

# FG begins nationwide review of agric curricula

The Federal Government has commenced a comprehensive review of agricultural curricula in polytechnics and colleges of education to address widening skills gaps and revive youth interest in agriculture.

The Chairman of the Agriculture Curriculum Review Implementation Committee, Prof. Idris Bugaje, disclosed this at a two-day national workshop on agricultural curriculum review

on Monday in Abuja.

Bugaje, who is also the Executive Secretary of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), said many agricultural programmes had remained unchanged for more than 15 years.

He said the outdated curricula had become unattractive to young Nigerians and misaligned with industry needs.

According to him, the review will cover all 33 Nation-

al Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) agricultural curricula, alongside more than 32 National Occupational Standards.

Bugaje said past funding for curriculum review was grossly inadequate.

He noted that about N50 million was previously allocated annually to review over 320 curricula and more than 100 occupational standards nationwide.

“The work before this committee is critical because agriculture remains the mainstay of Nigeria’s economy.

“It employs a large number of Nigerians and contributes significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

“Unfortunately, admissions into agricultural programmes have been declining because the curricula are no longer attractive or responsive to cur-

rent realities,” he said.

Bugaje added that the review would prioritise practical, industry-driven training rather than purely academic content.

He said private sector participation would be strengthened to ensure graduates acquire relevant skills aligned with modern agriculture and global best practices.

The NBTE boss said four thematic groups covering crops

and agronomy, livestock, fisheries, and forestry would develop implementation timelines.

He added that the groups would also recommend industry resource persons for the exercise.

Bugaje noted that undergraduate agricultural programmes under the National Universities Commission (NUC) would not

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# The Nigerian OBSERVER

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#200

# CDS orders total offensive against bandits • *Vows safer N'West, stronger air support*

The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Olufemi Oluyede, has ordered troops of Operation Fansan

Yamma (OPFY) to intensify operations and flush out all remaining bandits and criminal elements from the North-West region.

Oluyede gave the directive

on Monday during his maiden operational visit to troops in Gusau, Zamfara State, where he assessed their readiness, reviewed operational challenges, and boosted morale in the ongoing counter-banditry and anti-kidnapping campaign.

He declared that Nigeria must be made safe “at all costs,” stressing that the military would sustain renewed pressure on criminal networks with improved aerial support.

“My charge to the troops is clear: go out there and elim-

inate all these criminals. We must make Nigeria safe at all costs,” he said.

The CDS reaffirmed the Armed Forces’ determination to clear the North-West of banditry, noting that sustained operations would ultimately

restore peace and stability in the region.

He acknowledged existing limitations in air support but assured that efforts were ongoing to strengthen the Nigerian Air Force’s operational capacity.

According to him, available platforms are being deployed across multiple theatres, while government is working to acquire additional equipment to support ground operations.

Oluyede commended the Zamfara State Government and local communities for their continued support to military operations, noting recent procurement of armoured vehicles, including Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) platforms, which he said would enhance operational effectiveness across the region.

He also appealed for stronger collaboration from residents, particularly in intelligence sharing, describing credible information as critical to dismantling bandit networks operating in the area.

The Defence Chief later paid a courtesy visit to Governor Dauda Lawal, where both held a closed-door meeting before his departure from the state.



**CLOSING OF 6 DIVISION INTER BRIGADE:** Obua of Elele, HRH Eze Mike Elechie (6th L); Special Guest of Honour Brig.-Gen. Emmanuel Adamu (M); representative of the Commander 16 Brigade, Col. Mubarak Yahaya, (10th R) and others, during the closing of the 6 Division Inter Brigade Below Corporal Competition in Elele Barracks, River State.

# EIRS reaffirms ban on transport levies, unveils tax reforms

The Executive Chairman of the Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS), John Odior has reiterated the state government’s continued

ban on the collection of transport levies while affirming that transporters in Edo State still enjoy tax incentives introduced to support the sector.

Odior gave the assurance during separate engagements with stakeholders, including the

leadership of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), the Road Transport Employers Association of Nigeria (RTEAN), and the Amalgamated Union of ANNEWAT, as well as meetings with banks and Data Collecting Agents (DCAs)

operating in the state’s revenue ecosystem.

He explained that the transport sector remains a key driver of Edo State’s economy, noting that tax incentives introduced since August 2025 have helped reduce the cost of transporting goods and services

across the state.

While reaffirming government support for the sector, Odior raised concerns over non-compliance among some operators, particularly commercial drivers without valid vehicle number plates. He called for stronger collaboration with union leaders to ensure strict adherence to ve-

hicle registration laws, stressing that this would enhance revenue generation, improve security, and strengthen public safety.

The EIRS boss also urged transport union members to take advantage of the extended deadline for filing annual

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PDP backs Makinde, dismisses impeachment rumours

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Tehran will never cede control of Strait of Hormuz, senior Iranian politician says

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Team Nigeria’s camp for World relays opens in Lagos

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# 2027: Nigeria won't return to 'Years of Regression' —APC

## LAGOS

The All Progressives Congress (APC) has declared that Nigeria will not return to what it described as years of regression and squandered opportunities, insisting that the 2027 general elections will mark a decisive moment of democratic reckoning.

oning.

The party, through its Lagos State spokesman, Mr Seye Oladejo, made the assertion on Monday, warning opposition figures against what it called attempts to mislead Nigerians ahead of the polls.

Oladejo said the country had moved beyond what he termed a "dark, wasteful and inglorious

era," stressing that the electorate would reject any attempt to reverse ongoing reforms.

"2027 will not be a pathway back to regression or a return to squandered opportunities. Nigeria will not return to policy somersaults or leadership by rhetoric and ruinous experimentation," he said.

He added that the forthcoming election would separate "genuine leadership from recycled ambition, substance from sloganeering, and nation-builders from opportunists."

The APC spokesman accused opposition figures, particularly those aligned with the African Democratic Congress (ADC), of parading themselves

in "borrowed robes of reform," despite having held top public offices without delivering meaningful progress.

According to him, many of the opposition actors currently positioning themselves as alternatives had previously wielded significant power but failed to utilise opportunities for national development.

"Before anyone takes seriously the sanctimonious posturing of the opposition, it is proper to interrogate their records and credentials. These are not men unfamiliar with power, but old hands who have occupied the highest offices and wasted decades of national opportunity," he said.

Oladejo questioned what he described as the opposition's "newfound patriotism," asking where such concern was when they were in positions of authority.

"Where was this patriotism when they held office? Where was the outrage when institutions weakened and governance faltered? It is hypocrisy for those who created yesterday's failures to present themselves as today's cure," he said.

He further described the emerging opposition coalition as "displaced power brokers" lacking vision and ideological clarity, adding that Nigerians were now more discerning and less susceptible to what he

termed the theatrics of recycled political actors.

Oladejo maintained that the reforms being implemented under President Bola Tinubu, though difficult, were necessary for long-term national development.

"These reforms may be tough, but they are courageous, purposeful and future-facing. They stand in sharp contrast to years of policy drift, fiscal indiscipline and leadership inertia," he said.

He emphasised that political power must be earned through credibility, vision and public trust, warning that "blackmail, brinkmanship and rhetoric" would not secure electoral victory.

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be reviewed immediately.

He said this was in line with the commission's five-year curriculum review cycle.

He added that the exercise would instead focus on programmes supervised by NBTE and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE).

Bugaje commended the Ministers of Education, the Minister of State for Agriculture, and the Minister of Livestock Development for their collaboration.

He said their efforts facilitated the establishment of the committee.

The Executive Secretary of NCCE, Dr Angela Ajala, said Nigeria must urgently shift agricultural education from theory to hands-on practice.

Ajala said this was necessary to address manpower shortages in extension services and specialised farm operations.

She said the decline in trained agricultural extension officers and technical experts underscored the need for a forward-looking curriculum.

"If Nigeria must secure its agricultural future, training must move from classroom theory to practical competence," she said.

Also speaking, the Executive Secretary of the Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria

(ARCN), Dr Abubakar Dabban, said the council was committed to producing industry-ready graduates.

Dabban, represented by Dr Oluwafemi Salako, Director of the Plant Resources Department, said the council would provide technical support for the exercise.

He said ARCN supervised 19 national agricultural research institutes and 17 federal colleges of agriculture.

He added that the council would strengthen research, training, and extension linkages.

An international expert representing the Sector Skills Council for Agriculture, Mr Pascal Durand-Carrier, said ongoing skills-gap surveys would support the review.

Durand-Carrier said the surveys were being conducted in collaboration with international partners.

He said the effort would help align training with labour market demands and strengthen collaboration between academia and industry.

Participants at the workshop expressed optimism that the review would produce modern, market-driven curricula.

They said the outcome would attract young Nigerians to agriculture and enhance national food security.



**AN AWARD OF EXCELLENCE:**

Amb. Solomon Okosun, popularly known as MC Allamano (left) receiving a plaque for an award of excellence from the Director of the Flipmode Brand Nigeria, Duke Benjamin Emetomo.

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tax returns, noting that the statutory deadline of March 30 had been extended to April 30, 2026, to give taxpayers more time to comply with their Personal Income Tax obligations.

He issued a strong warning against unauthorised revenue collection, stressing that no individual, group, or community is permitted to collect levies on behalf of the state government.

"As we speak, collection of levies from the transport sector remains banned. Anyone found collecting illegal revenue will face the full weight of the law," Odior stated, adding that such actions amount to extortion and touting.

He further emphasised the importance of transparency and trust in leadership within unions, noting that effective representation depends on accountability and prioritising members' welfare.

Earlier, the State Chairman of NURTW, Comrade Saturday Uwame, said the unions visited the Revenue House to congratulate Odior on his appointment and to express their readiness to collaborate with government through lawful and structured revenue processes.

In a related development, Odi-

or announced plans by the EIRS to introduce a Consolidated Annual Demand Notice aimed at streamlining levy payments, eliminating multiple taxation, and improving compliance across the state.

He disclosed this during a broader stakeholders' interactive session with trade unions, where he explained that the new system would consolidate all applicable levies into a single annual document.

According to him, "We want to stop fragmented collection of levies. Members will pay once a year through a Consolidated Single Annual Demand Notice that will incorporate all applicable fees."

Odior added that the initiative forms part of wider reforms to automate tax processes in Edo State, enhance transparency, and improve ease of compliance. He also reiterated the extension of the annual tax filing deadline to April 30, 2026, urging full compliance under the self-assessment regime.

He warned that tax evasion remains a criminal offence and advised business owners to formalise their operations, maintain proper records, and obtain Tax Identification Numbers in line with the Nigeria Tax Administration Act (NTAA).

RICHARD EWEKA

## BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has intensified its drive to reposition agriculture with a renewed call on farmers across Edo Central Senatorial District to participate in its ongoing registration and profiling exercise, aimed at strengthening planning and improving access to government support.

The State Commissioner for Agriculture, Jerry Nwangu, made the appeal during an awareness, sensitisation and interactive tour of the five local government areas in the district, stressing that the initiative is critical to identifying genuine farmers and ensuring they ben-

efit directly from state-backed agricultural programmes.

Nwangu explained that the exercise would provide the government with reliable data to enable targeted interventions, including the provision of farm inputs, access to funding opportunities and other incentives designed to boost productivity across the sector.

He noted that without proper documentation, effective planning remains difficult, adding that the government needs to know who the farmers are, their locations and the scale of their production in order to deliver meaningful support.

The commissioner also used the opportunity to promote communal farming, urging

communities to key into the initiative as the government clears large expanses of land to support collective agricultural activities.

He encouraged residents to make land available, assuring that the state would undertake the clearing to make such land suitable for large-scale cultivation.

According to him, communal farming holds significant potential to increase food production, reduce individual costs and enhance access to mechanised farming techniques, while fostering collaboration among farmers.

During the engagements, farmers commended Governor Monday Okpebholo for initiating the programme, describing it as a positive step towards revi-

talising agriculture in the state.

On the concerns over persistent challenges affecting productivity raised by farmers, key were insecurity, limited access to finance and poor rural road infrastructure, which farmers said continue to hinder the transportation of produce to markets and threaten farming activities, the commissioner assured that the government was addressing them.

He noted that the registration and profiling exercise would play a vital role in shaping policies and interventions tailored to the specific needs of farmers.

He emphasised that the administration is committed to improving security, expanding access to agricultural financing and upgrading rural infrastructure to create a more enabling environment for farming.

## Edo intensifies farmers registration, pushes communal farming in Edo Central

## MC Allamano bags Award of Excellence from Flipmode Brand Nigeria

### BENIN CITY

A prominent Edo State entertainer and public official, Amb. Solomon Okosun, popularly known as MC Allamano, has been honoured with an Award of Excellence by Flipmode Brand Nigeria in recognition of his contributions to the enter-

tainment industry and his sustained professionalism as a master of ceremonies.

The award, presented in Benin City yesterday was conferred under the platform of The Jokers Awards, an initiative of Flipmode Brand Nigeria aimed at celebrating individuals who have distinguished themselves in the creative

space through consistency, innovation and excellence.

Presenting the award, the Event Director of the organisation, Duke Benjamin Emetomo, described the recipient as a leading figure in the art of event hosting, noting that his charisma, professionalism and ability to engage audiences have set a high standard for practitioners

across the country.

He said MC Allamano has remained a consistent force in the industry, inspiring a new generation of entertainers.

The Award of Excellence, according to the organisers, is reserved for individuals whose work has significantly elevated standards within Nigeria's creative and entertainment sectors.

**NEWS****Foundation delivers free medical care to 222 residents in Benin**

EDWARD OSEGHE

**ABUJA**

No fewer than 222 residents of Oza and Sakponba communities in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State have received free medical care through a one-day outreach organised by the Esther Idisi Foundation, an intervention that has once again highlighted the widening gap in access to basic healthcare at the grassroots.

The outreach, first by the foundation held at Oza Street Junction, along Sakponba Road in Benin City.

It attracted a large turnout of residents, many of whom seized the rare opportunity to access medical services they said are often beyond their financial reach.

Medical personnel at the event provided a wide range of services, including blood pressure and blood sugar checks, malaria and typhoid testing, eye examinations, and general consultations.

Free medications were also distributed, while patients requiring further care were referred to appropriate health facilities.

Director of Operations of the foundation, Odemero Oloho, who represented the founder, Mrs Choice Idonije, said the initiative was conceived to bridge critical healthcare gaps in underserved communities.

He commended the leadership and management team for their collective effort in ensuring the programme's success, while hinting at plans to expand its scope.

"We initially planned to make this an annual programme, but given the overwhelming response, we will review our strategy and explore ways to scale it up. We are grateful to God for how far we have come and hopeful of making an even greater impact," he said.

Also speaking, the foundation's Secretary, Barrister Imonitie Omokhodion, explained that the outreach was inspired by the legacy of the late Esther Idisi,

whose lifelong commitment to philanthropy continues to guide the foundation's mission.

He noted that the programme coincided with her posthumous birthday and was designed to sustain her tradition of giving, particularly to those unable to afford basic healthcare.

According to him, the turnout far exceeded expectations, underscoring the urgent need for more consistent, community-level health interventions.

Medical implementation partner, Dr Blessing Gomina-Amune, an optometrist and Chief Executive Officer of Jess-Jojo Eye Clinic, described the outreach as highly impactful, noting that demand for services surpassed projections.

"I was scheduled to attend to about 40 patients, but I ended up seeing over 72. This clearly shows the level of need. Many people require these services, but simply cannot afford them," she said.

Another partner, Dr Michael Nwameme, an integrative metabolic health physician, observed

that while cases of hypertension and diabetes were fewer than expected, malaria, infections, and body pains were widespread conditions he linked to prevailing socio-economic realities in the community.

He, however, warned of a gradual shift, noting that increasing access to cheap processed foods could expose low-income populations to lifestyle-related diseases in the future.

He called for intensified

health education and preventive care campaigns to mitigate emerging risks.

Beneficiaries expressed gratitude for the intervention, describing it as both timely and impactful.

**UNIBEN secures full NUC accreditation for all academic programmes****BENIN CITY**

The University of Benin (UNIBEN) has secured full accreditation from the National Universities Commission (NUC) for all its academic programmes, marking a significant milestone for the institution and the first such achievement in many years.

The development was disclosed by the university's Public Relations Officer, Dr Benedicta Ehanire, in a statement made available to journalists in Benin City.

She explained that the ac-

creditation followed a comprehensive assessment exercise conducted by the NUC in October and November 2025, covering the university's faculties, schools, and specialised centres. The outcome was formally conveyed in a letter dated April 7 to the Vice-Chancellor.

Reacting to the achievement, the Vice-Chancellor, Mr Edoba Omoregie, described it as the result of sustained hard work and a strong institutional commitment to academic excellence.

"This accomplishment reflects the dedication of our management and staff to maintaining high educational standards and promoting ac-

demic distinction," he said.

Omoregie commended the university's Senate, faculties, departments, and relevant committees for their diligence in meeting accreditation requirements, noting that the collective effort was central to the success recorded.

He reaffirmed his administration's commitment to strengthening both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in line with his five-point agenda.

The full accreditation status, which is valid for five years until 2030, places UNIBEN among universities with strong compliance with national academic standards, further enhancing its reputation within Nigeria's higher education system.

**A CONDOLENCE VISIT:**

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

PHOTO: MOSES OBOH

**Okpebholo delivering on mandate, Ikhilor fostering unity —Cleric****BENIN CITY**

The The Resident Pastor of Bible Alive Miracle Ministry (BAMM), Pastor Eubaldus Enahoro, has called on residents of Edo State to remain patient and prayerful, expressing confidence that Governor Monday Okpebholo is steadily delivering on his developmental agenda while the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Musa Umar Ikhilor, continues to strengthen cohesion within the administration.

Speaking during the dedication of a newly completed teens' building at the church

in Benin City, the cleric said that available reports of ongoing projects across the state indicate that the government is on course in delivering the dividends of democracy, with critical support from the SSG.

Pastor Enahoro urged the governor and his team not to be distracted by what he described as "unnecessary criticisms," noting that governance requires time, planning and adherence to due process.

He maintained that the multiple projects being executed simultaneously across the state would ultimately justify public confidence once completed.

"The administration of

Governor Okpebholo is on track, and the people will not be disappointed when ongoing projects are delivered," he said, adding that efforts to undermine government through inciting statements and blackmail should be condemned.

He further called on Edo residents to reject actions capable of derailing developmental efforts, stressing that such conduct only serves as distraction to governance.

According to him, citizens must instead support policies and programmes designed to improve living standards.

The cleric, who doubles as Secretary-General of the Uromi People's Movement (UPM), described the governor as focused and committed

to fulfilling his electoral promises.

He appealed to citizens to remain law-abiding and support what he termed the growing synergy among government appointees for the overall progress of the state.

Pastor Enahoro also dismissed criticisms directed at the SSG, insisting that claims of ineffectiveness were unfounded and misleading.

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, formerly known as **ESTHER OMOKHELE OYEMI**, now wish to be known and addressed as **ESTHER AMANOOGHO-OYEMI**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

**Ugonoba community to hold land verification exercise****BENIN CITY**

Elders and residents of Ugonoba Community, Ward 10, along Agbor Road in Uhumwonde Local Government Area of Edo State, have announced plans to commence a comprehensive verification exercise aimed at orderly development.

The decision was contained in a statement signed by the Ohen, Pa Otabor Airhavbere; Secretary, Dickson Emokpae; and the Okaighele, Eliot Ikponwonsa, on behalf of the Ugonoba Community Land Allocation and Allotment

Committee.

The statement said the exercise would involve identification, verification, enumeration, partition and demarcation of communal land for building, development and other purposes.

According to the committee, the exercise will run from April to June 30, 2026, at the Ugonoba Community Town Hall.

The elders appealed to residents, including indigenes and non-indigenes, as well as intending developers, to co-operate fully and participate in the exercise to ensure a smooth and peaceful process.

**Edo community alleges Odionwere hijack plot**

MONDAY OISE

**BENIN CITY**

Tension is brewing in Iguevbiobo Village, Uhumwonde Local Government Area of Edo State, as residents raised alarm over an alleged plot to hijack the traditional office of the Odionwere.

The Odionwere, by Benin tradition, is the oldest surviving man in the community and serves as the administrative head, leading the Council of Elders and performing key cultural and spiritual roles.

Speaking on behalf of the community, the Okaighele (Youth leader), Austin Evbuomwan, said that the Palace of Benin Monarch, HRM, Oba Ewuare II, had directed that the rightful person be installed in accordance with tradition.

He explained that although the mandatory three-year period following the demise of the last Odi-

onwere ends in April 2026, the monarch approved a six-month extension to allow the community to reach a consensus.

Evbuomwan disclosed that the Oba had warned against any breach of the directive, stressing the need to avoid crisis among subjects.

However, he alleged that some indigenes in the diaspora were plotting to impose a candidate who is not the oldest man in the community.

According to him, the rightful candidate, Pa Daniel Okungbowa, is alive, mentally sound and ready to assume the position.

He warned that any attempt to impose another candidate could trigger avoidable conflict.

"Iguevbiobo has been peaceful, and we want to avoid anything that could lead to crisis," he said.

He appealed to the Oba Palace and relevant authorities to intervene swiftly to prevent actions that could destabilise the community.

# Editorial

## Unity in Edo's governance

**R**ecently, in the spirit of the 2026 Easter celebration, members of the Edo State House of Assembly, led by the Speaker, Hon. Blessing Agbebaku, visited Governor Monday Okpebholo at his country home in Irrua, Esan Central Local Government Area.

At first glance, it may have seemed like a simple festive visit; the executive and legislative arms of government coming together to share in the joy of Easter. However, beyond the pleasant moment shared, the visit carried a deeper meaning. It was a moment of reflection, appreciation and, more importantly, reassurance.

The Speaker made it clear that the lawmakers were not only there to celebrate, but also to acknowledge the Governor's performance and restate their readiness to support his administration. In a political climate where tensions between the executive and legislature are often the norm, as witnessed in some states, such a move by the Edo legislators

stands out.

For ordinary Edo people, this kind of unity matters if the state is to continue on a progressive path. It means fewer distractions and greater focus on governance. In essence, energy is being directed towards solving problems and improving lives, rather than settling political scores. In recent times, this working relationship between both arms of government appeared to have been non-existent.

In some states, Houses of Assembly have at times descended into crisis-ridden law-making bodies, manipulated by political actors to serve their own interests and advance the selfish agendas of so-called 'godfathers', often to the detriment of the state.

Today, however, both arms of government in Edo are on the same page; policies move faster, decisions are clearer, and governance feels more purposeful and seamless. It may not have solved every challenge overnight, but it certainly creates the right atmosphere for peace and harmony,

which are the main ingredients of development and progress.

There was a time when disagreements and political divisions slowed things down, leaving the state caught between opposing camps. That experience is still fresh in the minds of many. Today, seeing a different approach, one built on cooperation rather than confrontation, offers a sense of relief and cautious optimism. Governor Okpebholo himself acknowledged this when he said that the unity between the executive and legislature has already begun to yield positive results.

For many residents, what matters most is that this cooperation translates into real improvements, such as better roads, improved welfare for citizens, stronger institutions and more opportunities for the governed.

Edo has always had a reputation for resilience and forward-looking governance.

Like every other state, it has its share of challenges; however, moments like this suggest a willingness

to move in the right direction. It is not about perfection, but about progress and development that translate into the welfare of citizens.

Interestingly, the same Governor who once faced doubts and scepticism is now being judged by what people can see and feel. That shift from criticism to acceptance did not happen by chance; it reflects growing confidence, even if gradual.

For these gains to be sustained, citizens must also play their part by holding those in government accountable, supporting good policies, and contributing their quota, no matter how small, to the development of the state.

Besides, this collaboration between both arms of government offers important lessons that should guide future engagements, especially in the conduct of governance.

Now is the time for all stakeholders, irrespective of tribe or political affiliation, to jettison parochialism and support a shared developmental agenda.



# Osinbajo commissions Bayelsa Road, referral hospital, Commends Diri's Delivery

## YENAGOA

Former Vice President Yemi Osinbajo on Monday inaugurated the 6.72km Agbura-Oxbow Lake Road and a referral hospital at Oporoma in Bayelsa State.

The Agbura-Oxbow Lake Road is expected to serve as a bypass for residents of Agbura and adjoining Ogbia communities, while also linking Nembe and other areas from the busy Swali Market axis.

Speaking at the inaugura-

tion, Osinbajo thanked Governor Douye Diri for the invitation, noting that it was rare in politics for leaders to fulfil their promises.

"I was here four years ago for the groundbreaking, but today the project has been ac-

tualised. This is a man of his word," he said.

He added that the road would improve access to the Federal University Otuoke and Oloibiri, the historic oil discovery site, while easing movement to the state capital and surrounding communities.

Osinbajo commended Diri for making life easier for Bayelsans through infrastructure

development.

Governor Diri, in his remarks, said development must be evenly felt across the state, stressing that "there is nothing like difficult terrain." He also thanked President Bola Tinubu's administration for its support to Bayelsa and the country.

Commissioner for Works and Infrastructure, Mr Moses Teibowei, said the road is

a 6.72km single carriageway with 7.3-metre two-layer asphalt binder, 2.35m shoulders on both sides, and one kilometre of drainage on either side in developed areas.

He added that the bypass would reduce travel time, ease traffic congestion, improve access to Swali Ultramodern Market, and boost commercial activities in Agbura and surrounding communities.



## RECEIVING DOCUMENT:

Director-General, National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Rtd. DIG, Johnson Kokumo (right) receiving a document for containerised Armoury donated by the Mines Advisory Group Sahel and West Africa (MAG), with support from United States government from the Regional Director of MAG, Nicole Ntagobo in Abuja.

# FCTA urges teachers to suspend strike over WAEC exams

## ABUJA

The Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) has appealed to the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), FCT wing, to suspend its indefinite strike over unresolved welfare issues.

Mandate Secretary of the FCT Education Secretariat, Dr Danlami Hayyo, made the

appeal on Monday during an inspection of schools in the territory.

The NUT had directed primary and secondary school teachers in the FCT to begin an indefinite strike on Monday over what it described as the government's silence on their demands amid harsh economic conditions.

Hayyo described the timing of

the strike as "psychologically demoralising," noting that students are scheduled to begin WAEC examinations on Tuesday.

He expressed concern that teachers were reportedly removing students from classrooms, warning that such actions could lead to mass failure and disruption of examinations.

According to him, the FCT Minister, Nyesom Wike, has renovated over 100 schools and paid 40 per cent of teacher entitlements in 2025, adding that

many outstanding issues fall under local education authorities and area councils.

He urged the union to return to dialogue to prevent worsening the out-of-school children crisis.

The NUT, however, maintained that it appreciated the minister's efforts on minimum wage implementation and arrears payment but insisted that key demands remain unresolved, including salary increments and peculiar allowances.

# Osun lawmaker dumps Accord Party, cites personal reasons

## OSOGBO

A member of the Osun State House of Assembly representing Iwo Constituency, Mr Adesina Rabiu, has resigned his membership of the Accord Party.

His resignation letter was read on Monday by the Speaker, Mr Wale Egbedun, during plenary in Osogbo.

Rabiu had defected from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the Accord Party on February 27 alongside 24 other

lawmakers.

In his letter, he said the decision was personal and declined to disclose further reasons.

"I hereby tender my resignation from the Accord Party with immediate effect. This decision is personal, and I would

like to keep the reasons to myself," the letter stated.

He thanked the party for the opportunity to serve and prayed for its continued progress. Meanwhile, the Osun Mass Education Agency Bill, 2024, passed second reading at the sitting.

# Jandor rolls out 2,690-member grassroots machine for APC Lagos primary

## LAGOS

Lagos State governorship aspirant on the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Dr Abdul-Azeez Adediran, popularly known as Jandor, has unveiled a 2,690-member committee to drive grassroots mobilisation ahead of the party's primaries.

Adediran, in a statement issued by his spokesman, Mr

Gbenga Ogunleye, said the expansive structure was designed to ensure effective coordination under the Jagaban-Jandor 2027 Campaign Organisation.

He explained that the committee reflects the state's political architecture, with representatives drawn from all 245 wards and the 20 Local Government Areas.

"The 2,690-member committee comprises 10 representatives from each of the 245 wards, 10

from each of the 20 LGAs, and 40 at state level," he said.

Adediran further noted that each 10-member unit at ward and local levels includes agents, media personnel, security coordinators, grassroots mobilisers and canvassers, aimed at ensuring seamless operations across the state.

"This structure ensures operational efficiency, message consistency and robust voter engagement across all party

strata," he added.

According to him, the committee will coordinate ward-level mobilisation, deepen stakeholder engagement, and drive voter education and participation in the direct primary process.

He added that it would also ensure compliance with party guidelines and electoral protocols, while serving as the first line of communication between the campaign and grassroots members.

# ADC denies talks with PRP, insists on legal battle over party crisis

## ABUJA

The African Democratic Congress (ADC) has denied reports of any discussions with the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), insisting it remains focused on its ongoing legal battle over internal leadership disputes.

In a statement, the party's National Publicity Secretary, Mallam Bolaji Abdullahi, described the reports as false and misleading.

He said the party is not engaged in any negotiation with any political group and remains committed to challenging what it described as

illegal actions involving the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and other actors.

Abdullahi stressed that the ADC would pursue legal remedies to restore the rule of law and protect multiparty democracy in Nigeria.

He added that while the party remains open to opposition alliances, it will not abandon its legal responsibilities or core democratic principles.

"We believe the courts remain the only path to safeguarding democracy," he said, expressing confidence in the judiciary and urging it to resist external pressure.

# Tinubu reconstitutes police academy council, appoints Gaidam chair

## ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu has reconstituted the 16-member governing council of the Nigeria Police Academy, Wudil, Kano State, appointing the Minister of Police Affairs, Sen. Ibrahim Gaidam, as chairman.

The development was disclosed in a statement issued on Monday in Abuja by the Presidential Spokesperson, Mr Bayo Onanuga.

According to the statement, the council includes the Chairman of the Police Ser-

vice Commission, the Inspector-General of Police, and one representative each from the Federal Ministries of Education, Finance and Justice.

The President also appointed six members to represent the country's geopolitical zones.

They include Babagana Adam (North-East), Emmanuel Manger (North-Central), Mai-gari Dikko (North-West) and Dubem Obaze (South-East), as well as Toyin Ajibogere (South-West) and Udom Ekpoudom (South-South).

The Registrar of the academy will serve as secretary.

## NEWS

# APGA fixes May 23 primaries, sets presidential ticket at N75m

AWKA

The All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) has released its provi-

sional timetable for the 2027 general elections, fixing May 23 for its primary elections nationwide.

The schedule, approved by

the party's National Working Committee (NWC), was announced in a statement by the National Publicity Secretary, Dr Ejimofor Opara.

According to the timetable, the sale and submission of expression of interest forms will run from April 20 to May 8,

while screening of aspirants is slated for May 11 (National Assembly), May 12 (State Assemblies), and May 13 (governorship).

Nomination forms will be available between May 14 and May 21, ahead of the primaries to be conducted across wards

using the Option A4 voting system. Appeals arising from the exercise will be heard on May 28.

Opara disclosed that the expression of interest form for the presidency costs N25 million, with the nomination form pegged at N50 million,

bringing the total to N75 million.

He said the adoption of Option A4 was aimed at enhancing transparency and curbing malpractice, describing the timetable as a major step in the party's preparations for the polls.

## NDLEA arrests 170 drug suspects, records 16 convictions in Osun

OSOGBO

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in Osun State has arrested 170 suspected drug traffickers within the first quarter of the year.

The command disclosed this in its quarterly report released on Monday, noting that the suspects comprised 143 males and 27 females.

It added that 16 convictions had already been secured with-

in the period under review.

The agency also reported the seizure of 99.609kg of cannabis, 24 grams of cocaine, 6.585kg of psychotropic substances and 105.131kg of methamphetamine.

Beyond enforcement, the command said it conducted 34 sensitisation campaigns under its "War Against Drug Abuse" initiative.

It added that 51 drug users were counselled, while one was rehabilitated.

## PDP backs Makinde, dismisses impeachment rumours

IBADAN

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the South-West has thrown its weight behind Oyo State Governor Seyi Makinde, praising his commitment to sustaining multi-party democracy.

The party, speaking through its Zonal Publicity Secretary, Chief Sanya Atofarati, said Makinde's leadership has ensured political inclusiveness and stability in the region.

Atofarati described reports of an impeachment plot against the governor as baseless and

a calculated attempt to create unnecessary political tension.

He said the PDP remained firmly supportive of Makinde's administration, which he noted continues to deliver democratic dividends to the people of Oyo State.

The party also reaffirmed its solidarity with Nigerians amid economic hardship and insecurity, pledging to offer a credible, people-centred alternative.

It further reiterated its loyalty to the party's National Working Committee and commitment to unity, discipline and cohesion across all levels.

## NMA delegates to meet over leadership crisis

LOKOJA

No fewer than 200 delegates of the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) are expected to meet in Abuja on Wednesday for an emergency delegates' meeting aimed at resolving a worsening leadership crisis within the association.

The meeting was confirmed in a statement issued on Monday in Lokoja by Dr Oreyemi Ifedayo, Chairman of State Chairmen of the NMA.

He said the emergency meeting was necessitated by the controversial disqualification of candidates for the forthcoming elections, which has triggered widespread concern across the association.

According to him, the candidates for the Annual Delegates Meeting and elections were disqualified by the NMA President, Prof. Bala Audu, without due process, a development that has generated criticism from state chairmen, caucuses, and the Committee of Past Presidents

over the past two weeks.

Ifedayo stated that despite appeals for the decision to be reversed ahead of the Annual Delegates Meeting, the NMA President declined, further deepening tensions within the association.

He explained that members had rejected what they described as an illegal disqualification process, insisting that the matter be addressed before escalation.

He added that under the NMA constitution, the Committee of Past Presidents is the final authority on constitutional interpretation, noting that it had recommended reversal of the disqualifications in the interest of fairness.

Ifedayo expressed regret that the committee's resolution had been ignored, warning that continued disregard for due process could undermine unity and credibility within the association.

Organisers said over 200 delegates had confirmed attendance, adding that the meeting would review the issues and take steps to restore peace, unity and institutional integrity.



### END-OF-PROJECT DISSEMINATION MEETING:

L-R: Hakimi Bunun of Zazzau in Kaduna, Alhaji Tijjani Muhammad; President/Chief Executive Officer, Equal Access International in US, Mr Graham Couturier; Director, Project Designs, Zihabit Limited, Mr David Kpue; Director, Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD West-Africa), Dr Dauda Garuba; Director of Proposal Management, Blumont, Ms Anshikka Larsson and the Agom Kufana of Kajuru Local Government Area in Kaduna, HRH Chief Titus Dauda, during the CDD West-Africa End-of-Project Dissemination Meeting at CDD Office in Abuja on Monday.

## ADC crisis deepens as court adjourns Kingibe suit to June 9

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja has adjourned a suit seeking to restrain Senator Ireti Kingibe from parading herself as a member of the African Democratic Con-

gress (ADC) until June 9.

Justice Peter Lifu fixed the date following an application for adjournment by counsel to the plaintiffs, I. G. Ogugwa, who requested more time.

The court had earlier, on April 2, declined to grant an interim order against the lawmaker, instead directing that she be put on notice to show

cause why the reliefs sought should not be granted.

The suit was filed by two ADC ward executives in Wuse, Abuja—Chairman Okezuoh Kanayo and Secretary Isaiah Samuel who accused Kingibe of anti-party activities, gross misconduct and unlawful interference with ward records.

They claimed her suspen-

sion by the ward executive followed due process and was ratified by a two-thirds majority.

However, the plaintiffs alleged that Kingibe has continued to hold parallel meetings, issue statements as a party member and intimidate ward officials, thereby deepening the crisis within the party.

## Customs officer makes history with U.S. commercial pilot licence

ABUJA

The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has celebrated a landmark achievement as its first female pilot, Nafisat Balogun, obtained a commercial multi-engine pilot licence in the United States.

The development was an-

nounced by the NCS spokesperson, Abdullahi Maiwada, who said the officer was honoured at a ceremony organised by the Nigeria Customs Technical Hangar Service.

Maiwada described the feat as historic, noting that Balogun had broken barriers in a male-dominated field and set

a new standard within the service.

The Managing Director of the Customs Technical Hangar Service, Captain Kuhi Mbaya, said her journey from cabin attendant to commercial pilot was both inspiring and transformative.

He commended her de-

termination and urged more women to pursue careers in specialised fields, stressing that barriers were being broken.

Balogun, in her remarks, thanked the service for its support and pledged to continue serving with dedication, integrity and professionalism.

## Navy rescues 3 stowaways off Lagos, strengthens maritime security

ABUJA

The Nigerian Navy has intercepted and rescued three suspected stowaways aboard the merchant vessel MSC STELLA (IMO No. 9279988) off the Lagos Fairway Buoy, in a renewed effort to strengthen maritime security and search-and-rescue operations.

The development was contained in a statement issued on Monday in Abuja by the Director of Naval Information, Navy Capt. Abiodun Folorunsho.

He said the operation was carried out by personnel of the Nigerian Navy Ship (NNS) BEECROFT following credible intelligence from the Western Regional Control Centre (WRCC) at about 5:05 p.m. on April 19.

According to him, a Quick Response Team deployed from Tarkwa Bay successfully rescued the suspects about five nautical miles off the Lagos coastline.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the suspects illegally boarded the vessel at

about 1:00 a.m. on April 17 while it was berthed at Tin Can Island Port, Lagos.

The suspects were identified as Aguru Michael (27), a Benin Republic national; Soye Monday (25), from Ondo State; and Kentobou Peter (22), from Delta State.

They were said to have intended to stow away to Europe.

The Navy said the operation underscored its commitment to safeguarding lives at sea and curbing irregular migration within Nigeria's maritime domain.

It recalled previous operations, including the rescue of seven persons following a maritime collision in Bayelsa and the rescue and handover of three foreign stowaways aboard MT ANATOLIA in March 2026.

The suspects are currently in custody of NNS BEECROFT undergoing investigation and administrative processing in line with extant laws.

The Navy reaffirmed its commitment to maritime safety, security and continuous surveillance of Nigeria's territorial waters.

# Lagos unveils cybersecurity guidelines to boost digital safety

## LAGOS

The Lagos State Government has unveiled comprehensive cybersecurity guidelines aimed at

strengthening digital safety for businesses, public institutions and residents.

The initiative, according to the government, is designed to protect against growing cy-

ber threats and support Lagos' ambition of becoming a secure, globally competitive digital hub.

Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Mr Gbenga Omotoso, said the move was prompted by rising cyber risks within Nigeria's rapidly expanding digital ecosystem.

He noted that Lagos, as one of Africa's fastest-growing technology hubs, faces increasing exposure to cyber threats.

Citing data from the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), Omotoso said Nigeria loses over 500 million dollars annually to cybercrime, under-

scoring the need for stronger safeguards.

He explained that the guidelines provide practical and scalable cybersecurity measures for small businesses, large enterprises, and government agencies, adding that they are advisory tools rather than regulatory mandates.

Omotoso said that the framework aligns with key national policies, including the Cybercrime Act (2024), Nigeria Data Protection Act (2023), and National Cybersecurity Policy and Strategy (2021), reaffirming the state's commitment to innovation, investment and public trust.



## CONDOLENCE VISIT:

Former Senator representing Edo South Senatorial District, Sen. Matthew Urhoghide (left), during a condolence visit to the Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, over the death of his mother, Madam Esther Imaguomwanruo Idahosa.

PHOTO: MOSES OBOH

## Experts renew push for State Police amid rising insecurity

## ABUJA

Security experts have renewed calls for the establishment of state police, citing persistent insecurity in parts of Northern Nigeria as evidence of the limitations of the current centralised policing system.

The call was contained in a communiqué issued after the

46th Annual General Meeting of the Alumni Association of the National Institute (AANI).

The experts noted that Nigeria continues to face widespread security challenges, including terrorism, banditry, kidnapping and violent conflicts, particularly in the North-East and North-West.

They observed that the Nigeria Police Force, with about

371,800 personnel for a population exceeding 200 million, remains overstretched, resulting in a police-to-population ratio of 1:740—well below the United Nations recommendation of 1:450.

According to the communiqué, the centralised structure has led to slow response times, weak local intelligence and operational gaps, while governors

lack effective control over police formations despite being designated Chief Security Officers.

The experts advocated a hybrid policing model combining state and community policing with a central coordinating role for the Nigeria Police Force, alongside constitutional amendments to improve efficiency and public trust.

## Soludo names Okonkwo pioneer CEO of Anambra Investment Corporation

## AWKA

Governor Chukwuma Soludo of Anambra State has appointed Mr Nwabunwanne Okonkwo as the pioneer Chief Executive Officer of the Anambra State Development and Investment Corporation (ADIC).

The appointment was contained in a statement by the governor's Chief Press Secretary, Mr Christian Aburime, on Monday in Awka.

Okonkwo is expected to drive the corporation's mandate of attracting and financing major business and infrastructure projects, as well as pro-

moting private sector investment in the state.

Aburime described the appointee as a seasoned finance lawyer with over 16 years of experience in the financial sector, noting that he previously served as Managing Director of DLM Advisory, the investment banking arm of DLM

Capital Group.

He added that Okonkwo has mobilised over one billion dollars for governments and corporate organisations across Africa.

The 39-year-old holds a Master's degree in Corporate Finance from Wayne State University, Michigan, United States.

## UNIPOINT elevates 30 academics to professorial, reader cadres

## PORT-HARCOURT

The University of Port Harcourt (UNIPOINT) has promoted 30 academic staff, including 17 to the rank of professor and 13 to reader.

The institution's spokesman,

Dr Sam Kpenu, disclosed this in a statement, noting that the promotions followed rigorous screening and evaluation processes.

He said the elevations reflected the staff members' contributions to teaching, research and community service.

A breakdown showed that the Faculty of Science recorded five new professors, while the College of Health Sciences had three.

The Faculties of Pharmaceutical Sciences recorded three promotions, Agriculture two, while Humanities, Social

Sciences, Education and Engineering had one each.

In the reader category, the Faculty of Education recorded five promotions, Science three, Engineering two, while Health Sciences, Agriculture and Social Sciences had one each.

## Police nab 4 suspected cultists over armed robbery in Ogun

## SANGO-OTA (OGUN)

The Ogun State Police Command has arrested four suspected cultists in connection with an alleged armed robbery incident.

The command's spokesperson, DSP Oluseyi Babaseyi, said the suspects were apprehended by operatives of the Ilaro Division following a complaint lodged on April 16.

According to him, the suspects, alongside two others still at large, stormed the complainant's residence, assaulted him, threatened him with an axe, and robbed him of an iPhone 14 Pro Max.

Babaseyi said swift police

action led to the arrest of the suspects and recovery of a locally made pistol, an axe, suspected charms and the stolen phone.

He added that the case has been transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) for further investigation and prosecution, while efforts continue to apprehend the fleeing suspects.

The Commissioner of Police, Mr Bode Ojajuni, commended the operatives and reiterated the command's zero tolerance for cultism and violent crime, urging residents to remain vigilant and report suspicious activities through designated emergency lines.

## Edo tightens project monitoring, flags structural defects on inspection tour

## BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has reaffirmed its commitment to quality infrastructure delivery, saying that all contractors handling state projects must adhere strictly to approved standards and specifications.

The Managing Director of the Edo State Public Building and Maintenance Agency (EDPUBMA), Arc. Emmanuel Fashanu, gave the charge while addressing heads of department of the agency shortly before embarking on a joint inspection tour with the Projects Implementation and Monitoring Department (PIMD) of the Governor's Office to Edo North and Edo Central Senatorial Districts.

He urged officials to ensure due diligence in the discharge of their duties, stressing that effective monitoring remains key to guaranteeing quality execution of government projects.

The joint inspection team visited several projects across the state, beginning with Jattu Market, the Passport Office along Otaru Road, and the 2NR warehouses under construction for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security in Auchi.

Other locations included Irrua Market, Ogirrua's Palace, and the Resort Centre under construction at Udomi. Contractors and project supervisors were on site to guide the team through the various projects, while EDPUBMA officials reviewed plans and engaged site engineers on progress.

The team also inspected the Forward Operating Base (FOB) in Udomi, a 150-bed capacity hospital, and the medical school at Uwessan in Esan Central Local Government Area.

Further stops included Ekpoma Market, as well as projects at Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, such as a two-in-one 300-capacity lecture theatre, a 600-bed hostel, and a 1,500-capacity lecture theatre in Esan West Local Government Area.

During the exercise, the monitoring team detected some structural defects and deviations from original project specifications, which were promptly explained and addressed on site. Contractors also used the opportunity to highlight operational challenges and appealed for timely release of funds to meet project timelines.

At the end of the tour, the team concluded that effective monitoring ensures projects remain aligned not only with budgetary provisions but also with engineering standards and specifications.

The Special Adviser to the Governor on Project Implementation, Engr. Phoebe Bello, said the exercise would henceforth be conducted quarterly to ensure steady progress across project sites.

She added that inclusive stakeholder participation would guarantee timely and efficient delivery of projects to the people of Edo State.

It would be recalled that a similar inspection exercise was carried out in Edo South between February 24 and 26, 2026.

**NEWS**

# N'West APC rallies for 2027, backs Tinubu with 'Campaign of facts'

**KADUNA**

The North-West Zone of the All Progressives Congress (APC) has pledged to sustain its record of delivering the highest bloc votes for the party's presidential candidate and other APC contenders in the 2027 general elections.

The resolution was contained in a communiqué issued after the zone's maiden meeting held at its Zonal Secretariat in Kaduna, the first since the March 25 Zonal Congress.

The meeting was chaired by the National Vice Chairman (North-West), Mr Garba Datti Muhammad.

According to the commu-

iqué signed by the Zonal Publicity Secretary, Malam Musa Mailafiya Mada, deliberations focused on strategies to consolidate the zone's position as the leading contributor of votes to presidential candidates since 1999.

Members resolved to collaborate with critical stakeholders across the region to secure victory for President Bola Tinubu, the seven APC governors in the North-West, and the par-

ty's National and State Assembly candidates in 2027.

The communiqué added that the Garba Datti-led executive adopted a "campaign of facts" to promote the administration's Renewed Hope Agenda, with emphasis on achievements in infrastructure, education, healthcare and security, including projects by the North West Development Commission.

The zone also pledged to sustain internal cohesion, maintain peace within the party and counter what it described as opposition misinformation.

Security Forces Intensify Rescue Effort for 15 Abducted Passengers

Calabar: Security agencies have launched coordinated search-and-rescue operations to secure the release of 15 passengers abducted by gunmen along the Calabar-Oron waterways.

The Cross River Police Command confirmed the development on Monday, with its spokesperson, ASP Sunday Eitokpah, stating that efforts were ongoing in collaboration with the Akwa Ibom Command and the Nigerian Navy.

He said the operation was

aimed at ensuring the safe recovery of the victims and the swift arrest of those responsible for the attack.

A naval officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity, disclosed that the gunmen ambushed the passenger ferry mid-journey.

The vessel had departed Calabar in Cross River and was en route to Oron in Akwa Ibom when the attack occurred.

Authorities say the waterways are now under intensified surveillance as efforts continue to rescue the victims unharmed.

## Court remands businessman over alleged N20m dud cheques

**KADUNA**

Kaduna State High Court has ordered the remand of a businessman, Vincent Timothy, over the alleged issuance of N20 million worth of dud cheques.

Justice Darius Khobo gave the order on Monday after the defendant, who is being prosecuted by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), pleaded not guilty.

The judge directed that Timothy be held in a correctional facility pending ruling on his bail application, and adjourned

the case until May 12.

Earlier, EFCC counsel, E. K. Garba, told the court that the defendant obtained a N20 million loan from Aires Financial Services Limited but later issued five cheques of N4 million each that were dishonoured due to insufficient funds.

The prosecution said the offence contravenes provisions of the Dishonoured Cheques Act.

Defence counsel, A. M. Sunday, urged the court to grant bail, noting that the offence is not capital and that the defendant voluntarily honoured an EFCC invitation on April 3.

## Alleged certificate forgery: Ex-Minister, UNN opt for settlement

**ABUJA**

Former Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology, Uche Nnaji, and other defendants, including the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), have opted for an out-of-court settlement in their ongoing dispute over alleged certificate forgery.

The development was disclosed on Monday at the Federal High Court in Abuja before Justice Hauwa Yilwa.

Nnaji had filed the suit seeking to stop UNN from releasing his academic records following allegations that he forged his degree and NYSC certificates, claims that led to his resignation as minister in 2025.

At the resumed hearing, counsel to Nnaji, Ope Muritala, informed the court that parties were exploring settlement and requested an adjournment to allow the process continue.

Counsel to the Minister of Education, P. C. Ike, and the National Universities Commission (NUC), N. H. Obah, said they were not aware of the

development but did not oppose the adjournment.

Counsel to UNN and its officials (3rd to 7th defendants), Chidubem Ugwueze, said lead counsel Chris Uche, SAN, had informed them of the settlement discussions and confirmed they were not opposed to reconciliation, though he urged the court to hear their motion for regularisation if talks fail.

Justice Yilwa declined to hear the application at this stage, stating it would only be considered if settlement efforts collapse.

The matter was adjourned until July 8 for report of settlement.

In the suit marked FHC/ABJ/CS/1909/2025, Nnaji is seeking an order of mandamus compelling UNN to release his academic transcript, among other reliefs, and an interim injunction restraining the institution from tampering with his records.

The defendants, however, challenged the suit, arguing lack of jurisdiction, procedural irregularities, and non-disclosure of a reasonable cause of action, urging the court to strike out the case.

**SCREENING AND CONFIRMATION:**

Hon. Jonathan Ibhama, Majority Leader of the Edo State House of Assembly (left), with Hon. Addeh Isibor, Deputy Leader, during the screening and confirmation of Engr. Charles Onobhaya as Executive Director (Projects), Edo Ecological Funding and Management Commission, at a recent plenary session.

PHOTO: GODWIN ISEGUAN.

## FRSC warns drivers on rainy season hazards, urges speed reduction

**SANGO-OTA (OGUN):**

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) in Ogun has urged motorists to reduce speed and exercise caution during the rainy season to prevent avoidable accidents.

The Sector Commander, Mr Oludare Ogunjobi, gave the advice on Monday in Ota, stressing that wet roads become slippery and make vehicle control more difficult at high speeds.

He advised drivers to maintain double or triple the usual

distance between vehicles to allow adequate braking time in wet conditions.

Ogunjobi also called for routine vehicle checks, particularly tyres and windshield wipers, to ensure vehicles are roadworthy during heavy rains.

He emphasised the importance of functional headlamps, brake lights and indicators,

and warned motorists to avoid flood-prone areas or driving through running water.

The FRSC boss further advised drivers to pull over safely when rainfall becomes too heavy, noting forecasts by the Nigerian Meteorological Agency indicating prolonged rainfall and flood risks in Ogun State.

## Abia APC faces fresh rift over 'Divisive' guber endorsement

**UMUAHIA**

A chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Abia State, Chief Agwu Emeaba, has warned of a looming crisis following the endorsement of a governorship aspirant ahead of the 2027 election.

In a statement, Emeaba

described the move by some stakeholders to back Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Benjamin Kalu, as divisive and capable of triggering internal implosion.

He argued that endorsing a candidate without an open contest undermines party unity and weakens its electoral chances.

The endorsement, made at a stakeholders' meeting in Umuahia, has reportedly sidelined other aspirants, including Chief Mascot Kalu and Chief Henry Ikoh, both of whom are laying claim to the ticket.

Emeaba further alleged that key party figures were excluded from consultations, warning

that such actions could deepen existing divisions within the state chapter.

Meanwhile, Mascot Kalu has rejected the endorsement, declaring any consensus arrangement without the participation of all aspirants as "illegitimate, unacceptable and null and void," and warning of stiff resistance.

## NDLEA destroys 6-hectare cannabis farm, recovers 119kg in C'River

**CALABAR**

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in Cross River State has destroyed a six-hectare cannabis farm at Uwet in Akamkpa Local Government Area and recovered 119 kilo-

grammes of suspected hemp.

Deputy Commander of Narcotics, Peter Bisong, disclosed this in an interview with journalists in Calabar on Monday.

He said one suspect was arrested in connection with the illegal farm, while the operation was carried out in col-

laboration with troops of the Nigerian Army's 13 Brigade, Calabar.

Bisong said the raid followed credible intelligence from members of the public about illegal cannabis cultivation in the area.

He added that the destroyed

farm had an estimated street value of over N500 million.

The NDLEA said investigations would continue to track other individuals linked to the farm, urging the public to provide useful intelligence to support the fight against drug trafficking and abuse.



NNAJI



# LEGAL RUDIMENTS

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## Civil trial: The rudiments of civil litigation in Nigeria (2)

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

### CONTINUED FROM LAST EDITION

#### 4.0 AMENDMENTS OF PLEADINGS

Amendments of pleadings in civil procedure allow parties to correct, clarify, or expand their claims and defences so that courts can resolve the real issues in dispute rather than technical errors. Generally, courts favour amendments if they help achieve substantial justice without causing unfair prejudice or delay. The guiding principle is that amendments should serve justice, not punish inadvertent errors. See the case of *OLATUYI V. GOVERNOR OF ONDO STATE & ANOR* (2016) LPCA (371(CA) (PP. 28 PARAS. B)).

The purpose of an amendment is to ensure that litigation addresses the true issues in controversy rather than being derailed by technical mistakes. See the case of *MUHAMMED & ANOR V. ABDULLAHI & ORS* (2015) LPELR-40632(CA) (PP. 19-20 PARAS. D).

Amendments can be made at any stage of proceedings, even on appeal, provided they do not cause injustice or surprise.

#### 4.1 GROUNDS FOR ALLOWING AMENDMENTS

Generally, in a suit the court can allow amendment of pleadings inter alia, on the following grounds:

- Correcting errors (e.g., misnaming parties, misstating facts);
- Adding new claims or defences that arise from the same facts;
- Clarifying ambiguous pleadings to avoid confusion;
- Updating pleadings to reflect developments during litigation;
- To bring the pleadings in line with the evidence already adduced in the case. See the following cases: *A.C.B. LTD v. EMARAMI* (1978) 4 S.C. Pg.99; *TAIWO v. AKINWUNMI* (1975) 9 N.S.C.C. Pg.224; *OGUN-TIMEHIN v. GUBERE* (1964) 3 N.S.C.C. Pg.124; *GBADAMOSI v. KABO TRAVELS LTD.* (2000) 8 NWLR (Pt.668) Pg.243.

#### 4.2 GROUNDS FOR REFUSING AMENDMENTS

The Court may refuse an application for adjournment on the grounds inter alia as follows:

- Prejudice to the other party or to overreach them (e.g., depriving them of a fair chance to respond). See the case of *YUSUF V. ADEGOKE & ANOR* (2007) LPELR-3534(SC) (PP. 43 PARAS. C) *IDAKWO vs. EJIGA & ANOR* (2002) 13 NWLR PART 783 at p. 156; and *FADIORA & ANOR v. GBADEBO & ANOR* (1978) LPELR-1224 (SC);
- Where the amendment will cause undue delay. See *KEKERE-EKUN V. OWOLABI & ORS* (2008) LPELR-8410(CA) (PP. 18-20 PARAS. E);
- Bad faith or abuse of process (e.g., deliberately delaying proceedings);
- Fundamental change of cause of action that introduces an entirely new case. See *OKOLO & ANOR V. UNION BANK OF NIGERIA LIMITED* (1999) LPELR-2464(SC) (PP. 23 PARAS. B); and

RAS. B); and

v. Statute-barred claims: amendments cannot revive claims already barred by limitation laws. See *OLATUYI V. GOVERNOR OF ONDO STATE & ANOR* (2016) LPELR-41371(CA) (PP. 29-30 PARAS. F)

In summary, amendments of pleadings are a flexible tool designed to achieve fairness and accuracy in litigation. Nigerian courts, like others, lean toward allowing them unless they cause prejudice, delay, or abuse of process.

An amendment takes effect from the date of the original document sought to be amended; and this applies to every successive further amendment. See the case of *ADEWUMI & ANOR V. AG OF EKITI STATE & ORS* (2002) LPELR- 3160(SC) (PP. 24 PARAS. D).

The effect of an amendment is that what stood before the amendment is no longer material before the Court and no longer defines the issues to be tried. See: *U.B.A. PLC, V. ABDULLAHI* (2003) 3 NWLR PT.807 PAGE 359; *OSITA C. NWOSU V. IMO STATE ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION AUTHORITY* (1990) 2 NWLR PT.135 PAGE 688; *ENIGBOKAN V. A.I.I. CO. (NIG.) LTD.* (1994) 6 NWLR PT.348 PAGE 1; *HOUSE OF REPS & ORS V. SPDC (NIG) & ANOR* (2010) LPELR-5016(CA) (PP. 50-51 PARAS. F).

#### 5.0 PRE-TRIAL PROCEDURES

Service of processes: Before the commencement of hearing in a suit, all the parties to the suit must be served with all the court processes in the suit. Subsequent processes must also be served on all parties except for ex parte applications.

The purpose of service of Court processes on the parties to a case is to bring to their notice/attention the pendency of the case, the contents of the case and give them an opportunity to react to the said processes. Thus, the service of Court process is fundamental to the hearing of any suit before the Court. It is a well-known practice of our Courts that proof of service of all processes, where necessary, are enclosed in the Court file of the suit concerned so that on the date slated for hearing, the Judge, by referring to the file, can easily and readily determine whether there was any such proof of service or not. See: *ALL STATES TRUST BANK PLC V. REGISTERED TRUSTEES OF MISSION HOUSE INTERNATIONAL & ORS* (2018) LPELR-44349(CA) (PP. 30 PARAS. B).

#### 5.1 PRE-TRIAL CONFERENCES

A Pre-Trial Conference is a meeting held before the start of a trial, usually involving the judge, the lawyers for both sides, and sometimes the parties themselves. Its purpose is to streamline the upcoming trial and resolve issues in advance. Here are the key aspects:

#### 5.2 PURPOSE OF PRE-TRIAL CONFERENCE

- Clarify issues: Narrow down the matters that will actually be argued at trial;
- Encourage settlement: Explore



**HON. JUSTICE P. A. AKHIHIRO**

whether the case can be resolved without going to trial;

iii. Plan logistics: Set timelines, discuss witnesses, evidence, and scheduling;

iv. Address motions: Handle preliminary matters like admissibility of evidence or procedural disputes.

#### 5.3 PROCEEDINGS DURING PRE-TRIAL CONFERENCE

During the Pre-Trial Conference, the Judge controls the proceedings to ensure that time is not wasted. Lawyers may exchange witness lists and exhibits and agree by consent for some exhibits to be admitted upfront.

The judge may encourage negotiation or mediation and sometimes terms of settlement can be prepared and filed in Court to enable the Court enter a Consent Judgment as soon as possible.

During the Pre-Hearing Conference, time-lines can be set for the hearing of the case. Deadlines for filing documents can also be confirmed. Sometimes, agreements on certain facts are made to save time at trial.

The essence of a Pre-Trial Conference is that it can help to avoid surprises during trial and Fastrack the hearing.

Furthermore, the Pre-Hearing Conference enables the judge to have a clearer picture of the case before hearing it.

The High Court Civil Procedure Rules of most High Courts provide for Pre- Hearing Conference. For example, see: Order 25 of the Edo State High Court (Civil Procedure) Rules, 2018 and Order 5 of the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory Civil Procedure Rules 2025.

Unfortunately, despite the provision of the rules on Pre-Trial Conferences, most of the Courts are averse to the application of the rules on Pre-Trial Conference because contrary to the intendment of the rules, lawyers have abused the process by their unwillingness to attend promptly with a sense of readiness to Fastrack the proceedings. From experience, the insistence on pre-trial proceedings, may invariably delay hearing.

#### 6.0 THE TRIAL PROPER

Presently, in trials in most jurisdictions in Nigerian, evidence is presented through written documents and



**FAMOUS O. EDAFEYIWOTU, CHAIRMAN, YLF NBA, BENIN**

oral testimonies. The front-loading system requires all evidence, including witness statements and expert reports, to be submitted in writing before the trial. Witnesses adopt their written statements as evidence-in- chief under oath. During the trial, witnesses are cross-examined based on their written statements, and expert witnesses provide written reports with their findings or opinions. Both witnesses and experts may be subject to cross-examination to clarify their evidence.

#### 6.1 THE FRONTLOADING SYSTEM

The frontloading system in Nigeria refers to the modern procedural rule in civil litigation where parties are required to file and serve all their evidence, witness statements, and documents upfront—at the beginning of the case—rather than waiting until trial. It was introduced to reduce delays and make trials more efficient.

Under the Frontloading system, parties must file their pleadings together with their list of witnesses, witnesses' statements on oath, list of documents to be relied upon and documentary evidence to be tendered at the trial.

In essence, the witnesses' statements on oath replace oral examination-in-chief: Instead of calling witnesses to narrate their story from scratch, their written statements are adopted in court as evidence.

The major advantage of the front-loading system is that it speeds up trials. Furthermore, it reduces adjournments and surprises. Both sides know the evidence beforehand and they are better prepared for trial. Thus, it saves judicial time and reduces the backlog of cases.

However, the frontloading system also has its downsides. The first disadvantage is the cost burden. Preparing all documents and witness statements upfront can be expensive and laborious. Furthermore, it requires a lot of diligence on the part of the lawyer to assemble the evidence upfront to align with the pleadings. Lawyers must be meticulous; failure to frontload properly can weaken a case.

Under the frontloading approach, a witness is meant to adopt his deposition as his evidence in chief and to tender documents or things mentioned in his deposition. He is not permitted to give oral evidence of facts contained

in the pleadings. Evidence of facts pleaded must be contained in the deposition of the witness. See: *MAIRIGA & ANOR V. ALKALI & ORS* (2019) LPELR-48486(CA) (PP. 30 PARAS. B); *NNADI & ORS V. ARIRI* (2015) LPELR-24575(CA) (PP. 33-36 PARAS. F); and *SKYE BANK PLC V. TUNS FARMS (NIG) LTD* (2015) LPELR-25817(CA) (PP. 20 PARAS. C).

Sometimes, the question is raised on the effect of failure to frontload a document which a party intends to tender in evidence.

Under the Evidence Act and Nigerian case law, admissibility of a document depends on relevance and compliance with evidentiary rules, not merely on whether it was frontloaded. The frontloading system is a procedural rule designed to promote efficiency, but it does not override substantive law on admissibility. Courts have held that while frontloading is mandatory under the High Court Civil Procedure Rules, failure to frontload a document only affects procedure, not admissibility. *SULEIMAN & ORS V. ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA UNIVERSITY, BAUCHI & ANOR* (2019) LPELR-47708(CA) (PP. 13-15 PARAS. C); *SULEIMAN & ORS V. ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA UNIVERSITY, BAUCHI & ANOR* (2019) LPELR-47708(CA) (PP. 13-15 PARAS. C)

If a document is relevant and meets the requirements of the Evidence Act, the court may admit it even if it was not frontloaded. Lawyers should always frontload documents to avoid objections and delays.

However, if a crucial document was omitted, it can still be tendered during trial, provided it is relevant and admissible under the Evidence Act.

The opposing party may object, but the judge has discretion to admit it in the interest of justice. See the following cases: *AKONJOM & ANOR V. EKOM & ORS* (2019) LPELR-49093(CA) (PP. 25-26 PARAS. E); *MINISTER FOR WORKS, HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT & ORS V. OGUNGBE* (2018) LPELR-45977(CA) (PP. 35-40 PARAS. D); and *ZAREWA & 7 ANOR VS FALGORE & ORS* (2020) LPELR - 50870 CA; *INEC VS YUSUF & ORS* (2019) LPELR-48890 (SC).

#### 6.2 STREAMLINED TRIAL

Upon the close of pleadings, the parties are expected to lead evidence in proof of the case. The trial is mainly spent on the examination in chief, cross-examination and re-examination of witnesses.

Generally speaking, in court proceedings, witnesses go through three main stages of questioning: examination-in-chief (by the party who called them), cross-examination (by the opposing party), and re-examination (by the original party to clarify issues raised during cross-examination). These stages ensure fairness and accuracy in presenting evidence.

The purpose of the Examination-in-Chief is to present the witness's testimony in support of a party's case. Leading questions (suggesting the answer) are generally not allowed under examination in chief. See: section 214(1) of the Evidence Act, 2011.

**TO BE CONTINUED IN NEXT EDITION**

# OPINION



## From ridicule to results: How Monday Okpebholo is rewriting the narrative in Edo

ISAAC ASABOR

In politics, perception can be louder than performance, at least at the beginning. Before the last gubernatorial election in Edo State, Monday Okpebholo was not just doubted; he was aggressively dismissed. Critics painted him unfit, unprepared, and overshadowed by his opponent, Asue Ighodalo, who was widely touted as the more refined and capable choice. Social commentary, media narratives, and political rhetoric combined to create a near-consensus: Okpebholo was not the man for the job.

Yet, elections have a way of humbling projections. Against the tide of skepticism, Okpebholo emerged victorious. But if winning the election silenced some critics, his early days in office only seemed to amplify others. Every word, every gesture, every minor slip was scrutinized, exaggerated, and weaponized. It was as if a segment of observers had resolved not to be convinced, no matter what he did.

Still, history, both secular and biblical, has shown that early ridicule is often a prelude to eventual respect. The story of Nehemiah offers a striking parallel. Mocked by adversaries like Sanballat and Tobiah, Nehemiah was dismissed as leading a futile effort. Yet, through focus and resilience, he accomplished what seemed impossible, rebuilding Jerusalem's walls in just 52 days. Today, that story stands as a testament to the triumph of performance over perception.

In a similar vein, Okpebholo's tenure, though still unfolding, is beginning to challenge the narrative that once defined him. The noise of criticism has not disappeared, but it is increasingly competing with something more tangible: results.

One of the earliest indicators of Okpebholo's seriousness has been his attention to infrastructure, particularly in Benin City, the heartbeat of Edo State. Long-neglected roads that had become symbols of governmental inertia are gradually receiving attention. Rehabilitation projects on key urban roads have not only improved mobility but also restored a measure of public confidence.



Governor Okpebholo

For residents who had grown accustomed to broken roads and endless promises, the sight of active construction has been more than cosmetic, it has been psychological. Governance, after all, is often judged by what people can see and feel. In this regard, Okpebholo appears to understand that visibility matters.

Beyond roads, there has been a noticeable push toward urban renewal. Efforts to decongest parts of Benin City, enforce sanitation regulations, and restore order to chaotic public spaces suggest a government trying to reset standards. While such moves are rarely popular in the short term, especially among those directly affected, they signal a willingness to make tough decisions.

Critics may frame these actions as heavy-handed, but supporters argue they are necessary steps toward a more

liveable and organised city. Leadership, in this context, is less about applause and more about direction.

Another area where Okpebholo is beginning to shape his legacy is education. While systemic transformation takes time, early interventions, such as support for public schools, teacher engagement initiatives, and youth-focused programs, indicate an awareness of the state's demographic reality. Edo has a youthful population, and any meaningful governance strategy must account for that.

Programs aimed at skills acquisition and youth empowerment are also gaining traction. Whether through partnerships or state-led initiatives, there is a growing emphasis on preparing young people not just for employment, but for relevance in a changing economy.

*Leadership is rarely a finished product at inauguration. It is shaped by decisions, tested by adversity, and ultimately defined by outcomes. But the emerging pattern suggests a governor who is growing into the office rather than shrinking under its weight*

No government can function effectively without a baseline of security. While challenges remain, as they do across many parts of Nigeria, there have been efforts to strengthen local security frameworks. Collaboration with law enforcement agencies and community-based approaches to crime prevention suggest a multi-layered strategy.

It is too early to declare victory in this area, but the intent is clear: stability is a priority. And in governance, intent, when backed by action, often sets the tone for outcomes.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of Okpebholo's journey is not just what he is doing, but how he is evolving. The man once caricatured as politically inadequate is gradually redefining himself through execution. He may not fit the traditional mould of a polished political elite, but governance is not a beauty contest, it is a performance arena.

Like Joseph, who rose from ridicule to relevance, or David, who moved from obscurity to prominence, Okpebholo's trajectory underscores a simple truth: capability is often revealed under pressure, not predicted in advance.

Even Moses, hesitant and imper-

fect, became a defining figure of leadership. These stories endure because they challenge the assumption that greatness must announce itself early.

To be clear, criticism is not inherently unjustified. Public officials must be held accountable, and scrutiny is a necessary component of democracy. However, there is a difference between constructive criticism and relentless dismissal. The former refines leadership; the latter seeks to undermine it.

What is becoming evident is that Okpebholo is not governing in response to noise. Instead, he appears focused on incremental progress, small wins that accumulate into broader impact. This approach may lack the drama that critics thrive on, but it aligns more closely with sustainable governance.

It would be premature to canonize Okpebholo as a flawless leader. No administration is without its shortcomings, and Edo State still faces significant challenges. But the emerging pattern suggests a governor who is growing into the office rather than shrinking under its weight.

Leadership is rarely a finished product at inauguration. It is shaped by decisions, tested by adversity, and ultimately defined by outcomes. In this unfolding story, Okpebholo is beginning to tilt the balance from doubt to delivery.

The narrative is shifting, subtly, but unmistakably. The same figure once dismissed as a political misfit is now forcing reconsideration. Not through rhetoric, but through action.

Like Nehemiah standing before rebuilt walls, Okpebholo is gradually presenting evidence that performance can outpace perception. His critics are still watching closely, intensely, but they are no longer watching a vacuum. They are watching a governor who is working.

In the end, history tends to be kinder to those who deliver than to those who doubted. If the current trajectory holds, Monday Okpebholo may well join the long list of leaders who turned skepticism into surprise, and criticism into reluctant respect.

**Isaac Asabor, a Journalist and Public Opinion Analyst writes from Lagos**

## Yahaya/Goje rift and Gombe ADC's road to 2027

HAJARA LEMAN (NAN)

For the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) in Gombe State, the road to 2027 appears to be bumpy and tortuous.

This is not unconnected with the bitter feud between Gov. Yahaya Inuwa and Sen. Danjuma Goje which is tearing the party apart and possibly narrowing its chances of retaining the state in the next election cycle.

Reports indicate that the rift between the governor and Goje, representing Gombe Central Senatorial District has created a tense atmosphere, not only within the senatorial district but also in the entire state.

At the centre of the crisis, accord-

ing to reports, is the battle for the soul of the senatorial district, occasioned by surreptitious moves to ease Goje out of district and replace him with another candidate.

Historically, Gombe Central, which is made up of Akko and Yamaltu/Deba local government areas, remains a very critical area in the state's political matrix.

Goje, a former governor of the state who is from Akko local government area, has been representing the senatorial district in the upper legislative chamber since 2011.

Besides, the face-off between the two political gladiators is said to have emanated from the struggle for the leadership of the ruling APC in the state.

Although Yahaya served as Commis-

sioner for Finance during Goje's time as governor, the reported attempt by Goje to become the leader of APC did not go down well with the governor.

Yahaya was said to have insisted on being the leader of the party in the state, being the sitting governor.

Part of the governor's arguments was that his leadership of the party was in line with the APC tradition which automatically confers leadership on a sitting governor in any state where the party is ruling.

Goje was, however, said to have disagreed with Yahaya, insisting on becoming the APC leader in the state, with the latter vehemently voicing his disagreement.

This has since exacerbated the conflict, thus polarising the party in the state, even

though Yahaya, as the governor, appears to have stronger control of the party.

Consequent upon the raging feud, Goje has reduced his involvement in political activities, while he seldomly attends major political meetings in the state.

The situation has also generated tension in Gombe Central senatorial district, as some stakeholders from Yamaltu/Deba local government area are clamouring that they must produce the party's candidate for the district in 2027.

They argued that Goje, who hails from Akko council area, should step down, having been representing the district since 2011.

Expectedly, supporters of both sides have now taken different positions, leading to tension within the

party and among stakeholders in two local government areas.

Recently, a group from Yamaltu/Deba local government visited the governor, demanding for the senatorial seat to be moved to the council area.

The group included the member representing Yamaltu/Deba Federal Constituency, members of the State House of Assembly and traditional rulers from Yamaltu and Deba communities.

The stakeholders argued that the seat has stayed in Akko local government area for a long time and that fairness and equity should be considered in sharing political positions within the senatorial district.

(NAN Feature)

# Burrna Boy challenges Wizkid to physical fight

Popular Nigerian musician Burrna Boy has challenged Wizkid to a physical fight. This is coming hours after Wizkid blasted Burrna Boy and his team for physically assaulting DJ Tunez at Lagos club recently for not playing his songs. Reacting in a viral video Burrna Boy said he was the only one that beat DJ Tunez and, therefore, challenged Wizkid whom he described his strength as a social media power to a physical fight.



WIZKID, DJ TUNEZ &amp; BURNA BOY SPARRING

## Much ado about reviving nitelife in Benin

Benin city the historic cultural heart of Edo state Nigeria, renowned for its cultural heritage, traditional arts with deep - rooted culture has have it own side of the dwindling economy fortune of the country.

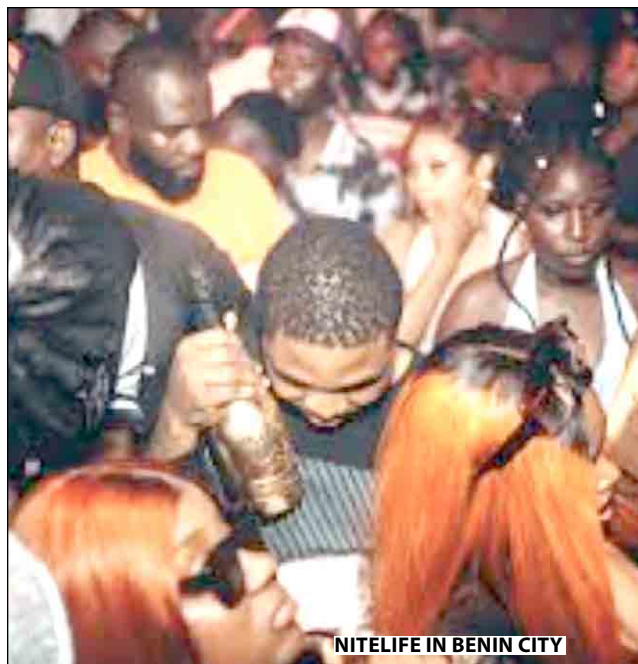
In recent times the city's nitelife has nose- dive into near oblivion thereby creating a vacuum in its traditional role to fully captured the potential that it vibrant history and dynamic population has provided.

It is obvious that entertainment offers a powerful tool to revive nitelife, drive social engagement, economic growth and promoting tourism.

With the right blend of events, venues, creative initiatives and secured security environment the city can alive after in way that respects its cultural heritage as well as meet modern interests.

Through nitelife focused initiatives, Benin city can tap into its rich cultural assets that would develop a vibrant society that will attracts local, tourists and returning visitors alike.

By combining modern entertainment with traditional culture and a safe environment, Benin city can build a nitelife that is not only enjoyable but also sustainable with its economic benefit.



NITELIFE IN BENIN CITY

## Orits Williki, Righteousman, Ekpenyoung, others set to light up Benin

Few weeks after the Shallipopi gig that send lovers of good music into crazy mood in Benin city during the last Easter celebration another banger is set to explode in the city.

The true skool blast which will be featuring legendary artistes like Pupa Orits Williki, Righteousman, Dr. Tony Akposheri, Keppy Ekpenyoung -Jyro, TDA worldwide

and MC - callertune is expected to be powered by a popular hotels and suits in Benin city.

Showbiz has it in good authority that the gig which is going to last all night long is expected to be mother of all banger that has assembled legendary old skool genre of years-a -years in the Nigeria entertainment industry in recent time.



WILLIKI



PEACE

## Peace Sunday debuts with "His Mercy"

Nigerian s idol season 8 contestant, Peace Sunday has made her appearance in the Nigerian music market with her debut single gospel album entitled "His Mercy".

Deeply rooted in the scriptural promise that the creator is " slow to anger and rich in mercy"the soprano singer said her debut album reflects on divine patience, mercy and companion.

She noted further that the song acts as both personal testimony and a general invitation for listeners to seek solace at the throne of grace.

Peace soprano voice and quality production bring fresh melody to the ever growing Nigerian's sacred music industry.

The single album is not just a displace of vocal clarity and emotional depth but a significant contribution to the music scene.

## What put me off in a man is low hygiene, inconsideration —Blessing Elias

Blessing Elias known for her role in 2019 movie titled "Royal Palace" says what turns her off in a man are low hygiene, inconsideration and stifling her growth.

The actress who described herself as courageous and Godly admits to bring heartbroken once due to giving too much in love and expecting the same in return.

She said showing resilience and hope her parents initially opposed her acting dreams viewing actresses as prostitutes, but they eventually allowed her to be when they saw her passion and determination.

"They realized it was what I wanted to do and they gave me the consent"



ELIAS

# ArtsWorld

with Francis Odupute  
08023680030

## Edwin Irabor: Structuring filmmaking with architecture (1)

### MAY WE MEET YOU SIR?

I am Arc Edwin Irabor, a filmmaker, 3D animator, illustrator and registered Architect. I am a member of Association of Movie Producers (AMP) and current Secretary of Edo State Chapter of the Directors Guide of Nigeria (DGN).

### WHAT GOT YOU INTO FILMMAKING AND THEREAFTER THE BUSINESS OF FILMMAKING?

I developed a deeper interest in filmmaking when I was preparing my research topic for my Masters thesis in school of Architecture. Though before then, sometime in the Mid 90s, I had been part of a film production for my youth drama group in church. In the course of coming up with the topic, I remembered my background as a stage actor and director and my love for film as an art form, so I decided to fuse film and Architecture together and my topic was to produce a design for a Nigerian Film Village.

In the process of designing the film village, I delved into deep research of the various aspects of filmmaking to understand how to develop a space that can accommodate the various activities involved in filmmaking. It was the first of its kind project in my school then because it was very unique. That research opened my eyes and enlarged my curiosity and interest in filmmaking.

So, after school, I did several courses in writing, directing, producing, editing, cinematography and creative thinking that really changed and developed my orientation in the art of filmmaking. I have never stopped learning about filmmaking ever since. Character Animation was a more recent addition which I have been into for a couple of years.

### GIVE US A DETAILED HISTORY OF YOUR JOURNEY INTO FILMMAKING AS AN ACTOR/PRODUCER AND HOW YOU FEEL PRESENTLY ABOUT FILMMAKING

I have always been an artist even as a child. I was drawing, making comic books, using water-colour, coloured pencils and all manner of art materials I could lay my hands on. There was also a technical part of me that was very interested in making crafts, tinkering with wires, motors and gears sourced from abandoned electronics and toys. So, I made cars, robots, models and other stuff with card boards and glue which later helped me to make fantastic miniature models later in the university. I chose to be a science student in senior secondary school while managing at the same time to keep a strong hold of my artistic and storytelling skills.

After secondary school, I joined my church youth organisation where I became the head of the drama wing and took part heavily in ticketed stage productions where I wrote, acted, directed and produced stage plays. Dance drama was a staple of those shows and I had my fill of dancing as well.

Then I went to university to study architecture which I believed was a course that allowed me to combine my artistic and scientific inclinations. In those days, aside from heavy school work, I painted portraits in pencils, watercolour and pastels. I also did quite a number of comic art and cartoons, some of which got published in my departmental magazine. It was the Masters thesis project in school of Architecture that finally opened my eyes into filmmaking as another medium of storytelling and artistic expression.

So, after school of Architecture, I did the course in filmmaking. Then I joined my church theatre group and encouraged production of short film contents as a medium of preserving stories for repetitive viewing compared to stage which is a one-off rich experience.



ED IRABOR - ARCHITECT, FILMMAKER, CARTOON ANIMATOR

My first production was what pushed me into getting more practical with filmmaking. My thesis research and filmmaking courses gave me a very strong theoretical background which somehow got me into conflicts with some crew members who kept telling me some things were impossible especially in the areas of cinematography, editing/VFX. So, I had to get into more productions to learn the practical side of things. The Nigerian film industry was widely known as an industry that survived on homegrown techniques of telling its own stories different from those of established film climes.

So eventually, practical skills matched theoretical knowledge and I went ahead to make several films.

As an Architect who loves designing and manipulating 3-dimensional spaces, visualising my design through 3D animation is something I employed to explain my designs to Clients. So, I simply went ahead and added character animation for storytelling to my skill set. My animated film, 'Valli of Chaddos' has been to several film festivals within and outside the country and I have many animation projects in different stages of production.

Looking back now I see how my art and architectural background have played major roles in my work. As an Architect, I'm able to design and visualise space when analysing how to tell the story better. Being an artist comes handy in story-boarding, concept and character designs, visual effects, production design, colour grading. Being a storyteller helps with generating ideas, editing and pacing the stories to get the desired reactions.

*I remember how disappointed I felt when I couldn't get a 50mm lens to buy in Benin when I got my first DSLR Camera back in the days when digital filmmaking was coming on board. I also remember the day I lost the bag containing all the footages captured after several days of shooting at a distant film location*

### WHAT ARE YOUR MEMORABLE FILMS AND WHY?

Every one of my films has been memorable because I work on almost all aspect of the creative process from producing, writing, story-boarding, directing, cinematography, editing, VFX, sound design etc. The ones that stand out to me are 'The Boxer', a combat piece; 'The Warrior', a film on the plight of independent womanhood in the face of old-fashioned patriarchy; then 'Valli of Chaddos', my first completed animation project.

### HOW DOES YOUR PERSON AS AN EDO PERSON INFLUENCE YOUR WORK. WHAT ARE THE VALUES YOU BRING TO THE TABLE.

I believe our cultural identity should be promoted in my works. As much as possible, my characters bear Edo names and I infuse Edo words into my works strategically. I currently have projects in pre production that are entirely spoken in Edo language. One of my major drives as an Edo filmmaker is how to promote the fact that Edo is a centre of creativity and talent and to prove that you can be based in Benin and make a mark with whatever you do. And indeed, the world is already a global village.

### HOW DO YOU VIEW THE INDUSTRY IN GENERAL AND THE EDO FILM INDUSTRY IN PARTICULAR?

I would say the Nigerian film industry has come a very long way right from the cinema era of greats like Hubert Ogunde, Eddy Ogbomah, Adelow and co, through the beginning of what we know as Nollywood to what we have today. From being an industry known for quantity, we have grown to a point where the quality of some of our movies can hold their own on international platforms alongside films from well established filmmaking regions. If not for budget, I believe our industry has the technical expertise to match VFX from those industries as well.

There's constant industrial and personal development going on at a massive scale within the industry and I can boldly say that technical and creatively skilled people abound in the Nigeria film industry.

Edo film industry has also grown. It has always been a film hub for indigenous filmmakers and held its place among top filmmaking regions in the country. It is constantly evolving with the times and recently has been a home to various scales of productions from outside the state due to the special initiatives and incentives pitched in by the outgoing government. My particular joy is that some veterans within the industry are getting good recognition on platforms that showcase their works far beyond the region to non-Edo speakers.

### WHAT ARE YOUR ADVICES TO THE OLD, YOUNG AND UPCOMING CREATIVE PEOPLE IN FILMMAKING.

I would say, don't stop learning. Keep improving yourselves. Keep working and looking for avenues to dish out what you have. Let the old mentor the younger ones. Let the upcoming ones study and perfect their skills as they selflessly seek to get their foot in the door. Let everyone promote the good cultural heritage of the Edo people.

### ANY SAD MOMENT IN YOUR EXPERIENCE AS AN ACTOR OR PRODUCER? HOW DO YOU THINK THESE CAN BE MANAGED?

I try as much as possible not to dwell on sad moments, so it is not easy to remember such because as long as humans come together to collectively achieve a goal, there will always be different ideological conflicts, expressed and veiled misunderstanding which come naturally from natural human imperfections. But I remember how disappointed I felt when I couldn't get a 50mm lens to buy in Benin when I got my first DSLR Camera back in the days when digital filmmaking was coming on board. I also remember the day I lost the bag containing all the footages captured after several days of shooting at a distant film location. It was a gut-wrenching experience that night. But I found the bag the following day.

\*(to be continued)

# Entertainment

— with Davidson Imosime Izegaegbe —

## Grants: Government and Nollywood

Why is the Nigerian government always positioned as a money lender, investor or guarantor in giving money to filmmakers in Nigeria to make films that will not only develop Nollywood, but Nigeria to the world? Or we all do not know that grants is the breath that can make Nollywood and Nigeria survive, even when we know that grants is the soil, the ecosystem on which the filmmakers can thrive, innovate and compete better on the global stage, if truly Nollywood is Nigeria's new oil? Can an industry be built on government's support as a lender, guarantor to filmmakers, bring about creating a vibrant film industry culture in Nigeria? Did filmmakers who swallowed the bait of loans to make movies survived or captured by economic constant collapse and its failure? Why is the silence loud now, especially from those who took these loans years ago, seen then as a golden opportunity? Truly, the questions are more than the answers because only the person who ran across many villages before dawn with the village masquerade on his head can truly tell the story of a masquerade's sojourn.

Nollywood is quick to be described by filmmakers as a creative entity that has achieved the global status as the world's second largest film industry by volume, while same appraisal is slow on Nollywood's growth in that regards remaining largely self-funded or lifted financially by the ass on the strength fuelled by the high-interest loans from banks. While many, from inception, have been clamouring for the need for grants to filmmakers, many then, of which some are victims today from the stung of bank loans, queried why should grants be thrown to filmmakers when everyone knew there are never free meal in Freetown? They supported their well researched ideas conclusively then that Nigeria is a capitalist state and therefore the creative sector should not and never be baby-fed. Good summation but those that took those loans and saw others who did not take the risk, how far? This is not to taunt or discredit their ideas on what they believed in. Surely, my personal opinion on this school of thought; methinks they failed to ask themselves then why these developed countries till date give grants to their creative sectors and also ensure as well that multinationals, corporations in their domains also do same.

However, In 2026, the conversation in the Nigeria film industry took a twist. It was like the moment the scales fell off Saul's eyes. The Nigeria filmmakers suddenly realised that they are making good movies, getting standing ovations in the cinemas and premiere. They also notice their actors are in high demands, the media and paparazzi are agog with these great movies from these great filmmakers, but failed to noticed the sad smile of financial defeat in the rueful smiles forced out the corners of their mouths for the paparazzi to think that the success of these films in cinemas and on the various media equate profits in their bank accounts. The sting of



defeat from loans to make their movies is killing them by instalments and therefore are no longer just asking for just money to make movies, but are now specifically demanding grants over loans.

As filmmakers or any creative in the creative sector, we must by all means understand that the current financial architecture, dominated by the Bank of Industry (BoI) and various creatives intervention funds, is built on a debt model. This is so, because they are in the financial sector to make profit. They do not run a charity organisation. For Nollywood to transition from hustle-scale to global-standard, with competing movies, the case for non-repayable grants is undeniable. In America, Canada, France, Italy, United Kingdom and other countries, with stable economy, even though mega billion film companies or studios invest in films, it does not make grants availability to become invisible or in existence. Why is Nigeria, with a film industry said to be amongst the top three in the world, exist only in numerical strength and not profits for the filmmakers? Why is it that the moment a filmmaker falls ill, the industry goes cap in hand like bambihala begging for money to treat them? Are we not aware of great talents that died prematurely in Nigeria because they refused to beg? Is Nigeria as a country more interested in being entertained or turning entertainment to not just a business entity but a profitable business that benefits the filmmakers?

To understand the semantic trap the Nigeria filmmakers found themselves in, one must first understand the clear frustration of the average Nigerian filmmaker by taking a curi-

*As filmmakers or any creative in the creative sector, we must by all means understand that the current financial architecture, dominated by the Bank of Industry (BoI) and various creatives intervention funds, is built on a debt model. This is so, because they are in the financial sector to make profit*

ous look at the fine print within the government financial circle. If you do, definitely you would realised that government has replaced the word grant with intervention fund. We all know that grant to any filmmaker around the world simply means a non-repayable investment in cultural capital, while to a banker, an intervention is ultimately a concessionary loan. Have Nigerian filmmakers not be told by government officials that grants are available for pick only for them to rush down to the banks mentioned to apply for these "grants", and be asked

if they came with collateral. This may sound absurd to those not living in Nigeria but not to those who reside in our unique country with a unique leadership.

Let us take the Bank of Industry Nolly Fund for example. I know then that it offers its loans to filmmakers at an interest rates as low as 10%. Therein lies the entrapment, however it may not be intentional, but when a filmmaker compares it to that of commercial banks, the filmmakers statements then starts with "Well..." until they are faced with the requirement of a "single obligor" limit and very strict repayment timetables, and their sentences then start with the word "Actually..." Again, let me ask this rhetorical question: is government or the Nigerian filmmakers not aware of the volatility of the Nigeria Naira before venturing into making movies? Do they not know that the risk of taking loans under such circumstances would definitely be too high for them to stomach? Sadly when kasala burst, government defense is always squeezed from the chaos of the film industry while the loan sharks, like painters better than Michael Angelo, come up with an expressionist narrative that Nollywood is devoid of structural integrity needed for a large-scale fund disbursement. What a way for the Nigeria filmmakers to be bottled by both government and the financial institutions.

Each time one finds one's self in any film forum where financial experts talk on why they have very few accepted entrants from amongst the creatives, one hears the applications fail not because of their stories but their business models seem nonexistent. They go further to add that many

film production houses do operate as sole proprietors with no clear financial history. I am not saying these banks should not carry out due diligence for filmmakers who seek for loans. My take is why delete grants for filmmakers who do not have large hearts to bear the stabs of loans? Can any filmmaker in Nigeria like Hollywood studios borrow against the IP of a franchise? Your answer is as good as mine, because the Nigerian banks sees the filmmakers script as just a paper with no tangible value. I do not want us to dive into the diverse possibilities of grants not getting to the right persons or hijacked by the "big four", and so on. LET THERE BE GRANTS first then we can open up the merits and demerits and fine tune the merits to ensure proper assessments and utilization of such grants. After all, is the Nigeria film Industry not made up of guilds with members and leaderships?

I may be wrong, but I want to strongly believe that Nigerian government is yet to differentiate the film industry from the Agricultural sector. While the later may depend on fertilizers, landmass, yields, man-power and outputs, film is simply a cultural product readily available as cultural export. If I want to enumerate the value of films compared to physical products, one may need to serialize this topic. However, always know this, that unlike Agriculture, culture (which the filmmakers' films sell and export) does not always work seamlessly on an accountant's quarterly balance sheet. Again who says state governments apart from the federal government cannot create grants for filmmakers in their states to help boost the creative industry in their states?

## FEATURE

# Beyond title: How SSG Ikhilor shapes Edo's governance direction

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

In the complex architecture of governance, some figures operate away from the loudest spotlights, yet remain central to the system's effectiveness. One such figure in Edo State today is the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Umar Musa Ikhilor, Esq, a man widely regarded as the stabilizing force and strategic mind behind the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo.

From the very onset of the administration, Ikhilor's role has gone beyond routine bureaucratic coordination.

At a time when the government was still taking shape and commissioners had yet to be appointed, he stepped into a broader space, serving not only as the chief administrative officer but also as a de facto spokesperson and frontline defender of government policies. In those early, defining moments, his voice in the media and in public spaces helped frame direction and reassure citizens of the administration's intent.

Observers of Edo's political landscape often describe Ikhilor as the "brain box" of the administration, a label that reflects both his intellectual depth and his hands-on approach to governance.

His imprint is particularly evident in the conceptualization and implementation of the administration's SHINE Agenda, a policy framework designed to drive development across key sectors. As a central figure in its execution, Ikhilor has consistently worked behind the scenes to translate vision into coordinated action.

Yet, beyond strategy and structure,



Musa Ikhilor

what sets him apart is a blend of energy and experience that defies easy categorization. Young, active, and widely acknowledged for his capacity, he has earned the informal title of "Capacity SSG" among admirers and political watchers alike, a nickname that

speaks not just to competence, but to reliability in moments that demand both speed and precision.

Before his appointment as SSG, Ikhilor built a formidable legal career shaped by years of experience in legislative drafting, parliamentary admin-

*For many observers, he represents a different model of public service leadership, one that combines competence with humility, and authority with approachability*

istration, lawmaking procedures, and constitutional amendment processes. His professional journey at the National Assembly saw him serve in various capacities, giving him a practical, insider understanding of how laws are crafted, debated, and implemented.

Notably, he also served as a consultant to the Federal House of Representatives on the review of the 1999 Constitution, a role that further sharpened his expertise in constitutional matters and policy design. This depth of experience has proven invaluable in his current role, where governance often intersects with legal precision and institutional compliance.

A member of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) and a notary public, Ikhilor's legal standing reinforces the credibility he brings into public service. His grounding in law continues to shape his administrative style—methodical, process-driven, and anchored on due diligence.

Despite what many describe as intimidating credentials, those who have worked closely with him paint a different picture, one of humility and accessibility.

Colleagues and stakeholders frequently speak of his willingness to listen, engage, and accommodate diverse perspectives. This quality has not gone unnoticed at the highest levels of the state's civil service. The Head of Service of Edo State, Anthony Okumbowa Esq, in a public remark, once described Ikhilor as a "strong unifier," underscoring his ability to bridge divides within government and beyond.

In a political environment where perceptions can easily shape narratives, Ikhilor's profile offers a counterpoint. Rather than projecting authority through distance, he has built a reputation anchored on collaboration and quiet efficiency. His loyalty to Governor Monday Okpebholo has also remained a defining feature, evident not just in words, but in consistent alignment with the administration's goals and priorities.

As Edo State continues to navigate the demands of governance and development, the role of the SSG remains critical.

In Ikhilor, the office appears to have found not just an administrator, but a coordinator, strategist, and bridge-builder rolled into one.

For many observers, he represents a different model of public service leadership, one that combines competence with humility, and authority with approachability. In that sense, Umar Musa Ikhilor is not just the Secretary to the State Government; he is, in many ways, an SSG with a difference.

## APC Lagos Governorship Primaries: Jandor unveils 2,690-member committee

## LAGOS

Dr Abdul-Azeez Adediran (Jandor), a Lagos APC governorship hopeful, has approved a 2,690-member committee to strengthen grassroots engagement before the party's primaries.

Adediran, in a statement by his spokesman, Mr Gbenga Ogunleye, said the move ensured effective coordination under the Jagaban-Jandor 2027 Campaign Organisation.

He said the committee reflected Lagos' political structure, with members drawn

from all 245 wards and the 20 Local Government Areas.

"The 2,690-member committee comprises 10 representatives from each of the 245 wards, 10 from each of the 20 LGAs, and 40 at state level.

"Each 10-member unit at ward and local levels includes agents, media personnel, se-

curity coordinators, grassroots mobilisers and canvassers.

"This structure ensures operational efficiency, message consistency and robust voter engagement across all party strata," Adediran said.

He said the committee would coordinate ward mobilisation, stakeholder engage-

ment, and drive voter education and participation in the direct primary process.

Adediran added that it would ensure compliance with party guidelines and electoral protocols, serving as the first communication link with grassroots members.

"This initiative underscores

our commitment to a participatory, transparent and inclusive process, aligned with APC internal democracy principles.

"The campaign remains

confident this structure will enhance party cohesion and position the aspirant for a credible and successful outing," he said.

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **IFEANYI CYRIL ONYENAGHALINIBE**, now wish to be known as **IFEANYI CYRIL GEORGE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

## CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **EHENEHIZENA OSARUGUE SOPHIA** and **EHENEHIZENA ESE SOPHIA** are one and the same person. Henceforth, I now wish to be known as **EHENEHIZENA ESE SOPHIA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

## REMOVAL OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **FELISITA CHINAGORO** and **OLUEBUBE FELISITA CHINAGORO** are one and the same person as appeared in some of my documents. Henceforth, I wish to be known and called **FELISITA CHINAGORO**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

## RECONCILIATION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **OSAGHAE EDWIN** and **OSAGHAE EDWIN OSAIKHUWOMWAN** are one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as **OSAGHAE EDWIN OSAIKHUWOMWAN**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

## ADDITION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **AKINDAHUN ATINUKE LISA EDE** and **AKINDAHUN ATINUKE LISA** are one and the same person as appeared in some of my documents. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as **AKINDAHUN ATINUKE LISA EDE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **EMMANUEL PEACE**, now wish to be known as **EMMANUEL SONIA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **OVIE JOY**, now wish to be known as **JOHN OKHUAKHVA JOY**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

## ADDITION OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MATTHEW HELEN**, now wish to be known as **EFFIONG MATTHEW HELEN**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

## CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **DAVID-IKEHI BUNMI OSASI**, **DAVID-IKEHI BUNMI OSAS**, **IZEBUWA BUNMI OSASI** and **IZEVBUWA BUNMI OSASI** are one and the same person as appeared in some of my documents. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as **DAVID-IKEHI BUNMI OSASI**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

## CORRECTION/ADDITION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **EZEAKUNNE OYIBO CALISTA** and **EZEAKUNNA CALISTA** are one and the same person. Henceforth, I now wish to be known as **EZEAKUNNE OYIBO CALISTA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS OKOYE NDIDIAMAKA LOVELY**, now wish to be known as **MRS. ONYENWE NDIDIAMAKA LOVELINE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

## CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **MISS OMOREGBE ANTHONIA IVIE**, now wish to be known as **MRS. OBASUYI ANTHONIA IVIE**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS ONWO SOPHIA EDEHA**, now wish to be known as **MRS. OAIKHIENA SOPHIA EDEHA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

### IYOBOSA PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION OF EBELLE

The general public is hereby notified that the above named association has applied to the Corporate Affairs Commission, Abuja for registration under Part 'C' of the Companies and Allied Matters Acts No. 2 of 2020.

## THE TRUSTEE ARE:

Osaro Osaigie — Chairman  
Imhanyelia Saturday — Secretary  
Oghadana Ehisuoria — Treasurer

## AIMS &amp; OBJECTIVES:

1. To help all Eken saving (Keep) Contribution.
2. To share with members in times of celebration and grief
3. The association is formed to help solve problems facing any member.

Any objections to the registration should be forwarded to the Registrar-General, Corporate Affairs Commission, Tigris Crescent, Maitama District, Abuja, within 28 days of this publication.

Signed: **OGHEDENA EHISUORIA** - Secretary

## Foreign

## NEWS

# Man kills seven of his children, and an eighth child, in Louisiana mass shooting

A father has killed seven of his children and another child in Shreveport, Louisiana, in a mass shooting that police called a "domestic disturbance".

Officers said the shooting began about 05:00 (10:00 GMT) on Sunday. After attacking the children at a property, the suspect drove away in a stolen car, police said. Officers then chased and killed him.

Two adult women, including the children's mother, are in critical condition after they, too, were hurt by gunfire. And a ninth child was taken to hospital after jumping from the roof of the home while escaping.

The suspect was identified as Shamar Elkins, Shreveport mayor's communications di-

rector told the BBC.

"We do believe him to be the only individual that fired gunshots at these locations," said Shreveport Police Department spokesperson Chris Bordelon in a news conference earlier on Sunday.

Officials have not yet suggested a motive on the gunman's part.

The children, siblings and one cousin, were three boys and five girls. They were aged between three to 11, the Caddo Parish coroner's office said.

Local police had earlier said on Sunday the children ranged in age from one to 14.

The coroner's office said the children were identified by their mothers as Jayla Elkins, 3, Shayla Elkins, 5, Kayla Pugh, 6, Layla Pugh, 7, Markaydon

Pugh, 10, Sariah Snow, 11, Khedarrion Snow, 6, and Braylon Snow, 5.

Neighbours described their shock to US media. Mack London, 71, told NBC News he had lived in the area for decades and that "nothing like this has ever happened on this street".

The attack occurred across multiple locations. The father is alleged to have first shot a woman, before moving to a second location where he fired further shots at the children.

One of the victims was able to run away to a nearby home and called the authorities, police said.

Members of the family told US media that Elkins was facing a split from his wife.

Elkins's brother-in-law Troy Brown, told the Washington

Post that he lived with the attacker, and that Elkins had been upset after his wife requested a divorce. "After the first argument about the divorce, he acted like he was losing his mind," he told the newspaper.

Crystal Brown, a cousin of one of the wounded women, told the AP news agency that the couple were separating and had been due to appear in court on Monday.

"He murdered his children... he shot his wife," she said.

In Sunday's press conference, Bordelon said officers attended a home shortly before 06:00 local time and found the bodies of the children.

He said officers determined the call had been "domestic in nature".

## Oil prices rise after Trump says Iranian ship seized

President Donald Trump said its navy had intercepted and seized an Iran-flagged cargo ship.

The Brent crude benchmark oil price jumped 5% to around \$95 (£70) a barrel, reversing the slump on Friday when Iran said the Strait of Hormuz would be "completely open" to commercial vessels for the remainder of the ceasefire.

On Saturday, Iran said it was closing the strait again and that any ship that approached it would be targeted.

The waterway is of key importance as usually about 20% of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas passes through it.

Energy markets have seen wild swings since the US and Israel attacked Iran on 28 February and Tehran responded with threats to target shipping in the strait.

Trump has said his representatives will be in Pakistan on Monday for negotiations. A White House official said Vice-President JD Vance would lead the US delegation.

But Iran's state media said Tehran had "no plans for now to participate" in the talks, although Iranian officials have not clarified the country's position yet.

"Oil markets continue to gyrate in response to oscillating social media posts by the US and Iran, rather than the real-

ities on the ground which remain challenging for oil flows to resume in a rapid fashion", analyst Saul Kavonic from financial services firm MST Marquee told the BBC.

"This is all part of negotiations, physically playing out in real time on the Strait of Hormuz."

Shanti Kelemen, co-chief investment officer at 7 Investment Management, said there was "a bit of fatigue" in the market given the "chopping and changing" in the situation.

"I think the market stopped believing the words, and will look more towards the actions," she told the BBC.

The Strait of Hormuz remained closed on Sunday, a day after the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) said it was ending a temporary reopening over the US blockade, which it said violated the terms of their ceasefire agreement. Iran said it would stay closed until the US ended its naval blockade.

Trump had said on Friday that the naval blockade would continue until a deal was agreed by the two countries.

Stock markets were mixed on Monday. In Europe, the FTSE 100 index of the biggest firms listed in the London fell 0.7%, while Germany's Dax and France's Cac 40 were both down more than 1%.



**LOUISIANA MASS SHOOTING:**  
Mourners gathered at the scene of Sunday's deadly attack.

## Tehran will never cede control of Strait of Hormuz, senior Iranian politician says

Former IRGC commander Ebrahim Azizi spoke to the BBC in Tehran about the current situation in the region.

"Never." That's when a senior Iranian lawmaker says they'll be ready to give up their control of the Strait of Hormuz.

"It's our inalienable right," Ebrahim Azizi, a former commander in Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), tells the BBC in Tehran. "Iran will decide the right of passage, including permissions for vessels to pass through the Strait."

And he says that's about to become enshrined in law.

"We are introducing a bill in parliament, based on article 110 of the constitution, which includes the environment, maritime safety and national security - and the armed forces will implement the law," says this member of parliament who heads the

Committee for National Security and Foreign Policy.

### FOLLOW UPDATES ON THE IRAN WAR

As worry mounts about the closure of this strategic waterway causing growing economic shocks worldwide, it's becoming clear this is not a short-term crisis to be resolved in a day.

War has handed Tehran what it sees as a new weapon - Azizi described this highly strategic strait Iran has managed to weaponise during this conflict as "one of our assets to face the enemy".

He's a key player in a parliament dominated by hardliners. Azizi also reflects the thinking among some of the senior decision-makers emerging in the new order born of this war, which has become increasingly militarised and also dominated

by hardliners, most of all the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), after a series of high-level assassinations in Israeli strikes.

Tehran now sees its ability to control the passage of vital maritime traffic, including critical oil and gas tankers, not just as a bargaining chip in current negotiations, but as long-term leverage.

"The first priority for Iran after the war is to restore deterrence and the Strait of Hormuz is among Iran's principal strategic leverages," explains Mohammad Eslami, a research fellow at the University of Tehran.

"Tehran is open to discussing how other nations can benefit from Iran's new framework for the strait, but control is the bottom line."

But that's a future rejected by some of Iran's neighbours already furious about its at-

tacks on their countries during the five weeks of war, which is now on pause in a fragile temporary ceasefire.

"An act of hostile piracy" is how Dr Anwar Gargash, diplomatic adviser to the president of the United Arab Emirates, described it to me in a recent interview.

He warned that if Iran refused to relinquish its control of these international waters it would set a "dangerous precedent" for other strategic waterways in the world.

"They are the pirates who sold our region to the Americans," was Azizi's retort in a reference to the US military bases across the Middle East which, along with other infrastructure, were repeatedly targeted by Iran's drones and missiles. The US, he added, was "the biggest pirate in the world".

## New Zealand declares state of emergency in Wellington as floods hit

New Zealand has declared a state of emergency in its capital city Wellington as torrential rain and flash flooding drenched the country's North Island.

Footage online shows vehicles submerged, trees uprooted and houses hit by landslides. Wellington received a record 77mm (3in) of rain in less than an hour on Monday, said mayor Andrew Little.

Local authorities advised residents to hunker down, with rain forecast for the next day and a half. Some flights at Wellington Airport have been cancelled and several schools have shut their campuses.

More than a dozen people have been evacuated while a 60-year-old man in the Karori suburb has been reported missing. No fatalities have been reported so far.

This series of flash floods comes less than a week after Cyclone Vaianu swept through the North Island last weekend.

Research over the years have shown that climate change has made extreme weather events, including floods, more common and more intense around the world.

"The wild weather continues. We've had flooding, slips and evacuations... The flooding has been strong enough to move cars, and many manhole covers have been lifted," Little said in

a video published on his Facebook page.

In the suburb of Kingston, a resident told Radio New Zealand (RNZ) that he had tried to escape on the back of his neighbour's motorbike after a landslide buried a nearby road in the early hours of Monday.

"It's definitely a big event," he said. "You wouldn't have wanted to be under it, it wouldn't have been survivable."

Another resident in the suburb of Morningside said his garden had been "inundated with water, you couldn't see the grass or anything". There was a "huge deluge, flow, river in fact, flowing through the garden", he told RNZ.

Mark Mitchell, the minister for emergency management and recovery, said they were expecting the "worst of the weather" later on Monday evening.

"If you are in the Wellington region, be prepared," he said in a post on Facebook. "If you are going to evacuate make those decisions early and keep yourself updated with information."

The emergency management office for the Wellington region has advised residents to cut or delay all non-essential travel, and for those residing in low-lying or flood-prone areas to consider relocating to their friends' and families' for at least the next 24 hours.

**NEWS****Foreign****Rumen Radev's party wins Bulgarian election**

Rumen Radev's Progressive Bulgaria (PB) party has won a landslide victory in Sunday's Bulgarian election - the eighth general election in five years.

With almost 100% of the vote counted, his PB movement, only set up 4 months ago, won 44.7% and has secured a majority of 135 seats in the 240-seat parliament. It is the first time since 1997 that a single Bulgarian party has sufficient seats to govern alone.

Ex-prime minister Boiko Borisov's GERB party came second with 13.4%, with the liberal PP-DB coalition third with 12.8%.

The election was called after the previous government tried to push through a controversial budget in December, prompting mass protests which Radev, as president, supported.

"People rejected the self-satisfaction and arrogance of old parties and did not fall prey to lies and manipulation. I thank them for their trust," Radev said, in his victory speech.

He promised to build "a strong Bulgaria in a strong Europe".

"What Europe needs right now is critical thinking, pragmatic actions and good results, especially to build a new security architecture and ... recover its industrial power and competitiveness. That will be the main contribution of Bulgaria to its European mission," he said.

Radev, 62, is seen as a pragmatic, somewhat pro-Russian leader, who has criticised EU sanctions, and called for constructive dialogue with the Kremlin.

He opposes Bulgarian military support for Ukraine, but is more likely to seek compromise than confrontation with fellow European leaders.

"Radev is unlikely to obstruct EU support for Ukraine," said Philip Gounev, a security analyst in Sofia and former deputy Bulgarian Interior Minister.

"His approach will be pragmatic, more like Slovak premier Robert Fico than outgoing Hungarian premier Viktor Orbán."



**BULGARIAN ELECTION:**

Rumen Radev of Progressive Bulgaria (PB) celebrates his landslide victory.

**Israel under fire over appointment of ambassador to Somaliland**

A dozen Muslim-majority nations have condemned Israel's appointment of a diplomatic envoy to the breakaway region of Somaliland.

In a statement posted on social media by Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ministers from 12 governments, including Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan and Kuwait, called the move a "flagrant violation" of Somalia's territorial integrity.

The African Union has also denounced the decision, saying any unilateral recognition of the territory is "null and void." It also warned that such actions risk undermining regional stability.

There are rumours of Israel planning to build a military base in Somaliland, which sits

across the Gulf of Aden from Yemen. It would allow Israel to conduct strategic airstrikes and attacks on its adversaries in the wider region, including Houthi rebels in Yemen, but also Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

In December, Israel officially recognised Somaliland as an independent state. It's the first and only country to do so, a move that provoked an immediate international backlash. On Wednesday, it announced Michael Lotem, Israel's former ambassador to Kenya, as its first envoy to the territory.

Israel has granted diplomatic approval to Mohamed Hagi, a presidential adviser who helped broker the recognition, as Somaliland's first ambassador to Israel.

**Japan on high alert for 'huge' second quake after issuing tsunami warning**

Officials in Japan have warned of an increased risk of a "huge" earthquake in the next week after a 7.7 magnitude quake struck off the north-east coast, triggering an evacuation order and warnings of 3m tsunami waves.

Thousands of people were told to leave coastal areas for higher ground after the quake in waters off Iwate prefecture, 530km (330 miles) north of the capital Tokyo.

The biggest waves measured 80cm but the meteorological agency in earthquake-prone Japan warned that quakes "causing even stronger shaking" could occur in the next week, producing bigger waves.

Later, the agency warned the risk of a quake measuring 8.0 or higher was now "relatively high-

er than during normal times".

People in Japan are still scarred by memories of a huge quake in 2011 that triggered a tsunami which killed more than 18,000 people and caused a meltdown at the Fukushima nuclear plant.

After Monday's undersea quake, recorded at a depth of 10km, warnings of possible bigger waves were issued to residents in areas nearest the epicentre - in Japan's main island, Honshu, and the northern region of Hokkaido.

Tremors were felt as far away as Tokyo.

In Hokkaido tsunami alerts remained in place two hours after the quake struck at 16:52 local time (08:52 BST).

"As soon as we heard the earthquake alert, everyone ran

downstairs," Chaw Su Thwe, a Myanmar national living in Hokkaido, told the BBC. "However, this time the shaking was relatively mild."

"Right now, local authorities are using loudspeakers in the neighbourhood to warn people about a possible tsunami and to stay alert," she added. "Office workers have been allowed to leave work early."

A number of bullet trains were affected, and 100 homes were without power, Japan's Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kiara told reporters. He said there were no immediate reports of major damage or injuries.

A tsunami warning was issued across part of Japan's east coast. The warning is the second-highest of three levels of

alert, with people being told to evacuate immediately from coastal regions and riverside areas and move to higher ground or an evacuation building.

"Tsunami waves are expected to hit repeatedly. Do not leave safe ground until the warning is lifted," Japan's Meteorological Agency (JMA) told reporters in the hours after the quake - a plea echoed by Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, who urged people to get to "higher, safer places".

It was later downgraded to a tsunami alert.

Japan's precarious location on the Ring of Fire means it experiences about 1,500 earthquakes a year, and accounts for 10% of quakes measuring 6.0 magnitude or higher worldwide.

**At least 25 killed in firecracker factory blast in India**

At least 25 people have been killed in an explosion at a firecracker factory in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, with four others seriously injured.

The blast occurred at the Vanaja Fireworks Industry in Virudhunagar on Sunday evening. The factory was supposed to be closed but about 50 workers were inside at the time, officials said.

A second explosion occurred while rescue operations were on, injuring 13 more people, though none sustained serious burns, District Collector NO Sukhaputra told ANI news agency.

The cause of the blast is not yet known and an investigation is under way.

An eyewitness, who is being treated for injuries, told BBC Tamil that around 25 people were working in the veranda

in front of the factory when the fire broke out, damaging at least three rooms and reducing parts of the building to rubble.

Rescue operations - which have now concluded - were then significantly slowed down as firecrackers continued to explode inside the building.

A complaint has been filed against the factory owner and foreman, both of whom are absconding, police said, adding that four special teams have been set up to trace and arrest them.

Meanwhile, efforts to identify the victims continued on Monday. District officials said that 22 of the 25 dead had been identified so far - most of them are women.

Some reports say the force of the blast left several bodies charred beyond recognition.

Accidents at fireworks factories in India are not uncommon.

The industry supplies fire-

crackers for weddings, festivals and other ceremonies and has faced repeated scrutiny over safety standards.

As the investigation continues, questions are being raised about possible safety violations.

Speaking to reporters, district collector Sukhaputra said the factory should not have been operating on a Sunday, calling it a "first violation".

He added that it held a valid licence, but that checks into other possible breaches were under way.

The tragedy also prompted swift responses from politicians.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi described it as "deeply distressing" and offered condolences to the families of those killed.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin said the deaths had caused "immense sorrow" and that he had instructed officials to ensure all necessary assistance.

**Iranian woman arrested in US for allegedly trafficking arms to Sudan**

US authorities have arrested an Iranian woman for trafficking arms to Sudan on behalf of her country, federal prosecutors have said.

Shamim Mafi, 44, was arrested at Los Angeles airport on Saturday and is accused of "brokering the sale of drones, bombs, bomb fuses, and millions of rounds of ammunition manufactured by Iran and sold to Sudan", First Assistant US Attorney Bill Essayli said on X.

The alleged sales were to Sudan's defence ministry, including a €60m (\$70m; £52m) drone contract, court documents show.

Mafi, who has not yet commented on the allegations, is expected to appear in court later on Monday. If convicted, she could face a jail sentence of up to 20 years.

An FBI criminal complaint

filed in court, a copy of which was obtained by the BBC, says Mafi coordinated a "Sudanese delegation's travel to Iran, received over €6m in payments, and issued payment receipts" for the drone deal.

She submitted "a letter of intent" to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to broker the sale of 55,000 bomb fuses to Sudan's defence ministry, it adds.

According to Essayli, Mafi is "an Iranian national who became a lawful permanent resident of the United States in 2016".

She is accused of breaching US sanctions against Iran, which prohibit US persons from transacting or dealing in Iranian goods or services without authorisation.

Court documents describe her "repeated use of informal exchange entities across multiple transactions" in the arms

deals as a "deliberate effort... to evade US sanctions".

She is said to have been ready to board a flight from California to Turkey when she was arrested.

Essayli's post included images of a woman presumed to be Mafi surrounded by security agents at an airport, a drone on tarmac and bundles of cash.

Sudan has been engulfed in a devastating civil war between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces for the past three years.

The war has resulted in the world's worst humanitarian crisis, according to the UN, with tens of thousands of people killed, and millions displaced.

Foreign powers have been accused of backing both sides and providing ammunition, further fuelling the conflict.

# Feature

## The Human Cost of Disharmony: Nigeria's displacement crisis in 2026 and the gender dimension

GRACE IJEOMA UMEH

Since February 2026, aid agencies in Nigeria's Northeast have been using the same word to describe the situation: "critical". Not improving. Not stabilising. Critical and volatile.

That is the language of the United Nations Population Fund's latest situation report on Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe — the BAY states. It describes a protracted conflict now compounded by economic hardship and climate shocks, producing 3.6 million internally displaced persons nationwide and over 400,000 refugees in the Lake Chad Basin.

Behind those numbers are women delivering babies without skilled birth attendants, girls facing heightened risks of gender-based violence, and communities where access to water, sanitation, and health care determines whether displacement becomes a death sentence.

This is the human ledger of disharmony. And in 2026, Nigeria is overdrawn.

### THE SCALE: A CONFLICT THAT WON'T CLOSE

The JAS faction of Boko Haram is active again in Borno. Banditry and kidnappings continue across the Northwest. Farmer-herder clashes keep killing in the Northcentral. These are not separate crises. They are a single, sprawling security failure that has displaced families for over a decade.

Internal displacement in Nigeria is no longer an emergency. It is a permanent feature of governance. The 3.6 million IDPs are not waiting to go home next month. Many have been waiting ten years. Camps that were "temporary" in 2015 are now villages with their own economies, trauma, and second generation of children born stateless in practice.

UNFPA reports that limited access to water, sanitation, hygiene, and sexual and reproductive health care is increasing exposure to protection risks and driving "elevated rates of maternal morbidity" across the Northeast. In February 2026 alone, 13,700 people received direct sexual and reproductive health services through UNFPA and partners. That included 1,141 safe deliveries with skilled attendants, 4,230 women accessing antenatal care, and 1,222 receiving postnatal care.

Those 1,141 safe deliveries are the headline Nigeria wants. The real story is the denominator: how many women delivered unsafely in the same month because clinics were too far, too insecure, or too underfunded.

### 2. THE GENDER DIMENSION: GBV IN A FUNDING DROUGHT

Displacement does not affect everyone equally. UNFPA is explicit: women and adolescent girls are "disproportionately affected by gender-based violence". Across the BAY states in February, 9,960 individuals accessed GBV-related services — mental health and psychosocial support, case management, legal assistance, safe shelter,



Refugees in queue

security, and forensic care.

Outreach reached another 26,900 people with awareness messaging on available survivor support. Yet the funding to sustain this is collapsing. UNFPA's 2026 appeal for Nigeria was cut from \$22.1 million to \$11.9 million to reflect what it calls the "Humanitarian Reset". As of February, only \$590,134 had been secured, mostly from 2025 rollover funds. The gap is \$11.31 million.

That is not a budget shortfall. It is a policy choice. When GBV services lose 95% of requested funding, the state is banking on disharmony — betting that the social costs of unaddressed trauma, untreated infections, and unsupported survivors will not come due.

They always do. In broken school attendance. In lost labour. In retaliatory violence. In the next generation

of displacement.

### 3. THE ECONOMIC FEEDBACK LOOP

Insecurity has a balance sheet. Land-use conflicts between farmers and herders undermine food security and drive inflation. Banditry on transport corridors raises the cost of moving goods from North to South. Whole local government areas are economically severed because markets cannot open and extension workers cannot travel.

The 2026 budget of N68.3 trillion will not matter to a farming community that cannot plant because armed groups control access to fields. Tax reform will not raise revenue from SMEs that closed after the third kidnapping on their supply route. Debt service ratios are academic when the local economy is cash, barter, and aid.

Humanitarian actors now talk openly about "aid fatigue" and "competing crises". But Nigeria's displacement is not competing with Ukraine or Gaza. It is competing with Nigeria's own fiscal priorities. Every naira that services debt is a naira not drilling a borehole in a camp, not paying a midwife in Gwoza, not fueling a patrol that lets a market reopen.

### 4. THE POLICY GAP: MANAGING DISPLACEMENT VS. ENDING IT

For years, Nigeria's response has focused on managing displacement: camps, rations, and security operations. The data from 2026 shows the limits of management.

You cannot UNFPA your way out of a governance problem. 2,629 individuals supported with modern contraceptives in a month is important. So are 2,897 people receiving STI information, testing, and treatment. But those are harm-reduction metrics. They measure how well we are treating symptoms.

The cause is the state's inability to guarantee physical security and basic services outside state capitals. Until displaced families can return voluntarily, in safety and dignity, with access to land, schools, and clinics, the caseload will not shrink. It will age.

The "Humanitarian Reset" that cut UNFPA's appeal is an admission that the international system will not fund indefinite care. The question is whether Nigeria's 2026 fiscal reset — N68.3 trillion, new tax laws, debt restructuring — includes a security reset. Because without one, the budget

is just a more expensive way to manage the same crisis.

### CONCLUSION: THE TEST OF A STATE

A country is not measured by the size of its budget, but by the share of its citizens who can sleep without fear, give birth without dying, and report violence without stigma.

On that test, the February 2026 data is clear: 1,141 safe deliveries is progress, but it is not coverage. 9,960 GBV services accessed is response, but it is not prevention. A \$11.31 million funding gap is a warning, but it is not yet a collapse.

Nigeria has two choices. It can continue to bank on disharmony — to let conflict simmer while extracting revenue from the parts of the economy still functioning. Or it can price the true cost of displacement into every fiscal decision: every naira borrowed, every tax enforced, every capital project prioritised.

The latter requires admitting that security is economic policy. That a clinic in Bama is infrastructure. That a forensic rape kit in Yobe is debt sustainability, because a society that cannot protect its women cannot grow.

The human cost of disharmony is no longer theoretical. It is 3.6 million people. It is 1,141 women who delivered safely last month, and the unknown number who did not. It is \$590,134 raised against an \$11.9 million need.

2026 will tell us whether Nigeria sees those numbers as a humanitarian footnote, or as the central line item in the national budget.

*Humanitarian actors now talk openly about "aid fatigue" and "competing crises". But Nigeria's displacement is not competing with Ukraine or Gaza. It is competing with Nigeria's own fiscal priorities.*

# Mothers in Crisis: Maternal Health and GBV in Nigeria's Northeast

GRACE IJEOMA UMEH

In February 2026, 1,141 women in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states delivered babies with a skilled birth attendant present.

That is the number the United Nations Population Fund put in its report. It is a real number, attached to real mothers and newborns who survived.

It is also the wrong number to focus on. The right question is how many did not.

Nigeria's Northeast remains the sharpest edge of the country's development crisis. A protracted conflict, climate shocks, and economic hardship have created a region where childbirth is still a gamble and violence against women is routine. The data for 2026 shows progress. It also shows a funding cliff that will decide whether that progress holds.

## THE MATERNAL HEALTH PICTURE: GAINS WITHOUT COVERAGE

UNFPA's February 2026 Situation Report for the BAY states reads like a field hospital ledger. In one month: 13,700 people received direct sexual and reproductive health services. That included 4,230 pregnant women accessing antenatal care, 1,222 women receiving postnatal care, and the 1,141 safe deliveries.

Another 2,629 individuals were supported with modern contraceptive methods. 2,897 people received information, testing, and treatment for sexually transmitted infections. Awareness campaigns reached roughly 9,000 people.

These are hard-won gains in a place where clinics are targets, roads are unsafe, and midwives work under threat. But they are not coverage. They are islands. UNFPA itself notes "limited access to essential services" is driving "elevated rates of maternal morbidity" across the Northeast.

Maternal morbidity means injury, illness, and long-term disability from pregnancy and childbirth. It means fistula, haemorrhage, and sepsis that do not kill but break lives. It means that for every woman who delivers safely, others deliver in IDP camp tents, on the road while fleeing, or at home without clean water, let alone a trained hand.

The arithmetic of survival is still brutal: 3.6 million internally displaced Nigerians nationwide. 400,000+ refugees in the Lake Chad Basin. And a health system in the BAY states that functions in patches, not networks.

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: THE SECOND EMERGENCY

Displacement multiplies risk. UNFPA is direct: women and adolescent girls are "disproportionately affected by gender-based violence" in the BAY states.

In February, 9,960 individuals accessed GBV-related services. That includes mental health and psychosocial support, case management, referrals, legal assistance, safe shelter, security services, and forensic care. Outreach reached another 26,900 people with awareness messaging on available survivor support.



PREGNANT WOMAN WITH NURSE

Those 9,960 cases are not the total. They are the number who found a service, trusted it, and were physically able to reach it. The real caseload is hidden by stigma, distance, and insecurity.

GBV in conflict is not collateral damage. It is a tactic. It is used to terrorise, displace, and destroy social bonds. It creates trauma that outlasts the war. And it thrives where the state is absent and impunity is normal.

## 3. THE FUNDING CLIFF: RESET OR RETREAT?

Here is the number that should alarm every policymaker: UNFPA's 2026 funding appeal for Nigeria was cut from \$22.1 million to \$11.9 million under what it calls the "Humanitarian Reset". As of February, only \$590,134 had been secured, mostly from 2025 rollover funds.

The gap is \$11.31 million. That is a 95% shortfall.

The "reset" is humanitarian-speak for donor fatigue. The world is telling Nigeria it will not finance indefinite care for indefinite displacement. That is not cynical. It is predictable. No donor system is designed to fund the same crisis for 15 years.

But the timing is dangerous. The reset coincides with the Federal Government's own fiscal squeeze. The 2026 budget is N68.3 trillion, yet debt service takes 80-90% of revenue. The new tax laws that began in January are meant to raise money, but households are already under inflation and subsidy-removal pressure.

If Abuja cannot fill the \$11.31 million gap, GBV services contract. Safe shelters close. Forensic kits run out. Mobile clinics park. The 1,141 safe deliveries in February become 800 in June, then 400 by December. That is

how resets become reversals.

## THE COST OF INACTION: WHY THIS IS ECONOMIC POLICY

Maternal death and GBV are often treated as social issues. They are economic issues.

A woman who dies in childbirth leaves children who are less likely to attend school, more likely to be malnourished, and more likely to be displaced again. A girl who survives rape but receives no psychosocial support is less likely to return to education

**”**  
*The world is telling Nigeria it will not finance indefinite care for indefinite displacement. That is not cynical. It is predictable. No donor system is designed to fund the same crisis for 15 years.*

or work. A community where women cannot access contraceptives has higher fertility in conditions of extreme poverty and insecurity.

The land-use conflicts driving food inflation are not separate from this. When women cannot farm because of insecurity, food supply drops and prices rise in Lagos and Kano. When displacement breaks health-seeking behaviour, STI rates and long-term treatment costs rise for the national system.

Every naira that services debt instead of funding a midwife in Gwoza is a fiscal choice. Every tax enforcement drive that ignores market access for displaced women is a growth choice. Nigeria's N68.3 trillion budget is not neutral on gender. No budget is.

## BEYOND MANAGEMENT: THE RETURN QUESTION

For over a decade, Nigeria's response to Northeast displacement has been management: camps, rations, security operations, and donor-funded health posts. The 2026 data shows the ceiling of that model.

You cannot UNFPA your way out of a governance failure. 2,629 contraceptive users and 2,897 STI cases treated in a month are important. They are not a strategy for ending displacement.

The strategy is return. Not forced return to unsafe villages, but voluntary, dignified return with land access, schools, clinics, and security that holds after the cameras leave. Until that happens, the caseload ages. Children born in camps in 2015 are now 11. They have known no other home. Their mothers have known no other health system than mobile outreach.

The "Humanitarian Reset" is a message to Abuja: the international sys-

tem will not fund permanent camps. The question is whether the 2026 fiscal reset — new taxes, new borrowing, new budget lines — includes a security and services reset that makes return possible.

## A BUDGET IS A VALUE STATEMENT

A country says what it values by what it funds. In February 2026, Nigeria funded 1,141 safe deliveries and 9,960 GBV services in the BAY states through a UN agency that is 95% underfunded.

If that is acceptable, then we have accepted that childbirth in Borno is more dangerous than in Ekiti by policy, not by fate. We have accepted that a rape survivor in Yobe is less likely to see justice than one in Abuja. We have accepted that "critical and volatile" is a permanent address for 3.6 million citizens.

The alternative is to price maternal health and GBV response into the core budget, not the donor annex. It is to treat a forensic rape kit as infrastructure, because a society that cannot protect its women cannot protect its growth. It is to measure the success of the N68.3 trillion budget not by GDP points, but by whether the number of safe deliveries in December 2026 is higher than in February.

A state is not sovereign where its women cannot give birth safely. It is not legitimate where survivors cannot report violence without stigma. And it is not solvent if it treats the health of half its population as a humanitarian line item.

The mothers of the Northeast are not asking for charity. They are asking for the contract of citizenship: safety, services, and a future. Is Nigeria still willing to sign it?

## FEATURE

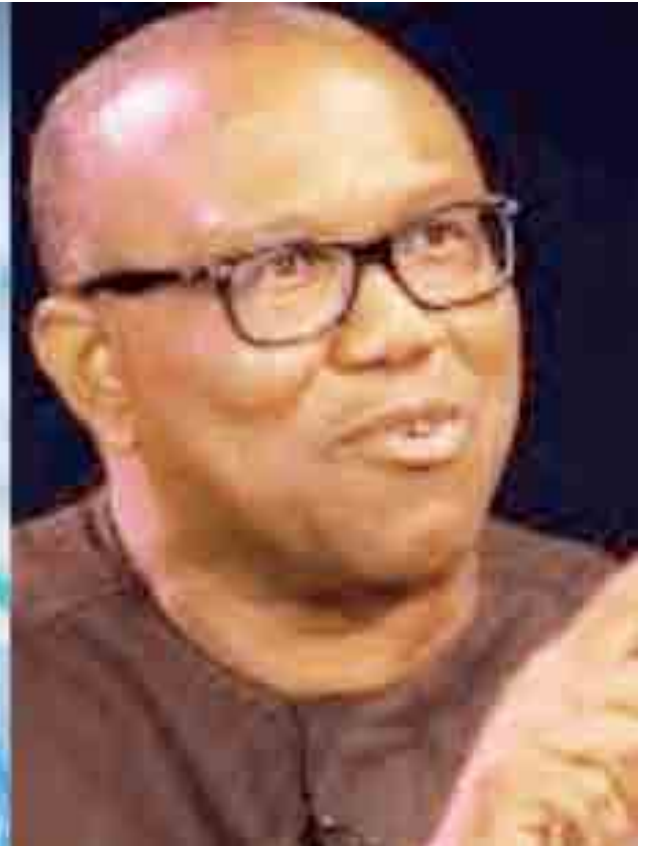
# Tax, Tensions, and 2027: Why 2026 will define Nigeria's next election



ATIKU ABUBAKAR



BOLA TINUBU



PETER OBI

MARTHA OBI-DIKE

Nigeria does not have off-years. Every year is a pre-election year. But 2026 is different. It is the year when tax policy, governorship contests, and reform fatigue collide to set the terms for 2027.

On January 1, four new tax laws took effect: the Nigeria Tax Act, Nigeria Tax Administration Act, Joint Revenue Board Act, and Nigeria Revenue Service Act. The Presidency calls them modernisation. Northern lawmakers who opposed them call them provocation. Small businesses call them confusing. And voters, watching inflation and insecurity, will call them the ballot question.

2026 is not about 2026. It is the primary election for the general election.

## THE TAX FLASHPOINT: REVENUE VS. RESENTMENT

President Bola Tinubu signed the tax package on June 26, 2025, after months of legislative battle. The stated goal: broaden the base, tighten enforcement, and reverse years of declining non-oil revenue. Non-oil takings did rise from N5.96 trillion in 2022 to N16.09 trillion in 2024. The administration wants more.

The problem is sequencing. The laws landed in January 2026 while households are still absorbing subsidy removal, FX unification, and a CBN policy rate above 25%. BusinessDay identified the core risk: "The challenge now is whether the government can strengthen its finances without putting more pressure on households or scaring away investors."

Early signs are not reassuring. Business groups report multiple agency audits, unclear guidelines, and allegations of discrepancies between the versions of the bills passed and those gazetted. Stears economist Dumebi Oluwole diagnosed the political prob-

lem: "One of the biggest sources of pushback is information asymmetry as many people still do not understand the potential benefit of these policies".

When citizens don't understand a tax, they don't comply. They evade, or they vote. Opposition parties in 2026 have been handed a simple message: "They are taxing you to pay debt, not to serve you." Whether that is true matters less than whether it feels true.

## THE GOVERNORSHIP TEST RUNS: OSUN AND EKITI

Two states vote for governor in 2026: Osun and Ekiti. On their own, they are not national bellwethers. In a pre-2027 year, they are laboratories.

Both contests will measure three things. First, \*reform fatigue\*. Are voters willing to endure more hardship for promised long-term gains, or will they punish incumbents for tax pain and inflation? Second, \*opposition coherence\*. Can PDP, Labour, and other parties convert economic frustration into a unified message, or will they fracture as they did post-2023? Third, \*federal influence\*. Will Abuja's fiscal choices help or hurt its party's candidates in the Southwest?

The governorships are also a test of the new Nigeria Revenue Service. If enforcement is perceived as selective or punitive in opposition strongholds, "tax" becomes a campaign weapon. If it is transparent and digital, the federal government can claim state capacity. Either way, Osun and Ekiti will produce the soundbites that define 2027.

## THE FISCAL-ELECTORAL LOOP

Nigeria has a habit: election years distort budgets. Political spending rises. Capital releases lag. Debt grows. The 2026 budget is N68.3 trillion, with a projected N35.51 trillion in retained revenue. Debt service already consumes 80-90% of revenue. That leaves little room for either development or

patronage.

Here is the loop 2026 must break: To win 2027, parties need money. To raise money, the government leans on taxes and borrowing. Taxes and borrowing squeeze households and firms. Squeezed voters punish incumbents. To avoid punishment, governments delay reforms or increase untargeted spending. The deficit widens. The next administration inherits a worse balance sheet and repeats the cycle.

BusinessDay's warning applies to politics as much as finance: the "2026 budget could trap Nigeria in fiscal time-loop despite gains from reforms". A political time-loop works the same way: reform, backlash, reversal, crisis, reform.

## THE OPPOSITION'S OPENING: FROM SUBSIDY TO TAX

In 2023, the removal of petrol subsidy was the defining economic shock. By

2026, the shock has been absorbed, but the grievance has migrated. The new target is taxation without visible services.

The tax laws were opposed by federal lawmakers from the North before passage. That regional split is now national policy. If enforcement is heavy in the South and uneven in the North, or vice versa, the charge of "fiscal marginalisation" writes itself. If implementation is chaotic, the charge is "incompetence".

An opposition coalition does not need a detailed manifesto in 2026. It needs one question: "What did you get for the tax you paid this year?" If the answer is "more debt service and fewer working clinics," the 2027 election is already framed.

The Tinubu administration's counter is to show results fast: digital tax filing that works, eliminated multiple taxation, and capital projects commissioned before December. The risk is that the N9.83 trillion added to the budget to cover "outstanding capital projects" from prior years means 2026 is paying for 2023's promises. Voters don't reward you for keeping old promises late. They reward you for new ones kept early.

## THE EXTERNAL WILDCARDS

Two non-fiscal issues will bleed into the 2026 political debate. First, \*security\*. Banditry, kidnappings, and farmer-herder clashes continue. A government that cannot secure supply routes cannot protect the tax base. Second, \*geopolitics\*. Punch reported that "implications of United States air strikes on Nigerian soil" are among the issues shaping 2026. Sovereignty questions inflame elections faster than VAT rates.

Add FX volatility, crude price swings, and US Fed decisions that affect capital flows, and 2026 becomes a year where domestic tax policy is hostage to global shocks. A government seen as unlucky is quickly seen

as unfit.

## THE 2027 BALLOT IS BEING PRINTED NOW

Elections are not won in election year. They are won in the budget year before. 2026 is Nigeria's budget year before.

The administration's hypothesis is that painful reforms plus aggressive revenue can stabilise the economy before 2027. The opposition's hypothesis is that pain without visible gain is politically fatal.

## FIVE METRICS WILL DECIDE WHICH HYPOTHESIS HOLDS:

1. \*Tax-to-service ratio\*: Can a trader in Aba or a teacher in Kano point to one new, working public good funded by 2026 taxes?
2. \*Inflation vs. wages\*: Is core inflation falling faster than the tax burden is rising?
3. \*Osun/Ekiti signal\*: Do incumbents win by defending reforms, or does the opposition win by attacking them?
4. \*Debt narrative\*: Does the public hear "we borrowed to build" or "we borrowed to pay interest"?
5. \*Security perception\*: Do people feel safer in December 2026 than in January?

If the answers trend positive, 2026 is the year Tinubu's reforms consolidate. If they trend negative, 2026 is the year the 2027 opposition was born.

A tax law is not just a fiscal instrument. It is a social contract. In 2026, Nigerians will decide whether that contract was renegotiated with them, or imposed on them. That decision will not wait for INEC's timetable. It is being made now, in markets, in council areas, and in the quiet calculation of households deciding what they can still afford.

2027 will count the votes. 2026 will cast them.

”  
*Outstanding capital projects” from prior years means 2026 is paying for 2023’s promises. Voters don’t reward you for keeping old promises late.*

# Beyond title: How SSG Ikhilor shapes Edo's governance direction

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

In the complex architecture of governance, some figures operate away from the loudest spotlights, yet remain central to the system's effectiveness. One such figure in Edo State today is the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Umar Musa Ikhilor, Esq, a man widely regarded as the stabilizing force and strategic mind behind the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo.

From the very onset of the administration, Ikhilor's role has gone beyond routine bureaucratic coordination.

At a time when the government was still taking shape and commissioners had yet to be appointed, he stepped into a broader space, serving not only as the chief administrative officer but also as a de facto spokesperson and frontline defender of government policies. In those early, defining moments, his voice in the media and in public spaces helped frame direction and reassure citizens of the administration's intent.

Observers of Edo's political landscape often describe Ikhilor as the "brain box" of the administration, a label that reflects both his intellectual depth and his hands-on approach to governance.

His imprint is particularly evident

in the conceptualization and implementation of the administration's SHINE Agenda, a policy framework designed to drive development across key sectors. As a central figure in its execution, Ikhilor has consistently worked behind the scenes to translate vision into coordinated action.

Yet, beyond strategy and structure, what sets him apart is a blend of energy and experience that defies easy categorization. Young, active, and widely acknowledged for his capacity, he has earned the informal title of "Capacity SSG" among admirers and political watchers alike, a nickname that speaks not just to competence, but to reliability in moments that demand both speed and precision.

Before his appointment as SSG, Ikhilor built a formidable legal career shaped by years of experience in legislative drafting, parliamentary administration, lawmaking procedures, and constitutional amendment processes. His professional journey at the National Assembly saw him serve in various capacities, giving him a practical, insider understanding of how laws are crafted, debated, and implemented.

Notably, he also served as a consultant to the Federal House of Representatives on the review of the 1999 Constitution, a role that further sharpened his expertise in constitutional matters



SECRETARY TO THE STATE GOVERNMENT (SSG), UMAR MUSA IKHILOR, ESQ

and policy design. This depth of experience has proven invaluable in his current role, where governance often intersects with legal precision and institutional compliance.

A member of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) and a notary public, Ikhilor's legal standing reinforces the credibility he brings into public service. His grounding in law continues to shape his administrative style—

methodical, process-driven, and anchored on due diligence.

Despite what many describe as intimidating credentials, those who have worked closely with him paint a different picture, one of humility and accessibility.

Colleagues and stakeholders frequently speak of his willingness to listen, engage, and accommodate diverse perspectives. This quality has not gone

unnoticed at the highest levels of the state's civil service. The Head of Service of Edo State, Anthony Okumbowa Esq, in a public remark, once described Ikhilor as a "strong unifier," underscoring his ability to bridge divides within government and beyond.

In a political environment where perceptions can easily shape narratives, Ikhilor's profile offers a counterpoint. Rather than projecting authority through distance, he has built a reputation anchored on collaboration and quiet efficiency. His loyalty to Governor Monday Okpebholo has also remained a defining feature, evident not just in words, but in consistent alignment with the administration's goals and priorities.

As Edo State continues to navigate the demands of governance and development, the role of the SSG remains critical.

In Ikhilor, the office appears to have found not just an administrator, but a coordinator, strategist, and bridge-builder rolled into one.

For many observers, he represents a different model of public service leadership, one that combines competence with humility, and authority with approachability. In that sense, Umar Musa Ikhilor is not just the Secretary to the State Government; he is, in many ways, an SSG with a difference.

## Uhunmwode and the Rural Question: Why local Governments Must Stop Failing the Grassroots

RAYMOND OSOGBE

Why have successive administrations failed to deliver basic infrastructure in Ehor, the administrative headquarters of Uhunmwode Local Government Area?

The abysmal neglect is too glaring to ignore. It forces us to confront a hard truth: governance at the third tier has collapsed. Uhunmwode is my case study, but the rot is nationwide.

The root cause of infrastructure decay in our local councils is simple — gross maladministration and corruption. Before we celebrate the promised "full local government autonomy," a surgical operation is needed across all 774 LGAs. Autonomy without accountability will only decentralise theft.

It is profoundly sad that nothing seems to work in our rural areas. They are bereft of essential infrastructure: no water, poor roads, failing clinics, and schools without roofs. For too long, the people of Uhunmwode and other councils in Edo State have been deprived and short-changed. Nigeria's local government system, as presently run, has failed.

If we are serious about reaching our destination as a country, we need a new way of thinking. Development must be bottom-up, not top-down. Project proposals should originate from the wards, not from council chairmen's offices. The people who fetch water from streams know better than any administrator what their ward needs.

Local government executives must stop pretending to think for the people. The wards that constitute each

LGA should be allowed to propose and defend their budgets. No one should cry more than the bereaved. Those in the council secretariat cannot dictate to the people at ward level what their priorities are.

To whoever becomes the next Chairman of Uhunmwode LGA: brace for project delivery. Make the revival of the Ehor Water Works your first and most urgent task. Let clean water flow again. This advice extends to all incoming council executives nationwide. Get things right from day one.

Again, I call on local government executives across Edo South Senatorial District: wake up and do the needful. Is it not a shame that Edo South is the least developed senatorial zone in the state? We are saying, enough is enough.

A new moral and ethical revolution must sweep through Nigeria's local councils. Only then will rural dwellers enjoy the benefits of our national wealth. The era of excuses is over.



## Prof. Abhuere at 75: A Life of Service, Scholarship and Youth Development

OBOH SYLVESTER

As Professor John Imonbhio Abhuere marks his 75th birthday on April 21, 2026, reflections on his life reveal a distinguished career defined by service, scholarship and commitment to youth development and national growth.

Born on April 21, 1951, at Unuwazi, Uromi in Edo State, Prof. Abhuere had his early education at St. John's Anglican Primary School, Unuwazi, before attending Edo Boys High School (now Adolor College), Benin City.

He pursued higher education at notable institutions including the University of Lagos, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, University of Ibadan, University College Swansea in the United Kingdom, University of Wales and the University of Benin, where he obtained a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Public Administration with emphasis on Development Administration.

His academic qualifications include a Bachelor of Arts degree in History, a Master of Science degree in Economics with specialization in Sectorial Planning and Management, as well as postgraduate certifications in Modern Management, Social Policy and Administration, and Speech Writing. In 2019, he attained the rank of Professor of Management and Development Studies.

Prof. Abhuere served meritoriously in the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) for over three decades, contributing significantly to youth mobilization, empowerment and national integration. He rose to the position of Director, Corps Welfare and

Inspection at the NYSC Directorate Headquarters, Abuja. He also served as Director, Planning, Research and Statistics, and as State Director in Edo and Kebbi States.

During his service, this humble giant held several key administrative responsibilities and chaired important committees, including the NYSC Honours Awards Committee, the Tenders Board, and the Decree Review Committee, among others.

In addition to his administrative career, Prof. Abhuere has contributed to academic development, having taught Industrial Relations at Nasarawa State University, public Administration department, (2011)Lafia. He currently lectures postgraduate students in Leadership, Management and Development Studies at the CIBS Learning Centre, University of America, Abuja.

A prolific writer and commentator, Prof. Abhuere has published extensively on socio-economic and governance issues in both local and international journals. He is the author of notable books, including Youth Policy and Administration in Nigeria since 1970, Power of Youth and Other Essays on the Political Economy of Nigeria, and Restructuring Debate in Nigeria: Invitation to Nation Building.

He is a Fellow of the Nigerian Institute of Management (FNIM), Fellow of the Institute of Management Consultants (FIMC), and a member of several professional bodies. He is also a certified trainer with the Centre for Management Development (CMD), Nigeria.

Prof. Abhuere's contributions to public service and youth development



PROF. ABHUERE

have earned him several honours, including the Best Federal Director of the Fourth Republic Award (2006), Global Lifetime Achievement Award (2010), and the Pan-African Servant Leadership Award (2018).

He is the Founder and Chairman, Board of Trustees of the Centre for Childcare and Youth Development (CCYD), Uromi, through which he continues to promote youth empowerment and community development initiatives.

It is very important to add that this ebullient professor, even at 75, still has much to offer society in advancing the collective good of humanity.

He holds traditional titles including Ehinomen of Kebbi and Oven-non-refuare of Ebelle Kingdom.

Prof. Abhuere, whose interests include writing, music, dancing and lawn tennis, is married with children.

# Sports

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

## Rangers rise, Khalifat ignite, Remo rebound as away Kings rewrite the script

If you are not following the Nigeria Premier Football League right now, you are missing a season of pure theatre. This is, arguably, one of the most gripping campaigns in recent memory—where every matchday tilts the balance, and certainty is a luxury no one can afford.

At the summit, the battle has narrowed into a fierce duel between Rangers International and Rivers United. But just beneath them, the race for continental football has exploded into life. What once looked like a straight contest between Abia Warriors and Ikorodu City has been disrupted by the sudden surge of Bendel Insurance and Shooting Stars, both delivering statement wins on the road. Now, the chase for that coveted third spot is a



REMO PLAYERS

crowded, unpredictable affair, with Nasarawa United firmly in the conversation—each result tightening the plot.

At the other end, the survival fight has taken on a life of its own. Kun Khalifat have found their spark at the most crucial moment, Remo Stars are rediscovering the steel of champions, and Kwara United—the Afonja Warriors or Harmony Boys—are refusing to fade, clawing their way back with renewed belief. It is a relegation battle laced with defiance and drama.

In Enugu, the Oriental Derby delivered chaos and character. Rangers International, playing before a charged crowd at the Nnamdi Azikiwe Stadium, were stunned early in the second half when Wonah Williams struck in the 49th minute to silence the stands. But this is a different Rangers side—resilient, relentless, reborn under Fidelis

Ilechukwu. Chidozie Iwundu restored parity in the 61st minute with a fine finish, and seven minutes later, Ifeanyi Onyebuchi completed a stirring comeback. The Flying Antelopes surged to the top, capitalising on Rivers United's stumble.

In Kano, it was heartbreak and heroics rolled into one. Kano Pillars, desperate for survival, threw everything at Rivers United. Abdullahi Musa's 81st-minute strike sent the Sani Abacha Stadium into a frenzy, belief surging through the stands. But football can be cruel. Just when victory seemed secured, a late lapse was punished—the "handsome surveyor" striking to silence the crowd. Yet, in a twist befitting the occasion, Ahmed Musa rolled back the years, delivering a dramatic stoppage-time response to keep Pillars alive in their fight.



RANGERS INTERNATIONAL CELEBRATING

## Rangers 2-1 victory compounds Enyimba's relegation woes NPFL

Rangers International FC of Enugu, on Sunday, thrashed visiting Enyimba International FC of Aba 2-1 in the week 35 of the Nigerian Premier Football League (NPFL).

The outcome of the derby compounded the woes of the relegation-bound People's Elephant.

The match, which was played behind closed door at the Nnamdi Azikiwe Stadium, Enugu, saw the two teams in a lack-lustre showing in the first stanza.

Though Rangers appeared better, they were wasteful in front of goal, hence a barren first half.

On the resumption of the second half, Enyimba stunned their host with a 48th-minute goal by Wonah Williams, who pulled a shot behind the net from outside the 18-yard box.

The goal rattled the home side, who fought hard to pull an equalizer through defender Chidozie Iwundu, who slotted the ball behind the goalkeeper, during a goal-mouth scramble in the 61st minute.

Another defender, Ifeanyi Onyebuchi, increased the tally in the 68th minute to brighten the team's hope of winning the league twice in two years.

## NFCA Commends NPFL Board, NFF for structural stability, competitive growth

The Nigeria Football Coaches Association (NFCA) has commended the board of the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL), led by Honourable Gbenga Elegbeleye, and the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) for their roles in delivering a stable and well-organised 2025/26 season.

With the league now at Matchday 35 and no outstanding fixtures, the campaign reflects clear administrative progress and improved structural discipline. The NPFL board's ability to maintain a consistent calendar, aligned with continental schedules, marks a notable shift from past disruptions and underscores growing professionalism within the league.

The NFCA also acknowledged the board's handling of sensitive issues throughout the season, noting its proactive approach in preserving the integrity of the competition and ensuring continuity.

The association further highlighted the NFF's supervisory role and its contribution to key development initiatives. Ongoing efforts to strengthen coaching capacity and improve refereeing standards have translated into better organisation and overall match quality.

On the pitch, the league has remained highly competitive. With three matches to go, both the title race and relegation battle are still open—an indication of balance across the competition. Increased away victories, the emergence of young

talents, and a tighter contest among leading goal scorers point to steady technical and tactical progress.

According to the NFCA, these gains reflect deliberate improvements in governance, planning, and stakeholder coordination. Enhanced matchday logistics and growing confidence in officiating further underline the strides made this season.

As a key technical body, the NFCA reaffirmed its support



HON. GBENGA ELEGBELEYE

## 15th Police Games drive martial arts inclusion at National Sports Festival

The 15th Biennial Police Games (BIPOGA) has recorded a major milestone, as Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) makes its debut at the National Sports Festival (NSF).

The inclusion follows an impressive outing at the 15th BIPOGA Games, where athletes from 17 Police Zonal Commands and the Force Headquarters competed in a strictly amateur MMA event.

The Games, held in Asaba, Delta, from Feb. 14 to Feb. 21, marked a turning point in the

recognition of MMA in Nigeria. CSP Kalu Chijioke, a board member of the Nigeria Mixed Martial Arts Federation (NMMMAF), attributed the development to the efforts of the Nigeria Police Force and other security agencies in strengthening MMA governance nationwide.

Chijioke disclosed on Monday that the sport's rise from obscurity reflects deliberate institutional support and commitment by the Nigeria Police Force.

"The attention, visibility and momentum MMA enjoys in Nigeria stem from the influence and credibility of the Nigeria Police Force.

"After being a demonstration sport at the 14th BIPOGA edition in Ibadan, Oyo State, MMA became a fully recognised, medal-scoring sport for the first time at the 15th edition in Asaba.

"The impact of the last Police Games on the development of the sport in Nigeria is significant. "Our goal was to transform MMA from a fringe activity into a structured, regulated and globally competitive sport," he said.

15th BIPOGA Created a Pathway for Police Athletes, Coaches and Officiating Officials under a regulated framework.

The Nigeria Police Force boosted MMA development by establishing its MMA Association, chaired by Chijioke, and formally sanctioning the sport after its demonstration at the 14th BIPOGA in Ibadan.



17 POLICE ZONAL COMMANDS

## NNL sets April 24 for Super 4 playoffs draw

The Nigeria National League (NNL) says the draw for the 2025/2026 Super 4 Playoffs will hold on April 24.

Bukola Olopade, Director-General, National Sports Commission (NSC), in a statement on Sunday by his media aide, Kola Daniels, said the draw will take place at Marriott Hotel, Ikeja.

Olopade said: "The draw will set the stage for the final showdown of an intense season.

"The Super 4 tournament, determining the overall NNL champions, will hold from May 1 to May 8 at Remo Stars Stadium, Ikenne, Ogun.

"Doma FC, Inter Lagos and Sporting Lagos have secured promotion to the Nigeria Premier Football League, underlining their consistency throughout the campaign.

"Attention now shifts to the remaining promotion ticket and the battle for Super 4 qualification."

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that in the Southern Conference, Sporting Lagos and Inter Lagos have secured tickets to the elite league and a shot at the Super 4 crown.

Meanwhile, the Northern Conference presents drama. Ranchers Bees, known as the Sadiq Umar boys, remain in contention, facing stiff competition from Jigawa Golden Stars.

| CONFERENCE A        |                       | CONFERENCE B         |                   |
|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| A1 - SPORTING LAGOS | A2 - RANGERS FC       | B1 - SMART CITY      | B2 - EDO FC       |
| A3 - FIRST BANK FC  | A4 - GATEWAY FC       | B3 - RAY FC          | B4 - BEYOND LIMIT |
| A5 - KUNIHAIKATA    | A6 - ABIAKALU FC      | B5 - WARRI WOLVES    | B6 - ULE FC       |
| A7 - ANADIBA        | A8 - ODOHILL ANADIBA  | B7 - INTER LAGOS     | B8 - CROWN FC     |
| A9 - EMALUX FC      | A10 - OGBIN UNITED    | B9 - DAKADA FC       | B10 - KALAJO FC   |
| A11 - BOWEN FC      |                       | B11 - ASA COMETS     |                   |
| CONFERENCE C        |                       | CONFERENCE D         |                   |
| C1 - GOMBE UNITED   | C2 - BOKOFC UNITED    | D1 - DOMA UNITED     | D2 - KESHI UNITED |
| C3 - ZAMFARA UNITED | C4 - BARAU FC         | D3 - BASRA FC        | D4 - ADAMAWA FC   |
| C5 - WASHIT JETI    | C6 - WAKEL TOURIST FC | D5 - KADUNA WARRIORS | D6 - YOFI DESERTS |
| C7 - HALLANPARK FC  |                       | D7 - SPORTING KADUNA |                   |

# NWFL Premiership MD 16 Previews: Robo Queens, Nasarawa Amazons, Abia Angels, Remo Stars Ladies eye Super 6 spots

## ● *Four Away Victories Mark Competitive 2025/26 NWFL Premiership Return*

SAMUEL AHMADU

**F**our Away Victories Mark Competitive 2025/26 NWFL Premiership Return as

Matchday 16 of the Nigeria Women Football League (NWFL) Premiership promises high drama as nine fixtures unfold across the country, with crucial points at stake in both groups on Wednesday.

While Group A teams play largely for pride following confirmed Super Six and relegation outcomes, attention shifts firmly to Group B, where qualification and relegation battles remain wide open.

The headline attractions are the derby clashes, particularly in Group B, with rivalries in the North Central and South-West regions set to shape the narrative of the round.

### GROUP A FIXTURES

#### Bayelsa Queens Look to Reassert Dominance Against Adamawa

#### Bayelsa Queens vs Adamawa Queens

Defending champions Bayelsa Queens return to Yenagoa looking to reinforce their status as one of the league's strongest sides. Their emphatic 4-1 win in the reverse fixture in Makwada showcased their attacking depth and ability to control games. Despite a slight dip in consistency in recent outings, they remain a formidable force, particularly at home.

Adamawa Queens face a daunting task, having struggled to maintain consistency throughout the campaign. While they have shown flashes of attacking quality, defensive lapses have often cost them.

Against a side as clinical as Bayelsa Queens, they will need to remain compact and disciplined for long periods while taking any opportunities that come their way.

#### Rivers Angels Seek Another Statement Win Over Heartland

#### Heartland Queens vs Rivers Angels

Rivers Angels travel to Owerri with confidence after their commanding 5-0 win in the first meeting. Known for their attacking efficiency and structured play, they will look to dominate proceedings once again.

Their ability to control midfield battles and convert chances has been a defining feature of their campaign. Heartland Queens, however, will be eager to restore pride on home soil.

While their form has been inconsistent, they have shown they can be competitive when organised. The key for Heartland will be defensive solidity and discipline, as any lapses against Rivers Angels could be ruthlessly punished.

#### In-Form Edo Queens Aim to Extend Winning Run

#### Pacesetter Queens vs Edo Queens

Edo Queens head into this fixture as one of the most in-form teams in the league, with a strong run of results that has underlined their attacking sharpness and defensive balance. Their narrow 2-1 win in the reverse fixture highlighted their ability to



NWFL PREMIERSHIP ACTION

grind out results when needed.

Pacesetter Queens, already relegated, will approach this match with less pressure but a desire to prove a point. Playing at home, they could adopt a more adventurous approach, but Edo Queens' quality and confidence make them favourites. The visitors will aim to control possession and dictate the tempo from the outset.

#### Even Contest Looms in Ado Ekiti Clash

#### Ekiti Queens vs Ibadan Angels

This fixture presents one of the most evenly matched contests of the round at the Oluyemi Kayode Stadium in Ado-Ekiti. Ekiti Queens have shown flashes of quality, particularly at home, but have struggled for consistency. Their ability to convert chances has often determined their outcomes. Ibadan Angels arrive with a similar profile, competitive but inconsistent.

They are capable of upsetting opponents when their attacking unit clicks, but defensive vulnerabilities remain a concern. This game could be decided by which side manages the key moments better, especially in transitions and set-piece situations.

### GROUP B FIXTURES

#### North Central Derby Showdown as Amazons Host Confluence

#### Nasarawa Amazons vs Confluence Queens (North Central Derby)

This North Central derby in Lafia brings together two sides still very much in the mix for a strong finish.

Their first meeting ended 1-1, a reflection of how evenly matched they are in structure and approach.

Nasarawa Amazons have shown more consistency across recent fixtures, combining defensive discipline with timely attacking output, and will look to impose themselves early with the backing of their home crowd. Confluence Queens, however, have proven to be one of the more resilient sides this season, particularly away from home where they tend to sit compact and strike on the break.

Their ability to frustrate opponents and stay in games could be key again. With both sides possessing physical midfield presence and aerial threat, this contest may be decided by set-pieces or moments of concentration late on.

#### South-West Derby Tension in Akure as Sunshine Face Osun Babes

#### Sunshine Queens vs Osun Babes (South-West Derby)

Akure hosts a fierce South-West derby with local pride firmly on the line. The reverse fixture ended goalless, and there is little to suggest a one-sided affair this time. Sunshine Queens will rely on their organisation and structured build-up play, especially at home where they tend to control possession and tempo.

Osun Babes, on the other hand, arrive with renewed confidence after halting a poor run of form in recent weeks. They have shown improved defensive shape and greater attacking intent, particularly in transition.

This clash could hinge on which side takes its chances, as both teams have struggled with consistency in front of goal. Expect a tense, physical battle with derby emotions likely to influence the tempo.

#### South-West Derby Spotlight as Robo Queens Battle Remo Stars Ladies

#### FC Robo Queens vs Remo Stars Ladies (South-West Derby)

One of the standout fixtures of the round takes place in Lagos, where FC Robo Queens face Remo Stars Ladies in a high-stakes South-West derby. Remo Stars Ladies hold a narrow advantage from the first leg and will be confident of repeating that success, especially given their structured defensive play and quick attacking transitions.

Robo Queens, however, are traditionally strong at home and boast attacking threats capable of turning games quickly, particularly in wide areas. Their recent performances have shown resilience, and they will aim to dominate possession and create early chances.

This contest could evolve into an open, end-to-end battle, with both teams aware that a positive result could be crucial in shaping their final standings.

#### Ahudiyanm Queens Target Revenge Against Dannaz Ladies

#### Ahudiyanm Queens vs Dannaz Ladies

Ahudiyanm Queens will be motivated to avenge their narrow 2-1 defeat in the first leg. Their recent improve-

ment in form suggests a side growing in confidence and tactical understanding.

Playing at home, they will look to press higher and control the tempo. Dannaz Ladies, despite inconsistent results, have shown they can be dangerous, particularly on the counterattack.

Their ability to capitalise on defensive mistakes could prove decisive again. This fixture is likely to be closely contested, with momentum swings expected throughout.

#### Abia Angels, Delta Queens Renew Rivalry in Tight Contest

#### Abia Angels vs Delta Queens

Abia Angels secured a narrow 1-0 win away in the reverse fixture, and will look to replicate that disciplined performance at home in Aba. The Super Six spot contenders have shown attacking promise but need to maintain consistency over 90 minutes.

Delta Queens, meanwhile, have struggled to string together consistent performances but remain a dangerous side on their day. Their physical presence and experience could play a role in what is expected to be a tightly contested encounter. Small margins, such as defensive organisation and finishing, may ultimately decide the outcome.

With derby bragging rights, momentum shifts, and crucial points on the line, Matchday 16 is set to deliver another compelling chapter in the NWFL Premiership season, where intensity, rivalry, and late drama are almost guaranteed.

## Sports



## NPFL26: Enabulele hails Bendel Insurance FC after crucial away Victory at Wikki Tourists

KEHINDE OSAGIEDÉ

The Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele, has



BENDEL INSURANCE FC

heaped praise on the players Bendel Insurance FC following their hard-fought 2-1 away victory over Wikki Tourists FC in Jos.

The Benin Arsenal's defeat-

ed Wikki Tourists courtesy of goals from Dung Emmanuel (11) and Efe Ubiomo (55) in one of the Matchday 35 fixtures of the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL).

The Edo State Sports Commission boss who was excited by the result posted by the state owned club said the result reflects the team's resilience, determination, and renewed focus, particularly after some setbacks they experienced recently.

He specially praised the two scorers Dung Emmanuel and Efe Ubiomo for their decisive and important contributions, noting that their performances underscore the team's fighting spirit.

"The victory in Jos is a clear statement of intent by Bendel Insurance. It shows the team's readiness to compete at the highest level and push for a continental slot. I commend the players, coaches, and management for their discipline and resilience," he said.

Enabulele also highlighted the team's defensive organisation in weathering the storm and pressure from their opponents, describing it as vital at this critical stage of the season.

He urged the players to remain focused and disciplined ahead of the remaining fixtures, expressing confidence in their ability to finish well on the league table.



RAPHAEL ONYEDIKA

## Club Brugge title hopes dented as Onyedika picks injury in defeat

Club Brugge midfielder Raphael Onyedika was forced off with an injury as his side suffered a 2-1 defeat by Union Saint-Gilloise in the Belgian Pro League.

The Nigeria international was withdrawn in the 68th minute and replaced by Hans Vanaken, raising concerns ahead of the decisive phase of the season.

Brugge had made a strong start, taking the lead through Brandon Mechele in the 15th minute as they looked to move top of the table.

However, the hosts responded before the break when Mateo Biondic equalised in the 29th minute.

The game turned after Onyedika's exit, with substitute Besfort Zeneli scoring the winner to seal a sixth consecutive league victory for Union St-Gilloise.

The result leaves Club Brugge four points behind the leaders with seven matches remaining, dealing a setback to their title ambitions.

Union move to 42 points at the top of the table, while Brugge remain second on 38 and will look to respond in their next fixture against KV Mechelen.

Brugge will also await further assessment on Onyedika, with the extent of his injury yet to be confirmed.

## Nigerian Football: Rangers Edge closer to NPFL title as race tightens after matchday 35

Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) title race took another dramatic turn on Matchday 35 as leaders Enugu Rangers strengthened their grip at the summit, while challengers Rivers United stumbled to keep the contest wide open with three matches to go. Soccer

Rangers moved to 59 points after a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Enyimba in Enugu on Sunday, extending their lead at the top. The Flying Antelopes showed resilience against their Oriental rivals, reinforcing their title credentials at a crucial stage of the season.

However, the biggest twist of the weekend came in Kano, where Kano Pillars defeated Rivers United 2-1, halting the Port Harcourt side's momentum. The result leaves Rivers United just one point behind the leaders on 58 points, setting up a tense run-in.

### Top Four Battle Intensifies

The race for continental spots is equally fierce, with Ikorodu City and Abia Warriors locked on 55 points.

Abia Warriors boosted their chances with a 2-1 win over Ikorodu City, a result that not only tightened the top four race but also dealt a blow to Ikorodu's ambitions of closing the gap on the top two.

Shooting Stars, sitting fifth on 54 points, also kept pace with a

valuable 2-1 away win against El Kanemi, staying firmly in contention for a continental ticket.

### Mid-Table Shuffle

Further down the table, Nasarawa United delivered one of the most emphatic performances of the round, thrashing Warri Wolves 3-0 to climb to sixth with 53 points.

Bendel Insurance, who edged Wikki Tourists 2-1 on Saturday, remain seventh with 52 points, continuing their quiet push toward the top tier.

Katsina United edged Bayelsa United 3-2 in a five-goal thriller. Kwara United defeated Barau FC 2-1.

Remo Stars boosted survival hopes with a commanding 3-0

win over Niger Tornadoes.

Plateau United and Kun Khalifat settled for a 1-1 draw. Relegation Fight Goes Down to the Wire

At the bottom, the battle to avoid relegation remains intense. Wikki Tourists, Bayelsa United, and Kun Khalifat are all tied on 40 points, with only goal difference separating them.

## Super Eagles' Onyeka earns permanent move to Coventry City

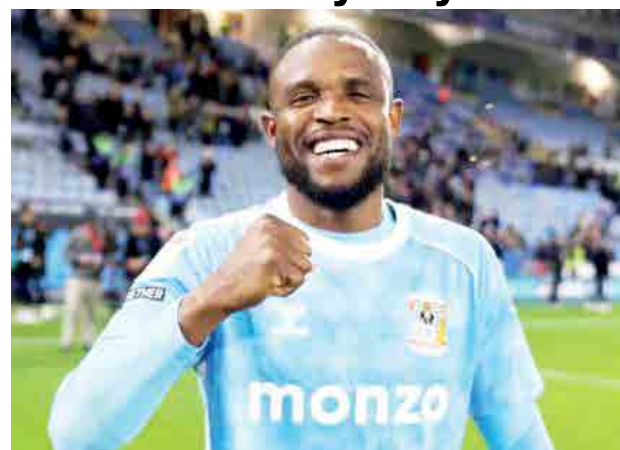
Super Eagles midfielder, Frank Onyeka has earned a permanent move to Coventry City after helping the Sky Blues gain promotion to the English Premier League.

The Nigerian midfielder joined Coventry at the end of the winter transfer window from Brentford on loan until the end of the season.

As part of the conditions of the deal, if Coventry were promoted to the Premier League, they were under obligation to sign Onyeka permanently.

It's unclear what the fee is, but the 43-cap Nigeria international has played a key role for Frank Lampard's men in the closing stages of the Championship campaign.

He made 12 appearances for Coventry – starting on 11 occasions – with his only goal



FRANK ONYEKA

coming in the 3-2 win over Derby in early April.

The move indicated that Coventry City haven't even been in the Premier League for 24 hours and they have already made their first signing.

It has also been 25 years since the Sky Blues last played in the top-flight, but with promotion secured following Friday's 1-1 draw at Blackburn, Frank Onyeka has joined the club permanently.

## CAF CC: USM Alger Edge Olympique Safi to Reach Confederation Cup Final after Chaotic Semi-Final

USM Alger booked their place in the CAF Confederation Cup final after battling to a 1-1 draw away to Olympique de Safi in a dramatic and disrupted semi-final second leg on Sunday night.

The result handed the Algerian side progression on away goals following a goalless first leg in Algiers, ending Safi's historic run at the semi-final stage.

The decisive encounter in Safi was overshadowed early on by crowd disturbances involving visiting supporters, forcing a delay of one hour and 20 minutes before kick-off. Despite the chaotic build-up, both sides delivered a high-intensity contest befitting the stakes.

USM Alger struck a crucial blow just before half-time when Ahmed Khaldi calmly converted a penalty deep into

stoppage time, putting the visitors ahead and firmly in control of the tie.

The opening half was played at a relentless pace, with both teams combining for 17 shots — one of the highest first-half tallies in this season's tournament. Olympique Safi, backed by their home crowd, created the bulk of the chances but were repeatedly frustrated in front of goal.

The Moroccan side's persistence eventually paid off in the 75th minute when substitute Moussa Koné rose highest to head home an equaliser, sparking hopes of a late comeback.

However, Safi were unable to find the decisive second goal. Despite registering an impressive 41 attempts across both legs, they managed just one goal against a disciplined and well-organised USM Alger

## Team Nigeria's camp for World relays opens in Lagos

...as Ethiopia gets hosting rights for 2027 Gold meet

Team Nigeria's camp for the World Relays Championship holding in Gaborone, Botswana, opens in Lagos.

The Technical Director of the Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN), Gabriel Okon is expected to oversee the camping programme that will last for a week.

This Is The Full List of Athletes Expected In Camp

**4×100 MEN**  
Enoch Adegoke  
James Taiwo Emmanuel  
Chidera Ezeakor  
Tejire Godwin

**4×400M MEN**  
Ezekiel Enoch Azukwo  
Gafari Badmus  
Victor Ime  
Samson Nathaniel  
Emmanuel Ojeli

**4×100M WOMEN**  
Jenifer Chukwuka  
Miracle Ezechukwu  
Rosemary Nwankwo  
Maria Thompson Omokwe

**4×400M WOMEN**  
Anita Enaruna  
Patience Okon George  
Toheebat Jimoh  
Taiwo Mary Kudoro  
Jecinta Lawrence

Esther Okon  
Sekiru Adewale Adeyemi

The foreign based athletes will join the team in Gaborone.

The World Relays Championship holds on the 2nd and 3rd of May 2026.

Meanwhile, it was a weekend of strong statements and sharpened intent as Africa's finest lit up the track at the Addis Ababa Grand Prix, with several stars building momentum ahead of upcoming meets in Gaborone and Accra.

In the men's 110m hurdles, Anthony Edward Jr. stormed to victory in 13.61 seconds, fending off a spirited challenge from Yusuf Badawi, who clocked 13.76.

Nigeria's Musa Wisdom settled for third in 14.34, a performance that still keeps him in contention heading into the next leg of the competition.

The women's 400m delivered one of the standout performances of the meet, with Femi Adekoya blazing to a winning time of 50.28 seconds. Mercy Chebet followed in 51.38, while Nigeria's veteran Patience Okon George crossed in 51.70 to claim third, showing experience and consistency on the continental stage.

# FEATURE



## 2026 Budget: Expansion or Fiscal Time-Loop?

MUHAMMED IBN UMAR

On Tuesday, Nigeria's National Assembly signed off on a N68.3 trillion budget for 2026 — \$49.38 billion at official rates, the largest appropriation in the nation's history. President Bola Tinubu had asked lawmakers in December to revise his initial N58.47 trillion proposal upward, and they obliged.

The question now facing households, markets, and policymakers is blunt: Does this budget represent a genuine expansion of state capacity, or are we funding a fiscal time-loop where more naira chase the same unresolved obligations?

### 1. THE SCALE AND THE STATED LOGIC

The N9.83 trillion increase from the President's December draft was not for new ambitions, according to the Senate and House appropriation chairs. It was to "accommodate outstanding capital projects carried over from previous budget cycles" and prevent them from "weighing on the 2026 fiscal programme".

In other words, 2026 is partly paying for 2023, 2024, and 2025. That admission matters. Nigeria's budgets have for years suffered from low capital release rates and multi-year rollovers. Rolling them into a new headline figure creates the appearance of expansion without guaranteeing execution.

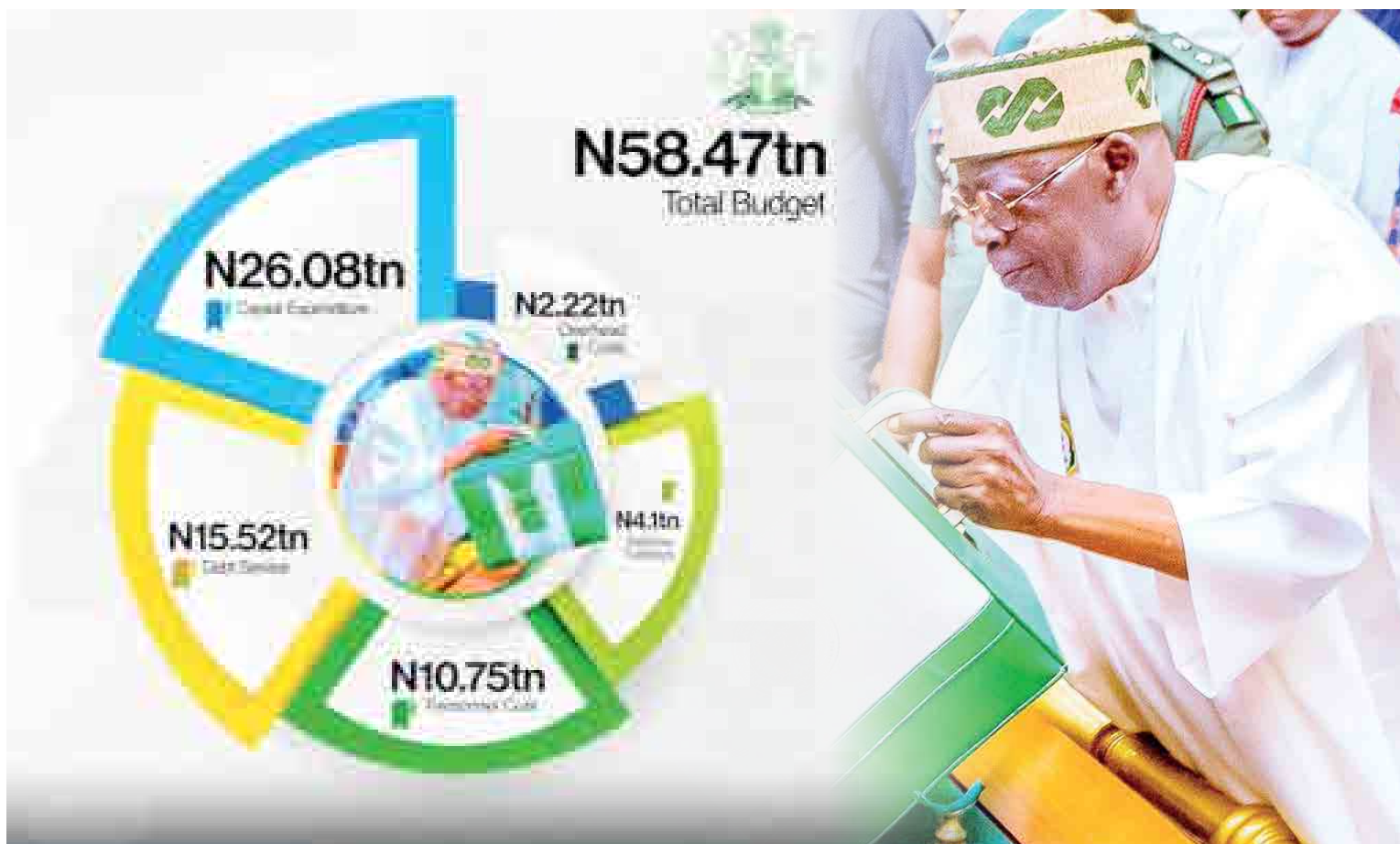
The Central Bank of Nigeria projects Federal Government retained revenue will hit N35.51 trillion in 2026. Even if that optimistic target is met, the gap between N68.3 trillion in spending and N35.51 trillion in revenue is N32.79 trillion before borrowing. Debt service already consumes 80-90% of revenue in recent years, and the total public debt stock has crossed N90 trillion. The arithmetic is unforgetting.

### 2. THE TAX REFORM VARIABLE

January 1, 2026 marked the commencement of four new tax laws: the Nigeria Tax Act, Nigeria Tax Administration Act, Joint Revenue Board Act, and Nigeria Revenue Service Act. The administration says they will "modernise revenue collection, broaden the tax base, and tighten enforcement after years of declining non-oil revenues".

Non-oil revenue did jump from N5.96 trillion in 2022 to N16.09 trillion in 2024. But nominal GDP growth has been slower, creating what analysts call "tax-to-GDP tension". You cannot tax an economy into productivity if compliance costs, inflation, and weak power supply are shrinking the formal sector faster than new laws expand the net.

The reforms faced stiff opposition from northern lawmakers before passage. Since January, businesses and



PRESIDENT BOLA AHMED TINUBU

households have reported confusion over implementation guidelines, multiple agency audits, and allegations of discrepancies between the bills passed and the gazetted versions. As economist Dumebi Oluwale of Stears put it, "One of the biggest sources of push-back is information asymmetry as many people still do not understand the potential benefit of these policies".

Revenue mobilisation without stalling growth is the first key fiscal test of 2026. If the new laws extract more from a stagnant base, they risk becoming a drag on consumption and investment — the very things that raise revenue sustainably.

### 3. THE HOUSEHOLD SQUEEZE AND INFLATION TEST

Inflation is easing from recent highs, but the CBN's monetary policy rate remains above 25%. Credit to the real sector is constrained. Food, transport, and energy costs continue to pressure wages.

BusinessDay frames the government's dilemma clearly: "The challenge now is whether the government can strengthen its finances without putting more pressure on households or scaring away investors".

A N68.3 trillion budget funded by aggressive taxation and borrowing risks doing both. If capital releases lag, as they have historically, then the inflationary impact of spending arrives before the productive impact of completed projects. Households pay twice:

once through taxes and prices, again through unrealised services.

Manufacturing, agriculture, and SMEs still cite power, logistics, and port bottlenecks as existential risks. None of those are solved by appropri-

ation alone. They require execution, regulatory clarity, and FX stability — areas where 2025 reforms showed mixed results.

### 4. DEBT, CONFIDENCE, AND THE 'TIME-LOOP' RISK

Nigeria's debt trajectory is the ghost at every budget presentation. With 80-90% of revenue going to service existing obligations, new borrowing finances either more debt or recurrent spending disguised as capital.

BusinessDay warned that the "2026 budget could trap Nigeria in fiscal time-loop despite gains from reforms". The loop works like this: Borrow to fund rollover projects → miss revenue targets due to weak growth → borrow more to service debt → defer new capital → roll over again.

Breaking it requires three things the 2026 framework has not yet demonstrated:

\*A.\* Ruthless prioritisation of capital projects with near-term GDP impact.

\*B.\* Transparent, quarterly publication of releases and completion rates.

\*C.\* Tax administration that feels like simplification to SMEs, not duplication.

Investor confidence hinges on whether 2026 consolidation strengthens economic resilience or exposes new fault lines. The new tax laws, if poorly sequenced, could push more activity into informality. If debt service forces further cuts to health, education, and infrastructure, the human

development costs compound.

### CONCLUSION: THE QUESTIONS THAT WILL DEFINE 2026

A budget is a hypothesis. The 2026 hypothesis is that Nigeria can spend 68.3 trillion, raise 35.5 trillion, borrow the rest, and still ease pressure on households while funding growth.

To test it, Nigerians should demand monthly answers to five questions:

1. \*Release rate:\* What percentage of capital votes for roads, power, and health have been cash-backed by Q2?

2. \*Tax clarity:\* Has the Nigeria Revenue Service published unified procedures ending multiple audits for SMEs?

3. \*Debt transparency:\* What share of new borrowing is concessionary, and what is the average maturity?

4. \*Inflation pass-through:\* Are core food and transport costs falling as revenue rises?

5. \*Completion audit:\* How many "outstanding capital projects" from 2023-2025 will be commissioned by December?

If those answers are positive, 2026 is expansion. If they are vague or negative, it is a time-loop: a bigger budget paying for the past while the future waits.

The National Assembly has done its part. The Executive now owns execution. And the public, squeezed by reforms, owns the right to ask whether this 68.3 trillion is a down payment on growth — or on deja vu.

**“**  
The loop works like this: Borrow to fund rollover projects miss revenue targets due to weak growth borrow more to service debt defer new capital roll over again.  
**”**