

# Easter: Okpebholo seeks prayers to drive Edo's infrastructure push

## ● Commissions rebuilt Auchi College, promises more teachers

RICHARD EWEKA/LAMAI CASSIUS  
**BENIN CITY**

Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo, has called on residents to sustain prayers and support for his administration to enable the delivery of more infrastructural development across the state.

The governor made the appeal during the 2026 Easter programme themed, "The Risen Christ and the Risen Edo State" held at the Government House Chapel in Benin City.

Represented by his Special Adviser on Women in Christ, Pastor Aburime-Walter Courage Iziegbe, Okpebholo described the death and resur-

rection of Jesus Christ as the foundation for the all-round infrastructural and human capital development being recorded in the state.

She noted that the Easter message symbolises restoration, hope and faith, stressing that just as Christ rose from the dead, Edo State is experiencing a rebirth under the current ad-

ministration.

"This is a message of wisdom and grace to Edo people. We should keep praying for the governor, his administration and uphold the state for God to take it to enviable heights," she said.

She added that sustained prayers would further encourage the governor to deepen development efforts across sectors.

The Chaplain of the Government House Chapel and Special Adviser on Religious Matters, Apostle Sule Faraday Azekhumen, said that a "new Edo" had emerged under the governor's leadership.

According to him, Easter is not merely a remembrance but a revelation that whatever is touched by divine power can rise above limitations.

"It is in this light that we understand our theme: 'The Risen

Christ and the Risen Edo State'.

Through the SHINE agenda, we see a reflection of resurrection principles where order replaces disorder, strength replaces weakness and hope replaces uncertainty," he said.

He noted that since the declaration of "A New Edo is Risen," the administration has remained deliberate in translating vision into measurable

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# The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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# NCSCN backs INEC chairman amid resignation calls

**ABUJA**

The National Civil Society Council of Nigeria (NCSCN) has passed a vote of confidence in the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Joash Amupitan.

The Executive Director of NCSCN, Mr Blessing Akinlosotu,

made this known while briefing newsmen on Monday in Abuja.

Akinlosotu said the decision was driven by the need to protect Nigeria's democratic institutions amid what he described as misguided calls for the chairman's resignation and unwarranted attacks on the integrity of INEC.

"In light of the unpatriotic and ill-motivated calls for the

resignation of the INEC Chairman, the NCSCN hereby issues a unanimous vote of confidence in Prof. Amupitan," he said.

He noted that the council's position was based on the chairman's legal integrity and commitment to the rule of law, adding that his handling of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) matter demonstrated independence and respect for

judicial processes.

Akinlosotu said that under Amupitan's leadership, Nigeria's electoral system had continued to improve, citing the role of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) in curbing electoral fraud and strengthening credibility.

He added that renewed efforts to tackle vote trading showed that the electoral process had become more robust.

According to him, since assuming office on Oct. 23, 2025, Amupitan has remained apolitical and focused on delivering a free, fair and inclusive

electoral process ahead of the 2027 general elections.

He cited the outcomes of the Anambra governorship election in November 2025 and the recent FCT Area Council polls as indicators of progress.

Akinlosotu warned against attempts to undermine the commission, stressing that criticism of the INEC chairman for complying with court orders amounted to an attack on the judiciary.

He advised the faction of the African Democratic Congress involved in the dispute to seek redress through the courts rather

than politicising the issue.

The NCSCN executive director also disclosed that the council had received intelligence about plans to mobilise civil society groups for protests against INEC.

He cautioned that any organisation found participating in such actions would face sanctions, including possible de-affiliation from the council.

"We state categorically that the civil society space will not be used for partisan interests. Nigeria's democracy is maturing, and the rule of law must prevail," he said.



**THE EHI AGANMONMEN E-LIBRARY:**

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State (middle) commissioning the Ehi Aganmonmen Business Administration E-Library at the Edo State University, Iyamoh. With him are the Senator representing Edo North Senatorial District in the National Assembly, Senator Adams Oshiomhole (2nd left) and other government officials.

## INEC's move may block ADC from 2027 elections — Spokesman

**ABUJA**

The African Democratic Congress (ADC) has said that the Independent National Electoral Commission's decision to stop receiving its correspondence pending a Federal High Court ruling can jeopardise its participation in the 2027 elections.

The party's National Publicity Secretary, Malam Bolaji Abdullahi, in a statement issued in Abuja on Monday, said that INEC sits at the centre of the emerging crisis.

Abdullahi said that the commission's action might appear procedural but added that in reality, it conflicts with the timelines in the Electoral Act, 2026 which provides defined compliance windows.

This, he said, included the mandatory 21-day notice period and subsequent submission requirements within which political parties must complete critical electoral processes.

"This has revealed the deliberate administrative landmines being deployed by INEC to prevent the party from fielding candidates in the upcoming elections.

"We are compelled to raise serious concerns about a developing situation that appears designed to prevent the ADC from fielding candidates in the upcoming elections.

"It is based on documentary evidence which we are now placing before the Nigerian public, including certified INEC records, attendance logs, monitoring re-

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**Gov. Okpebholo boosts Edo State University, commissions e-Library, flags off fitness, health facilities** —Pg 2

**FG unveils ₦12bn digital economy research fund for Universities** —Pg 6

**Burkina Faso rejects report that over 1,800 civilians killed since junta seized power** —Pg 9

**AFCON 2025 final in legal limbo as explosive reports reveal chaos, contradictions** —Pg 15

# Gov. Okpebholo boosts Edo State University, commissions e-Library, flags off fitness, health facilities

## IYAHMO, (EDO)

In a landmark move to strengthen education and student welfare, Governor Monday Okpebholo has increased Edo State University, Iyahmo's monthly subvention from ₦100 million to ₦250

million and approved a ₦2 billion grant for critical infrastructural development.

On Monday, April 6, 2026, the Governor officially commissioned the Ehi Aganmonmen Business Administration E-Library and performed the groundbreaking ceremony for the Peter Omoh

Dunia Fitness Centre and the Edo State University Health Centre, describing the occasion as a defining moment for the institution and a reflection of his administration's commitment to repositioning the state's education sector.

"Today marks a great day for Edo State University, Iyahmo. Since assuming office, our administration has remained committed to repositioning the education sector in Edo State. These facilities — the E-Library, Fitness Centre, and Health Centre are clear symbols of progress, partnership, and shared responsibility in advancing education and health in our state," Governor Okpebholo said.

He paid special tribute to Chief Ehi Aganmonmen for donating computers and furniture to the E-Library, noting that the contribution would significantly enhance digital learning and academic excellence.

The Governor also acknowledged Mr. Peter Omoh Dunia for his support in establishing the Fitness Centre, describing it as a strategic investment in students' wellbeing.

Governor Okpebholo further highlighted contributions from other stakeholders, including a parent who sponsored architectural designs and Vice-Chancellor Prof. Adetimirin, who donated a month of his salary

toward the projects.

"If the Vice-Chancellor can contribute personally, why shouldn't Edo State government support these initiatives? On this note, the State Government is granting ₦2 billion to the university," he stated.

Stressing the importance of collaboration, the Governor called on the private sector and well-meaning individuals to emulate such generosity to build a stronger Edo State.

On the Health Centre, he added: "This new facility will replace the existing sick bay and is a critical step toward improving healthcare services for our university community. We assure you of continued support to bring this vision to reality."

Addressing students and management, he urged respon-

sible use and proper maintenance of the new facilities. "These projects are investments in your future. Guard them with discipline and purpose."

The commissioning and groundbreaking also saw the Governor inaugurate several projects at Auchi College, including an ICT hall, administrative blocks, and a sporting arena, all sponsored by Peter Omoh Dunia.

The event was attended by prominent figures including Senator Adams Oshiomhole, founding visitor of the university, Edo North Senatorial District representative; Secretary to the State Government, Barr. Musa Ikhilor; Chief of Staff Hon. Yakubu Musa; former Deputy Governor, Philip Shaibu, and other senior government officials.

## Easter: Okpebholo seeks prayers...

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progress, adding that the state is moving forward with stability and purpose.

Also speaking, the Special Adviser on Communication Strategy and Media Projects, Hon. Godswill Inegbe, said the governor had, in the last 15 months, transformed promises into tangible results.

He pointed to ongoing infrastructural projects across the three senatorial districts, including the near-completion of the Ramat Park flyover, which he described as a legacy project that would outlive the administration.

Guest speaker, Apostle Favour Mopa-Awom, in a sermon titled "He Rose to Break Barriers That You Might Rise," said Christ's resurrection remains significant in the lives of believers, as the grave could not hold Him.

She assured the congregation that despite life's barriers, the power of resurrection guarantees restoration.

The service featured musical ministrations by the Government House Choir and guest minister Cassidy Omoruyi Nelson, while prayers were offered for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Nigeria, peace in Edo State, and divine guidance for the governor and his cabinet.

Also, Governor Monday Okpebholo, has commissioned the reconstructed and reno-

vated Auchi College, Auchi, calling for stronger collaboration between government, corporate organisations and individuals to drive sustainable development.

The governor said that government alone could not shoulder the responsibility of development, stressing the need for collective commitment to the common good.

Speaking at the event, Okpebholo described the project, executed by Mr Peter Omoh Dunia, as a symbol of unity, dedication and love for community.

"What we are witnessing today is more than the rebuilding of structures; it is the restoration of hope, the revival of legacy and a bold investment in the future of our children," he said.

He commended the Association of Great Achievers, Class of 1991, and Dunia for their initiative, noting that their sacrifice and generosity had created opportunities for future generations.

"This is the spirit we must promote across Edo State. When people come together with a shared vision, great things happen," he added.

The governor urged students to make the most of the improved learning environment by remaining disciplined and striving for excellence, while as-

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## INEC's move may block ADC from...

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ports and excerpts from the commission's own sworn affidavit.

"Taken together, these documents establish a clear and consistent record of events," Abdullahi said.

He further stated that INEC monitored its July 29, 2025 NEC meeting, documented proceedings, updated records and recognised the new leadership, including Sen. David Mark and Rauf Aregbesola.

"These are not claims. They are facts contained in INEC's own records.

"That the leadership transition had already been completed and recognised, that such internal party matters fall outside judicial interference and completed acts can not be reversed by injunction.

"Yet, in spite of this clear documentary trail, INEC has now taken the position that it will no longer receive any correspondence from the ADC.

"This is where the contradiction becomes dangerous,"

he added.

Abdullahi noted that INEC had fixed May 10 as the submission deadline, adding, however, that its refusal to accept ADC correspondence within that period could effectively block compliance with statutory requirements.

"This places the ADC in an impossible position and creates a clear pathway to artificial non-compliance, which can justify excluding the party from fielding candidates.

"INEC has claimed that its April 1 decision was taken to avoid rendering the proceedings before the Federal High Court nugatory.

"The reality is the opposite. By intervening in a matter already before the court, the commission has undermined the very process it claims to protect," he said.

The spokesman urged INEC to reverse its position, resume accepting lawful correspondence and uphold its constitutional duty to ensure fairness and a level playing field.



### EASTER HOMAGE:

L-R: Former Minister of Works and Housing, Mr Babatunde Fashola; President Bola Tinubu and former President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Chief Wole Lanipekun, during their Easter homage to the President in Lagos.

## NDLEA seizes 1,378kg cannabis in Edo raid, arrests suspect

### BENIN CITY

Operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) have raided a major drug warehouse in Igbanke community, Orhionmwon Local Government Area of Edo State, seizing 1,378 kilograms of suspected cannabis sativa and arresting one suspect, 37-year-old Roland Owie.

The Edo State Command-

er of the agency, Dr Mitchell Ofoyeju, disclosed this on Monday in Benin City, stating that the operation was carried out, following credible intelligence.

According to him, the raid led to the recovery of 125 bags of dried weeds suspected to be skunk.

Ofoyeju described the operation as a significant breakthrough in the agency's ongoing efforts to dismantle drug trafficking networks.

"This successful operation underscores our relentless pursuit of drug cartels and our

strategic focus on supply suppression," he said.

He noted that the seizure of such a large quantity in a single operation had dealt a major blow to illicit drug distribution networks.

"The seizure of 1,378kg of cannabis represents a significant dent in the distribution chain of these harmful substances," he said.

The NDLEA commander added that intercepting the drugs would prevent them from reaching communities, particularly young people who are most vulnerable to substance abuse.

"Every kilogramme seized disrupts the criminal economy, weakens trafficking syndicates and makes our society safer," he added.

He reaffirmed the agency's commitment to sustaining the offensive against drug traffickers, warning that Edo State would no longer serve as a safe haven for illicit drug operations.

Ofoyeju also commended the officers involved for their professionalism and urged members of the public to continue providing credible information to support the agency's efforts.

## Troops foil fuel smuggling, arrest 16 suspected terrorists in N'East

### ABUJA

Troops of Operation HADIN KAI have intercepted a cross-border fuel smuggling attempt and apprehended 16 suspected terrorists in sustained operations across the North-East.

The Nigerian Army disclosed this in its operational report made available to newsmen on Monday.

According to the report, troops of 3 Battalion (Mechanised), acting on intelligence, seized 19 jerrycans of Automotive Gas Oil (AGO) and two carts in Gamboru/Ngala Local Government Area of Borno near the Nigeria-Cameroon border.

The suspects fled, abandoning the fuel.

"In another development, troops intercepted 16 suspects along the Biu-Buratai-

Kamuya road in Biu Local Government Area. Although the suspects claimed to be members of hybrid forces, search recovered ammunition, magazines, improvised explosive device (IED) materials, military kits, and multiple mobile phones," the report said.

The troops also recovered a motorcycle previously stolen by terrorists during an attack in neighbouring Yobe State.

In Chibok Local Government Area, soldiers engaged insurgents in a brief firefight, forcing them to retreat.

The report stated that Operation Desert Sanity V continues with aggressive patrols and clearance missions across Sectors 3 and 4 to disrupt terrorist logistics, dismantle criminal networks, and deny insurgents freedom of movement in the region.

## NEWS

# Lagos deploys 500 extra LASTMA officers ahead of Tinubu's visit

## LAGOS

The Lagos State Government will deploy 500 additional officers from the Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) to major roads and critical corridors ahead of President Bola Tinubu's visit on April 8–9.

Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Mr Gbenga

Omotoso, said on Monday that the deployment aims to ensure smooth traffic flow, adequate security, and minimal disruption during the inauguration of key projects by Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu.

LASTMA General Manager, Mr Olalekan Bakare-Oki, said the personnel would manage strategic routes to control traffic and reduce inconvenience

for commuters.

Authorities will communicate alternative traffic arrangements in advance.

Tinubu will inaugurate several projects, including the Ojota/Opebi Link Bridge, Lagos State Geographic Information Service Building, Alausa Multi-Agency Complex, Tolu Schools Complex in Ajegunle, and the Mid-Level Agro-Producer Hub in Abijo, Ibeju-Lekki.

Omotoso said that the projects aim to address population

growth, ease mobility, stimulate economic activity, and enhance social welfare. The Tolu Schools Complex, spanning 11.73 hectares, houses 36 public schools—31 secondary and five primary—serving about 20,000 pupils.

The complex now has 13 additional classroom blocks, 24 school buildings, an ICT hub, central laboratory, sports facilities, health centre, solar panels, and inclusive buildings for persons with disabilities.

The Alausa Multi-Agency

Complex, built on 2.01 hectares, consolidates multiple government agencies into one facility with four blocks, a penthouse for meetings, and parking for 300 vehicles.

Omotoso said that the 5.04-kilometre Ojota/Opebi Link Bridge, conceived over 20 years ago, now eases traffic in the Ikeja metropolitan zone.

The President's visit reflects

strong Federal-State collaboration and continuity in governance.

Commissioner Omotoso and Special Advisers Dr Adekunle Olayinka, Mr Femi Daramola, and Ms Abisola Olusanya attended the briefing. Governor Sanwo-Olu's media aide, Mr Gboyega Akosile, urged residents to comply with LASTMA officers' instructions.



LAGOS FANTI CARNIVAL 2026:

Members of Okepopo Ijikenji Family, during the Lagos Fanti Carnival 2026 In Lagos on Monday.

## Experts call for urgent reforms to stabilise Nigeria's power sector

## LAGOS

Energy experts have warned that Nigeria's electricity sector, despite its abundant resources, continues to fail millions of households and businesses, leaving citizens to rely heavily on costly diesel generators.

Frequent grid collapses, gas supply disruptions, mounting debts, and ageing infrastructure have reduced actual electricity generation to between 4,000 and 5,000 megawatts, far below the installed capacity of over 13,000 megawatts.

Experts describe the sector's challenges as a fragile value

chain.

Generation companies struggle with gas shortages and liquidity issues, the transmission network remains overstretched, and distribution companies face metering gaps, revenue losses, and operational inefficiencies.

The Federal Government, through the Ministry of Power, has introduced reforms to stabilise the sector.

President Bola Tinubu approved a N3.3 trillion debt resolution plan to settle long-standing liabilities, complemented by a N4 trillion framework including bond issuances to boost liquidity and restore investor confidence.

Several generation compa-

nies have signed settlement agreements, and funds have already been released to ease financial pressures. Minister of Power, Dr Adebayo Adedun, reported modest improvements in peak generation and highlighted tariff adjustments for high-end consumers to reduce subsidy burdens while increasing sector revenue.

However, experts cautioned that financial interventions alone cannot fix deep-rooted inefficiencies.

Mr Chinedu Bosah, National Coordinator of the Coalition for Affordable and Regular Electricity (CARE), said gas supply challenges continue to hamper progress.

Dr Olukayode Akinrolabu

of Lagos State University recommended a calibrated reform approach that deepens private sector participation while maintaining strategic oversight of transmission.

Mr Francis Bada, Consultant at Adglow Renewable Energy, urged decentralisation and localised renewable energy solutions, citing the Aba integrated power system as a successful model.

Experts warned that reliable electricity is critical for industrial growth, job creation, and national development.

They stressed that improving the entire value chain requires sustained execution, modern infrastructure, and regulatory certainty.

## Kano police reunite missing teen from Spain with family

## KANO

Kano State Police have reunited a 16-year-old boy, initially identified as Alex Ansol from Spain, with his family in Nigeria.

Police investigations revealed the boy's real identity as Yusuf Sabiu, 16, whose parents—Saminu Yusuf (44) from Lere, Kaduna State, and Habiba Adam (35) from Plateau State have been separated for over 13 years.

The Police Command thanked the media and social media users for sharing information that helped trace the

family.

CSP Abdullahi Kiyawa urged parents to report missing children immediately and maintain communication despite separation or divorce, noting that a stable support system protects children from wandering and danger.

The command formally handed Sabiu over to his parents at Doguwa Police Division. CSP Kiyawa provided emergency contact numbers—08032419754, 08123821575, 09029292926—and the "NPF Rescue Me" App on the Play Store for prompt reporting of missing persons.

## Okpebholo redeploys Works Commissioner to Water Resources Ministry

## BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has approved the redeployment of the Commissioner for Works, Hon. Felix Akhabue to the Ministry of Water Resources

A statement by Secretary to the State Government, Umar Musa Ikhilor indicated that the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Works has been directed to assume oversight of the ministry pending the appointment of a new commissioner.

## Easter: Okpebholo seeks prayers...

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uring that more teachers would be deployed to the school.

He also charged school authorities to ensure proper maintenance of the facilities.

In his remarks, the initiator, Mr Peter Omoh Dunia, said the project was his way of giving back to his alma mater, describing it as an act of remembrance, responsibility and gratitude.

"This school helped shape me. My prayer is that it will continue to stand as a place where knowledge is gained, character is built and dreams take shape," he said.

Dunia stressed that his intervention was not to replace government, but to complement its efforts in strengthening the education sector.

Also speaking, the President of the Association of Great Achievers, Class of 1991,

Prince Omokhigho Momoh, said the project marked the first phase of a broader development plan.

He listed completed projects to include, a modern ICT/CBT centre, well-equipped science laboratories, a sports complex, solar-powered borehole, perimeter fencing, synthetic football field and a modern gatehouse.

Momoh called for the deployment of qualified teachers to complement the new infrastructure and appealed for support towards the second phase of development.

The school's Principal, Mrs Adams Momoh, expressed appreciation to the initiators, describing the project as a major investment in human capital.

"This is not just about buildings; it is about creating an ecosystem where young minds are nurtured and future leaders are shaped," she said.

## IU students advance to Nigerian Engineering Olympiad regional finals

EDWARD OSEGHE

## OKADA

Two Petroleum Engineering students at Igbinedion University, Okada, have qualified for the regional stage of the Nigerian Engineering Olympiad (NEO) with their project, "SMART-FLARE: An

AI-Enabled Gas Capture and Monetization System."

The NEO Management Team, in a letter to Vice-Chancellor Prof. Lawrence Ikechukwu Ezemonye, PhD, FAS, said Esther Anene and Aigbe-Edebor Gaius advanced after a highly competitive national review.

Their innovation uses artifi-

cial intelligence to capture and monetise flared gas, addressing critical environmental and economic challenges in Nigeria's oil and gas sector.

The team will compete against four top regional teams in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, from April 19–21, 2026.

NEO awarded them a

₦3,000,000 grant for prototype development, logistics, accommodation, and feeding during the competition.

The Nigerian Engineering Olympiad identifies, nurtures, and promotes high-impact engineering innovations from undergraduate and postgraduate students across Nigeria.

# Tyre burst, speeding kill 4, injure 8 on Lagos-Ibadan Expressway

## ABEOKUTA

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Ogun Command, has confirmed the death of four persons in a lone accident that occurred in front of Christopher University along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway.

The command's Public Relations Officer, Mr Afolabi Odunsi, disclosed this in a statement issued on Monday in Abeokuta, noting that eight others sustained varying degrees of injuries in the crash.

Odunsi said the accident, which occurred at about 1:30 a.m. on Sunday, involved a

commercial Toyota Hiace bus with registration number AGL 789 YL.

According to him, a total of 13 persons were involved in the accident, comprising 11 adult males and two adult females.

"Eight persons sustained injuries, including seven adult males and one adult female, while four adult males lost their lives in the crash," he said.

He explained that preliminary investigation revealed that the accident was caused by a burst tyre and speed violation, which led to the driver losing control of the vehicle.

Odunsi said FRSC rescue operatives from the Mowe Unit

Command arrived promptly at the scene and carried out rescue operations.

He added that the injured victims were taken to Famobis Hospital for treatment, while

the bodies of the deceased were deposited at Idera morgue.

The PRO further stated that the vehicle and passengers' belongings recovered from the scene had been handed over

to the Motor Traffic Division (MTD) of the Redeemed Police Station.

Odunsi said the Ogun State Sector Commander, Mr Ak-inwunmi Fasakin, commiser-

ated with the families of the deceased.

He urged motorists to obey speed limits and ensure their tyres are in good condition before embarking on any journey.

## Plateau killings: Adebayo demands stronger, community-driven security

### JOS

Former presidential candidate of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), Dr Adewole Adebayo, has called on the Federal Government to adopt a more responsive, community-driven security strategy following recent attacks in Angwan Rukuba, Plateau State.

Adebayo made the call on Monday during a condolence visit to the affected community, where he met with grieving families.

He described the incident as a painful reminder of Nigeria's persistent security challenges, noting that innocent citizens had once again borne the brunt of violence.

"Our brothers and sisters who are now fleeing are sacrificial lambs for those who want to take away peace," he said.

He urged residents not to lose hope, stressing that divine justice remains constant even when government response appears inadequate.

"There is God. God is always responsible, even if the government is not responsible," he said.

Adebayo described Plateau as central to Nigeria's unity and heritage.

"Plateau is a gift of God to Nigeria, and that gift will endure forever," he said, assuring residents that they would not abandon their ancestral land despite the attacks.

"The people of this community are saddened and battered, but they will not leave this land. Their children, grandchildren, and generations to come will still be here for millions of years," he added.

Condemning the attacks as the "craftiness of the devil," he said such incidents must compel a more proactive and responsible government response.

"When such a lightning happens, it is the best time for government to show empathy,

comfort families, and prioritise victims," he said.

He emphasised the need to strengthen law enforcement through improved intelligence, logistics, and community collaboration.

"Government must strengthen our law enforcement, give them the resources they need, and merge them with the community to form a composite security network," Adebayo said.

He assured that perpetrators would be brought to justice and that affected families would be compensated.

"The criminals who came to commit this offence will not escape. Families will be compensated and the community will be protected," he said.

Adebayo cautioned against politicising the killings, insisting that no justification exists for taking human life.

"Killing Nigerians by anybody, anywhere, cannot go unpunished," he said.

He also urged Plateau State authorities to strengthen collaboration with the Federal Government to enhance security coordination in the Middle Belt, which he described as "the glue holding Nigeria together."

Reflecting on his personal ties to the state, Adebayo said his family had maintained a long-standing connection with Plateau.

"My family has been coming here for the past 100 years, prospering here, some dying here," he said.

Responding, the District Head of Angwan Rukuba, Mr Haruna Bala, lamented the absence of adequate security during the attack, noting that the assailants operated without resistance.

"There were no police around for any emergency. They came, did what they wanted, and left without anybody stopping them," Bala said.



**EASTER CELEBRATION:**

Funseekers at Ndubuisi Kanu Park, during the 2026 Easter Monday Celebration in Lagos on Monday.

## Bandits kill Police officer, 2 civilians in Katsina attacks

### KATSINA

Suspected armed bandits have killed two civilians and a police officer during coordinated attacks along the Karadua-Musawa Road in Matazu Local Government Area of Katsina State.

The Katsina State Police Command disclosed that the incident occurred on Sunday when the attackers reportedly blocked the road and opened fire on a moving Volkswagen Golf vehicle, killing two occu-

pants on the spot.

In a statement issued on Monday, the command's spokesman, DSP Abubakar Sadiq-Aliyu, said security operatives swiftly responded to the distress call.

He said a joint team comprising police personnel, military operatives, members of the Katsina State Community Watch Corps, and local vigilantes was mobilised to the scene.

"The team swiftly dislodged the assailants and evacuated the victims to a nearby hospi-

tal," he said.

According to him, the bandits later regrouped and attempted to launch another attack on the Musawa Police Division.

He said officers on duty successfully repelled the assault after a fierce gun battle, preventing the attackers from overrunning the facility.

Sadiq-Aliyu added that one police officer was killed in the line of duty while defending the station.

The Commissioner of Police, Mr Ali Umar-Fage, said additional operational assets

had been deployed to the area to strengthen security and prevent further attacks.

He also ordered a full-scale investigation to track down and arrest the perpetrators.

Umar-Fage expressed condolences to the families of the slain civilians and the fallen officer, describing the latter as a hero who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

He urged residents to remain calm and support security agencies with credible information as efforts intensify to bring those responsible to justice.

## Otu launches grassroots security intelligence network in C'River

### CALABAR

Governor Bassey Otu of Cross River State has launched a grassroots security intelligence network aimed at strengthening community-based surveillance and enhancing safety across the state.

The initiative, named the "Homeland Safety and Security Agency," was inaugurated on Monday in Calabar, with the governor announcing that similar offices would be established in the Central and Northern Senatorial Districts.

Otu, represented by his Chief of Staff, Mr Emmanuel Ironbar, said the agency would serve as a first point of contact for security issues before escalation to the state's main security architecture.

He described the outfit as an

intelligence-driven structure focused on neighbourhood monitoring and early threat detection through coordinated local efforts.

According to him, the initiative comprises directors and field operatives tasked with gathering and forwarding intelligence to relevant security agencies for prompt action.

"It is important that we enhance monitoring of movements across our communities, border areas, and riverine zones to identify suspicious activities and improve security

response," he said.

Otu assured that the state government would provide necessary gadgets and communication tools to enhance efficiency and real-time intelligence sharing.

He called for public cooperation, stressing that security remains a collective responsibility requiring timely information from residents.

"To ensure that the security outfit works effectively, proper screening will be conducted on volunteers to weed out undesirable elements," he said.

The governor also handed over 14 motorcycles to the Southern Senatorial District office of the agency to boost operational efficiency.

In his remarks, the Director-General (South), Mr Michael Nsan, said volunteers had played a key role in reducing crime through coordinated patrols and intelligence sharing.

He disclosed that over 1,300 volunteers currently support the agency's operations, with additional informants providing critical intelligence across communities.

### RECONCILIATION OF NAME

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

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **JOSEPH OSAYEMWENRE IDEHEN**, now wish to be known and addressed as **JOSEPH OSAYEMWENRE OTASOWIE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

### ADDITION OF NAME

I, formerly known as **NWOKIKE NKIRUKA**, now wish to be known and called **NWOKIKE REGINA NKIRUKA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

# Fintechs drive credit expansion as trust deficit persists

## —FintechNGR

## LAGOS

The President of the Fintech Association of Nigeria (FintechNGR), Dr Stanley Jacob, has said Nigeria's credit economy is expanding steadily but remains at an early stage of development, with lingering trust issues slowing

broader adoption.

Jacob told reporters on Monday in Lagos that credit adoption could be rated at "three out of five," reflecting measurable growth alongside persistent structural challenges.

He noted that financial technology firms have played a pivotal role in widening access

to credit, particularly among underserved segments of the population.

"Fintechs deserve credit for democratising access. Players such as Carbon, FairMoney, CredPal and CDCare have introduced Buy Now, Pay Later and micro-lending at scale," he said.

According to him, these platforms leverage mobile technology and alternative data for credit scoring, enabling them to reach consumers

often excluded from traditional banking systems.

Despite the gains, Jacob observed that credit usage remains largely urban, youth-driven and transactional, driven more by necessity than by a deep-rooted culture of credit utilisation.

He attributed this to enduring mistrust shaped by past experiences.

"The mistrust is not irrational. It stems from years of unclear pricing structures and

difficult recovery practices that have influenced public perception," he said.

Jacob added that many Nigerians still view borrowing as a last resort rather than a tool for financial growth, describing the mindset as a major barrier to wider adoption.

He, however, commended recent Federal Government initiatives aimed at strengthening the credit ecosystem, including the Nigeria Credit Guarantee Company and the Nigerian Consumer Credit Corporation.

"CREDICORP holds promise

as an enabler of consumer credit at scale, but effective implementation will be critical," he said.

He emphasised the need to deepen credit infrastructure through improved reporting systems and sustained public awareness, recommending transparent pricing, stronger consumer protection and incentives for responsible borrowing.

"The culture will follow the infrastructure, but only if that infrastructure is seen as fair and accessible. While progress has been made, more work is needed," he said.



2026 EASTER MONDAY CELEBRATION:

Fun seekers at Ndubuisi Kanu Park, during the 2026 Easter Monday Celebration in Lagos on Monday.

## Activist urges urgent action on poverty, education, security

## ABUJA

A human rights activist, Dr Ijeoma Nwafor, has called on government at all levels to urgently tackle the persistent challenges of poverty, education and security, warning that failure to address them holistically will continue to undermine national development.

Nwafor, who is also Country Representative of the Hague Institute for Innovation of Law (HiIL), made the call while featuring on a Personality In-

terview Series on Monday in Abuja.

She said meaningful progress would only be achieved when the three critical areas are addressed collectively.

"I have not seen a state where these three basic challenges of poverty, education and security have been addressed.

"Most of our governors are being distracted and are not tackling the problems," she said.

She stressed the importance of effective communication in governance, noting that public officials must properly inform citizens about projects and achievements.

"If you build a hospital, you

must let the people know. Otherwise, they will continue to patronise old facilities. Governance includes communication," she added.

Nwafor, a certified psychologist-turned-activist, also cautioned Nigerians, particularly young graduates, against what she described as a "poverty mentality" driven by the get-rich-quick syndrome.

She argued that societal thinking, shaped by deprivation and scarcity, often fuels unrealistic expectations.

"Many young graduates start dreaming of becoming millionaires or billionaires overnight. This is an illusion of

grandeur," she said.

Drawing comparisons with developed countries, she noted that widespread prosperity is built on shared opportunities rather than the concentration of wealth.

"In the West, the system works because opportunities are widely available and largely merit-based, even though inequalities still exist at higher levels," she said.

She further lamented that in Nigeria, success is often tied to connections rather than competence.

"Some people prefer to know the boss rather than do their work," she said.

## ADC kicks as INEC moves against party leadership, vows legal battle

## SOKOTO

The African Democratic Congress (ADC) in Sokoto State has rejected the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) move concerning its leadership, describing it as a misinterpretation of a subsisting court order.

The state chairman, Alhaji Bello Isiyaku-Kigan, made this known at a press conference on Monday, insisting that the party's leadership remains intact at both state and national levels.

He said the dispute originated

from a suit filed by Nafi'u Bala, adding that the court had directed all parties to maintain the status quo pending further hearing.

"We view this development as a troubling step that could undermine democracy and the constitutional rights of political parties," he said.

Isiyaku-Kigan expressed concern over the timing of INEC's action, noting that opposition parties were intensifying efforts to build alliances ahead of the 2027 general elections.

"The ADC remains a law-abiding political party with internal mechanisms to

resolve disputes," he said.

He warned that contrary interpretations of the court's directive were misleading and capable of creating confusion among members and the public.

"The court clearly ordered maintenance of the status quo. Any suggestion of leadership dissolution is mischievous," he said.

The chairman described INEC's stance as "wrong and mischievous," adding that the party would challenge it in court to seek clarity and justice.

He maintained that the current leadership would continue to steer the affairs of the party in

preparation for the 2027 polls.

Isiyaku-Kigan also described the development as a potential act of sabotage that could interfere in party affairs, weaken public confidence in the electoral process and generate unnecessary tension nationwide.

He called on INEC and relevant authorities to remain neutral and respect due process.

"Allow the courts to determine the matter fairly," he urged.

He disclosed that preparations were ongoing for party congresses and the national convention scheduled for April 18, with mobilisation already underway.

## Investors signal readiness for May 29 T+1 settlement transition

## ABUJA

Investors in the Nigerian capital market have expressed readiness for the transition to the T+1 settlement cycle scheduled to commence on May 29, describing it as a step toward greater efficiency and competitiveness.

The T+1 settlement cycle refers to the process where securities and cash are exchanged one business day after a trade is executed, replacing the current T+2 cycle, which takes two business days.

Some investors and shareholders who spoke in Abuja on Monday said the transition would enhance market speed, safety and liquidity.

Mrs Bisi Bakare, National Coordinator of the Pragmatic Shareholders' Association, said the market was largely prepared, although some adjustments would be required.

She noted that preparations were evident in the gradual technological upgrades by market operators, though smaller

brokers and retail investors might need time to adapt.

Bakare explained that the existing T+2 system had already improved liquidity, reduced counterparty risk and enhanced transparency, laying a solid foundation for the shift to T+1.

"These benefits will be further strengthened under T+1, improving competitiveness and market efficiency," she said.

Also speaking, Prince Ridhwan Hamza, Secretary-General of the Liberated Shareholders' Association, said the transition would enable faster access to funds.

"Markets in advanced economies have moved to same-day settlement. T+1 will at least ensure investors can access funds more quickly for reinvestment," he said.

Mr Moses Igrude, National Coordinator of the Independent Shareholders Association of Nigeria, described the policy as one aimed at delivering greater value to shareholders through timely and efficient market operations.

## FRSC recovers stolen vehicle in Anambra, foils fraud attempt

## ABUJA

The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) has recovered a suspected stolen Toyota Corolla in Nnewi, Anambra State, highlighting the effectiveness of the National Vehicle Identification Scheme (NVIS) in tackling vehicle-related crimes.

The Corps Public Education Officer, Mr Osondu Ohaeri, disclosed this in a statement on Monday, stating that the recovery was made on April 4 at the NVIS Desk Office in Nnewi.

He said the discovery followed a detailed verification process triggered during an attempt to process proof-of-ownership documents on the NVIS portal.

Suspicion was raised when the chassis number presented showed inconsistencies during routine checks, prompting further verification and physical inspection.

"This revealed discrepancies

linked to an already registered vehicle in the database," he said.

Further checks established the true identity of the vehicle and its rightful owner, Mr Onyechi Dickson, the Eze of Awka.

Ohaeri said the owner confirmed that the car had been forcefully taken from him during a kidnapping incident on January 23, 2023.

The development led to swift collaboration with the Nigeria Police Force Area Command in Nnewi and the State Criminal Investigation Bureau (SCIB).

A coordinated operation involving FRSC officials, the police and the Motor Licensing Authority in Ojoto resulted in the arrest of the agent who facilitated the fraudulent documentation, alongside the applicant.

"The vehicle was recovered on April 4 at about 16:54 hours and is currently in the custody of the SCIB for further investigation," he said.

## NEWS

# FG unveils ₦12bn digital economy research fund for Universities

ABUJA

The Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy has earmarked ₦12 billion to support research in Nigeria's digital economy across universities and research institutions.

The Special Adviser on Media and Communications to the Minister, Mr Isime Esene, disclosed this in a statement on Monday in Abuja, noting that the funding would drive innovation and policy-relevant research nationwide.

Esene said the government would host a three-day virtual open day beginning April 7 to guide universities and research institutions on the National Digital Economy Research

Clusters initiative.

He explained that the event, organised through the Project BRIDGE Implementation Unit, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, would help eligible institutions understand and apply for the programme following the release of the Request for Expressions of Interest (EoI).

According to him, the sessions will provide clarity on the objectives, structure and application requirements of the initiative.

"All sessions will cover the same content to allow participants attend at their convenience.

"The programme, valued at ₦12 billion, is designed to mobilise university-led research consortia to deliver policy-relevant research across six prior-

ity areas," he said.

The priority areas include connectivity and meaningful access, digital public infrastructure, digital skills and human capital, jobs and livelihoods, trust and safety, as well as artificial intelligence and emerging technologies.

Esene added that the programme would bring together leading academics and over 200 researchers, with each cluster receiving dedicated funding to ensure that research outputs inform government policy and decision-making.

He noted that the virtual open

day would provide prospective applicants with detailed guidance on programme expectations, consortium requirements and submission processes, as well as an opportunity to engage directly with the Project BRIDGE Implementation Unit.

Participation, he said, is

open to vice-chancellors, pro-chancellors, rectors, directors and senior research officials from eligible institutions.

He urged interested institutions to register via the official link, adding that joining details would be communicated ahead of each session.

## British Museum, Oxford team eye partnership on Nigeria's railway heritage

LAGOS

Experts from the British Museum and the University of Oxford have visited the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) Legacy Museum to explore collaboration on preserving and revitalising Nigeria's railway heritage.

Prof. Paul Bagu, an anthropologist from the University of Oxford who led the delegation, disclosed this in a statement, noting that the team toured key sections of the museum, including the historic Old Running Shed housing ageing locomotives and coaches.

He expressed strong interest in the restoration and preservation of the artefacts, emphasising the importance of international collaboration.

"The NRC Legacy Museum represents a valuable repository

of Nigeria's industrial and cultural history. There is significant potential for collaboration in conservation, restoration and knowledge exchange," he said.

Bagu noted that the historical ties between Britain and Nigeria's railway development offer a unique platform for partnership.

He also cited a similar railway heritage initiative in Freetown, Sierra Leone, where local efforts have driven museum revival and sustainability, urging similar commitment in Nigeria.

The President of the Legacy Museum Railway Compound, Mr Taye Olaniyi, welcomed the delegation and commended Mr Nate Adediron, a retired director, for his contributions to the museum.

He said the visit underscores the importance of global partnerships in advancing the vision of making the NRC Legacy Museum a leading railway heritage centre in Africa.

## Easter rush: Lagos restaurants record surge in patronage

LAGOS

Restaurants across Ikeja were filled to capacity during the Easter holiday as residents thronged popular dining spots to celebrate with family and friends.

The festive atmosphere drew large crowds seeking a mix of leisure, culture and social interaction, with many establishments struggling to accommodate the surge in customers.

Popular outlets such as Yellow Chilli, Iyeru Okin, Cilantro and Spur Steak recorded heavy turnout, with diners often waiting for available seating.

Other eateries including Jevnik Restaurant, Kilimanjaro and The Place also witnessed increased patronage, with local favourites such as jollof rice and village rice in high demand.

To manage the rush, many restaurants combined dine-in services with takeaway options, while home delivery orders also rose as some residents opted for quieter celebrations.

Some patrons described the experience as lively and memorable.

A resident, Oluwaseun Adeyemi, said the atmosphere was "fun and refreshing," adding that the festive mood enhanced the dining experience.

Mr Chinedu Okafor noted that the turnout was impressive despite prevailing economic challenges, saying it reflected the importance of family time during celebrations.

Another diner, Ibrahim Musa, praised the variety of food options, while Ms Kemi Balogun commended restaurant operators for effectively managing the large crowds.



DISU VISITS DSS HQ:

IGP Olatunji Disu (L) and Director-General, Department of State Services (DSS), during the visit of the IGP to DSS headquarters in Abuja.

## NDPC probes alleged data breach involving remita, Sterling Bank

ABUJA

The Nigeria Data Protection Commission (NDPC) has launched an investigation into an alleged data breach involving Remita Payment Services Ltd., Sterling Bank and other institutions.

Mr Babatunde Bamigboye, Head of Legal, Enforcement and Regulations at NDPC, disclosed this in a statement on Monday, confirming that a notice of investigation was served on April 1 in line with the commission's procedures.

He said relevant parties and individuals have since been providing information to aid the probe and address the incident.

According to him, the investigation is aimed at ensuring that data subjects are protected through appropriate technical and organisational safeguards.

"The investigation by NDPC covers, among others, the types of personal data involved, the nature and scope of the alleged breach, the risk to data subjects and the mitigation measures carried out where a breach is

confirmed," he said.

Also speaking, the National Commissioner of NDPC, Dr Vincent Olatunji, warned that organisations deploying digital payment systems without adequate safeguards would face scrutiny.

He stressed that such safeguards are mandated under the Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023 to ensure the integrity and security of the digital ecosystem.

## FCCPC expands crackdown on substandard electricals, building materials

ABUJA

The Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) has expanded its market surveillance and product testing to cover electrical and electronic products, as well as cables and other building materials, amid rising safety concerns.

Mrs Boladale Adeyinka, Director of Surveillance and Investigations, who spoke on behalf of the Executive

Vice-Chairman, Mr Tunji Bello, said the move was in response to the prevalence of substandard products and incidents linked to building collapses.

She disclosed that the commission continues to encounter products that fail to meet basic safety and quality standards.

Adeyinka said any business conduct that raises concerns about consumer safety would be investigated, adding that the FCCPC is coordinating with sector regulators to address

loopholes that allow unsafe products into the market.

"When a product presents a risk, the law requires prompt collective action, including product withdrawal, product recall and proper notice to consumers.

"If you are producing products in Nigeria and discover a safety concern, you have an obligation to withdraw and recall them, and notify consumers for remedial action.

"These are not optional expectations but statutory duties. Failure to act responsibly will

attract strict regulatory sanctions. Compliance is not a favour to the regulator," she said.

She reaffirmed the commission's commitment to enforcing compliance and ensuring safer markets, noting that consumer protection depends on responsible business conduct, effective regulation and active public participation.

Adeyinka urged consumers to remain vigilant and report suspicious products through the commission's hotline or website.

## Islamic group targets ₦10bn Tinubu Hajj Training Centre

LAGOS

A pilgrims' welfare group, the Like Minds of Ullamah Community Development Association, South-West Nigeria, has unveiled plans to raise ₦10 billion for the construction of the Bola Ahmed Tinubu Hajj Training and Resource Centre in Lagos.

The group disclosed this at a fundraising event and lec-

ture held on Sunday, themed "Hitch-Free Hajj: The Spiritual Gain of the Renewed Hope."

The proposed centre will train intending pilgrims' trainers from across the South-West and will include a central mosque, ablution facilities, a multipurpose hall, administrative and logistics block, as well as a vocational training centre.

It is designed to provide comprehensive guidance on

visa processing, insurance, logistics, welfare and conduct in the Holy Land.

Speaking at the event, the Chairman of the association, Dr Abdullah Ahamad-Jebe, who is also Special Adviser to the Lagos State Governor on Islamic Affairs, said the initiative would help eliminate the challenges often faced by pilgrims.

He noted that the centre would equip prospective pilgrims with

the knowledge required for a smooth and successful pilgrimage.

According to him, trainers produced by the centre would in turn educate intending pilgrims across states, ensuring compliance with statutory requirements.

"Recent experiences in Hajj operations show that significant improvements have been made. The establishment of this centre will further enhance the process," he said.

## JUDICIARY

## NEWS

# NGO urges FG to formalise traditional dispute resolution for wider access to justice

ABUJA

An international non-profit organisation, the Hague Institute for Innovation of Law (HiiL), has called on the Federal Government to formalise African traditional dispute

resolution systems to expand access to justice across Nigeria.

The Country Representative of HiiL, Dr Ijeoma Nwafor, made the appeal in an interview with newsmen on Monday in Abuja, citing data that only 15 percent of Nigerians seek redress through the

courts, while 85 per cent resort to alternative channels.

According to her, the low patronage of the formal justice system is driven by high costs, limited accessibility and procedural complexity.

“Three factors why 85 per cent of Nigerians don’t go to

court are high cost, low accessibility and ease of the system,” she said.

Nwafor explained that African Traditional Dispute Resolution, now widely known as Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), reflects the reality that many citizens prefer informal justice systems.

“If parties believe they will get a fair hearing and resolution, it is important that out-

comes are documented and properly archived,” she said.

She identified the major gap in traditional systems as their lack of integration into the formal legal framework.

Drawing from international experience, she cited Ethiopia, where HiiL partnered with the government to enact a law empowering traditional rulers to resolve land disputes, with decisions documented and recognised within the formal system.

“In many of our villages, disputes resolved by traditional rulers are not documented, leading to recurring conflicts

when future generations reopen the issues,” she said.

Nwafor stressed that Nigeria’s existing court system cannot meet the justice needs of its population, underscoring the urgency for innovation.

“Some justice needs are casual and do not necessarily require court intervention,” she added.

She disclosed that HiiL is currently operating pilot Community Justice Centres in Imo, Ogun and Kaduna states, expressing hope that Imo State would expand the initiative to 53 additional centres to deepen public access to justice.



## NEWS CONFERENCE:

L-R: Special Adviser to the Lagos State Governor on Enterprise Geographic Information Service (E-GIS), Dr Babatunde Olajide; Lagos State Commissioner for Agriculture and Food System, Ms Abisola Olusanya; Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Mr Gbenga Omotoso and the Special Adviser to the Governor on Works, Dr Adekunle Olayinka, during a news conference on the forthcoming 2-day visit by President Bola Tinubu to inaugurate some projects in Lagos.

## Youth leaders condemn Kaduna attack, demand stronger security measures

ABUJA

The Forum of National Youth Leaders of All Political Parties in Nigeria (FNYLPPN) has condemned recent attacks on worshippers in Kaduna State, calling for intensified efforts to tackle insecurity nationwide.

In a statement signed by its Chairman, Mr Eze-Onyebuchi Chukwu, on Monday, the forum also raised concerns over persistent killings in Jos and other parts of Plateau State.

Chukwu described the East-

er-period attack as disturbing, noting that it exposed the vulnerability of places of worship and threatened public safety.

He said such incidents undermine the sanctity of religious gatherings and heighten national security concerns.

“When citizens are not safe in their homes, farms and places of worship, it raises serious concerns about national security,” he said.

He urged President Bola Tinubu and relevant authorities to strengthen security operations, ensure the arrest and

prosecution of perpetrators, and enhance protection for vulnerable communities.

Chukwu noted that youths, who constitute a significant portion of the population, are among the most affected by insecurity.

While acknowledging the sacrifices of security agencies, he called for sustained and coordinated efforts to rebuild public confidence.

The forum also advocated stronger collaboration between citizens and security agencies, urging Nigerians to promote peace, unity and tolerance across religious and ethnic divides.

It reaffirmed support for

initiatives aimed at restoring peace and stability nationwide.

Meanwhile, troops of the Nigerian Army foiled a terrorist attack and rescued 31 abducted worshippers following an Easter service incident in Ariko Village, Kaduna State.

The Army disclosed in a statement on its official X handle that the operation was launched after a distress call reported that terrorists had stormed a church and abducted worshippers.

Troops, supported by local residents, were said to have swiftly mobilised and pursued the fleeing attackers, leading to the successful rescue operation.

## Police arrest 23yr-old over alleged defilement of minor in Ondo

AKURE

The Police Command in Ondo State has arrested a 23-year-old man, Emmanuel Usman, over the alleged defilement of a 14-year-old girl in Ijebu-Owo, Owo Local Government Area.

The command’s spokesperson, DSP Abayomi Jimoh, disclosed this in a statement on Monday, stating that the case was reported by the victim on March 29.

According to him, the victim alleged that the suspect

forcefully dragged her into his employer’s office along Ijebu-Owo, where he had unlawful carnal knowledge of her without consent.

He added that the suspect allegedly threatened the victim with dire consequences to prevent her from reporting the incident.

“Despite the threat, the victim courageously reported the matter to the police, prompting immediate action. The case is currently under thorough investigation by the Gender-Based Violence Unit,”

he said.

Jimoh said operatives swiftly arrested the suspect, who is currently in custody and has made useful statements to aid investigations.

He added that the suspect would be charged to court upon conclusion of investigations.

The victim, he said, has been taken to the General Hospital, Owo, where she received medical attention, while psychosocial support is being arranged to ensure her well-being throughout the process.

He disclosed that the Commissioner of Police, Mr Adebowale Lawal, has directed that the case be handled with utmost diligence, sensitivity and urgency.

“The command reiterates its commitment to combating all forms of sexual and gender-based violence and assures the public that offenders will be brought to justice,” he said.

He urged parents and guardians to remain vigilant, educate their wards on personal safety and promptly report suspicious activities.

## Police nab 2 robbery suspects, recover rifle, stolen motorcycle in Imo

OWERRI

The Imo State Police Command has arrested two suspected armed robbers and recovered a pump-action rifle and a stolen motorcycle following an intelligence-led operation in Owerri.

The command’s spokesperson, DSP Henry Okoye, disclosed this in a statement on Monday, identifying the suspects as Sohnani Bitrus, 25, and Burfa Selkap, 25, both from Langtang Local Government Area of Plateau State.

He said operatives of the New Owerri Divisional Headquarters apprehended the suspects on April 3 based on credible intelligence.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the suspects allegedly robbed one Joel Andrew at his residence around 4:00 a.m., threatening him

with a firearm and carting away his red Daylong motorcycle with registration number NWA765QT.

“The motorcycle has since been recovered,” Okoye said.

He added that further interrogation led to the recovery of a pump-action rifle and a machete at the suspects’ hideout in Okwu-Uratta, Owerri North Local Government Area.

The suspects, he said, would be transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) for further investigation and to track down accomplices.

Okoye reaffirmed the commitment of the Commissioner of Police, Mr Audu Bosso, to ensuring security during and after the Easter period.

He urged residents to provide timely and credible information through police stations or the emergency line 08034773600.

## Kaduna explosion: Pi-CNG reassures public, launches probe into incident

ABUJA

The Presidential Initiative on Compressed Natural Gas and Electric Vehicles (Pi-CNG & EV) has reassured Nigerians on the safety of natural gas following a vehicle explosion at a motor park in Kaduna.

In a statement signed by its Head of Brand and Communications, Ms Onyekachi Eke, the initiative expressed concern over the incident and extended solidarity to those affected.

Eke said investigations were ongoing, noting that no definitive cause had been established.

“At this time, there is no confirmed information on the specific cause of the incident, as investigations are ongoing,” she said.

She added that the initiative was working closely with state and federal authorities to determine the circumstances sur-

rounding the explosion.

Eke emphasised that compressed natural gas (CNG) has maintained a strong safety record both globally and within Nigeria, with years of incident-free usage.

“CNG remains a safe, reliable and cost-effective fuel option, with the added benefit of supporting cleaner energy and improved air quality,” she said.

She urged the public to remain calm and avoid speculation or sensational reporting while investigations continue.

Pi-CNG & EV, inaugurated in July 2023 by President Bola Tinubu, aims to convert one million vehicles to CNG within three years as part of efforts to reduce transportation costs by up to 70 per cent following fuel subsidy removal.

The initiative reaffirmed its commitment to safety and pledged to provide updates as more details emerge.

## NEWS

## Foreign

## Russia-Ukraine war: Ukraine strikes Russian Black Sea energy hub Novorossiysk

Ukraine has increased attacks on Russian energy infrastructure in bid to disrupt financing of its war.

The Ukrainian military reported that it has struck a Russian warship and a drilling rig in the Black Sea.

Kyiv's drone forces commander Robert Brovdi said on Monday that the attack targeted the Admiral Makarov missile carrier in the port of Novorossiysk, which is Russia's largest oil exporting outlet on the Black Sea. Ukraine has increased its attacks on Russian energy infrastructure in a bid to disrupt export revenues that feed into Moscow's war chest.

Russian authorities said at least eight people, including two children, were injured in Novorossiysk, without specifying

whether the port was struck.

Videos posted on Telegram and verified by Al Jazeera's verification unit showed a fire at one of the oil port's docks in the city.

Novorossiysk's Mayor Andrei Kravchenko said debris from drones had fallen on two locations in the city, including a residential area.

Russia's military said in the early morning that air defence units had downed 148 Ukrainian drones over a three-hour period. It added that officials said emergency crews were restoring power to nearly half a million households in outages linked to air attacks.

The area of the port of Novorossiysk is also a location for the Caspian Pipeline Consortium's (CPC) terminal, which exports oil from Kazakhstan and whose shareholders include US majors

such as Chevron and ExxonMobil.

Ukraine has significantly intensified attacks on Russia's energy facilities, including the largest oil exporting hubs both on the Baltic and Black Seas, as it seeks to reduce Moscow's revenues from the sales of oil, the lifeblood of its economy.

The Kremlin has attempted to boost its exports after US President Donald Trump gave it a temporary waiver from sanctions to ease supply constraints, as the US-Israeli war on Iran upends oil markets following the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Kyiv officials complain that Russia will use the additional revenue on new weapons to hit Ukraine harder.

Later on Monday, Russia reported that Ukrainian drones had attacked the CPC termi-

nal. The export facility, which handles 1.5 percent of global oil supply, reported damage to mooring, loading, and storage infrastructure, the Reuters news agency reported.

"The Kyiv regime deliberately attacked facilities of the international oil transportation company Caspian Pipeline Consortium in order to inflict maximum economic damage on its largest shareholders - energy companies from the United States and Kazakhstan," the defence ministry said in a statement.

The Black Sea strikes come a day after Ukrainian drones struck Russia's Baltic Sea port of Primorsk - one of Russia's main oil exporting outlets - and the NORSI oil refinery in the central Nizhny Novgorod region.

## Emergency jabs after 100 children die of suspected measles in a month in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has launched an emergency vaccination campaign after a fast-spreading measles outbreak is suspected of killing more than 100 people, mostly children, in what may be the country's most lethal wave of the disease in recent history.

The campaign, which began on Sunday, comes amid more than 7,500 suspected measles cases since 15 March, according to health ministry data.

More than 900 of these cases have been confirmed - a sharp increase from 2025, when just 125 measles cases were recorded over the entire year, local media report.

While Bangladesh has long vaccinated children against the highly contagious disease, the recent outbreak has exposed gaps in its programme, raising concern.

"Vaccines are foundational to child survival," Rana Flowers, the Unicef representative in Bangladesh, said in a statement on Sunday, adding that the current measles outbreak was "putting thousands of children, especially the youngest and most vulnerable, at serious risk".

In Bangladesh, a nation of 170 million people, routine measles vaccines are given to children as young as nine months old.

But Shahriar Sajjad, deputy director of the Health Department, told BBC Bangla that about one-third of those infected in the recent outbreak were under nine months old.

The infections of these young infants "who are not yet eligible for routine vaccination,

are especially alarming", said Flowers from Unicef.

On top of routine vaccinations, Bangladesh conducts special measles vaccination campaigns every four years.

But these campaigns haven't gone according to plan.

There have been no special measles vaccination campaigns since 2020, first because of Covid then because of the "political situation", Sajjad told BBC Bangla.

Bangladesh experienced political upheaval in 2024, when massive anti-government protests toppled its long-ruling leader Sheikh Hasina. An interim government took over after Hasina's ousting, and only in February this year did the country elect a new government.

A measles vaccination campaign was supposed to be held in April this year, "but it did not happen", Sajjad said.

A health official said procurement issues had led to a shortage of vaccines, including for measles, the Daily Star reported.

Many in Bangladesh have blamed the vaccine shortages on the former interim government, which oversaw a new vaccine procurement system.

But measles resurgences "are typically the result of these accumulated gaps rather than a single factor", Unicef said in its statement.

"Bangladesh has a strong history of high immunisation coverage, but even small disruptions can lead to the gradual accumulation of immunity gaps over time."



**SUSPECTED MEASLES KILL IN BANGLADESH:**

Measles is suspected to have killed more than 100 people, mostly children, across Bangladesh since 15 March.

## Iran threatens Bab al-Mandeb closure: How would that affect world trade?

Atop adviser to Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei has threatened that Iranian allies could shut the Bab al-Mandeb shipping route as Tehran has effectively done with the Strait of Hormuz.

The Bab-al-Mandeb connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and is a crucial waterway for global oil trade. Its importance has increased since Iran's effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz - through which 20 percent of the world's oil and gas is shipped in peacetime.

Ali Akbar Velayati, a former Iranian foreign minister and veteran diplomat known for his influence within the establishment, warned on Sunday on X that "the unified command of the Resistance front views Bab al-Mandeb as it does Hormuz".

"If the White House dares

to repeat its foolish mistakes, it will soon realize that the flow of global energy and trade can be disrupted with a single move," Velayati wrote. Iran's state-owned Press TV subsequently confirmed his warning.

It follows US President Donald Trump's threats to bomb Iran's power plants and bridges from Wednesday this week if Tehran does not agree to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has said that Hormuz is open to ships from countries that negotiate safe passage - apart from the US and Israel. Trump has previously threatened to bomb Iran's desalination plants.

But if Bab al-Mandeb were closed, it would impact more than the ongoing war - it could compound the global energy supply crisis sparked by the conflict, deepening the economic turmoil being felt in

factories, kitchens and at petrol stations around the world.

It connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden, which then extends into the Indian Ocean. It is 29km (18 miles) wide at its narrowest point, limiting traffic to two channels for inbound and outbound shipments and is effectively controlled by the Iran-backed Houthis.

The Yemen-based group is a central part of Iran's so-called "Axis of Resistance" - a coalition of groups ideologically or tactically aligned with Tehran which Velayati appears to have been referring to in his Sunday post on X.

Why is the Bab al-Mandeb important for the energy trade?

It is one of the world's most important shipping routes.

The strait is a vital route through which Saudi Arabia sends its oil to Asia. When the Strait of Hormuz is open, it is

also a crucial passageway for Gulf states besides Saudi Arabia to export their crude oil, gas and other fuel to Europe via the Suez Canal or the Sumed (Suez-Mediterranean) Pipeline on Egypt's Red Sea coast.

In 2024, about 4.1 billion barrels of crude oil and refined petroleum products passed through the strait - that's 5 percent of the global total.

If Bab al-Mandeb and the Strait of Hormuz were both shut, that would block 25 percent - or a quarter of the world's oil and gas supply.

It's not just oil: About 10 percent of global trade sails through the Bab al-Mandeb, including containers shipped from China, India and other Asian countries to Europe.

With the Strait of Hormuz shut, Bab al-Mandeb's importance has only grown.

## 'Really feeling the love' - Savannah Guthrie returns to NBC as search for mother goes on

US television presenter Savannah Guthrie has returned to NBC's Today show, telling her co-anchors it was "good to be back", as the search for her mother continues.

It was her first appearance in the studio since 30 January, two days before her 84-year-old mother Nancy was reported missing.

Her co-anchors noted on Monday that many fans were standing outside the studios on a chilly New York morning carrying signs welcoming Guthrie back. "I'm really feeling the love," she said in response.

Investigators believe Nancy Guthrie, who was last seen on 31 January, was taken against her will from her home near Tucson, Arizona, but they have not shared a possible motive or arrested a suspect.

Before giving his typical weather report, NBC forecaster Al Roker blew her a kiss and said: "It's good to see you my dear."

Guthrie carried on with the news as usual, telling viewers about the Artemis moon mission and the National Collegiate Athletic Association men's basketball tournament finals.

Last month she said it was "part of my purpose right now" to return to work although she was unsure if she would still be able to do it.

On Easter Sunday, Savannah Guthrie reaffirmed her Christian faith in an Easter video message from a church in New York.

"I still believe. And so I say with conviction, 'Happy Easter,'" she said in her closing message at the end of the Easter Sunday service at Good Shepherd New York.

The NBC presenter, one of the most recognisable figures on morning television in the US, had temporarily stepped away from her anchoring duties after her mother's disappearance.

She also stood down from NBC's coverage of the Winter Olympics.

In an interview last month with Today, she said: "I can't not come back. This is my family."

She also raised the possibility that her own fame may have been behind her mother's disappearance, saying that thought was too much to bear.

Nancy Guthrie vanished without her medicines. She was dropped off at her home by relatives on the evening of 31 January and then failed to show up at a friend's house to watch a virtual Sunday service the following morning.

The family announced in February a \$1m reward for information leading to her return.

## Foreign

## NEWS

## Nigerian army rescues 31 held after Easter church attack

Thirty-one civilians held hostage following a Sunday morning church attack in north-west Nigeria have been rescued, the army has said.

Five others were killed as gunmen targeted Easter celebrations at a church in Ariko, Kaduna state, according to a statement from the security forces. A local church official had earlier put the number of dead at seven.

The army said soldiers engaged the attackers in a "fierce firefight", forcing them to flee and leave the hostages and the bodies of the dead victims behind.

Attacks and kidnappings for ransom are common occurrences in northern Nigeria, as the country grapples with security threats from jihadist groups and armed gangs, locally known as bandits.

Although the army said it responded swiftly to Sunday's attack, local media report that residents said the gunmen operated for a long time without facing resistance.

As a result of the firefight, officials said the "fleeing terrorists" had "significant casualties, as evidenced by blood trails along their escape routes".

Troops had also been deployed to hunt the insurgents and reinforce security.

The army has urged residents to share information that can support operations against groups fuelling insecurity across the country.

In a separate incident, Nigeria's military killed 65 bandits following an offensive in Zamfara state, the AFP news agency reported on Sunday, days after a large group of bandits abducted residents from villages in the state.

Police had on Saturday confirmed that there had been a mass abduction in villages in the state earlier in the week and a manhunt had been launched.

Late last year, the administration of US President Donald Trump raised concerns about the treatment of Christians in Nigeria - and urged the government to do more to improve security and strengthen protection for Christian communities.

Trump had previously claimed there was a "Christian genocide" under way in Nigeria - an allegation strongly rejected by Nigeria's government, which said Muslims, Christians and people of no faith were victims of attacks.

In February, US troops were deployed to Nigeria to train its forces and help them with intelligence in their fight against Islamist militants and other armed groups.



**PRESIDENT OF BURKINA FASO:**  
Burkina Faso President, Capt Ibrahim Traoré

## Burkina Faso rejects report that over 1,800 civilians killed since junta seized power

Burkina Faso has rejected a report that said more than 1,800 civilians have been killed in acts amounting to "crimes against humanity" in the three years since Ibrahim Traoré seized power.

The government has called the Human Rights Watch (HRW) report "false", dismissing the findings as "conjecture and serious unfounded claims".

The report has "only one purpose... to demonise" the country's troops, who have always fought with "professionalism", its statement added.

The government has dismissed previous accusations that their forces have killed civilians. Last week, HRW attributed

most of the killings - 1,255 - to the military and allied militias.

The rights group blamed the rest of the deaths on Islamist militants.

About 1,837 civilians were killed in 57 incidents between January 2023 and August 2025, including dozens of children, the report said.

HRW found President Traoré and six senior military commanders "may be liable as a matter of command responsibility for grave abuses and should be investigated". It also said five jihadist leaders may be culpable.

One of the reasons the military gave for seizing power was to tackle the jihadist groups linked to al-Qaeda who have been waging

an insurgency in Burkina Faso and neighbouring countries for over a decade and control huge parts of the country.

The report is based on analysis of open-source information, including photos, videos and satellite imagery, and interviews with witnesses and survivors.

"All sides are responsible for the war crimes of willful killing, attacks on civilians and civilian objects, pillage and looting, and forced displacement," the report said.

It accused the junta of committing "horrific abuses" and failing to hold perpetrators to account while blocking reporting to hide the suffering of civilians caught in the violence.

"The scale of atrocities taking place in Burkina Faso is mind-boggling, as is the lack of global attention to this crisis," said Philippe Bolopion, HRW's executive director.

The report cited one of the deadliest incidents in December 2023 in which it said the military and allied militias killed more than 400 civilians in the northern town of Djibo.

A 35-year-old woman told the rights group that her two daughters died on the spot and bullets injured her and her nine-month-old son.

"Make sure no-one is breathing before heading out," she recounted a militia member as saying.

## Middle East War: Iran and US receive temporary truce proposal

Both the United States and Iran have received a draft urging a 45-day ceasefire. The proposal also calls for Iran to loosen its grip on the Strait of Hormuz shipping lane.

It was put forward by Pakistani, Egyptian and Turkish mediators, who hope that the 45 day time frame would provide enough time for discussions to come to a permanent truce.

Both sides have not currently responded. It comes after US president Doanld Trump gave an ultimatum to Tehran, threatening to strike its critical infrastructure if it does not reopen the Strait.

On Sunday, the US President made expletive-laden threats to Tehran on social media; Iran for its part stated on Monday that the Strait of

Hormuz would never go back to the way it was before the conflict, especially for the US and Israel.

On the ground in Iran, the us and Israel are pressing ahead with their campaign of air strikes. On Monday the leader of Iran's paramilitary revolutionary guard was killed in an attack targeting him, according to the country's state media.

The fighting continues to take a heavy toll on civilians, with more people killed across the country on Monday.

Iran meanwhile is continuing with its own offensive launching strikes at gulf neighbours and Israel.

In the northern Israeli city of Haifa, an Iranian missile struck a residential building over the weekend, killing several people.

## Cairo goes dark as Egypt struggles to cope with fall out from Iran war

Soaring fuel costs due to US-Israel war on Iran have pushed the Egyptian government to issue a month-long early-closing order. Small businesses are scrambling to adapt.

At a roadside cafe in downtown Cairo, Abu Ali was mid domino throw when the lights snapped off under new early-closing orders enacted to curb Egypt's soaring energy bill due to the US-Israel war on Iran.

"I used to stay here until 2:00 am," the 63-year-old told AFP,

tapping his tiles as the street went dark.

"Now I'm home by 11 at most, just watching the news. This is not the Cairo we know."

The month-long order instituted last week shuts shops at 9:00 pm on weekdays and 10:00 pm on weekends, with a brief extension to 11:00 pm expected for the Coptic Easter holidays.

It's a jarring shift for nocturnal Cairenes.

Thursday nights usually buzz with families strolling between

storefronts, teenagers lingering over ice cream and music spilling out of cafes, well into the early hours of the morning.

Now each evening collapses into a final frantic hour of last-minute shopping before fluorescent lights flicker out and shutters rattle down.

Police patrols ensure compliance and soon only delivery scooters remain, zig-zagging through the dark.

"This is usually when work starts," shopworker Ali Haggag said, standing outside his suddenly quiet clothing store.

The city once famed for never sleeping now "feels like COVID again," he added, recalling the 2020 lockdowns that emptied its streets.

Cutting incomes

Well-to-do Cairenes have flocked to Nile-side restaurants and international hotels, exempt from the order as tourism establishments.

But small businesses are already feeling the squeeze. Haggag estimates his shop has lost more than half its revenue in a matter of days.

Officials say the decision was unavoidable, given the country's heavy reliance on imported fuel.

Global energy prices have surged since the US and Israeli war on Iran began in late February.

Prime Minister Moustafa Madbouly has said Egypt's monthly energy import bill more than doubled between January and March to \$2.5 billion.

Around 60 percent of the country's \$20 billion annual oil budget goes toward powering the grid.

In recent weeks, the government has introduced what it calls "exceptional" measures, including hiking fuel prices, slowing state projects, enacting remote work on Sundays and dimming streetlights.

Critics say early closures are disproportionately affecting the informal economy, which accounts for some two-thirds of all jobs.

"Millions of small businesses depend on evening foot traffic," economist Wael el-Nahas told AFP. "Cutting those hours means cutting incomes."

## Somalia set for 'historic' first offshore oil drilling

Somalia says it is ready to begin its first offshore oil drilling operations, with a Turkish government-owned drilling ship expected to arrive off its coast on Friday.

The move follows the successful completion of seismic surveys last year by a Turkish research vessel.

In a post on X, Somalia's Petroleum Minister Dahir Shire described the move toward what would be the country's first offshore drilling as a "historic

milestone in our offshore energy journey... A new chapter begins."

The foreign ministry said if the drilling were to be successful, it would unlock offshore oil reserves and support the country's economic recovery as a regional energy player.

The Turkish Petroleum Corporation's drilling ship, Çağrı Bey, is on its first international mission, heading into Somalia's territorial waters in the Arabian Sea.

It will carry out deep water

drilling at sites identified by recent surveys that mapped the country's hydrocarbon potential.

"This signals Somalia's readiness to move into exploratory drilling, beginning with our most promising offshore prospects," Shire said.

He added that the country would ensure that the benefits of the oil drilling leads to national prosperity and improves the well-being of the people.

Turkey and Somalia formalised their cooperation in 2024

through a production-sharing agreement.

On Monday, Somali Foreign Minister Ali Omar said the oil drilling campaign would reinforce Turkey's role as a "trusted long-term partner" in development.

Speaking on Saturday ahead of his planned travel to Somalia, Turkey's Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar said any discovery of oil or gas reserves would bring significant economic benefits to Somalia, East Africa and Turkey.

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FP 2X2	59,000	63,425	64,900	69,768	2 X 2	18,680	20,081	15,600	16,770
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EFFECTIVE FROM FEBRUARY 1, 2023

## FEATURES

# EDO: Illegal mining and conspiracy of silence

RAYMOND OSOGBE

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

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

In Edo South Senatorial District, you have kaolin in Egor and kaolin and clay. In Uhumwode local gov-



MINING SITE

ernment area, In Ikpoba Okha, you have petroleum, clay and kaolin. Oredo local government area has petroleum, kaolin and clay. Similarly Orhiomwon has petroleum, gas, kaolin and clay. It's absolutely of essence to emphasize that, Oben in Orhiomwon, has an unprecedented gas reserve. Ovia North East local government area has petroleum, kaolin and clay.

Similarly, Ovia South West local government area has silical sand and kaolin. Owan East parade diorite, granite, marble, kaolin and limestone. In same hemisphere, Owan West local government area has, granite, gypsum, limestone, marble and clay.

The motive of this unfolding scenario is to enable Edo State government and the general public know the

amount of untapped resources we have as a people. Our discreet investigations revealed that, some of these resources are being tapped, with the conianvance of our people and some non indigin indigenes, foreigners as well.

This Writer is calling on the Governor Okpevbolo led administration, to beam her searchlight on this sector. This is with a view of creating a

conducive investment atmosphere, to attracting potential Investors. Government should be proactive, to halting illegal minn of her minerals. Even though, it's absolutely federal government jurisdiction, however, Edo State government will benefit from derivative principle and taxation, if potential Investors are on ground.

Our investigations revealed that, pockets of recent security breaches, such as kidnapping and banditry that spiraled across Edo are diversionary tactics. These strategies are often ignited by illegal Miners to distract relevant authorities from scrutinizing their illicit activities.

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

The exploiters of these resources give you peanuts, while they cart away the chunk of money.

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

## If you're black, diabetic, and taking Metformin...

Your doctor may have accidentally given you neuropathy.

And the most enraging part is — it's completely documented in the medical literature.

They know. They've known for years. And they never told you.

My name is Dr. Marcus Webb.

I'm a Board-Certified specialist and I've spent 22 years treating Black patients on the South Side of Chicago who are fighting Type 2 diabetes and the complications that come with it.

And I am writing this because I am furious.

Because every week I see the same thing. A Black man or woman in their 50s or 60s comes in complaining about burning feet, numbness in their hands, and a tingling that keeps them up at night.

Their doctor told them it's "diabetic neuropathy." A natural consequence of having high blood sugar for too long.

So they get handed a gabapentin prescription. Or Lyrica. Maybe both.

And sent home.

But when I look deeper — when I run the right labs — I find something that should be criminal.

Their nerve damage isn't from their diabetes.

It's from the medication they were given to treat it.

Here's what Metformin actually does — and what your doctor never mentioned.

Metformin works by blocking calcium-dependent membrane receptors in your gut. That's how it slows glucose absorption.

But those same calcium-dependent receptors are the exact receptors your gut uses to absorb Vitamin B12.

So every single time you take your Metformin... it is blocking your body's ability to absorb B12.

This isn't a theory. This isn't fringe science.

The FDA itself has acknowledged that long-term Metformin use can lead to B12 deficiency. It's in the drug's prescribing information. Right there on the label.

Studies show that up to 30% of long-term Metformin users develop significant B12 deficiency.

And for Black diabetic patients — who are already starting with lower B12 and lower Vitamin D due to melanin — the rates are even higher.

Yet most doctors never check B12 levels in their diabetic patients. Not once.

And when the burning and tingling starts, they call it "diabetic neuropathy" — because it's easier to prescribe another pill than to look for the real cause.

It's a prescription merry-go-round. Metformin for blood sugar. Gabapentin for the nerve pain the Metformin caused. Side effects from the gabapentin treated with more drugs.

Meanwhile you're getting worse. Not better.

But here's the part that makes this even more sinister.

Let's say you find out about this. Let's say you tell your doctor and they say, "Okay, take a B12 supplement."

You go to CVS. You grab a 1000 mcg B12 pill. You feel like you're finally doing the right thing.

But weeks go by. And nothing changes. Why?

Because of what I call Stomach Blindness.

For your gut to absorb B12 from a pill, your stomach has to produce a protein called Intrinsic Factor.

Intrinsic Factor acts like a taxi cab for B12. It binds to it in your stomach, drives it through your gut wall, and drops it off in your bloodstream.

But after years of Metformin use — and after age 40 — your stomach progressively loses its ability to produce Intrinsic Factor.

The taxi cabs aren't running anymore.

Your stomach is blind to the B12 you're swallowing. It can't grab it. Can't transport it. That B12 pill you took this morning? It went straight to the toilet.

This is why millions of Black diabetics on Metformin are taking B12 supplements and feeling absolutely nothing.

They're trying to fill a broken pipe with more water. The problem isn't the water. The pipe is broken.

So what actually works?

You need to go around the broken pipe entirely.

Your mouth is lined with mucous membrane — highly vascular tissue loaded with blood vessels sitting just below the surface.

When you place B12 drops under your tongue, those nutrients absorb directly through that membrane into your bloodstream. No stomach. No Intrinsic Factor. No Metformin blocking the pathway.

Absorption jumps from 1-5% with a standard pill to 80-90% with sublingual delivery.

But sublingual B12 alone still isn't enough. Because to actually rebuild the nerve damage, you need the full repair team: Methylcobalamin B12 — sublingual, pre-activated, goes straight to nerve tissue.

The active form your body can use immediately, bypassing all the conversion steps that Metformin and age have compromised.

B6 as P5P — the nerve repair co-factor.

B6 works with B12 to synthesize the proteins that rebuild the myelin sheath. No B6, no structural repair —

no matter how much B12 you take.

Folate (B9 as Methylfolate) — completes the repair cycle.

Folate drives the methylation cycle that B12 depends on to repair nerve cells. Without Methylfolate, B12 gets stuck halfway through the repair process.

B1 (Thiamine) — the peripheral nerve shield.

Thiamine is clinically shown to reduce the burning and pain that comes from peripheral nerve damage — and it protects remaining healthy nerve fibers from further deterioration.

Niacin — opens the blood vessels so the healing can reach the damage.

Diabetic neuropathy often involves compromised microcirculation. Niacin restores blood flow to peripheral nerves so all the other nutrients can actually arrive at the damaged tissue.

All five of these — in their correct, activated forms — are combined in a single sublingual formula called Nuvel.

It is not sold in stores. You have to order it online.

I've recommended Nuvel to dozens of my diabetic patients who were struggling with nerve pain despite taking B12 pills for years.

Every single one of them thanks me for it.

Here's what my patients typically experience within the first 8 weeks on Nuvel:

Week 1-2: The burning in the feet begins to soften. Not gone — but noticeably less aggressive. Sleep improves because the nighttime nerve pain quiets down. Energy levels start to climb.

Week 3-4: The constant tingling becomes intermittent. Some mornings they wake up and their feet feel almost normal. Sensation starts returning in areas that had gone numb. Several patients tell me this is the first time in years their feet don't feel like they're on fire.

Week 5-6: Balance improves significantly. Patients who were gripping walls to walk down the hall are moving more confidently. Hands are steadier. The mental sharpness that B12 deficiency had been stealing for years starts to return.

Week 7-8: When they come back for follow-ups, I run the labs. B12 is optimal. Inflammatory markers are down. Several patients have worked with their doctor to reduce their gabapentin dose. They tell me Nuvel has given them their life back.

I reached out to the team at Nuvel before posting this.

I told them what I'm seeing in my clinic — the Metformin betrayal, the stomach blindness, the patients who've been suffering for years while taking supplements that couldn't even reach their bloodstream.

They were outraged on behalf of every patient this has happened to.

And they set up a special link where you can try Nuvel for just \$27.95 — a significant discount off the regular price.

And because they know Metformin is often prescribed to the whole household — they're doing a Buy One Get One FREE at that same price.

Two bottles. For next to nothing.

30-day money-back guarantee. If the burning doesn't ease, if the numbness doesn't lift, if you don't feel a real difference — they'll refund every penny.

Don't wait until the numbness becomes permanent.

Don't wait until a small cut on your foot becomes a wound that won't heal.

We have to take care of our own health because the system that prescribed you Metformin without telling you what it would do to your nerves is not going to fix it.

# A line the system can no longer cross: Ola Olukoyede and the end of delay, influence, and negotiated justice in Nigeria

IJEOMA UMEH

Ola Olukoyede, the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, represents a turning point in Nigeria's justice system—one that challenges delay, disrupts influence, and restores the meaning of accountability.

For years, corruption in Nigeria did not survive merely because people stole. It survived because the system learned to protect those who stole. Delay became strategy. Influence became currency. Legal complexity became shelter. And over time, the public learned something even more damaging—they learned to expect nothing.

Cases stretched endlessly. Outcomes weakened quietly. Powerful individuals relied on connections, celebrated legal titles, and internal compromise to outwait justice. And as this pattern repeated itself, Nigerians adjusted. They spoke less. They hoped less. They believed less.

That pattern is now being challenged.

Under Olukoyede's leadership, a different message is emerging—clear, firm, and increasingly difficult to ignore: no more endless adjournments, no more quiet interference, no more reliance on influence, and no more assumption that power guarantees protection.

This is not about perfection.

It is about direction.

And the direction is unmistakable—when a crime is committed, it must be pursued, and when proven, it must carry consequence.

The Psychology of Delay: How a Nation Was Trained to Wait

Nigeria's corruption crisis cannot be understood without understanding its relationship with time.

Delay was never accidental. It was engineered.

Cases were not dismissed. They were stretched.

Justice was not denied. It was postponed.

And in that postponement, corruption found its strongest shield.

Over time, this created a psychological contract between power and impunity. The corrupt learned that time would protect them. The public learned that justice would not arrive. Victims learned to move on without closure.

This was not just institutional failure.

It was psychological conditioning.

A nation trained to wait eventually stops expecting.

What is happening now disrupts that training.

Breaking Influence: When Power Loses Its Grip

Influence has long operated as an invisible force within Nigeria's justice system.

A quiet call.

A familiar name.

A reminder of proximity to power.

These were often enough to shift outcomes without leaving visible traces.

Influence did not need to be loud. It only needed to be understood.

But when leadership stops responding to that language, something fundamental changes.

The powerful begin to lose certainty.

The connected begin to feel ex-



OLA OLUKOYEDE, CHAIRMAN OF EFCC

posed.

And once influence stops guaranteeing safety, corruption begins to lose its confidence.

This is not a surface level change.

It is a structural disruption.

From Legal Mastery to Legal Manipulation—and Back Again

Nigeria's legal system is filled with brilliance. But brilliance, when misused, becomes obstruction.

Senior advocates, with deep procedural knowledge, have often turned legal defense into legal delay. Adjournments, technical objections, and procedural loops became tools not just of defense, but of exhaustion.

For years, this worked.

Cases weakened.

Momentum faded.

Outcomes became negotiable.

But under a leadership that appears unwilling to let cases drift, that pattern is being challenged.

Legal strategy is now meeting institutional persistence.

And when persistence holds, even the most sophisticated delay tactics begin to lose their effectiveness.

This is not the end of legal defense.

It is the end of legal games as guaranteed escape.

Internal Weaknesses Are No Longer Hidden

Corruption does not only exist outside institutions.

It survives within them.

Delayed investigations.

Softened reports.

Compromised actors.

Quiet sabotage.

These internal cracks have often determined whether a case survives or disappears.

What is emerging now is a leadership that watches not only the accused, but the system itself.

And when internal compromise is being monitored, the system becomes tighter.

When the system becomes tighter, manipulation becomes riskier.

And when manipulation becomes

risky, accountability becomes possible.

A Judiciary Responding to the Weight of the Moment

Nigeria's judiciary has faced deep criticism, much of it deserved. Yet within this moment, something important is occurring.

Judges are responding.

Cases are being heard.

Evidence is being weighed.

Decisions are being delivered.

Not perfectly. Not universally. But sufficiently to allow outcomes to emerge.

This is not praise.

It is recognition.

Because without judicial action, no prosecution effort survives. When the bench responds, even partially, the chain of accountability begins to hold.

And when that chain holds, escape becomes harder.

Public and Private Corruption: One System, Not Two

Corruption in Nigeria has never been isolated.

It has always been connected.

Public officials create access.

Private actors create channels.

Together, they sustain the system.

What is now being seen is accountability reaching both sides.

Public service actors are being confronted.

Private corporate actors are being confronted.

This matters.

Because dismantling corruption requires dismantling its partnerships.

The End of Soft Landing Justice

There was a time when serious financial crimes ended softly.

Negotiations replaced consequence. Settlements diluted severity.

"Option of fine" turned justice into transaction.

This created a dangerous message—that crime could be managed after the fact.

That message is now being challenged.

There is a growing expectation that punishment must reflect the weight of

the offense. That consequence must be real. That justice cannot be purchased.

And more importantly, there is a forward reality:

More convictions are coming.

More penalties are coming.

And with that, the culture of soft landing begins to collapse.

The Silent Witness: Where the Next Reform Must Reach

Many Nigerians know more than they can say.

The bank clerk who sees irregular movement.

The junior officer who observes manipulation.

The insider who understands hidden processes.

Yet they remain silent.

Not because they agree.

But because they are afraid.

Fear of losing employment.

Fear of retaliation.

Fear of isolation.

If this moment is to grow into lasting reform, protection must extend to these individuals.

Truth must be protected.

Because corruption survives in silence.

And it collapses when truth becomes safe.

The Quiet Backbone: Workers Who Refused to Bend

Leadership alone does not produce results.

Behind every movement are people. Investigators who refused influence.

Officers who chose integrity over pressure.

Clerks who ensured files did not disappear.

Analysts who followed complex financial trails.

Prosecutors who worked long hours, building cases under pressure.

These individuals operate in environments where compromise is easier than resistance.

Yet they resist.

Their work is often unseen.

But it is essential.

Because without them, leadership

remains intention.

With them, it becomes action.

Now and the Future: From Moment to System

What is being seen today is significant.

But its true importance lies in its future.

Because systems are not changed by moments.

They are changed by continuity.

If sustained, this direction reshapes expectations:

A system where delay no longer protects.

Where influence no longer shields.

Where legal process serves justice, not avoidance.

Where accountability reaches both the powerful and the ordinary.

This is the future possibility.

But it depends on consistency.

A Leadership That Does Not Seek Praise

This moment is not driven by performance.

It is driven by task.

He does not appear to seek praise.

He appears to pursue work.

And that distinction matters.

Because leadership that is not driven by recognition is harder to manipulate, harder to pressure, and harder to redirect.

Protection for Those Who Refuse to Bend

But with disruption comes risk.

Challenging corruption at this level disturbs powerful networks. It exposes long standing beneficiaries. It unsettles a system built on protection.

That is why protection is essential.

For him.

For his team.

For investigators who refused influence.

For clerks who kept the system moving.

For prosecutors who carried the burden of proof.

For silent witnesses who may now speak.

Because in a system shaped by fear, those who refuse to bend must not be left exposed.

Conclusion: A System Confronted

This is not the end of corruption.

But it is a confrontation.

A line drawn.

No more delay.

No more quiet influence.

No more endless legal games.

And no more certainty that power guarantees escape.

This moment may not be perfect.

But it is real.

And for a nation long conditioned to expect nothing, that reality matters.

About the Author

Prof. John Egbeazien Oshodi is an American psychologist and educator specializing in forensic, legal, clinical, and cross cultural psychology, with expertise in policing, corrections, and public ethical policy. A native of Uromi, Edo State, Nigeria, he works at the intersection of psychology, justice, and governance and teaches at Nova Southeastern University and Walden University. Prof. Oshodi is a Black Republican in the United States but belongs to no political party in Nigeria, and his work is guided by justice, good governance, democracy, and Africa's development. He is the founder of Psychoafricalysis and has authored more than 700 articles and multiple books.

# Sports

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

## NPFL26: Bendel Insurance FC suffer heavy defeat in Kano, face Abia Warriors

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Bendel Insurance Football Club, Sunday, succumbed to a 4-0 defeat in the hands of Kano Pillars in the Nigeria Premier Football League match day 33 game

played at the Sani Abacha Stadium in Kano.

The 4-0 encounter in Kano is the heaviest defeat the Benin Arsenal have suffered since past three seasons. And it is a big blow to their ambition this season.

Bendel Insurance FC con-

ceded two goals in each half with Mustapha Jibrin opening scoring for the host 23 minutes into the game with a clever header. Chiedozie Okorie doubled the lead for Pillars with former Super Eagles' captain Ahmed Musa supplying the as-

sist in the 33rd minute of play.

The Benin Arsenal however put up some resistance. From the start of the second half until 81 minutes of the game when Aminu Mohammed increased the goal tally for Pillars after finishing the task set up by former Insurance winger Bernard Ovoke's curled pass. Bernard Ovoke sealed the 4-0 victory for the host in the 85th minute of play.

Insurance FC were forced to a 2-2 draw by visiting Plateau Utd in the match day 32 fixture of the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL), at the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium in Benin last week.

The Benin Arsenal remained 7th on the league table with 46 points, and they will be back home to welcome Abia Warriors on Saturday, April 11 in the NPFL match day 34 at the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium.



Bendel Insurance FC



VICTOR OCHEI

## President, Nigeria Tennis Federation (NTF), Victor Ochei

President, Nigeria Tennis Federation (NTF), Victor Ochei, has extended Easter greetings to Christians nationwide, urging unity, hope and renewed commitment to national development.

Ochei said in a statement that Easter symbolises sacrifice, love and victory over adversity, adding that the values align with Nigeria's aspirations for peace, progress and collective resilience.

"This season reminds us that after trials come triumph. Nigeria will rise stronger if we remain united in purpose and faith," he said.

He urged Christians to reflect on Christ's teachings, em-

brace peace and compassion, and promote harmony across communities for sustainable nation-building.

"As a people, we must show love beyond words. Our strength lies in our ability to live together in peace in spite of our diversity," Ochei stated.

He also charged the sporting community to uphold discipline, resilience, and sportsmanship, noting that tennis players must embody values that inspire national pride.

"Sports remains a unifying force. Through tennis, we can nurture character, inspire youth, and project a positive image of Nigeria globally.

## 'Stand up and deliver' — Arteta rallies Arsenal after FA Cup exit as pressure mounts

Manager Mikel Arteta has delivered a defiant message to his players, urging them to "stand up and deliver" as Arsenal face mounting pressure following their FA Cup quarter-final exit.

Speaking after the shock defeat to Southampton at the St Mary's Stadium, Arteta took full responsibility for the result but insisted belief remains high within the squad despite back-to-back losses.

"I love my players. What they have done for nine months, I'm not going to criticise them," Arteta said. "Someone has to take responsibility — that's me. Now we have the most beautiful period of the season ahead of us."

The Spaniard framed the setback as a defining moment rather than a collapse, calling on his side to respond with renewed intensity.

"In a season, you always have moments — this is the first one we have," he added. "So stand up, make yourself comfortable and deliver like we've been doing all season."

Arsenal's hopes of a historic quadruple have unraveled within two weeks, following defeat to Manchester City in the Carabao Cup final and their elimination from the FA Cup after a late winner from Shea Charles.

Despite dominating large spells of the match, Arteta's side failed to convert control into victory, raising fresh concerns over their ability to handle pressure in decisive moments.

Former Arsenal forward Theo Walcott echoed those concerns, warning that the team must avoid letting the season slip away.

"They have to not let the season

run away from them," Walcott said. "Everything they've built — they can't let this affect them."

Arteta, however, struck a resolute tone, emphasizing clarity, trust, and consistency as key to reviving their campaign.

"Giving them clarity, giving more conviction, trusting our players — that's the way forward," he said. "But especially maintaining the speed, attitude and energy at the highest level, because that's critical to win matches."



MIKEL ARTETA

## Chelle approves strategic move to recruit dual-eligible Premier League talent

The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) is preparing to open formal discussions with Michael Kayode as part of efforts to secure his international allegiance for Nigeria.

The move follows approval from Super Eagles head coach Eric Chelle, who is keen to strengthen his squad ahead

of the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations. Kayode, a 21-year-old right-back currently playing for Brentford FC, is viewed as a key long-term prospect due to his pace, physical strength, and attacking contributions, including his distinctive long throw-ins.

Born in Italy to Nigerian parents, Kayode remains eligi-

ble to represent either nation at senior level. Despite his consistent performances in the Premier League and a reported market valuation of €35 million, he was recently overlooked by Italy's senior team coach Gennaro Gattuso for the country's 2026 FIFA World Cup play-off fixtures.

Instead, Gattuso opted for alternative defensive options, including Atalanta's emerging talent Marco Palestra. The decision drew criticism within Italian football circles, with legendary goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon publicly urging the national team setup to secure Kayode's commitment before Nigeria makes its move.

Kayode, who has previously represented Italy at youth level, was subsequently called up to the country's Under-21



MICHAEL KAYODE

## NPFL: Title race still open — Fidelis Ilechukwu

Head coach of Rangers International F.C., Fidelis Ilechukwu, has maintained that the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) title race remains wide open despite recent developments at the top of the table.

The Flying Antelopes missed the opportunity to climb to the summit after they were held to a goalless draw at home by Barau FC in their Matchday 33 encounter.

The result came even as Rivers United F.C. suffered a defeat on the road, leaving the title race finely poised heading into

the final stretch of the season. Speaking after the match, Ilechukwu expressed optimism about his side's chances, insisting that with five games remaining, nothing has been decided.

"Five games to go, the league title is still open. Rivers United lost today, but you can never say what can happen. The most important thing is that we will prepare for our next game," he said.

With the season approaching its climax, Rangers remain firmly in contention, as the battle for the NPFL crown intensifies among the top sides



FIDELIS ILECHUKWU

# Sports

The Nigerian  
**Observer**  
...that the people may know

## SWAN hails Enabulele's visionary leadership, celebrates prestigious Sportsville honour

IDAHOSEA MOSES

The Sports Writers' Association of Nigeria (SWAN), Edo State Chapter, has extended warm and heartfelt congratulations to the Executive Chairman of the Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele, on his

well-deserved recognition at the prestigious Sportsville Special Recognition Awards.

In a statement signed by Comrade Idahosa Moses, Secretary of Edo SWAN, the association described Hon. Enabulele as an exceptional, visionary, and result-driven sports administrator whose

sterling leadership has continued to redefine and elevate the standard of sports development in Edo State.

SWAN noted that the conferment of the Sportsville Special Recognition Award in the Visionary Leadership category is a fitting tribute to a man whose foresight, passion, and administrative acumen have repositioned Edo State as a dominant force in Nigerian sports.

The association further commended his instrumental role in guiding the state to a historic first-place finish at the 2nd Niger Delta Games, an unprecedented achievement in over two decades.

The Edo SWAN lauded Hon. Enabulele's humility in dedicating the award to the Executive Governor of Edo State, Monday Okpebholo, acknowledging the synergy between leadership and government support in driving sustainable sports development.

According to the statement, "Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele stands tall as a beacon of excellence, an innovative thinker, and a transformational leader whose commitment to grassroots sports development, athlete welfare, and modern sports administration is both inspiring and commendable."

SWAN emphasized that his achievements are not only a source of pride to Edo State but also a shining example for sports administrators across Nigeria.

The association expressed confidence that this recognition will further spur Hon. Enabulele to greater heights as he continues to build a legacy of excellence, dedication, and impactful leadership in the Nigerian sports sector.

SWAN, Edo State Chapter, therefore, wishes him continued success and more accolades in his service to sports development in Edo State and the nation at large.



DESMOND ENABULELE

## NPFL promotion fight: Sporting Lagos edge closer to return as Akwa United face uphill task

The Nigerian National League (NNL) Conference B is reaching its climax, with Sporting Lagos poised to secure promotion back to the Nigeria Premier League (NPFL).

The Lagos-based team is on the pole position of booking their ticket back to the top flight, and all they need is a maximum points haul from their final two fixtures against Rovers FC at home and Osun United away. This would mark the end of a two-year wait since their relegation, and their fans are eagerly anticipating a return to the NPFL.

Sporting Lagos has been on a roll, showcasing impressive form and determination, their recent performances have been nothing short of spectacular. With a solid squad and a winning mentality, they will be looking to carry this momentum into their final two games and seal their promotion.

However, Akwa United, currently leading Conference B with 31 points, will not go down without a fight. The Promise Keepers need to defeat Solution FC and hope Sporting Lagos drop points to keep their promotion hopes alive. With just a point separating the two teams, the stage is set for a thrilling finale.

Akwa United's squad, known for their attacking flair and solid defense, will be looking to capitalize on their consistency and secure a spot in the NPFL.

The battle for promotion has come down to these two consistent performers, with both teams showcasing impressive skills and determination. Sporting Lagos's recent

form has been impressive, with a string of victories that have propelled them to the top of the table. Akwa United, on the other hand, has been equally impressive, with a solid defense and a potent attack that has seen them score crucial goals at crucial times.

As the season draws to a close, the tension is palpable. The teams are giving it their all, and the outcome is far from certain. The NPFL ticket is on the line, and both teams will stop at nothing to secure



SPORTING LAGOS

## Our chairman's leadership recalibrated Lobi Stars, instilled discipline —Official

The management, staff, and players of Lobi Stars Football Club of Makurdi have said that the leadership of their chairman, Simon Ikya, has recalibrated the club's direction and instilled unity as the team's core shape.

The club stated this on Monday in Makurdi in a goodwill message signed by Austin

Tyowua, principal media officer, to celebrate Ikya on the occasion of his birthday anniversary.

Tyowua said that the chairman ensured discipline and decorum as its guiding principles and a culture of promptness and industry that now defines both officials and players.

"Under his watch, every unit has found its rhythm, func-

tioning with clarity and cohesion like a well-drilled side executing a perfect game plan.

"With the leadership of Ikya and the valued support of the Executive Governor of Benue, Dr Hyacinth Alia, Lobi Stars returned to Makurdi after years on the road.

"By ensuring the McCarthy Stadium met minimum approval standards for league games, the chairman restored the club's home ground.

"The three matches played on the home turf produced three victories, a flawless run that propelled the team from fifth position to a strong second-place finish, just three points behind the leaders.

"Your tenure reflects calm authority, sound judgement and purposeful leadership, qualities that continue to shape the club's progress," he added.

He prayed for greater accomplishments, good health, and continued success at the helm.



LOBI STARS



JOACHIM LOW

## Joachim Löw dismisses Ghana coaching links ahead of World Cup

Joachim Low has dismissed speculation linking him with the vacant head coach position of the Ghana national football team ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Reports earlier suggested that the former Germany manager was close to reaching an agreement with the Ghana Football Association, with discussions allegedly progressing toward a deal worth approximately €150,000 per month. It was also claimed that personal terms were nearing completion following recent negotiations.

However, speaking to Sky Sport Germany, Löw categorically denied any such developments, stating that he has not

been contacted by Ghanaian officials. "No one from Ghana has officially spoken to me," he said, effectively dismissing the reports as unfounded.

His comments suggest that speculation surrounding a potential appointment is premature and not grounded in formal discussions.

Löw remains one of the most accomplished international managers in modern football. During his tenure with the Germany national football team from 2006 to 2021, he guided the side to a third-place finish at the 2010 FIFA World Cup and famously led them to victory at the 2014 FIFA World Cup. He also secured the FIFA Confederations Cup in 2017.

## Bronze isn't gold: Peseiro reacts to Super Eagles AFCON outcome

Former Nigeria national football team head coach José Peseiro has expressed disappointment over the team's third-place finish at the 2026 Africa Cup of Nations, insisting his side's runner-up achievement two years earlier remains a superior performance.

Peseiro guided Nigeria to the final of the 2023 tournament—their first appearance at that stage since 2013—where they narrowly lost 2-1 to hosts Ivory Coast national football team. The result marked the country's best finish in over a decade.

At the most recent edition in Morocco, however, the Super Eagles—now under the leadership

of Eric Chelle—secured a third-place finish. Despite falling short of the final, the team drew widespread praise for its attacking style and overall performances during the competition.

Speaking in Portugal, Peseiro maintained that expectations for Nigeria should always extend beyond a podium finish, given the country's stature in African football. "Nigeria is a big football country in Africa, and every tournament comes with expectations," he said.

"You are expected to reach the final of the AFCON, and we did that two years ago—our best finish in a long time. I see that the team finished third at the last tournament."



JOSÉ PESEIRO

# SPORTS

## AFCON 2025 final in legal limbo as explosive reports reveal chaos, contradictions



The controversy surrounding the January 18 final of the Africa Cup of Nations in Rabat has taken a dramatic new turn, following revelations by French newspaper Le Monde, which has obtained and reviewed five official match reports that sharply contradict decisions taken by the Confederation of African Football (CAF). Soccer

Nearly three months after the ill-fated final at the Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium, the winner of the tournament remains uncertain, with the case now before the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

CAF's Appeal Committee

stripped Senegal of the title, while the latter has headed to CAS

What was meant to be a showpiece finale between Senegal and hosts Morocco descended into confusion amid torrential rain and rising tension. Senegal initially secured a hard-fought 1-0 victory, denying Morocco a second continental title, fifty years after their first triumph.

However, the match was marred by extraordinary scenes late in regulation time. With Morocco awarded a contentious penalty in the dying minutes, Senegalese players and officials protested vehemently and eventually walking off the pitch in defiance. The interruption lasted approximately 14 minutes before play resumed.

Morocco missed the penalty, and Senegal went on to clinch victory in extra time through

Pape Gueye. What appeared to be a historic triumph for the Lions of Teranga soon spiralled into a legal and administrative crisis.

In the aftermath, the Royal Moroccan Football Federation filed two formal appeals to CAF, arguing that Senegal's temporary withdrawal constituted abandonment of the match—an offence punishable by forfeiture under CAF regulations.

On March 17, CAF's Appeals Committee upheld Morocco's argument, ruling that Senegal had forfeited the match. In a stunning and unprecedented decision, the committee awarded Morocco a 3-0 victory, effectively overturning the on-field result.

Senegal's football authorities swiftly rejected the ruling and escalated the matter to CAS, insisting that the decision violated both sporting integrity and due process.

### Le Monde investigation raises alarming questions

The investigation by Le Monde has now cast serious doubt on the handling of the final by CAF and its officials.

Drawing on five official reports, including those of the referee, match commissioner, and security officials, the newspaper describes a match "spiralling out of control," with regulations allegedly ignored in favour of avoiding public embarrassment.

The most critical moment, according to the reports, occurred in the 97th minute. Officials, including Tunisia's Khaled Lemkecher and Egypt's Ahmed Osman, reportedly confirmed that Senegal "abandoned the match" by retreating to the dressing room, a clear violation that should have triggered immediate forfeiture.

Yet, despite this, the match was allowed to continue.

Even more controversially, the report alleges that behind-the-scenes "instructions" were issued to the referee not to send off Senegalese players who had already been cautioned when play resumed. The aim, it is claimed, was to prevent a potential scandal during the live broadcast of the final.

#### CAF UNDER SCRUTINY

These revelations have exposed deep contradictions within CAF's handling of the incident. While the Appeals Committee eventually ruled in Morocco's favour based on the abandonment argument, the decision to allow the match to continue on the night—and to validate Senegal's eventual victory before reversing it weeks

later—raises questions about procedural consistency and governance.

Observers say the situation highlights a troubling pattern of "ad-hoc" decision-making, where written regulations appear secondary to immediate reputational concerns.

The case now rests with the Court of Arbitration for Sport, whose ruling could have far-reaching implications for

African football governance. Soccer

If CAS adheres strictly to the evidence contained in the official reports cited by Le Monde, there is a strong possibility that Morocco could be definitively awarded the title. Conversely, Senegal will argue that the match's continuation effectively nullified any claim of abandonment, making CAF's later reversal legally untenable.

### Seven Eritrean players go Missing in South Africa after AFCON qualification feat

Seven players from the Eritrean national team have reportedly gone missing in South Africa after refusing to return home following their historic qualification for the group stage of the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) qualifiers.

The development comes shortly after Eritrea secured a 4-1 aggregate victory over Eswatini, a result that saw the East African nation advance to the group stage of the qualifiers for the first time in 19 years.

According to reports, only three of the ten locally-based players who travelled for the encounter have returned to Eritrea.



SEVEN ERITREAN

The players who made the trip back home are Ablelom Teklezgi, Nahom Tadese, and Romel Abdu, while the remaining seven players are believed to have absconded while still in South Africa.

The incident has sparked fresh concerns over recurring cases of athletes from Eritrea seeking to remain abroad during international engagements, often citing personal and political reasons.

### Crisis Rock Obasogie's Singida Black Stars as Coach, Technical crew are sacked

The club side of Nigeria's Super Eagles goalkeeper Amas Obasogie, Singida Black Stars, is currently embroiled in a major crisis following a string of poor performances and disappointing results.

The Tanzanian outfit has taken drastic action by sacking head coach Othmen Najjar and dissolving the entire technical crew in a bid to arrest the club's declining form.

The decision comes after a run of unsatisfactory outcomes

that has left the club struggling to meet expectations, prompting the management to initiate sweeping changes within the team's structure.

Obasogie, who has been part of the squad, will now have to adapt to the changes as the club begins the process of rebuilding under a new technical setup.

Singida Black Stars are expected to announce a replacement for the vacant coaching position in the coming days as they aim to stabilize their season and improve results.



AMAS OBASOGIE

### CAF faces another controversy as Champions League Semi-Final looms



PATRICE MOTSEPE

Al Hilal are threatening to take legal action at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) following a controversial decision involving RS Berkane's place in the CAF Champions League semi-finals.

The controversy centers on Berkane captain Hamza El Moussaoui, who tested positive for the banned substance Prednisone in January.

CAF initially suspended El Moussaoui for 30 days on

March 11 just two days before the first leg of the quarter-final but lifted the suspension on match day.

El Moussaoui went on to play a pivotal role in the quarter-final, winning the penalty that allowed Berkane to secure an equalizer.

The semi-final clash is scheduled for April 11, but questions over CAF's handling of the suspension have already sparked calls for review and possible legal action