept for TotalEnergies CAF U-17 Africa Cup of Nations in Morocco

**T**he Confédération Africaine de Football (CAF) will introduce a new festival-style format for its youth competitions, bringing matches, training and team operations into one integrated setting for all participating teams.

The first Festival-Style event will be staged during the TotalEnergies CAF U-17 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) scheduled to hold in Morocco from 13 May to 02 June 2026.

All the matches, barring the opening match, the semi-finals and the final, will be played at the Mohammed VI Football Complex in Morocco.

The approach is designed to create a vibrant tournament atmosphere while enhancing operational efficiency, ensuring consistency in delivery and supporting long-term player development across multiple editions.

The final draw for the TotalEnergies CAF U-17 AFCON Morocco 2026 was conducted earlier this month and produced a competitive group-stage line-up.

Hosts and defending champions Morocco have been drawn in Group A alongside Tunisia, Egypt and Ethiopia. Former champions Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon headline Group B, where they are joined by Uganda and debutants DR Congo.

Last year's runners-up Mali are in Group C together with Southern African sides Angola and Mozambique, as well as East African representatives Tanzania.



## Nigeria Para-Powerlifting Federation Set to Host Kingsley Iwodi Open Championship in Abuja

**T**he Nigeria Para-Powerlifting Federation has finalized plans to host the Kingsley Iwodi Para-Powerlifting Open Championship, scheduled to take place from 30th April to 4th May, 2026, at the Indoor Sports Hall of the Moshood Abiola National Stadium, Package 'B', Abuja.

The championship is expected to bring together some of Nigeria's finest para-powerlift-

ing athletes, further reinforcing the country's dominance in the sport on the global stage.

Arrival of athletes and officials is slated for 30th April, with competitions running from 1st to 3rd May, while departure is scheduled for 4th May, 2026.

Top athletes expected to feature at the championship include world champions and decorated lifters such as Fola-shade Oluwafemiayo, Esther

Oyema, Riluwani Idris, and Ogundolie Tolulope.

Folashade Oluwafemiayo, the current world champion in the +86kg category, continues to set the standard globally and was recently nominated into the Athletes' Representative Forum of the World Para Powerlifting Organisation (WPPO), a recognition of her excellence and leadership in the sport.

## Lagos Boxing Hall of Fame: Fatade, Bossinu shine at tournament

**T**he April edition of the Lagos Boxing Hall of Fame tournament delivered thrilling contests, with Juwon Fatade and Julius Bossinu recording flawless victories to headline the event.

The tournament was held on Sunday at the Agege Stadium in Lagos State.

Fatade opened proceedings in commanding fashion, outclassing Mustapha Yusuf with a unanimous 5-0 win in the men's 50kg category.

Bossinu followed with equal dominance in the men's 60kg, overpowering Innocent Prosper to secure another emphatic 5-0 result.

Their performances set the tone for a spirited night, as Opeyemi Lawal impressed with a dominant 5-0 victory over Wabab Ramadan in the men's 70kg.

Other bouts proved tighter, with Tajudeen Rasheed edging Aliazeem Ogunleye 3-2 in the

men's 60kg.

Idris Ibadiaran also secured a narrow 3-2 win against Makinde Mohamed in the men's 75kg category.

In the evening's only female bout, Amirat Oluwatoyin showed resilience, defeating Raheemo Animashaun 3-2 in the 48kg division.

Mohamed Lawal overwhelmed Oluwaseun Olawepo with a 4-0 win in the men's 80kg.

Faruq Adenle dazzled spectators with a stylish 5-0 victory over Tajudeen Yekini in the men's 55kg category.

Founded in 2010, the Lagos Boxing Hall of Fame has become Africa's longest-running amateur boxing tournament.

Conceived by former Finance Minister, Wale Edun, the initiative aims to develop young boxers through training, exposure and competition.



LAGOS BOXING HALL OF FAME

## US Tour: D'Tigress Suffers Defeat, shift attention to Minnesota Lynx



D'TIGRESS

**N**igeria's senior women's basketball team, D'Tigress, suffered a 63-89 defeat to Los Angeles Sparks in the opening game of their United States tour.

The African champions were handed a tough test against the experienced WNBA side and found it difficult to keep pace across all four quarters. Despite showing flashes of quality, D'Tigress struggled to match

the Sparks' intensity and clinical execution.

The fixture forms part of Nigeria's build-up programme, aimed at strengthening the squad's competitiveness against elite opposition ahead of upcoming international engagements.

D'Tigress will look to bounce back quickly when they take on the Minnesota Lynx on Monday, April 27, as their US tour continues.

# Sports



## Olopade targets 22 gold as Team Nigeria eyes glory at Glasgow Commonwealth Games

The countdown to the Commonwealth Games Glasgow has begun with bold ambition, as Nigeria sets its sights on a historic medal haul. The Director General of the

National Sports Commission, Bukola Olopade, has declared his confidence in Team Nigeria's readiness, projecting an impressive 22 gold medals at the global showpiece.

Speaking in Lagos on the sidelines of the NNL Super Four draw 2026, Olopade struck an optimistic tone, insisting that the target could even surpass internal expectations.

"Although the Elite Athletes Podium Finish team is looking at 18 gold medals, I think we will push beyond that to 22," he said. Nigeria will compete in seven sports in Glasgow, banking on a blend of experienced stars and emerging talents to deliver on the lofty goal.

Behind the scenes, Olopade credits a revamped system under the leadership of Shehu Dikko for the team's preparedness adding that Nigeria's number one citizen President

Bola Ahmed Tinubu is completely behind them.

From early local camping to timely payment of athlete grants and the securing of dedicated training sites, the NSC has, according to Olopade, "broken many barriers" in its build-up to the Games.

Logistics, including team kits and travel arrangements, have also been fully addressed, which is an area that has historically troubled Nigerian contingents.

This confidence is not without foundation, at the Commonwealth Games Birmingham 2022, Team Nigeria delivered its best-ever performance, racking up 35 medals—12 gold, nine silver, and 14 bronze.



TEAM NIGERIA



AREMU AFEEZ CELEBRATING

## Premier League: Nigerian-Descent Eze fires Arsenal back to the summit

Arsenal arrested their slump in form with Eberechi Eze's superb early goal securing an ugly 1-0 home win against Newcastle United to reclaim top spot in the Premier League on Saturday. Soccer

After successive league defeats to Bournemouth and Manchester City, Arsenal were knocked off the summit for the first time since October by City on Wednesday, but they responded to secure three vital points.

It was far from convincing, and the quality of Eze's sublime ninth-minute strike was at odds with the rest of a laboured display by Mikel Arteta's side, but all that mattered for the hosts was getting back to winning ways.

The nervousness around the stadium was apparent throughout a tight contest and there was relief when Newcastle substitute Yoane Wissa blazed a glorious late chance over the crossbar.

With Manchester City otherwise engaged in FA Cup semi-final action, Arsenal took the chance to move to 73 points from 34 games with City on 70 from 33.

"It's never going to be a path of roses," Arteta said. "We knew at halftime we wanted to score the second goal but we were not efficient enough. But we did the job."

Newcastle's fourth succes-

sive league defeat, and 13th in their last 14 league visits to Arsenal, left them in 14th place and with pressure mounting on Eddie Howe, although he said he was pleased with his side's improved display.

"I can't be too critical of the players today, it was a much better performance," Howe said.

Arsenal's stuttering run in the past month began with a tame League Cup final defeat by Manchester City followed by a surprise loss to second-tier Southampton in the FA Cup.



EBERECHI EZE'

## World Cup: Toronto to make World Cup fan festival mostly free after \$10 entry backlash

Toronto reversed course on plans to charge fans to attend its World Cup fan festival, with the city council approving a revised plan to create a free general admission option after some councillors objected that the \$10 fee broke a promise.

City staff had proposed a plan

last week for \$10 general admission tickets for the event. The festival, which is set to include live game broadcasts, food and entertainment, was originally promoted by the city last year as a "free and inclusive space" for fans to enjoy games during the June 11-July 19 World Cup.

But after objections from some councillors, who raised concerns about affordability for residents, Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow asked staff this week to revisit the ticketing idea.

City staff issued a report on Wednesday proposing that of the 20,000 general admission tickets available every day, 15,600 will be free and 500 will be reserved for community groups at no cost. There will be 3,900 premium tickets available daily that will range from \$100 to \$300.

In the original report last week, staff said the ticketing plan was required as a crowd control measure and to help cover costs related to an "enhanced fan experience."



## Brou leads Nigeria to African senior fencing championships in Abidjan



INKOSI BROU

Nigeria's top-ranked fencer, Inkosi Brou, will lead the national contingent at the 2026 African Senior Fencing Championships in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

This marks his second appearance at the continental event, scheduled from May 31 to June 6.

The 18-year-old Nigerian-American, who made history earlier this year as the first Nigerian to break into the global Top 10 of the Men's Sabre Junior rankings, will lead the team.

In spite of being born and raised in the United States, Brou, a grandson of the late Prof. Dora Akunyili, former Director-General of NAFDAC, has represented Nigeria since October 2023.

He secured Nigeria's first international fencing medal with a silver at the 2024 World Tournoi Satellite Cup in Iceland.

Joining Brou in the sabre event are compatriots Oluwafolayemi Akinyosoye and Phoenix Zaoku-Sabre.

## Nigerian midfielder nets only goal to boost Aberdeen survival hope

Nigerian midfielder Aremu Afeez scored his first goal for Aberdeen FC, securing a crucial 1-0 victory over Kilmarnock FC in their relegation knockout clash.

The Former Akwa United midfielder joined the Scottish side during the winter transfer window from Germany second division side.

The 26-year old midfielder

delivered the decisive moment of the encounter, finding the back of the net to hand Aberdeen a much-needed win as they continue their fight to retain their top-flight status.

Afeez's strike not only marked his maiden goal for the Scottish side but also proved vital in boosting the team's survival hopes in the tense relegation battle.

## Oyo FA Final: Crown FC defeat Shooting Stars on penalties

Crown Football Club of Ogbomoso, on Sunday at the Olubadan Stadium, Ibadan, defeated Shooting Stars Sports Club (3SC) of Ibadan 5-2 on penalties in the final of the President Federation Cup in Oyo State.

Crown FC opened scoring in the 25th minute of the game through a perfect finish from Emmanuel David, a goal that changed the outlook of the game into a real final encounter.

However, Alade Balogun levelled the game in the 58th minute for Shooting Stars, keeping the hope of lifting the cup alive.

The game went straight

to penalties after both teams maintained a 1-1 draw at the expiration of regulation time.

The result made Crown FC the champions of the 2026 Oyo State President Federation Cup after a 5-2 triumph over 3SC on penalties.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that Shooting Stars secured their place in the final after edging their Team B side 1-0 in a closely contested semi-final clash at the Olubadan Stadium.

Crown FC, on the other hand, delivered a convincing performance defeating Ibadan United 2-0, to seal their spot in the title decider.



CROWN FC

# FEATURE



## Rural Electrification and the Issues of Power Generation in Nigeria

PRINCEWILL ELOCHUKWU,  
A RESEARCH MATERIAL

**I**ntroduction: Darkness in the Midst of Plenty

Nigeria generates power for 230 million people with less than 5,000MW consistently available on the national grid. Yet, it is in rural Nigeria — home to 48% of the population — that this energy poverty bites deepest. Over 80 million Nigerians live without any access to electricity, and 70% of those are in rural communities. This is not just an infrastructure gap. It is a development emergency.

Rural electrification is the deliberate extension of electricity services to remote areas, villages, and agricultural settlements. In a nation that flares enough gas daily to power 3 million homes, the persistence of dark villages from Uhumwode in Edo State to Koma in Adamawa is both an indictment and an opportunity. The issues of power generation in Nigeria — gas constraints, transmission bottlenecks, liquidity crises, and policy failures — converge most cruelly on the rural poor.

This article examines why Nigeria's power sector struggles to light up its villages, the cost of that failure, and what must change if "light for all" is to move from slogan to reality.

1. The State of Rural Electrification in Nigeria

### 1.1 The Numbers

The World Bank's 2023 Tracking SDG7 Report places Nigeria's national electrification rate at 60%. Urban access is 89%. Rural access is 26%. That 63-point gap is one of the largest in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Rural Electrification Agency, REA, estimates that 80% of the 17,800 communities without grid access will never be economically viable for grid extension. They are too far, too dispersed, and too poor in load demand. For them, off-grid is the only path.

### 1.2 The Human Cost

Without power, the rural economy freezes after 6pm. Agro-processing stops. Cassava can't be milled. Tomatoes rot. Milk spoils. PHCs can't store vaccines. Children study with kerosene lamps, inhaling smoke equivalent to 40 cigarettes per night. Women spend 4-6 hours daily fetching water because electric boreholes don't exist. Insecurity thrives in darkness.

The economic loss is staggering. IFPRI estimates that lack of rural electricity reduces Nigeria's agricultural GDP by 25% annually. The political cost is worse: it deepens the urban-rural divide and fuels migration to already strained cities like Lagos and Benin City.

## 2. Why Generation Fails Rural Nigeria: The Core Issues

Nigeria's power problem is often framed as "generation shortage." That's true, but incomplete. The real crisis is a value-chain collapse. Rural areas sit at



Officials working on electric lines.

the tail end of that broken chain.

### 2.1 Generation: Not Enough, and Not Reliable

Nigeria's installed capacity is 13,000MW. Available capacity hovers around 4,500MW. Peak generation rarely exceeds 5,200MW. For context, South Africa with 60 million people generates 58,000MW.

### THREE ISSUES CRIPPLE GENERATION:

A. Gas Constraints: 80% of grid power comes from gas-fired plants. But gas producers prefer NLNG export or industries that pay in dollars. Gencos are owed N2.7 trillion by NBET as of Q1 2026. With no bankable gas supply agreements, plants like Azura-Edo and Geregu run below capacity. When gas pressure drops in the Escravos-Lagos Pipeline, the entire country dims.

B. Hydropower Limitations: Kainji, Jebba, and Shiroro provide 1,200MW combined. But seasonal rainfall, siltation, and poor maintenance cut output by 40% in dry season — exactly when rural irrigation demand peaks.

C. Transmission as Generation Cap: You can't generate what you can't evacuate. The Transmission Company of Nigeria, TCN, can wheel only 5,300MW. So even if Gencos fire all plants, the grid rejects the load. Investors won't build new plants into a bottleneck.

### 2.2 Transmission: The Weakest Link for Rural Areas

The national grid is radial, not meshed. One fault in Benin North or Osogbo transmission station can black out 8 states. Rural 33kV and 11kV feeders are last in priority for load allocation. During system stress, DisCos practice "load shedding" by cutting off rural feeders first because urban feeders have higher revenue customers.

Result: Even electrified villages in Uhumwode LGA get 3-4 hours of sup-

ply daily. Transformers are vandalized because they're idle. Communities lose faith and stop paying bills. The cycle repeats.

### 2.3 Distribution: Too Broke to Serve the Poor

The 11 DisCos inherited dilapidated networks in 2013. Aggregate Technical, Commercial & Collection losses are 46%. That means for every N100 of power received, DisCos lose N46 to theft, bad meters, and non-payment.

Rural areas have the worst metrics: 70% ATC&C losses, low tariff collection, high cost-to-serve. Extending 50km of line to a village of 200 homes for N400m makes no business sense when those homes will use N15,000 of power monthly combined. So DisCos don't extend. The Rural Electrification Fund tries to bridge this gap, but disbursement is slow and politicized.

### 2.4 The Liquidity Crisis

The entire sector runs on debt. Gencos are owed by NBET. NBET is owed by DisCos. DisCos are owed by customers, especially MDAs and rural users. Without cost-reflective tariffs and metering, cash doesn't flow. Without cash, no investor maintains plants or builds rural mini-grids at scale. The 2020 Service-Based Tariff was a step forward, but rural "Band E" customers still pay N53/kWh for power they don't get.

### 3. Policy and Institutional Bottlenecks

#### 3.1 The Grid-or-Nothing Mindset

For decades, Nigeria's policy assumed grid extension was the only path. The REA's mandate was to string wires. But the economics failed. It costs \$1,500-\$3,000 per connection to grid-extend to remote villages versus \$800-\$1,200 for solar mini-grids. Yet budgets and political preference still favor grid projects that are commissioned with fanfare and die 6 months later.

#### 3.2 The 2023 Electricity Act: A Turn-

#### ing Point?

The new Act decentralizes power. States can now generate, transmit, and distribute. Edo, Ekiti, and Enugu have passed state electricity laws. This is crucial for rural areas because a state can license a 5MW solar plant for Esan villages without waiting for Abuja. However, states lack technical capacity, and most have not set up independent regulators. The risk is 36 different weak regulators replacing one strong one.

#### 3.3 Off-Grid Promise vs. Reality

The REA's Nigeria Electrification Project, NEP, with World Bank funding, has deployed 120+ solar mini-grids serving 500,000 people. The private sector, led by Husk Power, A4&T Power, and others, is proving the model. A 60kW mini-grid can power 300 homes, a PHC, school, and mill for \$150,000.

### BUT ISSUES PERSIST:

1. Import duties on solar components raise costs 25%.

2. Community engagement is weak. Grids fail when villages don't see them as "ours".

3. Productive Use Appliances are unfunded. Power without mills, freezers, and welders doesn't raise income.

4. Uniform tariff expectations. Villagers hear Lagos pays N65/kWh and resist N250/kWh mini-grid rates, even though it's cheaper than diesel.

### 4. The Way Forward: Lighting Up Rural Nigeria

Solving rural electrification means fixing generation and rethinking delivery. Grid and off-grid must work as one system.

#### 4.1 Fix Gas-to-Power First

Gencos need payment assurance. The Presidential Power Initiative with Siemens aims to raise grid capacity to 25,000MW by 2030. That must be matched with gas commercialization. End flaring. Enforce the Domestic Gas Supply Obligation. Pay Genco debts via the Power Sector Recovery Program. No gas, no generation, no rural light.

#### 4.2 Embrace Distributed Generation

Rural Nigeria won't be lit by Kainji alone. The future is 1,000 micro power plants, not 10 mega ones.

- Solar hybrid mini-grids for clustered villages. Target 10,000 mini-grids by 2030.

- Small hydro for sites like Ovia River in Edo State. Nigeria has 3,500MW small hydro potential.

- Biomass gasification using farm waste in Benue, Kaduna, Cross River.

- Embedded generation for farm clusters. A 2MW plant for a rice mill cluster in Uhumwode keeps value-addition local.

#### 4.3 Make DisCos and States Accountable for Rural Service

The NERC should mandate a "Rural Service Obligation" in DisCo performance agreements. For every 10 urban connections, 1 rural connection via

grid or franchise mini-grid. States using the Electricity Act must ring-fence 15% of their budgets for rural energy, not just urban beautification.

#### 4.4 De-Risk Private Mini-Grids

1. Eliminate duties on solar and battery imports for 5 years.

2. Scale the Rural Electrification Fund to N200bn annually, with 60-day disbursement.

3. Bundle Productive Use: Every mini-grid project must include N50m for appliances — mills, cold rooms, e-bike chargers — so income rises and tariffs get paid.

4. Community Equity: Let communities own 10% of mini-grids via cooperatives. Ownership ends vandalism.

#### 4.5 Meter Every Rural User, Fast

You can't manage what you don't measure. The National Mass Metering Program must prioritize rural feeders. Prepaid meters kill estimated billing disputes and build trust. For mini-grids, Pay-As-You-Go meters via mobile money are working in Kenya and Tanzania. Nigeria should replicate.

### 5. The Role of Lions, NGOs, and Local Government

Government can't do it alone. Service clubs matter. In District 404-A4, Lions Clubs can:

1. Adopt-a-Village Electrification: Fund 1 solar mini-grid yearly per region. 4 regions = 4 villages lit.

2. Power for PHCs: Partner REA to solarize 100 PHCs in Edo/Delta. No vaccine should spoil for lack of light.

3. Advocacy: Pressure state assemblies to pass electricity laws with clear rural targets.

4. Monitoring: Use club structures to report failed grid projects. A Lions transformer audit in Uhumwode would expose abandoned projects.

### CONCLUSION: FROM DARKNESS TO DIGNITY

Rural electrification is not a technical problem. It is a political and moral one. Nigeria has the gas, sun, water, and money. What it lacks is the will to prioritize the 80 million in darkness.

Power generation will remain unstable until the sector is liquid, gas is paid for, and transmission is expanded. But rural areas cannot wait for the grid to be perfect. The Electricity Act 2023 gives states and private firms the tools to build from the bottom up.

The boy in Ehor who reads by candlelight tonight should be doing his homework under an LED bulb tomorrow. The nurse in Usen PHC should not deliver babies with phone torchlight. The farmer in Ohe should mill at home, not travel 30km.

Light is not luxury. It is the foundation of health, education, security, and dignity. To solve rural electrification is to declare that every Nigerian life counts — whether in Ikoyi or in Igeduma.

The switch is in our hands.