

Nigeria's public debt hits N159.28trn as borrowing rises to \$110.97bn in Q4 2025

ABUJA

Nigeria's public debt stock climbed further to N159.28 trillion in the fourth quarter of 2025, reflecting a steady rise in government borrowing amid growing fiscal pressures.

The figure, which represents

both external and domestic obligations, rose from N153.29 trillion recorded in the third quarter, according to the latest Nigerian Domestic and Foreign Debt Report released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in Abuja on Monday.

This indicates a quar-

ter-on-quarter increase of 3.90 percent.

In dollar terms, total public debt also rose from \$103.94 billion to \$110.97 billion within the same period.

The report shows that domestic debt continues to outweigh external obligations, with total local borrowing

standing at N84.85 trillion, while external debt rose to N74.43 trillion.

In percentage terms, domestic debt accounted for 53.37 percent of the total public debt stock, while external debt made up 46.73 percent.

A breakdown by states revealed that Lagos State re-

tained its position as the most indebted sub-national government, with domestic debt put at N1.22 trillion and external debt at \$1.17 billion.

Rivers State followed with N378.81 billion in domestic debt, while Kaduna State recorded \$684.29 million in external obligations.

At the lower end of the scale, Jigawa State posted the least domestic debt at N1.60 billion, followed by Ondo State with N8.42 billion.

For external borrowing, the Federal Capital Territory recorded the lowest figure at \$26.80 million, while Zamfara State followed with \$41.93 million.

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#200

Edo seals 10m tonne cement deal

Boosts IGR, jobs drive

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has announced a major industrial breakthrough with the signing of

an agreement with a Chinese firm for the production of 10 million metric tonnes of cement in the Owan axis of the state, a move the government said will accelerate economic growth, create jobs and curb

social vices.

State Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Prince Kasim Afegbua, disclosed this on Monday while addressing journalists at a press conference in Benin City.

He said that groundwork on the project will begin by the middle of next month.

"By the middle of next month, the first step towards realising the dream of producing 10 million metric tonnes of cement will commence. We are hopeful that even the commencement of the project alone will generate employment and help tackle social vices," he said.

Afegbua described the deal as a strategic investment by the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo aimed at deepening industrialization and strengthening the state's economic base.

Beyond the cement deal, the commissioner revealed that the state's internally generated revenue (IGR) has risen significantly; now hovering between N9.5 billion and N10 billion monthly, driven by sweeping reforms and digital monitoring systems.

"The state IGR is hovering around N9.5 to N10 billion every month. Everything that needs to be done has been done. We now have a proactive IGR system that digitally monitors revenue across the state," he said.

He added that the government has overhauled its e-governance architecture, introducing cloud-based platforms to drive efficiency, reduce paperwork and enhance service delivery across ministries, departments and agencies.

"The entire e-gov process has been retooled and regenerated with new cloud-based platforms that will drive governance in Edo State. Agencies, ministries and parastatals are being onboarded to ensure more efficient service delivery,"

he noted.

Afegbua commended civil servants for their continued cooperation in advancing the administration's SHINE agenda, stating that the government has addressed years of stagnation in the public service through promotions and fresh recruitment.

According to him, about 3,000 personnel have been employed across various MDAs, while 5,000 teachers have also been recruited to strengthen the education sector.

On infrastructure, he said the government has renovated, remodelled and completed 83 schools across the state, while about 85 primary healthcare centres have been completed and equipped with essential drugs.

He assured residents that all ongoing projects would be delivered within record time, citing the reconstruction and commissioning of the POWA Shopping Mall within two months after it was destroyed by fire, alongside support extended to affected traders.

He added that construction is ongoing at an ultra-modern market in Ekpoma and Jattu, while the burnt Oba Market in Benin City is also being rebuilt.

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MEDIA ENGAGEMENT:

L-R: Director, Rail Development, Federal Ministry of Transportation, Finbarr Zirra; Senior Special Assistant to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on Media and Special Duties, Tunde Rahman and Special Adviser on Information and Strategy to Nigerian President, Bayo Onanuga, during a media engagement by the Renewed Hope Ambassador in Abuja on Monday.

Military deploys veterans to tackle rising conflicts nationwide

ABUJA

In a notable shift from purely combat-driven operations to dialogue-centred peacebuilding, the Nigerian military has moved to engage its retired officers and soldiers in efforts to stem the rising tide of violent conflicts across the

country.

Speaking in Abuja at the launch of a mediation and conflict resolution training programme for veterans, the Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Olufemi Oluyede, said the initiative reflects a growing recognition

that many of Nigeria's conflicts are rooted within communities, where unresolved grievances and tensions often escalate into violence.

The training, organised by the Retired Members of Nigeria Armed Forces (REMENAF) in

collaboration with the Mediation Training Institute and Defence Headquarters, is aimed at equipping former military personnel with contemporary skills in mediation, negotiation and conflict management.

Oluyede noted that the experi-

ence, discipline and credibility of veterans position them uniquely to intervene in fragile situations and foster dialogue before disputes degenerate into violence.

"This initiative reflects the understanding that sustainable security requires both kinetic and

non-kinetic responses," he said.

"Veterans understand the cost of conflict because they have lived through it. That gives them the moral authority to promote dialogue, restraint

CONTINUES ON PG 2 >>

Tinubu tasks new envoys on investment drive, reorders foreign policy priorities —Pg 5

Military unveils plans to engage veterans in tackling rising violent conflicts —Pg 7

At least 42 killed in Chad after water well dispute escalates —Pg 15

Falconets set for crucial World Cup qualifier, face Malawi in Ikenne —Pg 22

Adetunji advocates impact-driven research protection, economic diplomacy

EDWARD OSEGHE

OKADA, EDO STATE

A globally ranked scientist, Prof. Charles Adetunji, has called for a major shift in Nigeria's academic culture, urging researchers to move beyond routine publication and focus on impact-driven studies capable of attracting global funding

and addressing societal challenges.

Adetunji made the call during a one-day research lecture and workshop organised by the Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi Ojaja II College of Natural and Applied Sciences (CNAS), Igbinedion University, Okada.

The workshop, themed, "Crafting the Grant-Winning Proposal: Research, Innovation

and Grant Hunting," focused on strengthening research capacity and equipping scholars with practical grant-writing skills.

Speaking at the event, Adetunji of the Department of Microbiology, Edo State University, Iyamho said that many researchers are constrained, not by intellectual limitations, but by systemic inefficiencies within institutions.

"Research productivity is often constrained by institutional inefficiencies, rather than intellectual limitations. Most problems are systemic, not individual," he said.

He identified administrative bottlenecks, fragmented

workflows, delayed funding processes and weak approval systems as major challenges affecting research output, adding that reforms are more critical than increased pressure on academics.

Adetunji argued that research productivity should not be measured solely by publication counts, but by efficiency, relevance and real-world impact.

"Productivity is output multiplied by impact and divided by time. Administration can either become a multiplier or a major constraint," he noted.

He urged early-career researchers to develop strong academic profiles through specialisation, consistent publication in reputable journals, increased citations and international collaborations.

"Research begins with curi-

osity, not credentials," he said, encouraging scholars to pursue problem-driven inquiries and seek mentorship.

He also called on universities to ensure that research outcomes translate into policy influence, innovation and community development, rather than remaining within academic journals.

"Imagine a society where research informs policy, innovation drives the economy, universities serve communities, and young minds solve local problems. That is the power of research beyond walls," he said.

Linking research to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Adetunji highlighted its role in addressing poverty, improving education, advancing clean energy and tackling climate and health challenges,

noting that digital tools are reshaping global research.

"The laboratory is now virtual, global and interconnected," he added.

In his remarks, the Vice-Chancellor of Igbinedion University, Prof. Lawrence Ezemonye, said that the institution was repositioning itself to compete globally through improved research output and successful grant acquisition.

"This workshop is coming at a time when the university is really focusing on research. The university is thinking research, the university is speaking research, and the university is acting on research," he said.

Ezemonye described research as central to national development, stressing that grant writing has become essential for institutional sustainability.

Edo seals 10m tonne cement...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

Afegbua further disclosed that a security camp in Edo Central is nearing completion to accommodate military and police personnel, a move aimed at strengthening security operations and tackling kidnapping in the area.

He noted that traditional rulers have been assigned responsibilities to monitor activities within their domains, particularly to track movements and address ungoverned spaces.

Calling on international investors, the commissioner described Edo as safe and business-friendly, urging investment in agriculture, especially in rice, cassava, oil palm and maize production.

He also revealed that the state government has ordered 100 Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses, with 50 to be deployed for free transportation across the state to cushion economic hardship.

"By next month, you will see about 100 CNG buses, 50 of which will be distributed across the state for free transportation to ease the burden on the people. The reforms at the centre will also help mitigate hardship, and in no time, we will all smile better," he said.

The commissioner, however, distanced the state government from a trending video circulating

online in which one Emmanuel Akpan, popularly known as "Egogo," allegedly issued threats against members of opposition political parties, particularly the Africa Democratic Congress (ADC).

He stressed that the remarks do not reflect the position of the government, reiterating that the Okpebholo administration does not condone gangsterism, political hooliganism or any attempt to intimidate opposition voices through threats or coercive language.

"Let me use this opportunity to respond to criticism of the opposition in respect to one Egogo with a trending video online issuing a threat to members of the Africa Democratic Congress (ADC)," Afegbua said.

"Let it be on record that the governor doesn't tolerate gangsterism, political hooliganism and any attempts to subdue the opposition using violent language by issuing subtle threats and otherwise.

"We disown that statement as it is not the position of the Edo State Government. It is the voice of an individual who is also answerable to existing laws of the land. It is the responsibility of security agencies to keep people in check. We welcome opposition, robust and constructive engagement, as opposition helps the ruling party to perform better."



A PRESS BRIEFING:

Edo State Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Prince Kassim Afegbua (middle), flanked by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry, Dr. Desmond Agbama (left) and Director of Documentation and Publication, Mr Matthew Okunsebor, during a press briefing in Benin City on Monday.

Military deploys veterans to tackle...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

and reconciliation at the grassroots level."

He emphasised that while military force remains an essential tool in certain contexts, it cannot on its own guarantee enduring peace, particularly in conflicts driven by local disputes, mistrust and communal tensions.

Beyond mediation, the programme is also expected to strengthen early warning systems, as veterans embedded within communities can facilitate the timely flow of information to security agencies, helping to prevent crises before they escalate.

Officials stressed that the role of the veterans will remain strictly non-operational, serving instead as a bridge between communities and formal security structures.

For many of the retired personnel, the initiative offers an opportunity to continue serving the nation in a different

capacity.

President of the Coalition of Concerned Veterans Association, Isaac Oguntuyi, described the programme as an extension of national duty, urging participants to cascade the training to other veterans across the country.

He maintained that retired personnel remain a valuable national asset and must continue to contribute meaningfully to peacebuilding and stability.

Similarly, the National Coordinator of REMENAF, Abiodun Durowaiye-Herberts, said veterans are well placed to support intelligence gathering, community engagement and conflict prevention, given their operational experience and deep understanding of security dynamics.

The initiative underscores a broader recalibration within the military towards preventive, community-based security strategies, aimed at addressing conflicts at their roots and reducing the burden on front-line troops.

Edo Assembly confirms Ehimare as IRS Executive Director

KEN ABU

BENIN CITY

The Edo State House of Assembly on Monday confirmed Mr Victor Ehimare as Executive Director

of the Edo State Internal Revenue Service.

The confirmation followed the consideration and adoption of a report presented by the House Standing Committee on Rules, Business and

Government House, chaired by the Majority Leader, Hon. Jonathan Ibhamawu.

Presenting the report, the committee stated that Ehimare possessed the requisite academic qualifications and relevant experience to effectively discharge the responsibilities of the office.

Following deliberations, the

House adopted the committee's recommendation and formally confirmed his appointment.

The Speaker of the House, Rt. Hon. Blessing Agbebaku, thereafter directed Mr Ehimare to take a bow and also ordered that clean copies of the resolution be transmitted to the Governor for necessary action.

Agbomhere declares for Reps seat, seeks Etsako mandate

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

Legal practitioner and political strategist, Blessing Agbomhere Esq., has formally declared his intention to contest for the House of Representatives seat representing Etsako Federal Constituency in Edo State on the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

The declaration, held at Auchi, Etsako West Local Government Area, signals what supporters describe as the start of a new phase of purposeful leadership, renewed hope, and strategic progress for the people of Etsako.

In a statement issued by the Blessing Support Organiza-

tions (BSO), Media and Publicity Directorate, the group portrayed Agbomhere as a committed progressive, grassroots mobiliser, and advocate of youth inclusion, party growth, and democratic development.

According to the statement, Agbomhere has consistently distinguished himself through loyalty, service, and people-centred engagement, earning widespread trust and confidence across the constituency.

"As a lawyer, communicator, strategist, and passionate patriot, he possesses the experience, intellect, courage, and energy required to provide effective and impactful representation at the National Assembly.

"His aspiration is driven by

a clear vision focused on inclusive development, economic empowerment, infrastructure renewal, security of lives and property, youth and women advancement, educational support, and expanded access to federal opportunities for the people of Etsako," the statement read.

The organisation added that the people of Etsako deserve dynamic and responsive representation that reflects their needs and aspirations, stressing that the constituency requires a representative with both the competence and resolve to tackle local challenges.

BSO therefore called on party leaders, stakeholders, youths, women groups, market associations, profession-

als, community leaders, and residents across Etsako East, Etsako West, and Etsako Central to support Agbomhere's ambition.

"This movement is bigger than politics. It is about restoring confidence in leadership, empowering our people, and securing a brighter future for the next generation," the statement added.

Top APC leaders in Edo State, including party stalwarts and key stakeholders, were present at the declaration.

The organisation expressed confidence that with unity and collective support, Agbomhere would emerge victorious and deliver effective, people-oriented representation for Etsako Federal Constituency.



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

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

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

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The general public is hereby put on notice that the land measuring **983.509 square meters** situated at **Evbuabogun/Evbuamoma Community along Benin/Sapele Road, Ikpoba-Okhai LGA, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria**, with **Certificate of Occupancy No ED 76654**, formerly belonging to Mrs Iyabosa Cynthia, has been duly purchased by **NIPCO Gas Limited of 6, Lisabi Road, Apapa, Lagos**.

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

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

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

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

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **GRACE UWA ODINMA**, now wish to be known as **GRACE UWA EDOSA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS OKOSUN ODION JOY**, now wish to be known as **AKPODUADO SUCCESS OKE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS AIWEKHAE PROMISE**, now wish to be known as **MRS. EMEKARA PROMISE AIWEKHAE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS JOYCE OSATOHAMWEN EHIMWENMA** now wish to be known as **MRS. JOYCE OSATOHAMWEN IRABOR**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

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

REMOVAL OF NAME

I, formerly known as **EHIGIATOR CHARLES MARTINS**, now wish to be called **EHIGIATOR CHARLES**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME

I, formerly known as **IMADE SHARON OSATOHANMWEN**, now wish to be known as **IMADE-BEN SHARON OSATOHANMWEN**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **ENWEREM AUGUSTA CHINENYE** now wish to be known as **DANIEL ENWEREM AUGUSTA CHINENYE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME/DATE OF BIRTH

I, formerly known as **MACAULAY BLESSING PRECIOUS**, now wish to be known as **MACAULAY BLESSING PRECIOUS** and also my correct date of birth is **25/8/2005** and not **8/8/2025**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

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The general public is hereby notified that I, **COMFORT OSAYOMWANBOR OMOROGBE** is the bonafide and lawful owner of a piece/parcel of land, measuring 50ft by 100ft, (Fifty Feet by One Hundred Feet) with an uncompleted four bedroom bungalow and a room & parlour self contain, lying and situate at **Ward 20/K, Uzebu Quarters, Benin City, Edo State**. The title documents of the landed property was discovered missing in Benin City, Edo State and all efforts to trace it has proved abortive, hence this publication for record purposes. The property is not for Buyers Beware!

The general public and concerned authorities take note.

Signed: COMFORT OSAYOMWANBOR OMOROGBE

REARRANGEMENT OF NAME

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

ADDITION OF NAME

I, formerly known as **IMADE PRINCE OSARUMWENSE**, now wish to be known as **IMADE-BEN PRINCE OSARUMWENSE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

RECONCILIATION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **ILECHUKWU CHEKWUBECHUKWU JOSHUA** and **ILECHUKWU CHEKWUBE** are one and the same person. I wish to be known as **ILECHUKWU CHEKWUBECHUKWU JOSHUA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

Tinubu tasks new envoys on investment drive, reorders foreign policy priorities

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu has charged Nigeria's newly appointed ambassadors and high commissioners to aggressively pursue foreign investments.

He also charged them to strengthen strategic partnerships and reposition the country's global image in line with evolving diplomatic realities.

This was contained in a statement on Monday in Abuja, by Mr Yomi Odunuga, Special Adviser on Media and Publicity to the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Goerge Akume.

According to Odunuga, Tinubu represented by the SGF, gave the charge at the opening of an induction course for the envoys in Abuja.

The president said that the appointments of the envoys

reflected the administration's confidence in their capacity to advance Nigeria's interests on the international stage.

He noted that the global system was undergoing rapid transformation driven by shifting geopolitical dynamics, economic uncertainties, technological disruptions, climate challenges and emerging security threats.

He added that the developments had made the role of dip-

lomats more critical than ever. "The international system is evolving rapidly. We must be prepared to meet these challenges by focusing on how best to protect and promote Nigeria's national interest," he said.

Tinubu urged the envoys to adopt a modern, results-oriented approach to diplomacy by combining traditional methods with digital engagement, public diplomacy and strategic communication.

He underscored the importance of telling Nigeria's story in a compelling and credible

manner while projecting the achievements of his administration's Renewed Hope Agenda.

The president also called on the envoys to be proactive and innovative in fostering partnerships, promoting trade and attracting foreign direct investment and technology to Nigeria.

According to him, safeguarding the welfare of Nigerians in the diaspora must remain a top priority.

He also announced a reordering of Nigeria's foreign pol-

icy framework, known as the "4D Doctrine".

He said that the doctrine, originally anchored on Democracy, Development, Demography and Diaspora, had now been rearranged to Demography, Development, Diaspora and Democracy.

According to him, the adjustment places Nigerians at the centre of foreign policy and is aimed at ensuring that international engagements deliver tangible benefits to citizens.

**NEWLY APPOINTED ENVOYS:**

Nigeria's newly appointed envoys shortly after a meeting with the President at the Aso Rock Villa on Monday.

Experts review Edun's tenure, set agenda for new finance minister

ABUJA

Economic experts have offered mixed assessments of the tenure of the former Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, while outlining priorities for the new minister, Taiwo Oyejede.

The experts spoke with our correspondent in Abuja on Monday.

Oyejede was recently elevated to the position of Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy in a major cabinet reshuffle.

He officially assumed office on April 24, succeeding Edun.

They acknowledged Edun's efforts at macroeconomic stabi-

lisation, while stressing the need for deeper reforms to sustain growth and ease citizens' hardship.

Dr Gloria Phillips, a development economist, said Edun's tenure was marked by fiscal discipline and improved revenue drive, but noted inflationary pressures remained high.

"Stabilisation policies were evident, but transmission to household welfare was weak," he said.

Phillips commended the government's coordination of fiscal and monetary policies during Edun's period.

She, however, urged the new minister to prioritise exchange rate stability and boost investor confidence.

Mr Simon Audu, an econo-

mist, said reforms initiated under Edun laid a foundation for long-term growth.

Audu said that consistency and policy clarity would be critical for the incoming administration.

He said that the business environment improved moderately, while calling for stronger support for small and medium enterprises to drive job creation.

Miss Lydia Emerson, a public finance expert, said that debt management strategies were strengthened during the period.

She urged the new minister to focus on reducing debt servicing costs and expanding

non-oil revenue sources.

Emerson also emphasised the need for comprehensive tax reforms to widen the revenue base.

She urged the incoming minister to simplify tax administration and improve compliance.

The experts collectively agreed that the new finance minister must prioritise inflation control, economic diversification, and social protection programmes.

They also stressed the importance of transparency, policy continuity, and inclusive growth to consolidate gains recorded in recent years.

Centre urges respect, dignity in treating physically challenged people

UYO

The Centre for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) has urged Nigerians to treat physically challenged people around them with dignity and respect.

The Executive Director, Mr David Anyaele, made the call at the opening of a two-day training workshop for persons with disabilities in Uyo on Monday.

Anyaele said that physically challenged persons should not be discriminated upon, but supported to live a worthy and dignified life.

Speaking at the conference

intitd: "Ending Barriers Against Niger-Deltans with Disabilities" he said that 16 per cent of the world's population lived with different forms of disabilities.

Anyaele stated that disabilities could result from accidents, violent attacks, building collapses, fire outbreaks among others.

According to him, disability cases in Nigeria has continued to rise due to persistent conflict, violence, accidents and a weak healthcare system.

The executive director further said that the workshop was designed to equip participants with the knowledge to demand their rights within the

society.

A facilitator, Mr Godwin Olumere, said that physically challenged persons should not only benefit from the society but be actively involved in its affairs.

Olumere stated that while change was constant, it might not favour persons with disabilities except they participated in change processes.

He said that it was unfair to develop and implement public programmes without the inputs of physically challenged persons.

The facilitator described advocacy as a critical tool that empowered physically chal-

lenged persons to speak out, and demand accountability from stakeholders.

"This workshop will educate stakeholders on disability-related issues, it will help to change negative attitudes, and address misconceptions," he said.

A participant, Mr Anietie Jackson, said that physically challenged people should approach advocacy with courage and strength to avoid being intimidated.

Jackson thanked CDD for organising the programme, describing it as a huge support to physically challenged persons in the region.

Sanwo-Olu backs Hamzat for Lagos governorship bid

LAGOS

Lagos State Governor, Mr Babajide Sanwo-Olu, on Monday endorsed his deputy, Dr Obafemi Hamzat, describing him as competent, prepared and deserving to lead.

The endorsement signals continuity within the administration and strengthens early political positioning ahead of the next governorship race in the state.

Sanwo-Olu said Hamzat formally declared his intention during a consultation at the State House, attended by party leaders, cabinet members, former senators, ministers and diplomats.

The high-level delegation, he noted, reflected broad political support and confidence in Hamzat's capacity to lead Lagos effectively if elected.

"We just concluded a session where the Deputy Governor came with a strong delegation to formally inform me of his intention," he said.

He described the meeting as warm and consultative, noting stakeholders unanimously backed Hamzat's aspiration after extensive deliberations.

"It was a warm family meeting and, at the end of consultations, it was unanimous that the

Deputy Governor is fit, ready and well-prepared," he said.

Sanwo-Olu commended Hamzat's experience and deep understanding of governance, saying he had been involved in shaping policies and programmes since the administration began.

"He is a man who understands governance deeply and has been part of the system, knowing how every aspect functions," he said.

The governor praised his deputy's character, citing humility, integrity, loyalty and commitment demonstrated consistently throughout their years of working together.

"He has worked with me with humility and at the highest level of integrity, loyalty, commitment and support," he said.

Sanwo-Olu expressed appreciation for the formal notification, describing it as an honour and a mark of respect within their political relationship.

"I feel personally honoured and privileged that you have given me this respect to formally inform me," he said.

He acknowledged the role of President Bola Tinubu in shaping their political journey, noting their partnership had long been envisioned and nurtured.

46 killed, 346 injured in Gombe road crashes —FRSC

GOMBE

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Gombe Command has said that no fewer than 46 persons were killed in 77 crashes recorded in the state between January and March, 2026.

The State's Sector Commander, Mr Samson Kaura, stated this in an interview with newsmen in Gombe on Monday.

Kaura said that 346 persons sustained varying degrees of injuries within the period under review, while 179 persons went home unhurt.

Comparing the statistics with that of 2025 within the same period, Kaura said there was a reduction in the number of crashes, as there were 107 crashes recorded in 2025 as against 77 in 2026.

He said that in spite of the

reduction in the number of crashes recorded in 2026, there were more fatalities in the year as 46 persons were killed compared to 35 in 2025.

He attributed the high fatalities in the first quarter of 2026 to high movement of people in January.

"In January alone, 36 deaths were recorded while four and six were recorded in February and March respectively," Kaura said.

He said that analysis of the crashes showed that the cause of the crashes within the period under review were high speed, overloading, tyre burst and dangerous driving and amongst others.

The Sector commander advised motorists in the state to adhere strictly to traffic regulations and prioritise their safety and those of their passengers.

NEWS**Economic transformation: Lagos unveils bold industrial policy****LAGOS**

Lagos State will launch its Industrial Policy (2025–2030) on Thursday, outlining a strategy to position the state as Africa's leading industrial and manufacturing hub.

Mrs Folashade Ambrose-Medebem, the Commissioner for Commerce, Cooperatives, Trade and Investment, disclosed this at a press conference in Alausa, Ikeja, on Monday.

She said the policy reflected months of stakeholder consultations, data-driven analysis and alignment with global best practices in industrial planning and sustainable economic growth.

Ambrose-Medebem described the document as the

most ambitious industrial agenda ever conceived by the Lagos State Government in recent history.

"Within 72 hours, Lagos will launch its Industrial Policy 2025–2030, committing stakeholders to a coherent and actionable plan for industrial transformation," she said.

She noted that the policy provided a clear roadmap for economic diversification, reduced import dependence and increased value addition across critical sectors of the state's economy.

Ambrose-Medebem said the initiative was driven by Gov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu's leadership and aligned with his THEMES Plus development agenda.

"The governor insists on strategic planning, disciplined exe-

cutation and strong public-private collaboration as foundations for sustainable prosperity," she said.

She added that policy continuity and institutional coordination would be prioritised to ensure that implementation remains consistent beyond political cycles.

The commissioner noted that Lagos remained Nigeria's economic backbone, contributing significantly to industrial output, trade expansion and non-oil revenue generation.

"Lagos remains West Africa's

financial and commercial hub, with over 20 million people engaged in daily economic activities," Ambrose-Medebem said.

She said the state's large population, coastal advantage and entrepreneurial culture positioned it uniquely for industrial expansion and regional economic leadership.

According to her, the policy targets agro-processing, manufacturing, creative economy, healthcare, blue economy and digital trade as priority sectors.

She explained that these sectors were selected based on their job creation potential, export capacity and ability to stimulate inclusive and sustainable growth.

"The policy addresses constraints to industrial growth, with timelines to tackle infrastructure, regulatory and supply chain challenges," she said.

Ambrose-Medebem emphasised that small and medium-sized enterprises would play a central role in achieving the policy's objectives.

"SMEs remain our economic backbone; we are expanding finance access, removing bottlenecks and boosting competitiveness," she said.

She said targeted interventions would include easier access to credit, improved regulatory processes and capacity-building programmes for entrepreneurs.

The commissioner stated that innovation, technology adoption and human capital development would drive the policy's implementation across all sectors.

Osun APC chieftain wants Reps ticket zoned to constituency**OSOGBO**

Chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Osun, Mr Adebayo Balogun, has decried the marginalisation of Odo-Otin LGA, urging the party leadership to zone the House of Representatives ticket to it ahead of the party's primaries.

Balogun, the spokesperson to late Afenifere leader, Sen. Ayo Fasanmi and the present coordinator of Odo-Otin Progressive Like-Minded Group, made the appeal in a statement issued to newsmen on Monday in Osogbo.

He expressed concern over the continued marginalisation of Odo-Otin in the political arrangement of the constituency with unequal distribution of elective positions.

According to him, equity, fairness and justice will speak

if the ticket is zoned to Odo-Otin without further delay.

"We want Odo-Otin to get the ticket and not sidelined while other local governments continue to benefit from the rotation of this ticket.

"Odo-Otin has waited long enough and deserves its rightful place in the political sphere," he said.

Balogun added that Odo-Otin Local Government has credible and competent aspirants capable of winning elections and representing the constituency effectively.

The APC chieftain appealed to former Osun governor, Chief Bisi Akande, to intervene and ensure fairness in the zoning arrangement.

He also urged the Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Alhaji Gboyega Oyetola, to support the demand in the interest of party unity.

2027: Count us out of Ibadan opposition summit's resolutions —NNPP faction**ABUJA**

The New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), under the leadership of Dr Agbo Major, has distanced itself from the resolutions reached at opposition political parties summit held in Ibadan, Oyo State last Saturday.

Major, who spoke at a news conference on Monday in Abuja, said the party was neither represented nor officially involved in the coalition gathering.

He stressed that the presence of some expelled members of the party at the meeting should not be misconstrued as participation by the NNPP.

"The NNPP, as a registered political party, wishes to categorically distance itself from the just concluded opposition parties' summit held in Ibadan.

"None of the recognised leaders of our great party attended that gathering, nor was the party represented in any official capacity," he said.

He cautioned the coalition leadership against allowing individuals he described as imposers to use the party's name for relevance or political advantage.

Major also disclosed that the party's ongoing electronic membership registration exercise, launched two weeks ago, had recorded significant progress nationwide.

According to him, the party has commenced a comprehensive review of the exercise involving key stakeholders, including aspirants, zonal and state chairmen, to improve efficiency and transparency.

"Our goal remains to build a credible, technology-driven political institution that reflects the aspirations of Nigerians," he said.

Major said, the party recently met with Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and requested for the upload of the duly recognised National Working Committee (NWC) on its official portal in line with sub-judicial court judgments.



OPENING OF A SPECIALISED TRAINING:

Participants at the opening of a specialised training on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in custodial facilities held in Abuja on Monday.

FG moves to curb extremism in prisons, trains stakeholders**ABUJA**

The Federal Government has intensified efforts to prevent the spread of violent extremism in custodial centres, that prisons could become breeding grounds for radicalisation if not properly managed.

The National Coordinator, National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC), Maj.-Gen. Adamu Laka, gave the warning on Monday in Abuja at the opening of a specialised training on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in custodial facilities.

Laka said the initiative was part of a broader strategy to strengthen Nigeria's non-kinetic response to insecurity.

He said custodial centres, though meant for rehabilitation, could inadvertently serve as recruitment hubs for extremist groups without proactive measures.

"Global experience has shown that, if not properly managed, such environments can become breeding grounds for radicalisation.

"The training is designed to equip relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies with the tools to detect, prevent and respond to extremist ideologies within correctional facilities," he said.

Laka noted that the programme aligned with the Federal Government's whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to tackling violent extremism.

He highlighted key inter-

ventions by government, including the deradicalisation programme at the Kuje Custodial Centre and the Operation Safe Corridor, which has rehabilitated over 3,000 former associates of terrorist groups.

He added that 744 clients were recently graduated from the programme, with a new facility established in Zamfara to expand capacity.

In his remarks, the Controller-General, Nigerian Correctional Service, Sylvester Nwakuche, said the agency had moved beyond mere custody to structured rehabilitation of inmates linked to extremism.

Represented by Deputy Controller Jammal Bakare, Nwakuche said managing extremist offenders remained one of the most complex challenges

in correctional administration.

He stressed that the training would enhance risk assessment, inmate engagement, and reintegration outcomes across facilities.

"Custodial centres can either disrupt extremist thinking—or unintentionally reinforce it. The difference lies in how prepared we are," he said.

Also speaking, a Senior Fellow at the Global Centre on Cooperative Security, Ms Saeida Rouass, said the programme was part of a six-month initiative to adapt global CVE curriculum to Nigeria's context.

She said the organisation had trained over 45,000 correctional personnel globally and remained committed to supporting Nigeria with technical expertise and best practices.

ECA calls for integrated approach to tackle Africa's climate, other challenges**ABUJA**

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), has called for an integrated approach to addressing Africa's interconnected climate, food, energy and water challenges.

The Deputy Executive Secretary for Programme Support at ECA, Mama Keita, said this at a high-level dialogue in Addis Ababa.

Keita said climate shocks, rising debt pressures and tightening financial conditions

were increasingly constraining growth across the continent.

She noted that Africa faced a financing gap of about 1.3 trillion dollars annually to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

According to her, climate shocks are already reducing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by up to five per cent annually in vulnerable African economies.

She also warned that disruptions in global supply chains were affecting energy and fertiliser flows, with implications for food prices and economic

stability.

Keita stressed that Africa could no longer address development challenges in isolation, describing fragmented approaches as inefficient and counterproductive.

"We must move away from disjointed responses where sectors operate in silos and investments fail to reinforce each other," she said.

She called for a Climate-Water-Energy-Food nexus approach to manage interconnections and build resilience across sectors.

The ECA official said integrated solutions would help maximise synergies, reduce trade-offs and accelerate progress toward development goals.

Keita said that while some progress had been made, integrated approaches remained limited across the continent.

She said the dialogue provided a platform to share experiences and identify scalable solutions for implementation.

Keita outlined three priorities, including policy coherence, innovative financing and investment in data and science.

Kano Assembly confirms Garo as deputy governor

KANO
The Kano State House of Assembly has confirmed Muritala Garo as the new Deputy Governor of Kano State after a successful screening.

The confirmation followed the presentation and adoption

of the report of an ad hoc committee during plenary, presided over by the Speaker, Jibril Falgore, on Monday.

Deputy Speaker Muhammad Bello, while presenting the report, explained that Garo's nomination came after the resignation of former Deputy Governor Aminu Gwarzo.

He said that the screening was conducted in line with Section 191(3)(c) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), which empowers the Assembly to approve a nominee in the event of a vacancy.

According to the committee, Garo underwent a comprehensive screening process covering

his educational background, professional experience, understanding of governance, and vision for the state.

The committee also observed that Garo demonstrated a clear grasp of the responsibilities of the office and presented a workable vision to support Governor Abba Yusuf in deliv-

ering on his mandate.

Based on its findings, the committee recommended his confirmation, which was unanimously adopted by the House.

The Assembly also reaffirmed its commitment to working with the executive arm to promote good governance, accountability, and the overall development of the state.



OPENING SESSION:

L-R: Director-General, National Intelligence Agency (NIA), Amb. Mohammed Mohammed; Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Amb. Dunoma Ahmed and the representative of the President, Sen. George Akume, during the opening session of the Induction ceremony for Ambassador-designates in Abuja on Monday.

Military unveils plans to engage veterans in tackling rising violent conflicts

ABUJA

The Nigerian military has unveiled plans to formally engage retired personnel in efforts to address rising violent conflicts across the country through mediation, conflict resolution and community-based peacebuilding.

The Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Olufemi Oluyede, disclosed this at the flag-off of a mediation and conflict resolution skills training for veterans in Abuja.

The training was organised by the Retired Members of Nigeria Armed Forces (REMENAF), in collaboration with Mediation Training Institute

and Defence Headquarters.

The training is aimed at equipping retired military personnel with modern skills in mediation, negotiation and conflict resolution.

Oluyede said the initiative reflects a strategic shift towards strengthening non-kinetic approaches in addressing Nigeria's evolving security challenges, where violent conflicts are increasingly driven by local disputes and community tensions.

He stressed that military operations alone cannot guarantee lasting peace, noting that early intervention, dialogue and structured mediation remain critical to preventing es-

calation of violence.

"This initiative reflects the understanding that sustainable security requires both kinetic and non-kinetic responses.

"Veterans possess the experience, discipline and credibility needed to intervene in community disputes and help prevent violence before it escalates.

"They understand the cost of conflict and are uniquely positioned to promote dialogue, restraint and reconciliation at the grassroots level," he said.

The CDS explained that the initiative would also strengthen early warning systems and improve information flow from communities to security agencies, while remaining non-operational and complementary to

existing security structures.

The President, Coalition of Concerned Veterans Association, Isaac Oguntuyi, described the programme as a continuation of national service, urging beneficiaries to cascade the training to other veterans across the country.

He said retired personnel remain committed to national stability and must continue contributing to peacebuilding efforts.

Similarly, National Coordinator of Retired Members of the Nigerian Armed Forces (REMENAF), Abiodun Durowaiye-Herberts, said veterans were well placed to support intelligence gathering, community engagement and conflict prevention due to their operational experience.

FG launches community food bank programme in N'East to tackle malnutrition

MAIDUGURI

The Federal Government has launched the North-East zonal phase of the National Community Food Bank Programme (NCFBP) as part of efforts to curb child malnutrition in the country.

The First Lady, Sen. Oluremi Tinubu, said on Monday in Maiduguri that child malnutrition remained a pressing national concern requiring urgent and coordinated intervention.

Tinubu said millions of Nigerian children still lacked access to adequate nutrition, adding that the expansion of the programme was aimed at addressing the challenge nationwide.

She acknowledged the support of the federal government, state governors, private sector partners and well-meaning Nigerians toward ending malnutrition among Nigerian children.

"Their generosity affirms that we are indeed our brothers' keepers and gives confidence that this programme will endure and thrive for many years beyond this administration.

"Globally, community food banks have proven to be effective mechanisms for delivering nutritious food to those who need it most.

"By building strong partnerships among farmers, food producers, corporate organisations and communities, food

banks bridge the gap between abundance and need.

"The success of this programme will depend on sustained collaboration. We must work together to build a transparent, accountable and well-structured food bank system that reaches vulnerable households across Nigeria," she said.

The First Lady noted that the programme aligned with President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, especially in advancing food security, improved healthcare and national development.

She said the initiative was being implemented in collaboration with the Office of the First Lady, the Federal Ministry of

Health and Social Welfare, the National Primary Health Care Development Agency and the Bank of Agriculture.

She added that the programme would be extended to other geopolitical zones while calling for stronger partnerships and increased stakeholder support.

"I therefore call on individuals, organisations and institutions across the North-East to support and actively participate in this initiative as we commence zonal rollouts nationwide.

"The choice of Borno State for the North-East launch is strategic. The region has faced security challenges, which have contributed to food insecurity and child malnutrition."

Parents urge vigilance on children's screen use

LAGOS

Parents in Lagos State have stressed vigilance and structured control in managing children's screen time and online exposure, as digital devices increasingly influence childhood development and everyday learning experiences for children.

The parents, speaking in separate interviews with newsmen on Monday, shared practical strategies including regulating screen hours, using parental controls, and promoting alternative recreational and educational activities.

Screen time, according to Wikipedia, refers to the amount of time spent using electronic devices with display screens, including smartphones, computers, televisions, video game consoles, and tablets in homes and schools.

Mr Anon Amaeze, father of six-year-old twins, described digital screens as both beneficial and potentially harmful if not properly managed, noting their influence on learning, behaviour, and early childhood development outcomes.

He said that carefully selected television programmes had positively influenced his children's speech and cognitive development, helping them learn words, improve pronunciation, and build confidence in communication at an early age.

"The screen has significantly helped in the development of my kids. My twin daughter, for instance, started speaking well through the kids' programmes they watch on television at home," he said.

Amaeze, however, emphasised the importance of supervision, warning that children learn quickly and can independently operate devices, adding that it was necessary for parents to remain attentive and guide their media consumption habits.

"As a parent, you should not allow them watch just anything," he said, emphasising discipline and supervision while urging parents to monitor content and guide children's viewing habits consistently at home.

"Children these days are smart; they observe how you use the remote and can replicate it when you are not around. So, we need to be vigilant," he added.

Police recover 2 motorcycles, arrest 3 key suspects in Ondo

AKURE

The Police Command in Ondo State says it has recovered two stolen motorcycles and arrested three key suspected thieves in the state.

This is contained in a statement made available to newsmen on Monday in Akure by the command's Spokesperson, DSP Abayomi Jimoh.

Jimoh, who said the command acted on credible intelligence provided by a vigilant security guard, explained that the suspects were arrested at different places.

The spokesperson said one of the suspects, Joseph James aged 28, was arrested on April 9 at about 0430hrs while attempting to move a stolen black Boxer motorcycle from Sabo Area of Ondo Town.

He said the suspect was arrested by the operatives attached to Funbi-Fagun Division, and the motorcycle, which was stolen on April 8 valued N500,000, had been recovered.

"Similarly, on April 22, the command responded swiftly to a report by one Olowolafe 'm' of Araromi Street, Akure, whose red Boxer motorcycle had been stolen.

"Acting on intelligence, operatives tracked and arrested one Raji Akeem 'm' at Shasha while attempting to dispose of the stolen motorcycle.

"The suspect had been severely assaulted by an irate mob before police intervention and is currently receiving medical attention under police custody.

"The recovered motorcycle has been secured as exhibit, while investigation is ongoing to identify and apprehend other accomplices," Jimoh said.

He explained that the command also arrested Adedigba Adeola for deceitfully disposing a commercial motorcyclist, Jolayemi Ahmed 'm', of his motorcycle under the pretext of a trip.

Jimoh, who said that the case was reported to the Enu Owa Division on Oct.14,2025, said the suspect was arrested on April 18, 2026.

According to him, the suspect initially denied the allegation but later confessed during interrogation, and admitted to being the principal actor.

"The suspect further revealed that he concealed the motorcycle in an uncompleted building for four days before selling it to one Danjuma Gideon 'm' of Canon Adeyemi Road, Ondo.

NEWS**Kaduna SUBEB inaugurates TPD training, targets 8,000 teachers**

KADUNA

The Kaduna State Universal Basic Education Board (KADSUBEB), has inaugurated the 2023/2024 Teachers' Professional Development (TPD) training to strengthen education quality and drive human capital development across the state.

Speaking at the inauguration of the statewide initiative on Monday in Kaduna, Governor Uba Sani, said the programme reflects his administration's aspiration for a stronger, enlightened, and more prosperous Kaduna through improved education outcomes.

Sani, represented by the Deputy Governor, Dr Hadiza Balarabe, noted that the training would advance educational attainment and push the state forward.

According to him, education

remains a powerful instrument for transformation and a top priority of the administration's development agenda.

He described teachers as quiet nation builders, patient guides, and architects of minds and futures, central to societal progress.

The training, he said, underscored the government's commitment to improving teaching quality and adapting to evolving classroom demands.

Sani stressed that modern classrooms require innovation, adaptability, digital competence, and deeper understanding of learners' needs.

He added that the programme is a strategic intervention to strengthen teaching quality, enhance pedagogy, and improve classroom delivery.

"The initiative aims to deepen teachers' competence and ultimately raise learning outcomes

across schools in Kaduna state.

"No fewer than 8,000 teachers, head teachers, and school support officers from all the 23 local government areas will benefit," he said.

Sani noted that the programme focuses on practical skills designed to deliver measurable impact in classrooms.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to sustained investment in teachers' welfare, motivation, and professional advancement.

The administration, he said, has introduced the Best Teacher Award to recognise excellence and inspire performance.

He also highlighted the clearance of promotion backlogs from 2021 to 2024 as part of efforts to boost morale, disclosing that promotion exercises for 2025 and 2026 would soon commence to ensure career progression.

He further disclosed the resolution of the long-standing NUT End Well scheme dispute as a major milestone.

He said that plans were underway to recruit about 10,000 additional teachers to strengthen the education sector.

According to him, these combined actions reflect a comprehensive strategy to reposition teachers as the foundation of quality education.

Sani commended the Ministry of Education and the Commissioner for their leadership in advancing reforms, and the Executive Chairman of KADSUBEB for his dedication and vision

in driving transformation.

Acknowledging development partners, he said their support continues to sustain the state's shared education mission.

He urged participants to fully engage in the training and apply the lessons with pride and purpose.

Earlier, KADSUBEB Executive Chairman, Mubarak Mohammed, said the initiative targets the teacher, classroom, and overall learning experience of every child.

Ekiti 2026: Tight security at Oyebanji's campaign flag-off

ADO-EKITI

There is tight security at the Ekiti Parapo Pavilion, Ado-Ekiti, venue of the flag-off of re-election campaign of Governor Biodun Oyebanji.

Security operatives comprising the Police, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Department of State Services and other agencies were on Monday deployed within and around the venue to ensure a hitch-free programme.

The security checkpoints were mounted on major routes leading to the pavilion, while vehicular and human movements were thoroughly screened before accessing the venue.

The venue witnessed a large turnout of All Progressives Congress (APC) supporters, stakeholders and government officials.

APC members gathered early at the venue, displaying banners, party insignia and chanting slogans in support of the incumbent governor.

Party chieftains and dignitaries, including members of the National Assembly and state executive council were also in attendance, reaffirming their support for Oyebanji's re-election bid.

As at the time of filing this report, the situation at the Ekiti Parapo Pavilion remained calm and orderly, with security agencies maintaining vigilance while the campaign activities progressed peacefully.

Rainstorm wrecks havoc on school, homes in Kaduna community

KADUNA

Rainstorm has damaged schools and homes in the Hausawa community of Angwan Gado in Malali area of Kaduna North Local Government Area.

The rainstorm which occurred on Sunday evening at about 8pm blew off roofs and caused significant damage to facilities.

Mr Shola Kabir, a resident who was affected, said the storm destroyed his house and business premises.

"I was preparing for my daily prayers when I heard heavy wind blowing the roof top of a primary school and my house," he said.

Abdulummini Yakubu said the rainstorm destroyed part of his house.

"The heavy downpour pulled down parts of my building, damaged valuable property, and swept away belongings accumulated," he said.

The headmaster of a Local Education Authority (LEA) primary school affected, Mallam

Salihu Muhammad, said teaching materials, classroom furniture, and sections of the school structure were badly affected.

"We are appealing to the government and relevant agencies for urgent intervention.

"The damage is extensive. Several classrooms have been exposed, and learning may be interrupted if repairs are not carried out quickly," Muhammad said.

A community leader in the area, Mr Emmanuel Musa, described the incident as devastating, noting that many residents were displaced.

"The storm came with powerful winds that destroyed school buildings and many houses.

"Some families have been left without shelter, while pupils may struggle to return to school if repairs are delayed," he said.

He urged the Kaduna State Government, the State Emergency Management Agency, and other relevant authorities to provide immediate support for affected victims.

**COMMEMORATION OF WORLD MALARIA DAY:**

Kaduna State Chairman, Civil Society in Malaria Control Immunization and Nutrition (ACOMIN), Diji Ogbadiya, (L), being tested by a Red Cross official, during the Commemoration of World Malaria Day by the Civil Society in Malaria Control Immunization and Nutrition (ACOMIN) in Kaduna on Sunday.

Dangote pledges N550m hostel to FUTO**OWERRI**

President of Dangote Industries Ltd., Alhaji Aliko Dangote, has pledged to construct a N550 million students' hostel at the Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO) to address accommodation challenges.

Dangote made the pledge at the weekend while delivering a public lecture on: "Enterprise,

Leadership and Service to Humanity," at the institution in Owerri, Imo state.

He also donated N25 million to the students through the Student Union Government.

The industrialist said the hostel project, when completed, would help ease the shortage of on-campus accommodation for students.

Speaking during the lecture, Dangote recounted his entre-

preneurial journey, noting that he began as a distributor of bagged cement and other commodities before venturing into large-scale manufacturing.

He said his decision to adopt backward integration was driven by the need to produce locally goods that were previously imported.

Dangote described the importation of finished goods as detrimental to the economy,

saying it fuels unemployment, inflation and poverty, while creating jobs and prosperity in exporting countries.

According to him, sustainable economic growth depends on local production and value addition to raw materials.

He urged investors to prioritise domestic investment, stressing that industrialisation must be driven largely by citizens.

LASTMA to introduce short code for public engagement**LAGOS**

The Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) has said it will introduce a short code enabling residents, especially the motoring public to engage and share information on the road.

The General Manager of LASTMA, Mr Olalekan Bakare-Oki,

disclosed this in an interview with newsmen on Monday in Lagos.

"The agency is working on ensuring that we get a short code instead of the long digit that is currently running.

"In the next two to three weeks, our call centre will come up with a short code that will be free, we have done all necessary details, we are just

waiting for the final approval with the network provider.

"This is where Lagos residents, especially the motoring public can engage us and give us information," he said.

He added that presently, machinery and all equipment are being installed for the agency to kick-start the short code.

He pointed out that infor-

mation expected from residents is mainly on the conduct of officers on the road, emergency situation, information on congestions, feedbacks or any information they deemed fit to pass.

He added that presently in LASTMA's digital call centre, there are 10 responders and Lagos residents could reach agency in Yourba, English and vernacular.

Troops rescue kidnapped victim, recover N8m ransom in Plateau**JOS**

Troops of Joint Task Force, 'Operation ENDURING PEACE (JTF-OPEO)' have rescued a kidnapped victim and recovered the ransom paid by the family during a coordinated operation in Qua'an Pan Local Gov-

ernment Area of Plateau.

This is contained in a statement issued by Capt. Polycarp Oteh, the Media Officer of the operation JTF-OPEO on Monday in Jos.

Oteh said that the victim was rescued on Saturday.

"She was earlier abducted at Bauna community of Shendam

LGA on April 19.

"Troops, acting on intelligence report, launched the operations. Through rigorous intelligence gathering and interrogation of an arrested suspect who confessed to the crime, troops were able to identify the victim's location in Padam Forest in Qua'an Pan LGA.

"The victim has been reu-

nited with her family after a thorough medical checks. The N8 million ransom was handed over to the family," he said.

Oteh said troops are currently conducting operations on the kidnappers hideout within Qua'an Pan and Shendam LGAs to identify and apprehend other members of the syndicate.

Ethical conduct, integrity key to restoring public confidence in judiciary —CJN

ABUJA

The Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun, has stressed that ethical conduct, integrity, and professionalism are essential to restoring public confidence in the judiciary.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the 2026 National Workshop on Judicial Ethics for Judges of the Lower Courts, organised by the National Judicial Institute, the CJN described ju-

dicial ethics as the foundation of judicial legitimacy.

She noted that for most Nigerians, justice is experienced at the grassroots through lower courts, which serve as the primary interface between the judiciary and the public.

“Every interaction, ruling, and exercise of discretion by judges shapes public perception of fairness, integrity, and accessibility within the justice system,” she said.

Kekere-Ekun stressed that ethical discipline enhances

the authority of the judiciary, while its absence undermines public trust and confidence.

According to her, judges must uphold professionalism, impartiality, and dignity, particularly in an era of increased public scrutiny and rapid technological advancement.

She added that judicial officers now operate in a highly visible environment where both courtroom decisions and personal conduct are constantly evaluated.

The CJN further noted that

ethical responsibility in the judiciary is both personal and institutional, stressing that integrity cannot be delegated.

She explained that while judges are human and not expected to be infallible, their public role demands restraint and conduct that preserves the dignity of the bench.

Kekere-Ekun described the workshop as timely, providing a platform for reflection, knowledge-sharing, and practical engagement with ethical challenges faced by judicial officers.

She commended the Education Committee of the Institute, led by John Inyang Okoro, for conceptualising the programme, as well as the Administrator of the Institute, Babatunde Adejumo, for organising the event.

The CJN expressed optimism that the workshop would enhance

ethical consciousness, strengthen professional judgment, and equip participants to deliver justice with fairness and integrity.

She thereafter declared the workshop open and urged participants to engage actively for improved judicial service delivery nationwide.

Student tells court how lecturer allegedly raped her in underground office

IKEJA

A 20-year-old undergraduate of the University of Lagos, name withheld, on Monday, recounted her ordeal before a Lagos High Court in Ikeja how her lecturer, Dr Obinna Ojogbo, allegedly raped her in his underground office.

Ojogbo is standing trial on a two-count charge of rape and sexual assault, brought against him by the Lagos state government.

The alleged offences contravene Sections 260 and 263(1) of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015.

Each of the offences attracts life imprisonment, if convicted.

Continuing her testimony during cross examination at the resumed hearing on Monday, the student, confirmed that the alleged incident occurred in the lecturer's office.

Responding to questions from Defence Counsel, Mr Ademola Bello (SAN), the witness said that the Ojogbo “pushed and pinned” her during the alleged incident.

She, however, told the court that she did not scream or call for help at the time.

The defence counsel had questioned her in relation to her Evidence in Chief on April 15.

The witness said that though

she knew the defendant as a lecturer and invigilator, August 21, 2025, was the first time he approached her directly.

She also confirmed that other students were present in the examination hall and that the defendant neither threatened nor isolated her at that time.

She described the office where the incident allegedly occurred as an “underground office” without windows or a secretary.

The witness added that the encounter lasted between 15 and 20 minutes, noting that two female students briefly entered the office during her visit.

A photograph depicting the lecturer's office presented by the defence was challenged by the prosecution counsel, Mr Owolabi Azeze, over admissibility under provisions of the Evidence Act.

But Bello argued that the witness only identified the picture as a representation of the defendant's office.

Bello said: “The defendant office is the alleged scene of the offence.

“My lord Section 84 of the Evidence Act relates to document printed by a computer and which the witness or the maker must lay foundation orally.

“However that foundation is no longer necessary as the adversary has identified it.



DONATION OF EQUIPMENT TO NACCIMA:

L-R: Head, Commercial Banking, Polaris Bank Ltd, Ladi Ene-Garba; Acting Divisional Head, Ilupeju Business Division, Abiola Adebisi; Executive Director, Polaris Bank Ltd, Mr Chris Ofikulu; National President, Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA), Dr Jani Ibrahim and others, during the donation of equipment to NACCIMA Export Express Support Centre by Polaris Bank on Monday.

Court sentences man to death for killing father in Anambra

AKWA

A High Court in Anambra State has convicted and sentenced one Ifeanyi Anizoba Jr. to death by hanging for the murder of his father, Ifeanyi Anizoba.

Delivering judgment in Awka, the trial judge, Justice Chukwu-di Okaa, found the defendant guilty of the offence, adding that the prosecution proved its case beyond reasonable doubt.

The prosecution, led by

Chief State Counsel, Mrs Chiamaka Chukwuika, had told the court that the incident occurred on Dec. 24, 2019, at Nodu Village, Awka, following a dispute between the defendant and his father.

The prosecution had in its submission alleged that the defendant pushed his father during an altercation, causing him to hit his head against a wall and losing consciousness.

The court heard that the defendant left his father unat-

tended to for two days without seeking medical assistance.

He also locked him up in a room until neighbours raised the alarm after perceiving an offensive odour.

The body was subsequently discovered by family members.

The prosecution called three witnesses, including a relative of the deceased, the investigating police officer and the medical doctor, who conducted the autopsy.

The defendant, who was

initially without legal representation, was later assigned a counsel from the Office of the Public Defender.

The defence called two witnesses and denied responsibility for the death.

In his judgment, Okaa held that the totality of the evidence established that the defendant's actions led to the death of the deceased and accordingly convicted him.

He subsequently sentenced the defendant to death by hanging.

NHRC trains 34 human rights advocates in Gombe

GOMBE

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has trained 34 Community Protection Rights Advocates to protect and promote human rights in Gombe state.

Dr Joseph Wanshe, the State Coordinator of the Commission, made the disclosure in an interview with newsmen in Gombe on Monday.

Wanshe said that the training was imperative toward achieving the mandate of the commission in the state.

According to him, the

trained advocates, who are mostly in rural areas, will penetrate distant and rural communities where human rights violations are rampant.

He said that the training has started yielding the expected results as there have been increased number of reported cases of human rights violations from rural communities across the state.

He said that the advocates have been deployed to the 11 local government areas of the state.

“We are witnessing an upsurge in human rights reporting coming to the office.

“The numbers are increasing as regards civil and political rights followed by cases of women and children, domestic violence, economic, social and cultural rights.

“There are many factors involved in the upsurge as the NHRC within the last one month has stepped up sensitisations and stakeholders' engagements.

“We have trained Community Protection Rights advocates, who have been working and as a result, awareness has increased and number of complaints received have spiked,” he said.

Wanshe said that the trained advocates have been affiliated to

NHRC at the local government levels toward ensuring wider coverage of the state in terms of human rights protection.

He assured residents on the commission's effort at ensuring that it achieved effectively its mandate of protection and promotion of human rights.

Wanshe commended the people of Gombe State for their improved confidence in NHRC which has resulted in improved reportage of human rights violations

He further urged communities to support the advocates in their domains in the overall interest of human rights protection.

Child trafficking: Court jails woman, orders ₦500,000 compensation

CALABAR

The Federal High Court in Calabar has convicted one Ms Mbika Edem, also known as Ikwo, on a four-count charge bordering on conspiracy and child trafficking.

The offences which contravened Sections 13(2)(b), 21, and 27 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, 2015 was secured by the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP).

The prosecutor had told the court that Edem conspired with a nurse, now at large, to induce one Ms Mercy Ekanem to deliver prematurely through deception.

“Ekanem was forced into early labour and dispossessed of her newborn shortly after delivery.

“The convict reportedly sold the baby to an unidentified buyer and abandoned the vic-

tim by the roadside with ₦200,000,” the prosecutor said.

The convict who had pleaded not guilty to the charges filed on March 4, 2025 was arraigned before the court on March 19, 2025, where trial commenced.

Delivering judgment on the matter on Monday, Justice Rosemary Oghoghorie found the defendant guilty on all counts.

Oghoghorie sentenced her to two years imprisonment on count one with an option of ₦2 million fine.

She further sentenced the defendant to two years imprisonment each on counts two, three, and four without option of fine.

“The sentences are to run concurrently and take effect from the date of her arrest.

“Also, the convict is to pay ₦500,000 as compensation to the victim; additionally, the ₦200,000 recovered from the victim shall be forfeited to the Federal Government,” she said.

NEWS

Abia, Imo govts battling to rescue communities from devastating gullies

UMUAHIA

The Abia and Imo Governments have expressed serious concern over the devastating human and environmental impacts of gully erosions in many communities in the two sister states of the South-East.

A survey carried out by our news crew in the two states revealed impressive strategic efforts to bring the phenomenon under serious check.

Speaking in an interview with NAN in Umuahia, the Executive Secretary of the Abia State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), Dr Sunday Jackson, said the State Government was working tirelessly to address the gully erosion ravaging communities in the state.

Jackson described Abia as “one of the states worse hit by gully erosion”, with active sites scattered across the three senatorial zones.

He further said that the state was among 33 other states projected to face high flood risk this year, based on the seasonal climate prediction and annual flood outlook released by the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet) and the Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency (NIHSA).

“With increasing rainfall, Abia, which is already prone to gully erosion, may record more cases,” he warned.

He commended Gov. Alex Otti for taking bold steps to tackle the challenge, citing the

ongoing remediation works at Ossah in Umuahia North LGA and several other affected communities.

The SEMA boss, however, maintained that the state still needed support, pointing out that many farmlands and houses were being washed away, leaving scores of residents displaced.

“SEMA is taking proactive measures in security, awareness, and public education, but the magnitude of the disaster is beyond what the State Government alone can bear,” he said.

He promised that SEMA would collaborate with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the Ministry of Environment, and other critical stakeholders to carry out a downscaling exercise in flood-prone communities.

According to him, the exercise aims to sensitise residents to the impending flood disasters and associated risks.

“If we don’t do that, it might lead to loss of lives, loss of property, and environmental degradation,” Jackson said.

Dr Kenneth Anyalechi, the immediate past President of Ozuitem Development Union in Bende LGA, corroborated SEMA’s concern, saying that his community suffered so much damage by erosion due to its topography.

Anyalechi said Ozuitem, made of nine autonomous communities and about 100 villages, had been badly hit, with

Umuikwuoma-Ndiambe, Ndi Okala-Ogboko, Nzerim-Ogboko, and Elugwumba-Odum among the worse affected.

He explained that gully erosion had cut off several villages from the rest of the community and neighbouring areas, in spite self-help palliative carried out by the community in 2021.

“Between 2010 and 2024, my community spent personal

funds just to create access in and out of our village.

“In 2025, the Niger Delta Development Commission came to our rescue, but unfortunately, they stopped midway.

“The erosion has now cut us off from our water source,” he lamented.

Anyalechi appealed for government’s intervention to control the erosion and landslides

so that residents can access water, farmlands, and the neighbouring communities.

Also, a community advocate and native of Elu-Ohafia in Ohafia LGA, Mr Ndubuisi Ume-Ado, lamented the destruction of buildings and displacement of families by erosion, particularly in Amaekpu-Ohafia.

Ume-Ado said that erosion in Elu-Ohafia had cut off five

communities, forcing residents to use dangerous alternative routes to access farmlands.

He revealed that 13 people were involved in a serious accident earlier in the year, while travelling through one of such routes.

He called for urgent government intervention to avert further loss of lives and property in the area.

**PROTEST:**

Protesters from Kaduna South Local Government Area on Nnamdi Azikiwe Eastern bypass protesting incessant fatal accidents caused by Trailers in Kaduna on Sunday.

Lagos unveils ‘Library on the Lagoon’ to promote blue economy

LAGOS

The Lagos State Government has strengthened its environmental sustainability drive with the introduction of the ‘Library on the Lagoon’, an innovative initiative, designed to deepen public engagement with the state’s waterways.

The initiative was launched on Monday in Lagos by the General Manager, Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency (LASEPA), Dr Tunde Ajayi.

Ajayi represented the Commissioner for the Environment and Water Resources, Mr Tokunbo Wahab, at the event.

The Project Director, Mrs

Maryam Kazeem, described the initiative as a social research platform that reimagines the concept of a library beyond a fixed structure into an interactive, water-based learning experience.

“The research for this project started about a year ago. We are thinking about the lagoon as a social research space, where a library is not just a stationary place but something created through interaction and shared experience,” Kazeem said.

She explained that participants engage directly on the lagoon through guided prompts and activities that encourage reflection on the water body’s history, present condition, and future.

She noted that the initiative also confronts the challenge of pollution affecting the lagoon, adding that creative tools such as a prototype trash collection system powered by a typewriter have been introduced to stimulate dialogue and action.

“At the centre of the exercise is a trash wheel powered by a typewriter, which is still in its prototype stage.

“The idea is to invite people to sit with the water, observe it, and think critically about their relationship with it,” she added.

Kazeem further emphasised that the initiative seeks to foster collective responsibility in addressing environmental deg-

radation.

“It is more than what one person or even government can handle alone. We need to think about it collectively,” she said.

Ajayi said the agency partnered with the initiative to strengthen environmental advocacy through creative engagement.

He explained that the agency saw the project as an opportunity to connect environmental monitoring with artistic expression and public awareness.

“We thought it was important to engage the creative arts. This initiative provides a platform to reach creative minds who care about environmental protection,” he said.

2027 presidency: How opposition alliance can succeed —Pearse

LAGOS

PDP Chieftain, Dr Adetokunbo Pearse, says agreement by opposition parties to field a single presidential candidate in 2027 will only succeed if key actors subordinate personal ambitions to collective interest.

Major opposition parties agreed to field a single candidate against President Bola Tinubu in the 2027 presidential election at a summit on Saturday in Ibadan.

Reacting, Pearse said on Tuesday said for the emerging partnership between the PDP, the African Democratic Congress (ADC) and others to succeed, ambitions must be controlled.

“The success of this arrangement depends on unity and sacrifice.

“If leaders put Nigeria first and work together, the opposition can present a credible alternative and achieve victory.

“Leaders must be willing to sacrifice personal ambition. Not everyone can be the presidential candidate.

“If the parties agree on credi-

ble candidates and support them fully, the alliance can succeed. Unity, humility, and discipline are critical,” Pearse said.

Pearse, who served on the 2023 Presidential Campaign Committee of Atiku Abubakar and is Convener of the Reset Lagos PDP group, said that the current alliance differed fundamentally from previous coalitions.

He recalled that the 2019 coalition under the Coalition of United Political Parties (CUPP) collapsed due to internal rivalry and lack of cohesion.

“When we moved from PDP to SDP around 2018, after the convention where my candidate, Prof.Tunde Adeniran, lost, we joined a coalition, but it collapsed because of internal wrangling.

“All the smaller parties, which previously had little influence, suddenly wanted to produce presidential candidates. There was too much competition and not enough unity.

“Even though leaders like Olusegun Obasanjo and Ibrahim Babangida were willing to support the effort, the rancour within made it unsustainable,” he added.

Ex-NPHCDA boss, Shuaib, withdraws from Nasarawa guber race

LAFIA

Dr Faisal Shuaib, former Chief Executive Officer of the National Primary Healthcare and Development Agency, has withdrawn from the Nasarawa State governorship race.

He also declared his support for Sen. Ahmed Wadada, Gov. Abdullahi Sule’s preferred successor.

Shuaib, who aspired for the Nasarawa governorship position on platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC), announced his withdrawal from the race at a press conference on Monday in Lafia.

He explained that his decision was based on a commitment made during a meeting with other aspirants and the governor, to support and of them so chosen by the governor.

“Some weeks ago, the amiable governor of our state in keeping with the consultative tradition of our great party, summoned the gubernatorial aspirants from the Nasarawa West Senatorial District and eight of us contesting from the zone answered the call.

“He charged us with a single task to deliberate among ourselves and emerge with a consensus candidate, so the western zone might enter the

primaries united.

“We tried, in good faith. We met as colleagues. We met as brothers. We sat with one another, weighing every consideration that decent men can weigh in such a season.

“But the truth is that we could not arrive at a single name by our own hands. And so we returned to the governor and asked him to make that determination on our behalf, undertaking that the rest of us would rally behind whomever he chose,” Shuaib said.

He further explained that two weeks later, the governor reconvened a stakeholders’ meeting where he announced Wadada as

his preferred candidate.

Shuaib explained that he had promised to support whoever the governor chooses among the eight of them from Nasarawa West and that he intends to keep to his promise.

“Accordingly, I am formally withdrawing from the contest for the APC gubernatorial ticket in Nasarawa State. I throw my full weight, the weight of my structure, and the weight of my conviction behind the preferred candidate of the governor, Sen. Ahmed Wadada.

“The strength we have built across this state remains intact, and it stands ready to serve the journey ahead.

Biza Blingza debuts with 'Dutty O' Clock'

Edo State born United Kingdom (UK), based Afrobeats crooner, Biza Blingza has made his appearance into the Nigerian music industry with his official debut album titled 'Dutty O' Clock'.

The seven track album released into the music market on April 10th, 2026 had remained a must play lyrics as it's currently available in all streaming platforms globally.

Deeply rooted in the root Afrobeats tune, the soprano singer told showbiz in an interview that the album reflects his long wait in the music industry after announcing his entrance into the ever busy and talented scene over 20 years ago.

The Biza Blingza maestro further revealed that the seven track album which was independently produced with the assistance of Okunskii music took long time to mature for release due to financial difficulties, purse for educational knowledge and other unforeseen challenges. "These has

hampered the earliest release of the album" he yelled

Featuring songs like "Booze (shak Am), Gimmie some Love (ft papi-chino), Rah Rah (Dungeon Dragan), 10/10 (Clap), Turn up (Wound Dem) ft Diamant B, Rah Rah (Dungeon Dragon) ft Cyrus Tha Virus and Ancestors are quality production that would bring fresh melody to the ever growing Nigerian sacred music industry.

Lyrics in the album is not just a displace of vocal clarity and emotional depth but a significant contributions to the music scene globally.

The artiste who claimed he got his inspiration to be a musical art from his family lineage, however noted that his believe that our cultural identity should be promoted gave reason for the infusion of Edo words into some of the lyrics strategically.

On how he viewed the Nigerian music industry generally, he said the industry has come a long way, adding that being an industry that has been

known for quality, the system has grown to a point where the quality of Nigerian music can hold sway on international platforms alongside music from well established regions of the world.

"If not for finance, I believe the Nigerian music industry has the technical expertise and capacity to match any art globally"

"There is constant industrial and professional development going on at a massive scale within the industry and I can boldly say that technical and creatively skilled people are abound in the industry now" he said

Advising the old and upcoming artistes, the Afrobeats star charged them to keep learning and improving on themselves as well as looking for avenues to dish out what any of them have before now, while the young ones should study to perfect their skills as they selflessly seek to get their foot on the door.



How 2Baba takes guests on musical journey at personality show

It was a night of glitz, glamour, excitement and glory in recognition of excellent service to humanity as Nigerian music icon, innocent Idibia, fondly called 2Baba make his second appearance at the annual vanguard personality Awards show.

The event which took place at the popular convention centre of Eko Hotels and suites, Victoria Island, Lagos at the weekend was a beauty to behold.

The evening was an unforgettable night of music and dance as the "African Queen" crooner showcase his best

hits as he takes the guests on a musical journey of years - a-years.

The night which featured ex - BBNaija star, Tacha who brought her signature glamour to the red carpet event earlier in the day is one show logasian who attended the ceremony will not forget in a hurry for a very long time to come.

2Baba first performed at the glamorous award in 2019, sharing the stage with Adejunle Gold.

This year, he took the stage solo dishing out his favourite songs and infectious dance steps.

I'm not what BBNaija show painted me to be —Tacha

Anita Natacha Akide, fondly called Tacha recently reflected on her participation in the 2019 edition of the Big Brother Naija reality TV show where she was disqualified following her altercation with Mercy Eke, the eventual winner of the edition.

Many thought then that her eviction from the show would be the end of the road for her but rather than sinking, she continued to flourish, building her brand and breaking boundaries.

The actress who attributes her soaring and breakthroughs to hard work, dedication and resilience said in a recent interview that if people were not creating a different narratives about her, how would they have thought she is naturally wild?

"Some persons were deliberately out to lie, come up with negative narratives that were not true all to get at me"

"Why I'm not bothered is because

when people see me in person or experience me in person they will get to know Tacha for who she is and not what BBNaija painted me to be"

"A lot of the mistakes Nigerians make is that the show only gets to show each of the housemaids 10 percent of the time. So, anybody would be very foolish and I say it again, very foolish to actually judge or draw conclusions about anyone from 10 percent of the person's personality"



Mc Allamano bags award of excellence

It was celebration of excellent, dedication and commitment as a prominent Edo state born entertainer Amb. Solomon Okunsun, popularly known as Mc Allamano received an award of excellence from Flipmode Brand Nigeria.

The award which was in recognition of his contributions to the entertainment industry and his sustained professionalism as a master of ceremonies.

Conferred on the platform of 'The Jokers Awards' an initiative of Flipmode Brand, the honour is 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 awardee as a leading figure in the art of hosting, adding that the recipient charisma, professionalism and ability to engage audience have set a high standard for participants across the country.



ArtsWorld with Francis Odupute

08023680030

Significance of museums in Nigeria

UKPALO BEAUTY ZUWARETU

The word museums originate from the Greek word mouseion which means temple of muses —the nine daughters of Zeus who are said to have protected and encouraged Greek arts. Use of Latin derivation of 'mouseion' is museum and it had been restricted in Roman times mainly to places of philosophical discussion.

Use of the word museum during the 19th and most of the 20th century denoted a building housing cultural material to which the public had access. Museum is a place which houses artifacts that have historical, scientific, cultural, archeological, anthropological values. As museums continued to respond to the societies, the emphasis on the building became less dominant. There are also open-air museums consisting of buildings and monuments preserved as objects and ecomuseums, involving the interpretation of all aspects of an established outdoor environment. The first known museum was opened in the University of Alexandria in Egypt in the third century.

In Nigeria, the first museum to be established was the Esie Soap- Stone museum in 1943.

Now, virtual museums exist in electronic form on the internet, but remain dependent upon the collection, preservation and interpretation of material things by the real museum. Therefore a museum is an institution that conserves its collection of artifacts and other objects of artistic, cultural, historical or scientific importance, and exhibits its collection of objects for public viewing that may be permanent or temporary. Nigeria has about 52 national museums.

OBJECTIVES:

- To know the meaning of a museum
- To know the latest definition of museum
- To understand various scope of museum
- To know the various functions of museum

DEFINITION OF MUSEUM:

Many organizations and people define museum in different ways, many scholars have attempted to define museums in such a way as to capture its essence, functions or role in the society that makes it so relevant all over the world for some scholars, the museum is a building with rich cultural collections, it is a store house of knowledge or an institution which houses our cultural wealth and enable people to discover their roots.

However, the international council of museum (ICOM) has proffered an apt and also all-encompassing definition of the museum.

In August 24th 2022, ICOM approved a new definition for museums:

A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage, open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museum fostering diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing.

SCOPE OF MUSEUM:

A scope is a stand-alone planning document of a museum that defines the purpose of its collection holding at the present and for the future. It is derived from the mission of the respective museum, as well as laws and regulations mandating the preservation of collections.

A museum must have a scope of collection statement. It guides the museum in the acquisition and management of those objects. The scope of a museum document is a valuable tool for museum operation. It describes the museum collection, plan activities for the public, and



NATIONAL MUSEUM, BENIN CITY.

management. It guides the museum in acquisition, budgeting, prioritizing resources and overall planning and management. The curator or other museum professionals are responsible for the collection, education, public relations, community engagement program and preparation of scope of museums.

SIGNIFICANCE OF MUSEUM:

Museum is a public service organization. The significance of a museum is better understood in its functions. The various functions of a museum vary from one museum to the other according to the nature of collection.

COLLECTION

Collecting objects of heritage is the most important function of a museum. Every museum collects based on its collection policy and collection management. Objects can be collected through different means such as purchase, gift, loan, bequest, exploration, archeological excavation, exchange. Collection in a museum depends on the mission, vision, and objective of the museum. A museum must not collect anything that is stolen, smuggled or very much fragile.

STORAGE

Museum collection should be stored in a well-planned and secured area. It is the most important function of all museums, not every collection is displayed in the Gallery, some remains in the store.

So, the museum must have a good storage of its collection. Collections are stored separately such as organic/inorganic, objects, paintings, textiles. Stores should be clean, controlled from humidity, light effect, pest and other bio-chemical and natural hazards or disasters.

PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION

Objects should be regularly cared for because they can deteriorate due to change of environment and subsequent physio-chemical factors. No objects can last forever but there is a need to do all that is possible to prolong the life-span of collections. Objects in display or storage should be properly cared for by preventive or curative conservation. These are to protect collections from attacks of organisms like fungus, insects, rodents and damage from humidity, temperature and light sources.

DOCUMENTATION

Documentation is the process of preparing records of collected objects by formal entry in the entry register, accessioning, cataloguing and indexing with photo-image. It is record keeping. It is very important to document objects with authentic information after necessary research and consultation.

It facilitates in knowing the provenance, identification, composition and necessary treatment of objects.

RESEARCH

Every museum needs to research objects in their possession. Museums are required to preserve and publish such information for the use of museums and professionals. Research improves access to collections and enhances better understanding. Research is based on history, technological advancement, ethnography, geology, architecture, agriculture, arts etc. these researches can be published in journal articles, newspapers, museum guild and posters.

EXHIBITION

This is the display of objects either in permanent or temporary exhibitions, by museums. Museums sometimes send their objects on mobile exhibitions to reach people who can't come to the museum. Unlike the supermarket, museum exhibitions are accompanied with well researched information.

SECURITY

Museum collects and stores antiquities which require strong and good security. Museums need to secure their objects from theft, vandalism, disasters, fire etc. Some security gadgets to be used are CCTV cameras, alarms, fences, burglary proof etc.

EDUCATION

Museum is known as a place where knowledge is disseminated on the subject it is established for. People visit the museum to see wonders and get knowledge. It disseminates knowledge on art, history, science and technology through the material and non-material evidences

OUTREACHES AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Museums communicate their collections to the public through outreaches. The chain of communication between museum and visitors must be smooth. Museums serve the commu-

nity by reaching out to them. Museum visits the field, meeting artists, taking initiatives in preserving the intangible heritage like folklores, folk tales, folk dances and folk songs. Museums also organize lectures, seminars, workshops, and international museum day to reach out to the host community.

Museums can also invite experts to share his/her opinion in the field of heritage and culture on a specific subject area. This can also help museum professionals to enhance their work potential and the research and development of the museum.

CHALLENGES

Museums face a lot of challenges in the course of carrying out its functions.

- (a) Poor funding
- (b) Climate change
- (c) Trafficking and exportation of Nigeria art
- (d) Theft and looting of objects
- (e) Civilization
- (f) Insecurity
- (g) Lack of maintenance and protection of artifacts
- (h) Outdated technology

RECOMMENDATIONS

Museum is a not-for-profit organization, so the government should fund the museum properly to help preserve our heritage.

The decree 1977 that establishes museums in Nigeria should be reviewed with strict punishment for those that engage in looting and trafficking of artifacts.

Museums should engage in public-private partnerships. This will make the host communities know the importance of museums. Modern technology should be used in museums. Museums should function according to their mission and vision.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a museum is an organization that collects and stores objects of both cultural and natural heritage, cares and provides necessary conservation support required by objects in both display and storage.

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Entertainment

— with Davidson Imosime Izegaegbe —



Film festivals as catalyst to power Edo State's economy

Benin City came alive on a humid November evening in 2023, as Nollywood celebrities were driven to their various hotels where staff and management were positioned for quick selfies with them.

While the city was already lit up with presence of Nollywood greats, women were seen in various parts of the city setting up stands popularly known as mama put, the barbecue fish and chicken sellers were not left out of this preparation for the biggest event in Nigeria as that was the date given to Edo State to host Edo State International Film Festival (ESIFF).

The organizers, who already intimated the fast food owners and other business partners about the event, also ensured there were enough publicity as well as the readiness of the Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub to accommodate guests from within and outside Nigeria. It was a beauty to behold as Edolites were looking forward to an eventful outing.

The following day, the kicking of the film festival witness the opening ceremony and opening the door to screening of films. Film owners, film/content buyers, thronged into the dimly lit cinema halls filled with film lovers, students and government officials for the maiden Edo State International Film Festival. The screening room buzzed like a beehive: deals were quietly being discussed, young filmmakers nervously rehearsed pitches, and a small army of technicians hustled between panels and

workshops. It was a beauty to behold.

The question that many within or outside the government circle may ask is: what is the relevance or economic value of film festival to a state or nation? If this question is viewed from an economic or cultural standpoint, one would realize that film festivals are not just cultural highlights or avenues for paparazzi, they are engines for systematic creative-economy growth. Italy, France, Germany and the United States of America are countries among others who knew this and dug into exploring film festivals to their nations benefits. Canada is today doing quiet well with Cannes Across Nigeria, it is believed that the creative industries already contribute billions to its GDP; in Edo State the push is explicit. The state previously started to invest in film festival and had its maiden edition in 2022, opened Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub and launched business-enabling reforms which were aimed at attracting investment into film, arts, culture and tourism — moves that align festivals with an industrial strategy, not just a cultural calendar. That public backing within Edo State at that moment turned Benin City, Fugar, Ososos into a magnet for film productions, movie screenings, film workshops and co-productions conversations that would once have happened only in Lagos.

Film festivals are far beyond the spotlight and spectacle of red carpets and paparazzi. It is the bridge that

Film festivals encourages economic and social growth. The Edo State International Film Festival was already attracting attention beyond local circuits, opening pipelines for funding, cultural and film exchange programs and film export just within two years of its existence

connects talents, capital, ideas and the diverse heterogeneous audiences together for economic and cultural benefits. It is where the creatives learn to monetize culture and content. These played out in the Edo State International Film Festival as gains were transformed structurally into a sustainable creative industry. Upskilling, by cast and crew are achieved through detailed compressed film curriculum called "master classes" with positive ripple effects in world class film pro-

ductions.

Film Festivals are processed for recognizing productive efforts via awards as well as encouraging the advancement of production value-chain. This is noticeable in a film production where a crew may have a least between 50 to 100 persons employed for it. Same with the cast depending on the type of story to be filmed. Let us not forget the gains from the presence of celebrities and other guests from different states and countries. Their presence will rub, economically, on the carpenters, painters, security, transport, food vendors, bars, clubs, printing, hotel and tourism as well as marketing. Not leaving out the print and broadcast media in terms of contents. Film festivals encourages economic and social growth. The Edo State International Film Festival was already attracting attention beyond local circuits, opening pipelines for funding, cultural and film exchange programs and film export just within two years of its existence. Some other state's government were already sponsoring teams to Edo State to study how the state suddenly became the fastest growing film/creativity hub in Nigeria.

Film industries in developed countries didn't just happened, intentionally and deliberately efforts were injected into the process to make filmmaking an industry unlike Nigeria. Government of these developed and fast developing countries, has National and state level policies that

rubbed on entertainment legislation, film infrastructural investments, tax incentives, trainings and grants, export and cultural diplomacy where foreign revenues would be gotten from well articulated monetisation structures. Festivals are a practical, testable lever for economic development. They convene people, surface projects, and create temporary demand that — with the right policy scaffolding — becomes permanent industry. Edo State has internationally and deliberately begun to place its film road map like round pegs in round holes. This was already noticeable in a visible festival calendar, a creative structural edifice like the Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub, an already furnished Edonimose apartments for accommodation for filmmakers, a two-storey building for film editing, rebranded tourist sites for filmmaking, easy access to government facilities including the usage of Airport, police stations, uniforms and guns, and state-level reforms that invite film business men into the sector. I strongly feel that the present government need to deliberately knit these pieces together into a long-term strategy that would make the film industry in Edo State meet global standards, link festivals to continuous training, supply chains and distribution, that would in turn make Edo State an exporter of culture, talent, tourism, hospitality in monetized structure which would therein build an economy that would become the cynosure of all eyes.

NEWS**Foreign**

Kim Jong Un opens memorial for N Korean soldiers killed in Ukraine war

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Russian Defence Minister Andrey Belousov have unveiled a memorial in Pyongyang for North Koreans who have died fighting in the Ukraine war.

Military jets flew overhead and white balloons were released into the air as Kim and Belousov unveiled a statue and opened a memorial museum.

It is not known how many North Korean soldiers are fighting against Ukraine, but South Korean intelligence estimates that at least 15,000 have been sent to help Russia recapture parts of western Kursk.

Seoul also estimates that about 2,000 North Koreans have died in the conflict - neither Pyongyang nor Russia have provided any official numbers.

In return for providing soldiers, it is believed North Korea has received food, money and technical help from Moscow.

The opening of the Memorial Museum of Combat Feats at the Overseas Military Operations on Sunday coincided with what Russia described as the first anniversary of its recovery of parts of Kursk.

Ukraine launched a surprise incursion in Kursk in August 2024. Russia said it regained full control of the region a year later.

Kim assured Belousov that North Korea "will as ever fully support the policy of the Russian Federation to defend the national sovereignty, territorial integrity and security interests", according to state media.

Russia will "surely win a victory in the just sacred war", Kim said.

Belousov said he discussed long-term military co-operation with North Korean officials, according to Russian news agencies.

Aside from Belousov, Kim also met with the speaker of Russia's parliament, Vyacheslav Volodin, a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

During a meeting on the sidelines of China's military parade in Beijing last September, where both leaders came as guests, Putin thanked Kim for supporting Russia's war.

"Your soldiers fought courageously and heroically," Putin told Kim.

In June 2024, Putin and Kim signed a deal pledging that Russia and North Korea will help each other in the event of "aggression" against either country. At the time, Kim hailed the treaty as the "strongest ever".

Apart from soldiers, North Korea also promised to send thousands of workers to help rebuild Kursk.

**RUSSIAN AFRICA CORPS WITHDRAWAL:**

The Russian Africa Corps reached a deal with the FLA separatists (shown above) to leave Kidal

Sri Lankan monks arrested after 110kg of cannabis discovered in their luggage

Twenty-two monks have been arrested at an airport in Sri Lanka after officials discovered 110kg (242lbs) of cannabis concealed in their luggage.

Customs officials said each monk was found with around 5kg of Kush - a particularly potent form of the drug - hidden

within "false walls" in their luggage when they arrived in the capital Colombo on Saturday.

The monks, who were mainly students, were returning from Thailand after being treated to an all-expenses-paid four-day holiday by an unnamed sponsor when they were detained.

A 23rd monk, believed to have organised the trip, has since been arrested in a suburb of Colombo, police told BBC Sinhala.

According to the acting police spokesman, the monk - who did not join the trip - had told the other monks that "these parcels are a donation" and that a van would come to collect the packages.

Sri Lanka's Police Narcotics Bureau discovered photos and videos on the mobile phones of some of the monks, who were from temples across Sri Lanka, showing them enjoying their break wearing casual clothing.

The 22 monks were remanded

in custody for seven days for further questioning after appearing in court on Sunday.

Police told BBC Sinhala they believed the monks potentially did not know what they were carrying.

The drugs were found in among school supplies and sweets.

It is thought to be the first time a group of monks have been arrested on suspicion of smuggling drugs into the country through the airport.

Russian fighters confirm withdrawal from northern Mali city after separatist attacks

After a weekend of co-ordinated attacks across Mali by separatist fighters and Islamist militants, Russian forces who are in the country helping protect the military government have confirmed they have pulled out of the northern city of Kidal.

In a series of social media posts, Russia's Africa Corps said they had "left the locality" along with Malian troops.

The separatist Azawad Liberation Front (FLA) group said on Sunday the Russian troops had agreed to withdraw permanently, and claimed control of Kidal, declaring it "now free".

Mali has faced insurgencies for years from the separatists in the north, and groups affiliated with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group.

On Saturday, explosions and sustained gunfire were reported in multiple parts of Mali, including the capital, Bamako.

Attacks were also reported in the central cities of Ségou and Mopti, as well as Gao and Kidal in the north, on the southern fringes of the Sahara desert.

In Kati - a town near the capital and home to a major military base - Malian Defence Minister Sadio Camara was killed in an apparent suicide truck bombing on his residence.

Reports suggest the assault by

the FLA - who seek a breakaway state for northern areas dominated by ethnic Tuaregs - was primarily focused on cities in the region, while the jihadist group Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) had staged simultaneous attacks in multiple areas.

The Alliance of Sahel States (AES) - comprising Mali and the neighbouring countries of Burkina Faso and Niger also led by the military - said the attacks were a "monstrous plot backed by the enemies of the liberation of the Sahel" but did not go into any further detail.

Fighting resumed in Kidal on Sunday, but shortly afterwards, FLA spokesman Mohamed Elmaouloud Ramadané said an agreement had been reached between them and the Russian Africa Corps with a "a view to ensuring their secure withdrawal from the fighting".

He previously told the BBC the FLA had remained in the city because "elements of the Malian army and Russian mercenaries" were still present.

The group says it has taken control of the city, which served as an unofficial headquarters of the separatist movement for more than a decade before it was captured by Mali's army with the help of Russian mercenaries in late 2023.

Mali's authorities have not officially confirmed this, but a source close to the local governor told AFP news agency that they are "no longer there - it's the jihadists and FLA who are in Kidal".

AFP reports that the capital was calm on Monday, with schools and offices open, while several military checkpoints which had been erected over the weekend had been removed.

Kidal is in northern Mali, on the southern fringes of the Sahara desert

While the Russian Africa Corps confirmed they had withdrawn from Kidal, their posts on X on Monday stated that operations would continue elsewhere in the country, without giving further details.

In Kidal, the group said wounded personnel and heavy equipment had been evacuated.

"The situation in the Republic of Mali remains complex," it wrote, adding that a number of civilians has also been injured and taken to their medical units.

Most fighters in the Africa Corps formerly belonged to the Russian mercenary Wagner group, which was active in the continent, hired by local governments to help curb insurgencies.

Colombia offers record \$1.4m-reward for rebel it blames for deadly bomb attack

Colombia's Defence Minister Pedro Sánchez says he is offering a record reward for information leading to the capture of a rebel leader known as "Marlon".

"Marlon", whose real name is Iván Jacob Idrobo Arredondo, is suspected of having ordered Saturday's bomb attack on the Pan-American Highway, in which 20 people were killed.

The attack is one of the deadliest targeting civilians and comes just over a month before presidential elections scheduled for 31 May.

Sánchez said the 5bn peso (\$1.4m; £1m) reward for "Marlon" was the highest offered by Colombia.

The defence minister accused "Marlon" of being behind Saturday's attack as well as a series of others in the provinces of Cauca and Valle del Cauca, in south-western Colombia, over the weekend. No evidence or details have been released.

In the deadliest of these incidents, 15 women and five men were killed when an explosive device was detonated on the

motorway connecting the cities of Cali and Popayán, the governor of Cauca province said.

Several buses and other vehicles were destroyed in the blast, which opened up a huge crater.

"Marlon" belongs to an armed group led by a dissident rebel known by the alias of Iván Mordisco, Colombia's most wanted man.

Mordisco once formed part of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc) but broke away from the rebel group as it negotiated the 2016 peace deal with the government.

He is considered to be Colombia's most powerful dissident re-

bel leader. His group engages in illegal mining and extortion as well as drug trafficking.

Cauca Governor Octavio Guzmán described Saturday's explosive attack as the "most brutal and ruthless attack against the civilian population in decades".

President Gustavo Petro described those behind it as "terrorists, fascists and drug traffickers" and ordered additional troops to the region.

Petro's term ends in August of this year. Barred by the constitution from running for a second term, he has given his backing to the left-wing candidate, Iván Cepeda.



Foreign

NEWS

Trump says King Charles 'll be 'very safe' during US visit after security talks

Donald Trump has said King Charles III will "be very safe" during his state visit to the US, which is due to begin later on Monday.

Further security talks took place between the White House and Buckingham Palace after a gunman gained access to an event attended by Trump in Washington DC on Saturday.

Asked about the security implications for the royal visit, the US president told CBS' 60 Minutes on Sunday that the grounds of the White House, where King Charles will visit, are "really safe".

The King and Queen's programme will go ahead largely as planned, Buckingham Palace said, with the UK government hoping it could ease dip-

lomatic tensions.

The UK's ambassador to the US, Sir Christian Turner, said the visit would be about "renewing and revitalising a unique friendship" between the two countries.

He said Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer had spoken to Trump on Sunday, and the trip would proceed largely as expected.

The King and Queen privately reached out to the Trumps to give their sympathies after the attack, during which a Secret Service agent was lightly injured and the president and his wife were rushed to safety.

The four-day state visit will begin in Washington DC, with the King and Queen being greeted at the White House by Trump and the First Lady Mel-

ania Trump.

The president said on Sunday: "I think it's great, he'll be very safe... the White House grounds are really safe. This area of not very many acres is really safe.

"And he'll be staying here, I believe he's going to a couple of other locations because he's here for a few days.

"He's a great guy. They called him and they are so looking forward to being here. We spoke this morning."

There are British and US flags flying in the streets around the White House, ahead of what will be several days of political theatre.

It will be a charm offensive by the UK, attending ceremonial events in Washington and making a symbolic show of solidarity at

the 9/11 Memorial in New York.

For Trump, it will also be a chance to be seen on the world stage next to royalty and might be a welcome diversion from his own political battles. And he told the BBC that he thought the visit could help repair relations with the UK, saying: "Absolutely, the answer is yes."

Sir Christian said the royal visit would emphasise the "shared history, shared sacrifice and common values" of the two countries and would show that the partnership meant both peoples were "safer, richer and happier".

It is understood that diplomats no longer use the phrase the "special relationship", but this visit comes at an unusually difficult time for the US and UK partnership.

At least 42 killed in Chad after water well dispute escalates

At least 42 people have been killed and 10 injured in fighting between rival ethnic groups in eastern Chad in a conflict that began as a dispute over a water well, officials say.

There are frequently disputes over access to water in Chad.

The conflict in Wadi Fira province, initially between two families, is said to have escalated into a cycle of reprisal attacks that spread over a wide area, with villages burned down.

Chadian authorities said on Sunday that a delegation led by deputy Prime Minister Limane Mahamat had been sent to the area and the situation had been brought under control.

Deadly communal clashes are common in the central African nation, with a long-running pattern of disputes between farmers and herders, as well as ethnic tensions.

The clashes are often triggered by competition over water and grazing land.

The arrival of refugees fleeing the civil war in neighbouring Sudan in recent months has further raised tensions over resources and security.

On Sunday, the deputy prime minister said the government was taking all necessary measures to prevent the conflict in Sudan from destabilising the border area.

Communal clashes in Chad have led to the death of hundreds of people in recent years, including 33 killed in November over a disputed well in Dibebe, in the south-west.

According to the International Crisis Group think-tank, 1,000 people were killed and 2,000 injured in about 100 clashes between 2021 and 2024.

Rights Group Amnesty International last year said it had documented seven episodes of herder-farmer violence between 2022 and 2024, resulting in 98 deaths.

It said the clashes were driven by climate change and other issues, and that despite the recurring violence, authorities had failed to adequately protect the population.

Amnesty said responses by security forces were often delayed and perpetrators were not being held to account "fuelling a sense of impunity and marginalisation within communities".



COURTESY VISIT:

Trump and the King were pictured interacting amicably at many points in Trump's state visit to the UK.

Understanding suspected Washington press dinner gunman

New information is emerging about Cole Tomas Allen - who was identified by US officials as the man who was arrested after shots were fired inside the hotel where the White House Correspondents' Dinner was being held on Saturday night.

The 31-year-old suspect, who described himself as a mechanical engineer, game developer and teacher, is from Torrance in the Los Angeles region of California. He is due to appear in court on Monday. Police said Allen exchanged fire with security agents on a level of the Washington Hilton hotel that was one floor above the room in which Trump had gathered with members of his cabinet and journalists.

After he was detained, Allen told officials he wanted to shoot officials in the Trump administration, two sources

told CBS, the BBC's US news partner.

US media are reporting a history of anti-Trump social media posts from 31-year-old Allen, citing law enforcement sources.

BBC Verify has been looking into social media accounts with the same username reportedly used to sign a document, described as a manifesto, which is believed to be linked to the suspect.

One post on X from November 2024 said the user had voted for Kamala Harris.

A person with the same username also posted on the social network Bluesky. In January they wrote: "The country will continue to crash and burn until people stop asking when other people will step up." In April they posted that US President Donald Trump was a "villain" and a "desperate man".

Resharing a video of Vice-President JD Vance saying that stopping funding for the war in Ukraine was one of his proudest achievements, the user wrote "he's proud that we don't uphold our commitments" before using an expletive.

A Bluesky post earlier this month criticised plans by some journalists to wear white pocket squares at the White House correspondents' dinner, to promote press freedom, calling them "pathetic".

Meanwhile, the BBC's partner CBS News has seen that written document, and other US media have also reported on it.

The document said the gunman wanted to target members of the Trump administration "from highest-ranking to lowest", and that while guests and hotel staff were not the intended targets, they would be attacked if necessary to get to the officials.

BBC News has not independently verified the alleged writings, which have been described as a manifesto and were reportedly sent to the suspect's family members before the attempted attack.

On Sunday, Trump told Fox News that the suspect "had a lot of hatred in his heart for a while", and said his family knew he had "difficulties". He, too, suggested the suspect had a manifesto, and suggested the man was "strongly anti-Christian".

Trump later told CBS's 60 Minutes programme that the suspect "was a Christian - believer, and then he became an anti-Christian, and he had a lotta change".

The suspect was a guest at the Washington Hilton hotel where the correspondents' dinner was taking place, said Washington interim police chief Jeffery Carroll.

Pirates seize another vessel off Somali coast as threat level increased

Maritime authorities are warning of an increased threat to ships off the coast of Somalia after a cargo ship became the latest vessel to be seized in a suspected act of piracy.

The UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) raised the threat level in the area to "substantial" as it reported "unauthorised persons" seized the vessel and re-directed it to Somalia's territorial waters on Sunday.

At least four vessels have been targeted in suspected piracy incidents in the last week including a fishing vessel and oil tanker.

Until three years ago piracy had almost disappeared in this stretch of the Indian Ocean once notorious for hijackings, but it has since made a comeback.

"Due to the increased threat of possible PAG (Pirate Action Group) activity, vessels are advised to transit with caution," the UKMTO said in a statement, noting that weather is conducive to small boat operations.

The hijacking on Sunday occurred six nautical miles off

Garacad, Somalia, the UKMTO said in a statement. No further details were reported.

The UKMTO also issued a warning over a separate hijacking off the coast of Mareeyo, northern Somalia which occurred on 21 April.

Pirates also hijacked an oil tanker, Honour 25, with 17 crew that was sailing near the Somali coast on 22 April, according to multiple security officials speaking to the BBC.

Under the control of the pirates, the vessel, with a crew of 10 Pakistanis, four Indonesians, one Indian, one Sri Lankan and one from Myanmar, anchored close to the Somali shore between the fishing towns of Xaafun and Bander Beyla.

The UKMTO also reported that a Somali-flagged fishing vessel had been seized last Thursday.

At least two armed people also attempted to board a cargo ship from a small boat on Thursday, the UKMTO reported, although they turned away after the cargo's crew fired warning shots.



Plane crash in South Sudan kills all 14 on board

A small passenger plane has crashed in South Sudan killing all 14 people on board, the country's civil aviation authority (SSCAA) has said.

The CityLink plane was on its way from Yei to Juba - a distance of about 130km (80 miles) - when it came down on Monday morning.

Officials have sent a team to the crash site for investigations but initial reports have suggested the aircraft may have come down "due to adverse weather conditions, particularly low

visibility", the SSCAA added in a statement.

The plane crashed about 20km (12 miles) south-west of the capital, Juba, on Monday morning. It had taken off from Yei at 09:15 local time (07:15 GMT) and the authorities lost contact about 30 minutes into the journey to the capital.

Among the 14 on the flight - the pilot and 13 passengers - were 12 South Sudanese and two Kenyans.

The plane - a Cessna 208 Caravan - was operated by CityLink Aviation Ltd.

Iran offers to reopen Strait of Hormuz without nuclear deal

A standoff continues in the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow entrance to the Persian Gulf through which one-fifth of the world's oil and natural gas is transported, as Iran has limited access and the United States has imposed a blockade on Iranian ports.

Iran is willing to lift its restrictions on the Strait of Hormuz without addressing its nuclear ambitions, according to two regional officials familiar with the proposal who spoke on Monday.

Additionally, Iran is requesting that the US lift its blockade on the nation as part of this proposal, the officials, who wished to remain anonymous due to the confidential nature of the discussions, revealed.

This new proposal, conveyed to the United States by Pakistan, is unlikely to gain the support of US President Donald Trump, who insists that

Iran's nuclear programme must be resolved as part of a comprehensive agreement to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and establish a lasting ceasefire.

"We hold all the cards. If they wish to negotiate, they can come to us or reach out by phone," Trump stated on Sunday during an interview with Fox News Channel.

The closure of the strait has intensified pressure on Trump, as oil and gasoline prices have surged ahead of critical midterm elections, also affecting his Gulf allies who rely on the waterway for their oil and gas exports.

Moreover, the closure has had significant repercussions on the global economy, driving up the costs of fertilizer, food, and other essential commodities.

The proposal would defer discussions regarding Iran's nuclear programme to a later time.



THE CARGO SHIP:

A speedboat approaches the cargo ship during what state media described as the seizure of one of two vessels accused of violations in the Strait of Hormuz, April 21, 2026.

Ukraine's drone commander has Russian oil, troops and morale in his sights

We're like a red rag to the enemy. Because we're taking the war to their territory so that they feel it too," the Ukrainian soldier says, as his unit scramble to assemble long-range drones for launch at Russia.

Ukraine has been intensifying its deep strikes like this for several weeks, targeting oil export facilities, in particular, like never before.

Now, in a rare interview, the commander of all Ukraine's unmanned systems has told the BBC such attacks will escalate

and claimed his drone forces are also holding back Russia's advance along the frontline by killing a record number of soldiers.

"1,500 to 2,000km (930-1,240 miles) inside Russian territory is no longer the 'peaceful rear'," Robert Brovdi warns. "The freedom-loving Ukrainian 'bird' flies there whenever and wherever it wants."

At the secret launch site, a drizzly field in eastern Ukraine, the long-range drones are primed and we're ordered back to a safe distance. The team work quickly before Russian forces can detect them and send ballistic missiles hurtling towards us. There's a shouted command, loud revs of an engine and a flash of white as the first device tears into the sky towards Russia like a mini jet plane.

President Volodymyr Zelensky calls such deep strikes "very painful" to Moscow, causing

"critical" losses running to tens of billions of dollars in its energy sector despite the recent surge in global oil prices.

The increase in such attacks is partly down to technology. Locally produced drones are becoming cheaper and flying further: the model we see launch can now travel more than 1,000km and others already go twice as far.

But it's also about focus. In addition to military personnel and production, Russia's energy exports have been identified as a priority target.

"Putin extracts natural resources and converts them into blood dollars that they then direct against us in the form of Shahed drones and ballistic missiles," says Commander Brovdi, justifying the strikes.

Residents in Tuapse on Russia's Black Sea coast complain of toxic rain after a second

wave of major strikes on the local refinery in several days. But Brovdi is dry-eyed.

"If oil refineries are a tool to make money that's used for war, then they are a legitimate military target, subject to destruction."

The commander wages war in the skies from a secret location deep underground. We're taken to meet him in a van with blacked out windows, then led down stairs and along corridors lined with sleeping pods to emerge into a high-tech cavern covered in screens from floor to ceiling.

The soundtrack is a series of beeps and pings as fresh data is fed to dozens of men in T-shirts and hoodies hunched over joysticks and keyboards. They're monitoring images streamed directly from the battlefield from drone pilots with names like KitKat and Antalya.

How one surgeon maintained hospital care amid Sudan's conflict

As Sudan's healthcare system teeters on the brink of collapse, doctors like Dr. Jamal Eltaeb and Dr. Osman Ismail Osman are battling against impossible odds to keep hospitals operational and save lives.

For Dr. Jamal Eltaeb, an orthopedic surgeon at Al Nao Hospital in Omdurman, the war in Sudan has forced him to make heart-wrenching decisions daily.

With dwindling medical supplies, frequent bombings, and a flood of patients, Eltaeb has become a symbol of resilience in a country where healthcare is on the verge of collapse.

"You choose... as if you can decide who will live and who will die," Eltaeb said, reflecting on the impossible triage decisions he faced after a strike on a nearby market left over 100 injured and eight dead.

A hospital under siege Al Nao Hospital, once a tranquil facility with nearly 100 beds, became a lifeline for

countless wounded as fighting between Sudan's military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) intensified.

Despite being targeted four times by the RSF, Eltaeb and a small team of volunteers fought to keep the hospital running.

Power outages lasted for weeks, forcing the hospital to rely on fuel from the army to operate generators.

Essential medications like antibiotics and pain relievers ran out, leaving doctors to perform surgeries with limited resources.

The collapse of Sudan's healthcare system

Al Nao is one of the few hospitals still standing in Sudan. Nearly 40% of the country's hospitals are no longer operational, dismantled for parts or repurposed as military bases.

Across town, Dr. Osman Ismail Osman, director of Al Shaabi Hospital, surveyed the ruins of what was once a critical facility for emergency cardiac care.

Located near the General Command centre in downtown Khartoum, Al Shaabi

bore the brunt of some of the war's fiercest battles.

"We've lost cardiac catheterization machines worth \$2 million each since the war began," Osman said.

Despite modest government support, the hospital remains closed, a stark reminder of the devastation wrought by the conflict.

A glimmer of hope amid uncertainty

While some nations have pledged aid for Sudan's reconstruction, concerns loom that escalating conflicts in the Middle East, particularly with Iran, could divert attention and resources away from Sudan's recovery.

"We were already at war, and now we are entering a new conflict, and the issues are piling up," Osman lamented.

Yet, amidst the chaos, doctors like Eltaeb and Osman continue to fight for their patients and their country.

Their unwavering dedication serves as a beacon of hope in a nation grappling with unimaginable loss and destruction.

Court martial of Nigerian officers over coup plot to resume in May

The court martial of three dozen Nigerian officers charged with planning to overthrow the government will resume next month, local officials said on Monday.

The court martial opened on Friday when the defendants appeared before newly sworn-in judges at a military installation in the country's capital, Abuja.

The next sitting, on 8 May, will also be held behind closed doors, with no media access, a military spokesperson said.

The alleged coup was reportedly due to take place on 1 October 2025, during the country's Independence Day celebrations. Instead, a parade, which the president was expected to attend, was cancelled

at the last minute.

Authorities initially denied any knowledge of a coup attempt but in January, the military announced that a number of military officers would face court martial for plotting to overthrow the government.

The trial of six civilians charged with treason and terrorism for their alleged role in the plot resumed on Monday at Abuja's Federal High Court.

They include a retired major general and a serving police inspector. All six have pleaded not guilty. A seventh suspect, former Bayelsa state governor Timipre Sylva, is accused of helping to conceal the plot and is still at large.

In the charge sheet, author-

ities said the six suspects "conspired with one another to levy war against the state to overawe the president of the Federal Republic."

Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria has a long history of military takeovers, having spent much of the post-independence period under army rule after gaining independence from the United Kingdom in 1960.

Civilian governance was restored in 1999 and has continued ever since.

Following the initial denial of the coup plot, President Tinubu moved to reshuffle the country's top military leadership, a decision widely seen as part of efforts to stabilise the armed forces.

Feature

Osezua delivers 11th OAUSTECH Inaugural Lecture

A Distinguished Scholar of Public Administration, Professor Ehiyamen Mediayanose Osezua is slated to deliver the 11th Inaugural Lecture of Olusegun Agagu University of Science and Technology (OAUSTECH), Okitipupa, Ondo State.

Titled, "Governing Without Results: Public Administration, Leadership And Institutional Failure In Nigeria. Quo Vadis," the lecture expected to be chaired by the Vice Chancellor, Professor Temi E. Ologunorisa, is scheduled to hold at the institution's main auditorium at 1pm on Tuesday, May 5th, 2026.

One of Nigeria's most accomplished academics, whose career embodies scholarship, leadership, public service, and institutional transformation, Osezua is a professor at the Department of Public Administration in the School of Management Sciences and a leading scholar on Higher Education and Conflict Management. He has earned a reputation as a respected scholar, higher education administrator, policy thinker, researcher, public intellectual, editor, mentor, and civic leader whose influence extends beyond the walls of the university into broader society.

His intellectual contributions and professional engagements cut across Nigeria, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Ghana, Senegal, Namibia, Russia, Togo, Mexico, and other parts of the world, making him a truly global academic voice in governance, leadership, higher education, institutional development, and public sector reform.

Born on 15 February 1973 in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, Professor Osezua who hails from Uhiele in Ekpoma, Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State, has taught at the Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, the University of Lagos, Osun State University and the University of Ilorin.

A Visiting Research Scholar at the University of Texas at Austin, USA from 2018 to 2022, Osezua has worked as a Professional Researcher from 2022 to 2023, and Resident Researcher in the Department of Government, Innovations for Peace and Development, University of Texas at Austin.

He is also adjunct professor of Public Administration at Austin Christian University, Texas, and has served as guest educator in the Round Rock Independent School District in the United States. He has also served as member, board of directors, Travis Central Appraisal District, Texas.

He is currently Dean, School of Management Sciences, Olusegun Agagu University of Science and Technology, (OAUSTECH), Okitipupa, where he provides strategic, academic, and administrative leadership for the advancement of scholarship, institutional visibility, staff development, innovation, and academic excellence. His academic excellence has earned him a remarkable array of fellowships, grants, honors, and



PROF EHIYAMEN MEDIAYANOSE OSEZUA

international research opportunities.

He has participated in and contributed to major academic and policy initiatives associated with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank's Stolen Assets Recovery Initiative, the United States Institute of Peace, the Brown International Advanced Research Institutes at Brown University, the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the University Research Committee of Obafemi Awolowo University, the Federal Government Scholarship Board, Abuja, the Tertiary Education Trust Fund, and the Collaborative Multi-Country Moral Eyes Project.

An elected Member of Congregation to Senate at Osun State University, Osezua is a Member of Faculty Senate at Austin Christian University, and a Member of the Governing Advisory Council of Austin Christian University. He equally served as elected Parliamentarian

Through these editorial roles, he has advanced scholarly discourse, strengthened academic publishing, and promoted research visibility within and outside Nigeria.

of the University of Texas at Austin Staff Council, where he was notably identified as the only Black African in that role during the 2024 to 2025 period. Across these positions, he has demonstrated administrative tact, institutional wisdom, collegiality, and a consistent capacity to build consensus and advance growth.

One of his most distinguished academic recognitions remains the Best Ph.D. Thesis Award in Africa conferred by CODESRIA in 2006, a landmark honor that speaks eloquently to the originality, relevance, and scholarly quality of his doctoral work. Professor Osezua was also named a Fellow of BIARI, Brown University, in 2017.

A prolific scholar of international repute, Professor Osezua has authored over 55 peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, edited works, and accepted manuscripts published in reputable national and international outlets across Nigeria, the United States, Romania, India, Uganda, Ethiopia, Turkey, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and other countries.

His more recent and notable works include studies on public-private partnerships and Bus Rapid Transit performance in Africa and Latin America, urban mobility transformation, leadership capacity as a panacea for public sector success, bureaucratic corruption and public service reform in Nigeria, party alignment and democratic consolidation, management of institutional conflicts in African higher education, and effective job supervision in the Nigerian educational sector. Through these scholarly contributions, he has become an important voice in contemporary conversations on public administration, institutional leadership, governance reform, and development in Africa and beyond.

Professor Osezua has equally made enduring contributions to scholarly publishing and academic visibility through his editorial leadership. He has served as Founding Editor-in-Chief of Management and Development Review at OAUSTECH, Founding Editor-in-Chief of the Ilorin Journal of Administration and Development from 2015 to 2019, Founding Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Organizational Leadership and Management in the United States, Founding Editor-in-Chief of the Administrator's Quarterly Journal of the Chartered Institute of Public Administration of Nigeria, and Co-Editor of Contemporary Issues in the Management of Higher Education.

Through these editorial roles, he has advanced scholarly discourse, strengthened academic publishing, and promoted research visibility within and outside Nigeria. His body of work and editorial service together reflect a sustained commitment to knowledge production and dissemination.

Osezua attended Edo College, Benin City, for his secondary education. He later got admitted to the University of Benin, where he obtained the Bsc degree in Political Science and Public Administration in 1997. He also bagged his Msc degree in Public Administration in 2002 from the same university.

He capped it with a PhD in Public Administration at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife in 2006, specializing in Higher Education Administration and Conflict Management. He also got a Diploma in Leadership at Austin Christian University, Texas, in 2023, where he graduated as the overall best student.

He is happily married to Associate Professor Oghoadena Osezua, a distinguished scholar of Anthropology and Gender Studies, a former academic staff member of Obafemi Awolowo University, author of the award-winning book *Crowned with Truth*, convener of Hadassah Forum International in the United States, and a certified teacher in the United States who is currently associated with the Austin Independent School District and also a resident researcher at the University of Texas at Austin. Their union reflects shared values of scholarship, faith, service, leadership, and family commitment.

Palm Oil: Nigeria's green gold and the battle for \$72bn global market



A red palm oil processing farm in Akinlapa village in Osun state, Southwest Nigeria.

GRACE IJEOMA UMEH

In the 1960s, Nigeria controlled 43% of global palm oil supply. Today, we produce just 1.4 million metric tons and still import N600 billion worth yearly to feed our soap, noodle, and biscuit factories. Yet in the red soils of Edo, Ondo, and Cross River, a quiet revolution is brewing. Smallholders are replanting. Okomu and Presco are expanding. Wilmar is betting big. With the global palm oil market projected at \$72 billion by 2027, the question is no longer “can Nigeria return?” but “will 2027 politicians choose green gold over black gold?”

THE FALL AND THE FIGHTBACK

Nigeria's palm oil story is a parable of missed opportunity. Before crude oil, the crop was our forex king. The Eastern Region's farm settlements and the Western Region's cooperative mills built schools and roads from palm kernels. Then oil came in 1958. By 1975, Malaysia — which took seedlings from Nigeria's NIFOR in 1961 — overtook us. Today, Malaysia and Indonesia command 84% of global output.

But the tide is turning. Q1 2026 data from the National Bureau of Statistics shows agriculture grew 1.76%, with oil palm as a standout. Nigeria is now the 5th largest producer globally, though we remain a net importer. The gap between local demand of 2.5m MT and supply of 1.4m MT is the N1.2 trillion opportunity.

Table: Nigeria Palm Oil Snapshot Q1 2026

Metric	Figure	Source
Local Production	1.4m MT	NBS
National Demand	2.5m MT	MAN
Import Bill 2025	N612bn	CBN
Global Market Size 2027	\$72bn	FAOSTAT
Direct Employment	4m farmers	

FMARD

EDO, ONDO, CRIVER: THE NEW FRONTIER

Walk through Ovia North-East LGA in Edo State and you see it: 5-year-old tenera palms replacing wild groves. The Edo State Oil Palm Programme has allocated 120,000 hectares to 12 investors, targeting 300,000 MT by 2030. Governor calls it “our red crude.”

Presco Plc, now majority-owned by SIAT Group, just commissioned a 15,000-hectare expansion and a 60MT/hour mill in Edo. Okomu Oil, listed on NGX, posted N34.4bn profit in 2025 — up 87% — from palm oil alone. Their secret? Integration. From nursery to refinery.

In Ondo, the state's REDD+ programme is trying to balance expansion with forest protection. Over 50,000 smallholders under the CBN's Anchor Borrowers are intercropping oil palm with cassava to survive the 4-year gestation period. “My father had 2 hectares. I now have 6,” says Mrs. Felicia Akinyemi, chair of Ore Oil Palm Farmers. “But banks still want collateral we don't have.”

Cross River's 30,000-hectare cocoa-oil palm belt is Wilmar International's biggest Nigeria bet. The Singapore giant is building a \$200m refinery in Calabar FTZ. The problem? Community land disputes. Three villages in Akamkpa shut down planting in March over compensation. Land, not seedlings, is the real bottleneck.

2027: WILL THE CANDIDATES SEE THE PALM TREES?

With President's first term ending May 2027, agriculture is back on the stump. A review of party manifestos shows a split: [Incumbent]

APC: Promises “\$10bn agric export fund” and “oil palm belt industrial clusters.” Critics note the 2023-2026 budget allocated just 1.8% to agric vs

AU's 10% Malabo target.

PDP: Is pitching “Green Revolution 2.0” with focus on smallholder mechanization. Their Edo chapter points to Obaseki's ESOPP as proof of concept.

LP: Wants “state-led commodity boards” and a ban on CPO exports until local refining meets demand. Manufacturers say that would crash investment.

The real test is political will. Malaysia's Felda scheme succeeded because prime ministers staked careers on it. Nigeria's Anchor Borrowers spent N1.09trn from 2015-2023, yet CBN's own 2024 audit shows 76% default. Without land reform, subsidized seedlings rot.

Youth see it clearer. At UNIBEN's Agric Faculty, 300 students just launched “PalmPreneur Club.” “We don't want oil jobs,” says final-year student Eseosa Omoruyi. “One hectare of hybrid palm gives M3m yearly after year 5. That's better than japa.”

THE EU, THE CLIMATE, AND 4 MILLION FARMERS

Here's the catch: the world wants our palm oil, but not at the cost of forests. The EU Deforestation Regu-

lation, active since December 2024, blocks imports from land deforested after 2020. RSPO certification now determines market access.

Nigeria has only 7 RSPO-certified mills vs Malaysia's 144. For 4 million smallholders, certification costs \$300/hectare — impossible without aggregation. “If EU shuts us out, China and India will buy,” says Bisi Ogunjobi, VP, Plantation Owners Forum. “But at lower prices. We lose both forest and forex.”

The answer may be jurisdictional certification. Edo State is piloting it: certify the whole state, not individual farms. If it works, Nigeria could leapfrog. If not, our “green gold” stays locked in village mills.

THE N1.2 TRILLION VALUE CHAIN GAP

Here's the absurdity: Nigeria exports crude palm oil but imports N1.2trn of finished goods yearly. Breakdown from MAN:

Vegetable Oil: N480bn — mostly from Malaysia, refined in Lagos

Soaps/Detergents: N320bn — PZ, Unilever, P&G all import CPO derivatives

Noodles/Biscuits: N260bn — palm oil is 20% of Indomie's input

Cosmetics: N140bn — lipstick to cream, all need palm fractions

Why? Refining capacity. Nigeria has 18 refineries but only 5 work at 60% capacity. Power is 40% of cost. “We pay N225/kWh on diesel,” laments Henry Agbaje, MD, Sodangi Farms. “Malaysia pays N45. How do we compete?”

Dangote Refinery's 650,000bpd plant was meant to cut energy cost. But petrochemicals for soap are still imported. Until we fix power and build oleochemical plants, we'll ship CPO at \$950/MT and buy back olein at \$1,400/MT.

THE STREET MAN'S VERDICT

At Oba Market, Benin City, 5 li-

tres of branded vegetable oil sells for N9,500. A year ago: N6,200. “Na palm oil dey make soup sweet,” says Mrs. Itohan Osahon, who fries akara. “But if I use imported oil, I no fit gain. If I use local, e dey scarce.”

She's right. Local CPO trades at N1.1m/MT — cheaper than Malaysia's N1.25m/MT landed. The problem is consistency. “Today e dey, tomorrow e no dey,” says Osahon. “How I go plan?”

That's the final gap: aggregation. Nigeria's 4m farmers produce 70% of output but sell through middlemen. Brazil solved this with cooperatives. Ghana did it with COCOBOD. Nigeria's NIFOR has the research. We lack the politics.

WHAT MUST HAPPEN BEFORE 2027

1. Land: States must gazette oil palm belts and digitize titles. Edo's model should go national.

2. Finance: CBN must move from Anchor Borrowers to “Anchor Processors” — fund mills that offtake from clusters.

3. Power: Give oil palm refineries gas at industrial rate. No refinery survives on diesel.

4. Certification: FG should subsidize RSPO audit for first 500,000 smallholders. Cost: \$150m. Return: \$2bn yearly exports.

5. Politics: Any 2027 candidate who ignores agric is not serious. Oil rigs don't vote. 4m farmers do.

In 1961, Malaysia came to NIFOR for seedlings. In 2026, Nigeria's best agric students are studying Malaysia's model. The irony isn't lost on 72-year-old Pa Sunday Okoro, who still taps palm wine in Uromi. “My father made money from palm. I made small. My son ran to Canada. If government serious, my grandson go return.”

Green gold doesn't need rigs. It needs rain, reform, and resolve. The trees are already in the ground. The question for 2027: who will water them?

”
Nigeria exports crude palm oil but imports N1.2trn of finished goods yearly. Breakdown from MAN

FEATURE

Brain drain: The black sheep of national development

EJEMOGO REBECCA ANWURI

Who could have imagined that a country which has invested so much resources in training bright minds will someday require for the service of all, only to receive a response from few? Who could have fathom that a nation which could out rightly beat her chest to reap from the dividends her youth have to offer is unfortunately disappointed by their exodus to foreign land? The straw that broke the camel's back is captured in the big question 'Why are Nigeria's intellectuals building other nations, while theirs suffer?' The response to the rhetorical question is not far-fetched as it reveals the gruesome effect of 'Brain drain' in a developing country like Nigeria.

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, brain drain is the departure of educated or professional people from one country, economic sector, or field for another, usually for better pay or living condition. While some countries might be experiencing it in some aspects that has not dwindled the national development of such country to a large extent, Nigeria as a developing nation has encountered cadres of brain drains in the aspect of economy, healthcare, education, youth migration otherwise known as 'Japa' etc. The advent of brain drain does not surface out of the blues to ambush the development of the Nigerian society; instead there are certain factors that have propelled its existence which has contributed to most of

the setbacks she struggles with.

Lack of employment opportunities is one of the key factors that have led most citizens in Nigeria to migrate to foreign land in search of greener pastures. It is hurting to realize that after spending the duration of four, five, or seven years to study a course in the tertiary institution or passing through the 6-3-3-4 system of education with the hope of having a gainful employment at the end of the day, such person's hope is crumbled due to lack of employment opportunities that will enable them to become an asset to themselves and the society. The inability to cope with such amidst the harsh economic condition of the country to earn a living irrespective of the nature of the job. For instance, people who tend to study courses that can earn them a lucrative job in Nigeria are most times found taking up jobs like 'Care givers' otherwise known as 'Nanny' in developed countries like United Kingdom and United States, while their home country is starved of the services they ought to have rendered as a result of their professional skills.

Also, the insecurity challenges of the country has led to massive brain drain in respect to the fact that the incessant unrest in Northern part of Nigeria has created fear and the impression that no one and nowhere is safe, hence, many skilled professionals relocate to overseas which has created loopholes in the area of development in that region. The awareness that the government has not being able to ful-

ly apprehend the issue of insecurity in the country has heightened the fear in the heart of citizens to look for alternatives to safeguard themselves from becoming victims of the ongoing fight against insecurity and terrorism.

Furthermore, the harsh economic condition of Nigeria's economy has

driven a lot of talented and promising intellectuals to neighbouring of faraway countries where their standard of living can take a U-Turn in terms of its improvement. For instance, there have being waves of report on Nigerian Doctors either embarking on warning strikes or embarking on the strike itself and most especially the civil servants due to withheld and overdue salaries, corruption etc. This and many more have created an opportunity for foreign nations to annex these loopholes by granting enticing opportunities and other benefits attached to it to these aggrieved intellectuals, hence, many of them will not bait an eye lid before migrating to countries where their skills will be appreciated in cash and kind.

In addition, poor system of education is not excluded as part of what has influenced brain drain in deterring the national development of a developing country like Nigeria. Lack of effective learning facilities, infrastructures, and the use of updated curriculum which would have enhanced the education system is missing in many schools and tertiary institutions. It is rather unfortunate that a lot of them use of outdated curriculum which cannot help to solve real-time problem in the country, as a result of this, parents prefer spending huge sum of money provided their children earn quality education overseas, and after they are done with their duration of study, only few Percentage return to the country because they have tasted a better side of life.

However, despite the depressing state of brain drain, there are practical solutions that can avert the continuous exodus of bright minds out of the country.

Better working conditions for workers and professionals will go a long way in preventing their departure to foreign lands. For example, when a medical doctor is experiencing prompt payment of salaries, there is welfare of staff provided with incentives, promoted, etc, it will be difficult for such individual to entertain the thought to 'Japa' when an individual is comfortable and in love with his or her job, they will give their all into it unlike when staff welfare is not prioritize by organization.

Also, improved remuneration which comes inform of salary review should be taken into consideration. In a country or society where workers are well paid, the chances of experiencing brain drain will reduce, because staff will feel motivated to discharge their duties.

Furthermore, security measures that will allay fear and instability should be addressed. When it is taken into consideration, the government can effectively control and reduce the emigration of skilled professionals and encourage national development in that regard.

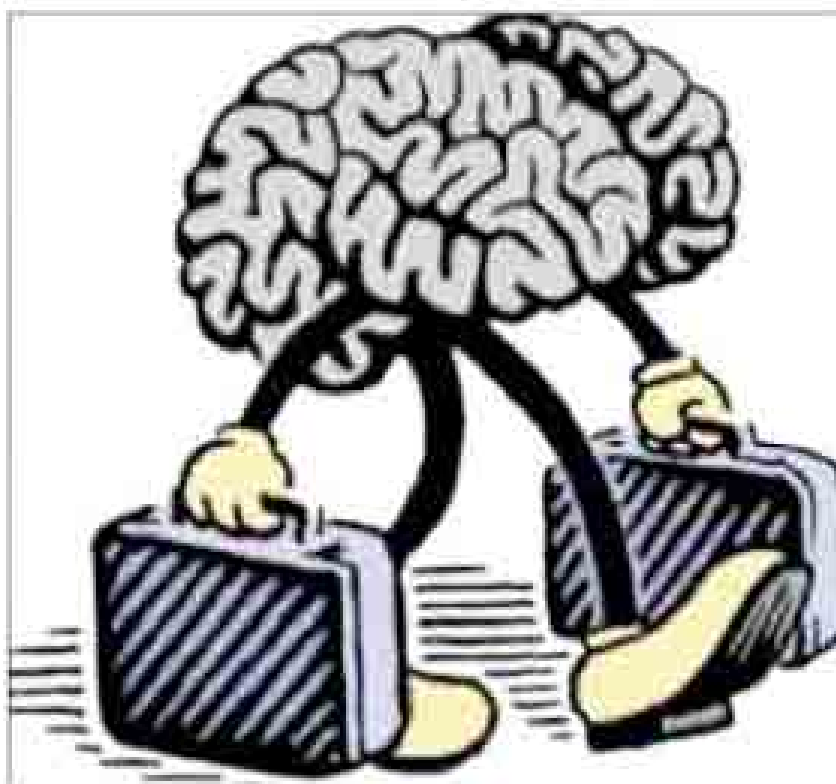
In conclusion, brain drain is a national issue that needs urgent attention, lest, Nigeria risks losing resourceful individuals needed to contribute immensely to her growth and development.

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BRAIN- DRAIN

Meaning

The departure of highly qualified people (scientists, engineers, etc.) for other countries, where they have better opportunities and usually better pay, is called the brain drain.



Example

"Many developing countries suffer a brain drain where talented people move to places like Europe or the US."

As we approach May Day 2026: Edo workers, CPS, and the wages of survival

RAYMOND OSOGBE

Every first day of May is Workers' Day. In Nigeria, it is more than parades and matching vests. It is stock-taking day for the public and private sectors. A moment of sober reflection on the uneasy marriage between employers and employees. A forum for cross-fertilization of demands and responses from both sides of the divide.

But this forthcoming May Day is exceptional. The Nigerian worker in 2026 is not just tired — he is wounded. Wounded by social, political, and economic policies that promised reform but delivered hardship. Wounded by a minimum wage that arrived dead, a Naira that lost its voice, and a pension scheme that turned 35 years of service into 35 years of regret.

As we approach May 1st, the question for Abuja, for the 36 states, and for Edo in particular is simple: Will this be another May Day of speeches, or the first May Day of solutions?

THE NIGERIAN WORKER: A BALANCE SHEET OF PAIN

Let us take stock, as May Day demands.

The Minimum Wage That Wasn't: In July 2024, the Federal Government signed N70,000 as the new national minimum wage. On paper, it was a 133% increase from N30,000. On the streets of Oba Market, Benin City, it was a joke. Inflation stood at 34.8% in December 2024 and remains 31.7% in March 2026. Food inflation is 37.9%.

Do the math: The N70,000 of July 2024 now buys what N28,000 bought in May 2023. We have not increased wages. We have renamed poverty.

The Devaluation Death-Spiral: The Naira was unified and floated in June 2023 at N461/\$. Today it trades at N1,540/\$. Every worker who imports nothing still pays the price. Why? Nigeria imports 90% of refined petrol, 70% of pharmaceuticals, 98% of wheat, and 100% of the chips in POS machines. When the dollar sneezes, the Nigerian salary catches pneumonia.

A Level 8 officer in Edo State Civil Service earns N128,000 monthly. In 2022, that was \$280. Today, it is \$83. He has not been demoted. His country has.

Petrol: The New Landlord: PMS moved from N195/litre in May 2023 to N980/litre in April 2026. For the average worker in Ikpoba Hill who spends N3,000 daily on transport, that is N66,000 monthly — 51% of a Level 8 salary. Before he buys food. Before school fees. Before rent.

The Federal Government removed subsidy to "free up money for development." The states' FAAC allocations have indeed tripled, as President Bola Tinubu told the nation. The IMF and World Bank confirm Nigeria is witnessing "unprecedented fiscal recovery."

But recovery for whom? If the father recovers and the children still starve, is that recovery or cruelty?

The Palliative Paradox: Only yesterday did we hear of five new federal palliatives: 50kg rice, N25,000 wage award for 3 months, CNG buses, fertilizer, and N50,000 nano-grants. The question Edo workers ask is the same



THE PROTESTERS

Lagos workers ask: Will states and local councils implement them?

We all buy from the same market. The trader in New Benin does not ask if your salary is federal or state. The landlord in Ugbowo does not give "state worker discount." If economic pain is national, relief must be national. State governments have no excuse. Their allocations have tripled. If Abuja can pay, Benin City can pay.

THE EDO WORKER: BETWEEN PROMISE AND PENSION

Coming home to Edo State, I write as a stakeholder, not a spectator. I commend Governor Monday Okpeholo for his giant strides across board since November 12, 2024. From roads to education, the signs of work are visible. The Red Roof Revolution in schools is back. Contractors are back on sites. Hope is back in the air.

But hope does not pay school fees. And for one class of Edo citizens, hope has been replaced by hunger. I speak of our retirees — men and women who gave 35 years to the state and now receive N8,000 to N22,000 monthly as pension under the Contributory Pension Scheme.

The CPS Crisis: How We Got Here
The Pension Reform Act 2014, domesticated by Edo State, was meant to cure the ills of the old Defined Benefits Scheme. But laws are not medicine. Implementation is.

Two things went wrong in Edo:

Violation of the Exemption Clause: Section 5 of the PRA 2014 is clear: employees with 5 years or less to retirement as at June 2014 should be exempted. Those with 10 years or less had the option to exit. In Edo, the directive was ignored. Directors with 3 years to retirement in 2017 were forcefully migrated from Defined Benefits to CPS. The result? After 35

years, they retired into N1.2m lump sum and N14,000 monthly pension. A mockery.

No Consultation, Only Coercion: Workers were not educated. They were herded. "Sign or forfeit your salary" was the memo in many MDAs between 2017-2019. The Nigerian Union of Pensioners, Edo Chapter, has protested for 6 years. Their files sit in the Head of Service office. Their tears sit in churches.

Madam Agnes Ehigiator, 64, retired as a Chief Nursing Officer in 2022 after 35 years. Her CPS statement: N3.1m total. She got 25% lump sum — N775,000. Her monthly pension: N18,200. Her drugs for hypertension and diabetes cost N27,000 monthly. "I served the state," she told me in March. "Now I beg my children to serve me."

This is not pension. This is punishment.

MR. GOVERNOR, YOU ARE OUR LAST HOPE

Your Excellency, Governor Monday Okpeholo, this May Day appeal is directed at you because power now sits on your desk. The same power that built roads can rebuild lives.

Three facts you must know:

You Inherited It, But You Can End It: The CPS force-migration happened under previous administrations. But government is a continuum. The tears of retirees do not expire every 4 years. Your administration can set up a CPS Review Panel with NUP, NLC, TUC, and the Pension Bureau to identify all wrongly enrolled workers and retirees.

The Law Is On Your Side: The PRA 2014 allows states to exit CPS and return to Defined Benefits, or run both. Lagos runs a hybrid. Delta paid N10bn in 2023 to clear pension arrears for pre-CPS retirees. Edo's FAAC allocation in Q1 2026 was

N89.2bn — up from N31.4bn in Q1 2023. The money is there. The morality must follow.

The Politics Is Smart: There are 18,000 Edo pensioners and 97,000 active state workers. They have families. They have PVCs. In 2027, they will remember who heard them in 2026. Solving CPS is not just justice. It is strategy. It is the difference between a May Day of jeers and a May Day of cheers.

What We Ask, Specifically:

1. **Immediate Moratorium:** Suspend CPS deductions for Edo workers with 10 years or less to retirement. Return them to Defined Benefits.

2. **Bailout Fund:** Create a N15bn Edo Pension Redemption Fund to pay gratuity differentials for retirees who got less than N5m lump sum. Fund it from the increased FAAC.

3. **CPS Truth Commission:** Publish the names of all Edo workers wrongly migrated between 2017-2023. Apologize. Compensate.

4. **Harmonize Allowances:** If federal workers get N35,000 wage award, Edo workers must get it. If federal directors get CNG bus loans, Edo directors must get it. We live in the same hemisphere of hardship.

5. **May Day Bonus:** On May 1st, announce one month's salary bonus for all state workers and N50,000 for all pensioners. Cost: N8.2bn. Impact: priceless.

TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: RELIEF IS NOT A PRESS RELEASE*

To President Bola Tinubu: Sir, we hear of recovery. We read the IMF reports. But recovery that does not reflect in Mrs. Itohan Osahon's akara pot is not recovery. It is statistics.

Your five palliatives are welcome. But they must be backed by a Presidential Enforcement Order mandating states to implement them within

30 days or face FAAC deductions. Devolution without enforcement is abandonment.

To the NLC and TUC: May Day is not for matching past the Eagle Square. It is for marching into the negotiation room with one demand: "No worker earns below the cost of a bag of rice." Today, a bag of rice is N82,000. Minimum wage is N70,000. That is a mathematical insult. Correct it.

GIVE US CAUSE TO REJOICE

May Day was born in 1886 in Chicago when workers demanded "Eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, eight hours for what we will." In 2026 Nigeria, we demand something simpler: "Eight hours for work, and a salary that lets us rest."

To Governor Okpeholo: You told Edo people "A New Edo Is Rising." Let it rise in the bank accounts of our retirees. Let it rise in the paylips of our teachers. Let it rise on May 1st, when you face the workers at Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium.

Reverse the CPS injustice. Harmonize the allowances. Pay the bonus.

Do that, and you will not need a speechwriter on May Day. The joy on the faces of Edo workers will be your speech. The prayers of Madam Ehigiator will be your campaign poster.

After 35 years of service, no Edo man or woman should retire into shame.

Your Excellency, you are our last hope. Give us cause to rejoice on May Day.

We Serve. Hands On. Hearts In.
Where There's A Need, There's A Worker. Where There's A Worker, There Should Be Wages.

Raymond Osogbe writes from Benin City. He is a public affairs analyst and advocate for pension justice. He can be reached at the Features Department of The Nigerian Observer

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

Rangers clinch historic Enugu FA Cup double

Rangers International Football Club have etched their name in the history books after both the men's and women's teams

emerged champions in the Enugu State FA Cup.

Rangers Women delivered a ruthless performance in the final, thrashing Zohar FA 10-0.

The Flying Does dominated from the start, scoring six goals in the first half before adding four more after the break to seal a comprehensive victory.

In the men's final, Rangers defeated NLO side INGAS FC 2-1 in a competitive encounter. Waheed Adebayo opened the scoring in the 26th minute, rising highest to head home a long throw from Daniel Itodo. Early in the second half, Pius Igwe doubled the lead from close range. INGAS FC pulled one back in the 58th minute from the penalty spot, but Rangers held firm to secure the win.

Speaking after the matches, the club's General Manager praised both teams for their remarkable achievement:

"I want to congratulate the teams for making history. This

is the first time Rangers Women and Rangers International FC Men are winning the FA Cup in our state, and we will continue to push for more. This aligns with the innovation-driven vision of His Excellency, Dr. Barr. Peter Ndubuidi Mbah, who has consistently encouraged excellence.

Now, as we head to represent Enugu State at the national level, it's time to showcase our tactical depth, technical quality, and overall brilliance. Every trophy matters, and today is a proud moment for us."

Rangers Women will represent Enugu State alongside Zohar FC in the women's category of the President's Federation Cup, while Rangers International FC and INGAS FC will fly the state's flag in the men's competition.



RANGERS INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL CLUB



MIGHTY JETS MATA FC

Mighty Jets Mata FC reigns Supreme on, wins Plateau State FA Cup

It was a glorious day to savour for years to come as Mighty Jets Mata FC of Jos caused a major upset to lift their first ever trophy since their formation 3 years ago with a comfortable 3-0 win over city rivals Plateau United Queens FC.

Two goals in the first half from Jemimah Daniel and Beatrice Okoh saw the Jets side in a commanding position for a potential glory ahead.

The second half resumed with Plateau United Queens mounting serious pressure in an attempt for a possible comeback, but Jets goalkeeper Paulina John produced series of sensational saves to deny the Queens on several occasions.

However, there would be yet another moment for the Jets ladies to punish the Queens again as Blessing Swatvel seized a rare opportu-

nity to lift the ball high above the Queens' goalkeeper into an empty net to make it three and officially putting an end to any hope of a comeback from the Queens.

It would be recalled that Mighty Jets Mata FC became the first ever female team from Plateau State to reach the round of 16 of the Women's National President Federation Cup after achieving the feat last year.

According to the Assistant General Manager of the club, Salisu Nakanade, MON, the team is in high spirit to surpass the previous record.

General Manager of the club Mbum Ferdinand who was visibly elated after embracing his first major trophy, praised the determination of the female team and promised more support and motivation to further boost the side.

Gusau Pledges Renewed focus on Women's Football, lauds Toptier Sports management's Commitment to NWFL, NNL

The President of the Nigeria Football Federation, Alhaji Ibrahim Musa Gusau, has pledged greater commitment to women's football as part of plans to elevate the game to global standards.

Gusau, who attended the NNL Super Four Draw in Lagos, also commended Toptier Sports Management for its investment in the Nigeria National League, which he said is now attracting global attention.

Speaking to journalists at the event, the NFF president praised the structure and visibility that private partnership has brought to the domestic game.

"I want to use this medium to commend Toptier Sports Management for what they have been doing in the Nigeria National League. Their investment in the league and their belief in our structure have yielded dividends. Just look at the visibility of the NNL Super Four Draw, the organization, the media presence, the television coverage, and the visibility they have given the league. It is worthy of note. Kudos must go to the CEO of Toptier Sports Management, Mrs. Chichi Nwoko, for believing in our structure," Gusau said.

"I also want to use this medium to assure you that my team and I will sit at the table with them to discuss how we can promote Nigeria's

women's football to the top level. I have personal discussions countless time with Chichi about female football and her passion for it is top notch. Our women's football can never be undermined. We remain the best in Africa. We have won countless trophies, and that is why we have decided to host a CAF B Female Workshop in Nigeria in a couple of weeks. The workshop will focus on how women's football in our region can improve."

"We will continue to support the women's league and all our



ALHAJI IBRAHIM MUSA GUSAU

Crown FC, Pace Setters Queens emerge 2026 Oyo State Federation Cup Champions

It was a scintillating encounter between Shooting Stars Sports Club of Ibadan, 3SC, and Crown Football Club of Ogbomoso in this year 2026

Oyo State Federation Cup final held at Lekan Salami Stadium, Adamasingba, Ibadan, where the Ajilete boys emerged champions.



CROWN FC

From the women's category, Pacesetter Queens took their opponents, Dragon Fury Ladies Football Club, to the cleaners with 5 unreplied goals. Fresh from goalless encounter from the Nigeria Women Football League, NWFL, Raheem Aisha of Pace Setters Queens opened scoring at the 6th minute of the encounter, and that led to a goal rush against the largely amateur side. Ayantsho Yetunde doubled the lead in the 15th minute before Teslimot Balogun added a third in the 24th minute to give the "Arewa Oyo" a comfortable halftime advantage.

Agbaje claims WBA Africa title, misses knockout bet

Taiwo 'Esepo' Agbaje claimed the WBA Africa lightweight title with a unanimous decision over Tosin 'Sojar Boy' Osaigbovo at a packed Indoor Sports Hall, Surulere, Lagos.

The bout delivered drama, as Agbaje fought relentlessly in spite of boldly predicting a seventh-round knockout before the contest.

Agbaje forfeited his N2 million wager after failing to stop Osaigbovo in the seventh round, a prediction he had publicly declared before the fight.

In a show reminiscent of Muhammad Ali, Agbaje named the decisive round in advance and staked part of his purse on the outcome.

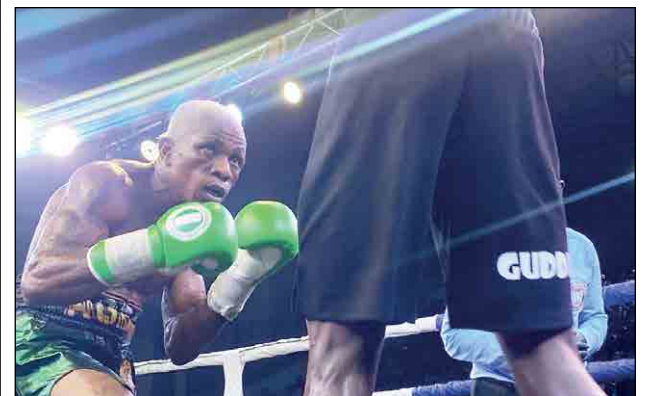
The contest, however, went the full 10-round distance.

Agbaje dominated much of the fight, trading punches evenly with Osaigbovo, as judges returned a unanimous verdict in his favour.

The electrifying encounter thrilled a capacity crowd, with fans filling every seat and standing in aisles throughout the contest.

At the final bell, judges confirmed Agbaje as the new champion, extending his unbeaten record to 19-0.

In spite of the victory, the anticipated knockout never materialised, costing him the N2 million wager.



AGBAJE

Fernandes hopes to win World Cup to crown C'Ronaldo's career

Portugal midfielder Bruno Fernandes expressed hope that he and his teammates can help crown Cristiano Ronaldo's international career by winning the 2026 World Cup.

The 41-year-old Ronaldo is set to appear in a record sixth World Cup in June, a tournament expected to be the final

major chapter of the forward's career.

"Wrapping up all this last World Cup with Cristiano (Ronaldo) winning it would be something amazing," Fernandes told Wayne Rooney in a BBC report published on Friday.

"I really hope we can make it happen, not just for Portugal, but for everything Cristiano

gave to football and the world," the Portuguese midfielder and Manchester United captain said. Soccer

Ronaldo, considered one of the greatest players ever to have not won a World Cup, is the record scorer in international football with 143 goals.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner was part of Portugal's

Euro 2016-winning team and has lifted the Nations League twice.

Portugal's opening Group K game is on June 17 against the Democratic Republic of the Congo, followed by Uzbekistan on June 23, with both games in Houston. They play Colombia on June 27 in Miami in their final group game.

Africa sets the pace as Nigeria urged to fix technical gaps amid NSC remarkable reforms

Africa's athletics circuit has surged into global prominence in recent weeks, delivering a seamless blend of elite competition, technical precision and growing international appeal yet the same standard still appears frustratingly out of reach for Nigeria.

From the bustling tracks of Addis Ababa to the electric atmosphere at Nairobi's Nyayo Stadium for the Kip Keino Classic, and onward to Gaborone for another Grand Prix, the continent has hosted a string of high-calibre meets that have drawn top athletes from the United States, Europe

and Africa.

The season had earlier gathered momentum with the Lefika International Relays, effectively setting the tone for what has become a vibrant African athletics renaissance.

Beyond the star power on the track, it was the technical excellence behind the scenes that stood out.

Competitions were executed with precision, meeting global standards and earning commendation from World Athletics officials.

Former Technical Director of the Athletics Federation of Nigeria, retired General,

Omatseye Nesiamia, highlighted this stark contrast.

According to him, organisers across these meetings demonstrated discipline and professionalism, ensuring events ran strictly within broadcast windows while deploying only certified officials.

He pointed to a critical requirement, officials must possess World Athletics-approved National Athletics Referee (NAR) certification, describing it as a non-negotiable benchmark for credibility.

Nesiamia did not mince words when comparing that standard to the Nigerian situation.

"In most cases, we run high-level competitions with unqualified officials. It is shameful," he said, warning that such lapses continue to cost Nigeria opportunities to host major World Athletics events.

His concerns echo a growing sentiment among stakeholders, who believe Nigeria risks being left behind despite its rich pool of athletic talent.

Analysts argue that while Nigerian athletes continue to shine individually, the domestic system underpinning the sport remains weak, particularly in technical administration and coaching quality.



SABASTIAN SAWE

Sabastian Sawe makes history, sets world record at 2026 London Marathon

Sabastian Sawe delivered a breathtaking performance, clocking 1:59:30 to win the race and rewrite marathon history forever today.

He improved significantly on his previous personal best of 2:02:05, showcasing remarkable endurance, discipline, pacing intelligence, and elite competitive execution throughout.

The historic feat occurred during the 46th edition of the race, which featured approximately 59,000 participants across elite and amateur categories.

Ethiopia's Tigst Assefa secured victory in the women's elite race, recording 2:15:41 and defending her title with authority and composure.

In the wheelchair divisions, Marcel Hug dominated the men's race, while Catherine Debrunner claimed the women's title with another commanding performance.

The iconic 42.2-kilometre course passed through Greenwich, Tower Bridge, Canary Wharf, and finished at The Mall near Buckingham Palace.

Race organizers confirmed that Sawe's time remains subject to official ratification, but analysts widely recognize the achievement as groundbreaking already.

The event also attracted celebrities and global figures who participated to raise funds and awareness for various charitable organizations worldwide.

Nasarawa United Edge City Rivals, Basira, to retain state FA Cup title

The Solid Miners produced a moment of late resolve to defeat their city adversaries, FC Basira 1-0 in a gripping Nasarawa State Football Association President Federation's Cup final on Sunday afternoon at the Lafia City Stadium, securing back-to-back titles and sealing qualification for the National President Federation's Cup.

In a contest defined by tension rather than free-flowing football with rising sensation, Benjamin Oloche subbed in the 19th minute of the first-half after pulling out his right shoulder after falling awkwardly, the deadlock held until the 66th minute when constantly-improving midfielder, Habibu Alakija, benefitted from a pass from winger, Jofrank Istifanus, to strike a low ball that beat the grasp of FC Basira's goalkeeper, Abdulrazak Shehu.

The goal proved decisive in a match where margins were razor-thin and discipline proved costly.

The complexion of the tie, however, shifted dramatically in the closing stages, with John Joshua's goal cancelled out for offside and Captain of FC Basira, Babangida Mohammed being dismissed for a second bookable offence. Already cautioned for dissent, the defender received his marching orders for unsporting behaviour following a cynical foul on a United player, reducing his side to ten men, while compounding his side's woes.

Despite their numerical deficit, FC Basira pressed fiercely

in the closing minutes, with Ismail Kana, calling the goalkeeper into forced saves, but a disciplined Nasarawa United's backline held firm to preserve a hard-earned clean sheet.

Sunday's result ensures Nasarawa United have won the single knockout competition a record 15 times, and retain the State FA Cup they won last year against the same foes, as they further confirmed their place in the National Challenge Cup final now renamed President Federation's Cup, alongside today's defeated finalists, FC Basira, who qualified by virtue of reaching the final.



NASARAWA UNITED

Cowrie, Barewa Headline Strong Field for 2026 Atlantic Rugby Sevens

● **French fullback Aaron Grandier-Nkanang to grace event**

Anticipation is rising as top clubs and state-backed teams gear up for the 2026 edition of the Atlantic Rugby Sevens, one of Nigeria's premier rugby competitions.

Set for May 2 at Rugby School Nigeria, Eko Atlantic, Lagos, the tournament will once again bring together some of the country's finest talents. In the men's category, Cowrie RFC of Lagos, Barewa RFC of Kano, Racing RFC of Lagos, and Nigeria Police RFC headline a strong and competitive lineup.

The women's category will feature Nigeria Police RFC,

Delta State Women's team, and Edo Women's RFC, highlighting the steady growth and increasing competitiveness of women's rugby in the country.

Beyond the race for silverware, the Atlantic Rugby Sevens continues to serve as a vital platform for talent development and elite competition. It offers players the chance to test themselves against quality opposition, refine their skills, and gain exposure in the fast-paced sevens format.

Adding further prestige to this year's event is the expected presence of 2024 Olympic gold medallist Aaron Grandier-Nkanang, who plays as a wing or fullback for Top 14 side Pau and the French national team. His participation is set to bring global attention and valuable experience to the tournament.

More broadly, the competition reflects a growing ambition to position Nigeria as an emerging force in global rugby and a hub for sports innovation in Africa. With increasing participation, improved organisation, and rising standards, the Atlantic Rugby Sevens is steadily establishing itself as a flagship event on the nation's sporting calendar.

Italian referees chief suspends himself over investigation of fraud

Gianluca Rocchi, an Italian Referees Association official has suspended himself following an investigation into alleged sporting fraud.

Italian news agency AGI reported that the former referee is under investigation for what sporting fraud in the 2024-2025 season as it regards assigning referees to games and use of VAR.

The Milan Public Prosecutor's office has launched an investigation into allegations of fraud against him. Andrea Gervasoni, the video assistant referee supervisor for Italy's top who divisions also suspended himself following in-

vestigations.

"This painful and difficult decision, shared with my family, is intended to allow the judicial process to proceed smoothly, from which I am certain I will emerge unscathed and stronger than before," Rocchi said.

"My great love for my association and my sense of responsibility for the role I hold lead me, above all, to protect such an important group of athletes, whom I do not want to be affected in any way by my circumstances.

"I await further developments, which I hope will arrive soon to clarify my position," he concluded.

Falconets set for crucial World Cup Qualifier, face Malawi in Ikenne



FALCONETS

Nigeria's U-20 women's national team, the Falconets, have wrapped up a three-week intensive training camp in Abuja as they intensify preparations for their decisive qualifier against Malawi in the race for a place at the FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup.

The team is expected to arrive in Ikenne-Remo, Ogun State, on Sunday ahead of the first leg of the final qualifying round, scheduled for Saturday, May 2. The Abuja camp focused on building match

fitness, tactical discipline, and team cohesion, with players undergoing demanding training sessions designed to fine-tune performance.

Head coach Moses Aduku expressed optimism about the squad's readiness, highlighting the players' commitment during the training period. He noted that the team had made significant progress in key areas, including tactical organization and physical conditioning, and voiced confidence in their ability to deliver a strong performance.



GIANLUCA ROCCHI

Sports



Nigeria heads to Gaborone for World Athletics relay Championship, eyes medals and qualification slots

Team Nigeria will be departing for the World Athletics Relay Championship in Gaborone, Botswana, with high hopes of securing qualification spots for major

global competitions. The contingent, made up of 24 athletes blending youth and experience, will leave for the Championship today via Ethiopian Airlines, with a sched-

uled stopover in Addis Ababa before arriving in Gaborone. The team will compete in all six relay events at the championship, which runs from May 2 to May 3, 2026.

Backing the squad are four coaches led by the Technical Director of the Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN), Gabriel Okon, as preparations intensify for what is expected to be a fiercely competitive outing.

An advance party, headed by AFN Secretary Israel Inwang, had earlier arrived in Botswana on Sunday, following the team's official photo session ahead of departure. This year's World Relays carries added significance, offering qualification pathways to both the World Athletics Championships in Beijing 2027 and the World Athletics Ultimate Championship.

A total of 723 athletes from 40 countries are registered, underscoring the scale of competition. All six reigning relay champions from 2025 are expected to defend their titles, alongside medal-winning nations from the World Championships and Olympic Games, setting the stage for a high-intensity showdown.



WORLD ATHLETICS



ATLANTIC RUGBY

Clubs, teams gear up for 2026 Atlantic Rugby Sevens

Anticipation is building as top clubs and state-backed teams prepare for the 2026 edition of the Atlantic Rugby Sevens, one of Nigeria's premier rugby competitions.

The Media Coordinator of the federation, Tolu Oguntimehin, disclosed this in a statement on Monday in Lagos.

The event is scheduled for May 2, 2026 at Rugby School Nigeria, Eko Atlantic City, Lagos.

Oguntimehin said the tournament would bring together some of the country's finest rugby talents, promising thrilling action for fans and stakeholders.

In the men's category, Cowrie RFC of Lagos, Barewa RFC of

Kano, Racing RFC of Lagos and Nigeria Police RFC headline a strong and competitive lineup.

The women's category will feature Nigeria Police RFC, Delta State Women's Team and Edo Women's RFC, highlighting the steady growth and increasing competitiveness of women's rugby in the country.

Oguntimehin said beyond the race for silverware, the Atlantic Rugby Sevens continued to serve as a vital platform for talent development and elite competition.

"It offers players the chance to test themselves against quality opposition, refine their skills and gain exposure in the fast-paced sevens format," he said.

World Cup: FIFA set to increase 2026 World Cup prize money

FIFA is in discussions with national associations to increase prize money for all 48 teams participating in the 2026 World Cup, soccer's global governing body said on Sunday.

The proposal must be approved at Tuesday's FIFA Council meeting, being held ahead of the 76th FIFA Congress in Vancouver.

In December, FIFA said prize money for this year's World Cup would be 50% higher than for the previous edition at \$655 million after agreeing a record \$727 million financial contribution to the tournament.

However, FIFA has told Reuters that the prize money on offer is set to increase, with the world governing body projected to surpass \$11 billion in revenue in the current four-year cycle from 2023 to 2026. Soccer "FIFA can confirm it is in discussions with associations around the world to increase available revenues," said a FIFA spokesperson.

"This includes a proposed increase of financial contributions to all qualified teams for the FIFA World Cup 2026 and of development funding available to all 211 member associations.

"The FIFA World Cup 2026 will be groundbreaking in terms of its financial contribution to the global football community, and FIFA is proud to be in its strongest ever financial position to benefit the global game through its FIFA Forward programme."

The biggest slice of FIFA's initial funding package for the North American showpiece – \$655 million – was to be performance-based payments to the 48 participating nations.

FIFA's December announcement on prize money said the champions would take home \$50 million and the runners-up \$33 million, while the 16 nations that failed to advance from the initial group phase were set to earn \$9 million.

Additionally, each qualified nation would be entitled to \$1.5 million to cover preparation costs.



Netherlands-born Nigerian starlet signs First professional deal with Ajax

Netherlands-born Nigerian youngster Jeshurun Simeon has signed his first professional contract with European giants Ajax Amsterdam.

The 16-year-old right-footed winger, who has featured for the Netherlands U-17 national team, earned the deal following an impressive run of form with Ajax's youth side this season.

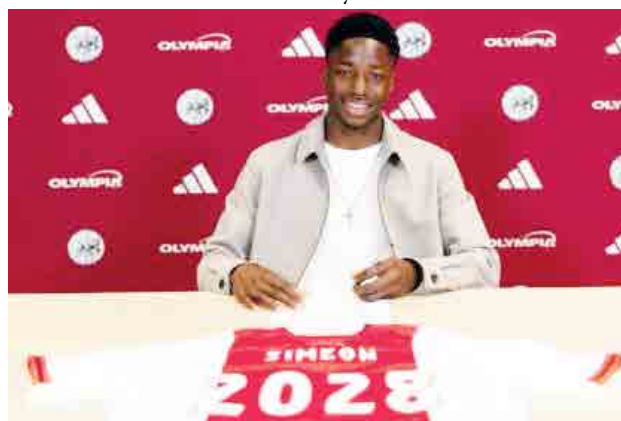
Simeon has been one of the standout performers in the academy, registering 12 goal involvements in his last 18 matches, a return that underlines his growing reputation as one of the brightest young prospects at the club.

His development continues to attract attention, with the

versatile attacker combining pace, creativity, and technical quality on the flanks.

The contract marks a significant milestone in the

youngster's career and reinforces Ajax's long-standing tradition of nurturing elite talents through their famed youth system.



JESHURUN SIMEON

Athletics: 24 Athletes to Represent Nigeria at World Relays Championship

Nigeria will depart for the World Athletics Relays in Gaborone, aiming to secure qualification slots for upcoming global competitions and contend for podium finishes.

The 24-athlete contingent, comprising a blend of emerging talents and seasoned performers, is scheduled to travel on Monday via Ethiopian Airlines, with a stopover in Addis Ababa before arriving in Botswana.

Nigeria will compete in all six relay events at the two-day championship, set to take place from May 2 to May 3, 2026.

The team will be guided by four coaches under the lead-

ership of Gabriel Okon, Technical Director of the Athletics Federation of Nigeria, as preparations intensify for what is expected to be a highly competitive tournament.

An advance delegation led by AFN Secretary Israel Inwang arrived in Gaborone on Sunday following the team's official photo session ahead of departure.

This year's event carries added importance, serving as a qualification pathway to the World Athletics Championships Beijing 2027 and the World Athletics Ultimate Championship.

CAF U17 AFCON Champions to receive ₦170m From CAF



The Confederation of African Football (CAF) has announced the prize structure for the upcoming U-17 Africa Cup of Nations, setting clear financial rewards for participating teams based on their final standings.

According to CAF, the champions of the tournament will receive \$125,000 (approximately N168,979,980.00) while the runners-up will earn \$90,000.

Semi-finalists are set to take home \$60,000 each, with quarter-finalists guaranteed \$50,000.

Teams finishing third in their respective groups will receive \$25,000, while those placed fourth in the group stage will earn \$20,000.

The total prize pool for the competition stands at \$715,000, underscoring CAF's continued investment in youth football development across the continent.

The U-17 Africa Cup of Nations remains one of Africa's key youth tournaments, serving as a platform for emerging talents to showcase their abilities on the international stage.



ATHLETES NIGERIA

FEATURE



Nigeria's economy Q2 2026: Inflation, Dollar, and the street man's wallet

MARTHA OBI-DIKE

In Oba Market, Benin City, a paint bucket of garri that sold for ₦1,800 in January 2024 now goes for ₦4,200. A bag of rice is ₦82,000. The dollar trades at ₦1,540. Yet on paper, Nigeria's economy grew 2.98% in Q1 2026. GDP is not garri. For the 133 million Nigerians the NBS calls "multidimensionally poor," the only index that matters is the one in their pocket. This is the story of Q2 2026: an economy stabilising at the top, still bleeding at the bottom. And a country asking — when will growth become food?

THE NUMBERS: WHAT ABUJA SEES VS WHAT THE STREET FEELS

The Central Bank's Monetary Policy Committee met in March and left MPR at 26.25% — the highest in Nigeria's history. CBN Governor insists it's working. Inflation, which peaked at 34.8% in December 2024, has slowed for three straight months to 31.7% in March 2026.

But "slowing" is not "falling." Food inflation remains brutal at 37.9%. The Naira, after crashing to ₦1,900/\$ in February 2024, found a floor around ₦1,540 after the FX reforms and unification. Reserves sit at \$34.2bn. Oil production is back up to 1.5mbpd. On a Bloomberg terminal, Nigeria looks like it's turning a corner.

Table: Nigeria's Key Economic Indicators, Q2 2026

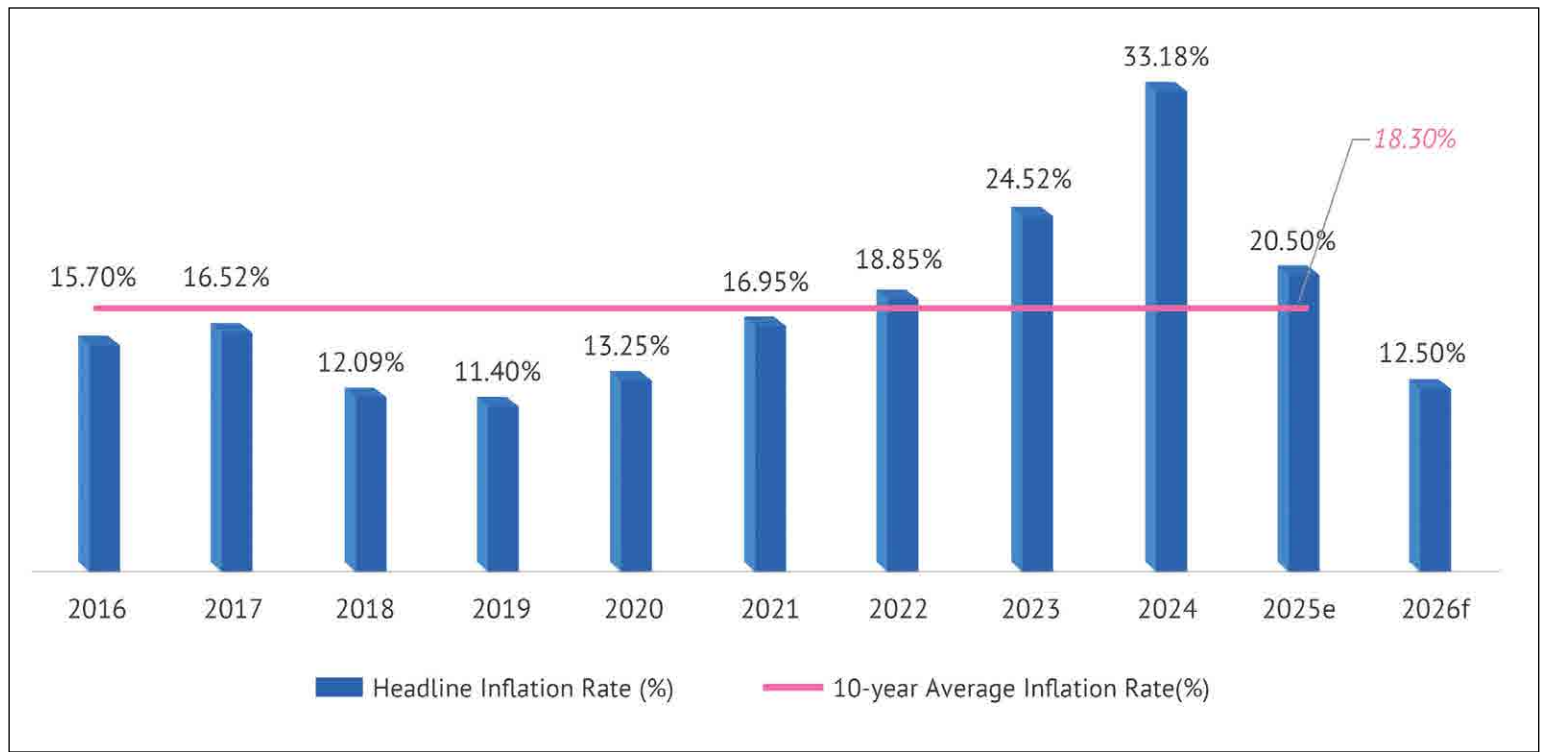
Indicator	Q2 2026	Q2 2025	Trend
Headline Inflation	31.7%	33.9%	Slowing
Food Inflation	37.9%	40.5%	Slowing
MPR	26.25%	24.75%	Tightening
N/\$ Official Rate	₦1,540	₦1,480	Stable
GDP Growth	2.98%	Q1 2.31%	Rising
Unemployment	5.0%	NBS New 5.3%	Flat
Crude Oil Output	1.5mbpd	1.28mbpd	Up

The problem? The "new" unemployment figure of 5% uses a methodology that counts anyone working 1 hour a week as employed. On the street, that's called POS agent, keke rider, or "I dey manage." Real wages have collapsed. The ₦70,000 minimum wage approved in July 2024 now buys what ₦28,000 bought in May 2023.

WHY FOOD HATES POLICY

Ask any mother in Lagos or Lafia why soup is now a luxury. She'll give you 3 reasons policy papers miss.

1. Insecurity Ate the Food Belt: Benue, Niger, Kaduna, Zamfara — Ni-



geria's yam, maize, and tomato belt — lost 1.3m hectares to banditry and herder clashes between 2023-2025, per SBM Intelligence. Farmers who returned in late 2025 met high input costs. A bag of fertilizer is ₦42,000, up from ₦15,000 in 2022.

2. Transport Is 35% of Food Cost: Diesel is ₦1,450/litre. Moving tomatos from Jos to Lagos now costs ₦900,000 per truck vs ₦350,000 in 2022. The Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway is 12% done. CNG buses promised in October 2023? Only 1,200 delivered of 5,500 pledged.

3. FX Still Imports Inflation: Nigeria imports ₦3.1trn in food yearly — wheat, sugar, fish, milk. At ₦1,540/\$, that's baked into every loaf of bread. The "food import waiver" of July 2024 crashed the rice cartel for 6 months. It expired January 2025. Prices rebounded.

"We were told to produce what we eat," says Alhaji Musa Dankano, Chairman, Mile 12 Market. "But how do I produce when gunmen collect tax on my farm, and diesel to bring it to Lagos is higher than profit?"

PALLIATIVES VS PRODUCTION: 12 MONTHS AFTER

May 2024 to May 2025 was the year of palliatives. What moved?

- Wage Award: ₦35,000 for 6 months to FG workers ended September 2024. States copied it unevenly. Edo paid. Zamfara didn't.

- CNG Transition: PCNGi says 65 daughter stations are live. Target was 1,000. Conversion cost of ₦600,000/vehicle keeps danfo drivers out.

- Food Import Waiver: Crashed

rice from ₦88,000 to ₦64,000 for 5 months. Millers protested. It wasn't renewed.

- Student Loan: NELFUND has disbursed ₦32bn to 62,000 students. Dropout rate still rising — fees up 300% in most universities.

The verdict from MAN: "Palliatives are painkillers. Production is surgery." Capacity utilisation in manufacturing is 56.4%, down from 59.1% in 2023. Unilever closed its home care plant. GSK left. P&G scaled down. Why? FX for raw materials, energy cost, and "low consumer purchasing power."

THE HUSTLE ECONOMY: HOW NIGERIANS ARE REWRITING GDP

If you only read CBN reports, you miss the real economy. It's on WhatsApp, TikTok, and at every junction.

1. Japa Wave 2.0: The first wave was UK/Canada students. Wave 2.0 is artisans. Canada's new care-giver visa and Germany's skilled worker law took 47,000 Nigerians in 2025 alone, per IOM. But 18,000 also returned — UK deportations, Canada housing crisis. "I went, I saw, I couldn't pay rent," says Kingsley Okafor, 29, now running a POS + laundry in Asaba.

2. POS & Betting: There are 3.1m active POS agents — more than teachers. Sports betting did ₦1.8trn turnover in 2025. "Government taxes my ₦70k salary," says a teacher in Ekiti. "But betting shop near my school makes ₦400k daily. Who is the economy?"

3. Content & Crypto: From skit makers in Benin to crypto P2P traders in Lekki, under-35s created an

estimated \$2.1bn in informal digital income in 2025. The SEC's crypto ban lift in December 2024 helped, but banks still flag accounts.

The NBS doesn't capture this well. But it's why, despite 31.7% inflation, markets are still open and owambes still happen. Nigerians don't wait for GDP. They create it.

HOPE SPOTS: WHERE THE GREEN SHOOTS ARE

It's not all bleak. Three sectors are showing life:

1. Solid Minerals: Lithium is the new oil. Nasarawa, Kaduna, and Kwara have 14 licensed mining firms. Chinese firm Ganfeng just opened a \$250m plant in Nasarawa. FG banned raw lithium export in 2024 — process it here or don't mine it. Result: 3 battery assembly talks ongoing.

2. AfCFTA & Services: Nigeria's tech and creative exports hit \$1.9bn in 2025. From Afrobeats to Flutterwave, services are now 58% of GDP. Air Peace's Lagos-London route crashed fares 40%. That's inflation relief.

3. Lagos-Calabar Highway: 700km. 10 lanes. ₦15trn. Critics call it vanity. But S&P says it could add 1.5% to GDP yearly from 2028 via trade, tourism, and land value. Already, land in Agge, Bayelsa is up 400%.

THE STREET MAN'S 2027 QUESTION

"I don't eat GDP," says Mrs. Itohan Osahon, the akara seller from Oba Market. "I eat akara. Beans is ₦6,500/paint. Groundnut oil ₦9,500. If government can't bring that down, all this grammar is story."

She's the 2027 election. Incum-

bents will campaign on "stability." Challengers will campaign on "sapa." The winner will be whoever convinces Itohan that 2027 won't be like 2024.

WHAT MUST HAPPEN BEFORE Q4 2026

1. Food Emergency: Deploy agro-rangers to 8 food belt states. Secure farms, not just highways. Subsidize fertilizer direct to clusters, not politicians.

2. Power for Industry: Give manufacturers gas at \$2.50/mmBtu. Let 10 industrial clusters run 24 hours. A noodle factory can't compete on diesel.

3. FX for Production: CBN's new "dollar for real sector" window must prioritize raw materials, not BTA. No economy grows importing toothpicks.

4. Kill Multiple Taxation: A tomato truck from Kano to Lagos pays 28 levies. Harmonize it. One haulage tax. Period.

5. Tell the Truth: NBS must publish "food misery index" monthly — cost of stew for family of 5. That's the number Nigerians understand.

Nigeria's economy is like a sick man whose fever broke. The temperature is down from 40°C to 38°C. He's not well, but he's not dying. Q2 2026 is that moment.

The risk? Celebrating the broken fever while the patient still can't afford drugs. The opportunity? Use the stability to do surgery — on power, on food, on trust.

Because in the end, economics is not about NBS data. It's about whether Mrs. Osahon can fry akara tomorrow and still send her daughter to school.

And that's the only GDP that matters.