

Senator Ikpea raises alarm over devastating erosion crisis in Edo Central

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

The Senator representing Edo Central, Joseph Ikpea, has called for urgent federal intervention to address what he described as worsening ecological disas-

● **Seeks urgent Fed intervention**

ter threatening communities across Esan land.

Moving a motion on the floor of the Senate titled "Urgent Need for Immediate Federal Intervention to Address Escalating Ecological Degradation Across Esan

Land in Edo Central Senatorial District," Ikpea warned that unchecked erosion, flooding, and deforestation are already destroying livelihoods, infrastructure, and settlements.

He said that Esan land, which

lies within a fragile ecological belt of rainforest and derived savanna, is naturally prone to erosion due to its terrain, but noted that human activities have significantly worsened the situation.

According to him, major erosion sites such as the Ewu gully erosion zone in Esan Central

and the Ukhun-Emaudo corridor in Esan West have expanded dangerously, cutting off roads, destroying farmlands, and threatening residential communities.

He also raised concerns over persistent flooding around the Ambrose Alli University axis in Ekpoma, which has led to

displacement and disruption of academic and community life.

Senator Ikpea further blamed deforestation and unchecked agricultural expansion for accelerating land degradation, warning that continued environmental

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Senate orders nationwide military audit

● AS power realignment deepens amid fresh wave of defections

● Senator Abba faults security strategy

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

The Senate has ordered a full-scale operational and logistical audit of Nigeria's military following recent deadly insurgent attacks on formations in Benisheikh and Monguno, Borno State.

The resolution, adopted during Wednesday's plenary, directed the Chief of Defence Staff, General Olufemi Oluyede, and other service chiefs to under-

take a comprehensive review of the circumstances surrounding the attacks, including an assessment of equipment adequacy and compliance with established rules of engagement.

Lawmakers also demanded a separate independent investigation into reports of civilian casualties during military operations, stressing the need for accountability and improved operational standards.

The motion was sponsored by Senator Tahir Monguno (Borno

North), who raised concerns over the intensifying wave of Boko Haram attacks in the North-East.

He said that several military personnel were killed in the recent assaults, including Brigadier General Oseni Braimah, Colonel Mohammed Isya, Captain A.M. Esmat, and Lieutenant Kelvin Festus, alongside 13 other soldiers.

Monguno described Benisheikh as a key corridor along the Damaturu-Maiduguri highway and Monguno as a strategic garrison town, warning that re-

peated attacks on such locations suggest a deliberate effort by insurgents to weaken military operations and disrupt humanitarian and commercial activities.

Senators paid tribute to fallen soldiers and observed a minute of silence in their honour, noting that the renewed attacks threaten national security, agricultural activities, and resettlement efforts for displaced persons in Borno State.

The Senate also emphasised the obligation of the Armed

Forces to protect civilians in line with national and international humanitarian law, urging stricter adherence to rules of engagement and improved training on civilian protection.

Some lawmakers, including Senator Abdul Ningi, further called for a temporary suspension of political activities

in parts of the North-East and other vulnerable areas until security conditions improve.

Meanwhile, the political balance in the Senate shifted further on Wednesday as Senator Tony Nwoye emerged as the new Minority Whip, following a string of defections that has continued to reshape align-

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THANKSGIVING SERVICE:

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State (left) and Deputy Chairman, All Progressives Congress (APC), Edo State, Sylvester Aigboboh, during a thanksgiving service, held on Wednesday at St. Paul Catholic Church, Benin City to mark the 20 years in episcopal service of Archbishop Augustins Akubeze, the Catholic Archbishop of Benin City.

Okpebholo hails Archbishop Akubeze's 20yrs of episcopal service

● Links leadership journey to spiritual guidance

BENIN CITY

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State has credited part of his leadership journey and political resilience to the spiritual guidance and prayers of the Catholic Archbishop of Benin City, Most Rev. Dr Augustine Obiora Akubeze, as the cleric marked his 20th Episcopal Anniversary.

Speaking at the thanksgiving ceremony held in his honour, Governor Okpebholo described his first encounter with the Archbishop as a defining moment that shaped his resolve and direction in public service.

"To me, it is a special day. The first day I met him, I saw the glory of God upon his life. I knew, by the time I knelt before him, that I was going to conquer," the Governor said.

He recounted that he had specifically sought the Archbishop's prayers at a critical point in his political journey, especially as he prepared to confront insecurity

and cultism in the state.

"I requested a prayer from him. I said I was going to fight cultism and work for Edo people. I needed him to pray for me so that God would give me the strength. Today, I am happy that everything I requested has been answered by God," Okpebholo added.

The Governor said Archbishop Akubeze's spiritual counsel had provided strength and clarity in governance, stressing that the anniversary was not only a celebration of years of service but also of enduring moral influence and mentorship.

"This is 20 years, and we are still expecting more years to come," he said.

The thanksgiving service, held on Wednesday at St Paul Catholic Church, attracted a wide array of dignitaries, religious leaders, and political figures from within and outside Edo State.

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CAF set to move AFCON 2027 to S'Africa —Pg 12

FG, states, LGs share N2.036trn March revenue as FAAC reports mixed inflows

ABUJA

The Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) has shared a total of N2.036 trillion among the Federal Government, state governments and Local Government Councils (LGCs) as revenue allocation for March 2026, amid a mixed performance across key revenue streams.

Details contained in a communiqué issued at the end of FAAC's April meeting in Abuja showed that the distributable

revenue comprised N1.320 trillion from statutory sources, N515.391 billion from Value Added Tax (VAT), and N200 billion recorded as augmentation.

The committee disclosed that total gross revenue available in March stood at N2.364 trillion. From this, N81.084 billion was deducted as cost of collection, while a total of N246.872 billion was allocated to transfers, refunds and savings.

According to the communiqué, gross statutory revenue rose significantly to N1.699 tril-

lion in March, representing an increase of N137.914 billion when compared with the N1.561 trillion recorded in February 2026.

However, VAT collections recorded a slight decline, with N664.425 billion generated in March, down by N4.025 billion from the N668.450 billion recorded in the previous month.

From the total distributable revenue of N2.036 trillion, the Federal Government received

N789.159 billion, state governments got N657.596 billion, while local government councils received N468.826 billion.

In addition, oil-producing states received N120.759 billion as 13 percent derivation revenue.

A further breakdown showed that from the N1.320 trillion statutory revenue, the Federal Government received N632.260 billion, states got N320.691 billion, while local governments received N247.239 billion.

The sum of N120.759 billion was also distributed to eligible states as derivation revenue

from mineral resources.

From the N515.391 billion VAT revenue, the Federal Government received N51.539 billion, states got N283.465 billion, while local governments received N180.387 billion.

Similarly, from the N200 billion augmentation, the Federal Government received N105.360 billion, state governments got N53.440 billion, and local governments received N41.200 billion.

The communiqué further indicated that revenue performance across tax categories was

uneven during the period.

Company Income Tax (CIT), Capital Gains Tax (CGT), Stamp Duties (SDT), and Excise Duty recorded notable increases, reflecting improved activity in those segments.

In contrast, Petroleum Profit Tax (PPT), Hydrocarbon Tax (HT), oil and gas royalties, Import Duty and Common External Tariff (CET) recorded significant declines, underscoring continued volatility in oil and trade-related revenues.

VAT also recorded a marginal decrease.

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ments in the upper chamber.

Nwoye, who represents Anambra North Senatorial District, was unanimously selected by the minority caucus to replace Osita Ngwu, who recently left the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) for the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

The announcement of Ngwu's defection was formally made on the Senate floor by Senate President Godswill Akpabio after receiving a letter from the senator.

In the communication, Ngwu said his decision was influenced by his alignment with Enugu State Governor, Peter Mbah and President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, while also describing the APC as Nigeria's most stable political platform.

Nwoye's elevation marks yet another turn in his own shifting political journey.

He was elected to the Senate in 2023 under the Labour Party (LP) before moving to the African Democratic Congress (ADC) in 2025.

The defections did not end there. Senator Anthony Siyako Yaro of Gombe South also announced his departure from the PDP to the APC, citing unresolved internal crises within the opposition party as the reason for his move.

In a similar development, Senator Aliyu Wadada confirmed his switch from the Social Democratic Party (SDP) to the APC.

Wadada, who chairs the Senate Committee on Public Accounts, said his alignment with the ruling party had earlier been informal, but has now been fully formalised.

He has also been endorsed as the APC's consensus governorship candidate in Nasarawa State ahead of the 2027 elections.

Reacting to the developments, former Edo State governor and Senator, Adams Oshiomhole, praised the defecting lawmakers, saying their decisions were in line with constitutional provisions.

He described the trend as evidence of growing confidence in the APC and President Tinubu's leadership.

With the latest movements, the APC has further strengthened its numerical advantage in the Senate, deepening its grip on the National Assembly as political realignments continue ahead

of the 2027 general elections.

Speaking with newsmen, Senator Abba Moro launched a sharp critique of Nigeria's security response to recurring killings in Benue South Senatorial District, warning that the state appears increasingly overwhelmed and unwilling to decisively confront armed networks behind persistent attacks on rural communities.

He said that the latest wave of violence in Benue State and the recurring cycle of killings exposed deep weaknesses in the country's security architecture, particularly in intelligence gathering, prevention, and coordinated response.

He described the situation as "predictable and repetitive," lamenting that each incident follows a familiar pattern of condolence messages, emergency deployments, and symbolic gestures, without lasting solutions.

"What we are seeing is not new. It is the same story repeated over and over again; killings, silence, deployment, and then more killings," he said.

The senator specifically referenced recent attacks in Apa Local Government Area, where at least nine persons were reportedly killed in Edikwu Ankpali on April 12, 2026, allegedly by suspected armed herders.

He noted that the same axis had also suffered similar violence in January 2025, raising questions about the effectiveness of repeated military deployments.

He questioned the impact of ongoing security operations in the region, including Operation Whirl Stroke and police tactical units.

"If security forces are already deployed there, why are they not stopping the attacks before they happen?" he asked.

Senator Abba argued that Nigeria's security challenge was no longer about lack of awareness, but about political will and operational effectiveness, insisting that authorities already know the locations and movement patterns of armed groups.

"These are not unknown enemies. We know where they operate. We know the forests they occupy. So why is it that they still move freely?" he said.

He further faulted what he described as a reactive security posture, where intervention only follows attacks, rather than preventing them through actionable intelligence.



A CONDOLENCE VISIT:

Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa (left) and Co-Director of Concern Edo Hunters Association, Edo South Branch, Dr Osas Oshodin, during a condolence visit to Idahosa whose mother, Madam Esther Imaguomwanruo Idahosa passed-on recently.

PHOTO: MOSES OBOH

Edo commences hajj kits distribution, vaccination exercise for 2026 pilgrims

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH
BENIN CITY

The Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board has commenced the distribution of uniforms, travel bags and the administration of compulsory vaccination for intending pilgrims ahead of the 2026 Hajj exercise, as part of preparations for a smooth pilgrimage.

The announcement was made in a statement issued on Tuesday by the Executive Secretary of the Board, Alhaji Eranga Abdulkabir Muhammadkabar,

who described the exercise as mandatory for all intending pilgrims from the state.

According to him, the exercise will be conducted simultaneously across designated centres to ensure convenience and proper coordination of participants ahead of their departure to Saudi Arabia.

He explained that intending pilgrims from Edo South Senatorial District are scheduled to participate on Saturday, April 25, 2026, at the Hajj Board office located at 2/3 Ugomosun Street, off Dumez Road, Benin City.

The exercise is billed to com-

mence at 9:00 a.m.

Pilgrims from Edo Central and Edo North Senatorial Districts are to attend on Sunday, April 26, 2026. While those from Edo Central will converge at the Irrua Central Mosque, opposite the palace, their counterparts from Edo North will gather at Arafat Mosque in Auchi.

Both exercises are also scheduled to begin at 9:00 a.m.

Muhammadkabar noted that the programme would include screening, orientation and vaccination, all of which are essential requirements for partici-

tion in the Hajj.

He added that the exercise would be carried out by the 2026 Hajj medical team in collaboration with officials of the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) and the Edo State Government.

The Executive Secretary stressed that strict compliance with the schedule is crucial, warning that failure to participate in the exercise could affect pilgrims' eligibility for the journey.

He urged all intending pilgrims to turn up promptly at their designated centres and cooperate fully with officials to ensure a hitch-free process and successful Hajj operation.

Okpebholo hails Archbishop... Senator Ikpea raises alarm over...

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Among those present were the Esama of Benin Kingdom, Chief Gabriel Osawaru Igbinedion; former Edo State Governor, Chief John Odigie-Oyegun; former Deputy Governor, Hon. Philip Shaibu and APC State Deputy Chairman, Sylvester Aigboboh.

Archbishop Akubeze's two decades of episcopal leadership were highlighted as a period marked by spiritual growth, peace-building, and moral influence within society, with speakers noting his role in shaping leadership values beyond the pulpit.

In a separate congratulatory message earlier, Governor Okpebholo described the

milestone as a testament to the Archbishop's unwavering commitment to faith, service, and moral leadership since his episcopal consecration in 2006.

He noted that Archbishop Akubeze, who previously served as pioneer Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Uromi before his elevation in 2011 as Metropolitan Archbishop of Benin City, had provided consistent spiritual leadership and institutional stability.

According to the Governor, the Archbishop's episcopal motto, "Ut Testimonium Perhibeam Veritati" — "to bear witness to the truth" — reflects a ministry grounded in integrity, discipline, and service to humanity.

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damage could trigger wider social and economic consequences.

He lamented what he described as inadequate response from federal agencies, including the Ecological Fund Office, the Federal Ministry of Environment, NEMA, and NEWMAP, despite repeated assessments of the affected areas.

"If people lose their farmlands and livelihoods, poverty increases, and where there is poverty, insecurity becomes inevitable," he warned, stressing that Edo State communities are heavily dependent on agriculture.

The motion, which had been pending since last year, eventu-

ally received unanimous support in the Senate, with lawmakers describing erosion as a national challenge affecting multiple regions.

Ikpea urged immediate deployment of federal teams for on-the-spot assessments and commencement of remediation works, while calling for sustained funding for erosion control, land reclamation, and afforestation programmes.

He also appealed for stronger collaboration between federal and state authorities, noting that while Edo State has undertaken some drainage and intervention projects, the scale of destruction now requires coordinated national action.

NDLEA seeks partnership with medicine vendors to curb drug abuse in Edo

IDAHOSA MUSA

BENIN CITY

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Edo State Command, has called for a strategic partnership with patent medicine vendors, identifying them as critical agents in the fight against substance abuse through strict adherence

to ethical dispensing practices.

The Commander of Narcotics, Mitchell Ofoyeju, made the call during a one-day anti-drug abuse workshop organised for members of the National Association of Patent and Proprietary Medicine Dealers, Edo State chapter.

The workshop, held on Wednesday at the Ogbe Stadium Indoor Sports Hall in Be-

nin City, was themed "Patent Medicine Vendors as Frontline Defenders: Ensuring Safe Medicines, Preventing Drug Abuse."

Addressing about 2,154 NAPPMED members across Edo South, alongside resource persons, NDLEA officers and the media, Ofoyeju described the gathering as both a capacity-building exercise and a clarification call to uphold rules guiding access to medicines.

He stressed the need for collective action against substance abuse and illicit drug trade, warning

that the diversion of prescription drugs, psychoactive substances and codeine-based syrups fuels addiction, destroys families and undermines the future of youths.

"The line between legitimate medicine and substance abuse is perilously thin, and it is at this junction that NAPPMED members stand as gatekeepers," he said, urging participants to maintain high ethical standards in their operations.

In her welcome address, the state president of NAPPMED, Omueti Victoria, described the

workshop as remarkable and reaffirmed the association's commitment to collaborating with relevant stakeholders to combat drug abuse.

She noted that members of the association, as healthcare providers regulated by the Pharmacy Council of Nigeria, would continue to ensure responsible dispensing of medicines in line with national standards.

Ofoyeju highlighted key challenges in Edo State, including the diversion of controlled drugs and the growing influence of profit-driven practices, which he said contribute to addiction and erode societal values.

He explained that the workshop aimed to deepen participants' understanding of drug laws, enhance their ability to

detect abuse indicators, reinforce ethical practices and position them as active agents of prevention and referral.

The NDLEA boss assured participants of collaboration but warned that the agency would not hesitate to arrest and prosecute erring members, adding that the initiative aligns with the directive of NDLEA Chairman, Mohamed Buba Marwa, to strengthen public education and enforcement.

He added that the programme would boost intelligence gathering and grassroots surveillance, describing it as a step towards a community-centred approach in Nigeria's drug control strategy, with similar workshops planned for Edo Central and Edo North districts.

**A ONE DAY WORKSHOP:**

L-R: National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Edo State, Deputy Commander, Adeola Salaudeen; President of National Association of Patent and Proprietary Medicine Dealers (NAPPMED), Edo State Chapter, Mrs Victoria Omueti, and NDLEA Edo State Commander, Dr. Mitchell Ofoyeju at a one day workshop an anti-drug abuse organised in Benin City by NAPPMED.

Tinubu approves appointments for NECO, NBTE, National Library

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu has approved fresh appointments for the National Examinations Council (NECO), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), Federal Polytechnic N'yak-Shendam, Plateau, and the National Library of Nigeria.

This is contained in a statement issued by Presidential Spokesperson, Mr Bayo Onanu-

ga, on Wednesday in Abuja.

Tinubu appointed Prof. Modupe Adelabu as Chairman of the Governing Board of NECO and retained the current Registrar, Prof. Ibrahim Wushishi.

For the chairmanship of NBTE, the president appointed Prof. Babatunde Salako.

On April 10, Tinubu had re-appointed the incumbent Executive Secretary of NBTE, Prof. Idris Bugaje, for a second and final five-year term.

The president also appointed Dr Bongfa Binfa as Rector of Federal Polytechnic N'yak-Shendam.

Binfa succeeds Dr Mukaila Yá'u, whose tenure expired on March 16.

Tinubu approved Binfa's appointment for a single term of five years following a public recruitment process.

Before the appointment, Binfa served as Deputy Rector (Academic) at the Federal Polytechnic of Oil and Gas, Bonny.

He was also a lecturer in the Mechanical Engineering Department of the Federal Polytechnic, Idah.

The president renewed the tenure of Prof. Chinwe Anunobi as Director-General and Chief Executive of the National Library for a final term of five years.

She was first appointed on Sept. 2, 2021.

According to the Presidency, Anunobi has led reforms aimed at repositioning the National Library as a technology-driven knowledge institution.

These include the development of the National Repository of Nigeria, the National Virtual Library and other digital information systems.

8,000 people died, missing on migration routes in 2025 —IOM

NEW YORK

No fewer than 8,000 migrants were reported dead or missing worldwide in 2025, bringing the total since 2014 to more than 82,000, according to new data released by the International Organization for Migration (IOM)

At least around 340,000 family members are estimated to have been directly affected.

Despite declines in arrivals in some regions, the data shows migration routes are shifting rather than easing, with risks remaining high along increasingly dangerous journeys.

The findings draw on IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Global Overview of Migration Routes and new analysis from the Missing Migrants Project (MMP).

DTM tracks movements, changing routes and conditions along migration corridors through direct field monitoring and governmental data sources, while MMP documents migrant deaths and disappearances using official records, media reports and information from IOM missions worldwide.

Together, the reports show how drivers at origin and policy changes along the routes are

reshaping migration journeys, while the human cost of unsafe migration continues to rise.

"Routes are shifting in response to conflict, climate pressures and policy changes, but the risks are still very real," IOM Director-General Amy Pope said in a statement.

"Behind these numbers are people taking dangerous journeys and families left waiting for news that may never come. Data is critical to understanding these routes and designing interventions that can reduce risks, save lives and promote safer migration pathways."

The 2025 Global Overview

of Migration Routes shows that lower arrival figures in some regions do not reflect reduced migration pressure, but rather changing journeys as enforcement measures, conflict dynamics and environmental stress have altered established pathways.

In the Americas, north-bound movements along the Central American route fell sharply compared to 2024.

In Europe, overall arrivals declined, but the profile of movements changed, with Bangladeshi nationals becoming the largest group arriving, while Syrian arrivals fell following political and policy shifts.

Soludo appoints Kukah as Ojukwu varsity chancellor

AWKA

Governor Chukwuma Soludo of Anambra has appointed Bishop Matthew Kukah as Chancellor of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University.

The appointment was announced in a statement issued on Wednesday in Awka by the governor's Chief Press Secretary, Christian Aburime.

Kukah, the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese, is a renowned Nigerian cleric and intellectual known for his contributions to scholarship and advocacy for social justice.

He studied Philosophy and Theology at St. Augustine Major Seminary, Jos, and obtained a diploma in Religious Studies

from the University of Ibadan.

He later earned a Bachelor of Divinity from the Pontifical Urban University, a Master's degree in Peace Studies from the University of Bradford, and a PhD from the SOAS University of London in 1990.

The cleric also undertook studies at the University of Oxford and Harvard University.

Kukah is a prolific author and founder of the Kukah Centre, where he has championed research-driven advocacy on inter-faith harmony and policy reform.

According to the statement, his appointment is expected to strengthen the university's global partnerships, promote ethical leadership and enhance the institution's drive to produce well-rounded graduates.

Court admits PDP factional chairman to N100m bail

ABUJA

An Abuja High Court on Wednesday admitted a factional National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Sen. Tanimu Turaki, SAN, to bail in the sum of N100 million.

Turaki was dragged to court by the Inspector-General of Police (IGP) for allegedly giving false information.

He was accused of giving false information to the IGP through a petition on his letterhead, dated October 5, 2022.

Ruling on the bail application by the defendant, Justice Peter Kekemeke held that bail is not only granted at the discretion of the court but is also a fundamental right.

The judge further held that though a bench warrant was issued against the defendant, he (Turaki) appeared in court before the warrant was executed, leading the court to vacate the order.

The court held that the prosecution did not place sufficient reasons before it to deny the defendant bail and as such granted bail.

He therefore admitted Turaki to bail in the sum of N100 million with one surety in like sum.

The surety, according to the judge, must be a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) with not less than 20 years of practice or a lawyer with over 40 years of practice.

He then adjourned the case until June 11 for hearing.

The prosecution accused Turaki of writing and signing a petition against one Saidi Mainasara with intent to use the lawful power of the IGP to the injury or annoyance of the said Mainasara.

The offence, according to the prosecution, is punishable under Section 140 of the Penal Code Law.

Turaki, however, pleaded not guilty to the charge when it was read to him in open court.

Following his plea, the prosecution counsel, Usman Rabiu, asked the court to fix a date for the commencement of trial.

Counsel to Turaki, Abdulaziz Ibrahim, SAN, informed the court that the defendant filed three different motions and sought to withdraw two, marked M/1043/26 dated January 26, and M/4847/26 dated March 31.

NEWS**Group raises alarm over bandits' occupation of Rivers forests****PORT HARCOURT**

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

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

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

Onuekwa condemned the alleged occupation of forests by armed bandits and the ris-

ing cases of kidnapping across Ikwerre communities.

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

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

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

"Efforts by a local vigilante

group to rescue the victims failed, with the attackers overpowering them and abducting their leader.

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

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

and killings reported in affected communities.

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

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

fear," he said.

He called on the Federal Government, Rivers State Government and security agencies to act decisively to dislodge the bandits from forests in Ikwerre communities.

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

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

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

Kano Assembly sets up panel to screen dep governor nominee**KANO**

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

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

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

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

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

In his letter, Governor Yusuf said Sule-Garo's nomination followed extensive consultations with socio-political, religious and cultural stakeholders.

He described the nominee as a seasoned public administrator

with broad experience at grassroots and sub-national levels.

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

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

He urged the House to expedite the screening process.

Following deliberations, the House constituted a committee chaired by the Deputy Speaker, Muhammad Bello, with the Majority Leader, Chief Whip, Deputy Majority Leader, Majority Whip, and lawmakers representing Fagge, Sumaila, Warawa, Dawakin Kudu and Tudun Wada as members.

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

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

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

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

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

The minister expressed optimism that the board would strengthen Nigeria's business

ecosystem and improve its global standing.

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

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

Oduwale also tasked the board with prioritising digital innovation, improving financial performance and simplifying processes for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

She emphasised the need for integrity, stakeholder collaboration and measurable results during the board's tenure.

The minister noted that CAC processes had been largely automated and assured Nigerians of continued improvements and strong oversight.

She commended board members and stakeholders for their contributions to strengthening Nigeria's business environment.



COURTESY VISIT:

L-R: Commissioner for Finance, Lagos State, Mr Abayomi Oluyomi; Deputy Governor, Dr Obafemi Hamzat; Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu; Executive Secretary, Joint Tax Board, Mr Olusegun Adesokan and Chairman of Lagos Inland Revenue Service, LIRS, Mr Ayodele Subair, during a courtesy visit by the Joint Revenue Board to the Lagos State Government House on Wednesday.

APC founding member Momoh joins Owan Reps race, seeks zoning to Ward 11**AFUZE (EDO)**

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

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

Speaking at a meeting with APC executives and leaders in Owan East at Afuze shortly af-

ter the ceremony, he described himself as the most qualified aspirant, citing his extensive experience in party administration and governance.

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

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

Momoh emphasised his role in shaping the APC's guid-

ing principles, noting that he served as secretary of the manifesto drafting committee chaired by the late Chief Audu Ogbeh.

"The manifesto guiding the APC today was produced by that committee. In fact, the entire drafting process revolved around me," he said.

He highlighted his status as a founding member alongside key figures, such as President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, former President Muhammadu Buhari and former Edo State Governor Adams Oshiomhole.

The former state secretary and treasurer of the party argued that founding members deserved recognition and political opportunities for their

sacrifices in building what he described as Africa's largest political party.

"I am the only one among the Edo founding members who has neither been given an elective ticket nor appointed to a major political office at the state or federal level. Now is the time for me to be considered," he said.

Momoh also advocated zoning the constituency seat to Ward 11 in Owan East, noting that other wards had benefited from elective and appointive positions, leaving his ward without representation.

He pledged not to criticise past representatives but to leverage his experience and networks to drive development across Owan if elected.

Kano Assembly sets up panel to screen dep governor nominee**KANO**

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

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

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

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

The nomination follows the resignation of former Depu-

ty Governor, Aminu Abdulsalam, on March 27, 2026.

In his letter, Governor Yusuf said Sule-Garo's nomination followed extensive consultations with socio-political, religious and cultural stakeholders.

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

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

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

He urged the House to expedite the screening process.

Following deliberations, the House constituted a committee chaired by the Deputy Speaker, Muhammad Bello, with the Majority Leader, Chief Whip, Deputy Majority Leader, Majority Whip, and lawmakers representing Fagge, Sumaila, Warawa, Dawakin Kudu and Tudun Wada as members.

The committee is expected to conclude the screening and

submit its report on Monday.

Soludo Seeks EU Backing to Tackle Flooding, Erosion in Anambra

Awka: Governor Chukwuma Soludo of Anambra State has called for stronger collaboration with the European Union (EU) to address worsening environmental threats, particularly flooding and gully erosion.

Soludo made the appeal on Wednesday in Awka while receiving the EU Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr Gautier Mignot, during a courtesy visit.

He described the environmental challenges as existential, warning that they pose a serious threat to the state's geography and future.

Nigeria's debt stock hits N159.28trn as domestic borrowing dominates

ABUJA

Nigeria's total public debt rose to N159.28 trillion (110.97 billion dollars) as of December 2025, according to the Debt Management Office (DMO).

A breakdown of the figures shows that domestic debt stood at N84.85 trillion (59.11 billion dollars), while external debt was N74.43 trillion (51.86 billion dollars).

Domestic borrowing remains the larger component,

accounting for 53.27 per cent of the total debt stock, compared to 46.73 percent for external debt.

The DMO noted that the country's total debt comprises borrowings by the Federal Government, the 36 states, and

the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

Further analysis indicates that the Federal Government holds the bulk of the debt, with N80.49 trillion in domestic debt and N66.27 trillion in external obligations.

The states and the FCT account for N4.36 trillion domestically and N8.16 trillion

externally.

According to April data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Nigeria's debt-to-GDP ratio is projected at 32.3 percent in 2026, down from 35.5 percent in 2025.

Although this remains below the 60 percent global threshold, experts warn that rising debt-servicing costs relative to revenue continue to pose a major concern.

External debt is categorised into three main sources. Multilateral loans account for 23.19 billion dollars, representing 45 per cent of external debt, largely from international financial institutions offering concessional loans.

The largest single creditor is the World Bank, with exposure of 18.3 billion dollars. Nigeria is currently the third-largest debtor to the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA).

The African Development Bank (AfDB) holds approximately 3.5 billion dollars in outstanding loans.

Bilateral loans from individual countries total 6.20 billion dollars, representing 12 percent of external debt.

The Export-Import Bank of China is the leading bilateral creditor, accounting for 4.91 billion dollars, or over 80 percent of such loans.

Domestic debt consists



EXCHANGING THE SIGNED MoU:

General Manager/CEO, Lagos State Consumer Protection Agency, Afolabi Solebo (R), exchanging the signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Executive Vice-Chairman/CEO, Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, Mr. Tunji Bello, at the FCCPC headquarters in Abuja, on the protection and promotion of consumer rights for residents of Lagos State.

Empowering youths, women critical to nat'l peace —Expert

ABUJA

A peace-building expert, Mr Rafiu Lawal, has identified Nigerian youths and women as the country's most potent assets for achieving lasting peace and sustainable development, if properly supported.

Lawal, Executive Director of Building Blocks for Peace Foundation (BBFORPEACE), made the assertion in an interview with our correspondent on Wednesday in Abuja.

He cautioned against labelling young people as perpetrators of violence, describing them instead as victims of systemic failures and neglect.

"I do not agree that young people are perpetrators of violence. I am more comfortable saying they are victims of violence and irresponsibility in society," he said.

According to him, youths possess energy, creativity, and innovation, and when empowered, can become drivers of peace and national develop-

ment.

He attributed rising youth involvement in crime to challenges such as unemployment, prolonged school closures, and lack of opportunities, noting that many are pushed into desperation rather than criminal intent.

Lawal also underscored the critical role of women in peace-building, lamenting their underrepresentation in governance and conflict resolution processes.

"We are not giving women the space they need in decision-making and peace processes, and that is the truth.

Women hold communities together during crises, yet their representation remains very low," he said.

He called for deliberate policies, including training, leadership development, and inclusive governance structures, to enable women and youths to contribute meaningfully to national stability.

Lawal added that countries that prioritise inclusion tend to achieve stronger and more sustainable peace outcomes.

"If we invest in our youths and women, Nigeria will be stronger, more stable, and more innovative," he said.

Experts push production subsidies as inflation pressures persist

LAGOS

Economic and agricultural experts have called on the Federal Government to subsidise production to boost output and ease inflationary pressures across the economy.

The experts spoke in separate interviews with newsmen on Wednesday in Lagos.

Dr Femi Oke, Secretary-General of the All Farmers Association of Nigeria, said increased government intervention in agriculture would help moderate rising food prices.

He lamented the sharp rise in the cost of farm inputs and equipment, noting that items previously sold for about N5,000 now cost as much as

N45,000.

"This increase is undermining affordable food production and discouraging farmers," Oke said.

He added that rising fuel costs were further pushing up food prices and urged the government to consult farmers' associations before introducing new import policies, especially to protect those who had accessed credit for expansion.

Also speaking, Dr Ayo Teriba, Chief Executive Officer of Economic Associates, described the current inflation rate as moderate in light of prevailing global conditions.

He noted that the impact of recent geopolitical tensions had been limited, partly due to improved domestic refining

capacity, which helped cushion potential shocks.

However, Teriba ruled out the return of fuel subsidies, describing current economic challenges as temporary.

He recommended targeted interventions, including conditional cash transfers, to support vulnerable populations.

Similarly, Dr Muda Yusuf, Chief Executive Officer of the Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise (CPPE), attributed inflation largely to high production and logistics costs.

He called for sustained investment in transportation infrastructure, particularly rail systems, to reduce the cost of moving goods nationwide.

Yusuf also urged the government to tackle insecurity

in farming communities and improve storage facilities and road networks to minimise post-harvest losses.

According to him, these measures are essential for boosting food production and stabilising prices.

Nigeria's inflation rate rose to 15.38 percent in March 2026 from 15.06 percent in February, ending an 11-month disinflation trend.

Data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed that food inflation increased to 14.31 percent in March from 12.12 percent in February.

However, on a year-on-year basis, food inflation declined significantly from 25.22 percent in March 2025 to 14.31 percent in March 2026.

Lagos details sanitation exercise as monthly clean-up resumes

LAGOS

The Lagos State Government has clarified modalities for the reintroduced monthly environmental sanitation exercise ahead of its resumption on Saturday.

The Commissioner for Environment and Water Resources, Mr Tokunbo Wahab, disclosed this in a statement on Wednesday, following the symbolic flag-off along the Mushin-Agege Motor Road corridor on March 14.

Wahab said the exercise would hold on the last Saturday of every month between 6:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m.

He explained that there would be controlled movement across the state during the period to enable residents to clean their homes, surroundings, and drainage frontages effectively.

According to him, enforcement officers from the ministry, the Lagos State Environmental

Protection Agency, Kick Against Indiscipline (KAI), the Lagos Waste Management Authority (LAWMA), and local government sanitation inspectors will monitor compliance.

He added that physical inspections would be conducted during and after the exercise, while defaulters would be sanctioned in line with the Lagos State Environmental Management and Protection Law of 2017.

Wahab further disclosed that LAWMA intervention trucks would be deployed to evacuate waste generated during the exercise.

He also announced plans to reward the cleanest Local Government Area, Local Council Development Area, and street to encourage healthy competition and community participation.

The commissioner urged residents to support the initiative in order to build a cleaner, safer, and more sustainable Lagos.

Police nab 4 over alleged PMS fraud scheme in Lagos

LAGOS

The Lagos State Police Command has arrested four suspects over an alleged petroleum product fraud in Satellite Town.

The suspects, aged between 33 and 43, were apprehended on April 14 at about 6:00 p.m.

A police source said the suspects allegedly attempted to defraud by offering Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) below the official depot price under false pretences.

The product involved was said to belong to AA Rano Nigeria Limited.

According to the source, the suspects brought five articulated trucks with different number plates to the company for the loading of PMS as part of the alleged scheme.

The Commissioner of Police, Mr Fatai Tijani, has ordered the transfer of the case from Agboju Divisional Police Station to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), Panti, for

further investigation.

Speaking at the SCID, one of the suspects admitted that they were not members of any recognised union operating at the depot.

He disclosed that the group attempted to purchase over 60,000 litres of PMS using about 40 trucks under suspicious pricing arrangements and with unverified truck details.

The irregularities were reportedly detected by the Chief Security Officer of AA Rano Nigeria Limited, who ordered their arrest before handing them over to the police.

The Deputy Commissioner of Police in charge of SCID, Mr Dayo Akinbisehin, said investigations had been concluded and that the suspects would be charged in court.

Akinbisehin reaffirmed the command's commitment to protecting lives and property, urging the public to provide timely and useful information to aid policing efforts.

NEWS

Attack: Senate urges improve collaboration among multinational joint forces

ABUJA

The Senate has called for improved collaboration and intelligence sharing among various multinational joint security forces to curb attacks on military formations and the killing of personnel, especially in Borno State.

This followed the adoption of a motion at resumed plenary on Wednesday in Abuja.

The motion under “urgent matter of national public importance” was sponsored by Sen. Mohammed Monguno (APC-Borno) and co-sponsored by Senators Shehu Kaka and Ali Ndume (APC-Borno).

Monguno, in his motion, expressed concern over the recent attacks on military formations, leading to casualties among troops, including a general of the Nigerian Army and 13 other soldiers.

He said the recurring strategic attacks on Munguno, a strategic garrison town, demonstrate a deliberate attempt by insurgents to undermine military operations and disrupt humanitarian and commercial access routes.

He said the Nigerian Armed Forces have continued to make immense sacrifices in the fight against insurgents in Munguno, with officers and men paying supreme prices in recent attacks while defending the territorial integrity of Nigeria.

He expressed worry that the

resurgence of attacks on both military bases and civilian communities erodes gains already recorded in counter-insurgency operations and poses grave threats to national security.

He said that the protection of innocent civilians remains a fundamental obligation under national and international humanitarian law and is essential for maintaining public trust and cooperation in the fight against insurgency.

“The primary responsibility of government is to protect the lives and property of the people.

“That is the only essence of governance and that is the social contract which the people have entered into with government; it is to protect their lives and property.”

Sen. Shehu Kaka (APC-Borno), while seconding the motion, called for improved provision of equipment for the military to combat insurgency.

Corroborating, Sen. Ali Ndume (APC-Borno) said there was an urgent need to holistically address the problem of insecurity in Nigeria.

He said the problem has been the issue of inadequate equipment, expressing hope that current efforts by the government to provide equipment would help address the matter.

He also called for concerted efforts to ensure the release of 416 abducted people in his constituency.

Sen. Abdull Ningi (PDP-

Bauchi) expressed worry over the trend of attacks on military formations in the country, saying that efforts must be intensified to

provide the needed solutions.

Sen. Barau Jibrin (APC-Kano), who presided over plenary, said that President Bola Tinubu is making frantic efforts to end insecurity in the country, adding that insecurity has a global dimension.

The Senate also, in another

resolution, strongly condemned the continued attacks by Boko Haram elements on military formations in Borno communities.

The Senators observed a minute of silence in honour of the affected military personnel and civilians killed in the

course of the fight.

The Senate also called on the Chief of Defence Staff and other Service Chiefs to conduct a comprehensive operational and logistical audit of the circumstances surrounding the attacks on military formations.



TLWVN S'EAST WORKSHOP:

L-R: Chairperson, The League of Women Voters of Nigeria (TLWVN), Ebonyi, Mrs Anthonia Chukwuma; Chairperson TLWVN Abia State, Ms Blessing Nwasi; Zonal Women Leader S'East, All Progressive Congress (APC), Dr Oby Ajihi; Chairperson TLWVN Anambra State, Dr Anuli Iruoma-Aguiyi; Chairperson, Imo State, Mrs Joy Ewa and Chairperson, Enugu State, Ms Sylvia Abanah, during the TLWVN S'East chapter workshop in Enugu on Wednesday.

NIS partners NELFUND to boost sports education, workforce devt

ABUJA

The National Institute for Sports (NIS) has called for strategic collaboration with the Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) to strengthen sports education and develop a skilled workforce within Nigeria's sports ecosystem.

The Director-General of NIS, Comrade Philip Shaibu, made the call during a visit to the NELFUND headquarters, highlighting the critical role the fund can play in supporting aspiring coaches and sports professionals.

In a statement issued by his

Special Adviser on Media, Ben Ogbemudia, Shaibu reiterated the institute's core mandate is to train sports personnel and drive capacity development in the sector.

“We are here to partner with NELFUND. They have a key role in developing coaches and building the workforce needed in the sports sector.

“NIS once trained coaches from across Africa who came to learn sports administration and coaching. Unfortunately, the institute suffered years of neglect and mismanagement.

“However, President Bola Tinubu, in a bid to revitalise

the institute, has restored life to NIS, the engine room of sports development in Nigeria.

“What was missing was vitality, and that has now been restored,” Shaibu said.

He noted that the current administration is focused on returning the institute to its original vision while aligning it with modern global standards.

Shaibu added that several African countries are now adopting similar sports development models conceptualised by Nigeria over five decades ago.

“Our institute was originally modelled after leading institu-

tions in Australia and Germany. The structures remain solid, but they lacked vitality.

“It felt like stepping into the unknown, but we had to chart a new path.

“That new path led to the development of a 10-year strategic plan to guide the institute's mission and vision.

“The strategic plan was developed through extensive consultations with past and present NIS management, stakeholders, and private sector contributors, with a committee established to refine it into an actionable roadmap,” he said.

NUPRC tasks IPPG on industry standards, human capital devt

ABUJA

The Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) has charged the Independent Petroleum Producers Group (IPPG) to uphold industry standards to strengthen human capital development.

The commission also urged the group to work towards promoting good corporate governance.

Mrs Oritsemeyewa Eyesan, the Commission's Chief Execu-

tive, said this during a courtesy visit by the IPPG Chairman, Mr Adegbite Falade, in Abuja.

Eyesan described the IPPG as a significant force in the industry, particularly following the divestment of international oil companies.

According to Eyesan, the commission values its relationship with the group.

She emphasised adherence to the provisions of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), 2021, underscoring the importance of human capital development

and strong corporate governance.

“One area I think we need to spotlight is human capital development. As the industry grows, there is a tendency to default and, if we allow that to fester, it will hurt all of us.

“Because we are in a global market, the financiers are rating Nigeria; they are not rating companies, and if we do not bring our human capacity up to par, then we will be creating a big problem for ourselves.

“As a pressure group, you

should hold yourselves to a standard. I think that is one of the things the International Oil Companies (IOCs) have done very well,” she said.

Eyesan reiterated the commission's commitment to its mandate as a business enabler, assuring that it would continue to be responsive to industry needs in line with the aspirations of President Bola Tinubu.

The NUPRC boss said the commission has gone paperless as part of its commitment to digitise its operations.

Allocate more crude to Dangote, ex-ANAN President urges FG

SANGO-OTA

A former President of the Association of National Accountants of Nigeria (ANAN), Dr Samuel Nzekwe, has advised the Federal Government to allocate more crude oil to the Dangote Refinery.

Nzekwe gave the advice in an interview with newsmen on Wednesday in Ota.

The former ANAN president also appealed to the Fed-

eral Government to sell crude oil at the benchmark price of 64.85 dollars per barrel as earmarked in the 2026 Budget.

He said that the appeal had become necessary to help the Dangote Refinery produce cheaper fuel for Nigerians.

Nzekwe attributed the rising price of food commodities to the increase in pump prices of fuel across the country.

The former ANAN president added that this step would also

prevent Dangote from importing crude oil into the country from the United States.

According to him, what is driving the nation's inflation trend is the increase in fuel prices due to the current crisis in the Middle East.

“There is the need for the Federal Government to critically look at the oil sector to alleviate the suffering of Nigerians.

“Whatsoever affects the petroleum sector affects every

sector of the economy,” he said.

Nzekwe said that the ability of the Federal Government to allocate more crude oil to the Dangote Refinery would not only stop fuel importation but also bring down the rising inflation rate the country has experienced since March.

The National Bureau of Statistics, on April 15, said that Nigeria's headline inflation rate rose to 15.38 percent in March from 15.03 percent in February.

Omo-Agege declares 2027 Senate bid for Delta Central

ASABA

Sen. Ovie Omo-Agege, former Deputy Senate President of the 9th Senate, has formally declared his intention to contest the Delta Central Senatorial District seat in the 2027 general elections on the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

Omo-Agege announced this in a statement on Wednesday in Asaba.

He said the decision followed extensive consultations and reflection.

“Driven by patriotic duty, resourceful service, and a hopeful vision for our future, I, Ovie Omo-Agege, Deputy President of the 9th Senate, hereby declare my intention to contest the Delta Central Senatorial District seat in 2027 on the platform of the APC.”

Omo-Agege described the declaration as “not a light decision,” noting it followed broad consultations with family members, political leaders, and stakeholders across all eight local government areas of Delta Central.

“It is a response to the humbling calls by our electorate, constituents, professionals, and supporters that I return to the

Senate to serve our common good and give unflinching support to President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda.

“Clear consensus across Ughelli North, Ughelli South, Udu, Okpe, Sapele, Uvwie, Ethiope East, and Ethiope West that the Urhobo Nation needs an experienced, smart, resourceful, purpose-driven, compassionate, and courageous voice in the Senate once again,” he said.

He added that after prayer and reflection, he concluded that public service is a divine duty.

“Having sought the face of our Lord Jesus Christ in prayer, I have concluded that service to my people is a divine duty. I therefore humbly yield to their call,” he said.

Omo-Agege noted that the ambition was collective, aimed at strengthening Delta Central's influence nationally.

He said representation must be purposeful and resourceful, not cosmetic or insipid, insisting Urhobo interests must be strongly defended in national policymaking.

Reflecting on his 2015–2023 tenure, he described it as golden years in parliamentary leadership, during which he served as Deputy Senate President.

JUDICIARY**NEWS**

Supreme Court reserves judgment in ADC leadership dispute

ABUJA

The Supreme Court on Wednesday reserved judgment in an appeal filed by former Senate President, David Mark, who is also the National Chairman of the African Democratic Congress (ADC), against Nafiu Bala, a former deputy national chairman of the party.

Justice Lawal Garba, who led a five-member panel of justices, announced that judgment had been reserved after counsel to all parties adopted their briefs of argument for and against the

appeal. He said the date for delivery of the judgment would be communicated to the parties.

Mark had approached the apex court seeking an order to stay the execution of a Court of Appeal ruling delivered on March 12, which dismissed his earlier appeal in the protracted leadership tussle within the party.

The appellate court, in a decision by a three-member panel led by Justice Uchechukwu Onyemenam, upheld an objection raised by Bala, ruling that Mark's appeal was incompetent as it raised issues not contained

in the decision of the trial court.

The dispute stems from a September 4, 2025 ruling by Justice Emeka Nwite of the Federal High Court, Abuja, which declined to grant injunctive reliefs sought in an ex parte application filed by Bala.

The lingering crisis has left the ADC without a recognised national leadership, with the dispute escalating from an internal transition disagreement in mid-2025 into a full-blown legal battle involving the courts and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

INEC had, on April 1, withdrawn recognition from both the Mark- and Bala-led factions, citing a subsisting Court of Appeal order directing parties to maintain the status quo ante bellum. The commission said it would not engage with any faction pending a final judicial pronouncement.

The development has raised concerns over the party's readiness to function effectively as an opposition platform ahead of the 2027 general elections.

While the Mark-led faction insists it emerged through due process, referencing a series of Nation-

al Executive Committee (NEC) decisions in 2025, including the July 29 ratification of a caretaker leadership, it maintains that its actions were backed by provisions of the party's constitution.

Citing Articles 13, 17(3) and 17(4), the faction argues that the NEC is empowered to administer the party, implement

convention decisions, and fill leadership vacancies through appropriate mechanisms.

It further contends that eligibility requirements, including the two-year membership rule under Article 9(4), were lawfully waived through NEC resolutions to accommodate coalition-building efforts.

Court jails man 18 months for drug trafficking in Ibadan

IBADAN

The Federal High Court in Ibadan has sentenced one Jamiu Omobolaji to one and a half years' imprisonment for unlawful dealing in 848 grammes of Cannabis Sativa.

Justice Nkeonye Maha convicted and sentenced the defendant after he pleaded guilty to a one-count charge filed against him by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Oyo State Command.

In her judgment, the judge noted that the court considered the convict's remorse, his status as a first-time offender, and his promise to turn a new leaf.

She, however, warned that a stiffer penalty would be imposed if he reoffends.

"The sentence takes effect from the date of his arrest, while the exhibits recovered from him are forfeited to the NDLEA and shall be destroyed," the judge ruled.

Earlier, defence counsel, Musbau Olapade, had pleaded for leniency, stating that the convict's family depended on him for survival.

The prosecution counsel, D.O. Otunla, told the court that the offence was committed on December 13, 2025, in Ogbo-moso, following intelligence reports that led to the defendant's arrest with the illicit substance.

**DISPLAYING SIGNED MoU:**

Governor Caleb Mutfwang of Plateau State (L) and Minister of Art, Culture and the Creative Economy, Hannatu Musawa, displaying the signed Memorandum of Understanding for tourism development in Abuja on Wednesday.

Kano Court sentences 21yr-Old to death for murder

KANO

Kano State High Court has sentenced a 21-year-old man, Umar Idris, to death by hanging for the murder of a shop owner, Sabiu Umar, 28.

Idris, a resident of Farawa Quarters in Kumbotso Local Government Area, was convicted on a one-count charge of culpable homicide.

The prosecution counsel, La-

mido Abba-Sorondinki, told the court that the offence was committed on September 2, 2021, at Tsamiya Mariri Quarters in Kano.

He said that at about 10:30 p.m. on the said date, the defendant trespassed into the deceased's shop, where he also lived, and stole wedding clothes meant for his bride.

According to the prosecution, the deceased raised an alarm after spotting Idris, lead-

ing to a struggle during which the defendant stabbed him with a sharp knife in the neck, shoulder and other parts of the body, resulting in his death.

The prosecution called three witnesses and tendered the confessional statement of the defendant, who, however, denied committing the offence.

The offence contravenes Section 221(a) of the Penal Code Laws of Kano State.

Delivering judgment, Justice Sunusi Ado-Ma'aji held that the prosecution had proved its case beyond reasonable doubt and accordingly sentenced Idris to death by hanging.

"I hereby sentence Idris to death by hanging for stabbing the victim on his neck, shoulder and other parts of his body, which resulted in his death.

May the Lord have mercy on his soul," the judge declared.

SAN calls for greater inclusion of women lawyers in politics

LAGOS

Senior Advocate of Nigeria and Professor of Law at Osun State University, Prof. Olaide Gbadamosi, has called for increased participation of women lawyers in politics, urging stakeholders to dismantle barriers hindering their involvement in governance.

Gbadamosi made the call on Wednesday at a memorial lecture organised by the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS) in honour of the late Prof. Jadesola Akande, Nigeria's first female Professor of Law. The event was held at the University of Lagos, Akoka.

Reflecting on Akande's legacy, Gbadamosi described her as a trailblazer whose contributions to constitutional law and women's rights advocacy remain unmatched.

He noted that Akande broke barriers when she became Nigeria's first female Professor of Law in 1981 and later served as Vice-Chancellor of Lagos State University.

According to him, her efforts significantly expanded opportunities for women in both the legal profession and public office.

He, however, lamented the low representation of women in elective positions, stressing the need for deliberate efforts

to encourage their participation in politics.

Gbadamosi criticised structural and cultural barriers within political parties and society that discourage women from contesting elections, and urged families, institutions and stakeholders to provide support through mentorship and policy reforms.

He also charged senior lawyers mentored by Akande to sustain her legacy through excellence, guidance and commitment to public service.

In his remarks, the Director-General of NIALS, Prof. Abdulqadir Abikan, called for sustainable funding to ensure the continuity of such memo-

rial lectures, warning that reliance on government funding was not viable.

Chairman of the occasion, Prof. Abiola Sanni (SAN), described Akande as a "colossus" in legal scholarship whose works continue to inspire generations, noting that her intellectual footprint remains globally relevant.

He emphasised the importance of constitutionalism and the rule of law in promoting accountability and limiting the excesses of government.

A representative of the family, Mr Adetokunbo Coker, expressed appreciation to the organisers and participants for honouring the late scholar.

Inventory mgr arraigned over alleged theft of N1.9m goods

IBADAN

A 21-year-old inventory manager, Damilola Ogunmola, has been arraigned before an Iyaganku Magistrates' Court in Ibadan over the alleged theft of goods valued at N1,976,625 from her employer.

Ogunmola, an employee of Mrs Mopelola Adebayo, is facing a two-count charge of conspiracy and theft, to which she pleaded not guilty.

The prosecutor, Insp. Elisha Tellang, told the court that the defendant allegedly committed the offences between April 2025 and March 2026 at the

Ologuneru area of Ibadan.

He alleged that the defendant, alongside others still at large, stole various items including car wheel reflectors, elite shock pads, gold clutch bags, smart watches, IV Classic products and face serums.

According to the prosecution, the offences contravene Sections 390(9) and 516 of the Criminal Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

The presiding magistrate, Mrs Oluwaferanmi Raji, granted the defendant bail in the sum of N1 million with two sureties in like sum and adjourned the case until May 21 for hearing.

Cybercrime Act may undermine press freedom —Lawyer

IBADAN

A legal practitioner, Oluwatobi Fatoki, has warned that the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, Etc.) Act, 2015, as amended in 2024, could pose a threat to press freedom and democratic governance if not properly managed.

Fatoki, a former spokesperson of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Ibadan Branch, made the assertion while speaking with journalists on Wednesday.

He noted that the law has, in some instances, been used to suppress dissenting voices, particularly those of journalists, despite constitutional provisions guaranteeing freedom of expres-

sion and press responsibility.

Citing Sections 22 and 39 of the 1999 Constitution, he stressed that while journalists are mandated to hold government accountable, restrictive laws continue to hinder their operations.

He specifically referenced Section 24 of the Cybercrime Act, which criminalises the dissemination of information deemed false and capable of causing public disorder, describing the provision as subjective and open to abuse.

Fatoki cited cases involving Olurotimi Olawale, Precious Eze Chukwunonso, Rowland Olonishuwa, Seun Odunlami and Omoyele Sowore as examples of individuals affected under the law.

NEWS

Foreign

Lufthansa cuts 20,000 summer flights as fuel prices surge

German airline Lufthansa will cut 20,000 European short-haul flights over the summer, saying soaring fuel prices have made many journeys "unprofitable" for the firm.

Jet fuel has doubled in price since the start of the US-Israel war with Iran as the conflict has slowed its production and transportation across the Middle East.

Several airlines, including KLM-France and Delta, have also temporarily cut some flights while others have raised ticket prices as they pass on expenses to customers.

Analysts have warned that travellers should expect further ticket price rises and more cancelled

flights as the conflict continues.

The Gulf is a major source of aviation fuel, accounting for about 50% of Europe's imports. The bulk of it comes through the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran has effectively closed in response to US and Israeli attacks.

Lufthansa said on Tuesday it would save roughly 40,000 metric tons of jet fuel through its flight cuts, the majority of which will come from the closure of its CityLine service.

It said this means it will temporarily stop flying to and from Heringsdorf, Cork, Gdańsk, Ljubljana, Rijeka, Sibiu, Stuttgart, Trondheim, Tivat, and Wrocław.

The firm will either refund affected passengers or book them on to alternative flights with one of its other airlines – SWISS, Austrian Airlines, Brussels Airlines, and ITA Airways – where possible.

Some of the flight cuts could become permanent. Lufthansa said it was reviewing its whole European schedule and would release more details later in April.

The International Energy Agency warned last week that Europe could run out of jet fuel in weeks, though the UK government and airlines say they are not seeing a disruption in supply.

The EU said on Wednesday it will set up a fuel observatory to track EU production, imports, exports and stock levels

of transport fuels to identify potential shortages.

It said it hoped this would "mitigate the impact of high fuel prices and possible fuel shortages on the EU aviation sector".

Lufthansa said on Tuesday it was cutting down its European network, but that passengers will "continue to have access to the global route network, particularly long-haul connections".

"However, due to the increase in jet fuel prices, this will be achieved significantly more efficiently than before."

Tuesday's announcement comes after it said last week it was accelerating the closure of CityLine, retiring 27 aircraft, due to "significantly increased" fuel prices and "additional burdens from labour disputes".



GERMAN AIRLINE LUFTHANSA:

Lufthansa to cut 20,000 European short-haul flights over rising fuel cost

EU approves €90bn loan for Ukraine as pipeline is turned on ending deadlock

Ukraine says it has resumed pumping Russian oil through a pipeline into Hungary and Slovakia, bringing to an end months of deadlock over a €90bn (£78bn) loan seen as vital European Union support for Kyiv.

Soon afterwards, EU ambassadors meeting in Brussels gave preliminary approval to the loan, as well as a 20th package of sanctions on Russia, officials said.

It is now expected to be signed off on Thursday.

Although the funding was agreed last December, Hungary's Viktor Orbán slapped a veto on the payment in February after Ukraine said damage caused by a Russian attack had brought supplies to a halt.

Ukrainian oil and government sources told officials in Hungary and Slovakia that pumping had restarted, hours after the EU ambassadors began discussing the loan.

Orbán had demanded the oil start flowing again before

the loan could be paid out, and Ukraine confirmed the repairs had been completed on Tuesday.

His election defeat last Sunday also cleared the air for the EU, bringing to an end his 16-year era as prime minister. Hungary's next leader, Péter Magyar, has prioritised a reset in Budapest's poor relations with Brussels.

"Ukraine really needs this loan and it's also a sign that Russia cannot outlast Ukraine," EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said ahead of the ambassadors' meeting.

The EU funding has been described by Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Taras Kachka as "a matter of life and death" for Kyiv, and two-thirds of it will be spent on bolstering Ukraine's defence needs while the rest will go on broader financial assistance.

Slovak Economy Minister Denisa Sakova said she had been told by energy operator Ukrtransnaft, which looks after the Druzhba pipeline in Ukraine, that pressuris-

ing of the pipeline had begun on Wednesday morning and crude oil would start flowing into Slovakia on Thursday, for the first time since 27 January.

The volume of pumping was not yet clear, but a Ukrainian government source was quoted as saying that the transit of oil had begun at 12:35 local time (09:35 GMT).

Hungarian energy firm Mol said it expected the first supplies by Thursday at the latest.

Orbán, who is acting as caretaker leader until early next month, made clear at the weekend that as soon as oil deliveries through the pipeline were restored "we will no longer stand in the way of approving the loan".

In the run-up to Hungary's bitterly contested election this month which Orbán lost, he had accused Ukraine of imposing an "oil blockade" on his country and neighbouring Slovakia, claiming that the EU was working with Kyiv against him.

Satellite images at the time

suggested substantial damage to a major oil tank at Brody in western Ukraine in late January and Kyiv had insisted that repairs would take some time, adding that its engineers had come under Russian attack.

Meanwhile, Ukraine has also targeted oil facilities inside Russia, including a pumping station in Samara region linked to the Druzhba pipeline this week.

Orbán's decision to renege on last December's agreement to provide Ukraine with a €90bn loan had infuriated EU leaders, who had agreed to give Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic an opt-out from the scheme.

The Hungarian leader, long seen as the EU's closest partner to Russia's Vladimir Putin, made hostility towards both Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky and the EU central to his failed election campaign. Campaign posters across Hungary portrayed Zelensky alongside Magyar with the message: "They are dangerous!"

Trump buys time for Iran deal after frantic day of diplomacy

Tuesday began as a frantic day of diplomacy in Washington, with Air Force Two ready to fly Vice President JD Vance to Islamabad for another round of peace talks between the US and Iran.

Several hours later, Air Force Two hadn't taken off and the negotiations were postponed. President Donald Trump announced that he would extend the ceasefire with Iran, set to expire on Wednesday evening, to allow the regime more time to create a "unified proposal" to end the war.

In between, Trump weighed his options as the world waited to see if the countries were any closer to ending the war. Trump's decision marked the second time in as many weeks that he has backed off a threat to escalate the war, buying himself more time to wind down a conflict as it approaches the two-month mark.

Vance never officially announced the Islamabad trip, leaving Washington guessing. And Iran never officially committed to attending the talks, leaving the White House in the difficult position of deciding whether or not to send Vance with no assurance that Tehran would even come to the table.

As the day wore on, signs of a postponement emerged. Special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, senior members of the US negotiating team led

by Vance, flew to Washington from Miami instead of heading straight to Islamabad. Soon after, Vance made his way to the White House for "policy meetings" as the president and his senior advisers debated what to do next.

In the end, Trump announced the ceasefire extension on Truth Social, his preferred means for war updates since it began in late February. The president said he made the decision at the request of Pakistan, which has mediated talks between Tehran and Washington.

"We have been asked to hold our Attack on the Country of Iran until such time as their leaders and representatives can come up with a unified proposal," Trump said.

Notably, Trump this time did not specify how long the ceasefire might last. Earlier this month, he set a two-week deadline for the first ceasefire. That came after conflicting comments in press interviews, during which he said the talks were going well but also warned that he would consider resuming the war if Iran refused to negotiate.

"There is no clear formula" for ending wars, James Jeffrey, a former US ambassador to Iraq and Turkey, told the BBC.

Trump isn't the first US president to "threaten significant military escalation," Jeffrey added, "while also putting a good deal on the table."

Trump family's crypto firm sued over alleged 'extortion'

The Trump family's World Liberty crypto venture is being sued by one of its billionaire backers over allegations of extortion.

Justin Sun has accused World Liberty of an "illegal scheme" to seize his WLFI tokens, a cryptocurrency issued by the company.

Sun alleges the firm, co-founded by US President Donald Trump and his son Eric Trump, has "frozen" all of his tokens and stripped him of his right to vote on governance issues.

The BBC has contacted Trump and World Liberty for comment.

Sun is an ardent supporter of Trump and his stance on cryptocurrencies, but accused "certain individuals" associated with World Liberty of acting against the president's values.

"They wrongfully froze all of my tokens, stripped me of my right to vote on governance proposals, and have threatened to permanently destroy my tokens by 'burning' them - all without any proper justification," he said in a social media post announcing the lawsuit.

Sun is the founder of a separate multi-billion dollar crypto project, TRON. He initially in-

vested \$45m (£33m) in World Liberty and said that, at times, his WLFI tokens have been valued at more than \$1bn (£740m).

Since September, the price of a single WLFI token has plunged from 31 cents to just under 8 cents.

Sun said his backing was driven by the Trump family's association with the project and his long-standing support for cryptocurrencies. He also bought \$100m of Trump's meme coins in July 2025, as well.

World Liberty's co-founders include Donald Trump and Eric Trump

But Sun alleged that those running World Liberty, including another co-founder, Chase Herro, are using it as a "golden opportunity to leverage the Trump brand to profit through fraud".

In his complaint, filed on Tuesday in a San Francisco federal court, Sun argues that initial promises to give token-holders the option to trade the currency in future "were false and misleading".

While the tokens at large became tradeable, Sun said World Liberty has blocked him from being able to sell a single one, and is now threatening to "burn" his - deleting them entirely.

US and Iran in blockade standoff as Pakistan pushes for talks

Courtesy of last night's Truth Social post from US President Donald Trump, the ceasefire between Iran, the US and Israel which was due to expire on Wednesday does at least persist.

Instead of fighting, we have a "war of blockades" over the Strait of Hormuz, with both sides using force to intercept and seize commercial vessels.

The mood out in one of the world's most important waterways is combustible. It would be unwise to bet against events spiralling out of control.

In the meantime, Islamabad still waits for Iranian and American representatives to arrive for peace talks.

Parts of the city remain sealed off, the signs are still up and the hotel where talks were expected to take place is empty, ready for the hoped-for return of high-level delegations.

But after several days of fevered anticipation, the atmosphere has changed.

Gone is the talk of press pools in faraway Washington being told to head for the airport, or speculation about the contents of the giant C-17 Globemaster transport planes that landed at a nearby military

airbase earlier in the week.

In its place is the gloomy realisation that an opportunity for Pakistan to prove itself on the international stage, to broker a deal - any kind of deal - between mortal enemies may have slipped out of Islamabad's grasp. For now.

Pakistan has not given up. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who has invested considerable diplomatic capital in getting the two parties together, posted on social media that Pakistan would "continue its earnest efforts for negotiated settlement of the conflict".

Donald Trump has told at least one journalist that a deal is still possible in the next few days.

It's hard to know if this is reality speaking, or the voice of an impatient man, anxious to remove Iran from his most urgent to-do list before King Charles arrives in Washington for a state visit next Monday - and Trump's much anticipated visit to China not long afterwards.

Iran dismissed the president's suggestion that he was giving Tehran time to come up with a "unified position", but it seems unlikely that the regime, already bruised and battered by the war, will break the ceasefire, thus inviting more punishment from the air.

Two hostages captured in Niger freed by Russia's Africa Corps in Mali

Russia's army said Tuesday its Africa Corps unit had freed two hostages - employees of Russian geology company - held in Mali, almost two years after they were captured by an al-Qaeda-linked group in neighbouring Niger.

In August 2024, the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (GSIM or JNIM) released a video featuring two men it said had been captured in Mbanga, southwest Niger, from a Russian geology company.

Moscow said they had been taken hostage the month before.

The two men - Oleg Greta, a Russian citizen born in 1962 and Yuri Yurov, a Ukrainian born in 1970 - were freed by a "special operation" carried out by Russia's Africa Corps in Mali, Russia's defence ministry said.

"An initial medical examination by Russian doctors at the Africa Corps hospital revealed that they suffer from numerous medical conditions and severe

physical exhaustion," it said in a statement on social media.

It published video of the pair slouched down, one leaning against a pillow under a blanket.

The Africa Corps has largely taken over the operations of Russian mercenary group Wagner on the continent, which had a widespread presence there, deploying fighters alongside the armies of countries including Libya and Mali.

Mbanga, where the hostages were taken, is in the Tillaberi region near Niger's borders with Burkina Faso and Mali. It's home to several gold mines.

There have been several instances of hostage-taking in the region over the last six years.

Russia has despatched military instructors and paramilitary groups to several juntas in Africa's Sahel region, fighting off jihadist insurgencies.

Amid its war on Ukraine, Moscow has sought to expand its political, economic and military footprint in Africa.



EQUATORIAL GUINEA PRISONERS:

The inmates were gathered together to hear the Pope's message.

Pope Leo criticises Equatorial Guinea prisons as he winds up Africa tour

Pope Leo has criticised the treatment of prisoners in Equatorial Guinea, ahead of a visit to a jail known for its dire conditions.

He addressed the Central African nation on Wednesday at a Mass that drew some 100,000 people, including Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, the country's leader and the world's long-serving president.

Pope Leo said: "My thoughts go to the poorest, to families experiencing difficulty and to prisoners who are often forced to live in troubling hygienic and sanitary conditions."

Oil-rich Equatorial Guinea, a country with a poor human rights record and vast income inequalities, is the Pope's final stop on a four-nation tour of Africa.

In the evening on Wednesday,

his last full day of the tour, Pope Leo is scheduled to visit an infamous prison in the economic capital, Bata.

Amnesty International has said inmates in Bata prison are "reportedly routinely beaten as punishment". Numerous prisoners "have neither been seen nor heard from, and their relatives do not know whether they are alive or dead," the human rights organisation added.

During Wednesday's Mass at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in the town of Mongomo, Pope Leo urged Equatoguineans "to serve the common good rather than private interests, bridging the gap between the privileged and the disadvantaged".

He also called for the country's resources to be used to improve the lives of the wider population

and not just a privileged few.

"The Creator has endowed you with great natural wealth. I urge you to work together so that it may be a blessing for all," he said, warning that the future of the country depended on the people's choices.

Obiang's government has also been accused of corruption and diverting the country's oil revenues for the benefit of the elite, which it denies.

The president's son, who serves as the vice-president, was fined in a French court in 2020 for using public money to fund a luxurious lifestyle in the European nation. His French assets have since been seized.

Watchdog Transparency International has listed Equatorial Guinea as one of the world's most corrupt states, while the World Bank reports that more than half

of Equatoguineans live in poverty.

Political opposition in Equatorial Guinea is barely tolerated and is severely hampered by the lack of a free press, as all broadcast media is either owned outright by the government or controlled by its allies.

"May there be greater room for freedom and may the dignity of the human person always be safeguarded," the Pope said pointedly.

President Obiang, who is 83 years old and seized power in 1979, held a private meeting with the Pope on Tuesday.

During his tour of Africa - in which he visited Algeria, Cameroon and Angola - Leo has spoken frankly and emphatically, blasting "tyrants" for spending billions on wars and condemning the "colonisation" of Africa's mineral resources.

South Korean fighter jets collided due to pilots taking pictures, report finds

South Korean authorities have found that two fighter jets collided mid-air in 2021 because the pilots were taking pictures and videos.

The incident took place while the jets were on a flight mission in the central city of Daegu, according to Seoul's Board of Audit and Inspection.

The pilots survived with no injuries, but the collision

damaged the planes, costing the military 880 million won (\$596,000; £440,500) in repairs.

One of the pilots, who has since left the military, was made to pay a fine of 88 million won.

The incident took place because that pilot had wanted to take photos to commemorate his last flight with his military unit.

Taking photos of significant flights was "a widespread prac-

tice among pilots at the time", the audit board said in a report published on Wednesday.

The pilot had declared his intent to do so in a briefing before the flight, according to the report.

He was flying the wingman aircraft and was following the lead aircraft during the mission. While flying back to their base, he started taking pictures using his personal mobile phone.

Upon noticing this, the pilot of the lead aircraft then asked another pilot on his plane to film a video of the wingman aircraft.

The wingman pilot then abruptly flew his jet up higher and flipped it so that it could be better captured on camera. This manoeuvre brought the two planes very close to each other.

To avoid a crash, the lead aircraft tried to rapidly descend. But the two F-15K jets eventually collided, damaging the lead aircraft's left wing and the wingman aircraft's tail stabiliser.

South Korea's air force sus-

ended the wingman pilot, who has since left the military to work for a commercial airline.

Subsequently, the air force sought to fine the wingman pilot 880 million won to cover the full amount of the repair costs. When the pilot appealed against the fine, it prompted an investigation by the audit board.

The wingman pilot acknowledged his sudden manoeuvre led to the collision, but argued that the lead aircraft's pilot had "tacitly consented" to the manoeuvre since he was aware that filming was taking place.

The audit board eventually ruled that the wingman pilot should only pay a tenth of what the air force sought.

It said that the air force should bear some responsibility for not properly regulating pilots' personal use of cameras.

The board also took into account that the wingman pilot had a good track record prior to the incident, and that he had

Iran targets three ships in Strait of Hormuz escalation

He is once again under threat, as Iranian forces move against commercial vessels in the Strait of Hormuz. On Wednesday, three container vessels were caught in separate incidents, two seized, and one fired upon.

According to British maritime security officials, an Iranian Revolutionary Guard gun-

boat opened fire on a container ship off the coast of Oman, causing heavy damage to its bridge. Despite the attack, all crew members were reported safe.

At the same time, Iran's Revolutionary Guards say they intercepted and seized two ships in the Strait of Hormuz, accusing them of violating a blockade imposed during the

ongoing conflict.

The vessels were reportedly redirected toward Iranian waters.

In a third incident, another cargo ship was fired upon west of Iran and temporarily forced to stop, though no damage or injuries were reported.

The Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical oil and trade routes, has seen growing

restrictions since the outbreak of war involving Iran, the United States, and Israel earlier this year.

Shipping in the strait remains under intense pressure, with both Iran and US forces enforcing rival controls.

Despite a recently extended truce, these incidents highlight how fragile the situation remains.



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Edo FA Cup: Bendel Insurance FC thrash St. Andrews FC to secure President Federation Cup qualification

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Bendel Insurance Football Club, on Wednesday, April 22, 2026 defeated ST. An-



Edo State Sports Commission Coach Baldwin Bazuaye presents Man of the Match Award to Insurance FC Chijioke Akuneto.

draws FC 3-0 in the second Semifinals match of Edo FA cup to secure qualification for the 2026 President Cup Tournament.

The Benin Arsenal will be

defending the Edo FA cup they have been winning consecutively since 2019 against Westgate FC on Sunday, April 26. The final match is scheduled to hold at 4pm on Sunday at the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium, Benin.

Insurance FC final opponents Westgate FC defeated Inne Stars last week to reach the Edo FA cup final for the first time.

The defending champions Bendel Insurance FC and Westgate FC have already qualified for the President Federation Cup Tournament irrespective of the outcome of the FA cup final match on Sunday.

Bendel Insurance FC who went into the semifinals clash

with ST. Andrews at the Crescent Sports Club field with confidence following their impressive 2-1 away victory against Wikki Tourists FC on Sunday scored all their three goals in the first half to avenge the beating of their Feeders team by ST. Andrews FC in the second round of the tournament.

Promise Anyanwu opened scoring for the Benin Arsenal 14 minutes into the game to silence the noisy fans of ST. Andrews FC.

Akuneto Chijioke who was the man of the match struck twice in quick succession to extend the lead for the defending champions in the 27th and 30th minutes.



RUGBY ACTION

Rugby: NRFF shifts Abeokuta Sevens Cup to June

The Nigeria Rugby Football Federation (NRFF) has announced a new date for the Tunde Delu Abeokuta Rugby Sevens Cup 2026.

The federation's media coordinator, Tolu Oguntimehin, disclosed this in a statement issued on Wednesday.

He said the third edition has been moved from April 23 to June, with the exact date yet to be confirmed.

According to him, the adjustment followed internal consultations aimed at delivering a more impactful and well-structured competition.

He added that the shift would create room for increased participation and broader international representation.

The tournament sponsor and NRFF Chief Operating Officer, Tunde Delu, said the decision followed engagement with key stakeholders.

"After consultations and to accommodate more teams while boosting international appeal, the competition has been moved to June.

"The specific date and further details will be communicated after final consultations with participating teams and

D'Tigress draw France, Hungary, South Korea in tough FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup 2026 group clash

Nigeria's D'Tigress have been handed a challenging but intriguing path at the upcoming FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup 2026 after the official group stage draw placed them in a competitive Group B alongside France, Hungary, and South Korea.

The tournament, set to run from September 4-13 in Germany, will see the best women's national teams battle for global supremacy, and Nigeria will be aiming to build on their growing reputation as Africa's dominant force on the hardwood.

Drawn against European powerhouse France, Nigeria faces an immediate test of pedigree and resilience.

France, perennial contenders on the world stage, will likely start as group favourites, but the aging D'Tigress team has shown in recent years they are capable of upsetting top-ranked opposition.

Hungary presents another stern European challenge, known for their disciplined structure and physical play, while South Korea bring speed and tactical sharpness from Asia's elite basketball ranks.

The mix of styles in Group B sets the stage for a fiercely contested battle for qualification spots.

For Nigeria women's national basketball team, the draw represents both a hurdle and

an opportunity.

As multiple-time African champions, Nigeria carries the continent's hopes and will be eager to translate continental dominance into a deeper run on the global stage.

Elsewhere, Group A features Spain, Japan, Germany, and Mali, while defending giants USA headline Group D alongside China, Italy, and the Czech Republic.



D'TIGRESS PLAYERS

NIS partners NELFUND to boost sports education, workforce development

The National Institute for Sports (NIS) has called for strategic collaboration with the Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) to strengthen sports education and develop a skilled workforce within Nigeria's sports ecosystem.

The Director-General of NIS, Philip Shaibu, made the call during a visit to the NELFUND headquarters, highlighting the critical role the fund can play in supporting aspiring coaches and sports professionals.

In a statement issued by his Special Adviser on Media, Ben Ogbemudia, Shaibu reiterated that the institute's core man-

date is to train sports personnel and drive capacity development in the sector.

"We are here to partner with NELFUND. They have a key role in developing coaches and building the workforce needed in the sports sector.

"NIS once trained coaches from across Africa who came to learn sports administration and coaching, unfortunately, the institute suffered years of neglect and mismanagement.

"However, President Bola Tinubu, in a bid to revitalise the institute, has restored life to NIS, the engine room of sports development in Nigeria.

"What was missing was vi-

tal, and that has now been restored," Shaibu said.

He noted that the current administration is focused on returning the institute to its original vision while aligning it with modern global standards.

Shaibu added that several African countries are now adopting similar sports development models conceptualised by Nigeria over five decades ago.

"Our institute was originally modelled after leading institutions in Australia and Germany. The structures remain solid, but they lacked vitality.

"It felt like stepping into the unknown, but we had to chart a new path.

EPL: Brighton thrash Chelsea 3-0, extend Blues' scoreless streak

Chelsea on Tuesday slumped to a fifth straight league defeat without scoring, losing 3-0 to Brighton in their worst run since 1912.

Goal from Ferdi Kadioglu in the 3rd minute, Jack Hinshelwood 56th minute strike and Danny Welbeck stoppage time

goal sealed victory for Brighton at the Amex Stadium.

The defeat piles pressure on head coach Liam Rosenior, as disgruntled fans called for his sack following another dismal display.

Brighton's win lifts them above Chelsea into sixth place, boosting their push for Euro-

pean qualification with four matches remaining.

Chelsea's struggles persist in spite of heavy spending, with the team losing three consecutive matches at Brighton's home ground.

Moises Caicedo, one of Chelsea's costly signings, was at fault for the second goal after

slipping and losing possession.

Brighton took early control when Pascal Gross' corner was flicked on, allowing Kadioglu to score via a deflection.

The hosts dominated proceedings, creating multiple chances while Chelsea failed to register meaningful attacking threat.

Rugby coaching, medical course draw record interest

Preparations for the Nigeria Rugby Football Federation (NRFF) coaching and medical course have gained momentum, attracting an unprecedented number of interested participants.

The federation's media coordinator, Tolu Oguntimehin, disclosed this in a statement issued on Wednesday.

The event is organised with Ogun, World Rugby and Rugby Africa, supported by stakeholders committed to rugby development in the region.

The two-day programme will hold on Thursday and Friday at the MKO Abiola Sports Arena in Abeokuta.

According to Oguntimehin, the course will equip aspiring

coaches and medical personnel with foundational qualifications required to operate within the sport.

"It also aims to raise standards, enhance player welfare and develop the next generation of rugby union professionals," he said.

He added the initiative aligned with the federation's strategy to expand rugby's reach and create accessible pathways through structured training and education.

NRFF General Manager, Azeez Ladipo, stressed the importance of capacity building within the sport.

"We are committed to creating opportunities for young people to be empowered across different areas of sports.



RUGBY ACTION

Sports

CAF set to move AFCON 2027 to S'Africa



CAF PRESIDENT

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) is considering a major change to the hosting plans for the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations, with South Africa emerging as a potential replacement for the original hosts.

The tournament was initially awarded to a joint bid from Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, marking a historic first for East Africa to co-host the continent's biggest football competition.

However, recent developments indicate that preparations across the three nations have fallen behind schedule, raising serious concerns within CAF over their readiness to stage the tournament.

Key infrastructure projects,

including stadium renovations, transport networks, and accommodation facilities, are reportedly progressing slower than expected, prompting CAF to reassess the situation.

As a result, South Africa has now been identified as a strong alternative, given its proven track record in hosting major international tournaments including FIFA World Cup.

The country successfully hosted the 2010 FIFA World Cup and has continued to maintain world-class sporting infrastructure, making it a reliable backup option.

Sources within CAF suggest that discussions are ongoing, with a final decision expected in the coming months.



VOLLEYBALL ACTION

Volleyball: School championship heats up in Lagos

The battle for honours at the second National School Volleyball Championship intensified on Wednesday, as teams from nine states clashed in keenly contested matches.

The tournament is taking place at the Teslim Balogun Stadium, Surulere.

The competition, for secondary schools, is organised by the Nigeria School Sport Federation with the Nigeria Volleyball Federation, supported by the Lagos State Sports Commission.

The four-day event aims to nurture talent and select players for the International School Sport Federation World School Volleyball Championship in China, July 1-10.

Teams from Lagos, Ondo, Ekiti, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Bayelsa, Ad-

amawa and Bauchi are competing in boys' and girls' categories.

A total of 28 teams are participating, comprising 18 boys' squads and 10 girls' squads.

Hundreds of students have converged on the venue, bringing energy and passion to the second edition of the championship.

NSSF President, Olabisi Joseph, praised participating schools' enthusiasm and reaffirmed commitment to developing volleyball talent through schools.

"We are excited with the huge support from NVBF, ensuring international standards and the presence of top officials to handle proceedings.

"This collaboration will produce quality athletes and worthy ambassadors for our nation," she said.

FIBA World Cup: D'Tigress draw tough group with France, South Korea and Hungary

Nigeria's D'Tigress have been drawn in Group B with France, South Korea and Hungary for the 2026 FIBA Women's World Cup.

The eighth-ranked team face a competitive group widely described as open and highly challenging for qualification.

D'Tigress will renew rivalries with France and South Korea, both of whom defeated them during the World Cup qualifiers in Lyon earlier this year.

Nigeria lost 93-86 to France and 77-60 to South Korea, in spite of securing a convincing win over Colombia between both fixtures.

The results are expected to fuel Nigeria's determination as they prepare to meet familiar opponents on the global stage once again.

The 16-team tournament will take place in Germany from Sept. 4 to Sept. 13 featuring the world's leading women's basketball nations.

France, ranked second globally, lead Group B, with South Korea ranked 15th and Hungary 19th completing the lineup.

Hosts Germany headline Group A alongside Spain, Japan and Mali, while Group C features Australia and Belgium in a competitive pairing.

Defending champions, the United States, top Group D, where they will face China, Italy

and Czechia in their title defence.

D'Tigress Head coach, Rena Wakama, has named a 21-player provisional squad blending experience and youth, saying: "We are building depth and belief."

The team is also scheduled to play high-profile friendlies against WNBA sides as part of preparations for the tournament.

Key players including Ezinne Kalu, Promise Amukamara and Victoria Macaulay are expected to anchor Nigeria's squad.



Igboka regrets dearth of coaches in Anambra sports sector

National athletic coach, Johnny Igboka, has expressed concern over the "increasing dearth" of technical officials in Anambra's sports sector.

Igboka, who is the Founder and Chief Coach of All Sports Foundation Academy, Nimo, made the remark in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Awka on Tuesday.

He said it was regrettable that only four athletic coaches in the state were certified at the national level.

He said that the poor technical manpower was affecting grassroots development and exposure of athletes in the state.

"Currently, I can say we do not have coaches in Anambra.

"Some of our best coaches, who were also athletes in the past, have retired from service and the state is not interested in tapping from their experience.



JOHNNY IGBOKA

"As I am talking to you, just only four athletic coaches, including myself, are known at the national level, most sports in the state do not have coaches," he said.

Igboka, who retired from the Anambra Sports Development Commission, therefore, called on Gov. Chukwuma Soludo to pay more attention to sports "by appointing a passionate chairman, who would genuinely work for the progress of the sector and development of athletes".

He advocated for special recruitment of coaches, who had both the playing and administrative experience, against the culture of using civil servants as sports coaches.

Basketball: France awarded hosting rights for 2031 FIBA Basketball World Cup



FRANCE COACH

France has been officially confirmed as the host nation for the 2031 FIBA Basketball World Cup following a decision by the FIBA Central Board.

The tournament will be staged across three major cities Lille, Lyon, and Paris with the competition set to take place from August 29 to September 14, 2031.

Paris will host the final phase of the tournament, including the semifinals and the championship game, where the next world champion will be

decided.

France's selection underscores its strong track record in organizing major international sporting events, supported by modern infrastructure and a deep-rooted basketball tradition.

The use of multiple host cities is expected to enhance fan participation nationwide while highlighting the country's diverse regions.

The 2031 FIBA Basketball World Cup is expected to feature the top basketball nations globally, promising a highly competitive showcase under the sport's world governing body.

CBN Director Yusuf backs 2026 AACT bid, pledges collaboration

Rakiya Yusuf, Director, Payment System Supervision Department of the Central Bank of Nigeria, has pledged support for Nigeria's bid to host the 2026 All Africa Challenge Trophy (AACT).

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that Yusuf made the pledge during a courtesy visit by Lami Ahmed, President, Ladies Golf Association of Nigeria, and her team on Tuesday in Abuja.

Yusuf, who expressed appreciation for her surprise award and appointment as an AACT Ambassador, said she would support Nigeria's aspiration to host the continental championship.

"I am honoured by this recognition and accept the ambassadorial role with responsibility to support Nigeria's dream of hosting the championship successfully," she said.

Yusuf also reaffirmed the

apex bank's readiness to collaborate with stakeholders, adding that efforts would be made to facilitate LGAN's planned visit to the CBN Governor.

"The Governor is a strong advocate of collaboration, reflected in strides recorded in monetary policy, ease of doing business and payment systems within two years," Yusuf said.

Yusuf further informed the delegation of the existence of the CBN Golf Association and introduced its captain, Sunkanmi Aroyehun, who was present at the meeting.

Aroyehun commended the recognition, describing Yusuf as a committed member and worthy ambassador.

"LGAN made the right choice. Dr Yusuf has remained a strong pillar in promoting golf and supporting initiatives within the association," he said.



Rakiya Yusuf (middle), Director, Payment System Supervision Department of the Central Bank of Nigeria

SPORTS



NWFL: Robo Queens book Super Six ticket with 1-0 win over Remo Stars Ladies

FC Robo Queens have secured qualification for the NWFL Premiership Super Six after a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Remo Stars Ladies in a Southwest derby clash.



ROBO QUEENS AND REMO STARS LADIES

The Lagos-based side delivered a composed and disciplined performance, capitalizing on home advantage to edge a tightly contested encounter. The decisive win confirms their return to the league's elite playoff stage, where the top teams compete for the championship.

Robo Queens showed tactical maturity and efficiency in front of goal, demonstrating the resilience and focus required in high-stakes matches. Their qualification marks a significant milestone in the season and reinforces their status as one of the league's formidable contenders.

With their place now confirmed, attention will turn to their prospects in the Super Six as they aim to challenge for top honors.



AKOR ADAMS

Adams shares first-hand insight into Sevilla-Betis rivalry

Super Eagles forward Akor Adams offered a vivid reflection on the intensity and significance of El Gran Derbi, describing the clash with Real Betis as an experience that transcends ordinary football.

Speaking during an interactive session organised by LaLiga on Tuesday, the Nigerian international emphasised the emotional weight and cultural importance of the fixture, which divides the city of Seville. "Some things in life can't really be explained—you just have to experience them," Adams said. "El Gran Derbi is one of those moments. It's not just about the points; it's pure football and passion from both sets of fans and the entire city."

The long-standing rivalry between Sevilla and Betis slightly favours Sevilla historically. Since their first LaLiga meeting in February 1935—won 3-0 by Betis—both sides have met 109 times in the com-

petition. Sevilla have recorded 50 victories, compared to Betis' 32, with 27 matches ending in draws.

Although Adams is yet to score in the derby, he came close during the March 2026 encounter. The 26-year-old was a constant attacking threat, forcing a save in the 77th minute before seeing a late effort cleared off the line in a dramatic 2-2 draw.

Reflecting on that match, Adams highlighted the unpredictable and electrifying nature of the occasion.

"As a footballer, you can only prepare so much. What happens on matchday is entirely different," he said. "We came back from 2-0 down and nearly won it at the end. It was a fantastic experience, especially playing away."

Adams also underscored the unique atmosphere surrounding the derby, suggesting it is something every football fan should witness.

Crisis rocks DR Congo federation election as players reject ex-CAF Secretary General candidacy

Tensions have escalated within Congolese football as fresh controversy surrounds the upcoming leadership election of the Fédération Congolaise de Football Association (FECOFA), with players openly protesting against the candidacy of former Confederation of African Football (CAF) Secretary General Véron Mosengo-Omba.

The crisis deepened after a group of Congolese footballers unveiled a protest banner rejecting Mosengo-Omba's bid for the FECOFA presidency.

The players, whose identities were not immediately disclosed, expressed strong opposition, insisting on preserving what they described as the 'sovereignty' of their football administration.

According to sources close to the situation, the protest reflects growing unease among stakeholders over the potential influence of external forces in the federation's electoral process.

The players' action signals a rare but significant intervention from active footballers in administrative matters, underlining the depth of concern within the domestic game.

Mosengo-Omba, who previously served in a high-ranking administrative role at CAF, recently confirmed his candidacy for the FECOFA top job, a move that has since generated mixed reactions across the Congolese football community.

While some view his experience at continental level as an

asset capable of reforming the federation, critics argue that his leadership could undermine local control and autonomy.

As the election approaches, the situation continues to develop, with the possibility of further protests or institutional responses from FECOFA and other governing bodies.

The unfolding dispute highlights ongoing governance challenges within African football, where leadership contests often trigger broader debates about transparency, independence, and stakeholder representation.



VÉRON MOSENGO-OMBA

FIBA Women's World Cup: France coach labels Nigeria as tough opponent

France women's national basketball team head coach, Jean-Aimé Toupane, has acknowledged the persistent challenge posed by Nigeria ahead of the 2026 FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup, describing the African champions as a consistently tough opponent.

Following the release of the draw for the tournament, FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup 2026 placed France in a competitive Group alongside Nigeria's D'Tigress, Hungary, and South Korea.

France enter the fixture with recent confidence after defeating Ni-

geria in a qualifying tournament, but Toupane insisted past results will count for little when both sides meet again on the global stage.

"We mustn't lose our focus just because we've recently played Nigeria," he said.

"Facing a team you've beaten recently is never easy. We need to maintain the same level of seriousness, the same determination, and the same ambition to have a great tournament."

"He further emphasized the mutual familiarity between both teams, adding: "The advantage is that we know them."

"But they know us too. It's never easy to play Nigeria. This will be the third competition in a row where we face them; it's always very tough."



Tokyo confirmed as host for 2030 FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup

The FIBA has officially announced Japan as the host of the 2030 edition of the FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup.

According to the global basketball governing body, the tournament will be staged in Tokyo, further strengthening the city's status as a premier destination for major international sporting events.

Japan's selection reflects its proven track record in organizing world-class competitions, with FIBA highlighting the nation's

modern infrastructure, efficient organization, and deep-rooted basketball culture as key factors behind the decision.

The 2030 tournament is set to feature top national teams from around the world, all vying for global honours in what is expected to be a highly competitive showcase of elite women's basketball.

Further details, including venues, match schedules, and qualification processes, are expected to be announced by FIBA in the coming months.